

## **Chapter 2: Is Your House in Order?**

### **Life Application Verses:**

**Isaiah 38: 1-5.** In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came 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 to the wall and prayed to the LORD, and said, “Remember now, O LORD, I beseech You, how I have walked before You in truth and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in Your sight.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly. Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah, saying, “Go and say to Hezekiah, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of your father David, “I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will add fifteen years to your life.”’”

In the times in which we live, in the Year of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Two Thousand Sixteen (MMXVI), is our world a ‘better, same, or worse’ place in which to live when compared to 2015, 2013, 2012, 2010, 2000, 1990, 1900, 1890, and so on? Each and every one of us will have to answer—for ourselves, our families, and our circumstances—what we perceive and believe to be the case. As I write this, I am of the perception and belief that it is a better place—not because it *IS* a better place—but because it is better between myself, my family, and my God. Do I still have issues that plague me? Or is my aging body doing an old-age shuffle at times? Or do I find myself in situations that *I* created and then have to repent and pray for forgiveness? The answer to these questions is of course—yes, yes, and In Grace and Mercy—yes.

I want to talk about this scripture for a moment in terms of Hezekiah as a person—not as a King, a powerful person in his own times, or as someone we know in the Old Testament who warrants ‘status’ when we consider him. Just think of him as a neighbor of ours, living in a house or apartment similar to the one we might live in, and doing the ordinary things we do every day. Can you see him? Do you see him in his plaid shorts mowing the lawn, waving at us as we might be doing the same thing? For instance, imagine the following conversation as [you/me] (insert your/my name here) and Hezekiah are, in fact, cutting the grass on a Saturday afternoon. As the two of us meet, we power our mowers off and begin to chat as old friends.

“Hey Hez, what’s up? Been doing any fishing lately?” [Ken] inquires. “Well not as much as I might like. Been feeling a bit under the weather lately. I think I’m just tired from work and cutting all this grass,” he quips, with a smile and friendly jesting. (He actually has a small yard.)

“I hear ya, my friend. Anything I can do for ya?” I respond. “Nah, I’ll just take it a bit easy for a while—after I get this grass cut, that is. Gotta be able to go and do for the family, you know! I would appreciate your prayers though. Will I see you and the family in church tomorrow?” he inquires. Your reply was one of concern and love for your good neighbor, “Surely so. We’ll be there and we’ll be praying for you. You take care of yourself and if you need anything at all, just let us know.”

The next day at church, you see Hez and he looks fairly well, but reminds you of someone who has been bothered by something that is so troubling that it nearly chips away the unfettered radiance of a Godly life and a few worry wrinkles begin to show. You comment to your wife that he looked more tired than usual. Over the next several weeks, you see Hez in the usual places, have dinner out with families, and he begins to look even more fatigued. Then one day, you meet him as the two of you are walking to the mailbox to check your mail and he looks at you with a seriousness you have *not known in him before*. He mentions to you that he visited Dr. Lindsay, who is your own physician, and received news that he has a terminal illness. He begins to express his hope that God will heal him, but that if He does not, he will be ready to go Home when God chooses. He just needed to do a few things to ‘set his house in order.’ You think to yourself, if his house needs ordering as careful and neat as he is, yours is in dire need of an overhaul. You attempt a smile at your self-humor, but it eludes you when you think of Hez.

You are distraught at the probability of losing your very good friend, and thoughts of your own life flash across that ‘self-made big screen’ we all carry with us to review life events—those that are good, bad, or indifferent. In your mind, you begin to wonder why God would allow this to happen to such an exceptionally nice gentleman and family man. You comfort Hez at the mailbox and promise to pray for him more than ever before...Three days later, you see Hez and he tells you the most fascinating story. He tells you that late one night, when he couldn’t sleep from worry, he was lying in bed and while his wife was asleep, he turned his face to the wall and began to weep bitterly in silence and tell God that he had served Him faithfully all his life. He tells you that in Spirit, he bowed before God and lifted up the following prayer: “Remember now, O LORD, I beseech You, how I have walked before You in truth and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in Your sight.” And the next thing Hez tells you is the

most amazing thing of all. He tells you that in those dark hours before dawn, he was awakened as he heard the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit saying, “Thus says the LORD, I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will add fifteen years to your life.”

Two weeks later, Hez comes to your front door—ringing and ringing the door-bell. You thought it might be the police on some emergency. Then, you open the door and there is a rested Hez, with a grin so big you have to smile too. He tells you that the doctor found no trace of the illness at the last checkup. You have unspeakable joy in your Heart because you know that God has worked in the life of your dear friend. And you and Hez and your families get together to praise God and celebrate the victory of a Loving and Merciful God. So many people today say this can’t be anything other than coincidence; these things don’t happen and there is no God. Well, by Faith it does happen and the following example in Scripture proves that God works in our lives. The Bible is replete with God’s Hand of Mercy, restoration, and saving lives—from Adam and Eve to the life of Jesus in the New Testament and John at Patmos.

Some would say that the story of Hezekiah in the Old Testament is ‘just another story in an old story book full of allegory.’ Is this what you understand, if you are a believing Christian? It is not just a story that is of interest in that Hezekiah ‘wept bitterly’ so that God heard his voice: And Hezekiah wept bitterly. Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah, saying, “Go and say to Hezekiah, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of your father David, I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will add fifteen years to your life’.”

From the perspective of Heavenly Minded events, God has told us that He is the God of yesterday, today, and forever. Thus, if this is true, then He is the same God during the times of Hezekiah as He is in the death of Jesus on the Cross and His resurrection. Heavenly Minded means we believe what God says, not out of convenience but because it is TRUE. If it can be done for Hezekiah it can surely be done for Hez—and us. The Earthly Good is the life being lived by Hez—and Hezekiah. But there are two very interesting things that should be applicable to our lives in 2016 and beyond: 1) unless God provides other arrangements, we all have an appointment with death; 2) knowing this, do we continually set our house in order?

Let me deal with the first item, which is difficult for so many, including Christians. If by chance you are reading this and you are not a Christian—that is, you are a true believer that

Jesus Christ is the risen Son of God and you have given your life to Him—then death must be a highly unwelcome thought for you. As I write this, I confess that death is a mystery to me and I am in no hurry for its arrival, but I know that God will see a believer’s death as very special as it is noted in Psalms 116: 15, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His godly ones.” Now, understand something: if God is the Maker of all Things, and He holds ALL power of Life and Death, then if He says our death (true believers) is precious and He knows when that will happen, I believe that He will give us Angels to go with us when we leave this world. Will we grieve the loss of our loved ones? I agree, this question borders almost on absurdity, but we know the answer. We will profoundly grieve the loss of our loved ones, our beloved pets, our friends, and our hearts will be broken for an immeasurable time. This is a normal part of life, albeit a deeply difficult part. For me as a follower of Christ, I believe that ‘precious’ means that I will blink-closed my eyes here on Earth and I will blink-open my eyes in my Heavenly Body. That’s a speed for which we have no comprehension.

Let us be Heavenly Minded to always know that when we or family are called Home, God is in the very midst of our heartache. We are NOT alone; shed the tears openly and without reservation, but know that God, in Christ, is by our side. Our Earthly Good is to prepare for our departure well in advance by living our Faith in every aspect of the life that we have been given by God. The Earthly Good is a Godly life and a continual ‘setting of our house in order.’

We had a family member that for years said he didn’t need a will. He would take care of that when the time was right. His life was cut short by an accident and to this day, I don’t know if he had a will. Now, this discussion is not about you having a will, a living will, power of attorney, and so forth. It’s about your entire house being set in order to serve God more fully. What does it mean to ‘set your house in order?’

For one thing, it means that you have lived at peace with your family, loved them, made arrangements for their care, spent time with them, and they know without any reservations that you have loved them fully and abundantly in the Love of God. You see...setting your house in order is a daily event, not an event when you are told by your other neighbor Isaiah that God has given him a message that you are to die. While it means to set your affairs straight at the time of your discovery of imminent death, this knowledge should guide you to make minor

arrangements to “be absent from the body and present with the Lord.” That is, keep your house in order every day, week, and year...so that when the “word” comes by whatever means it will come, your house needs very little setting-in-order for you to leave. Please understand that I am not insensitive to when we lose our loved ones, friends, and even our beloved pets. But I also know that if we believe the Words of Jesus Christ, our future is Heavenly Eternal with Him and Our God. (As I write this, my mother has now been with Jesus for a Glorious Year!)

Another thing that you might consider in setting your house in order is ‘what have you left undone?’ Who or what needed to be visited or completed? Did you do something to someone in your past and it lives in your memory as a painful time when you let them down and you have never apologized or asked for forgiveness? Or what paper did you not write or attempt to write because you always wanted to try your hand at writing? Maybe you should have told your daughter or son how proud of him or her you were; maybe your wife needed to hear that you loved her more often than just on your anniversary; maybe you removed something from work that you know didn’t belong to you and you always wanted to make amends for that; maybe you lied about something that caused someone to miss a promotion; maybe it was that drink you had that caused your witness to be tarnished; or, maybe a whole list of things that needed to be taken care of? Those things undone at the time we leave this world remain undone. Is that not part of “setting your house in order?” Your Spiritual House is not made of brick and mortar and grass; no, it’s made of where you live within your sphere of Spiritual living. Examples such as work, neighborhoods, homes, community service, and church constitute many areas within your sphere of physical living—and God gives us this life to live for Him in Christ Jesus, and to prepare in Faith to be ready for Eternity when He calls us home.

Listen...setting your house in order is like writing a letter to a loved one and in that letter you tell him or her that ‘I should have done this or that’; well, make the letter short and get it done while you have time. Set your house affairs in order now, while God provides Breath of Life for you to do what needs doing. Keep your house in order so that when God does call you home, your house only needs a bit of touch up before you enter the Gates of Heaven—if any touch-up is needed at all. Every day when you see the sun coming over the horizon, jump up and greet God with a “Mornin’ Lord,” and make a list of things to do. Be sure to keep the ‘to

do' list much shorter than 'done' list. Tell your neighbors hello when you see them; witness when the Spirit moves you **at the time** you are moved to do so; hug your wife every morning and evening when you leave home and when you arrive (you never know when that might be the last hug she may receive from you); and for all that is *Heavenly Minded, Earthly Good*, love your children consistently in word and deed—for this is right in the Sight of God.

Set your house in order daily and with purpose. Live so that when you leave this place, while your family will be in mourning, you will have very little (or nothing at all) that needs to be made right after you leave. And if you know in advance, then these words may provide guidance. If you are one of 'His godly ones' and discover that you have a terminal illness, ***I pray that God will grant you a Mercy and Grace that passes all understanding.*** By all that is Right and Holy, I pray that my words will only add comfort, never grief to a family or an individual. Only God knows the reasons for all things and it is my prayer that He will open eyes, hearts, and ears for those who need comfort and guidance.

Let every day be a day of ordering your house and affairs of life. Never let the sun go down on something undone, whether a kind word, words of love, tucking your children in and telling them how much God loves them in Jesus, or just a quiet time with your wife or husband. Hezekiah was given fifteen years more to live and I can imagine that his perspective on living was markedly different—even though he had lived a Godly life before. Could we honestly say that if we had those fifteen years of extended life we would be different, better organized, more caring, a better husband or wife, and so forth? Let **today** be the first day of those additional fifteen years, whether they last a day, a year, a decade, or more.

#### **A Question of Curiosity:**

If you were Hezekiah, how much time would you need to set your house in order? Have you left so much undone that you would not have time to complete those items, forever leaving many of them 'unfinished?' We all have 24 hours in a day; what do we prioritize in life that might be better left undone? When we arrive in Heaven, will we hang our heads when Jesus asks us why we spent so much time in events that had no value for the Kingdom of God? Think on this: if what we do to get our house in order is of no value to the Glory of God, maybe we should evaluate what we are doing? And you say...

<>< <>< <>< <>< <>< <>< <>< <>< <>< <>< <>< <>< <>< <>< <>< <>< <><

**"Leave nothing for tomorrow which can be done today."** ~ Abraham Lincoln ~

**"God has promised forgiveness to your repentance, but He has not promised tomorrow to your procrastination."** ~ Augustine of Hippo ~

<>< <>< <>< <>< <>< <>< <>< <>< <>< <>< <>< <>< <>< <>< <>< <>< <><

**My Prayer For You:**

Father, as we face the knowledge that death will come to us all, unless Our Savior Christ Jesus returns, I pray that we would all prepare our lives to live fully and abundantly yet knowing that as we do so, we must also set our houses in order every single day. If Your will is to extend our lives for fifteen years or to bring us Home at the appointed time, may we be mindful that we have an appointed time and day in which You will call us from this place. It is my Prayer that we will serve You as fully as we are able to do so and that when we are to leave this Earth, Your Angel will accompany us to Your Throne of Mercy and Grace. If it were possible to look back, may we find no regrets of unspoken Love to family and friends or a missed witness to those who needed to hear the Saving Grace of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Remind us daily to keep our house in order. Grant us Wisdom to know what is of value to You, Our One True God. Amen.

*The Parable of the Ten Virgins*

"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. *Matthew 25: 1-13 (ESV)*