

Organising your life for God's Purpose: Set your house in order

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[0:00] And Isaiah 38 is where we're going to go. Really it's a sobering message from God to King Hezekiah, King of Judah. And these are frightening words, a grim warning, a sobering message from the prophet.

! Set your house in order. Isaiah 38 reads, verse 1, Hezekiah here is only 39 years old. And Hezekiah is the son of this ungodly king Ahab. Ahab was a really wicked apostate king. And Hezekiah here learns that he would soon die.

Now these are confronting words for anyone, aren't they? The Bible tells us, it tells every one of us that he is appointed unto man once to die.

Every one of us will face that appointment. Where will you spend eternity? That's the big question mark. Hezekiah had become dreadfully sick and was about to die. Set your house in order for you shall die.

The nation at this time was in this moral and spiritual decline and enemies surrounded them. And we read on verse 2, It says here that Hezekiah, when he got this news, he turned his face toward the wall.

[1:52] It shows how earnest Hezekiah was in his prayer. He directed his prayer privately to God. It wasn't to any man. Hezekiah turned unto the Lord. So he wanted to get straight with God, straight direct to God.

And he poured out his heart to the Lord. Now when you hear a message, set your house in order, you want to get things right with your maker. Amen. That's what Hezekiah wanted to do.

Thank God that we as Christians, we can pray. No matter how dark the night may be. No matter how devastating the news. Hezekiah prayed. And it's one of the most earnest prayers you can imagine, given the circumstance.

One of the most earnest prayers in the Bible. And we read that verse 3. Hezekiah said, Hezekiah was a king who had a close relationship with God.

He beseeched the Lord about this news. It's interesting, the name Hezekiah, it means God gives strength. God gives strength.

[3:03] If you're one who prays, God will give you strength. Amen. And he was one who was doing what was good and right and faithful before the Lord his God. Hezekiah was a praying man.

And we might not be able to do much, but all of us can pray, really, can't we? When you really think about it, every one of us have got the same access. We've got the same means of speaking with our Lord.

Every one of us, the most humble believer, the most weakest saint can pray. Someone has said that Satan trembles when the weakest saint is on his knees.

And believer today, you can pray. And Hezekiah was a praying man. He prayed about these difficulties, as he prayed at other times about difficulties.

He was a man of prayer. And Hezekiah, it says of him in 2 Kings 18, verse 5, that he was one of the most godly of the kings. He was one of the very best kings.

[4:05] That's 2 Kings 18, verse 5. And Hezekiah, it tells of him that he removed the high places. He broke down the pillars, the idols that the people worshipped, the false gods.

And he confronted the people of their worship of idols. Hezekiah was a man of God. And he was a man who, when the people of God were in trouble and they were despairing, he did not run from God, he ran to God.

And it's the same for you, believer. You can run unto God. You can run unto him. Hezekiah was a man we would look to as a good example for others to follow.

What did he do? He rebuilt the temple. He restored it. He repaired the temple. He restored the Passover. And the Lord was with him and blessed him. And it says here that Hezekiah wept sore. He wept bitterly. And he prayed a bold prayer. Verse 4, it reads on, Think of it.

[5:19] What a blessing for God to say, I've heard your prayer. And that God reversed what he had said. So prayer matters, doesn't it?

Prayer changes things. You might think, what can my prayer achieve? Well, prayer matters and prayer counts. And prayer changes things.

By the grace of God. And God says, I've heard your prayer. What a blessing to think of that. Again, saint, you might think, how powerful are my prayers?

I'm just so weak, inadequate. What can my prayers achieve? He says to you, I hear your prayer. I hear your prayer. I've heard your prayer. And I've seen your tears.

You know, dear saint, God hears. He truly hears every prayer. And he knows every teardrop.

Sometimes we pray.

[6:17] I know that there's some have reflected that sometimes our prayers are just teardrops. Because we don't know what to say. Because words fail us.

But God even sees every tear. Have faith in God. Have faith in God. That's the message of Hezekiah's life, really. And prayer matters. In Luke 18, verse 1, it says, Man ought always to pray. Ought always to pray. So, what's the best time to pray? Always. All the time. There's no better time than another time.

Because we ought always. Ought always to pray. Luke 18, verse 1. So, we may not always get the answer to our prayer that we want. But we are to pray.

And God gives some promises we see as we read on verse 6. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria. And I will defend this city. Think of it.

[7:20] God is your defender, isn't He? He is your defence. He is your deliverer. He says, I will deliver thee and this city. And verse 7.

And this shall be a sign unto thee from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing that he hath spoken. Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees which has gone down in the sundial of Ahaz, ten degrees backwards.

So the sun returned ten degrees. By which degrees it was gone down. So God confirmed his word further in a powerful way. The big question from Hezekiah's account here.

The big question for every one of us is this. Are you prepared to die? That's a very telling question. A very sombre question, isn't it? Very sobering thought.

None of us are going to live forever in these here bodies. These bodies, as much as I know there's some remarkable specimens amongst us, that these bodies will not live forever.

[8:21] They will not live forever. We all can take life for granted, can't we? And some of us, maybe we're taking God for granted. Do we realise our own mortality?

These are sobering words. Life is fragile, isn't it? It's a vapour. And all of your big plans may come to nothing. All of those things you've got on your calendar for months ahead.

As it reads in James 4.13, Go to now ye that say, today or tomorrow. No, we will go into such a city and continue there a year and buy and sell and get gain.

Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. You don't even know what is going to happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away.

For that ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that. But it's always good to have that kind of proviso, God willing, as to what our plans are going to be.

[9:28] Because it's entirely up to his will, isn't it? Whether we even live and then whether we do this or that. How is your soul? It's better to have lived a shorter life that has been prepared for eternity than a long life with no view of eternal things.

So whether we're young or old, what matters is to get our house in order. To use this life to prepare for eternity.

God was kind to Hezekiah because not everyone is given the time to set their house in order. We don't get that opportunity necessarily.

None of us knows when death will overtake us. What if God were to speak to us today and tell us, set your house in order. Is that business unfinished?

Regarding our homes, our families, our lives. Unfinished business. This life is temporary, isn't it? We might all be making plans to do something sometime ahead, someday.

[10:36] But you're not going to see that day. When we stop and realise this, it causes us to examine our lives. To think, what can I make of my life in the now?

In that time that I have now, that I know that I have. Do we think about what really matters? What's valuable? What are you doing with what God has given to you? If you knew that you were going to die in the next 24 hours, what sort of changes would you make in your house, in your lifestyle? Getting our house in order. Really, it's about every facet of our lives, isn't it? These are telling thoughts because really, truly, none of us have any guarantee of years ahead, months ahead. So getting your house in order is something we ought to always have in the forefront of our thinking. Does my life line up with God's purposes?

Is what I'm doing glorifying Him? Do I prioritise what really matters? And there's a warning here. Take heed.

[11:46] Thou shalt die. Someday will be our last day. Do we evaluate our life to think, how can I use it for the glory of God? Set thine house, it says.

Set thine house in order. If the Lord came, if you were to go to Him today, is your house in order? Now, we could think naturally of practical things we can do.

I know I've got to look at my will and get that sorted out. There's some things I need to change. You kind of think, well, I'll put it off until when I get around to it.

But really, we should have our affairs in order and such things, practical things. And as much as I'm the executor for a couple of people I love, I'm really not looking forward to that day when I've got to take action and act as the executor.

Because it's an unpleasant thought, really, isn't it? But yet, they've made their preparation in some practical way. But what about spiritually so? Is your house in order spiritually?

[12:50] That's what really counts, isn't it? And the question really is this. Are you saved? How's your house? Do you have a date with death?

Do we consider our life, our priorities, our responsibilities with a view to what is the will of God for me? What is His purpose? Does my life align with God's principles?

Am I surrendering myself to the will of God? Truly, set your house in order. It's a call to live with integrity, with stewardship, with accountability.

Is there any unfinished business in our life? We could think about relationships. Things that we may need to sort out with other people. Well, we humble ourselves like Hezekiah.

Before the Lord. He wept bitterly. Do we seek God's guidance? His forgiveness? Do we live each day with that sense of urgency? That readiness for the day, the day, when we will meet our Saviour face to face.

[13:56] Set your house in order. Order, really, is what the world desperately needs, isn't it? When you think of it, in these turbulent times, there's much disorder. And really, the Holy Spirit, really God Himself is the only one who can bring true order and harmony by His authority into our lives, into society as a whole.

Without the guidance and power of God, Godly order is not going to happen in our homes, in our lives, or anyone else.

Set your house in order. Ordering is something speaking of sorting things. As far as what we count as priority, when you have a bit of a to-do list, you hopefully set things in order.

What about spiritually? Do we prioritize the worship and service of God? Will we be like Joshua, who made that determination? He says, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

He said, that's the bottom line for me. That's what matters. That me and my family, we're going to serve the Lord. God helping us, we're going to make that decision.

[15:12] And you look at Hezekiah's life, and he started out really as a godly king. There was much commendation of him. He was the best that Judah had and was to have.

His reign was one of the most outstanding in terms of godliness. In 2 Kings 18, verses 3 to 7, it says Hezekiah was really outstanding.

And yet, sadly, Hezekiah, he did not really finish that well. Now, God granted his prayer. God gave him 15 more years of life.

But the added years, it did not make him a better or more godly man. You could reflect maybe the Lord had a better plan than what Hezekiah prayed for and got, really.

In calling him home at the earlier time, that possibly was actually a better plan. God knew that if Hezekiah lived, he would give birth to a wicked successor.

[16:13] Sometimes it's best to leave our lot with the Lord, even if it's not how we would like it to be. To leave it in the sense that, what is good in God's wisdom?

What is good in His will for my life? As it was, Hezekiah got this extension of time. But then we see some failings of Hezekiah.

Wouldn't it be better to pray according to the will of God? Thy will be done. Hezekiah got this extension of time. What happened next? We see that Hezekiah, he acted with pride.

We see that there in verse 13. It says that the Babylonians came and Hezekiah foolishly showed off his palace and all of his armory, all of his weapons and treasures to the king of Babylon.

We read that there in verse 13. It says that as these men came, Hezekiah showed them all the house of his precious things, the silver and the gold and the spices and the precious ointment and the house of his armour, all of his weapons.

[17:21] And that was found in his treasures. There was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion that Hezekiah showed them not. And Isaiah confronted him about this.

Notice how he puts it in verse 15. As Isaiah confronted him and said, What have you done? And he said, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered and said, All the things that are in mine house have they seen.

There is nothing among my treasures that I have not showed them. Notice how he says, My house, my treasures. And there is no giving of glory to God here.

He was trusting in himself and he was basically vainly just showing off all of the wealth, all of his prosperity, even his weapons and all of the strength and treasures of the land.

And he didn't give any glory to God. It's all about my things, my house, my treasures. And Isaiah tells him this, Behold the days come, verse 17, Behold the days come, that all that is in thine house and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day shall be carried into Babylon.

[18:37] Nothing shall be left, saith the Lord. So Isaiah revealed to Hezekiah the damage that would unfold. Because of his foolishness. And Hezekiah responded in verse 19, how he said, Yeah, that's the word of the Lord that you've spoken is good.

And he had this thought, Well, that I'm okay. There's going to be peace and security in my days. That was what Isaiah told him.

That this is yet future. When he was to pass away, that everything was going to be taken. And Hezekiah had the view, Well, I'm okay.

Well, there's peace and security in my days. Who cares about anyone else? It's kind of the thought. He was kind of showing how utterly selfish that he was. It seemed like Hezekiah was just consumed with his own self-interest.

He seemed to lack concern about the legacy that he was leaving. About the destiny of his descendants. What a tragedy. Here's a man that's indifferent about the consequences of his choices on the success of generations.

[19:47] When you think about it, If you were given 15 more years than were allotted to you, that you had extra time, wouldn't you want to use that for the glory of God?

If you had extra time to do something for God, you're blessed to be a blessing. What kind of a legacy are we leaving for the next generation? What kind of example are we setting?

Hezekiah could have used his extra years of life for the glory of God. But it seems like he missed it. Hezekiah put all of this time into building and enlarging his palace.

And really, he put no time into his own son, Manasseh, who was going to follow him. Hezekiah showed all this pride, showing off all the treasures of his house and bragging about the weapons and such.

And the Babylonians were going to carry all that away. And what's more, make his grandchildren, his grandson's eunuchs. He showed all of this pride, this self-sufficiency, but he failed to lead his son.

[20:53] And when Manasseh took the throne, he ended up going off track. His son, who was to become king, Manasseh, he brought back all the idol worship and the Baal worshippers.

In 2 Kings chapter 21, we see the dread record of Manasseh. He was one of the worst of the worst. Hezekiah had 15 extra years.

He could have done something to prepare his son. He missed it. And we can miss it too, can't we? As we're called to set our house in order, we can miss it, what we could be doing.

And the Bible tells us warts and all about even some of the giants of the faith. They made a bit of a poor showing as they came to cross the finish line of faith.

For example, Noah. He had great faith, building the ark, despite the scoffers, despite the years of waiting. Yet his story ends with him lying drunk and disgraced in his tent.

[21:59] Noah. Moses. Moses, the man who led God's people out of the worst slavery they had ever known. Moses couldn't go into the promised land because of his sin.

Moses. David. David, a man after God's own heart. He steals another man's wife. He murders hundreds to cover it up. He ends his life in a desperate civil war with his very own son.

And here's Hezekiah. Hezekiah. He's given more time to live. But it seems like he did not use it for the glory of God. He did not use the time that he was given as wisely as he could have.

How will it be for us? I don't want to leave you on a downer here tonight to think that this is a dread thought.

But really it's a challenge to think, how can I turn things around that I can have a good legacy, that I can have a good testimony? When we look back over the years that we've lived, have we misused them?

[23:07] How was it that we've made use of the time that we've had, that we've been given? What of the years that may yet be ahead of us? What of those days that we have yet to live? How will you spend them?

It's a confronting question, isn't it? Hezekiah was blessed with more years to live. What a blessing. But sadly, Hezekiah didn't make good use of the extra days the Lord gave him.

And God's shocking words to Hezekiah woke him up about the reality of his approaching death.

And really the Word of God has got that confrontation to every one of us.

It says, prepare to meet thy God. Hezekiah, he had 15 more years to live. Yet none of us knows how much time we have yet to live.

Have we got 15 years? Have we got more? Have we got less? None of us knows how much time we have. So the sooner we put our house in order, the better.

[24:05] Amen? Setting your house in order should happen now. It's a call to live with integrity, with stewardship, accountability in all areas of our life. Think of Australia, our own nation.

This nation's house is not in order. It's your house in order. Your house. Don't follow the steps of Hezekiah, his later years. He got detoured.

He got proud, didn't he? He got proud. We see the shame of Manasseh. He led the nation into idol worship for most of his 52 years as king. Hezekiah could have influenced Manasseh, his son, but he wasted those years.

Now, of course, we can't always tell what our descendants will do, but we can do our part to try to reach them, can't we? To share the gospel to our children, our grandchildren.

I know I need to do more of that. Hezekiah missed these things. He missed some important things, some urgent things.

[25:11] We can waste our life. We can waste our life by poor stewardship of it. Get your house in order. Organise your life, your priorities, your responsibilities.

Who knows? What time do we have to reach our loved ones for Christ? When we leave a legacy of faith and righteousness behind us, they've got an answer for themselves.

They might just laugh it off. Some of my children have. It's good to do some soul searching, isn't it? Do what we can do.

Set your house in order. Will we submit ourselves to God's authority, His guidance, to reflect on what decisions I make, are they glorifying to God?

Set your house in order. Your own house. It's so easy, it's easy for me to look at others and see their shortcomings.

[26:18] As in Matthew 7, the Lord says, remove the plank that is in your own eye before trying to remove the speck in your brother's eye.

Set your house in order. We've all got to give account of ourselves to the Lord and think of our own faults and shortcomings before we criticize or judge others.

Just as surely as there is a time to be born, there is a time to die. If you knew you had only one year to live, one year left, is there something in your life that you would set in order?

Is there a relationship you would try to mend? Is there someone you would apologize to so that it's done?

It's done. You've done your part. Is there someone you would witness to? You know they're lost. They're astray from God's will.

[27:30] They're backslidden. Is there someone that God would put on your heart to speak to, to reach out to? Look, they might mock you and scorn and push you away and they might reject your love, your witness, but you can do your part.

We all can, isn't there? Is there some unresolved unforgiveness? There's some barrier. There's some divide. There's some some blockage.

There's someone that you know you'd want to reach out to them but maybe you've just not plucked up the courage to say, yeah, I should sort that out.

I really should. A relationship that you could do your part. They might reject you. They might close the door on you and slam the door on you but you can do your part.

Brother, sister, set your house in order. Think of it. Think of it for yourself. There may be folks hearing this who only have one year left. Maybe less.

[28:42] We don't know amongst us. If you had an experience like Hezekiah's, what would you change? Do we have to have an experience like Hezekiah for us to be wise and number our days?

To number our days and apply our hearts to wisdom? Here's the psalmist's prayer. So teach us to number our days and apply our hearts unto wisdom. how many numbers are left?

How many days? How many days? We don't know. 600. 100. What will you do with the years that God will favour you with?

Will you live honourably? Will it be a legacy that you'll leave behind? And for you that are unsaved that are hearing this, there's a dread prospect for you of stepping into eternity unprepared.

To step into eternity unprepared. We know our only hope is not any good works that we do. It's only the grace of God. It's only the blood of Jesus shed for us.

[29:55] That one way to salvation, the Saviour taking our penalty and making full payment such that we can believe and receive by faith that all our sins can be laid upon Him.

That dread sin, we can find forgiveness for it by the virtue of His love and grace and mercy, His kindness. Not of works that we do but of His mercy and grace that He would extend eternity as a gift and eternal life to you.

Hezekiah was dreadfully sick and about to die. Set your house in order. Set your house in order for you shall die. Let us pray. Lord, we thank you that for us that believe death is not a dread prospect, we can be like Paul who said, the time of my departure is at hand and he looked upon it as a glorious prospect.

He says, I'm ready to depart. I've run my race, I've finished my course and they set before me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give to me and to all them that love His appearing.

And Lord, we pray that each one here might know that we might be the ones that are looking forward to your appearing that one day we'll see your face, Lord, and it will be as our saviour, not of our judge but as our saviour.

[31:27] Sure, there'll be a judgement of works but yet our salvation has been fully paid and is a finished work. Lord, we thank you that we can trust in that promise that we have everlasting life.

Lord, we pray that we might have the mind to make the most of what time we do have, that we have a wisdom to apply our hearts to number our days, Lord, to count every day a privilege and Lord, to be a good steward of the time that we do have.

Help us, Lord, to live so that eternity will be in view when everything is said and done. Eternity is what will move us and decide our steps that we take, that will walk in your ways.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.