

The Hezekiah Syndrome

Hezekiah was one of the greatest kings in Judah's history, a man who put his trust in the Lord and who helped spark a national reformation movement. But later in life, he made one of the most selfish, shortsighted statements recorded anywhere in the Bible.

We cannot afford to make the same tragic mistake he made.

According to Isaiah 39, after Hezekiah was miraculously healed and his life extended 15 years, envoys from Babylon came to visit him in honor of his recovery. Their motivation, although not recorded explicitly in the chapter, was obvious. They had a common enemy in the nation of Assyria, and they were obviously looking to gain Hezekiah as an ally.

Hezekiah greeted them warmly and "showed them his treasure house—the silver, the gold, the spices, and the precious oil—and all his armory, and everything that was found in his treasuries. There was nothing in his palace and in all his realm that Hezekiah did not show them" (v. 2, HCSB).

After they left, the prophet Isaiah came to the king and asked him about these visitors: "Where did these men come from and what did they say to you?" Hezekiah answered, "They came to me from a distant country, from Babylon" (v. 3).

Isaiah then asked, "What have they seen in your palace?" Hezekiah replied, "They have seen everything in my palace. There isn't anything in my treasuries that I didn't show them" (v. 4).

Isaiah then delivered a devastating prophetic word to Hezekiah: "'The time will certainly come when everything in your palace and all that your fathers have stored up until this day will be carried off to Babylon; nothing will be left,' says the Lord. 'Some of your descendants who come from

you will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon'" (vv. 6-7).

What terrible news! Everything the past generations had worked for would be carried off to Babylon, and even the king's own offspring—his sons or grandsons or great grandsons—would go into exile. Some of them would even be castrated.

And how did Hezekiah respond to this dreadful word? Did he turn to the Lord and weep, as he did when he was told by the prophet that he was about to die? (See Isaiah 38:1-3.) Did he go to God in desperation, as he did when the Assyrians were threatening to destroy the nation? (See Isaiah 37:1-4.)

No. He responded with these shocking words: "'The word of the Lord that you have spoken is good,' for he thought: There will be peace and security during my lifetime" (Is. 39:8).

In other words, "Praise the Lord! As long as I'm going to be all right, it doesn't matter what happens to my kids and grandkids. That's a good word, Isaiah. There will be *shalom* during my lifetime."

What a godless, self-centered mindset.

Is it any wonder, then, that Manasseh, the son born to Hezekiah after he was healed, ended up being the most wicked king in Judah's history? Could it be that Hezekiah failed to be a godly father? Could it be that he failed to have a vision for the next generation?

According to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "The ultimate test of a moral society is the kind of world that it leaves to its children."

This forces us to ask ourselves: What kind of world are we leaving to our children and grandchildren?

Many Christian leaders today are afraid to (or, at the least, reluctant to) address the most pressing social issues, not

wanting to get caught up in controversy, not wanting to offend their congregants, not wanting to stir up opposition, not wanting to risk their tax-exempt status, not wanting to rock the boat.

After all, they think, Our congregation is healthy, and the ministry is bearing fruit. Why should I jeopardize this by taking a stand for righteousness? And why should I risk pushing the seekers away?

The answer is simple: It is our holy calling to stand for what is right, joining grace together with truth and compassion together with justice. It is our responsibility before God as the moral conscience of society, the salt of the earth and the light of the world, the Lord's prophetic voice to a dark and dying world.

It is also our sacred responsibility to the next generation.

Otherwise, if we fall short of our calling here, our children and grandchildren will have every right to say to us one day, "Mom! Dad! (Or, Grandma! Grandpa!) What were you doing when America changed so radically, when our freedoms were taken away, when marriage became all but meaningless, when tens of millions of babies were killed in the womb? How did you let this happen on your watch?"

What will we say to them on that day? And what will we say to the Lord when we stand to give account? Where is our generational vision?

Some Christians today even argue that we should support same-sex "marriage" in order to show gays and lesbians that we really do love them, with the hope that they will become more open to the gospel—as if we could say, "Hey, we're really not hateful bigots, and we support your right to 'marry' the one you love. So come, find out more about our wonderful Jesus—but once you get saved, you will need to repent of your homosexual practice and leave your partner."

This kind of thinking (for some, it is a “strategy”) is as illogical as it unbiblical.

Worse still, this kind of thinking is as shortsighted as Hezekiah’s, sacrificing the social foundations of the coming generations in order to appear likable to those we want to win.

To be sure, we need to demonstrate the compassion of Jesus to every person we meet, and where we as believers have been insensitive to the struggles faced by many who identify as LGBT, we need to repent before God and man and amend our ways. And where we have been passionate about political issues and passive about the Great Commission, we need to make a radical course correction.

But it is sheer lunacy to think that we can radically redefine marriage (and with that, open up the door to a massive flood of gender confusion as well) without negatively impacting the next generations, not to mention contributing directly to the loss of their religious freedoms. (For those who mock these words, take a moment to read the article entitled “It’s an Avalanche, Not a Slippery Slope.”)

And so I say to every Christian leader and parent: Please consider your ways, and save yourself from the Hezekiah syndrome. The discomfort of swimming against the tide today will be worth it all tomorrow.

And in the coming years, if the Lord tarries, your kids and grandkids will bless you, thank you and honor you. The legacy of the righteous is blessed.

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