

Lifted Up / Bowed Down • 2 Chronicles 32:24-26

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *The Heart*

1. We all know how important the condition of our heart is to our overall health.
 2. It pumps life to the rest of the body; a gallon & a half of blood is pushed through hundreds of feet of blood vessels with every beat.
 3. During an average lifetime of 74 years, the heart beats about 2½ *billion* times.
 4. The time it takes for one drop of blood to make an entire circuit of the body, is just *24 seconds*.
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5. According to the CDC, *heart disease* is the leading cause of death in the US. [\[1\]](#)
 6. Many of those sitting in this room right now are on some kind of heart or blood medication.
 7. Many have had their doctors tell them they need to watch their diet & start an exercise program to protect their hearts.
 8. A trip to the grocery store makes clear how heart-health has become a *marketing tool*.
 - a. Products are touted as being “*low fat & low salt*.”
 - b. Some even claim to *lower your cholesterol*.
 9. While all this attention on a healthy heart is good, what’s *more* important is the condition of our *spiritual* heart.
 10. The *physical* heart affects the quality of our *earthly lives*. But our *spiritual* heart affects eternity.
 11. Paul says it this way in 1 Timothy 4:8 –
Bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

B. *Set the Scene*

1. Our study today in 2 Chronicles 32 is an illustration of this.

II. TEXT

A. *V. 24*

24 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.

1. When the author Ezra said, “In those says,” he was referring to the days just before vs. 1-23 which recount the invasion of Judah by Assyria.
2. 2 Kings 20 & Isaiah 38 recount this story in much greater detail.
3. There we learn God sent the prophet Isaiah to Hezekiah with a message that he would die.
 - a. You see, while Hezekiah was a good & godly king, *he wasn’t perfect*.
 - b. He was 2nd only to David in terms of his devotion to God.
 - c. And just like David, he had weaknesses.
4. Hezekiah had the unfortunate *tendency* of playing politics & making treaties with others instead of trusting in God for the security of the nation.

- a. Half way through his reign, he joined in an alliance against the Assyrians who had control over the entire region.
 - b. He entered into a *treaty with Egypt*, though he'd been warned by Isaiah not to. [2]
 - c. It was this alliance & revolt that led to the Assyrian invasion recounted earlier in this chapter.
5. What we read here in v. 24 was God's way of chastening Hezekiah.
 - a. His tendency to trust in man rather than God was a danger that threatened the kingdom.
 - b. He needed to repent & change.
 - c. The threat of death was a messenger Hezekiah could not ignore.
 6. As he considered the fate of Judah, knowing the Assyrians were on the march with a huge force, he was concerned about what would happen if he were to die, if the nation lost its leader at such a crucial moment.
 7. There was no one capable of taking the reins of leadership.
 8. So 2 Kings tells us he *wept bitterly & pleaded* with God to spare his life.
 9. God graciously answered his prayer & added an additional 15 years to his life.
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10. This is amazing & exposes a mystery about *the power of prayer*.
 - a. Isaiah told Hezekiah to set his things in order because he would get ill & die.
 - b. Hezekiah immediately cried out to God & asked for healing.
 - c. Before Isaiah had even left the palace, God turned him around & told him to go back with word God heard & answered the king's prayer.
 11. God is sovereign – He does what He pleases & everything He does is perfect! So much so we'll spend eternity praising Him.
 12. God *always* keeps His word – He's trustworthy.
 13. Yet at several points in Scripture we find something amazing –
 - a. God announces impending judgment,
 - b. But when fervent intercession is made, He relents.
 14. It happened in Exodus 32 when Moses was up on Mt. Sinai & the people were worshiping round the golden calf in the valley below.
 - a. God said to Moses, "Stand aside, I'm going to wipe them out & start over with you."
 - b. Moses interceded on their behalf & asked God to relent. God said, "Okay."
 15. The prophet Amos was given a vision of judgment, a plague of locusts devoured the fields.
 - a. He cried out – "O Lord God, forgive, I pray!"
 - b. In reply the text says simply, "So the LORD relented concerning this. 'It shall not be,' said He."
 - c. Immediately Amos had *another* vision, this time a great fire that swept the land.
 - d. Again he prayed, "Lord, forgive." And *again* God answered, "This also shall not be."
 16. Here Hezekiah receives from Isaiah, one of the greatest prophets, a **Word from God**.
 - a. "You will fall ill & die."

- b. This was the result of Hezekiah's *disregard* for God's warning about trusting in Egypt instead of Him.
 - c. But when Hezekiah acknowledged his error, & pleaded with God to heal him, God said, "Okay."
17. I can't explain that! I don't think anyone can. But there's a crucial lesson to glean from it.
18. ***In every case***, when God works *contrary* to what He's announced, **it's about judgment**.
- a. He did it with Moses, with Amos, here with Hezekiah, & in every other situation.
 - b. Judgment isn't *removed*, but it is *delayed*.
19. In Psalm 106:45 regarding God's wrath we read –
For their sake He remembered His covenant, and relented according to the multitude of His mercies.
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20. Let's apply this mystery of the power of prayer to *our time* & plead with God to relent of judgment.
21. In Jeremiah 18 God says –
⁷ The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, ⁸ if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it.
22. The prophet Habakkuk was given a vision of imminent judgment & prayed –
^{3:2} O LORD, I have heard Your speech and was afraid; O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make it known; In wrath remember mercy.
23. Nite of Prayer – Wednesday, October 29th.
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24. When Isaiah returned to Hezekiah with the news God would heal him, he told him his life would be *extended* another 15 years.
- a. As a *sign* verifying this was truly from God, the sun reversed its course 10 degrees,
 - b. A phenomena that was witnessed all over the world & something that sets up what we read next.

B. V. 25; 31

²⁵ 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.

1. This occurred *half way* through Hezekiah's 29 year reign, *before* the Assyrian invasion of vs. 1-23.
 2. *That's* the wrath looming over them here.
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3. ***What went wrong?*** Well, it says Hezekiah's *heart was lifted up*. He grew proud.
 - a. We'd hope his healing would result in a *deep appreciation* to God for such a dramatic miracle.
 - b. No doubt at first, he *was* thankful.
 - c. But the promise of *another 15 years*, confirmed by an amazing sign,

- produced a feeling of *invincibility*.
4. Think about it, if someone with a long record of being THE prophet of God told *you* God had given *you* 15 more years—& *verified* it by showing you the sun moving backward, how would that effect *you*?
 5. Many would assume they must be pretty special to move God to make such a remarkable promise.
 6. That's what Hezekiah thought.
 7. His pride is revealed in v. 31. After several verses describing the huge amount of wealth God blessed him with, we read -

31 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.

8. The Babylonians were the scientists & astronomers of the day.
 - a. When the miracle of the back-tracking sun occurred, they immediately set out to find out why.
 - b. It didn't take long to discover it was a sign given to the king of Judah.
 - c. So they sent *highly placed officials* to investigate. Here's why →
 - d. While the Assyrians were the dominant power, the Babylonians had begun to rise to challenge them.
 - e. The king of Babylon was looking for allies to stage a revolt against Assyria.
 - f. He knew Egypt & Judah were lining up together & thought he'd ask them to join him.
 - g. He figured anyone powerful enough to send the sun back 10 degrees would make a powerful ally. So he sent some of his most important officials to Jerusalem with a hefty gift.
9. When they arrived, Hezekiah reverted to form & thought making an alliance with Babylon sounded like a good idea.
 - a. It was the same old thing all over again.
 - b. Instead of trusting in God as the prophets Isaiah & Micah warned him, Hezekiah allowed his head to be turned by the Babylonians.
 - c. He gave them a tour of his treasuries, showing them all the wealth God had blessed him with.
 - d. Instead of giving God the credit, he claimed it was his own skill as ruler that had enriched him.
10. When the Babylonians left, Isaiah *rebuked* Hezekiah.
 - a. He told the king his trust in Egypt & Babylon would be let down.
 - b. Indeed it was. The revolt was quickly crushed by the Assyrians & everyone Hezekiah had put his hope in failed him – everyone *except* God.
 - c. Because at Isaiah's rebuke, he repented . . .

C. V. 26

26 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.

1. Vs. 1-23 tell us the Assyrians laid waste to all of Judah.

2. But their siege against Jerusalem was broken when God wiped out nearly 200,000 of their force in a single night. They had to beat a hasty retreat back to their land.
3. It was this loss that spelled the beginning of the end for the Assyrian Empire.
 - a. They never recovered & slowly but surely began losing territory to the Babylonians
 - b. Who became the next great empire.
4. Then **they** marched into Judah bent on conquest.
5. Hezekiah's wealth was a hook in the jaw of their greed, just as Isaiah foretold.
6. In Isaiah 39 we read –

⁵ Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Hear the word of the LORD of hosts: ⁶ ‘Behold, the days are coming when all that *is* in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,’ says the LORD. ⁷ ‘And they shall take away *some* of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.’ ” ⁸ So Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “The word of the LORD which you have spoken *is* good!” For he said, “At least there will be peace and truth in my days.”

7. Whenever I've read this in the past, it always seemed like a wimpy cop-out on Hezekiah's part.
 - a. As though Isaiah said, “You've messed up & judgment's coming, but not in your lifetime; you kids will pay.”
 - b. And Hezekiah replied with, “Awesome! At least I'll not see it.”
8. But now I see it much differently. We need to understand what Isaiah said *in light of v. 26* –

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.

9. You see, Hezekiah understood that *judgment was inevitable*.
10. But by humbling himself, calling those he led to join him, & crying out to God for forgiveness, they could *delay* judgment.
11. And if the generations who came after did the same, they too could delay judgment – until the generation came that *no longer repented, no longer humbled itself, no longer looked to the Lord*.
12. After Hezekiah, Judah's most wicked king, Manasseh reigned, for the longest of *any* of the kings.
 - a. But as wicked as Manasseh was, even he repented in his last years.
 - b. Manasseh's grandson was one of Judah's greatest kings. Josiah led the greatest reformation in Israel's history.
 - c. But he was the *last good king*. After him came several wretches until judgment eventually fell; Jerusalem was destroyed, & the people were carried away into exile.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Gleanings

1. There are 2 important lessons for us to glean from all this.
 2. One we learn from Hezekiah's *failure*, the other from his *success*.
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3. From his failure we learn that even saints aren't perfect.
 - a. Hezekiah's weakness was his tendency to trust in the flesh rather than God.
 - b. Instead of looking to God for help, he kept conniving to make treaties & alliances with other nations.
 - c. When he *did* trust in God, God rewarded him abundantly!
 - d. But when a new challenge arose or someone appealed to his pride, he forgot God.
 - e. Those things never worked for Hezekiah. They never could, because in his heart of hearts, what Hezekiah wanted was to honor God.
 - f. But he had a *little spiritual heart disease* that needed mending. V. 31 -
- 31 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.**
- 1) It was God's grace that kept Hezekiah.
 - 2) When he forgot that, God pulled back just enough to let him rediscover it.
 - 3) And realizing it, Hezekiah returned to the Lord.
4. So it is for us. All of us, no matter how long we've walked with God, have some area of perennial weakness, some battle with the flesh, some avenue of temptation over which we can't seem to gain mastery.
 - a. We may go for months, years even without much struggle, then all of a sudden it rears its ugly head & down we go again.
 - b. Don't be discouraged in the fight against that familiar sin.
 - c. Don't give in or up. Don't resign yourself to defeat or think that there's something wrong with you & that you're just not cut out to be a follower of Christ.
 - d. Part of the great joy of shedding this earthly body & standing in glory will be our *final liberation* from those things!
 - e. Part of what makes heaven, heaven is *the absence of sin*.
 - f. It's the **HOPE** of heaven that fuels our lives *now* – which means the recognition we live in the presence of sin *until* heaven.
 - g. Our only safety & success is in dependence on God.
 - 1) So occasionally he will withdraw,
 - 2) So we'll realize apart from Him we're lost.
 5. So Christian – fight on in the battle with sin! Ask God to increase your *loathing* of it & your love of holiness.
 6. Look at it again:
 - a. V. 25 = Hezekiah's heart was *lifted up*.
 - b. V. 26 = Hezekiah *humbled* himself for the pride of his heart
 - c. Lifted up / Bowed down • How many times did he go through that cycle?
 - d. But the point is, *every* lifting up was *followed by* a bowing down.
 - e. The real problem isn't falling into sin – it's staying there!
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7. Finally, from Hezekiah's *success* we learn even when God's wrath looms large,

- humble repentance *delays* judgment.
8. These *are* the last days & the labor pains Jesus said would herald the end are all around us.
 9. The newspaper is a daily record of looming judgment.
 10. There is only thing for us to do: Humble ourselves & plead with God to forgive.
 11. Mordecai to Esther regarding interceding before the king to avert judgment:
“Who knows but that You’ve been sent to the Kingdom for such a time as this.”

[1] <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/FASTATS/lcod.htm>

[2] Isaiah 30:1-5, 31:1-3