

「Set your
house in order,
for you
shall die
and
not live.¹」

A
Lesson
from
Hezekiah's
Life



“**W**hat immediate thoughts would race through our minds if we receive such a message from the Lord? To Hezekiah, it was so shattering that he broke down and wept bitterly. Immediately, memories of his faithful service to the Lord surfaced as he pleaded with Him². Indeed, Hezekiah had been a good king who served God faithfully and revived the faith of the people³. God’s forewarning of his impending death was, therefore, special grace to a faithful servant, for how many in history have had the blessing of knowing when they would depart? Ironically, instead of appreciating this special grace, he felt as though God had cursed him. Instead of preparing to meet his Lord to receive the rewards of his labour, he wept bitterly.

Though once a faithful servant, Hezekiah resisted the will of God over this

matter. God relented and extended his life for 15 years⁴. But why was Hezekiah unwilling to leave? Surely it was not because he had been unfaithful and was thus unsure where he would end up? Was there any work yet undone? Was it his people that he could not bear to leave?

Unfortunately, it was not any noble reason which prompted Hezekiah to resist God's will for him to depart. His additional 15 years were a far cry from the former decades of his life. Instead of devoting the precious time to accomplishing more for the Lord, glorifying God and edifying man, Hezekiah squandered his extended life glorifying himself. When some ambassadors from Babylon visited him, God tested what was in his heart,⁵ and he failed the test. He did not attribute the nation's peace and prosperity to God. Instead he took the opportunity to exalt himself by displaying all the treasures he had acquired, and in so doing, incurred God's wrath.⁶

Suddenly the reason for Hezekiah's reluctance to die became clear. If he had had to die, his greatest regret would not be any unaccomplished task of the Lord, but rather, his unsatisfied ego. He had spent much effort reviving his people's faith and strengthening his nation. By God's grace, he had accomplished this

arduous task. Yet just when he thought he could enjoy the fruits of his labour, he received the untimely message of his impending death! He did not understand and was totally unprepared. He had, for all his life, walked in line with the will of God. Yet over the matter of his death he adamantly resisted God's will.

Not surprisingly, the additional 15 years of his life were hardly in line with God's will. He did more to incur the wrath of God than to win His favour. He lived for himself rather than for God. Though he had pleaded so vehemently with God and received the special grace of another 15 years, he ironically squandered every minute of it!

Hezekiah's life has indeed left an important message for us. Do we assume, albeit subconsciously, as we retire to bed each night, that we will surely be able to greet dawn the next day? Have we ever considered that each new day is indeed special grace from God? If the Lord were not willing, none of us can boast of living another day or plan to do this or that.⁷ The message to Hezekiah of his impending death is also relevant to us today since all our days are numbered. In fact, we could have died yesterday. We could die any time now! Hence we must view each new day as a special God-granted extension of our lives. But how have we conducted our

grace of God, the additional day He adds to our lives? How would we react if we receive a similar message as Hezekiah?

If we know that we would die very soon, we will probably realise that we have squandered much of our time on things that do not really matter. The movie ticket for which we spent hours queuing, the round-the-world tour which we had taken much pains to plan, the coming exams that had burdened us so much, the wealth we had exhausted so much energy to accumulate, and the career which we had devoted our lives to build - all these would suddenly become of no value. More so, the petty argument with our spouse or the irreconcilable difference with some church brethren would become meaningless. Our salvation which we have taken for granted, the bad and unspiritual habits with which we know we cannot meet the Lord, the work in church which we never have time to accomplish, our loved ones who are yet unsaved, the friends which we repeatedly tell ourselves we will preach to the next time we meet! Our minds would probably be plagued by this unending train

┌ *But how have we
conducted our lives?
Have we also squandered
this special grace of God,
the additional day
He adds to our lives?* ┐

of thoughts. There is just too much that we should have done! In deepest remorse and regret, our hearts would probably cry as loudly as Hezekiah. With all sincerity, we may plead with God to extend our lives, and we will surely re-examine the way we live, and devote our time to things which really matter.

Indeed God has already heeded our plea continually with each new dawn that we greet. Each new day is an extension of our lives which God has granted just as He had to Hezekiah. The only difference is that Hezekiah was given another 15 years whereas we may be given more or less. Yet the number of years is not important. What is important is how we use this special grace of God. Hezekiah squandered the additional 15 years of his life satisfying his personal ego. How do we deal with our lives?

To an unbelieving, dying artist, his greatest regret may be an unfinished masterpiece, and (his only) wish, an extension of his life to be squandered on applying the final stroke of the brush. Likewise, a dying novelist may seek to extend her life only to squander it on the concluding passage of her novel. As God continues to extend our lives today, let us examine what really matters. Let us devote God's special grace to matters which He has appointed us to accomplish; just like Paul, who chose to remain only because it was more needful for the believers,⁸ though he was ready and desired to depart to be with Christ, knowing and believing that it was far better.⁹

1. 2 Kings 20:1
2. 2 Kings 20:2,3
3. 2 Kings 18:1-5
4. 2 Kings 20:4-6
5. 2 Chron 32:31
6. 2 Kings 20:12-18;
2Chron 32:25
7. James 4:13-15
8. Phil 1:24
9. Phil 1:23

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