Hezekiah – The difficulty of faithfulness in the good times (2 Chronicles 29-33; 2 Kings 18-20  November 6, 2011)

Hezekiah was one of the greatest Kings of Judah.

Here is the inspired summary of his life.

2 Kings 18:3–7:

He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done. He removed the high places and broke the pillars and cut down the Asherah. And he broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had made offerings to it (it was called Nehushtan). He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel, so that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him. For he held fast to the Lord. He did not depart from following him, but kept the commandments that the Lord commanded Moses. And the Lord was with him; wherever he went out, he prospered.

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There is no doubt that he was a great and godly man. And yet – there is another verse that springs to mind when I think of Hezekiah – Proverbs 16:18:

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Here is what I want to suggest about Hezekiah. He reigned on the throne of Judah for twenty-nine years. The first fourteen years of his reign are about as good as any King. But at the midpoint of his reign – he took his eyes off the Lord – became puffed up – and the consequences for the rest of his life and for Judah were diabolical.

It is not enough to start the race of life well – we have to finish well. We have to never take our eyes off the Lord. We have to fight the demon of pride. We have to retain our first love.

Hezekiah did great in the tough times. But in the times of ease – he took his eyes off the Lord – became self-centred and the results were dreadful.

The life of Hezekiah can be divided up into four tests. I have called them:

- Test of national faithfulness
- Test of national annihilation
- Test of personal annihilation
- Test of personal faithfulness

Test of national faithfulness

Test of national annihilation

Test of personal annihilation

Test of personal faithfulness
How Hezekiah responded to these tests will teach us a great deal about walking with God.

The story of Hezekiah is found in three main places – 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles and Isaiah.

I decided to limit this sermon to just 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles – so if you want to follow in your Bibles – put a finger in each – but I will read each verse – so you can also just choose to listen.

The first test Hezekiah faced was:

Test of national faithfulness

Turn with me to 2 Chronicles 28:1–5 – where we read about Hezekiah’s father – Ahaz:

Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. And he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as his father David had done, but he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. He even made metal images for the Baals, and he made offerings in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom and burned his sons as an offering, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel. And he sacrificed and made offerings on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree. Therefore the LORD his God gave him into the hand of the king of Syria, who defeated him and took captive a great number of his people and brought them to Damascus. He was also given into the hand of the king of Israel, who struck him with great force.

2 Chronicles 28:22–27 describes the spiritual temperature when Hezekiah became King:

This same King Ahaz sacrificed to the gods of Damascus that had defeated him and said, “Because the gods of the kings of Syria helped them, I will sacrifice to them that they may help me.” But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel. And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and he shut up the doors of the house of the LORD, and he made himself altars in every corner of Jerusalem. In every city of Judah he made high places to make offerings to other gods, provoking to anger the LORD, the God of his fathers. Now the rest of his acts and all his ways, from first to last, behold, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, in Jerusalem, for they did not bring him into the tombs of the kings of Israel. And Hezekiah his son reigned in his place.

The Edomites and Philistines were oppressing Judah – so Ahaz sent word to Assyria asking for help. But instead the Assyrians decided that Judah was ripe for the picking.

Ahaz stripped the Temple for tribute – but it did not help.

So here is how Ahaz reasoned. Yahweh did not help me – the Assyrians defeated me – so their gods are stronger. He began to sacrifice to those gods. He began child
sacrifices. He destroyed the furniture of the Temple and shut the doors. He set up altars to false gods everywhere. The pagans were abhorrent. Ahaz outdid them. This man was so evil they would not bury him the tombs of the kings.

He was succeeded by his son – Hezekiah.

Hezekiah – along with Josiah – were the greatest Kings of Judah.

But Hezekiah is sandwiched in the middle of two of the most evil Kings to sit on David’s throne – Ahaz and Manasseh.

Ahaz reigned for sixteen years. He encouraged idolatry, child sacrifice and every abomination you can imagine. At the same time he bolted the Temple doors and forbade the true worship of Yahweh.

Sometimes I shake my head at the state of Australia. Gay marriage – porn on demand – easy divorce – ridicule of the Bible. But this is nothing compared to Judah in the days of Ahaz. Judah – just three centuries from David. Judah – the people of God’s choosing. Now they were living lives no different to the pagan nations. Making idols out of metal – killing infants – worshipping the Baals.

Imagine what Hezekiah faced when he became King. Where do you start to undo all of this?

Men love sin. Men hate righteousness.

When people and priests and rulers have had years of immorality, promiscuity, idolatry – no one loves the young reforming King who says – we will be holy as God is holy.

2 Kings 18:3–4:
He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done. He removed the high places and broke the pillars and cut down the Asherah. And he broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had made offerings to it (it was called Nehushtan).

Here is how bad things had become. The bronze serpent from the days of Moses actually was worshipped as a god.

On the journey from Mount Hor, Israel whined to God – We’ve had enough! We’ve taken a poll. We don’t like the desert lifestyle. And everyone thinks this manna is miserable stuff. We demand better food and better drink and we want it now!

And God said – Now I’ve had enough. So He sent snakes – supernatural snakes – fiery serpents into the camp. And these snakes bit the children of Israel and they died. They began dropping like flies.

It looked as if the patience of God had finally been exhausted and the Lord would destroy this ungrateful rebellious people.

But while they were ungrateful and rebellious they weren’t totally stupid. They went to Moses and begged that he pray to God to stop the plague.

Moses prayed and God had mercy once again. He told Moses to fashion a bronze serpent and put it on a pole. If anyone was bitten they need only look at the snake in faith and they would live.

And Israel was spared. The danger passed.

You know this story. You learned it in Sunday School. You’ve read it dozens of times. But did you ever ask yourself – so what happened to the bronze serpent? Did they leave it there in the desert or what?

It seems that someone decided it was worth taking along. This snake had miraculous powers. It had saved the nation. It had a special place in history and who knows, they might need it again. So it was packed up and someone carried it throughout the years of wanderings. Thirty-eight more years.

It was carried into the Promised Land and finally it must have been stored somewhere.

Years passed. Kings came. Kings went. Finally came the reign of Ahaz. And he bankrupted Israel – literally and morally. The country had gone broke from paying bribes to Assyria. The army was almost non-existent. And every abomination thrived.

Men and women decided that the way to make things better was to make little gods from wood, stone, metal. And many of these gods were in the shape of animals.

Sometime, we don’t know when – the bronze serpent had been dusted off and hoisted up on a standard. Probably in the Temple precinct.
In a land where people had taken to bowing down to idols, many in the form of animals, someone bowing down to his animal god thought about the bronze serpent.

Hey, that baby saved the nation 700 years ago. We know this piece of metal has power.

And instead of the fathers pointing to the serpent to tell of the greatness of God, the fathers bowed down to the snake and burned incense to it. They worshipped the serpent instead of the Lord.

That was the state of the nation.

Hezekiah knew – the snake had to go. The Asherah had to go. The idols had to go. The child sacrifice had to go.

And he knew that there would be enormous opposition to these reforms.

Where do you get the strength to do this? 2 Kings 18:5-7:

He trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel, so that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him. For he held fast to the LORD. He did not depart from following him, but kept the commandments that the LORD commanded Moses. And the LORD was with him; wherever he went out, he prospered.

He trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel.

Hezekiah’s response to this first test was – trust.

Trusting that the Lord would bless – Hezekiah set out to reform the spiritual heart of the nation.

Look with me at 2 Chronicles 29 – in verses 3-19 – he cleanses the Temple.

Hezekiah gathered all the priests and Levites and told them that the wrath of the Lord had come on the nation because of this unfaithfulness. He opened the Temple doors. They walked in and found that the Temple was desecrated.

The set themselves to clean the Temple – they carted the idols and filth down to the brook Kidron and threw them in. It took sixteen days just to get the filth out so the worship could begin.

Then Hezekiah gathered all the city officials – and he made sacrifices to the Lord. In verses 20-36 – the priests made atonement for the people. The Levites began to sing. Sacrifices recommenced. The worship of the true God in the true way began again.

Then in chapter 30 Hezekiah commands the nation to return to the ways of God. He demanded they recommence the Passover celebration and the other great feasts. The
people responded in repentance and mourning over sin. This led to great rejoicing and singing and praising God.

In chapter 31 we see Hezekiah sending the priests throughout the length and breadth of Judah to remove the Asherim and high places and altars. He removed the idols. He commanded the people recommence the Temple tithe to support the priests.

And here is the summary of Hezekiah’s national reforms. 2 Chronicles 31:20–21:

Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and he did what was good and right and faithful before the LORD his God. And every work that he undertook in the service of the house of God and in accordance with the law and the commandments, seeking his God, he did with all his heart, and prospered.

It is hard for us to imagine the faith needed by a young King to set out to cleanse a land entrenched in sin and idolatry – and return it to the worship of Yahweh.

But he trusted the Lord and the result was great blessing.

Just pause here for a moment. Years ago – when I first read 2 Chronicles – what happened next stunned me, confused me, made me question the plan of God.

Hezekiah set himself to trust the Lord, to act faithfully and to reform the nation.

Then we come to 2 Chronicles 32 1:

After these things and these acts of faithfulness.

Let me remind you – the acts of faithfulness are the three chapters of incredible faithfulness on the part of Hezekiah.

After these things – what?

God slew all his enemies. God blessed him financially. God brought peace to the kingdom. God gave him a large godly family.

No!

2 Chronicles 32:1:

After these things and these acts of faithfulness, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah and encamped against the fortified cities, thinking to win them for himself.

Here is the second test Hezekiah faced.

Test of national annihilation

Wow! All that faithful work. All that striving to make God the centre of Israel and the thanks is this – attacked by the most merciless of nations.
There is something in us that by default says – if I serve well and faithfully I deserve a reward.

Your quiet time is going well, you are praying regularly, giving well, invited a colleague to Introducing God, your marriage is good – time with the kids is good – thought life is disciplined – our default is to think – man I deserve a reward. God owes me.

After these things and these acts of faithfulness.

When you live your life faithfully – what do you deserve?


Saul meets Jesus on the Road to Damascus and is told he will be the Apostle to the Gentiles. Wonder what perks come with that? The Lord then says – I will show him how much he must suffer.

God works in mysterious ways. We think the blessing for faithfulness should be wealth and ease.

But God often sends trials to refine our faith and make us more like Christ. In fact as we will see with Hezekiah – he did well in trials – it was ease and plenty that side tracked him.

But back to the concept of reward for faithfulness. I could not begin to tell you how many Christians fail at this point. They don’t really believe that a sovereign loving God will choose to send trials that extend from mild to martyrdom – to refine and shape His people.

You might be doing well in your walk – yet for you – the after these things and these acts of faithfulness blessing might be – you get sacked from your job, your son goes off the rails and you find you have terminal cancer.

What do you do?

You have two choices.

First is anger. Either there is no God – or God is cruel, vindictive. He loves to taunt us.

You can yell at God. You can walk way from God. You can start sinning – there God – slept around, stole from the taxman – what are you gunna do? I suppose You will bless me now.

Or the second choice is faith. You can say with Habakkuk – Habakkuk 3:17–19:

Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and
there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer’s; he makes me tread on my high places. To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments.

Though everything goes badly – yet will I trust.

That is what Hezekiah did. He faced almost certain death – He trusted.

The Assyrians were the dominant superpower of the time.

Remember that in 2 Kings 18:9-12 – we are told that Hezekiah was King when the Assyrians attacked, decimated and totally destroyed the Kingdom of Israel.

Records of the time tell us that their usual modus operandi was to enter a country. Go to one city – over run it. Torture the men, rape the women, violate the children – then move to the next city and say – OK surrender or else. The city had to immediately open their gates and lay down their arms or face the same fate. It was an effective ploy. It meant that they got tribute money and slaves without a long fight.

As an example of the brutality of these people, listen to the words of the Assyrian King Ashur-Nasirpal II:

I stormed the mountain peaks and took them. In the midst of the mighty mountains I slaughtered them; with their blood; I dyed the mountain red like wool. With the rest of them I darkened the gullies and precipices of the mountains. I carried off their spoil and their possessions. The heads of their warriors I cut off, and I formed them into a pillar over against their city; their young men and their maidens I burned in the fire. … I built a pillar over against the city gates, and I flayed all the chief men who had revolted, and I covered the pillar with their skins; some I walled up within the pillar, some I impaled upon the pillar on stakes, and others I bound to stakes round about the pillar.

2 Kings 18 tells us what happened. Judah was caught between the two great superpowers of the day – Egypt and Assyria. Hezekiah had hoped Egypt would protect the nation. He was wrong. Sennacherib arrived with his army. Hezekiah said – I have done wrong – what do you want?

Sennacherib says that three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold should do it.

Hezekiah has to ransack the Temple – all the silver and gold – even stripping the gold off the doors of the Temple to try and get enough tribute to sate Sennacherib.

Then Hezekiah meets Sennacherib’s spokesman. Sennacherib basically says – OK so who is your Daddy? It’s me isn’t it?

Don’t be foolish enough to look to Egypt. And certainly don’t be so stupid as to trust your God. Nothing and no one can stand before me.
Hezekiah’s officials then spoke to Rabshakeh, Sennacherib’s spokesman. “Please speak to your servants in Aramaic. Do not speak to us in the language of Judah within the hearing of the people who are on the wall.” Don’t get the people worried.

Rabshakeh will have none of that. He wants all of Judah to know they are about to die. He stood and called out in a loud voice in the language of Judah: “Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria! Thus says the king: ‘Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you out of my hand. Do not let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD by saying, The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.’ Do not listen to Hezekiah, for thus says the king of Assyria: ‘Make your peace with me and come out to me. Then each one of you will eat of his own vine, and each one of his own fig tree, and each one of you will drink the water of his own cistern, until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive trees and honey, that you may live, and not die. And do not listen to Hezekiah when he misleads you by saying, “The LORD will deliver us.” Has any of the gods of the nations ever delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their lands out of my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?’

Here it is. Surrender and live. Listen to Hezekiah and trust God and every one of you – man, woman and children will die a painful and horrible death or become slaves of the King.

What a situation. No allies. They had already totally annihilated Israel. This huge unstoppable army had rolled up and said – surrender or else.

One of the great treasures of archaeology is a six-sided hexagonal clay prism, commonly known as the Taylor Prism. It was discovered among the ruins of Nineveh. It contains the Annals of Sennacherib himself.

Here is how he modestly described his campaign:
Sennacherib, the great king, the mighty king, king of the world, king of Assyria, king of the four quarters, the wise shepherd, favourite of the great gods, guardian of right, lover of justice, who lends support, who comes to the aid of the destitute, who performs pious acts, perfect hero, mighty man, first among all princes, the powerful one who consumes the unsubmitting, who strikes the wicked with the thunderbolt ...

As for Hezekiah the Judahite, who did not submit to my yoke: ... like a caged bird I shut up in Jerusalem, his royal city. ... As for Hezekiah, the terrifying splendour of my majesty overcame him.

The tablet describes the siege of Jerusalem. And here is Hezekiah – trapped – like a caged bird. Facing certain death.

But at this time of testing comes Hezekiah's finest moment.

2 Kings 19:14–19:

Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the L ORD and spread it before the L ORD. And Hezekiah prayed before the L ORD and said: “O L ORD, the God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth. Incline your ear, O L ORD, and hear; open your eyes, O L ORD, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God. Truly, O L ORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods, but the work of men’s hands, wood and stone. Therefore they were destroyed. So now, O L ORD our God, save us, please, from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O L ORD, are God alone.”

How did Hezekiah respond to this test of the threat of national annihilation?

By trusting God. And the Lord answered the prayer of Hezekiah.

2 Kings 19:32–35:

Therefore thus says the L ORD concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not come into this city or shoot an arrow there, or come before it with a shield or cast up a siege mound against it. By the way that he came, by the same he shall return, and he shall not come into this city, declares the L ORD. For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David." And that night the angel of the L ORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies.

Hezekiah trusted the Lord – in the darkest of circumstances – and the Lord blessed.
But, in some ways – while Hezekiah handled adversity well – he did not handle blessing well.

Look at what happened. 2 Chronicles 32:22–23:

So the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib king of Assyria and from the hand of all his enemies, and he provided for them on every side. And many brought gifts to the LORD to Jerusalem and precious things to Hezekiah king of Judah, so that he was exalted in the sight of all nations from that time onward.

God blessed Hezekiah. He was exalted in the sight of the nations. Gifts poured in.

Once he had to plunder the Temple and scrape the gold off the doors to provide bounty for Sennacherib. Now – look at verses 29-30:

And Hezekiah had very great riches and honor, and he made for himself treasuries for silver, for gold, for precious stones, for spices, for shields, and for all kinds of costly vessels; storehouses also for the yield of grain, wine, and oil; and stalls for all kinds of cattle, and sheepfolds. He likewise provided cities for himself, and flocks and herds in abundance, for God had given him very great possessions.

Hezekiah became a King of renown – and the wealth poured in.

Hezekiah did well when Judah was besieged – by idols and by Sennacherib. But like many great men – his undoing was prosperity and fame.

Hezekiah began to believe his own publicity. He began to see himself as important and indispensible to Judah.

Once his faith was only in the Lord. Now he had too much faith in his own importance. Pride.

Listen to verse 24:

In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death, and he prayed to the LORD, and he answered him and gave him a sign.

Here is his third test.

The test of personal annihilation.

In 2 Kings 20 we have a fuller description of what happened. Hezekiah was sick and about to die.

Isaiah the prophet comes and says – set your affairs in order – you are going to die. What? – all his faithfulness and trust and his reward is death?

I suspect that in the light of eternity – Hezekiah wishes he had said – as the Lord wills.
God is sovereign – He knows best – and died.

But Hezekiah saw himself as crucial to Judah – and as Isaiah walked out he turned to the wall and cried:

   Now, O LORD, please remember how I have walked before you in faithfulness and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight." And he wept bitterly.

I have done this and that.

The implication is that I deserve to live. Judah needed him.

The Lord sent Isaiah back who said – OK the Lord will give you 15 years more.

That was not enough for Hezekiah – he wanted a sign – so the Lord made the shadow go back up the steps.

Hezekiah recovered. But that was about the worst thing that could happen to him.

2 Chronicles 32:25:

   But Hezekiah did not make return according to the benefit done to him, for his heart was proud.

His response to this test of impending death was pride. I am important – they need me.

The Lord did spare him, but that led to tragic results for Judah. Verses 26-27:

   Therefore wrath came upon him and Judah and Jerusalem. But Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah.

God hates pride – the pride that makes us to be important. The pride that downplays God.

Somehow Hezekiah caught this pride and he and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem humbled themselves – but all that did was delay the wrath of God.

Listen to 2 Chronicles 33:1–2:

   Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel.

Hezekiah was granted fifteen more years of life. Manasseh was twelve when he began to rule. This means he was born after Hezekiah’s life was spared. If Hezekiah had died
— no Manasseh.

Manasseh was so evil — that he brought the wrath of God on Judah. 2 Kings 21:10–12:

And the LORD said by his servants the prophets, “Because Manasseh king of Judah has committed these abominations and has done things more evil than all that the Amorites did, who were before him, and has made Judah also to sin with his idols, therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Behold, I am bringing upon Jerusalem and Judah such disaster that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle.”

Hezekiah’s pride led to fifteen more years — and the birth of Manasseh and this man was a curse to Judah.

There was one final test for Hezekiah. 2 Chronicles 32:31:

And so in the matter of the envoys of the princes of Babylon, who had been sent to him to inquire about the sign that had been done in the land, God left him to himself, in order to test him and to know all that was in his heart.

Test of personal faithfulness.

Where was Hezekiah’s heart? Was it in his wealth and power or in the Lord?

This is an amazing verse. God sent the envoys from Babylon — he left Hezekiah to himself — in order to test him and to know all that was in his heart.

Wow. I sometimes wonder how we would do in such a test. What is in our heart?

I sometimes wonder what tests of faithfulness God does send our way and I wonder how we do on the tests?

These envoys heard about Hezekiah’s healing and the sign — and they arrive in Jerusalem. Hezekiah proceeds to show them every treasure he has. He wanted to impress them with how great and powerful he was.

When Hezekiah was trapped in his city — he cries out and declares the power of God.

Now he declares the power of his wealth.

Isaiah asked the King said, “What have they seen in your house?” And Hezekiah answered, “They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing in my storehouses that I did not show them.”
His response was pride. See how great I am.

Here is what God said.

2 Kings 20:16–18:

Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Hear the word of the Lord: Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have stored up till this day, shall be carried to Babylon. Nothing shall be left, says the Lord. And some of your own sons, who shall be born to you, shall be taken away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.”

All that stuff you value – one day those very Babylonians will turn up and they will take it all – every last bit of it.

But for me – one of the saddest bits comes next. Verse 19:

Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “The word of the Lord that you have spoken is good.” For he thought, “Why not, if there will be peace and security in my days?”

Not my problem if it happens after I die. Yeah I messed up – but I won’t live to see the consequences. That is for someone else to deal with.

Was Hezekiah a great and godly man – yes. He showed incredible faith and strength. His faithfulness led to enormous blessing for the nation.

But then prosperity brought him undone. He relaxed. He took his eyes off God. He allowed pride to well up. And the result was tragic for Judah.

Brothers and sisters. If we lived in Iran or Yemen – if our faith was under siege – I suspect our prayer life, our faithfulness, our trust in God would grow day by day.
But we live in the lucky country. Freedoms, prosperity, luxury.

We can gather to worship. We have big screen TV’s and iphones. We have superannuation and health insurance.

And our prayer life, our faithfulness, our trust in God find itself withering. We trust ourselves and what we have ahead of God.

It is hard to live a life of faith in plenty. We trust our riches, our resources, ourselves.

God may send trials. He may take all we have.

Or – more often – the Lord simply commands us to discipline ourselves to realise that our spiritual life is like the frog in the kettle – slow boiling to death. We have to realise that our lives can end at any moment – that our freedoms are not real – our wealth can be a curse. We have to realise that we are in a spiritual battle – and fight to live holy and godly lives – trusting God in good times and in hard times.

This is the legacy of Hezekiah. Don’t just start well – finish well.

Don’t just pray in hard times – pray in good times.

Don’t trust God when times are bleak – trust Him when times are good too.

We must live our whole lives in faith and trust – and never back off until we reach eternity.

This is the lesson of Hezekiah – one of the great Kings of Judah.