

Kings and Prophets 15-08-27

This is Thursday, the 27th of August, 2015. We are continuing expanding and forwarding, lifting up, ascending in and through our study of Kings and Prophets. And tonight we resume in Isaiah chapter 38.

This is the occasion of King Hezekiah with his fatal and terminal illness. We'll be looking specifically at the content of verses 9 and following in Isaiah chapter 38. Isaiah 38, 9 through 20.

Let's pause as we begin to go before the Lord in prayer, and ensure that our minds and our hearts are prepared and oriented to the study of God's Word. Father, thank you for this day. Thank you for the opportunity that we have to spend time together, looking at the treasure of your Word that we find as we dig beneath the surface.

And we recognize that sometimes it takes a bit of sustained attention on our part to come to a better understanding of your plan and purpose for us, and that this in itself is a part of the sorting process to reveal those who have the overcomer's heart. We pray that as we look together at this portion of your Word, that God the Holy Spirit will make it alive and understandable to us, so that we can gain benefit from it and be influenced for the better as we face our tasks and challenges and assignments in the days ahead. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. There are sort of three major episodes, if you will. I suppose four.

That's how the Bible does it, isn't it? These three things, yea, four, regarding Hezekiah. The memorable things about Hezekiah are when he first comes to the throne and the wonderful effort that he puts into the restoration of worship life. The second one is the face-down with the Assyrians, the Rabshaka coming and speaking, seeking to intimidate and to psych out the people of Jerusalem in particular.

The third is this grievous illness that he faces and turns to the wall and what we are currently studying. And the fourth is the visit of the Babylonian envoys, the misjudgment, shall we say, involved in that, which is emblematic of really the whole latter period of Hezekiah's reign. So those are the four big things.

If you think of Hezekiah, that's a convenient way to organize the information. And by the way, although the sequence isn't necessarily such in the account, that is in fact the chronological sequence. There has been a lot of interpretive ink spilled about what happened when, but it's pretty clear that it's in that order.

He obviously comes to the throne and rebuilds the temple. He has a very successful 14-year reign. The Assyrians come.

It is after that that he has this encounter with death, near-death experience, and then following that it is the visit of the Babylonians and the sort of tepid downward slide into mediocrity. So we find ourselves in the third of those four phases. We've spent a great deal of time looking at the restoration of worship and the things that Hezekiah did right.

He was very much after the pattern of his father David in that. We saw that it is sort of the, they have names for this, it's the Peter principle or the Murphy's law or whatever it is where, I think it's the other one though, where you rise one level above your greatest competence. You always get promoted until you get the job you're not good at, and that's when they finally decide to hand you a watch and tell you to go home.

And it seems that with all of the wonderful accomplishments, there was something lacking. It puts you in mind of the rich young ruler that Jesus encountered. He had kept the law and had been faithful and obedient since his youth.

And Jesus says, one thing you lack, and then he poses a challenge, and the young man can't do it and goes away sorrowing. Well, the encounter with the Assyrians seems to be one notch beyond what Hezekiah can handle. And I say that somewhat hesitantly because we are never tested above what we are able.

But having passed his previous tests, this is where he begins to show cracks in the facade. This is where some of the inherent weakness in his approach begins to be exposed. Now, this happens to all of us.

We hit things where we fail. The exercise in the Christian life is not, how can I never fail? It is much more, when I fail, how do I recover? How can I be in a position for God to take this and work it together for good? It's the classic broken bone mended is stronger than the surrounding material. It is in our weakness that God's strength is made manifest, that idea.

People will always take an idea and run off the field and out into the parking lot with it. And Paul says, well, if God's grace is greater than all our sin, then shall we sin that grace may abound? God forbid. And the fact that it's in one sense not surprising that we fail doesn't mean that we should just happily fail knowing that God will work it together for good.

We strive to succeed. We strive to be pleasing in God's sight and to pass our tests. But when we fail, it's not the end of the world.

People sometimes use that as an excuse to kind of give up, throw in the towel, collect their marbles and go home. And that's mixing like three metaphors, which is quite an achievement for me. But always we picture ourselves standing before the Lord God in heaven and the Lord Jesus Christ at his right hand.

And that alone ought to be enough to encourage us to do our very best and at the same time to not be unduly discouraged when we fail. We shouldn't fail. We don't have to fail.

But when we do, we need to quickly recover and learn whatever lessons we learn from it. This is the picture we find here in Hezekiah. He's had a string of successes.

But as he reaches the point of the Assyrians, and we find that instead of a great biblical episode of victory and accomplishment, he buys them off and he strips the gold from the temple at that point. And this is where our three accounts serve us pretty well. After all of that, after all of that, and by the way, what eventually happens with the incursion of the Assyrians? Does God eventually do a great and mighty act of deliverance? Anybody remember what finally happens when the armies are out there? So it isn't as though there was any need then or afterward to fear or to buy off the enemy.

God is fully in his heaven and is capable of delivering. It's a matter of accessing deliverance by faith. So after that, he develops this deadly disease.

We saw the beginning of this last time. And Isaiah is sent to him to tell him. Now how often does this happen, and it does happen a handful of times in Scripture, where somebody is told you are about to die? A lot of the great believers are given some advance notice that they are going to die.

Moses, David knows in advance and has time to set his house in order and ensure that the right son accedes to the throne. Jacob knows in time to bless his sons and deliver himself of prophecies that will be extremely valuable from then on. So there are times when someone is given some notice and has the opportunity to do something with that information.

Hezekiah is one of them. He's sick, but he doesn't just close his eyes in death. God details the prophet.

God sends the prophet to let him know you will die and not live. And the result of that was the content of the earlier part of chapter 38 of Isaiah and its parallel in 2 Kings 20, verses 1 through 11, 2 Chronicles 32, verse 24 and following. It must be an important episode because we have three accounts.

Go and tell Hezekiah, thus says the Lord, the God of David, your father. Why doesn't he say, thus says the Lord, your God? There's already a subtle clue here that Hezekiah, in the course of being a tall spirit at the beginning, didn't become a long spirit for the 14-year period. And by the time he gets here, God is being referred to as the God of his great-great-great-great-grandpa instead of the Lord your God has said.

I've heard your prayer, I've seen your tears. I will add to your days 15 years. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city.

And this is the sign to you from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing which he has spoken. Behold, I will bring the shadow on the sundial which has gone down with the sun on the sundial of Ahaz 10 degrees backward. So the sun returned 10 degrees on the dial by which it had gone down.

Is that the way you remember the story? That's the way it's told in Isaiah. But we already read this in Kings. And how was it in Kings? What sign will the Lord give me? Remember that? When we analyze the perspective of these accounts, what did we say about Kings? Kings is, this is what the king knows, and what the king can put down in his diary, and it's his view, much like the seals in Revelation.

It's the earthly view. This is what you see when you're on the ground and close up. There is the Chronicles, which is God's editorialized version for the population to understand what this all means.

And then there is Isaiah, which is God's prophet reflecting, this is how it is going to be viewed. This is how God chooses to view it in heaven. God chooses to observe some things and chooses to overlook others.

And the rather hubristic, the rather proud and insensitive and obnoxious demand for a sign from Hezekiah isn't in what you might call God's account. God just says, I'll give you this sign. And you think about the grace of God in overlooking the very petulant attitude of Hezekiah.

It's not in what you might call God's account here. He just says, I have given him the promise and here's the sign that I gave. And the unfortunate way that the sign came about is entirely overlooked.

And this ought to be a great comfort. And one of the wonderful points of application out of the Isaiah account is, won't it be wonderful at the judgment seat of Christ when all of our confessed sins are given this treatment? Have you ever been worried that there's going to be like some big jumbotron, just like the thing over there at the stadium, Jerry World, that's got that ginormous thing that both sides of the field can see, and here are the sins of Sam, writ large, and here I thought he was a good guy. That's just, oh, mortification, and I'd almost entertain, can't we just skip that part? Look at this account.

God does skip that. It's gone. When God says He separates our sins as far as the East is from the West, you know what we're going to be held accountable for at the judgment seat of Christ? Our work will be judged, not our sins.

Our work. And if any man's work survives because it is gold and silver and precious stones, meaning it was done in faith, it was done in and by the power of God, don't think that the judgment seat of Christ is going to be a long litany of every sin you ever committed past, present, and future. The Lord Jesus Christ died for those, and the only remaining effect they have is the extent to which they create stumbling and falling and a drag and friction in this life.

What does it say in Hebrews? Laying aside every weight and the sin which so easily entangles us, it slows us down. It entangles us. What is the way to get completely free? You sometimes wish you get tangled up in... If you've ever tried to walk through our woods in the summertime up there in Claremore, you get into the briars, and those things get stuck into your... I try to

wear my camouflage utility trousers because a lot of those thorns will kind of slide off.

It's just the nature of that material. That ripstop nylon stuff is designed to kind of slough off thorns. But you can get so tangled up, and you think, how can I get out of here? What's the shortest way? You're trying to look up and see where the edge is that you can move to, and it just slows you down and entangles you.

God's power eliminates them, and it is done through acknowledgement, through confession. If we can confess our sins, 1 John 1.7, 1 John 1.9, Psalm 51, we are purged, we are cleansed. Remember David's prayer? Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.

You, Lord God, wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. And when we are washed and made white, you don't go to the judgment, and suddenly everything that got washed off just jumps back up off of the wash water back onto you. It's gone.

Look at this account in Isaiah. You think, but he's left so much out. This is just almost deceptive in the way that it's written.

It seems to say that God just gratuitously provided the sign when it was no such thing, and there's actually quite a lot of blame and fault that could be assigned to Hezekiah. This is the way God chooses to look at the episode. It's His choice.

This is a wonderful thing, and occasionally you meet people and know people who have this as one of their fine qualities, one of their character gifts, is that they just seem to forget the bad things. We used to see this reflected in literature and in works of entertainment that had as a part of their purpose setting up exemplary behavior. If you saw *Poldark*, there's a book that was made into a PBS thing.

They did it a long time ago, and they've recently done it again. It's called *Poldark*, and it's really good. One of the qualities that comes out of the title character in that is although he is ill-used and ill-spoken of and is sabotaged even by some of his own relatives, when he encounters them and you think, well, he's going to really give them a piece of his mind.

He's going to unload both barrels on this cousin of his or whoever. He's very cordial, and he just seems to keep his own counsel, and he doesn't say what I would say. He doesn't say what I would expect him to say, and it was remarkable for the self-restraint.

And in those days, at least in the fictional account here, it was considered ungentlemanly to bring up such things in polite conversation. People had decorum, and they said it's not fitting. It's not proper, and by the way, it isn't helpful.

Well, that is a wonderful attribute, and it is a godly characteristic to cultivate. We are forgiven in the same way and to the same extent that we forgive. You look at the way God does here with Hezekiah.

This is our model. I do not remember the insults and the sins of the past. I remember the important things that happened, but I can leave a lot of that out of my mental calculation.

So that's why it reads so differently, and that's why it's important to distinguish these accounts. Isaiah presenting God's perspective. This is the throne room perspective.

This is how God chooses to view it in His own councils. I will bring the shadow on the sundial, and it's just the grace of God. God acts like it was all His idea, and of course, in some sense, it was.

So then we are going to say, well, if God has forgiven and forgotten the hubris and the disrespectful and short-sighted and very petty request of Hezekiah, what does God remember about Hezekiah? What's in this account that's not in Kings and not in Chronicles? Well, that is the writing of Hezekiah, king of Judah, that begins in verse 9. When he had been sick and had recovered from his sickness. Now, the writing is completed at that point, but as you read these stanzas, these trophies, you begin to think that some of it was written in the midst, or he's certainly putting himself back in time. Verse 10.

I said, in the prime of my life, I shall go to the gates of Sheol. I am deprived of the remainder of my years. I said, I shall not see Yah, the Lord, in the land of the living.

I shall observe man no more among the inhabitants of the world. My lifespan is gone, taken from me like a shepherd's tent. I've cut off my life like a weaver.

He cuts me off from the loom. From day until night, you make an end of me. I've considered until morning like a lion, so he breaks all my bones.

From day until night, you make an end of me. God does have all of this down in the heavenly account. What does it mean? Well, when he says, in the prime of my life, the Hebrew word here, without going into too much detail, means that there was an interlude.

In this interlude of my life, the word literally means a pause, a stoppage of activity. Everything was going along, going along, and then there was this interlude. And it is the time of his illness when he is prevented from furthering his plans and pursuing his goals.

He's forced to slow down. And in this vacuum of activity is when this takes place. So in the interlude, or in the time of pausing of my life, I was drawn up short.

I was forced to stop. Do you ever have one of those? Ever been blowing and going and then a health issue or an economic issue or some other weird thing happens and you're just kind of, you're stalled? You're stuck in traffic? Literally so, perhaps? It's one of those interludes. Now, here's my suggestion to you by way of application.

If we find ourselves in, in fact, I think there was a movie called Strange Interlude. Most of us are too old to remember it, including me, but Dolores remembers it. Strange Interlude.

But if we have a strange interlude, if we suddenly have a weird hiatus, a weird stoppage or an unexpected cessation and a forced wait, that's the time to spiritually become very alert and use it to take stock, use it to get our balance, use it to examine ourselves and see if we are in the faith. It's no accident when the normal, what we would consider the normal course of affairs is interrupted in some fashion. Our eyes should get a little larger, our hearts should be a little faster and we should start taking stock and being in a heightened state of awareness because many times it's one of these, like Hezekiah has.

Hezekiah didn't see it coming and he didn't know what it was when it arrived. In the interlude of my life, two things happen. I will go into the gates of Sheol.

Why not just Sheol? Why is it the gates of Sheol? What's the thing about a gate? What do you know about the gate to the Garden of Eden? It's a thing you can shut and not get back through, right? Some of these are sort of one-way gates. It's like those deals that rotate. You can get out, but it won't rotate the other way and let you back in.

The gates of Sheol are one-way gates. People go in, they don't come out, is the idea. Now, what did David say in his psalm? You will not leave my soul in Sheol.

You will not leave me in the one-way burn from which no traveler returns. But Hezekiah doesn't see it that way. He sees the gates of Sheol as a one-way destination.

His expectation, the expectation Job had, I know my Redeemer lives and even though skin worms eat my flesh, I will stand on my feet and use my own two eyes and I will see God. He had that confidence. Abraham looked for a city whose founder and builder is God and his bones rested in Machpelah along with his descendants in hope.

Hezekiah doesn't seem to have that. He says, I'm going through these one-way gates into Sheol and I shall be deprived, and that is a great translation of this word. I am being deprived.

The implication being, this is a wrongful theft. Something is being taken from me that is rightfully mine. What's the proper attitude toward the breaths that we take and the hours and days that we are given in this earth? They are a gift from God.

They belong to Him. We are made stewards of it. We are given time.

We are given opportunities. They belong to God. They are delegated to us to invest and to use.

Redeem the time because the days are evil. Redeeming the time. It is a resource from God given to us to invest.

But Hezekiah has a sense of possession and by not living as long as he thinks he should, he says, I am deprived of the remainder of my years. I own this life that is being taken from me. I deserve it.

I have a right to it and it is being taken from me. He is basically calling God a thief. It is mine

and you are taking it from me, which is a dangerous perspective.

You look at verse 11. How does verse 10 begin? What are the first two words there? It's kind of a trick question. Yomer means I said.

Same thing in verse 11. Yomer. Now in verse 10, the personal pronoun I is included and in verse 11 it's not.

Whether it's emphatic or put in a non-emphatic position. But there is, just in English, if you scan down through those first four verses of this song, I said, I shall go, I am deprived, I said, I shall not see, I shall observe, I have cut off, I have considered, I mourned like a dove. Somebody long ago wrote me something and then looking back over it said, I noticed that there is a preponderance of the first person pronoun in what I have just written.

And you see that here. What is our working definition of subjectivity? Of a lack of objectivity? A lack of connection to reality? Eyes on self. Eyes on people.

Eyes on circumstances. But first and foremost, eyes on self. Really people and circumstances, we look at them as they impinge on the mighty eye.

And it's all about Hezekiah. I said, I shall not see you, the Lord, in the land of the living. So the king is complaining here that he will no longer see God in this life.

This is sort of one of those piousities that we like to throw in, you know, got to say something about God, in the land of the living. So you've got a contrast between the gates of Sheol and the land of the living. You will die and not live.

I'm going to Sheol. I will no longer see God in the land of the living. It's almost an echo of Isaiah's words.

And he says, I shall observe man no more among the inhabitants of the world. And I think your King James has a text note there that says some texts or the Targum reads land and Septuagint omits that line altogether. But the implication here is that when he says, I will not see God, he's talking about going to, where would you see God in the land of the living? You go to the temple and worship.

Later on, he's going to talk about the praise of God. And his argument is, well, I'm not going to be able to go praise God in the temple. I will not be able to go into the presence of God if I die.

And God is sure going to miss me because my worship is a pretty big deal to Him. Lord, what are you going to do when I'm gone and I don't come down to the temple and see you? Are you sure you want to do this? I'm the king. Pretty good deal for the king to come down and see you, don't you think? This is sort of the unspoken idea.

I shall observe man no more among the inhabitants of the world, slash, land. And you notice that he says, I shall not see Yah, the Lord. And this personal name of God is used twice.

And there's debate about whether, we see where it says, Yah, the Lord. Well, in Hebrew, it's Yah, Yah. And there's all kinds of debate about, well, was this supposed to be Yahweh and it got corrupted? But in reality, I think this is legitimate that it is there twice.

And I shall not see the Lord, the Lord, in the land of the living. So there's an intensification there along the lines of doubling a verb. Dying thou shalt die.

You will surely die. I will not see the Lord, the Lord in the land of the living. There's an emphatic idea there possibly in the duplication.

And so he's calling on the name of the Lord here. He's invoking the name of the Lord as part of his appeal. That much is certain.

He says in verse 12, My lifespan is gone, taken from me like a shepherd's tent. This is actually sort of an Aramaism where the temporary nature is emphasized. What's the difference between a house and a tent? A tent is temporary.

So it's like a shepherd's tent that is pitched and then it's gone. It's too brief. It's too short.

There's no sense of permanence. If Abraham is looking for a city whose founder and builder is God, the opposite end of that spectrum is dwelling in tents. And he says, Well, you've made my life like a tent.

It's just here and it's gone. Where is the permanence and the stability and the solidity that was a part of your promise? And so again, this is sort of an indictment of God. You should have made me a house and you've made me a tent.

You should have built me of brick and you've made me of fabric. You should have made me permanent and I'm just temporary. He contrasts that with the song of David at the end of his life when he says, There are many things that happened in my life that didn't come to fruition, but I know that God is going to bring them to pass.

I have a great confidence in the future. That's David's song in a nutshell, if you remember. You don't get that idea here.

It's all the petulant analysis that this life was too brief, too short, and it's all God's fault. I've been deprived. God took it from me.

It was mine and now it's gone. I was counting on it and I'm bereft. There's no hint.

There's no suggestion at this point that there is any expectation for the future. I'm going through the one-way gates to hell and that's it. He might have been thinking of the subtle reference to David.

David was a shepherd and they occasionally talk about the tent of David that has fallen down and will be brought back up, but he uses it in an ironic sense here. I have cut off my life like a

weaver cutting me off from the loom. And if you've seen the way weaving works, the fabric that has been laboriously created on a loom with loops and it's looped over the teeth and so on, and then many times that is cut and becomes a fringe.

And he says, well, you've cut me off from the loom, which is a little bit ironic because you can't use a rug or a woven thing until you cut it from the loom. It's at most decorative. It may be very impressive as you look at it, but you can't use it until you take it off the loom.

But he's using this as a form of complaint. Well, I've been cut off like a guy cuts a rug off of a loom. Well, why would you not? But this is sort of the lack of thought and lack of logic that we can get into when we become subjective.

Our logic makes sense to us in our little curvature of space world that's bent around ourselves with hypergravity. But objectively, looking at it from the outside, you say this really doesn't make a whole lot of sense. So he's trying to emphasize how sad and short this is.

And he says, from day until night, you make an end of me. I've considered until morning like a lion. So here's the day of your life.

You know, there's day and there's night. There's night and then there's morning. And during the day, he says, well, you've taken the life that I was supposed to have during the day.

And then at night, which should have been a time of rest and recuperation, a lion has a hold of me and he's chewing me up for his dinner. We talked about the... Actually, it wasn't us. It was me talking to somebody else about the ethics or the morality of carnivorous animals.

There are people who, in looking back at the dawn of time and the sequence of creation and one thing and another and wonder, well, was everything herbivorous until Adam and Eve sinned? Then you had the carnivorous animals. Was there any carnivorousness before the fall? And because if there was, then God couldn't have looked at the world and said, it's all good, it's tov. God looked at everything he created and it's tov.

Well, if there's animals eating other animals, how could that possibly be good? Well, you go over to the Psalms and I think it might be Psalm 109, somewhere over in there, where it says that God gives prey to the lions and they chew it up and they are given good from his hand. And so the Bible declares that lions eating their prey is good from the hand of God for that lion. So that's your counter-argument to if anything's teeth are noshing on something else that is inherently evil.

Plus, there's no morality in the animal world anyway. A bunch of animals don't get together and say, we find the lion guilty of eating the gazelle and we sentence him to punitive measures. You know, this monkey went and took the other monkey's baby and tore it limb from limb.

And the monkeys all get together and say, he shouldn't have done that. You know, the chimps, which they do. And anthropologists and stuff will claim that this is evidence of primitive

jealousy and human-type thinking where a chimp mother that loses her child will go to some other chimp mother and take her child, run off to the other chimps and then tear it limb from limb and murder it, quote-unquote.

And that this says something about our origins. I say it says something about chimps, which is, you know, all the childish fantasies that, oh, couldn't I have a chimp, and Lancelot Link would be such a great friend in my house. Not so much.

Little wild animals are wild animals and they act in a wild manner, but they don't have any moral sense. The other chimps don't look at that and say, well, that's just wrong. Most of the time they're beating their fists on the ground and waving branches and saying, wow, look at that, look at that, look at that.

Anyway, the image here is of wrong. I should have had a great life during the day and it's been taken from me. I should have had, I will both lay me down in peace and sleep for thou, Lord, only dost make me to dwell in safety and instead the lions are chewing me up and breaking all my bones.

So it was a bad day and it's a bad night is his implication. Well, who's in charge of the order for the day and the night? It's God. This is a charge leveled against God that, you know, shall the Lord of the earth not do right? You remember who said that? Shall the Lord of the earth not do right? It's Abraham, way back.

Shall the Lord of all the earth not do right? If there are 50 righteous in the city, would you not spare them or 20 or 10? Well, according to Hezekiah, apparently not. He will do wrong. He'll rob you and he'll let you be crunched up by the lions.

Now, what's the point of all of this? We're going to run out of time before we finish this song. But here's the point. How many times are we encouraged and enjoined in Scripture to pray? All over the place.

We have it by example. The Lord Jesus, the Apostle Paul, replete with exhortations, encouragements, and examples to pray. Pray without ceasing.

In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. It's got that little with thanksgiving in there. Because just praying is kind of like just sacrificing in Malachi.

Are they encouraged and exhorted and given examples of sacrifice? Yes. But can you do a sacrifice that is repugnant to God and a stench in his nostrils? Yes, you can. We're encouraged to pray.

But can you pray in a way that is, shall we say, annoying to God? Yes, you can. And this is it. It is not enough to pray.

We want to think about what we are praying and how we are praying. What is an effective prayer? And we've seen this before. Jesus' prayers were effective.

Moses' prayer on behalf of the nation when God was about to blast them to cinders, at least in prospect. What is effective prayer? Effective prayer is a prayer that reflects back to God, God's own thinking, God's own promises, God's own priorities, God's own plan and purpose. Many times the situation has been constructed so that we will sit down and think of it in those terms, and when we go to God and express that we understand those terms, he says, mission accomplished.

It was never God's intention, and I can say this with 100% boldness and confidence, and I ask you the question, was it ever God's intention that Abraham kill his son Isaac on Mount Moriah? Did God for one millisecond expect, anticipate and want Abraham to slay his son? No. That was never in the plan. It was never a part of the thing.

And yet God told Abraham to go do it. Why? It is a circumstance designed to bring out of Abraham what is inside. Once that has been expressed, once his faithfulness has been demonstrated, demonstration concluded.

Situation finished. Let's get the ram out of the thicket. Many times the situations and challenges that face us, whether they are personal like this, whether they are in our periphery and are happening to someone near and dear, whether they are more distant and have to do with the nation or the world or large people groups or, you know, near and far in our fellowship or in our community or whatever, it is designed and our observation of it and our take on it is what's in view.

It is a story problem and God is waiting to see what response it will elicit. Here is somebody that has issues, health issues, circumstance issues, economic issues, people testing, situation testing, whatever it may be. The entire reason that that situation exists may be, or at least one of several, usually God is accomplishing multiple things at once.

But in terms of our observation, sometimes God is just waiting for us to parse the problem, sort it into priorities and divine viewpoint, divine perspective, and come before God and express that we have figured it out in prayer, that we understand what is important in that situation in prayer. Many times it isn't, Oh God, please heal Uncle Fred. Many times it is, Lord, work in and through this situation to reveal your glory so that Fred can be blessed, the people in Fred's immediate periphery can be blessed, his faith and his hope will be evident in a way that may cause people in and around that situation to ask a reason for the hope that is in him and his family.

It may be that Uncle Fred is far from his spiritual responsibilities and priorities and Lord use this to bring him to a realization of what is really important and give me the wisdom to know when to speak and when to shut up. Give me the wisdom to know when to offer help and when to step back. Let me be a light of the Lord Jesus Christ shining in this situation and any other

believers that are in the near periphery.

If Aunt Mary is married to Uncle Fred and she is a believer, there is a lot that is going to be going on with her. But we look at these things and we use them as extended examples of application, of analysis, and guess what? You can't do that while you are texting on your phone. You can't do that while you are watching television.

You can't do it while you are engaged in anything that comes over earbuds, anything that comes on a little square screen. We need time in the closet as they used to say. We need time in the inner chamber, time alone with God to think our way through.

One of the tragedies in the church today is so few people make time for reflection, for the Holy Spirit to speak. You are not going to get a text from the Holy Spirit. He is not going to call you up.

He isn't going to send you a tweet. God doesn't have a Facebook page and He doesn't have a website and He is not going to send you a little daily devotional over the web. We get these things in a higher and better way if we will pause, if we will stop.

God speaks to us through His Word via the Holy Spirit. We speak to Him in prayer. Be careful, be diligent, be thoughtful, be objective, be scriptural, be humble, be as the Lord Jesus was, self-sacrificial.

Everything that Hezekiah is not being and saying in this very selfish, self-centered, short-sighted and accusatory prayer to God. God forgave him and has ignored the whole give me a sign thing, but this content of the thoughts and intents of the heart that is expressed here is on record and it's on record partly for our instruction. Go thou and do not do likewise.

So look at the first person pronouns. Look at the lack of objectivity. Yes, one way to look at it is I have been deprived of my opportunity.

I've been deprived of my healthy ability to be nine feet tall and bulletproof. I've been deprived of my liberty. I've been deprived of my mobility.

I've been deprived of my whatever it may be, fill in the blank here. That's one way to look at it and you probably find people who commiserate with you and cry on your shoulder with you over it, but that's not how God looks at it. Paul was never more effective as an apostle than when he was chained to the praetorian guard.

Wrote some of the greatest scripture in the Bible with no liberty at all. No privileges, no great diet, no fun fellowship. He's sitting in a wet dank dungeon chained between a couple of smelly Roman guards and God is using him for the ages writing these tremendous epistles that are blessed.

He had no idea that there would be hundreds of millions of believers that would literally hang

on every word in those letters. But Paul had faith in God, that God knew what he was doing. And he said, leave me alone.

I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Those are self-sacrificial marks. Those are marks that are earned in a higher cause above and beyond ourselves.

It's the opposite of what you see here. God gives us a positive illustration in the Lord Jesus and the apostle Paul and in others. Here you get the negative side.

So we want to absorb this. We want to take it on board and most importantly we want to remember it. If we catch ourselves being a little bit peeved with God as we pray, well, Lord, I thought you were going to help me pass that test.

I thought you were going to help me accomplish that goal. Haven't I been good? Wasn't I in Bible class Thursday night? Where's my blessing? We need to slow down and think, you know what, maybe I don't want to be Hezekiah and I certainly don't want to give birth to a Manasseh that's going to be a blight and a curse to just thousands of people and be an everlasting example of how dumb I was by not accepting and entering into wholeheartedly God's perfect plan for me. That's a great lesson from Hezekiah.

We'll finish up and conclude the analysis of this because he's going to turn a corner in this psalm. You think, well, maybe it's just the first half where he needed help and he's going to turn the corner and redeem himself. Well, you can already tell just from the term.

Is there such a thing as self-redemption? No. So we'll see how the psalm concludes next time, but we'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the effective, bright, and clear light that shines from your Word onto our souls, illuminates for us reality and truth, the future, our great opportunities and our challenges, and the means that you have provided for us to meet those challenges successfully and in a way that is pleasing in your sight.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress these truths on each heart, that each of us will find encouragement and strength and motivation as we anticipate the opportunities that you have for us in the time that remains to us in this life. We look forward so much to the return of the Lord Jesus for us, to take us to himself, to bring us into your presence where we can live and serve with those skills and resources that we gain in this life as we live in the light of passages such as this. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.