

## Waiting on God

(2 Kings 20:1-11)

Many of us have often used the phrase 'waiting on God.' We probably know how important it is to 'wait upon the Lord' but are not sure how it fits into our everyday lives. In Scripture, there are times when the actual word 'waiting' or the phrase 'waiting on God' is used, yet the principle is often present without the express words 'to wait upon the Lord.' The life of Hezekiah provides a practical example of **waiting on God**.

Hezekiah was King of Judah (beginning 729 BC). He was a great religious and political reformer. He suppressed idolatry and reconstituted the temple services. In his reforms both in church and state he had the assistance of the great prophet Isaiah. The early part of the reign was prosperous. He made a successful expedition against the Philistines, and refused to pay the usual tribute to Assyria. Soon after came two Assyrian invasions. And after a time of great anxiety the city was at last delivered, probably by a plague that broke out in the Assyrian camp. A year later Hezekiah died, after a reign of 29 years.

During his reign, Hezekiah heard some very shocking news - he had become terminally ill. ***And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him and said to him, "Thus says the Lord, 'Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live'."*** (Isaiah 38:1). When Hezekiah heard that he was going to die it left him desperate and shaken. Note, the time-frame for **waiting** here, compared to Abraham, is much shorter. We are talking about days rather than decades. Therefore, the emphasis is very different. Hezekiah's matter was truly urgent! So how did Hezekiah respond to this devastating news?

We should also realise that the Lord left no door open for Hezekiah, other than absolute rejection of God. The Lord simply announced through His prophet that Hezekiah was going to die. There was no offer (or promise) that if he did this or that, then God would heal him. We often read this story as if God had given him a conditional command, but this is not the case. So how did Hezekiah respond? Or more importantly, how would you have responded?

***Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, "Remember, Lord, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes." And Hezekiah wept bitterly.*** (Isaiah 38:2,3). This devastating announcement had brought Hezekiah down on his knees to "wait upon the Lord." He prayed desperately and earnestly! Although his circumstances may have been much different to ours, I believe we can see three important principles to "waiting upon the Lord."

### 1. Trust

If you do not place your complete trust in God, you will most likely get bitter and angry in the "waiting room." In desperate circumstances, will you choose to believe in His all-conquering love - or will you doubt it? This is the ultimate trial. The testing of your **trust** forces you to make an important decision on how you will relate to the Lord. If you believe that God doesn't care for you, then you shall turn to distress, despair or bitterness. The "I am boomed" theology won't get God's attention!

If you have previously trusted in the Lord, it will help you to make a genuine 'trust decision' during a crisis. Hezekiah made this trust decision when he turned toward God rather than away from Him. If you are unable to think clearly at such a time, just remember to turn to the wall (away from your circumstances) and toward God (the source of all blessings).

### 2. Reject

You must consciously reject all other resources that you could turn to - all other options. You need to deliberately refuse all paths and channels that are void of God. The passage we are studying appears silent about this. But from this silence, we see clearly that Hezekiah did not turn to his kingly reserves to find out what could be done about his predicament. And this is because he believed God's message to him. Hezekiah knew he was going to die! He knew that this was the end of his life. After all, God Himself had said it was!

Hezekiah quickly realised that he had nothing else to trust in - that there were no other options. He could have tested God's Word by seeking medical help but he didn't. If ever you are a confused as to what the next step is, remember that you are not to look at human resources. You need to completely **reject** them - consciously refuse them! Your trust must be in the Lord, even if you have to weep bitterly in the process! Hezekiah was deeply affected by the news, but he still refused to listen to the circumstances. Rather, he

**faced the wall** and turned to God, reminding Him of his faithfulness and wholehearted devotion.

### 3. Pray

My advice to people seeking God's will is to pray. Pray and stop thinking; pray and stop planning; pray and stop talking; pray and stop intellectualising. Have you ever talked with someone who was willing to talk to everyone else but God about their problems?

Prayer is **conversation**. We are expected to talk to God about our problems so that we can find out what we should do next. To be candid, prayer does take on many forms and means, but essentially it is conversing (talking) with God about your circumstances. You need to earnestly seek the Lord in prayer. Hezekiah had two parts to his prayer.

a. He asked God to remember him.

Hezekiah needed God to remember him. After all, no one else could change matters. Does anyone believe that God did not remember Hezekiah's situation? I doubt it! Our God knows everything - even before it happens. Therefore, we can't say He had forgotten this man's good deeds. And the king knew it. More than this, Hezekiah asked God to remember him now. He really believed the prophet's word about his impending death; that his window of life was short. So he needed instant action. For that reason, he asked God to remember all the good things about his life and service. ***"Remember earnestly now, O Lord, I beseech You, how I have walked before You in faithfulness and truth, with a whole heart (absolutely devoted to You), and have done what is good in Your sight."***

b. He told God about his life.

This might sound a bit strange, but Hezekiah wanted God to remember what kind of life he had lived up to this point. Just in case God was choosing, for any reason, to block it from His thoughts. The king actually believed his life was important enough to tell God about it. This was essentially telling God about his life and goals. No doubt, he was hoping that God would re-evaluate His decision to allow him to die and change the circumstances. However, Hezekiah came short of asking God for healing. Yet in the end, this didn't seem to make any difference.

Hezekiah's prayer ended with bitter weeping. The words he sent before God were soaked in tears from his heart. Various people will pray differently, but all must pray if they are to "wait upon the Lord." God heard Hezekiah's desperate cry. And he did not need to wait long on God for an answer. But still, he did have to **wait** three days. The king received an additional 15 years of life. By simply trusting in God; refusing to turn to anyone else; and earnestly praying; this man added 15 years to his life. Not a bad reward for such a simple procedure!

The principle above discloses that your "waiting upon God" is an uncomplicated process. There will be many times, places and situations where you are required to **wait!** God develops these life encounters so that you will be protected, strengthened, redirected and recommitted. ***Waiting on the Lord*** will always produce something positive and beneficial. The "waiting room" is a place of blessing; so don't be alarmed if you are placed there. Relax and enjoy the wait!

Before we end I would like to clarify a few things:

1. God did not say to Hezekiah, "I am going to kill you." Through the prophet Isaiah, God told the king that he had a terminal illness, so he needed to set his affairs in order. Nothing else!
2. Hezekiah was already sick and near death when the prophecy came.
3. There is no evidence that God had put the sickness on Hezekiah (even though He must have allowed it to happen).
4. God was obviously not going to heal Hezekiah unless something changed His mind.
5. God told the king that He had heard his prayers (and seen his tears), and was going to answer him by adding fifteen years to his life.
6. As evidence that Hezekiah would be healed, God caused the shadow of the sundial to go backward ten degrees.

7. God didn't just deliver the king, He delivered the king's kingdom also. Even though Hezekiah had not asked God to deliver the city, the Lord sovereignly chose to do so. God does more than enough!

After his illness and recovery, King Hezekiah wrote a poem of thanksgiving to God.

*I said, "In the prime of my life, must I now enter the place of the dead? Am I to be robbed of the rest of my years?" I said, "Never again will I see the Lord God while still in the land of the living. Never again will I see my friends or be with those who live in this world. My life has been blown away like a shepherd's tent in a storm. It has been cut short, as when a weaver cuts cloth from a loom. Suddenly, my life was over. I waited patiently all night, but I was torn apart as though by lions. Suddenly, my life was over. Delirious, I chattered like a swallow or a crane, and then I moaned like a mourning dove. **My eyes grew tired of looking to heaven for help.** I am in trouble, Lord. Help me!" But what could I say? For He himself may have sent this sickness. Now I will walk humbly through-out my years because of this anguish I have felt. Lord, your discipline is good, for it leads to life and health. **You restore my health and allow me to live.** Yes, this anguish was good for me, for you have rescued me from death and forgiven all my sins. For the dead cannot praise you; they cannot raise their voices in praise. Those who go down to the grave can no longer hope in your faithfulness. **Only the living can praise you as I do today.** Each generation tells of your faithfulness to the next. Think of it—**the Lord is ready to heal me!** I will sing His praises with instruments every day of my life in the Temple of the Lord." (Isaiah 38:9-20).*