

Hezekiah's Prayer

by C.I. Scofield

The sermon emphasizes the importance of tested and exercised faith in receiving the promises of God, and that the life of the godly is a life of faith in the promises of God.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 28:1, Job 19:25, Isaiah 38:2, Isaiah 38:4, Daniel 12:2, Romans 8:28, 2 Corinthians 5:8

Topics: "Faith And Prayer", "Suffering And Promises"

Description

C.I. Scofield delves into the story of Hezekiah's prayer for healing and God's response in Isaiah 38:1-8. The passage reflects the Old Testament view on life, death, and blessings, emphasizing the earthly focus of the Israelites and their limited understanding of the afterlife. Hezekiah's plea for healing highlights the tension between God's promises and the reality of suffering, showcasing the importance of faith and seeking God's will in times of distress.

Transcript

(Isaiah xxxviii:1-8.)

I. The Analysis.

1. The King's Prayer (verses 2, 3). (See Heart.) 2. The Lord's answer (verses 4-8).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

No wholly consistent lesson can be made of the eight verses selected. Never was the context more necessary to the right understanding of a passage of Scripture. We shall, therefore, consider the whole chapter.

1. Hezekiah's thoughts about death give with completeness the Old Testament view. The Old Testament horizon was the grave. Not, of course, that the Old Testament saint had no intimations of immortality. Abraham laid hold on the thought of resurrection when he "Accounted that God was able to raise Isaac even from the dead." Job knew that though after death worms should destroy his body, yet in his flesh he should see God; and two hundred years after Hezekiah's time resurrection was plainly taught through Daniel.

But these were but dim and occasional foregleams and by no means filled the Jewish mind. Long life was the crowning blessing of the righteous, and grey hairs the crown of glory. All the distinctive blessings of the

Israelites were earthly blessings, and the curses were earthly deprivations and sufferings (Deut. xxviii:1-37). Sheol was the place of silence, of cessation. No voice praised God out of a grave; in the coffin no hands worked for God. What might be beyond the grave was not revealed. It was little in the thoughts of a godly Jew. To live long in the land which the Lord his God had given him, and therein to serve and glorify Him, was the characteristic thought of such a Jew.

2. It is, therefore, absurd to quote from the Old Testament to prove the state of the righteous dead. All that is fully disclosed in the New Testament. It is not that the one contradicts the other, but that the later revelation supplements and completes the older. It is still true that there is no devising nor praising in the grave. Whatever work our hands find to do must be done now or not at all. But the newer revelation lifts the veil and shows us that only the body enters the grave, and that for the righteous to be "absent from the body" is to be "present with the Lord."

The plan of the life of the New Testament saint, therefore, takes in two worlds, and he knows that the chief significance of this life is its relation to the life beyond the grave. Long life is not an unmixed blessing, nor brevity of life a calamity.

3. We are now ready to see the significance of Hezekiah's distress and the meaning of his plea: "Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight."

The king does not mean that his heart has been sinless, but that it has been "upright," which is the literal meaning of the word rendered "perfect." He has been over on God's side. He has desired God's will, and so his life, as to its whole trend and intent has been good.

And his point is that, according to the promises made distinctively to the Israelitish people, such a life should be long. But he was sick unto death, as a prophet of God had just told him. It seemed like a failure of the covenant, and his prayer, which would be arrogant self-righteousness in a Christian under grace, was a true utterance of faith in a sincere and godly Jew under the old dispensation. Being what he was, why should he die?

Therefore the abiding heart of this lesson is a truth good for all time and in all dispensations, that the life of the godly is a life of tested and exercised faith. The promises of God are yea and amen, but they do not work automatically. Back of the promise is the living God, and he will be inquired of. His promises are eternally good at their face value, but they must be presented.

Apparently, Hezekiah had overlooked that. He was dealing with the promises of God as many good people now do --apart from God Himself.

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