

16. Redeeming time during the days of evil

August 30, 2009

Someone said this: "How long a minute is depends on what side of the bathroom door you're on." We have 1440 minutes a day, 10,080 minutes a week, 43,200 minutes a month, and 525,600 minutes a year.

It sounds like a lot of time we still have. But it depends on whom you are asking. If you ask young people, especially children, they cannot wait to grow up. However, if you ask older people, especially those who past that 50 year mark, they will tell you that each day, each week goes by much faster. No kidding, I remember I walked out of this auditorium last Sunday like a couple days ago, but here we are again.

While some people make most of their time in their lives; some totally waste away their lives in destructive paths. I am sure that you can think of many people whom you know are just doing that.

You can almost get everything back if you lost them, but there are still many that you can never get them back. Time would be on the top of the list.

King Hezekiah of Judah was dying of illness. He prayed to the Lord and He graciously extended the king's life fifteen more years. So the king should have been grateful to the Lord and used it wisely, huh? Unfortunately, the answer was opposite. I do believe that we can learn a great deal of principles from this once godly king of ancient Judah.

A. HEZEKIAH'S LIFE EXTENDED

2 Kings 20:1-11 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.'" 2 Then he turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the Lord, saying, 3 "Remember now, O Lord, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what was good in Your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly. 4 And it happened, before Isaiah had gone out into the middle court, that the word of the Lord came to him, saying, 5 "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. 6 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.'" 7 Then Isaiah said, "Take a lump of figs." So they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered. 8 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?" 9 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?" 10 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." 11 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.

King Hezekiah died in 687 B.C. So if we back track 15 years, the year when the sickness and healing, as well as the visit of the Babylonian envoys were occurred in

the year of 702 B.C. The following year, the Assyrians returned and attacked Jerusalem which we learned in chapter 18 and 19.

King Hezekiah's prayer almost sound ungodly and arrogant because he mentioned about his accomplishment and loyalty to the Lord. But under the OT, this was a valid principle on which to approach God through a person's obedience to His law. However, under the NT, we don't come to the Lord with our own accomplishment, rather only by His grace and mercy. Hezekiah did not have any assurance that he would have eternal life in heaven like the born-again believers do have through Jesus Christ.

One of the most frequent questions from the skeptics and unbelievers to Christianity is: "How can you accept and believe that God allows sickness to His followers? Should you not have the best health and comfortable living if He is that good?"

In addition to this mind-boggling question, God heals some and chooses not to heal the others. Some of you guys came to me and asked me to pray for their sickness. Of course, I was happy to pray for them. What do you know? God healed them. Then I pray for my own illness and tendonitis on both of my arms, He doesn't. I had to ask Him, "Am I Your stepchild or something, God?"

With our finite and puny brains, we cannot understand God's infinite wisdom, nor can we fathom the depth of His will. But we do know that the Lord will use our infirmities for His glory and heal us eventually, because there will be no one who is sick in heaven.

If you have illness or you have someone who is sick and a believer of Jesus Christ, you need to listen carefully.

Some people who are sick, not all of them, think that everyone should feel sorry for them or they expect other people to put their lives on hold to take care of the sick ones.

With all due respect, I totally disagree. There is nothing wrong with caring for the ones who are sick and we should. But the sick people should not manipulate others to their advantage. I know it sounds cold and callous, but please continue to hear me.

Let me give you a few examples from our own congregation. Let's start with Diane Mertens. This dear saint has had Multiple Sclerosis over twenty years. If there is anyone who has excuses to feel sorry for oneself, it would be Diane. But she is a trooper for the Lord. She handles the ePrayer Chain ministry in our church. When you send out an e-mail prayer request or praise report to our ePrayer Chain, she distributes to the people who are on the prayer chain list in timely manner.

Diane does not expect others to feel sorry for her, but she is a prayer warrior whom I depend on and a colaborer for the Kingdom of God.

We have a couple more people who have physical limitation, yet they overcome their handicap and still serve the Lord and His people, like our elder Jerry Hamby and CJ Daniel who just led the worship.

By taking their eyes off their illness and physical limitation, they get to see other people's needs from the view point of God. What a privilege that is! If you have illness or handicap, you can be an overcomers in Christ like Diane, Jerry and CJ or be overcome by your own emotion which would drag you down further. It is your choice.

God can, and often does, bring healing through medical treatments, and apart from His miraculous healings, medical treatment should never be rejected in the name of faith. I believe in faith healing, not faith healer on Christian TV.

James 5:14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

Some theologians try to figure out or explain how God made the shadow of the sun dial of Ahaz to go backward 10 degrees. I don't know why these brilliant and intelligent scholars cannot simply accept the fact that God is God who can do anything and everything. After all God created the entire universe and do they actually think that He would have a problem making a shadow to go backward? If He wanted, He could make Jerry Hamby's shadow do a break dancing all by itself without Jerry.

B. THE FIFTEEN ADDITIONAL YEARS OF KING HEZEKIAH

2 Chronicles 32:24-25 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. 25 But Hezekiah did not repay according to the favor shown him, for his heart was lifted up; therefore wrath was looming over him and over Judah and Jerusalem.

What a sad statement! King Hezekiah was spared and his life was extended yet he was not grateful to the Lord.

Pride is one of satan's main arsenals in his battle against the Lord's people. Satan himself committed the sin of pride when he rebelled against God and sought the worship and obedience that God alone deserves. Pride makes us rob the glory of God that belongs to Him alone. If we must boast, we should boast about the Lord our God, not ourselves.

C. FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD

2 Kings 20:12-18 At that time Berodach-Baladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that Hezekiah had been sick. 13 And Hezekiah was attentive to them, and showed them all the house of his treasures--the silver and gold, the spices and precious ointment, and all his armory--all that was found among his treasures. There was nothing in his house or in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them. 14 Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah, and said to him, "What did these men say, and from where did they come to you?" So Hezekiah said, "They came from a far country, from Babylon." 15 And he said, "What have they seen in your house?" So Hezekiah answered, "They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shown them." 16 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the Lord: 17 'Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,' says the Lord. 18 'And they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.'"

The envoys from a far country Babylon which was an upcoming superpower came to see how Hezekiah was doing after his recovery from the terminal illness. Hezekiah was so impressed that they treated him like a peer even though his kingdom Judah was nothing to compare to Babylon in size and military power. Hezekiah wanted to impress the envoys so much that he showed everything he had.

As the rebuke from Isaiah demonstrated, it was nothing more than proud foolishness on Hezekiah's part. He was in the dangerous place of wanting to please and impress ungodly people.

This tactic is not an unusual for satan to use against the believers of Jesus Christ. He boosts up our ego and encourages us to read our own clippings. The devil whispers in our hearts, "You are so spiritual. Everyone notices it. Even God is impressed with you." Guess what? We are impressed with ourselves and we often listen to the devil.

Scripture pictures our adversary the devil as a cunning serpent and a roaring lion. He does not offer nice comments to us because he really was impressed with us, but to trap us and to defeat us. In response to the devil's silver tongue temptation, we often ignorantly expose our weakness to his crosshair.

Proverbs 27:6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

A century after Hezekiah's death, Babylon came and destroyed Jerusalem and took many of Hezekiah's descendants to Babylon and made them be eunuchs – like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. The Babylonians knew exactly where to go to get all the treasures of the king of Judah and what kind of weapons the Jews had, thanks to Hezekiah.

When the world comes to you and wants you to be their friends and ally like Babylon did to Hezekiah, just do not do it.

James 4:4 Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

D. A SAD STATE OF HEART OF THE KING

2 Kings 20:19-21 So Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the Lord which you have spoken is good!" For he said, "Will there not be peace and truth at least in my days?" 20 Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah--all his might, and how he made a pool and a tunnel and brought water into the city--are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 21 So Hezekiah rested with his fathers. Then Manasseh his son reigned in his place.

This was a sad state of heart for the king of Judah. When God announced coming judgment through His prophet, instead of repenting, all he did was relief that it would not happen in his lifetime.

Additional life or good health does not necessarily make us any better. Consider that time does nothing but pass away. We sometimes say, "time will tell," "time will heal," or "time will bring out the potential in me." But time will do nothing of the sort. Time will only come and go. It is only how we use time that matters. Hezekiah didn't make good use of the extra time the LORD gave him.

In my opinion, king Hezekiah wasted away 15 additional years that were given to him by the Lord. He should have turned to the Lord with humility and a grateful heart to serve Him more than ever before.

We hope and pray that we make the most of the time we are allowed to have – whether it is a long life or short life. We are not here to glorify ourselves, but to glorify the Lord our Savior Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 5:6-18 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not be partakers with them. 8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), 10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. 13 But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. 14 Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light." 15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit

Man has a beginning, but not an ending. Either he will live forever in heaven or hell. Eternity is not "extended time", rather its existence is above and apart from time. Where we spend that eternity completely depends on our decision to follow Jesus or not.

E. APPLICATION

We need to redeem our time in these evil days by solely depending on the Lord to maximize it for His glory.