

## Good Father, Evil Son

by Bayless Conley

Copyright © Answers with Bayless Conley

I hope you're ready for the Word because I'm ready to share with you what God's put on my heart today. If it's all right, let's just take a moment, settle our hearts down, and just assume an inward posture of attention and readiness. The Bible talks about seeking God with all of your heart. Well, the heart speaks about your insides. Peter spoke of the hidden man of the heart, which is your spirit. It's the real you on the inside. That's where God talks to you. When God speaks to us, He speaks to our hearts, and it can change everything.

Heavenly Father, we, as Your people, invite You to do a work within us corporately and within us individually. We know that You see us. You know the circumstances that we're facing. You know what's up the road ahead. You know our past. We ask You, Lord, to speak to us by the Holy Spirit through Your Word today. Right now, we just marshal all of our resources, spirit, soul, and body, and we lean out and we say, "Teach us." Grant us the spirit of wisdom and illumination and the knowledge of the truth today. Dear Father, it's our intent to not just merely be hearers or those who applaud Your Word, but we're going to be doers. Lord Jesus, we pray You'd be glorified in it all. Amen. Amen.

All right. We're in a series right now called Prophets, Kings, and Queens. We're looking at some of the prophets, kings, and queens in Scripture and just seeing what lessons we can draw from their lives. Last weekend, we talked about King Jehoshaphat. He was a man who had flaws, but he loved God. He was one of the kings in the Southern kingdom of Judah. Israel had become divided under Rehoboam, who was Solomon's son. He carried on as his father did in his backslidden state at the end of his life, overtaxing the people and oppressing the people. So, ten of the tribes said to King Rehoboam, "We're done. You're not our king anymore. We're not part of your kingdom." They established a new capital in the North in Samaria.

Those ten tribes, with the capital in Samaria, were known as Israel. Two of the tribes remained with the capital at Jerusalem. They became known as the Nation of Judah. Israel in the North. Judah in the South. Over the next 200 years, until they were taken into Assyrian captivity, in the North, in the Northern kingdom, they had 19 kings. Not a one of them served God. Not one of them loved God. They pretty much, wholesale, gave themselves over to idolatry. In the Southern kingdom in Judah, which, by the way, lasted 130 years longer than the Northern kingdom did. Eventually, the Southern kingdom of Judah was conquered by Babylon and taken as captives into Babylon, where they were there for a little over 70 years.

One of the kings in the South, one of the good kings, they had eight good kings in their history. Eight men who loved God and did their best to turn the people and the nation to God. One of the good kings that we're going to look at today, his name was Hezekiah. Honestly, his devotion to God was almost unparalleled in Scripture. This guy loved God. Served God. He trusted God with all of his heart and with all of his soul, which is astonishing when you look at the situation of things when he inherited the kingdom. His father, Ahaz, was an idolater. His father, Ahaz, did the same as the Northern kingdoms had done. He set up pagan shrines. He nailed the doors to

## Good Father, Evil Son

God's house shut. He filled it with rubbish and nailed it shut. He even burned one of Hezekiah's brothers when he was a child to a demon god. He sacrificed his own son and burned him alive.

At this time, the Assyrians had almost completely overrun and taken over the North. And now, in the South, because of the sins of Hezekiah's father and previous generations, they're vassals to the Assyrians as well. It's not as bad as it is in the North, but they are subject to the Assyrians. This is when Hezekiah walks in and becomes king. He's only 25 years old. He's inherited a mess. Things were dark. Things were bad. There was evil on the right hand and on the left. They were in trouble. We pick the story up in 2 Chronicles 29:1-3 NKJV.

<sup>1</sup> Hezekiah became king when he was twenty-five years old, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abijah the daughter of Zechariah.

<sup>2</sup> And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done. <sup>3</sup> In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them.

He didn't waste any time. He got busy. The first thing he did was to open up God's house. Then, he reinstated worship among God's people. He reignited a reverence for the Scriptures. He reinstated the priesthood and the offerings. People began to sing again. He had them begin to sing the Psalms of David once again. The man loved the Word of God. With Hezekiah at the helm, it wasn't long before all of Judah bowed in reverence, submission, and humility before God. Judah was in revival. Listen to what the Lord says about it. Second Chronicles 29:36 NKJV puts it this way,

<sup>36</sup> Then Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced that God had prepared the people, since the events took place so suddenly.

Everyone say "suddenly." God is a God of "suddenlys." He plays the long game, but He does some things suddenly. Here, the whole kingdom is in darkness. Things are bad. A wicked regime is what he inherited. Suddenly, God brings revival to the people. I know we're living in a dark time. I know a lot of things that our present government and the things that present culture stands for are diametrically opposed to the ways of God. Some of the things in our own state turn your stomach when you think about them, and some of the things that some of our politicians are standing for. My friend, I'm telling you, God can change things suddenly.

We can be in the midst of revival suddenly if we'll get men and women who will stand up like Hezekiah for the truth. Some of your relatives that have hated God, that have not wanted anything to do with church or Christianity, you're going to find them suddenly being visited by God, suddenly being swept into the kingdom of God. I think we should prepare for a season of suddenlys. It says that God prepared the people. I believe that God is preparing the people, and we're going to see some amazing things, some of them that will happen quite quickly. At this time, the revival is just local. It's just in Judah. Hezekiah was only 25. He didn't know certain things couldn't be done. It was a good thing in his case. He's like most 25-year-olds. They just don't know their limits.

Hezekiah calls all the religious leaders in and says, "Boys, I've been praying. God spoke to me." They said, "Really? What'd He say?" He said, "We're going to reinstitute the Passover. We haven't had a Passover celebration in the longest time, and I'm going to invite all of the Northern tribes." When all the religious leaders got up off the floor after having fainted, they said, "Are you sure God told you that?" Because think of it: 200 years at this point, they've been separated, the North and the South. The North has given themselves wholly over to idolatry. There has been

## Good Father, Evil Son

bloodshed between Judah and Israel for 200 years. Two hundred years of distrust and deep-rooted fear among them. At this time, the Assyrians, who were the aggressors, had already overtaken much of the North and Samaria. It was about to fall completely. They'd already carted off many of the citizens into captivity. Much of those living in the North were living under what we would call occupied territory by the Assyrians. It could never work.

It was an impossible dream. It was just too big. It was too fantastic. They would've been saying something like, "Your Highness, that's a great idea, but the facts." "I don't care about the facts. God told me." "You don't understand this couldn't happen because of X, Y, Z." Hezekiah says, "I don't care about X, Y, and Z. God told me, and it's going to happen." They said, "All right, how's it going to happen?" Hezekiah said, "God gave me a plan." "What is it, Your Highness?" "I'm going to write a letter and invite them." "And?" "That's it." "You're going to write a letter, and you're going to invite them, and that's your plan?" "Yes, that's my plan."

Crazy if you think about it. The content of the letter that he sent out by runners all throughout the North, where all the tribes were, the content basically said, "Repent." It wasn't a sweet letter at all. It said, "Repent and return to the Lord. Come to Jerusalem and keep the Passover," but he added something at the end of the letter. Second Chronicles 30:9 NKJV, this is what he said,

<sup>9</sup> For if you return to the Lord, your brethren and your children will be treated with compassion by those who lead them captive, so that they may come back to this land; for the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn His face from you if you return to Him."

Hezekiah, you can't say stuff like that! Their captors are going to release them? How can you say something like that? You're telling these people that if they repent, come back to God, and come for the Passover, that God is going to move on the Assyrians, and they're going to release their captives so they can come back to their homeland? Hezekiah, are you crazy?

I think one of the reasons we don't see the kind of results we'd like to see in the church today is because preachers and Christians are afraid to make bold statements like this. I want to tell you. I don't care how badly you are bound with unseen fetters and chains. I don't care about the degree or the length of time that you have been addicted. Jesus Christ can set you free now. He can bring peace to your mind. He can restore your family. He can heal your body. He can turn your life around, and He doesn't have to do it on the graduated installment plan. He can do it now. He is powerful. He is merciful. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. That is the Lord that we serve. Now, Hezekiah, it goes on here. In verses 10-12 NKJV, it says,

<sup>10</sup> So the runners passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, as far as Zebulun; but they laughed at them and mocked them.

There will always be people who will laugh and mock, but the next word says nevertheless. Everyone say "nevertheless."

<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless some from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. <sup>12</sup> Also the hand of God was on Judah to give them singleness of heart to obey the command of the king and the leaders, at the word of the Lord.

Only now is Hezekiah's letter called the Word of the Lord. Before this, they thought it was just some young king shooting off his mouth and reaching for the stars, but now they realize God was in it from the beginning. Some people will never understand that God was in certain things

## Good Father, Evil Son

until they stand on the other side and say, “Oh my gosh! That was God moving on her. That was God moving on him. It was God.” Back in the early, early days of the church, I remember we’re running 62–63 people on a really good Sunday morning, and we counted pregnant ladies twice, and if somebody brought in a service animal, of course, we counted their service animal too. God gave me an idea. We’re going to do door hangers. He gave me a plan. I told everybody. Some people laughed and said, “That’s stupid. Door hangers?” We made these door hangers, and I put on there and said, “Are you oppressed?” Then gave a promise from the Bible about God setting you free from oppression.

“Do you need peace? Are you worried? Here’s a promise of God’s peace,” just a bold promise. “Are you sick? Here’s a bold promise on healing. You don’t know what to do? Here’s a bold promise that God will give you wisdom.” Just all down the line and at the bottom, there was a little thing that you could cut off, and you could send it in for a free cassette tape that said “Freedom from Fear.”

A bunch of us went out, and we hung door hangers in the neighborhood. We got 50 families that joined the church from those door hangers that we put out that day, 50 families. That might not seem like a lot to you, but when the church is running 62 or 63, and suddenly 50 new families rock up? My friend, God can breathe on a door hanger. He can breathe on a letter from a 25-year-old king. When God breathes on something, it takes on a new life.

Here’s Hezekiah. He’s pacing back, and forth in the palace, being followed by all the religious leaders, and they said, “Well, your Highness, it was crazy in the first place. You never should have got your hopes up. It was just a wild dream, anyway. You never should have done it.” Some of the city council members saying, “Yes, and it was against city ordinances anyway. Could never have that many people. Even when they came, you never had the right to send out a letter like that in the first place.”

He’s walking back, and forth and they’re all following him, and yap, yap, yap, yap, yap. Suddenly, his servant comes up and says, “Your Highness, I think there’s something that you’ll want to see.” He motions to the balcony. Hezekiah walks up and pulls the curtain back at the balcony that overlooks the city square. There is a sea of humanity out in the square, hugging and praising and crying. One hundred thousand Jews have come to town. Now, they’re in the midst of a full-blown move of God. Hundreds of thousands of people are being impacted. A 25-year-old king. In the worst of circumstances, in the worst of conditions, in utter darkness culturally and spiritually, God does an amazing work, and He carries on. It says in 2 Chronicles 31:20-21 NKJV,

<sup>20</sup> Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and he did what was good and right and true before the Lord his God. <sup>21</sup> And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in the law and in the commandment, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart. So he prospered.

The very next thing we read, 2 Chronicles 32:1 NKJV, says, “After these deeds of faithfulness, God blessed Hezekiah even more, and he lived happily ever after.” That’s not what it says.

<sup>1</sup> After these deeds of faithfulness, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and entered Judah; he encamped against the fortified cities, thinking to win them over to himself.

Which if we read the account in Kings, he went ahead and did. He actually took all of Judah’s fortified cities, and then he set his sights on Jerusalem. My friend, after victory, expect more

## Good Father, Evil Son

battles. Your forward progress in the things of God will not come without opposition from the enemy. Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. The glory of God is there. God is speaking. The next thing that happens is He goes down to the valley, and He meets a demon-possessed boy. He goes straight from the presence of God to facing the devil. Jesus said, "When the sower sows the Word, Satan comes immediately to steal that Word, and he brings affliction and persecution and worry and the lust of other things." They all enter in. The devil uses them to choke out God's Word. He said, "Satan comes immediately."

I remember, as a brand-new Christian, I'd agreed with some friends to go to a little meeting to hear an evangelist who was in town. He'd rented a little hall out. They came by to pick me up, and I couldn't figure out what happened. I felt like I'd been run over by an 18-wheeler. I just told them. They knocked and came into the room. I said, "Guys, I can't go." I'm not sick, but I just feel like I've been run over by a truck or something. You guys go on." I'll never forget this one gal. She grabbed my arm, dragged me out of the bed onto the floor, and said, "Bayless, you're coming." I said, "I don't feel like it, but all right." I'll never forget that night. The evangelist was preaching on the parable of the sower, and it forever changed me. It may be, to this day, the most significant message I have ever heard preached by any preacher in my life. It totally changed the trajectory of my life.

I learned the importance of the Word of God and of sowing it in your life and how it worked and how much the devil fights against it. You know what? There was opposition. If you want to go forward in God, you are going to face opposition. Our previous campus, some of you go back with us that far. We built a beautiful church building and had several acres on Sausalito Street. One of the main building companies that we'd hired is working, and the guy who owned the company came to us. He's not a believer. He said, "Can you guys please explain to me what's going on?" He said, "I've been in the building business a long time, but I have never faced opposition like this." The fire department is opposing us. City officials are opposing us, and there's no logical reason for the opposition they're bringing. I've got perfectly good equipment. It keeps breaking down." This is what the unsaved guy said. He said, "There's almost like some unseen force that doesn't want this church to be built."

I said, "Actually, yes, there is." We got to praying, and that unseen force abated, and we got the job finished. We sit in this beautiful auditorium on this beautiful campus; whether you're out on the plaza or wherever you might be right now, it didn't come without opposition. We first obtained property, and we worked on plans for the longest time. Then, the city's redevelopment agency seized our property from us. They locked us out of our own property and said, "We're taking it through eminent domain, and we're going to sell it to a big box retailer." A total abuse of that law. That's not what it's for. It wasn't for the public good, which is what eminent domain is about. If you have to build a reservoir or a highway needs to come through, that's one thing. But to turn it over to a big box retailer, that's another thing altogether. We got into a legal battle, some of you were with us, and it went on for years and years and years and years. The redevelopment agency actually hired a PR firm to slander the church, which they did a pretty good job of.

The local paper just did us dirty for years. They did everything they could to turn public opinion against us. We prayed, and one of the things we did was hire this Jewish guy. His job was he would work with organizations, and he would organize town hall meetings so that you could go and get your side of the message out to the local township and so that they could hear something other than what the opposition was spewing. He organized these meetings, and we did it. He came to me. He said, "Bayless, I've done this for a long time and in some really hard situations, and most of the time, I feel like I'm swimming upstream." He said, "But with you guys,

## Good Father, Evil Son

I feel like I'm having to swim up a waterfall." This is what he said, not a Christian, just this beautiful Jewish man. He said, "The devil does not want this church to be built, but we're going to get it built." Again, after these deeds of faithfulness, the devil rocks up. The second Sennacherib comes he sets his sights on Jerusalem to destroy it and enslave the people. My friend, the devil does not want you to succeed. We read what happens in 2 Chronicles 32:20-23 NKJV.

<sup>20</sup> Now because of this King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah, the son of Amoz, prayed and cried out to heaven. <sup>21</sup> Then the Lord sent an angel who cut down every mighty man of valor, leader, and captain in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned shamefaced to his own land. And when he had gone into the temple of his god, some of his own offspring struck him down with the sword there. <sup>22</sup> Thus the Lord saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all others, and guided them on every side. <sup>23</sup> And many brought gifts to the Lord at Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah, so that he was exalted in the sight of all nations thereafter.

How many think that's wonderful? Yes, it is wonderful. The next thing we read, very next thing, verse 24.

<sup>24</sup> 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.

In those days, what days? The days of victory and celebration and deliverance, the days of forward momentum, the day when God had shown a strong hand, and things had happened in those days. Now, suddenly, Hezekiah is sick and dying. My friend, sometimes when it rains, it pours. We have a very obstinate adversary. He doesn't give up easily. You just need to be more stubborn than he is. The sign that Hezekiah was given, in fact, the story is intriguing from every angle. Isaiah comes in and says, "Hezekiah, you're not going to make it. You're going to die."

Isaiah leaves. Hezekiah turns his face to the wall, begins to weep, and to pray and pours his heart out to God. Before Isaiah gets across the courtyard, God stops him and says, "Go back and talk to Hezekiah again." He comes back and says, "God says, 'He's seen your tears. He's heard your prayer. He's granted you 15 more years, and He's going to give you a sign, and you get to choose. God will either cause the shadow in the sundial to go forward 10 degrees, or if you want, He'll make it go backward 10 degrees.'" Hezekiah says, "I'd like to see it go backward." The one who created the heavens, however He did it, made the shadow go backward on the sundial by 10 degrees. It's really an amazing thing. But then we read the next verse. Verses 25-26,

<sup>25</sup> 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.

<sup>26</sup> Then Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the Lord did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah.

He got lifted up in pride, and thank God he humbled himself, and he averted destruction. Now it says, "He did not repay according to the favor." I like the King James. It says, "He rendered not again according to the benefit done to him." The Bible says in Psalm 103:2-3 NKJV,

## Good Father, Evil Son

<sup>2</sup> Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: <sup>3</sup> who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases.

The benefit that Hezekiah had received was the benefit of healing. God's healing hand touched him, but he didn't render again. He didn't respond correctly to the benefit that God brought into his life. In verse 31 (2 Chronicles 32:31 NKJV) of that same chapter, it elaborates on the specific nature of what happened. It says,

<sup>31</sup> However, regarding the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, whom they sent to him to inquire about the wonder that was done in the land, God withdrew from him, in order to test him, that He might know all that was in his heart.

You can read Isaiah's account in Isaiah 39. It says, "When the King of Babylon heard that Hezekiah had been sick and had recovered, he'd been healed, he sent presents and a letter to him." The ambassadors come, and we put it together with this. They knew that something supernatural had occurred. The Babylonians were the foremost astronomers in the world. They watched the heavens meticulously, and they knew that something very supernatural had taken place in the cosmos. An unseen hand had done the unthinkable. Apparently, it wasn't a localized miracle. In far-off Babylon, the shadows had gone backward as well. Then they got word. It's all connected to Hezekiah, the King of Judah. This supernatural thing that happened in the heavens had to do with the healing of the King of Judah.

The King of Babylon sends ambassadors. "I want to know what this unseen hand that can move the very heavens and heal a person is all about." If you read the story, the ambassadors came, and Hezekiah never mentions God even once. All he does is show them his stuff. He says, "Come look at my treasures. Come look at all my armaments. Look at all these spices. Look at all these buildings. Look at the architecture." All he does is talk about how great he is. He's no second-rate king. He just shows off all of his stuff and doesn't mention God even once.

You know what? He could have been instrumental in the conversion of this Babylonian king to the one true God. He sent the ambassadors because he was hungry for the supernatural. He was hungry to know what was behind this. Hezekiah could have said, "Yes, the God we serve is the one that created the heavens and the stars that you study and the sun and the moon that you watch so closely. He made them with His fingers, and He can turn them any way He wants. That same hand that turns the cosmos reaches down, and He heals and blesses His people. He forgives us. He's interested in our lives. You can know Him," but Hezekiah never did that.

We don't render for the benefits of healing and forgiveness and blessing when we don't tell people about what God has done. We need to open our mouths, and we need to tell people about the goodness of God, and the nearness of God, and the power of God, and the mercy of God, and how He's helped us, and how He's answered our prayers, and how He loves people, and how God sent His Son. We need to tell people.

I didn't know him well, but we were acquainted. There was a man named Demos Shakarian. Demos is the founder of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship. He's been in heaven for quite a few years now. He and I shared meals together on a number of occasions, but I wouldn't call him a close friend, an acquaintance. One of the times when we were together having a meal, he told me this story. Now, he was a legendary dairyman. He had dairy farms before he started the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship. He was known for having the best milk-producing cows in the state. There was just something. He would always buy the best cows and come out on top. When he bought bulls to breed, he always hit the jackpot. He was a legend

## Good Father, Evil Son

when it came to that, and a lot of the other dairy conglomerates couldn't figure out how this guy was so successful. "How does he always end up with the best bulls and the best cows? How do they get a production like that?"

One of the CEOs from one of the other dairy conglomerates called and talked to Demos and said, "Look, we've all been scratching our heads. Nobody can get it right as much as you do. How can you do that?" Demos says, "Well, I've got someone on my team that actually counsels me and tells me which bulls to buy to breed and tells me which cows to buy and where to get them from. I attribute it all to this person on our team. Absolutely brilliant." He said, "I'd love to introduce you to him." The guy said, "Really?" He said, "Yes." The other guy is no doubt thinking, "All right, I'm going to meet this guy. I'm going to offer him more money, and we're going to take him away."

They arrange a lunch appointment. Demos is sitting there in the booth. The guy comes in, and he greets him. He sits down, and the guy says, "Well, where's your man?" He says, "Oh, He's here." He said, "Is He in the bathroom?" He says, "No, He's not in the bathroom. He's at the table." The guy said, "What?" He says, "Yes, let me introduce you to the Holy Spirit." He said, "The Holy Spirit always guides me and always tells me what to do." Then he shared the salvation story with him and talked about the baptism of the Holy Spirit and just rocked the guy's world. That's what we should be doing, telling people and giving glory to God. Have you rendered for all the benefits that have been done in your life? Sometimes, we have such a short memory.

I went to a little Pentecostal church when I got saved, and they would have testimony services in most of the evening services. People would stand up and share about something God had done for them. I'll never forget this old guy stood up and shared. Some of you may recall me telling the story before. When he was a kid, I think he was a young teenager, he was messing around on a riverbank, really swift moving water, and he slipped and fell in. He didn't know how to swim. Got caught in the current and started tumbling underwater over and over, and he realizes he's drowning. He can't swim, and he's under the water, tumbling, tumbling in that swift current, and he says, "I prayed with all of my heart."

I said, "God, if You rescue me, my life is Yours. God, if You just save me, I will live for You." Well, someone downstream had seen him fall in. There was a bridge that went over, and this guy actually climbed down on the trestles, the supports of the bridge, and got down there and grabbed him. He got him by his overalls, his suspenders when he was under the water and pulled him up. He's sharing the testimony. He's an old man now, and then tears started to stream down his eyes. He said, "As soon as I was dry, I forgot my promise to God." He said, "It took me more than 30 years to keep that promise that I'd made to God."

Friend, you don't want to have spiritual amnesia when it comes to the things God has done for you. You need to keep your promises to Him, and you need to tell others about Him. You need to give glory to God, which Hezekiah didn't do. He actually failed in that test, and it's interesting. It says, "That the Lord withdrew from him to test him." Now, obviously, God's everywhere, but as far as having any sense of the presence of God, any sense of the leading of God, any sense of the anointing of God, God lifted that. The true state of Hezekiah's heart came out. God will give you a measure of prosperity, a measure of success, and then He'll step back and watch just to see what you'll do. Will you still talk about Him? Will you still share about His compassion and about His goodness? Or will you forget?



## Good Father, Evil Son

I think God does that all the time. He blesses us. He does things, and then— I mean, He's there. He doesn't abandon us. As far as any sense, okay—It's easier to serve God when His presence is on you. It's easier to serve God when you sense that forward momentum of the Holy Spirit. When that's gone, and it's just you, that's when we learn something about the true state of our hearts. Oh, we don't want to have short memories. Something else in the story. Hezekiah was told by Isaiah that he was going to get 15 more years of life. Hezekiah could have done the math, and he knows the day he's going to die. How would you live if you actually knew how much longer you had? If you actually knew the amount of time you had left, you knew when you were going to exit planet Earth; how would you live? Hezekiah used his time well. Proverbs 25:1 NKJV says,

<sup>1</sup> These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied.

Hezekiah is the one who gathered all the proverbs of Solomon together and organized the proverbs that are in your Bible today. He gathered and organized many of the Psalms of David and put them together. In fact, I think from somewhere between Psalm 120 to maybe 134, they attribute 10 of those anonymous Psalms to Hezekiah himself. He actually was used by God to write part of the Scriptures. We have a lot to be thankful for. It's because of Hezekiah that the Old Testament was preserved, organized, and put together.

In fact, many of the Old Testament Hebrew Scriptures, if you look at them, the copies of them, the ancient ones, they have the initials HZK written next to them. The royal signature of Hezekiah. We wouldn't have the Old Testament today. Now, Ezra actually finished the work of putting the Old Testament together, but we wouldn't have it if not for Hezekiah, this lover of the Word of God. I would say those 15 years were spent well. He changed the whole world through what he did, but he also had a son three years after he was healed. His son's name was Manasseh. I wonder if Hezekiah knew how that boy would turn out if he would have ever asked God for more time. We pick it up in 2 Chronicles 33:1-2 NKJV,

<sup>1</sup> Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> But 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.

Verse 9,

<sup>9</sup> So Manasseh seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel.

Now, God had removed those pagan nations from the promised land. There was all the divine timing involved, but their wickedness had grown so great that God could no longer allow them to exist as they did. It was at that point that God removed them, not just to give the land to Israel but because of the wickedness of the people there. Here, Manasseh seduced the people of God to be even more wicked than the previous inhabitants of the land. Here in Chronicles and in 2 Kings, you can read just a few of the things that he was up to, that he rebuilt immediately. He rebuilt all the pagan shrines that his father, Hezekiah, had broken down. All of the reformation and the revival that had taken place under Hezekiah came to a grinding halt when this 12-year-old became king.

The Scripture tells us that he worshiped the stars. He erected idols everywhere and even set up pagan idols in the house of God. He sacrificed some of his own children to demon gods and

## Good Father, Evil Son

burned them alive. He practiced sorcery and witchcraft. It is said that he filled Jerusalem from one end to the other with innocent blood. The man set up an inquisition and committed mass murder against all the followers of the Lord. He filled that great city with innocent blood. We read 2 Chronicles 33:10-11 NKJV,

<sup>10</sup> And the Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they would not listen.

<sup>11</sup> Therefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the army of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze fetters, and carried him off to Babylon.

When it says it took him with hooks, that literally means a nose hook. They put a ring through Manasseh's nose and led him in chains with a ring in his nose attached to a chain. They took him away captive. It says in verses 12-13,

<sup>12</sup> Now when he was in affliction, he implored the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, <sup>13</sup> and prayed to Him; and He received his entreaty, heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God.

Pretty amazing. From this point, when he comes back and he's the ruler of Jerusalem again, for the rest of his life, he works at undoing all the evil that he had previously done. He broke down all the pagan shrines, and he urged all of Judah to worship the Lord only. Now, I bring up Manasseh specifically for the benefit of parents who are here who have wayward children. You think, "You know, I wasn't imperfect, but I did my best." You know Hezekiah was not perfect. We didn't look at all of his flaws. There are some other ones besides the fact that he had issues with pride that the Scriptures talk about. He compromised in some areas. We just didn't have time to cover it.

I know there's a lot of parents thinking, "Man, I did the best I could. Yes. We made mistakes. When I look at my kids now, we tried to raise them in the way of the Lord, but it's like the devil has a ring in their nose and is leading them around. Their behavior and their values and the way they talk and their lifestyle reflects the perverse culture around us rather than the way of God that they were brought up in."

Well, Manasseh lived like the devil, but when he hit rock bottom, and sometimes that's what it takes, in that dark prison cell, it came flooding back to him. Watching his father on his knees next to his bed with tears streaming down his face and Hezekiah praying for his family. He remembers the love that his father, Hezekiah, had for the Word of God and that he was a worshipper, and that God was first in everything. From the time he was a little boy, he'd heard the Word of God. He'd heard the Word of God. He knew his daddy was imperfect, but he knew his daddy loved God.

All that came like a tidal wave over him in the darkness of that prison cell, and he repented from the bottom of his heart. He says, "Oh, my God. Forgive me." In fact, I should've brought it. There's a copy of Manasseh's prayer and some other ancient texts. It would have been worth reading it to you. Man, this guy confessed his sin, and he held nothing back. God heard his prayer and restored him. You know what? God loves your children more than you do. He can reach them. There is hope for your kids.

I had a friend who used to come preach here at Cottonwood years and years ago. English preacher who pastored in Britain for a long time and then in Duluth, Minnesota, for about 25

## Good Father, Evil Son

years. We loved him. Actually, after he went to heaven, we supported his wife from the church until she died and went to heaven some ten years later. He told me this story once. He said, "When my son was a teenager, he came and said, 'Dad, your church is a dump. I hate it. I want nothing to do with church. I want nothing to do with you.'" My friend, he said, "I was shattered. My son walked out."

He said, "A friend came by to visit me that day, and he said, 'Man, you look down. What's going on?' I told him. I said, 'My son says our church is a dump. He wants nothing to do with Christianity, nothing to do with me.'" His friend hit his knees in the living room. The Spirit of God came on him, and he began to sob and pray and intercede for that boy. For about 15 minutes, he wept and prayed that God would turn that boy's heart. He's prayed his heart out. Within three weeks, his son had totally dedicated his life to Jesus and was attending his father's church. God can reach your kids. You may not have done a perfect job. You may have done a terrible job, but God still loves your kids.

We want to pray for them right now. If you've got other loved ones in your family who are lost, we're going to pray that God will open their eyes. Did you know you can't talk somebody into getting saved? It comes by revelation. If God doesn't open a person's eyes, they will remain lost. We're going to pray that God will open their eyes, and then they'll have a choice to make. I believe God will hear us. Then, I've got a couple of other things I want to share. Can we pray? Pray for our kids? Out on the plaza or wherever you're with us, won't you just pray with us?

Heavenly Father, we humble ourselves before You. We ask You to forgive us for our shortcomings. Forgive us if we haven't rendered again for all of the benefits You brought into our lives. We ask You to help us, Lord. By the precious blood of Jesus, we ask You to wash our slate clean. We confess those sins, and we receive forgiveness. Lord, we bring our children before You, our sons, our daughters, and the loved ones in our families. We pray that they would be saved and that they would not be lost. Father, we ask You to send laborers across their pathway. People who can speak their language and plant the seeds of the gospel in their heart.

Lord, those who have been brainwashed by this perverse culture we're living in, perhaps by even a godless university professor who has somehow poisoned their minds, God, we ask You to rescue our children. We ask You to open the eyes of their understanding. May the eyes of their heart be flooded with light, our sons, our daughters, our loved ones, and may they come into the kingdom of God.

Lord, we know sometimes You do a sudden thing. We'd be happy with that, but we leave the timing up to You. We do pray for the salvation of our families, of our loved ones, wherever our kids are right now, God, reach them. May Your presence come upon them. Bring them to a place where they can hear the truth of the gospel. Thank You for Your mighty presence coming upon them and changing things. We ask these things in Jesus's name. Father, we thank You that You hear us now. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Let me just share with you what we have learned. Just seven thoughts from what we've gone over. Number one: God can do sudden and dramatic things if we will dare to step out and obey Him. It may seem simple. It may seem ridiculous to others, but I'm telling you, God can do dramatic things, sudden things, if He can just find some people that will step out in obedience. Number two: we found out that the enemy will always oppose our forward progress in God, but we will prevail if we'll keep our eyes on God and if we will pray.

## Good Father, Evil Son

Number three: we need to speak up and tell others about the benefits and the blessings that God has given to us. Every one of us needs to do that. We need to keep humble and thankful hearts and not let prosperity go to our heads. Let's not have short memories, but let's render praise to God and tell others about what He's done.

Number four: that people have a free will. Manasseh could not have had a better example than Hezekiah, his father, but he still went off the rails. As parents, we do our best to set up guide rails. And the kids, as they grow up, they're going to go this way, but we want them to bump into those rails of truth, you know, and not go off the road. But despite our best efforts, some of us have seen our kids go off the rails.

It doesn't do any good to beat yourself up and say, "Oh, I should have done better. I should have done more. I should have prayed more. I didn't do this. I didn't do that." No friend, condemnation, that's the devil's language. In fact, it's the devil's quicksand. If you need to repent, then repent, but you need to remember people have a free will. Think about Adam and Eve in the garden. Perfect father, perfect instruction, and perfect comfort. Everything was perfect. They didn't even have a sin nature in their flesh like we do. Yet, look what they did. Look at the choice they made. Someone says, "Why would God give them a free will and allow that?" There's no such thing as love without a free will. It's the most dangerous, staggering, and amazing thing that God's ever done.

He's given you a free will. At the end of the day, He won't violate it. In the sense, He won't make you spend eternity with Him. If you don't want Him in this life, if you don't want God in your life for the 70 or 80 or 90 or 100 years that you live, you're not going to want to be with Him in eternity, and He won't make you. God's given us a free will. I'm so glad that He didn't get a bunch of automatons. "We love you, Lord. We love you, Lord." I worship God because I want to. That's my free will. I serve Him because I want to. I recognize it's my response to His ability. He's the one that's working in me, even giving me the want to. But at the end of the day, I still have a will.

Number five: God can rescue our loved ones no matter how bad things seem. Not a better example than Manasseh. God rescued him. Number six: if a person's conversion is real, there will be actions to back it up. John the Baptist said to Israel, "Bring forth the fruits worthy of repentance." If the repentance is real, if the conversion is real, at some point, there's going to be fruit to back it up, and given time, if there's no fruit, I think it's doubtful that there was ever a root. Real faith produces fruit. Real faith produces good works. Eventually, it has to be that way. There's always got to be actions to back it up if the thing's real. Then, finally, it doesn't matter how bad you've been or how low you've sunk; if you'll humble yourself before God and put faith in His Son Jesus, He will deliver you from the power of the devil and lift you into the sunshine of His grace.

You might say, "Pastor, you don't know how bad I've been. You don't know the things I've done." No, I don't, but I bet you haven't been as bad as Manasseh. The guy was a mass murderer, and he found grace. You cannot plumb the depths of God's mercy. There's something in my humanity that wants to recoil against things like that. I say, "No, God, no." God says, "Yes." The repentance is real. I can't change the damage that was done, but my friend, if you'll repent, I don't care what you've done or what you failed to do; He will wash you clean and give you a fresh start. Oh, the grace of God. Amazing. Amazing.

## Good Father, Evil Son

Why don't you bow your heads and close your eyes for a minute. I'm going to let you go in just a couple of minutes. I'm going to ask that everyone, unless you have to be in an assigned place or it's an emergency, just sit out of respect for those that need to hear this. If you've come today, or if you're listening to me, wherever you might be, and God's touched your heart, the utter passion of God's love can't be comprehended, but He won't force you against your will, but if you'll come to Him, He'll change you.

Jesus said, "The one that comes to me, I will not cast out." The Bible says, "That Jesus died as our substitute on the cross, paid for our sins, literally became our substitute, and the claims of God's eternal justice was satisfied once and for all. And on the third day, Jesus was raised from the dead." Scripture says, "If you'll believe in that and confess Him with your mouth as Lord—," and that word Lord means "boss," it means "you're willing to die to your rights of independent living and totally sell out." If you'll do that, God will bring you into a relationship. That's called salvation.

It's not about ceremony or ritual. It's about walking and talking with God. If you are here and you've never made Jesus the Lord of your life and again, it doesn't matter what your past has been or has not been. God loves you. Or if you're a prodigal son or a prodigal daughter here and you knew the truth. Maybe as a child or had an encounter with God at some camp as a teenager, but you walked away, and you're not living right, and you're not doing right; God's not mad at you, but prodigal, it's time to come home. It's time to start serving God again.

I'm just going to count to three. If you know you need to be in on this prayer, you're away from God and need to come back or coming to Him for the first time through His son, Jesus Christ, when I get to three, I'm going to ask you to just lift your hand. By that uplifted hand, you say, "I want in on that prayer." I'll acknowledge any hands that are up. You can put them up out on the plaza too. If you're watching us, you can put that hand up, and then I'm going to lead everyone in a simple prayer as we tie our hearts around the words of that prayer and speak those words to God.

One, it's your day, friend. It's not a coincidence we're together. God loves you. Two, are you ready? Do you want in on the prayer? Three, if that's you, put your hand up. All across the auditorium, awesome, quite a few hands it looks like every section. Just keep up for a minute while I look. Yes. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Go ahead and put those hands down. Everybody put a hand on your heart. Let's tie our hearts around these words and speak them sincerely to God. Say,

Dear God, I come to You. I humble my heart, and I repent of my sins. I know I can't change myself. That's why I'm coming to You. I believe You sent Your Son, Jesus Christ, to die in my place and to pay for all of my sins. I believe He died on the cross and paid my debt in full. I believe He was raised from the dead. Jesus, come into my life. Wash me clean. Change me. From this moment forward, I accept You as the Lord of my life. It's in Your name, I pray, amen. Amen.

Copyright © Answers with Bayless Conley