

Prosperity tests

*Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken.
He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.
Isaiah 39:8*

Hezekiah's attitude exhibited in this short chapter can be viewed from different perspectives. After the last few chapters describing his relatively successful and God-honoring reign, answered prayer for deliverance from the attack of the Assyrians, followed by his answer to prayer for deliverance from a terminal illness, there seems to be a lapse in his faithful walk. In the cases of the former deliverances, he showed a healthy humility and dependence on the LORD for both the keeping of the nation as well as the keeping of his own health and life. Yet in his response to the visitors from the far country of Babylon, he seems to have been moved to a state of pride. The commentary on this from the parallel account of Hezekiah in II Chronicles 32 helps to clarify the issue. It seems that after such deliverances that Hezekiah amassed wealth and a certain degree of fame among surrounding nations, including Babylon, which at that time was subservient to the Assyrians. The writer of Chronicles adds that the LORD allowed the ambassadors from Babylon to be a test for Hezekiah, who then left his prior humble attitude to instead pridefully show all of his wealth to these esteemed foreign visitors. Thus, as many left to human tendencies, he failed the test of prosperity. Instead of being humbly thankful for what had been given him, he boasted of his blessings.

On the other hand, when confronted by Isaiah with God's judgment upon his attitude and action, Hezekiah confessed that the word of the LORD was good. He did not deny that the punishment of the LORD was just reward for his pride and boasting. Yet the final statement in our text seems to imply his disregard for the welfare of his progeny. Again, the account from II Chronicles 32 expands on this, telling us that he did indeed humble himself for his sin, such that the punishment would be delayed. Thus, his statement here is more indicative of his thankfulness for the merciful reprieve, and not of any ill will toward his posterity. Of course, with the subsequent history provided to us, we can understand the LORD's reservation of the later judgment to be commensurate with the sins of the generation upon whom it finally came. Thus, as from others before him, we must learn from Hezekiah to beware of the danger of prosperity, and to humble ourselves before God's righteous judgments and under His merciful hand.