

**CALVARY PANDAN
BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 38

ISAIAH

CHAPTER 38

Theme: "The LORD Hears!"

THEME VERSE

Isaiah 38:1 (KJV) "In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live."

INTRODUCTION

Prayer and praise are the central focus of this chapter. The issue at hand was the request of king Hezekiah for his life to be extended. He was very sick and at his death bed. He was in need of prayer and healing.

The more serious our trial, the more intensely we tend to pray. There is no doubt that Hezekiah prayed intensely, sincerely and urgently. He had just been told by Isaiah to put his house in order because he would soon die from his illness.

Much could be learned from Hezekiah's experience as we follow the sequence of his sickness, prayer and praise. His experience teaches us how to conduct ourselves before the

LORD in times of trials and difficulties. It shows us how to ask for the LORD Almighty's help every moment of every day. We must not spurn this privilege by a lackadaisical attitude in our prayer life or we will lose greatly!

If we learn from king Hezekiah, we too will praise and thank the LORD from our hearts. These priceless personal experiences with the LORD are supposed to be the daily lot of every believer. Instead we have foolishly substituted them with materialism and carnality like a dog returning to its own vomit! What a tragedy when we backslide in our personal communion with God. It is precious to have an intimate relationship with Him like a young son with his Father.

It is not too late though if we learned from this example of Hezekiah. As long as there is breath in our nostrils, we can return to the LORD just as Hezekiah did and perhaps the LORD will extend our years on this earth to serve Him with renewed zeal and fervency for more years to come.

OUTLINE

1. The Sickness (v.1);
2. The Prayer (vv. 2-3);
3. The Reply (vv. 4-8);
4. The Praise (vv. 9-22).

COMMENTARY

The Sickness – 38:1

The phrase "in those days" refers to the period when Hezekiah fell sick. Commentators cannot agree on whether this sickness came before or after the events in Isaiah 37. The reason was due to verse 6. Commentators who believe that this sickness occurred before or during the siege of Jerusalem by Rab'sha-keh interpret verse 6 as a description of Isaiah 37. Commentators who interpret verse 6 as a reference to a total cessation of attacks and harassment from the king of Assyria (not to the Rab'sha-keh incident) argue that the sickness occurred after the events of Isaiah 37. I am of the opinion that Isaiah 38 came after the deaths and departure of the armies of Assyria. The reason is that all the three accounts of this same incident (2Kings 20:1-11; 2Chronicles 32:21-26) recorded that the sickness came after the departure of the Assyrian armies.

Hezekiah was very sick. Isaiah the prophet came and conveyed that the LORD told Hezekiah to set his house in order for he shall die and not live. The phrase to set one's house in order means to do what is necessary and say one's last words to loved ones before leaving this world forever.

The message was succinct and very clear to Hezekiah. We do not know what caused his sickness but when believers fall sick, it can be due to sin or it may have nothing to do with sin. In the latter case, the sickness strengthens the faith of the believers. Hezekiah's sickness fell under the

"strengthens the faith" category because the LORD answered his prayer without him having to repent of any sin.

The Prayer – 38:2-3

Without hesitation, Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall and prayed unto the LORD. The urgency was definitely there. Regardless of whether you are a king or not, when the pronouncement is given that you will die, unless you want to die, you will appeal for mercy. Hezekiah turned toward the wall -- this is not a figuratively turning of the wall of his heart as suggested by some commentators but a literal turning toward the wall in his room.

If he turned toward the wall of the Temple, based upon the dedicatory prayer of Solomon (cf. 1Kings 8:38) so that the LORD would answer, then He was praying according to Solomon's prayer. If he turned his face toward the wall to hide his tears, to seek privacy, to avoid embarrassment or to avoid interruption, then it was merely turning away from the people in the room. I am inclined to believe that it is the latter case because of verse 3.

Hezekiah asked urgently for the LORD to remember him. He invoked the covenantal name of the LORD in his prayer. His prayer was based entirely upon the covenantal relationship he had with God. He besought the LORD (pleaded with the LORD) for help. He said that he had walked before the LORD in truth (based upon God's truth). He did this with a perfect heart (sincere heart).

There was no hidden agenda behind his obedience to God's Word. He said that he had done what was right in the eyes of the LORD -- probably referring to the taunts of Rab'sha-keh in Isaiah 36 and 37. Then he wept greatly. Basically Hezekiah stated that he served the LORD with clean hands and a pure heart. He was not boasting at all. He wanted to be healed and he wanted to serve the LORD for more years to come. His past services had been faithful and sincere. This was a very good basis for prayer.

Although the words grace and mercy were not used here, the use of the word "beseech" implied that the king humbled himself before the LORD. The fact that he wept bitterly indicated a broken and contrite heart. He did not demand. Instead he pleaded and begged the LORD to heal and spare his life.

The Reply – 38:4-8

The LORD's reply was swift. Just as the warning came through Isaiah, the reply also came through him. Isaiah was told to go and say to Hezekiah that the God of David his father (not literally his father but of the lineage and dynasty of David) had heard his prayer and seen his tears. What wonderful words of comfort. The reason for answering Hezekiah's prayer was not because of the covenantal relationship the LORD had with king David (Hezekiah was of the covenantal line and therefore had a covenantal relationship with the LORD) -- it was not about the Messianic line.

The LORD had taken note of Hezekiah's prayers and had seen his broken and contrite heart. The LORD would give him an additional 15 years.

The LORD said that He would deliver Hezekiah and Jerusalem out of the hand of the king of Assyria. This deliverance was not a reference to the Rab'sha-keh taunts and the Assyrian armies that surrounded Jerusalem but a general and permanent revelation that the king of Assyria would no longer be a burden to him or to Jerusalem for the next 15 years. The LORD would defend Jerusalem against any future attacks from the king of Assyria. Hezekiah and Jerusalem were safe from this declining superpower. The LORD performed a miracle to seal his declaration (15 years extension of Hezekiah's life and the safety of Jerusalem). He brought the shadow of the degrees of the sun dial of Ahaz backwards by ten degrees. That is, He set the time backward by 10 degrees.

This miracle showed that the LORD is in control of time, the movement of the earth as well as the sun. We are not told how the LORD did this miracle. The fact that it was recorded meant that it happened like all the rest of the miracles recorded in the Bible. It is NOT the understanding of "how the miracle is done" that should be the key factor that moves the believers. We believe that the miracle happened because God said so. It is a matter of faith in God and His Word. The more we study the Bible, the better we know God, the easier it is

to trust Him. This is how faith grows and is strengthened.

The Praise – 38:9-22

Hezekiah praised the LORD and this was recorded for our blessing and encouragement. His song of praise was written when he was sick and after he had recovered from his sickness. It began on a very ominous note. The first six verses (verses 10-15) expressed his sorrows and his feelings about death.

He wrote about being told that his days would be cut off, that he shall go to the gates of the grave, that he was going to die and that the end of his life was nigh. He reasoned that he was deprived of the residue of his years. He began his reign at the age of 25 years. In total, he reigned for a period of 29 years (cf. 2Kings 18:2) until his death at the age of 55 (after the LORD added 15 years to his life). This meant that he was 39 years old at the time of his sickness and was asked to put his house in order. Compared to Psalm 90 (written by Moses) where the average man's life-span was stated as three score years and ten, Hezekiah was indeed deprived of his years. He was only 39 years old when he asked the LORD to spare his life and allow him to live longer.

Verse 11 -- He added that he would not see the LORD in the land of the living. He did not say that he would not see the LORD after death. He would leave and no longer experience life on this earth. He would have to say farewell to all his experiences on earth including the time he spent with the LORD and his loved ones.

Verse 12 – His age is departed (the use of the perfect tense here is to emphasize the past tense as if they were already gone). It meant that his remaining years had left him. His age was removed (also in the perfect tense) from him like a shepherd removing his tent. The tent was transient, designed and built for mobility. Hezekiah felt that his life was transient and easily taken away. Both of these verbs are in the passive voice which meant that someone else (in this case it was the LORD) had taken Hezekiah's years away from him. The weaver, at the end of his weaving, cut off the residue of the material that he did not need. Hezekiah felt that his years were cut off from him by the LORD.

The LORD would cut off his life through his illness. Hezekiah felt that it would be swift. He compared it to a day even to a night.

Verse 13 – Hezekiah reckoned till morning that the LORD, as a lion, would break all his bones. When a lion attacked and bit into its prey, it would break the bones and death would come swiftly to the prey. The mention of morning indicated that death would come early. The same phrase that Hezekiah used to end verse 12 was repeated in verse 13. He said that very early and swiftly would the LORD break his bones like a lion with its prey. He would be broken easily by the LORD and that would be the end of his life.

Verse 14 – Hezekiah's sorrow deepened with every verse. In this verse, he compared his cries to the

chatters of a crane or a swallow. Their chatters are loud and irritating. He also mourned like a dove whose mourning is quite soulful. Hezekiah's eyes failed to look upward unto the LORD as he felt so oppressed by the illness. He cried to the LORD to undertake for him (rescue him from the oppression due to his illness).

Verse 15 – Hezekiah was resigned to the fact that the LORD would take his life at the tender age of 39. The LORD and the prophet Isaiah had both spoken. Hezekiah was prepared to accept whatever the LORD gave to him. He surrendered to the will of the LORD even if it meant dying at the young age of 39. He said that he would go softly (humbly and quietly). Whatever the LORD willed, Hezekiah would walk through it. If it was bitter, he shall walk in bitterness with all humility and submission.

Verse 16 – From here onwards the mood of Hezekiah changed. He cried to the LORD and called Him O Lord (master). After he had surrendered himself to the LORD totally, it was so much easier to see the hand of the LORD. He said that in all these things was the life of his spirit: so would the LORD restore him to health and let him live. What a wonderful revelation from Hezekiah's song of praise. He was down and out but after his total surrender to the LORD, he was lifted up and the healing came. The LORD healed him and gave him another 15 years to live and to rule.

Verse 17 – Hezekiah testified that his feeling of peace came after a

period of great bitterness. Hezekiah experienced the love of God in his soul. He knew that the LORD delivered him from the pit of corruption because the LORD loved him. The LORD had cast away all Hezekiah's sins behind His back. Hezekiah knew that this love and healing from the LORD was out of grace.

Verse 18 – The grave and death cannot praise the LORD. In other words, a dead person cannot praise the LORD any more. Hezekiah had a near death experience and now he had been given a new lease of life - - an extra 15 years! He could not stop praising the LORD. He would cherish his life and live holily.

The ones who go down to the pit cannot experience the hope from God's truth. Everything comes to an end. It is only right now when we live on this earth and in this flesh that hope means something to us. Praise and thanks to God on this earth can only be done while we are yet alive.

Verse 19 – Using a repetition of the phrase "the living, the living" Hezekiah declared that he shall praise the LORD as he was doing this day. He could not thank God enough for the new lease of life! How wonderful it was for Hezekiah to be alive as a king. The father to the children shall make known God's truth. This meant that the father would tell his children what the LORD had done in his life and praised Him. This was what Hezekiah felt and wanted to do in his praise of the LORD. Do you make known your praises to your children?

Verse 20 – The LORD was ready to save Hezekiah. The timing was perfect. It was not too early that Hezekiah could not see that it was the hand of the LORD that healed him. Neither was it too late that Hezekiah would be crushed under the load of his illness. The LORD was just in time.

Hezekiah said that they would sing his songs to the stringed instruments all the days of their lives in the house of the LORD. The plural here referred to the people of Judah who were happy to have Hezekiah alive and with them for another 15 years. Hezekiah was a good and godly king. He did a lot of good reforms in Judah.

Verse 21-22 – These verses are not part of Hezekiah's praise. They covered what Isaiah did to heal Hezekiah. He instructed that a lump of figs be laid upon Hezekiah's boil. Once this was done, Hezekiah would recover. Hezekiah asked for a sign. The sign was the shadow of the dial of Ahaz being turned backwards 10 degrees.

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Isaiah 38:1-8

TUESDAY: Isaiah 38:9-22

WEDNESDAY: Isaiah 38:1-22

THURSDAY: Isaiah 38:1-22

FRIDAY: Isaiah 38:1-22.

Discussion Questions

- 1. When we pray to the LORD, should it always be based upon our covenantal relationship with Him? What does this mean and how does one pray based upon a covenantal relationship?

- 2. Is it all right for us to pray like Hezekiah, listing down the good deeds we have done for the LORD? Please elaborate.

- 3. Does this chapter of Isaiah teach us that our death date is adjustable by the LORD? Can we use this chapter of Isaiah to teach against the false teaching of fatalism? Please explain.

4. Do you want your life to be extended? Do you think the LORD may have extended your life? Have you ever prayed for an extension of your life when you were sick? Please elaborate.

7. Do you think it is good to be alive if you were not the king or a millionaire?

5. Do you want to live a long life? Why do you want to live a long life? Do you think that the LORD will grant you an extension of your life based upon the reason you have just given? Please explain.

8. What lessons have you learnt from this chapter about God's Word and about yourself?

6. Why did Hezekiah not want to go to heaven like the apostle who said that to die is gain? Do you think that remaining on earth is preferable to going to heaven? Please explain.