

A Bad King's Good Son

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that even in the most unlikely and sinful families, God's electing love can find and nurture a child with genuine goodness toward the Lord, emphasizing the sovereign grace that transforms hearts regardless of age or background.

Scripture: 1 Kings 14:13, Matthew 21:16, Psalm 51:5, Romans 3:10

Topics: "Divine Election", "Childlike Faith", "Grace and Salvation"

Description

In 'A Bad King's Good Son,' C.H. Spurgeon explores the remarkable truth that God's sovereign grace can bring forth genuine goodness even from the most sinful families. Using the example of Jeroboam's household, Spurgeon highlights the rarity and preciousness of true faith in children and encourages believers to trust in God's electing love. This sermon challenges common misconceptions about childlike piety and calls all to recognize that true goodness is always directed toward the Lord.

Transcript

"And all Israel shall mourn for him, and bury him: for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found some good thing toward the LORD God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam." 1 Kings 14:13.

WE must take the text, of course, with definite and full reference to its historical context. It seems that in the wicked house and family of Jeroboam, there was one godly child—and death, which very often mysteriously cuts down the green wheat, while it leaves the hemlock to ripen—seized upon this one and laid him low. Yet though he must die, there was this consolatory thought about his death, that it was the only one of the family that would ever have an honored burial, for all the others were to be slain by a death so sudden and violent that they were to be eaten by the fowls of the air or devoured by the dogs! This child was to be the only one who should have a funeral attended by mourners because he was the only child of the whole family in whose heart there was "found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel."

We shall make several remarks upon this text, perhaps too numerous to call them divisions as a discourse, but they will be illustrations drawn from the narrative before us. The first remark we shall make is this—

I. GOD'S ELECTING LOVE SOMETIMES HAS THE OBJECTS OF ITS CHOICE IN STRANGE PLACES.

Of all the houses of Israel, the palace of Tirzah was, surely, the last place one would think in which to look for a worshiper of the true God! The father of the family was a great sinner. He had set up gods of gold and said, "These are your gods, O Israel." Though much distinguished by God's Providential goodness and lifted up from the rank of an officer to that of a monarch, he forgot the God in whose sunshine he had flourished and must make the men of Israel bow down before an ox that eats grass! There could be in his palace no toleration for anything like true religion. There must have been a total neglect of all the hallowed engagements of the Sabbath and of everything else that looked like reverence to the unseen, but almighty God of Israel! And yet God's Sovereign, electing Love was bestowed upon a child of this wicked and rebellious Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin! God's everlasting mercy had designed that there should be a break in the line of sin and that there should be at least one who should be found among the choristers of Glory who had been nursed and nurtured among the degraded worship of calves!

What was the case in Jeroboam's family is often seen in many others. Remember how Paul seems to dwell upon it? "Chiefly they that are of Caesar's household." Of all the human animals that ever disgraced the race, the Caesars, as a whole, were the worst. I suppose that three out of four of them ought to have been kept in the worst ward of a lunatic asylum, and yet they were lifted up to preside over the vast Roman empire! Their lives were not only tainted with iniquity, but they reeked with every form of infamy. And yet, in households of such wretches as Tiberius and Nero, there were found true and eminent saints of God! Grace sometime finds its choicest jewels on the worst of refuse heaps. Sometimes it is impossible to account for it, as it is in this case. How should the child know anything about God? Was it, do you think, through his nurse? It certainly was not through his mother, but might it not have been through his nurse? Does not God sometimes send to little children in godless families good governesses? If some of you are in such positions, may you not, instead of running out of the house because it is too godless, hope that God has sent you there to be an instrument of good to some tender little heart, to pluck right out of the fire some brand, to take right away from between the lion's jaws some precious blood-bought lamb for whom the Savior died? It might have been so here. I cannot see how else this child could have known about the God of Israel, but this is certain—electing love had one of its objects in this strange household and it knew how to find that one out! I know there are some of you who belong to very strange families, where

the name of God is scarcely ever mentioned, except in profanity, where Christ is not loved and where His Cross is not revered, and yet you are saved. Perhaps it was curiosity that brought you here to hear that odd man who says such strange things against the world's popish church—or for some other reason you dropped in here and God blessed you. Or else you took up some stray book, or you happened to light on a torn-out leaf of the Bible and there, Sovereign Grace met with you. Oh, how should we praise electing love and lift up heart and soul and voice to say—

"It was not that I chose Thee,

For, Lord, it could not be!

This heart would still refuse Thee

But you have chosen me." Give the Glory, all the Glory, to the Sovereign, distinguishing, discriminating Grace of God!

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, there seems much comfort in this little incident to the Christian minister and to all Believers. You think, sometimes, that the Church is getting to a low ebb and that there is a lack of bold, brave men. But we do not know where God may yet find such men. Years ago we said, and

you believed, that God would find some of the best preachers of the Gospel among the very humblest classes of society—and did not that come true? Have there not been found some men with whose names the ears of England have been made to tingle, who were taken from the coalpit and other similar places to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Well, He can do the same again and what will be stranger, still—it may be that before many years or even months are over, He will find courtiers and men of noble blood and rank, after the world's way of talking, who will be down, or rather up to the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus! My Brothers and Sisters, we need never despair! The mighty arm of God can get into courts and houses of lords and reach the mightiest, the proudest, the most priest-ridden of men and lay them down at the foot of the Cross, saying, "I intended from before the foundation of the world to make you a vessel of mercy to bear My name to the Gentiles, and you shall do it—arise and go your way." Never despair for the Church! Out of the house of Jeroboam, God will bring His Ahijahs, and out of the worst and most unpromising of places, where God is most forgotten, and His Truth least known and despised, the Lord will bring testifiers to the Truth of God as it is in Jesus! Have hope, then! Have hope in God and look up and expect His blessing!

We shall now turn to a second remark, namely, that according to the text—

II. IT IS NOT ALWAYS, OR EVEN COMMONLY, THAT SOME GOOD THING TOWARDS THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL IS FOUND IN THE MINDS AND HEARTS OF CHILDREN.

It is mentioned, you observe, that in this child alone of all the race there was found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel. It has grown to be a common notion that there is a very great deal that is good in children—and this by unaided nature. Well, there are many traits in the character of childhood, as childhood, which are very beautiful and naturally and, according to the judgment of the natural man there is much about a child to be admired and imitated. But indulge no idea, parents, that your child is born with a perfectly balanced mind! Do not fall into the delusion that your infant will naturally choose the right and abhor the wrong, for before many days are past it is probable, if you are at all a watchful parent, that the delusion will be dispelled! You will discover, either in stubbornness, or in temper, or as soon as speech comes in, a constant tendency to untruthfulness and disobedience, or other forms of little childish sins that will prove the heart of the child to be far other than the sheet of white, unsoiled paper which some like to represent it to be! Alas, long before we can write upon it, the pen of evil tendency has traced lines on it which only the Grace of God will ever be able to erase! Cowper sings—

"True, you are young, but there's a stone, Within the youngest breast"

A child soon finds this out for himself, if God enlightens him. Though reared in a godly home, and brought up by godly parents and carefully shielded from everything like evil society or influence, I was very conscious of early feeling myself to be inclined to all sorts of evil, to have found it difficult to be and do that which was right, and easy to be and do that which was wrong. And so far as your memories will serve you, if you have any spiritual enlightenment, you will have found the same thing in relation to yourselves. How could it be otherwise? "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one!" "Behold," said David, and we cannot expect that we are better than he was, "Behold, I was born in sin and shaped in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." To find good, then, in a child should be to us a subject for

deep thankfulness to God! And we should always look upon it as being His work. We should not wonder to see it, for God often puts it there, but we should never look upon true goodness in a child as something from human nature—

"Grace is a plant, wherever it blooms,

Of a celestial birth"

and if there is a desire towards Jesus Christ. If there is a tenderness of heart concerning sin. If there is simple prayer for pardon and childlike trust in the Savior, it is as much a work of Grace in the youngest child as in the oldest convert—let us always remember that it is so!

"Well," says one, "one does not like to think of one's children as being fallen." My dear Friend! One does not like to think of one's self as being fallen! But it is not because the Doctrine is unpleasant that it is therefore untrue, for, unhappily, the most of true things about our spiritual state when unregenerate are unpleasant. That we are fallen by sin is a sad fact, but none the less a fact because sad! We know we are fallen short of the Glory of God. It is apparent and undeniable to ourselves and, therefore, we discover that "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." It is as much a matter confirmed by human experience when it is honest with itself, as it is a Divine Revelation!

And the same thing rest assured, is true of those who spring from our loins and inherit our nature! We cannot expect to be the parents of perfect children, being ourselves imperfect—but when we find in the heart of a child some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel, we see great cause for devout thankfulness to God. We observe now—

III. SOME GOOD THING TOWARDS THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL, THOUGH IT COMES NOT FROM NATURE, IS OFTEN SEEN IN VERY YOUNG PEOPLE. You will say I am preaching a "sermon to the young" without giving notice of it, but it is also a sermon to parents. There is a supposition abroad that there cannot be anything really good in people who are not adults. There is, at any rate, a difficulty among some people as to child-like piety. And with some, if a lad or a girl is under 12 years of age or thereabouts, it really is a matter of grave suspicion as to whether piety can be genuine. I have not a shadow of sympathy with such people! I cannot see any more reason for suspecting the sincerity of children than for suspecting the sincerity of those who are far better acquainted with the arts of deception than little children are likely to be! It is not difficult to acquire the pretence of religion so as to impose upon some church officers. It is not difficult to adopt the religious jargon which most people use, and to get it off by rote. But children do not find this to be so easy—besides, they have not been long enough in association with Christian people to have caught the thing up—and when a child says, tearfully and carefully, "I have repented of my sins, and I do trust in the Lord Jesus Christ"—I believe that that child is as much entitled to be believed as I am, or as you are! That you have a small quantity of gray sprinkled in your hair is, no doubt, an index of older years and, perhaps, maturer judgment, but I am not certain that it is an indication of a more sincere nature! The child has, I think, at any rate, as much reason to be believed as an older person. And, after all, why not? Do years help the Holy Spirit? Do we grow better as we grow older?

Is it easier to convert an old sinner than it is a child fresh from its mother's knee? Omnipotence is needed in the one case—and cannot Omnipotence suffice for the other? If there are difficulties in either case, I believe there is none when Omnipotence puts itself to work. Certainly there are no difficulties in the case of a child which are not aggravated in the case of an older person. Some of the most excellent Christians are those who were converted when they were very young. You shall find your ablest preachers, with few exceptions, to have been young converts. You shall look for your Timothies among those who have learned the Scriptures from their youth up!

If I might venture to do it, I would say to our elder Brothers and Sisters—Do let us get rid of the idea that we ought to suspect the young folk. Let us be jealous with a holy jealousy, lest they make a profession of what they do not understand. Let us be earnest with them to see that they really receive spiritual things and do not fall into hypocritical or deceiving habits—but do not let us be constantly suspecting children and be looking upon them as if they could not be of the right kind. "Nothing but a parcel of boys and girls!" says somebody. And what would you have them, Sir? A company of boys and girls may glorify God in every way as well as a company of even the oldest people you could find! They have their faults, but people of other ages have theirs, too, and, at any rate, it is written, "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings has God ordained strength because of His enemies."

We will now go a step further and remark—

IV. THAT A TRULY GOOD THING, IN THE DIVINE SENSE, IS ALWAYS TOWARDS THE LORD.

This is the tendency and the strong direction of the current. You observe it says not merely that "there is found some good thing," but, "some good things toward the Lord God of Israel" Here, then, is a test by which we may try religion, both in the old and in the young! There are many men who have some good thing in them politically. I can admire the man who stands up for the Constitution and who, although he may be called one of the stupid party, yet really believing that it is necessary that things should stand forever where they now are, can readily encounter disgrace for the matter. I can admire even more and with greater intensity the man who goes ahead and who desires to change everything that is wrong, even though it is venerable with years! I can admire him standing in the midst of storm and quietly enduring it, bearing all manner of rebuke for the sake of reform. Yet I can quite imagine all this existing without any "good thing toward the Lord God of Israel." Though one appreciates all this, yet he is compelled to lament if there is not something more. In daily life it is a noble thing to see some good thing in business. There are some of you who would as soon bleed to death as cheat others—to whom it would be the most tremendous misfortune to know deep poverty—but who would sooner be beggars than bankrupt, if bankruptcy meant in your case what it often means today! Now, I can admire this fine noble honesty.

Admire it! Ah, and wish that it were as common as daisies in the field! Admire it! Would God it might spread all over the land! But all this can exist without any good thing toward the Lord God of Israel, for the Lord God of Israel may be forgotten with it all! I can admire in the family the earnest mother bringing up her children with sedulous care, and the excellent daughter, amiable and kind, making everyone happy wherever she goes. And the hardworking father denying himself much that he may bring up his children properly. I can admire all these domestic virtues, but I fear that they often exist where there is no good thing toward the Lord God of Israel! This is the great point—goodness towards God. Perhaps I may have in this congregation some who have in them everything that is good except anything good towards God, Himself. How is it, now, that you can live as God's creatures and think of everybody else but not of the God who made you? The God who preserves you in life you forget! You would be dishonest to no one except to God—and you would be ungenerous to none except to Him who has the greatest claims upon you. Oh, the inconsistency of our evil nature, that the best Being in all the world is the least thought of! You would not keep a dog if it did not fawn upon you, or acknowledge you as master, and yet you never acknowledge God to whom you belong! You would not keep a horse if it rendered you no service, and yet you have been kept by God's goodness for 40 years and have persistently not thought of Him!

You expect when you have been kind to the poor that they will acknowledge your kindness and feel some gratitude for it. And yet you would have been naked, and poor, and miserable, and sick, and dying—no,

you would be in Hell at this very moment if it had not been for the goodness of God! And have you no gratitude towards Him, no good thing towards the Lord God of Israel? Now let me tell you, with deepest affection, what it is you need, and what you must have, my dear Hearer, or else you will never reach Heaven. You must have a sense of the sinfulness of all this! You must begin to feel that all this is wrong! That you have turned things upside down, that you have lived for trifles and forgotten realities! That you have remembered father, and mother, and country, and trade, and much else, but you have forgotten the God to whom you owe everything! I pray God to help you to repent, for that is one of the best and first good things towards the Lord God of Israel! But better still is this—God, the Gracious One, has provided a way of pardon. He tells you that if you trust His dear Son, who for eternal love of man became a Man, and for love of souls did die upon the tree, He will save you—that "there is life for a look at the Crucified One"—that if you want to please Him, faith in Jesus is the way to please Him! That if you must do works, the greatest work you can do is to believe in Jesus Christ whom He has sent! He tells you that there is nothing needed on your part, but that all is found in Christ—and He says to you in wooing terms, "Come unto Me! Come, now, and let us reason together. Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they are red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow." Before you can get to Heaven you must have something in your heart which says, "Lord, I come, I come. I trust Your Son. I believe in Your mercy and rely upon His blood. I trust myself in those dear pierced hands." If you can say this, you have a good thing towards the Lord God of Israel and God sees it and accepts you!

We must not tarry, but advance a step farther and say—

V. THAT WHERE THERE IS THIS GOOD THING TOWARD THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL, GOD ALWAYS SEES IT.

You will notice the text says, "There is found some good thing." The original Hebrew word used here means sometimes—a thing found without looking for it. But it sometimes means a thing found after long and loving search. And again, it also signifies a thing found after thorough enquiry to be more efficient and adequate—a thing which has been tested and found to endure. Now, wherever there is anything like a good thing toward the Lord God of Israel, God sees it, finds it out, tests it, finds it sufficient and accepts it because of the Savior!

You have not told anybody you are afraid. Mary, you have not even told your mother and you dare not! Many young people do not speak to their parents about their soul's deepest feelings and desires. They can sooner speak to strangers. But you do pray—you cannot help praying, and when you got home tonight you will not venture to go to sleep without earnestly crying to God, "Lord, save me, or I perish!" Your mother knows it not, but your heavenly Father does. You, John, have not got so far as praying yet, but a Sunday or two ago the sermon pricked your conscience and you have not been easy since. You could find no peace in yourself. You are not quite so far awakened as to be able to pray, but still there is a wish in your heart towards the right. You sometimes think it will come to that pass, that you must say with the prodigal, "I will arise and go to my father, and say to him, Father, I have sinned." Well, John, you are a great way off, it is true, but your Father's eyes can see you! And while you are coming to Him, creeping, He is coming to you running! And I do not doubt that before long you will be in His arms, receiving the kiss of His pardon.

Some of you live in strange places, perhaps. The Gospel light does not shine down that court and does not get into the neighborhood where you are generally found. Ah, but God can see you! And He has noticed with delight the good thing that is in you towards Himself. Yes, my young Sister, it is indeed a

strange place where you live, where your father curses God and your mother laughs at and ridicules religion—and your sisters, since they know you go to a place of worship, have begun to hate you! Ah, but my dear Friend, your Shepherd shall be with you even then! And though your path is a solitary one, and you have no friend into whose bosom to pour your griefs, yet go upstairs into the little room, or even in the crowded street as you walk along—make a prayer-chamber for your heart and get in there with Christ, and tell Him you are alone—and you shall not be alone any longer, for He shall be with you! "Blessed are you, when they shall persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for His name's sake: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you." You shall be blessed in this particular that He will be with you—your Salvation, your Strength, and your Stay! The fish are in the salt sea, and yet their flesh is as fresh as if there were no salt, and so you may live in an ungodly family and yet be as gracious as though you never came into contact with even one unpardoned sinner!

It is beautiful to sometimes see a fair flower growing in the hedge, or among range herbage or wild plants. In one's boyish days one has sometimes been out in the woods hunting nuts and all on a sudden one has come upon a fruit tree. How did it get there? A tree with fruit among the oaks, elms and underbrush! How did it get there? And truly when a Christian is found in ungodly places he does not escape God's attention, for He who looks for fruit is delighted to find an apple tree among the trees of the forest! That being your portion, my dear Friend, God will see you and see you none the less because of your surroundings. Be you, then, of good courage!

And now, to close.

VI. WHEN GOD SEES THIS GENUINE PIETY IN SUCH PLACES, HE WILL BE SURE TO REWARD IT. He may not reward it by giving long life, for these young people sometimes die early.

But even the death of young people who have some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel, has a voice to us—

"When blooming youth is snatched away By Death's resistless hand,"

there is a voice from God speaking to each of us, especially if the youth is converted. What a comfort, what a blessing, to the son of Jeroboam to be taken away! You will say, perhaps, it was a pity, for he might have come to the throne. He was the heir-apparent and might have been king, so why was he taken away? You do not know what he might have been had he been spared. God knew it was best for that child not to be subjected to the contamination of such a wicked court— and so He took him Home, as the gardener towards the end of the flowering season gets his flowers out of the open borders because he knows the frosty nights are coming. So does the Master often take some of the young people Home while they are yet young, lest the frosts of the world should nip them. But it is a very solemn thing when young people are taken out of the family by death.

It is something like clearing a ship because she is going down. Jeroboam's boat was now to go down to total destruction—and God brings the heavenly lifeboat and takes the last living soul out—and then He lets the whole house of the son of Nebat come to ruin!

Yes, my good woman, you came here tonight because your child is dead. You could not bear to stay at home. The poor dear thing is just buried.

Take heed my good woman, lest a worse thing happen to you! It is a dreadful thing to have lost so dear a child whose little beaming eyes were like stars in the house, and whose little voice had learned to sing—

"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, Look upon a little child."

You will sorely miss the patter of those little feet and the sound of those sweet revival hymns that she learned at school. You will not forget what she said when she was going, "Mother, follow me to Heaven!" But I warn you, even as Ahijah did the wife of Jeroboam, I warn you—take heed lest that child of yours has been taken away because the father and the mother and the household are to be swept away! It is the omen of a blessing when Lord sends a godly servant or a child into a family—it looks as if God had a purpose of love towards that house. But it is a token of mischief and of evil when a godly child, having been sent in such a household, is speedily taken away! That child of yours was God's little Prophet to you. It is true it was not, like little Samuel, clothed with an ephod, but when you go upstairs and look at the little pinafore or the little frock, you may almost fancy that those were priestly garments, for the child was God's messenger to your heart! Have you listened to this message from the skies? If not, perhaps I may refresh your memory. Perhaps you think I speak harshly. I mean not to do so—I mean in all tenderness to your soul to say, once again to put it plainly, that perhaps God sent that young Ahijah to your house to tell you to make your escape from the wrath to come. And that the message being neglected, He took back the child. But I would gladly hope that His judgment still lingers and that His mercy still waits! Let me speak to you mothers, especially for your hearts are most tender. God gave up His only Son for your sakes—He will understand your sorrow. Come to the Cross and look up and trust. Trust! Trust! Trust! That word, "trust," is the grandest word in the language of mankind! Trust! Trust Jesus! Trust only Him and you are saved! There is life in trusting, but there is death in everything else.

I saw an illustration somewhere the other day—I do not know now from where it came. It is not mine, but I must give it to you and then conclude.

A gentleman wishing to illustrate faith and to show what it really is—that it is trusting—says that he attended a lecture upon chemistry and the lecturer was trying to prove the spheroidal properties of liquids.

I do not mean to try to prove it, myself, but he showed that water put upon a bar of iron at a certain heat scattered itself over the iron or turned to steam. But the drops of water poured upon intensely hot iron would turn into spheroids and nothing else, and then roll off the hot iron. In order to prove the various qualities of the spheroids, a man who assisted the lecturer dipped his hand in some water which was standing by—and then plunged it into a vessel of molted lead and took up some of the lead without being hurt—the spheroidal property of the water being such that a man might do that without injury! The person listening to the lecture said, "Now, I quite believe what the lecturer said. He convinced me. He put it so plainly that I could not but see that it was so. Then he invited the audience to come and put their hands into the molten lead! I went up to the lead. I believed that it would not hurt me. I saw the man sitting there who had just put his hand in, but I did not dare to do it—and I found there is a good deal of difference between believing and trusting! But I thought—now either it is true, or it is not, and I am sure it is true. Very well, then, why don't I believe it? I dipped my hand in the water and having hardly courage enough to venture my whole hand, I put one finger in the lead and found that that one finger, after, was colder than it had been before, so then I put in my whole hand—and there were a number of others who were willing to follow my example."

Now, that is a very good illustration of what believing in Jesus Christ is, only there is something repulsive about putting one's hand into molten lead, and there should not be anything like that in believing in Jesus Christ! You believe that Jesus Christ can save. You believe that He has saved a great many and that the only way in which they were saved was by trusting in Him. But it is quite possible for you to believe this and yet not to be saved. If you trust Him, you will try Him, and that will be the true proof. You will come to the foot of His Cross and cast yourself entirely, wholly and simply upon the merits of His atoning Sacrifice. Then there will be some good thing in you toward the Lord God of

Israel—and then I think the mention of the little dead Ahijah, though it may have been painful, will have been made a blessing! God grant that it may be so!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 2 KINGS 20:1-7.

Verse 1. In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the Prophet Isaiah, the son of Amoz, came to him and said unto him, Thus says the LORD, Set your house in order; for you shall die, and not live. That is to say, in the common course of Providence, without a miracle, Hezekiah must die. God did by no means change when afterwards He permitted him to live. This time He spoke after the order of Nature—the next time He spoke according to the extraordinary work of His marvelous power.

2. Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, saying. What did he do that for? Well, as he could not rise from his bed through weakness, he gets the greatest privacy he can, and the God who accepted Carmel as Elijah's prayer shrine, would accept Hezekiah's prayer when he turned his face to the wall.

3. I beseech You, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before You in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Your sight And Hezekiah wept sorely. I do not think this was intended to be a self-righteous prayer, though it reads like one, or else the Lord would not have heard it. He meant to say, "Lord, You have been good enough to make me what I am, be pleased to spare me." In fact, the probability is that at this time Sennacherib had not been routed and Hezekiah could not bear to die while the nation was in danger. Certainly there was no son born to Hezekiah at this time, for Manasseh was only twelve years old when he began to reign at his father's death—and Hezekiah thought it would be a sad thing to leave a troubled kingdom without a prince to be his successor. It may be, too, that seeing he had just commenced the reformation and the casting down of the false gods, he trembled for the cause of God, and could not bear to be so soon taken away. "Hezekiah wept sorely." Ah, these are the things that prevail with God, these tears of His people—

"Prayer is the burden of a sigh, The falling of a tear! The upward glancing of an eye, When none but God is near!"

4-7. And it came to pass, before Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the Word of the LORD came to him, saying, Turn again, and tell Hezekiah, the captain of My people, Thus says the LORD, the God of David, your father, I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears: behold, I will heal you: on the third day you shall go up unto the house of the LORD. And I will add unto your days fifteen years, and I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for My own sake, and for My servant David's sake. And Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered. This, of course, was not a sufficient means to cure the boil, but God made the means efficacious. Why were the means used? Why, to teach us that we are to expect God's blessing, not in neglecting means, but in using them! See how simple was the remedy—just a thick poultice of figs laid on

the wound! Perhaps the physicians had tried expensive medicines without avail. What a mercy it is for us that the good medicine of the Gospel is as cheap as it is good, that it is to be had for nothing! While some ransack the world for expensive ceremonies and for gaudy shows, we have Christ, like the lump of figs, ready to heal the wound and make us strong again!

Again I say Hezekiah was a man of like passions with us—and he prayed earnestly that his life might be spared and God delivered him from the jaws of death. Let us, therefore, not be afraid to pray!

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