

A Remarkable Story of God's Grace (Devotional)

In 2 Kings 20 we have the story of King Hezekiah being told by the prophet Isaiah that he was going to die of the deathly illness which afflicted him. Hezekiah had been a good king, and he accepted the word spoken to him by Isaiah, the Lord's spokesman, but he wept bitterly, crying to the Lord, praying, **"Remember now, O Lord, I implore You, how I have walked before You in faithfulness with a whole heart, and have done what is good in Your sight."** (2 Kings 20:3) Upon hearing the pleas of Hezekiah, the Lord sent Isaiah back to Hezekiah to tell him, **"I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; indeed, I will heal you; on the third day you shall go up to the house of the Lord. I will add fifteen years to your life."** (2 Kings 20:5-6) Can you imagine the joy that King Hezekiah must have felt? Who of us would not be delighted to hear the Lord tell us that He was going to extend our lives several years just moments after we had been told we would not survive? The Lord kept His promise, and Hezekiah recovered from his illness just as the Lord had said. He did live an additional 15 years. But that, unfortunately, is not the end of the story, for we also learn from the word of God the following in 2 Kings 21:1-2: **"Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hephzibah. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel."** This means that he was born in the *last fifteen years* of Hezekiah's life. It was during those additional fifteen years of life that brought Judah one of its worst kings ever, King Manasseh.

Hezekiah was a very good king. I cannot help but believe that had he been able to foresee the wickedness that would come from his progeny given to him during those additional 15 years of life, I believe he would doubtless have had no desire to recover from his sickness. God's word tells us just how wicked the reign of Manasseh was, leading the nation of Judah down a path that was even more evil than the nations had been whom Israel had originally conquered when they took the Promised Land, even forcing his own son to be sacrificed alive in fire (2 Kings 21:6). But once again, this is not the end of the story. We also learn from God's word that no man, regardless of how evil he is or the greatness and depravity of his sin, is beyond the redemption of God. God's grace and His love are more powerful. 2 Chronicles 33:11-19 describes a remarkable repentance on the part of Manasseh. Because he and his people would not listen to the warnings of God, the Lord allowed the Babylonians to bind King Manasseh and take him as a captive to Babylon. There, **when he was in affliction, he implored the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers** (2 Chronicles 33:12) and God answered his prayer and restored him to the throne. Manasseh then proved that his repentance was genuine by taking away the idols and the foreign gods from Jerusalem, and he **commanded Judah to serve the Lord God of Israel** (2 Chronicles 33:16).