

Sermon #116 — Isaiah Series

Title: **SET YOUR HOUSE IN ORDER**

Text: Isaiah 38:1-8

Subject: *Hezekiah's Sickness and Recovery*

Date: Sunday Morning — January 12, 2020

Reading: *2nd Timothy 4:1-18*

Introduction:

“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.” —
The Lord God said to the good and godly King of Judah, Hezekiah, *“Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.”*

Of all the kings of Judah, none compared to Hezekiah. Hezekiah was the son of a reprobate apostate. But he was chosen of God, elect and precious. Hezekiah was the object of God's everlasting love and sovereign, saving grace. He was just 25 years old when he began to reign in Judah. And what a reign he had! — We read of King Hezekiah...

(2 Kings 18:3) “And he did *that which* was right

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in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did. (4) He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan. (5) He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor *any* that were before him. (6) For he clave to the LORD, *and* departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses. (7) And the LORD was with him; *and* he prospered whithersoever he went forth.” (2 Kings 18:3-7)

Then, we read in Isaiah 38, when he was just 39 years old, the Lord God said to the good and godly King of Judah, Hezekiah, “*Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.*” What are to learn from God’s word to Hezekiah? Turn to Isaiah 38 and we will see.

(Isaiah 38:1-8) In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of

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Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live. (2) Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, (3) And said, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done *that which is* good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore. (4) Then came the word of the LORD to Isaiah, saying, (5) Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years. (6) And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city. (7) And this *shall be* a sign unto thee from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he hath spoken; (8) Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.

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Proposition: We would be wise to live each day as if we knew it would be our last, wise to set our affairs in order in preparation for eternity.

May God the Holy Ghost be our Teacher as we look into these eight verses of Inspiration.

SICKNESS AND DEATH

1st — **The grace of God does not exempt us from suffering, sickness, and death.** — *“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”* (v1).

Neither a man’s greatness nor his godliness will exempt him from the sufferings, sicknesses, and death common to Adam’s fallen race. Hezekiah was a mighty potentate on earth and a mighty favorite of Heaven, but he suffered the insults of Sennacherib, the sickness of his body, and at last death, just like any other man.

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Godly, faithful, useful Hezekiah was stricken with a disease, which, without a miracle, would certainly be fatal. And this was in the midst of his days, his comforts, and usefulness. He was only 39 years old! Lord, *“he whom thou lovest is sick.”*

- How gracious the Lord is in sending him notice of his approaching end.
- It was David’s earnest prayer that he might be taught to number his days and to know their end. — *“LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.”* (Psalm 39:4) — *“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”* (Psalm 90:12)
- This sickness seized Hezekiah when he was in the midst of his triumphs over the ruined army of the Assyrians, to teach us always to rejoice with trembling.

Sickness is not a sign of God’s displeasure or a lack of faith on our part. The fact is, **sickness is sent to us by our heavenly Father for our benefit.** **That which is aggravating to our bodies is often good for our souls.** Sickness tends to draw our

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affections away from the world to Christ. Sickness **sends us to our knees**, sends us to our Bibles and sends us to our Savior. Anything that accomplishes these things is good!

Sickness **reminds us** that life in this world, at its best, is but a vapor that is soon gone. Sickness **forces us to look to the grave**, look past the grave to judgment, and look past the judgment to eternity. Whenever sickness comes, be it nothing more than a cold or something as serious as cancer, let us be patient before the Lord, ever mindful of the fact that...

- Sickness is the fruit of sin.
- Sickness is the forerunner of death.
- Sickness and health and life and death are in the hands of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- For believers, sickness is never unto death (John 11:25).

Illustration: Richard Baxter — *“Almost well!”*

- And our sicknesses, whatever they are, are for the glory of God.

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SET IN ORDER

2nd — We should each set our house in order in the anticipation of death. — *Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live”* (v1).

Put both your affections and your affairs in order. Oh, Spirit of God teach me and give me grace to live every day as if it were my last!

- Apply your heart to wisdom. — To Christ! — So that, when the Lord comes, you may be found of him in peace with God, with your own conscience, and with all men! — So that you may have nothing else to do but to die.
- Set the affairs of your life in order, so that your death will cause as little trouble or disturbance to others as possible

SICKNESS AND PRAYER

3rd — Prayer is the salve for every sore, the medicine for every sickness, and the comfort for

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every trouble. — *“Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the LORD”* (v. 2).

Is any afflicted with sickness? Let him pray (James 5:13). — When Hezekiah was distressed by his enemies he prayed. Now that he was sick he prayed. Where else should a child go, when anything ails him, but to his Father? I repeat what I said before. — Afflictions are sent to bring us to our Bibles and to our knees. When Hezekiah was in health he went up to the house of the Lord to pray. When he was sick in bed he turned his face towards the wall, towards the temple, the mercy-seat, which was a type of Christ, to whom we must look by faith in every prayer.

(Hebrews 4:14-16) Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession. (15) For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are, yet* without sin. (16) Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time

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of need.

GOD’S TESTIMONY

4th — **The testimony of God, giving us a good conscience before God, will make it easy to die.** — *“And (Hezekiah) said, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore”* (v.3).

Most of the commentators I have read suggest that Hezekiah dreaded death. But certainly there is nothing in his prayer to indicate that. Hezekiah did not pray either for life or for death. The subject of his petition is for God’s remembrance of him. And the argument he makes use of is, not taking pride in his integrity, but humbly begging to be remembered for his faith in God’s covenant grace and mercy, redemption and salvation in Christ, by Christ, and with Christ (Micah 6:8; 2 Timothy 4:6-8).

(Micah 6:8) He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of

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thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

This is what God requires; and this is what God gives. Sadly, almost every commentator I have read on this verse of Scripture and every sermon I have been able to find on it interpret the text to mean — God requires men and women, in every department of life, to behave justly, honestly, and uprightly; to be merciful and charitable to others; and to live in humiliation before God. They tell us that this is the sum and substance of real religion and true godliness

“But ye have not so learned Christ” (Ephesians 4:20). — How I thank God that I have not so learned Christ! Notice what the text says. **There is not a word in this verse about how we are to live before men, or about what we are to do to and with men.** God requires us to “*do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly WITH thy God.*” What does this mean?

“DO JUSTLY”

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What is this requirement that we “*do justly with God*”? This is not talking about treating all men justly, though we certainly should try to do that at all times.

- Pay your bills.
- Live honestly with all men.
- Treat all people right.

This is talking about doing justly with God! How can I do justly with God?

To “do justly” is to confess that in ourselves, by reason of sin, we justly deserve His wrath and indignation, having broken all His righteous law.

- To do just is to confess our sin.
- To do justly is to take sides with God against ourselves (Psalms 32:5; 51:4-5; 1 John 1:9).

(Psalms 32:5) “I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.”

(Psalms 51:4-5) “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done [this] evil in thy sight: that thou

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mightest be justified when thou speakest, [and] be clear when thou judgest. 5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.”

(1 John 1:9) “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

To “do justly” is to exercise that repentance toward God that only God Himself gives, that only God Himself can produce in a man by His grace.

“LOVE MERCY”

Who does not love mercy? Everyone I know loves mercy, especially when he needs it. But anyone who has not been blinded to the Word of God by His own love of works religion must surely realize that Micah is not here telling us that salvation is to be had by loving mercy in that sense!

- Let us love to show mercy and exercise mercy!
- Let us love to see mercy exercised!

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- But you are a fool, if you imagine that you can win God's favor by being merciful!

If you will turn to Luke 1:72, you will see that the Mercy we must love is our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God's salvation by Him. — Here Zacharias is speaking of John the Baptist and his ministry as the forerunner of Christ, our Redeemer.

(Luke 1:67-75) “And his father **Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied,** saying, 68 **Blessed [be] the Lord God of Israel;** **for He hath visited and redeemed His people,** 69 And **hath raised up an horn of salvation for us** in the house of His servant David; 70 As He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began: 71 That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; 72 **TO PERFORM THE MERCY** [promised] to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant; 73 The oath which He sware to our father Abraham, 74 That He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him

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without fear, 75 In holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life.”

Salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ is the performance of God’s mercy; and all who are born of God love that mercy!

- Performed by Christ’s Obedience in Life — Righteousness!
- Performed by Christ’s Obedience in Death — Satisfaction!
- Performed by Christ’s Power in Grace — The New Birth!

“WALK HUMBLY”

Next, we are told that we must walk humbly with God. — *“He hath shewed thee, O man, what [is] good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”* — **To “walk humbly with thy God” is to walk before God in the conscious awareness of your sin, trusting Christ alone as your Savior, as you are taught by God the Holy Spirit for the**

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everlasting comfort of your soul (John 16:7-11; 1 Corinthians 1:30-31; Philippians 3:3; Colossians 2:6).

(John 16:7-11) “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the **Comforter** will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. 8 And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9 **Of sin**, because they believe not on me; 10 **Of righteousness**, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; 11 **Of judgment**, because the prince of this world is judged.”

(1 Corinthians 1:30-31) “But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption: 31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

(Philippians 3:1-3) “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed [is] not grievous, but for you [it is]

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safe. 2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. 3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”

(Colossians 2:6) “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, [so] walk ye in him.”

Hezekiah confessed the very same thing Paul confessed as he anticipated death.

(2 Timothy 4:6-8) For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. (7) I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: (8) Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

“And Hezekiah wept sore” (v. 3). — Why?

- Not that he feared death!

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- Because of the distressed condition the nation would be in, having the Assyrian army in it.
- Because he had no son to succeed him in the throne, and so difficulties and troubles might arise within themselves about a successor.
- And it may be, what troubled him most of all was, that dying without an heir, without a son, God's promised Son, the woman's Seed, the Redeemer and Messiah could not spring from his seed.

GOD'S OPEN EAR

5th — **The Lord God, our God, our heavenly Father has a gracious ear open to the cries and prayers of his afflicted people** (vv. 4-6).

(Isaiah 38:4-6) Then came the word of the LORD to Isaiah, saying, (5) Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years. (6) And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I

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will defend this city.

The same prophet that was sent to Hezekiah with warning to prepare for death is sent to him with a promise that he shall not only recover, but be restored to a confirmed state of health and live fifteen years longer. As Jerusalem was distressed, so Hezekiah was diseased, that God might have the glory of the deliverance of both, and that prayer too might have the honour of being instrumental in the deliverance.

When we pray in our sickness, though God send not such an answer as he here sent to Hezekiah, yet, if by his Spirit he bids us be of good cheer, assures us that our sins are forgiven, that his grace shall be sufficient for us, and that, whether we live or die, we are his, we have no reason to say that we pray in vain. God answers us if he strengthens us with strength in our souls, though not with bodily strength (Psalms 138:3; 41:3).

(Psalm 138:1-3) I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee. (2) I will worship toward thy holy temple,

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and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. (3) In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, *and* strengthenedst me *with* strength in my soul.

(Psalm 41:3) The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.

The Lord God promised Hezekiah that he would both heal his body and protect his church. What a blessing! You see, a faithful man cannot take much comfort in his own health and prosperity unless he also sees the welfare and prosperity of the church of God. Therefore God, knowing what lay near Hezekiah's heart, he promised Hezekiah not only that he would live, but that he would "*see the good of Jerusalem all the days of his life*" (Psalm 128:5).

MIRACULOUS PROVIDENCE

6th — **The Lord God, our God graciously performs wondrous, miraculous works of providence by**

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which he confirms his Word to and comforts his elect in times of trouble (vv. 7-8).

(Isaiah 38:7-8) And this *shall be* a sign unto thee from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he hath spoken; (8) Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.

God is willing to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, that we may have an unshaken faith in his promised grace and a strong consolation and comfort of hope. God had given Hezekiah repeated assurances of his favor; and yet, as if all were thought too little, that he might expect from him uncommon favors, a sign was given him, an uncommon sign, a miraculous sign. — The sign was the going back of the shadow upon the sun dial.

Illustrations: *Things Done Just for Me*

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We will come back to this later, but I must call our attention to...

GOD'S USE OF MEANS

7th — **The Lord God always uses means to accomplish his purpose; but it is always a means that would accomplish nothing were it not for God's power.**

(2 Kings 20:7) And Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid *it* on the boil, and he recovered.

- The Instrumentality of Prayer
- The Instrumentality of Medicine — Figs! — Radiation! — Chemotherapy!
- The Instrumentality of Preaching!

“Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.”

- Believer!
- Unbeliever!

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Amen.