



"In the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years."

—Abraham Lincoln

**24-Feb-17**

## **The Word of the Lord Is Good (Part One)**

The life of Judah's King Hezekiah, including his prayer life, offers a mighty challenge and example for us today. Note what [II Kings 18:3-7](#) has to say about him:

And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done. He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that [Moses](#) had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan. He trusted in the LORD [God](#) of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him. For he held fast to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses. The LORD was with him; he prospered wherever he went. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him.

High praise indeed! [II Chronicles 32:30](#), 32 attests that he was a good king:

Hezekiah prospered in all his works. . . . Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his [goodness](#), indeed they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, and in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.

Those who rank the kings of Judah usually place David and [Josiah](#) on the top rank, putting Hezekiah just below, on par with Asa and Jehoshaphat. However, God devoted more space—eleven whole chapters—to the reign of Hezekiah than any king other than David. It is twice as much as is given to Josiah, a king who ranks with David.

Why is that so? It is likely that Hezekiah's life has more to teach us. Perhaps he was more like us than were David and Josiah—a bit more fractured and inconsistent than those two greats. Hezekiah did a great deal of good in God's sight and had a repentant attitude, but he was also proud and self-centered due to all the wealth and success that God had given to him.

Another of his major faults is that he had a "better you than me" attitude. For instance, because of his pride in his possessions, God pronounced a judgment through Isaiah that Hezekiah's sons would serve as eunuchs in Babylon ([II Kings 20:18](#)). He responded by telling Isaiah that he was glad the evil would not be visited on himself, showing no remorse for the fate of his sons: "'The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good!' For he said [or *thought* (*The Amplified Bible*)], 'Will there not be [peace](#) and truth at least in my days?'" (verse 19).

Yet, "The word of the LORD is good" does not seem to have entered his mind when Isaiah relayed a message from God that the king's illness was terminal, and he would die without an heir to his throne. No, when that happened, he was stressed to bitter tears! But he asked for God's mercy, and God told the prophet: "Go, and tell Hezekiah, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: "I have heard your prayer. I have seen your tears; surely I will add to your days fifteen years"' ( [Isaiah 38:5](#)).

God relented, rescinding His immediate death sentence for Hezekiah and adding fifteen years to his life. However, subsequent events show that it

came with a terrible price for the nation! As devout as he was, Hezekiah could not seem to trust God to do what was best for him and the nation, which likely included his death at that time. Rather than say, "Your will be done!" he pled bitterly for his life, a thoroughly human response.

Several sons were born to him during those extra fifteen years, and one of them, Manasseh, his successor, turned out to be ruthless and despicable—and not just for a short while, but for most of his 55-year reign! Manasseh undid every reform that his father had undertaken, reestablished idol worship, caused his own son to go through the fire, defied God's prophets, and slaughtered all those who opposed him. His victims probably included Isaiah, his father's most faithful friend. Jewish tradition says the prophet hid from him in a hollow tree, but the tree was cut down, sawing him in two. II Kings 21 is filled with the abominations of Manasseh.

How little Hezekiah knew of what was best for him or for Judah! We can claim no better foresight than what the king showed. But we can learn that, when a person demands that his own shortsighted vision take precedence over the [wisdom](#) of God's plan for his life, it shows great [presumptuousness](#).

Hezekiah ruled in tumultuous times, times that required a close relationship with God. Sometimes, he was quick to rely on Him, and at other times, he turned to Him only when forced into it. [II Chronicles 32:22-27](#), 29-31 concisely summarizes the ups and downs of his reign:

Thus the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all others, and guided them on every side. And many brought gifts to the LORD at Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah, so that he was exalted in the sight of all nations thereafter.

In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death, and he prayed to the LORD; and He spoke to him and gave him a sign. But Hezekiah did not repay according to the favor shown him, for his heart was lifted up; therefore wrath was looming over him and over Judah

and Jerusalem. Then Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah.

Hezekiah had very great riches and honor . . . for God had given him very much property. This same Hezekiah also stopped the water outlet of Upper Gihon, and brought the water by tunnel to the west side of the City of David. Hezekiah prospered in all his works.

However, regarding the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, whom they sent to him to inquire about the wonder that was done in the land, God withdrew from him, in order to test him, that He might know all that was in his heart.

We see some good and some bad—a measure of [faithfulness](#) and humility, as well as more than a little pride and [carelessness](#). He was a mixed bag, as most of us are, so there are plenty of lessons to be learned. We will see some more of those in Part Two.

- Mike Fuhrer

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## From the Archives: Featured Sermon

### [Faith and Healing \(Part One\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

A group of Ukrainian Jews applied foresight and sacrifice to escape from the impending onslaught of the Nazis, saving themselves from certain destruction. If we as Christians fail to dress and keep, cultivating, embellishing, and improving what has been entrusted to us (including our bodies and health), we are equivalent to a destroyer. Fighting the forces of decay - a continuous struggle of overcoming planned for us by almighty God - requires constant, life-long work and vigilance. We should never delude ourselves that we are "innocent victims" of our own sins or destructive

habits. We have a sobering responsibility to analyze our health needs, continually adjusting and changing as we learn, faithfully maintaining the temple of God's Spirit.

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## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[Living By Faith and Human Pride](#)**

by John W. Ritenbaugh

II Corinthians 5:7 is clear that God wants us to walk—live our lives—by faith, but our pride and vanity, mirroring the attitude of Satan the Devil, frequently get in the way. John Ritenbaugh delves into the depths of pride and its tragic results for the individual and for all mankind, most of all because it causes us to reject God and His Word.

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