

# **LifeWay Explore the Bible Series for Aug. 15: God participates in every facet of every life\_80904**

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## **God participates in every facet of every life**

2 Kings 20:1-21

**By David Morgan**

*Trinity Baptist Church, Harker Heights*

God participates in every aspect of human life. In Hezekiah, we see divine involvement encompasses health, religious concerns and even politics. The Lord heard the prayer of the godly king, healed him and announced Babylon would one day conquer Judah.

### **Hezekiah's illness and prayer**

A grave illness struck Hezekiah sometime during his life. Since God added 15 years to his life and he reigned 29 years, it may have been in his 14th year. We cannot be certain because "in those days" designates a general

time. God sent Isaiah to tell the king to set his affairs in order. The prophet offered no hope. Isaiah's announcement may indicate the illness resulted from some act of unfaithfulness or simply may have been a forecast of its outcome. The message does not include the prophetic formula, "thus says the Lord."



Hezekiah reacted to Isaiah's words by rolling over against the wall and praying—reflecting his deep commitment to God. Turning from Isaiah may have symbolized his rejection of the prophet's words as the only outcome.

The king's prayer contained no specific petition. Hezekiah reminded God he had walked faithfully before the Lord, was wholly devoted to Yahweh and had done what was good. The Old Testament elsewhere applied the phrase, "walked before you," to other godly men: Noah (Genesis 6:9); Abraham (Genesis 48:15); and David (1 Kings 3:6). To walk "faithfully" meant to be reliable before God. The king's actions were good in that they reflected God's will.

Hezekiah "wept bitterly" as he prayed. Hezekiah turned to God who alone could alter his fate. He wept that he would die without a son to succeed him. Moreover, his illness may have occurred while Assyria still threatened Judah. A premature death with no heir and line of succession would have increased Judah's vulnerability.

### **Hezekiah's recovery**

Isaiah had left the palace after delivering the bad news when the word of the Lord came with a new message for Hezekiah. The reasons for the second announcement are stated clearly: God had seen the king's tears and had heard his prayer with favor. The "middle court" identifies the area located between the palace and the temple.

God sent Isaiah back to Hezekiah, whom he called “the leader of my people.” He used the term to highlight that the reason for God's deliverance was for God's sake and because of God's promises to David. The word strongly associates Hezekiah with David. Both were righteous and godly kings.

The healing would occur the third day following Isaiah's pronouncement. God promised Hezekiah 15 more years to live. Isaiah applied a poultice of figs to the boil as a visible gesture of God's word. When Hezekiah asked for another demonstration of God's promise, the sun's shadow went back. This may symbolize going back to a time before Isaiah's first announcement, since prophetic words usually were not rescinded.

### **Hezekiah's visitors and Isaiah's rebuke**

Envoys from Babylon visited Hezekiah after his recovery and after the passing of the Assyrian crisis. News of the king's recovery and the miraculous sign had spread (2 Chronicles 32:24). Merodach-Baladan presented letters and gifts to him in a proposal of alliance between the two nations, since Babylon was not yet the world power that later would threaten Judah.

Hezekiah received and entertained the messengers and accepted their peaceful overtures. He demonstrated good faith by showing them his treasures.

Isaiah again approached the king. Hezekiah openly admitted to the prophet that the envoys came from Babylon. Isaiah pressed him further, asking what he had revealed to them. We can appreciate Hezekiah's honesty as he told Isaiah he had shown them the treasures of the palace and temple.

Isaiah then uttered another prophetic word. His oracle may have no direct causal connection between Hezekiah's action and Judah's future since the

word “therefore” does not occur. On the other hand, 2 Chronicles 32:25 mentions Hezekiah's pride. Babylon one day would replace Assyria as Judah's primary enemy. The Babylonians would pillage the treasures Hezekiah had shown them. Judah and Jerusalem would be destroyed. The Babylonians would forcibly deport some of Hezekiah's descendants. Judah's royal officials would become “eunuchs” in Babylon. “Eunuch” may refer to those who were physically made eunuchs, or it may indicate minor government officials. In either case, the future for Judah's kings included humiliation and subjection to a pagan and foreign nation.

Hezekiah accepted the prophet's message as a word from God. Some interpreters understand the king's reference to such a future as “good” as akin to “whatever will be, will be.” The king accepted the decree easily because it would come after his death.

Another view stresses God's grace. Judah deserved punishment. God would withhold the judgment until some future time. God's involvement in Hezekiah's life demonstrates the Lord can bless or punish, but not ignore.

### **Question for discussion**

- What keeps you aware of God's interest in your life?

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