

FACING THE WALL

In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, "Thus says the Lord: 'Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.'" **Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the Lord** (Isaiah 38:1-2). There are times in life when we too must turn our backs on the circumstances that confront us and face the wall. Too many believers prefer having their backs to the wall so that they can face their circumstances and get fixated with their past. Facing God is far better!

Hezekiah was the king of Judah, and he was "sick unto death." In other words, he suffered from a terminal illness. People get distraught and distressed when doctors tell them that they're not going to live. Imagine what it was like for Hezekiah. The Creator of heaven and earth gave him that message! The prophet Isaiah came to the king and said, "*Thus saith the Lord, Set your house in order: For you shall die, and not live.*" It's important to understand that God wasn't judging the king. He was simply telling him that his disease was terminal. God gave Hezekiah a natural diagnosis, which was fact! Due to his illness He was going to die and not live. Therefore, Hezekiah was advised to set his house in order.

However, the king decided he would rather live. The next verse says, "***Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord.***" Notice, Hezekiah not only prayed, but he turned his face to the wall. What does that mean? Well, the prophet Isaiah had undeniably laid out the king's tragic situation before him - confirming his worst fears. He was aware of his symptoms, he could feel the pain in his body and he knew that he had no future. So in response, Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, away from all natural circumstances, and he started talking to God. He simply rolled over in his sick-bed and faced the wall.

Hezekiah made a conscious decision to not get preoccupied with his circumstances or get trapped in the pain of the past. He chose not to dwell on the bad report; even if it was God Himself who provided it. Instead, he turned away from everything and fixed his eyes, his attention, his words and his prayers on his source - the Almighty God. Too many of us are more comfortable facing our circumstances than facing our God - the source of all blessings. ***“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ”*** (Ephesians 1:3). We need to acknowledge who is the “source” of all true blessings in life! ***“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort”*** (2 Corinthians 1:3). In his time of great need, Hezekiah turned his face to the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort!

Let’s refer to the same story in 2 Kings 20... Isaiah brings God’s answer to Hezekiah’s prayer (verses 4-7). ***And it happened, before Isaiah had gone out into the middle court, that the word of the Lord came to him, saying, “Return and tell Hezekiah the leader of My people, ‘Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father: “I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the Lord. And I will add to your days fifteen years. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for My own sake, and for the sake of My servant David.” Then Isaiah said, “Take a lump of figs.” So they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered.***

In response to Hezekiah’s prayer, God granted him fifteen years more. Now, because Hezekiah recovered, was God’s word (“*you shall die and not live*”) proved to be false? No! Because God was simply stating a fact concerning the king’s poor health - as it was at the time. If Hezekiah had not turned his face to his source, the Father of mercies, he would have died!

“Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the Lord, and said, “Remember now, O Lord, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what is good in Your sight. And Hezekiah wept bitterly.” By all indications, if Hezekiah had not made this passionate prayer, then his life would not have been extended. This is another demonstration of the principle that prayer makes all the difference. God said, *“I have heard your prayer.”* Therefore, Hezekiah’s prayer was important. In fact, God gave two gifts to Hezekiah. First, He gave the gift of an extended life. Second, He gave the gift of ‘knowing’ he only had fifteen years left. So if he were wise, this would give Hezekiah the motivation to walk right with God and to set his house in order. What’s more, when Hezekiah recovered his health, he knew that God would also deliver him from the Assyrians. His victory over death also guaranteed victory over his enemies. Likewise, through Jesus Christ, we too have been given victory over death and victory of the forces of darkness. We are more than conquerors through Christ who loved us!

After God had answered his prayer, Hezekiah suddenly found himself a uniquely wealthy man, having one thing in his treasury that could not have been found among the riches of any other living man, namely, a writ from the Court of Heaven, that he would live another fifteen years. None of us has this guarantee! That is why we should live each day at a time. Each day we must make a conscious effort to turn our backs on the past (and on our circumstances), and face the wall. Yes, we need to fix our eyes on the Author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy set before Him went to the cross. And at the same time, we need to set our gaze upon the Father of mercies, the God of all comfort, and the source of every blessing. Remember this, if you do not face the wall, you empower the opposing forces of evil that seek to steal, kill and destroy. But if you set your face toward God, the power of His grace and mercy will shine upon you and deliver you from every tragic or disastrous situation.

Notice, Isaiah had said, ***“Let them take a lump of figs, and apply it as a poultice on the boil, and he shall recover.”*** Apparently, God used this medical treatment to bring Hezekiah’s healing. God can, and often does, bring healing through medical treatments. Apart from an unusual or unique prompting from God, medical treatment should never be rejected in the name of faith. You had better be sure that God has directed you in such a way first, and ask for confirmation, before embarking down that road. Provided you ask for His direction and help, the Holy Spirit will always make sure that you are doing things according to the perfect will of God. Over the years I’ve seen far too many self inflicted disasters because people have been foolish and presumptuous. And remember, whatever way God chooses to heal is the best way for you, it’s His divine prerogative! He is Jehovah Rapha (the Lord God that heals).

In 2 Kings 20:8-11, we find God’s sign to Hezekiah known as ‘the retreating shadow’. ***And Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “What is the sign that the Lord will heal me, and that I shall go up to the house of the Lord the third day?” Then Isaiah said, “This is the sign to you from the Lord, that the Lord will do the thing which He has spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten degrees or go backward ten degrees?” And Hezekiah answered, “It is an easy thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees; no, but let the shadow go backward ten degrees.” So Isaiah the prophet cried out to the Lord, and He brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down on the sundial of Ahaz.***

Hezekiah wanted a sign, and a sign that would allow him to go up to the house of the Lord. This was because he could not, and would not go up to the house of the Lord until he was healed, so the two were connected. Hezekiah quite properly asks for a sign to assure himself of his recovery. God had shown even more mercy to Hezekiah, as God was under no obligation to give this sign. In fact, the king got far more than he deserved!

Isaiah asked, *“Shall the shadow go forward ten degrees or go backward ten degrees?”* As confirmation, God promised to do something completely miraculous. He undertook to make the shadow on the sundial move backward instead of forward. This was a wonderfully appropriate sign for Hezekiah. By bringing the shadow of the sundial to move backward, it gave more time in the day - just as God gave Hezekiah more time. *“It was a miracle, whatever way we take it. God could have reversed the revolution of the earth, had He seen fit to do so. For it’s a poor clockmaker, who cannot turn the hands of his own workmanship backward. Or, He could have caused the phenomenon by the law of refraction.”* (Knapp)

No matter how the miracle happened, 2 Chronicles 32:24-26 tells us that Hezekiah did not respond rightly to this gift of healing: ***“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. But Hezekiah did not repay according to the favour shown him, for his heart was lifted up; therefore wrath was looming over him and over Judah and Jerusalem. 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.”*** Often when God does something utterly miraculous, our response is foolish. We somehow feel that God’s favour has no boundaries or conditions. This is wrong! For when God stops the world to give you a break; when He stops time so that you may step out of your problems and into His blessings; be sure to not become self-centred and overconfident. Don’t let success entice you into pride. You must still humble yourself and turn away to face the wall - every day!

Let’s end by looking at what Hezekiah was able to obtain because He faced the wall and turned his back on adverse and tragic circumstances. And in doing so, let us have an expectancy in our hearts for the same to happen to us:

- He was victorious
- He was healed
- He had experienced a miracle
- He had been promised a long life
- He had connection to a great prophet
- He had seen a remarkable sign
- He was wealthy
- He was famous
- He was praised and applauded
- He was honoured by God

Facing the wall and praying has some incredible benefits for you!

- You shall be victorious
- You shall be healed
- You shall experience a miracle
- You shall receive a long life
- You shall be connected to great men and women of God
- You shall see a remarkable sign
- You shall become wealthy
- You shall be famous
- You shall be praised and applauded
- You shall be honoured by God

Look at what this covers... Victory; healing; miracles; long life; great connections; remarkable signs; wealth; fame; praise and honour.