

ISAIAH

Chapter 38

Hezekiah's Sickness and Recovery

In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him, and said to him, “Thus says the LORD: Set your house in order, for you shall die, you shall not recover. 2 Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, 3 and said, “Please, O LORD, remember how I have walked before you in faithfulness and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly. 4 Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah: 5 “Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Behold, I will add fifteen years to your life. 6 I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and will defend this city. 7 “This shall be the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he has promised: 8 Behold, I will make the shadow cast by the declining sun on the dial of Ahaz turn back ten steps.” So the sun turned back on the dial the ten steps by which it had declined. 9 A writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, after he had been sick and had recovered from his sickness: 10 I said, In the middle of my days I must depart; I am consigned to the gates of Sheol for the rest of my years. 11 I said, I shall not see the LORD, the LORD in the land of the living; I shall look on man no more among the inhabitants of the world. 12 My dwelling is plucked up and removed from me like a shepherd's tent; like a weaver I have rolled up my life; he cuts me off from the loom; from day to night you bring me to an end; 13 I calmed myself until morning; like a lion he breaks all my bones; from day to night you bring me to an end. 14 Like a swallow or a crane I chirp; I moan like a dove. My eyes are weary with looking upward. O Lord, I am oppressed; be my pledge of safety! 15 What shall I say? For he has spoken to me, and he himself has done it. I walk slowly all my years because of the bitterness of my soul. 16 O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these is the life of my spirit. Oh restore me to health and make me live! 17 Behold, it was for my welfare that I had great bitterness; but in love you have delivered my life from the pit of destruction, for you have cast all my sins behind your back. 18 For Sheol does not thank you; death does not praise you; those who go down to the pit do not hope for your faithfulness. 19 The living, the living, he thanks you, as I do this day; the father makes known to the children your faithfulness. 20 The LORD will save me, and we will play my music on stringed instruments all the days of our lives, at the house of the LORD. 21 Now Isaiah had said, “Let them take a cake of figs and apply it to the boil, that he may recover.” 22 Hezekiah also had said, “What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the LORD?”

38:1 *In those days.* Sometime before Sennacherib’s invasion of 701 B.C. (see v. 6). (CSB)

WE HAVE heard about that glorious and miraculous victory which was provided not by weapons but by faith alone. It is an example for our faith, so that we may learn to be diligent in the Word, not in our powers and endeavors. However, when one trial, namely, despair, had been overcome on the left, the king soon slipped to the right in good days, because wealth, riches, and strength puff us up, yes, righteousness and victory themselves puff us up. This extremely bad downfall is ours by birth, so that we very easily become proud and are lifted up when we have received gifts. This is a most dreadful downfall of the heretics and clearly devilish, when they are proud in spirit and lifted up. It is an uncontrollable evil that they even seem spiritual to themselves and are most haughtily proud even in their humility. It is safer for any young man to boast of his appearance or his riches and possessions (because he can easily be helped) than it is for him to conquer such spiritual trials. For our nature is so corrupted and depraved that nothing is worse. Consider David and how he slipped to the right. Consider that to Peter was given the disgrace of

denial, so that he might remain humble. To Paul was given a thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12:7), to the blessed and most spiritual Mary was given the sword of Simeon (Luke 2:35). Such a most dreadful example we see here in the king, who was puffed up with his victory and began to be proud of his uprightness and righteousness. (Luther)

Isaiah. He is prominent in this historical interlude (chs. 36–39). (CSB)

you shall die. Elisha similarly predicted the death of Ben-Hadad (2Ki 8:9–10). (CSB)

38:2 *wall.* Perhaps of the nearby temple. (CSB)

Unclear; may express sullen mood. The Targums suggest he turned toward the temple. (TLSB)

prayed to the Lord – Question: Was the king heard? I answer that his prayer was heard, but not the works of the prayer. Second, the question is asked, whether the king could with a good conscience boast about his works in the way it is reported in the text. The answer is twofold: First, as far as the Word is concerned; second, as far as his attitude is concerned. First we must turn to the Word, because the king knew most certainly that what he had done he had done on the basis of the Word. Such works as are done on the basis of the Word are certain and holy. Thus Peter says (1 Peter 4:11): “whoever speaks, as one who utters oracles of God.” This is clearly a holy office, of which we must boast in opposition to human traditions that come into being apart from the Word. Thus I can boast: “Lord, what I have done I have done and preached according to Thy Word.” And this is the very opposite of human traditions, which are observed apart from the Word. Thus the king should have boasted of his victory as having come because of the Word of God, not because of his own strength. But as far as our attitudes are concerned, this boasting is nothing, and therefore we must cry, “Forgive us our trespasses,” and we must say, “Preaching the Word is right and holy, but we never do justice to this office, because we are wretched sinners.” Therefore we must remain on the king’s highway, lest we depart from the Word. However wretched sinners we may be, let us glory in this divine Word. Thus also King Hezekiah boasted with reference to the Word, not with reference to his own attitudes. Let us remain on the true way, and even though we limp and are like clods, we are still on the royal road, we are still moving ahead. It does not help you at all to be swift on some byway. Take note also of the lie in the trial of those who are in agony, who say and cry out: “Would that I had been a swineherd! Would that I might be destined to live long, so that by my uprightness I might acquire merit and atone for my sins! Would that I had a bagful of good works!” The proudest people, whoever they may be, toil with this sin, and nature at its most natural in our life leads people to trust in their own works. Such a person says, “God be praised, I am not so bad at all. It was not like that.” He is forever looking for comfort in himself, instead of simply appealing to God’s mercy, as we experience in the case of people who are in agony. It is doubtful whether such an attitude existed in the king. When someone asks us whether the king was without sin and walked in faithfulness, as he boasted, we must answer that this king was righteous and faithful according to the Word in which he lived, but that as for his own nature, he was a wavering sinner, because together with us he prayed, “Forgive us.” His kind of life was correct because it was in harmony with the Word, although his life did not achieve it. Secondly, here is the desire for merits. In this pride we were born and reared. I myself was also involved in this over my ears. There is not one of us who is without this vice. I cannot get rid of it myself. Here I neither accuse nor excuse this king, but this is the way it appears. (Luther)

Isaiah’s word was from the Lord. Hezekiah had no other resource for healing than prayer to the Lord. (TLSB)

38:3 *with a whole heart.* Like David (1Ki 11:4), Hezekiah was truly faithful (see 36:7; 2Ki 18:3–5). (CSB)

The prayer itself is a godly one, flowing from faith, although there were impure thoughts. (Luther)

His prayer was a prayer of a soul in anguish, even if it may not strike us as a model prayer. At first reading, it may appear that he bargained with the Lord as he laid before the Lord his own faithfulness, devotion, and good deeds and offered them as a basis for the Lord's help. Isaiah would later write, "All our righteousness acts are like filthy rags" (64:6). (PBC)

He had inherited a spiritual mess from his father, Ahaz. But Hezekiah's reign had been different. During his reign, he had brought great reform to Judah. When Isaiah told this pious king that his life would come to an end, perhaps the king wondered what would happen to all the reforms he had instituted. (PBC)

Whatever lay in the heart of Hezekiah, he is a typical human faced with the end of his life. Those who face terminal illness go through stages of denial, anger, bargaining, and finally, acceptance. Somewhere in Hezekiah's reaction to Isaiah's news, he turned to the Lord who alone could help. Like every other child of God, he prays. We should not be surprised to hear Hezekiah utter these words even if we might think that it is not an ideal prayer. These are words which erupt out of a human heart that trust the Lord God. (PBC)

38:4 *came to Isaiah* – Common expression for the prophet's experience, typically involving vision or dreams. (TLSB)

38:5 *God of David your father* – Hezekiah knew, like Moses (cf. 32:7-14) and Jonah (cf. Jonah 4:2), that the Lord is always willing to be asked, always willing to listen to His people. (TLSB)

heard your prayer...seen your tears – Here God approves of his prayer, his grief, and his weeping to the extent that he looked to the mercy of the Lord. However, God omitted praising the prayer entirely. He makes no mention of it but says, *I have seen your tears*, not, "I have seen your faithfulness and righteousness." (Luther)

The message Isaiah delivered to Hezekiah asserts some wonderful truths that apply to all God's people of all time. The Lord hears the prayers of His people. No believer's prayer goes out to some dark, empty wastebasket beyond: God hears them all. (PBC)

I will add – We must leave the time, the place, and the circumstance to God. Let us place only the matter itself before God. So here reason would perhaps have prayed for scarcely an hour or three days, and yet he receives fifteen years. Do not look down on the prayers of the godly, for they are great and lofty. Writers raise the question how it is that God promised the king deliverance when he was already delivered. It is possible that another attack on the part of Sennacherib, who was not yet completely subdued, is indicated, and concerning this God promises Hezekiah that He will protect him forever. The meaning is: "The king of Assyria has been struck down, but perhaps you are afraid that he will take vengeance. I will protect you." Never again was Jerusalem besieged by the king of Assyria, but it was besieged by the kingdom of the Chaldeans, and all subsequent prophecies of Isaiah are to be directed toward that monarchy. Jerusalem was forever delivered from Assyria. Here is the end of this kingdom because of King Hezekiah's prayer. (Luther)

Long enough to be seen clearly as a divine gift. (TLSB)

38:6 *deliver ... this city*. Deliverance likely took place during the siege by the Assyrians in c 701 BC. (TLSB)

38:7 *sign*. This is a great and splendid miracle: God even goes beyond His own promise, just as if, on top of it all, great signs were to be done together with the promises. It is an amazing miracle, such as has never been heard of before. The sun has moved back ten hours. In these tremendous miracles the prophet very quickly passes by those who leave the event to our thoughts. The writers deliberate on the dial of Ahaz. This King Ahaz carried the brazen altar out of the temple and in its place set up an altar from Damascus. He did not wish to desecrate this altar, so he made a dial out of it. I do not know if this is true. Here, however, it is added that this one most wonderful day becomes three. The writers report that this miracle induced the kings of the Chaldeans to send gifts to Hezekiah. None of the astrologers would ever have observed anything in this sign. Here the king is so cheered by his good health that he did not recall much of his earlier deliverance from the defeated king, and he intones a very lovely song, although it is poorly transmitted. This song, too, has such great emotions and complaints about death that it can be understood by none but those who have had experience in dangers. This song is worthy to be incorporated by Isaiah in his prophecy for the comfort of all the dying. (Luther)

38:8 *declining sun...turn back*. Perhaps the miracle involved the refraction of light. See 2Ki 20:9–11; Jos 10:12–14. (CSB)

This is an astounding miracle. It certainly causes commentators to pause because it is so amazing. With this miracle the Lord asserted that He can alter the course of the universe for the benefit of His people. Nothing is beyond His power. We might wonder about this miracle the same way we wonder about the sun standing still for Joshua (Joshua 10), but faith does not stumble here. Faith trusts what God says. God can do all things, and if He chooses to stop the sun or turn the sun backward, He can do it. (PBC)

Possibly a sundial made for or by Hezekiah's father (Ahaz). Egyptians developed such instruments as early as fourth millennium BC. The ten steps were degrees on the face of the dial's face. (TLSB)

38:9 *a writing of Hezekiah* – This is the written form of the poem which he composed after he had recovered from his illness. This song has two parts: First, it relates the feelings of fear during his weakness; secondly, the joy at his recovery. Both death and resurrection are in the song. (Luther)

Isaiah inserts Hezekiah's psalm into this account. It is not included in the parallel account we have in 2 Kings. Isaiah's simple introduction identifies it as a writing King Hezekiah after his recovery. It is the song, or psalm, of a grateful believer. (PBC)

38:10–20 A hymn of thanksgiving in two stanzas, similar to many of the psalms. Hezekiah was deeply interested in the psalms of David and Asaph (see 2Ch 29:30). (CSB)

38:10–14 Hezekiah voices his complaint. (CSB)

38:10 *middle of my days* – This is what we call it when we think everything is going well for us; and yet to die unexpectedly, to die like the ungodly, this is the central thought. (Luther)

Hezekiah was 25 years old when he began his reign. He reigned in Jerusalem 29 years, making him 54 when he died (See 2 Chron. 29:1). (CSB)

Hezekiah's prayer reiterates what he felt after Isaiah's words from the Lord. About to die, his initial reaction was one of hopelessness and despair. (TLSB)

If we subtract the 15 years God added to his life, Hezekiah was 39 years old when Isaiah informed him that he would die. (PBC)

gates of Sheol – This is a Hebrew idiom. The Hebrew word *לִישׁוֹן* means what has been buried. It is indiscriminately used for hell and the grave, that is, “I go through the midst of the dead to the nether realm.” “I said in the silence of my days,” that is, “when I was well off, I thought of nothing less than of dying.” So we read in the Book of Sirach, “O death, how bitter is your memory to a man who has many possessions” (Sir. 41:1). Death is indeed bitter to those who are in their best estate, in quiet, and in peace. They are as secure as though they were in Paradise, and they do not fear death, This is what *in silence* means. In the midst of this king’s feeling of safety because of a defeated enemy Isaiah comes and says: “Set your house in order.” There, at the prospect of falling into an unexpected death, all laughter ceases. Here many have argued about getting ready for death. Many have gone into the desert to prepare themselves for dying well. I do not disparage spurning the world, but whether we shall accomplish this by withdrawing from this spurned world, I do not know. However, victory and preparation for death must be sought in Christ, not in the wilderness and in monasteries, where bellies are fattened. You must look to Christ, in whom you see death conquered. There the serpent’s head is bruised (Gen. 3:15), and there you will see the whole image and the trophies of victory against our foes. We must not look at our sins and disgraceful acts, but we ought to get out of ourselves, away from our sins and our presumption, and go to Christ Himself, to the Lamb of God that bears the sins of the world (John 1:29); to Him we should rise, on Him we should look. None have correctly dealt with this manner of preparing for death, although countless treatises on the preparation for death have been written. As for you, do not consider your death as it is in you, but see it in Christ, the Victor. (Luther)

From a young man staring at the end of his earthly life, Hezekiah’s words are completely understandable. His human eyes could see nothing beyond the grave, nor could he penetrate the barrier of death to see the joy and bliss of heaven. (PBC)

rest of my years – This is an extension of the foregoing. “I am compelled to crave, I am compelled to be without.” To crave means properly to be without, to lack, when we seek something we do not have. *I have sought*, that is, “I have not found it, and with all my seeking and planning, I do not have it, that is, in an unexpected and un hoped-for manner my years are being cut off.” Plop! Death strikes. This is therefore a word of distress and of one toiling in sickness. Such emotions are not recognized in talking about them, but by experience, as when some one has come down with the plague. (Luther)

Old age to which he felt he should live. (TL SB)

38:11 *the LORD, the LORD.* This is an argument born of distress. Not only does he say that his life is cut off, but also that he must then leave everything behind. As the ungodly say, “Where will my children and wife and riches stay now? Who will get my savings?” The dying have such feelings. Here the good king complains that he will be deprived of the worship and Word of God. In this alone he delights and for this he hopes to live, and from this purpose he is being snatched away. Because of his love of the worship of God he thinks of living on. (Luther)

As He reveals His power and goodness. (Cf Ps.38:10) (TL SB)

land of the living. Cf. Ps 27:13. (CSB)

Earthly existence, where the Lord and people are at work. (TL SB)

among the inhabitants – That is, “those who live and die with me.” He first complains that he must forsake the Word and worship of God, and then, that he must leave his excellent and, so to say, spiritual reign behind. You may see, then, that the excellent king complains of his distresses in an excellent order: First he laments leaving both orders, the spiritual and the political realm. In both of them he works hard, and in the midst of this work he is snatched away. He is not like us; carnal people that we are, we deplore

leaving carnal things behind. Now, after these most appropriate words, there follow some comparisons. (Luther)

38:12 *like a shepherd's tent* – that is, “those who live and die with me.” He first complains that he must forsake the Word and worship of God, and then, that he must leave his excellent and, so to say, spiritual reign behind. You may see, then, that the excellent king complains of his distresses in an excellent order: First he laments leaving both orders, the spiritual and the political realm. In both of them he works hard, and in the midst of this work he is snatched away. He is not like us; carnal people that we are, we deplore leaving carnal things behind. Now, after these most appropriate words, there follow some comparisons. (Luther)

Hezekiah compares his life with a shepherd's tent that can be dismantled quickly. (TLSB)

rolled up my life. Cf. the rolling up of the sky like a scroll in 34:4 (see also Heb 1:12). (CSB)

he cuts off from the loom – “He cuts off my life because of its thinness.” So God cuts off my life and tears it off as the weaver tears a thread. This is another excellent comparison. The former comparison refers to duration, while this one reflects unexpectedness, namely, that our life is like a web, since in the midst of weaving and working we suddenly fall down because of the plague, or hunger, or fire, etc. “He snaps me off like a slender thread.” (Luther)

day...night...end – That is, “Thou wilt not wait until the evening, but Thou wilt kill me this very day.” You have the same message in Deut. 28:66: “In the evening he shall not hope for the morning, and in the morning he shall not hope for the evening.” “If I live in the morning I wonder what I shall do in the evening; if in the evening, I wonder how I shall live in the morning.” (Luther)

Sunset of his life. What had seemed so permanent (a shepherd's tent or a large piece of cloth on a loom) could be quickly taken up or cut off. Hezekiah's life could be just as quickly ended. (TLSB)

38:13 *until morning* – “I would like to live tomorrow.” You see the feelings of distress. “I held out, I resisted, because I wanted to be alive tomorrow,” as we experience in the case of the ungodly when they die. These things cannot be expressed. (Luther)

breaks all my bones. Physical or spiritual distress is often described in terms of aching or broken bones (see Ps 6:2; 32:3). (CSB)

As quickly as a lion devours a carcass and licks clean each bone. (TLSB)

The distress is so great that a man simply becomes numb, so that he can neither stand nor walk nor look ahead. Thus a certain condemned man about to be executed and then set free said that he felt as if he had been walking in mud over his knees. So heavy are bones and limbs of the distressed. (Luther)

38:14 *swallow or crane...dove* – That distress forced me to clamor like the cranes, birds that whoop wretchedly. So the afflicted do not express themselves in words but produce sounds like doves, coo, coo, coo. Behold, then, the wretched groans of distress. To despair, this is what it means that the bones are broken. (Luther)

He is but a weak, complaining bird compared to a lion. (TLSB)

eyes are weak – Those who are near death have eyes that are broken, as it were. They have much whiteness and turn the pupil in an upward direction. *My eyes are weary*, that is, they have failed, they are

closed. It is not only death that produces this weakness of the eyes and of the body, but every sorrow of the heart does so. Every sorrow is a bit of death. This is a description of his distress: that his bones are broken and that his tongue has failed. He no longer had a heart for singing. Then the eyes have become weary, and all members have become weak, and all this has arisen from the inner distresses of the heart. (Luther)

I am oppressed – In Hebrew: “O Lord, I am slandered; sweeten me.” This is the highest art, that in the worst grief and distress we do not despair but call upon God. “Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you” (Ps. 50:15). The Hebrew word *אָנַח* means to answer, or to sweeten. He does not cry out much but says quite briefly: “I am oppressed.” These are sounds like those of a crane, sparks indicating that he is coming back to life again. “Relieve my lot, make it sweet for me, be gentle with me.” (Luther)

my pledge of safety – Using a financial expression, he requests that the Lord will intervene. (TLSB)

38:15–20 Hezekiah offers praise for God’s healing. (CSB)

38:15 *what shall I say?* See 2Sa 7:20. Hezekiah wonders how he can praise God. (CSB)

The rest of Hezekiah’s psalm is so full that it drips with the lessons God has taught. (PBC)

These are the words of one who is rejoicing and returning to life. This part refers to the part of the prophecy that says: “Behold, I will add fifteen years to your life.” Therefore we must read: “Oh, how I will speak, how I will talk and preach with rejoicing because I have been delivered.”(Luther)

he...has done it – “This is what He promised me, and He will keep His promise.” The convalescent is relying on God’s promises. Because of his joy great things are embraced in very few words. He thinks that his joy has been made known in all the world. (Luther)

I walk slowly all my years. Walk of humility before God (TLSB)

“I will give thanks all the years of my life. I will never forget as long as I live that He has delivered me from my distress.” “Bitterness” means distress. Some have applied this text to confession and have said that in bitterness one must recall the entire past up to the present day. But this is not true, for here he is speaking about the joyful feelings of the king coming out of his distress. (Luther)

38:16 *by such things.* Perhaps referring to God’s promises and gracious acts, though his gracious acts can include such experiences as sickness and peril. (CSB)

Now he recounts the things wherein his life and pleasure consist. He wants to compare the strength of the Word with the strength of all other things. For the abundance of all things is nothing apart from the Word, as we see in the case of the rich man who was enlarging his granary (Luke 12:16–20). So here the king knows by experience that there is no power to heal in the medicine, but there is power in the Word, just as nourishment is not a matter of bread and food, but of the Word. The Word accomplishes marvelous things in the human body. Not medicines and food, but only the Word changes the body. All the natural philosophers are unable to conceive of so great and so sudden a change in one hour, that food and drink should be transformed into blood and urine. The Word does all these things. We do not live by bread and wine, but we live and are nourished under the Word. Though we should swallow all kinds of medicine, it accomplishes nothing without the Word. (Luther)

When “the word of the Lord” (v. 4), spoken by Isaiah, prolonged the king’s life (v. 5), Hezekiah understood that “man does not live by bread alone, but... by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord” (Dt. 8:3). (TLSB)

restore me – “Without care and toil on my part Thou dost give me safety, and while I dream and sleep, Thou dost make me well.” There are many such passages in David. “In peace I will both lie down and sleep” (Ps. 4:8). “He gives to His beloved in sleep” (Ps. 127:2). He will give to His beloved in sleep, while He gives to others with supreme exertion and wakefulness, but also that they cannot enjoy it. What is sown grows, and the sprouts flourish while we sleep. Thus we are safe, having cast our care upon God. All things are given and preserved through the Word. This is a remarkable statement, “He gives to His beloved in sleep.” Why is it that you languish day and night? Wife, children, and cattle are given by God. As for you, just do your work, take care of your wife, your family, and your cattle, and leave the care to God. He will keep everything in His own order. Learn, then, that it is not our care and concern that does it, but that, having cast our care upon God, we leave the matter to Him. This is what it means to sleep. Take heed of this most beautiful rule in this verse if you want to be safe; go to sleep, that is, leave the care to God. (Luther)

38:17 *pit of destruction.* The grave (see Ps 55:23). (CSB)

in your love you have delivered my life – “Thou hast clasped me to Thy heart. This is what happened to me. I looked for peace while forsaking Thee and found nothing but bitterness until Thou didst embrace me with Thy Word.” Elsewhere (Is. 66:13) he compares the embrace of the Word to a husband’s or mother’s love that embraces him. Thus God enfolds us with His Word as with His arm; God embraces us also in all dangers and griefs. Even though things appear to be going in reverse for you, commit them to God, and He will embrace you. (Luther)

sins behind your back. God not only puts our sins out of sight; he also puts them out of reach (Mic 7:19; Ps 103:12), out of mind (Jer 31:34) and out of existence (Isa 43:25; 44:22; Ps 51:1, 9; Ac 3:19). (CSB)

Hezekiah sees the deliverance from death accomplished through the forgiveness of sins. (TLSB)

Every trial has this misery that it scares man into thinking that this is sin. When sickness and misfortunes come, Satan, too, soon comes and troubles the conscience, and for that reason a Christian must fight with his conscience and with his body. Here Satan shakes us with various conscience scruples and attacks us as if he were fighting against Cerberus, the Lernaean Hydra, and other monsters. Soon Satan draws the conclusion in our consciences: “God is not at all well disposed toward you because He did not help you.” Thus any affliction has a tail, namely, that we think God is unmerciful. Such a conscience thoroughly frightens man, so that we imagine death has a thousand teeth, while it has none; and the greater our weakness, the more Satan harasses us with despair, when our conscience ought to be surrounded with the more joy. Let all trials have their heartache. Therefore these are the greatest blessings of God: To believe that God takes hold of us and makes us alive. (Luther)

38:18 *do not hope.*† The privilege of “those who now dwell in this world” to thank and praise God “in the land of the living” (v. 11) ends when they “go down to the pit.” Then the night comes “when no one can work” (Jn 9:4). (CSB)

That the dead do not praise God is a common theme throughout the OT. Cf Jb 10:21–22; Ps 6:5; 30:9. However, all who die in the Lord are with the Lord (Rm 14:8; 1Co 15; 1Th 5:10), but even they long for the coming resurrection (Rv 6:9–11). (TLSB)

38:19 *the living* – “The living are those who are without care, who commit their affairs to Thee and then go to sleep. Such a person praises Thee.” And the king demonstrates this by his own example. (Luther)

Hezekiah’s repetition savors and celebrates God’s gift. (TLSB)

father makes known to the children – This is taken from Ps. 78:5: “Which He commanded our fathers to teach to their children.” We publish this praise in such a way that not we but all our children publish it. This, therefore, we must strive to do against the zeal of Satan. Note that there is no greater sacrifice for a godly man than gratitude, praise, and thanksgiving for the blessings received. (Luther)

Through a long life, fathers can teach their children. (TLSB)

The Scriptures remind us to live for God here on earth while we have the opportunity. Hezekiah concluded that he still had work to do in this life. He encourages the living to do what they can while they are alive. (PBC)

38:20 *the Lord will save me* – This is from Ps. 12:1. Here he comes to a close, as if to say: “Let us sing this song which I have composed. Only save us. Thou hast given us health; help us to remain in it.” So today we ought to sing: “Lord, preserve us in the truth that we have come to know.” (Luther)

stringed instruments. Instrumental music and hymns of praise were closely linked in worship (cf. Ps 33:1–3). (CSB)

Sound of joyful living. (TLSB)

all ... our lives. Hezekiah, like David (Ps 23:6), loved God’s house. (CSB)

38:21 *apply*. The verbs are plural (probably addressed to the court physicians). (CSB)

cake of figs. Figs were used for medicinal purposes in ancient Ugarit. (CSB)

Isaiah was directed to use natural means. (PBC)

he may recover. Contrast v. 1. God answered Hezekiah’s prayer for healing (see v. 5). (CSB)

38:22 *sign*. Perhaps the healing of the boil (see v. 21) (CSB)

These are words spoken in irony, as if the king were saying out of his excessive and unexpected joy: “What a sign, that I shall go up to the house of the Lord! I who thought I was about to go down to Sheol must now go up to the temple.” Therefore instead of “what” we must now read “how,” as elsewhere. “How lovely is Thy dwelling place, O Lord!” (Ps. 84:1). “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings” (Is. 52:7). And in Ps. 8:4: “What is man that Thou art mindful of him?” So here we must read: “How great will be the sign, that I shall go up to the house of the Lord,” as if in his sudden joy he were saying ironically: “Oho, what a sign is this, that I shall go up to the house of the Lord!” (Luther)

house of the LORD? The temple, where he would sacrifice and offer thanks. (CSB)

Ch 38 The Lord answers Hezekiah's prayer for healing and forgiveness. No matter what difficulty or diagnosis you face, do not hesitate to make your request known to the Lord. He hears, forgives, and delivers His people according to His mercy, and He works through our hands for others' good. • Lord, grant me good health, a heart of prayer, and ready hands that serve. Amen. (TLSB)