

Scripture Text

Isaiah 38

Context

Although Chapter 38-39 appears in Isaiah sequentially after Chapters 35-36, 38v6 shows us that this event (from 38-39) actually takes place before the Assyrian threat of 35-36. Beyond this, we don't have specifics about exactly when this takes place because Isaiah keeps it intentionally vague. Bear in mind that Isaiah did live a life that generally pleased God (2 Kings 18).

Observation and Meaning

- 38v1-3: This personal crisis is every bit as challenging for Hezekiah as the later invasion (of 36-37). How does the godly king deal with it?
- 38v4-6: What is God's magnificent response? What are the various aspects of his response?
- How does 38v4-6 help us understand prayer?
- 38v7-8: What is the implicit contrast with Ahaz (7.11-14)? And how does this help us understand how Hezekiah differs from his father?
- What lessons does Hezekiah learn in his psalm of thanksgiving (v9-20) What can we learn from this?
- How does v22 indicate that Hezekiah's faith isn't as strong as it should be?

Big Idea

Hezekiah's lack of faith put Jerusalem in great jeopardy and his life at risk. Both were under God's judgment. But God was merciful to him because a greater king would come, one who not in faith lay down his life for others, so that we might receive his mercy and enter into God's purposes.

Connecting to the Bible's storyline

The king has come under God's judgment, but is shown mercy in order that he might continue to walk faithfully before God all his days. He points to the true King, who is judged not for his own sins but for others, and lives in perfect faith towards God.

Sermon Outline

1. The God who works despite our sin
 - a. God disciplines us for our good
 - b. God responds to our prayers
 - c. God saves because he's merciful, not because we are good
2. 4 ways to honour God in the light of this passage
 - a. Don't assume you will finish strong
 - b. Put your confidence in God's mercy, not your own righteousness
 - c. Pathetic prayers are better than no prayer
 - d. See every challenge in life as an opportunity to grow in faith for what lies ahead

Application

- How does v1-3 help us understand the consequences of sin (particularly faithlessness to God)? How does this help you to see your need for God's mercy?
- How does this passage encourage you to go to prayer for both mercy as well as other challenges that you face in your life?
- How does Hezekiah's promises to God after his deliverance help us understand how we should aim to live all the time before him. How is God calling you to live before Him in faithfulness?
- Hezekiah shows great trust in God in chapter 35 and desperation in chapter 38 but not in 39. How are you tempted to trust in God in crisis but not in the daily grind of life?
- How does faith in Jesus, the better and more perfect King, help you to be faithful in following God all your days?

Guide for Study Leaders

Use the C.O.M.A. (Context, Observation, Meaning, Application) method to work through the biblical text.

Context

Pay attention to the surrounding verses, paragraphs, chapters, events, etc. to see how this passage fits within the context of this particular book of the Bible.

Note how this passage fits within the larger storyline of the whole Bible, i.e. how God is saving a people through Jesus Christ to live under his rule in his place.

Observation & Meaning

Make careful observations of the biblical text. Notice details such as linking words (eg. "for", "if", "therefore"), repetition, dialogue, narrative, OT quotations, etc.

To understand the meaning of the biblical text, we need to discern the author's purpose or intent: Why is the biblical author writing this?

Helpful questions to ask include:

Who is writing and to whom?

What is the situation of the author and of the readers?

Are we made aware of any problems that need to be addressed?

Are there any repeated themes, or a single idea that holds everything together?

Application

Apply God's word to the heart. Move beyond merely addressing circumstances and behaviour by asking good "heart" questions. For example: Why do we do what we do? What do we really desire?

Always connect the gospel to application. For example, what difference does knowing Christ make to our obedience to God?

Ask what the passage teaches us about God, ourselves, salvation in Christ, the church, the world, etc.