

引言 INTRODUCTION

Success is a result of starting right plus finishing well. I learned that lesson many years ago when I was in a track competition. I signed up for an 800-meter race. I ran as fast as I could. Therefore, I was leading by quite a bit at first. However, I ran out of gas in the second lap. Of course, I lost. I concluded that God created my body suitable only for a short dash. I envy all the marathon-runners in our midst. They can run for so long and not getting tired. Endurance is built upon an extensive training. Athletes set goals by gradually increase the distance. They learn how to control their pace. In an actual race, the participants will focus on the finish-line. No one will stop at a coffee shop or a store with a big sale on the way. They must beat other competitors and overcome their fatigue to win. The same principles apply to other settings in life too. Some businessmen, entertainers and politicians quit early because they cannot handle their initial success. Fame and fortune become stumbling blocks that lead to failure, instead of building blocks for further achievements. A similar situation happened to king Hezekiah. Last time, we saw his complete trust in the Lord. He understood that there was no way for his army to fight against Assyria. God credited Hezekiah's simple faith and eradicated 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night. Today, we see Hezekiah faced another huge test. His rise and fall affected not only himself, but also the destiny of Judah. A simple lesson for us is this: do not just let people see your outside, but show them the God on your inside.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 謙卑的禱告 Humble Prayer

Hezekiah now had to deal with a health crisis. The author later tells us that Hezekiah suffered from some sort of skin disease. Just like the way he handled the threat from Assyria; this time Hezekiah uttered another humble prayer before God. Prophet Isaiah conveys bad news to the king in verse 1: **In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to him and said, "This is what the Lord says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover."** Some commentators took "in those days" as the time when Assyria laid siege to Jerusalem. If that is the case, Hezekiah must be thinking: "How can I leave now? I need to protect my country. My sons aren't ready to replace me yet." It would also be disappointing if Hezekiah could not enjoy his wealth. He was about 40 years old at this time. In our society, a man at that age should be thriving in his career. He may also have a family of young kids. How will you react when a doctor tells you: "I'm sorry to inform you that it is a stage 4 cancer."? You will be thinking about your family and other loved ones. I once have a similar "life flashes in front of my eyes" moment. I was giving someone a ride. I was leaving a sub-division and going out to the main street. I thought I had the right of way at a certain intersection. I was wrong. Just then, a car was coming from my left side. I hit the brake as hard as I could. I narrowly dodged a major accident by God's protection. I hope none of you will face a scary moment like that. But very often all it takes is a simple illness. Perhaps you need to rest at home. Many things will come through your mind when you are lying on a bed. Perhaps God reminds you not to take good health, your family and the ability to work or study for granted. Do

not forget to thank God for the little things. Hezekiah knew that he would die of an incurable disease. Verses 2 to 3 tell us his reaction: **2 Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, 3 “Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly.** On the surface, it may sound like Hezekiah was bargaining with God. Since he did so much for God, the Lord should return him a favor. It is like someone says to God: “Remember that time when I made a \$1,000 offering for mission work? Also, I was one of the few persons who served the homeless people when my church called for volunteers.” God will not be manipulated by our negotiation. Every blessing is out of His grace. Hezekiah was not trying to cut a deal with God. Rather, he showed sincerity in his prayer. He implied: “God, I live a godly life to the best I can. I can’t survive this disease without Your help.” Prayer must be truthful. Since we cannot hide anything from an all-knowing God, we may as well present a full disclosure to Him. At one time I felt a lack of faith due to a personal crisis. I just told God: “Lord, You know I love You and I want to serve You. Please give me enough faith and strength to follow You.” I am still standing here by God’s mercy. God draws close to us when we humbly approach Him. God was gracious to give Hezekiah an instant answer as Isaiah was walking out of the palace. Continue to read verses 5 and 6: **5 “Go back and tell Hezekiah, the leader of my people, ‘This is what the Lord, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you. On the third day from now you will go up to the temple of the Lord. 6 I will add fifteen years to your life. And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city for my sake and for the sake of my servant David.’”** In merely three days, Hezekiah would be healthy enough to go to the temple to worship God. He would even live another fifteen years. God assured Hezekiah that He would save him from the sickness and He would save his country from Assyria. God did so to preserve His own glory and to protect the covenant He made with David. Judah would not be destroyed by the enemy this time. God would continue to put David’s descendants on the throne. God helps us not only because He is kind. He does so also because of His glory and His promises. We should hold onto those two notions when we pray. Jesus once said that we can move a mountain if we have enough faith. The question is: why does God move the mountain for us? It is not to show off how powerful our prayer is. It is to bring glory to Him. Our prayer should not stop at getting the results we want. But we need to ask how the outcome will glorify God. For example, we ask God to heal a serious disease so that people can see God working in us. We ask God for help to pass a licensing exam so that our future career can bless many people. We ask God for a spouse or a child so that we will raise a Christian family. God could exercise His healing power to Hezekiah through His words. But in this case, God made use of a prop. We see God’s instruction in verse 7: **Then Isaiah said, “Prepare a poultice of figs.” They did so and applied it to the boil, and he recovered.** Some Bible scholars say that figs indeed have some medicinal values in the ancient world. Those of you who know Chinese medicine can testify what benefits fig has. Hezekiah knew that he would get well, but he still had to use the fig patches for three days. Very often, God ministers His grace through some everyday items. Some Christian leaders advocate against receiving medical treatments. They say patients can recover if only they have enough faith. Sadly, some people died because they refused medicine. People stumble, thinking that either their faith or God was too small. There is no contradiction between seeking help from the best doctors and praying to God. The Lord gives people wisdom in research to develop new treatments. Therefore, at the end we should thank doctors for their skills and experience, and give glory to God for His healing power. After hearing the good news from Isaiah, Hezekiah asked God for a sign. We will skip that part in our study.

2. 愚昧的驕傲 Dumb Pride

Hezekiah recovered from a terminal disease. He and the whole country should rejoice. God had expected Hezekiah to go to the temple in three days, presumably to present a thanksgiving offering. We do not see that in the passage. Instead, Hezekiah displays signs of a dumb pride. First, let us look at a parallel passage in 2 Chronicles 32:25-26 – **25 But Hezekiah's heart was proud and he did not respond to the kindness shown him; therefore the Lord's wrath was on him and on Judah and Jerusalem. 26 Then Hezekiah repented of the pride of his heart, as did the people of Jerusalem; therefore the Lord's wrath did not come on them during the days of Hezekiah.** Hezekiah did not respond to God's healing grace because he was prideful. Perhaps Hezekiah gave credit to himself, thinking that a godly king like him deserved a long life. In addition, Judah people would celebrate for the outcome. They might hail: "Long live the king!" All that increased Hezekiah's pride. We can easily fall into the same trap too when we have success. We believe that we can shoot down the moon if we try harder. People's flattering will put us on a pedestal. The best antidote to pride is humility. Pride casts a spotlight on ourselves. But humility reflects the glory back to God in a mirror. It is natural to feel a sense of fulfillment when you did something well. But do not forget to thank God for His strength. When people give you compliments, thank them sincerely but also give thanks to God. Due to Hezekiah's pride, God was about to judge him and his nation. We said earlier that very likely Hezekiah's sickness occurred during the Assyrian's siege. God had intended to use Assyria to exercise His wrath on Judah. But Hezekiah humbled himself and so God changed His mind. However, Hezekiah failed the next test. We will read 2 Kings 20:12-13: **12 At that time Merodach-Baladan son of Baladan king of Babylon sent Hezekiah letters and a gift, because he had heard of Hezekiah's illness. 13 Hezekiah received the messengers and showed them all that was in his storehouses – the silver, the gold, the spices and the fine oil – his armory and everything found among his treasures. There was nothing in his palace or in all his kingdom that Hezekiah did not show them.** Babylon was the next international superpower after Assyria. Historians tell us that Merodach-Baladan was fighting with Assyria at that time. Very likely, he used Hezekiah's recovery as an opportunity to pay a visit and see if Judah was willing to join Babylon to counteract Assyria. Hezekiah showed his dumb pride a second time. He gave the Babylonian officials a tour to see his wealth and weapons. Anyone with a little commonsense would be very cautious of a foreign envoy. A friend can quickly become a foe when there is a conflict of interest. It is all about power and treasures. There is an interesting side-note in 2 Chronicles 32:31 – **...God left him to test him and to know everything that was in his heart.** God did not give Hezekiah any guidance on the matter. God chose not to intervene. Picture like a parent teaching a kid how to drive, or an apprentice learning a skill from a master. After receiving enough training, the student should know how to react to certain situations. The instructor remains silent and observes how the student responds. A good example in the Bible is God testing Abraham. He asked Abraham to sacrifice his only son Isaac on the altar. At the end, God spared Isaac. Then God said to Abraham: **"...Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son..."** God surely knew what Abraham would do. God wanted Abraham to know how much faith he had in God. Abraham passed the test. In contrast, Hezekiah failed. But being all-knowing and all-powerful, God's plans would not be derailed by Hezekiah's pride. But the king would suffer the consequence. God sent Isaiah to declare His judgment in verses 17 to 18: **17 "The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your fathers have stored**

up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the Lord. 18 And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood, that will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.” All those treasures Hezekiah proudly showed off would be seized by the Babylonians. Some of his offspring would become eunuchs. A G-rated way to say it is that they would not have any baby. Isaiah’s prophecy came true a hundred years after Hezekiah had passed away. Babylon gradually became a great empire. It conquered Assyria and other countries. That also included Judah. Refugees were sent to Babylon in three batches. Daniel and his three friends were among those people. They ended up as high officials in the palace of Babylon. It was sad to see a noble king like Hezekiah stumbled toward the end of his reign. In the previous incident, he asked God for forgiveness when God exposed his pride. But Hezekiah did not confess this time. His reply to Isaiah revealed his heart condition. Verse 19: **“The word of the Lord you have spoken is good,” Hezekiah replied. For he thought, “Will there not be peace and security in my lifetime?”** How should we interpret that remark? I concur with those commentators who said that Hezekiah did not quite care about God’s future judgment. He now had an extra fifteen years to enjoy life. He just let his heirs worry about Babylon. Till his death, Hezekiah showed no remorse about his pride. The author concludes by briefly summarizing Hezekiah’s accomplishments and departure.

結論 CONCLUSION

Do not just let people see your outside, but show them the God on your inside. Hezekiah had a wonderful beginning when he trusted God. He overcame a deadly disease and a foreign enemy. However, his faith crumbled when he boasted about his success. Do we cannot wait to tell people the great work we did? Or do we tell people how great a Savior we know? I read an interesting story when I was preparing this message. A father put a painting of Jesus in his daughter’s room. The next morning when the little girl opened her eyes, she could see a reflection of the drawing from a mirror. Then she stood up and looked at the mirror, hoping to get a better glimpse of the image. But since her position was in between the painting and the mirror, she was actually blocking the view. Therefore, she laid down on the bed again. She could see the painting from that vantage point. Next, she repeated getting up and lying down. Finally, the girl called for dad into her room. She said: “Daddy, this is funny. When I can’t see myself, I can see Jesus. But every time I see myself, I can’t see Him.” That is so true. People can see Jesus in us only when we step aside and push away all the trophies in our lives.

引言 INTRODUCTION

成功是美好的開始加上貫徹始終的結果。多年前，我在參加賽跑時汲取了這個教訓。我報名參加了一場 800 米的比賽。一開始時我盡量地快跑。因此，我領先了不少。然而，我在第二圈時沒有力氣了。當然，我最終輸了。我得出結論，神創造我的身體是只適合短跑。我羨慕我們中間的一些馬拉松選手。他們可以跑那麼久而且不會累。耐力是長期訓練的結果。運動員設定他們的目標，然後逐漸增加距離。他們學習如何控制自己的步伐。在實際比賽中，參與者將專注於終點線。沒有人會在路上停在咖啡店或大減價的商店。他們必須擊敗其他對手並克服疲勞才能獲勝。同樣的原則也適用於生活中的其他情況。一些商人、演藝人員和政治家因為無法適應初步的成功而中途而廢。名利成為他們失敗的絆腳石，而不是進一步取得成就的踏腳石。類似的情況也發生在希西家王身上。上一次，我們看到他完全信靠神。他明白他的軍隊沒有辦法打贏亞述大軍。神喜悅希西家單純的信心，祂在一夜之間消滅了 185,000 名亞述士兵。今天，我們看到希西家面臨另一個巨大的考驗。他的成與敗不單影響到他自己，也影響到猶大的命運。從中我們可以學到一個簡單的教訓：不要只讓人們看到你的外面，也要讓他們看到你內心的神。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 謙卑的禱告 Humble Prayer

經文說希西家要面臨一個健康的危機。作者後來告訴我們，希西家患有某種皮膚病。就像他應付亞述的威脅一樣；這一次，希西家在神面前謙卑地禱告。先知以賽亞在第 1 節中向王傳達壞消息：那時，希西家病得要死。亞摩斯的兒子先知以賽亞去見他，對他說：「耶和華如此說：『你當留遺命與你的家，因為你必死，不能活了。』」一些解經家認為「那時」是指亞述圍困耶路撒冷的時候。如果是這樣理解的話，希西家也許在想：「我現在怎麼可以離開？我需要保護我的國家。我的兒子們還沒有準備好接班。」另外，如果希西家英年早逝的話，他也無法享受他的財富。此時，他大約 40 歲。在我們的社會中，這個年齡的男人應該是事業正在蒸蒸日上的時候。如果已經成家的話，他的孩子可能還很小。當醫生告訴你：「很抱歉，這是第四期癌症。」時，你會有何反應？你會想到你的家人和其他親人。我曾經有過類似的「生命在我眼前閃過」的時刻。我在接送一個人到某個地方。我正要開車離開一個小區，然後前往主要的

街道。我以為我在某個路口有優先權。但是我搞錯了。就在這時，一輛車從我的左邊開過來。我馬上踩剎車。感謝神的保護，我逃過了一場事禍。我希望我們中間沒有人會面臨類似的驚險時刻。但很多時候，我們可能只是生一場小病。也許你需要在家休息。當你躺在床上時，你會想到很多事情。也許神提醒你不要把身體健康、家庭和工作的能力視為理所當然。不要忘記為小事感謝神。希西家知道他會死於不治之症。第 2 至 3 節告訴我們他的反應：**2 希西家就轉臉朝牆，禱告耶和華說：3 「耶和華啊，求你記念我在你面前怎樣存完全的心，按誠實行事，又做你眼中所看為善的。」**希西家就痛哭。從表面上看，希西家好像是在與神討價還價。既然他為神做了那麼多事情，神就應該報答他。就像有人對神說：「還記得我為宣教工作奉獻一千美元的那次嗎？另外，當教會找人服事時，我是少數為流浪漢服務的同工之一。」神不會被我們的談判所操縱。任何祝福都是出於祂的恩典。希西家並不是要跟神作買賣交易。他在禱告表現出真誠。他暗示：「神啊，我盡我所能過敬虔的生活。沒有祢的幫助，我無法面對這場疾病。」禱告必須是誠懇的。既然我們無法向無所不知的神隱瞞任何事情，我們不妨向祂傾心吐意。有一次我碰到一個難關，我感到缺乏信心。我便告訴神：「主啊，你知道我愛你，我的心願是事奉祢。請給我足夠的信心和力量來跟隨祢。」因著神的憐憫，我今天仍然站在這裡。當我們謙卑地接近神時，神就會親近我們。以賽亞離開皇宮時，神便顯出恩慈，並給希西家一個即時的答覆。請繼續閱讀第 5 節和第 6 節：**5 「你回去告訴我民的君希西家說：耶和華你祖大衛的神如此說：『我聽見了你的禱告，看見了你的眼淚，我必醫治你；到第三日，你必上到耶和華的殿。6 我必加增你十五年的壽數，並且我要救你和這城脫離亞述王的手。我為自己和我僕人大衛的緣故，必保護這城。』」**三天之後，希西家就會痊癒，並且可以去聖殿敬拜神。他甚至還能再活十五年。神向希西家保證，祂會醫治他，也會救他的國家脫離亞述。神這樣做是為了維護祂的榮耀，並保護祂與大衛所立的約。這次猶大不會被敵人消滅。神會繼續讓大衛的後裔繼位。神幫助我們不僅僅是因為祂是滿有恩慈的。祂這樣做也是為了祂的榮耀和應許。我們禱告時應該記住這兩點。耶穌曾經說過，如果我們有足夠的信心就能移山。問題是：為什麼神要為我們移山？當然不是要炫耀我們的禱告有多麼利害，乃是為要榮耀神。因此我們的禱告不應該停留在我們想要的結果。我們需要問，這個結果如何榮耀神。例如，我們祈求神醫治嚴重的疾病，使別人看到神在我們身上的作為。我們祈求神幫助我們通過專業考試，讓我們的職業能夠造福許多人。我們向神祈求配偶或孩子，希望建立一個基督徒的家庭。神可以通過祂的話賜下醫治的能力。但是這一次神使用了一個道具。我們在第 7 節看到神的指示：**以賽亞說：「當取一塊無花果餅來。」人就取了來，貼在瘡上，王便痊愈了。**一些聖經學者說，無花果在古代確實有一些藥用價值。懂中醫的人可以告訴我們無花果有什麼療效。希西

家知道自己會好起來的，但他還是要完成三天的治療。很多時候，神通過一些日常用品來賜予祂的恩典。一些基督徒領袖主張不要接受醫療。他們說，只要病人有足夠的信心，他們就能康復。可悲的是，有些人因為拒絕吃藥而死了。人們被絆倒，以為自己的信心或是神不靈光。向最好的醫生尋求幫助和向神禱告之間並不矛盾。神賜人智慧做研究，以開發新的治療方法。最終我們應該感謝醫生的技術和經驗，並歸榮耀給神。希西家聽到以賽亞的好消息後向神求一個證據。我們會跳過那個片段。

2. 愚昧的驕傲 Dumb Pride

希西家從絕症中痊癒。他和整個國家都應該歡欣鼓舞。神期待希西家三天後會去聖殿獻上感謝祭。我們在故事中看不到這一點。相反，希西家表現出愚昧的驕傲。首先，讓我們看看歷代志下 32:25-26 的一段平行經文：**25 希西家卻沒有照他所蒙的恩報答耶和華；因他心裡驕傲，所以忿怒要臨到他和猶大並耶路撒冷。26 但希西家和耶路撒冷的居民覺得心裡驕傲，就一同自卑，以致耶和華的忿怒在希西家的日子沒有臨到他們。**希西家沒有回應神醫治的恩典，因為他太驕傲。或許希西家自以為是，認為像他這樣虔誠的君王應該長壽。此外，猶大人會為他高興。他們可能會歡呼：「國王萬歲！」這一切都會使希西家更加驕傲。當我們稍有成就時，我們也會落入同樣的陷阱。我們相信，如果我們加把勁，連月亮都可以打下來。人們的恭維會把我們放在高台上。驕傲最有效的解藥就是謙卑。驕傲好像把大光燈照在我們身上。但是謙卑就像鏡子把榮耀反射回神。為個人成就感到滿足是很自然的。但不要忘记感謝神賜力量。當別人讚賞你時，要真誠地感謝他們，同時也要感謝神。由於希西家的驕傲，神即將審判他和他的國家。我們之前說過，希西家的病很可能發生在亞述人圍城的期間。神的原意是要使用亞述降下祂的憤怒。但由於希西家謙卑自己，神改變了主意。然而，希西家在第二次的考驗中失敗了。我們將閱讀列王紀下 20:12-13：**12 那時，巴比倫王巴拉但的兒子比羅達巴拉但聽見希西家病而痊愈，就送書信和禮物給他。13 希西家聽從使者的話，就把他寶庫的金子、銀子、香料、貴重的膏油，和他武庫的一切軍器，並他所有的財寶，都給他們看。他家中和他全國之內，希西家沒有一樣不給他們看的。**巴比倫是在亞述之後的下一個國際超級大國。歷史學家告訴我們，當時比羅達巴拉但正在與亞述打仗。很可能，他利用希西家的康復作為訪問的機會，看看猶大是否願意與巴比倫結盟來對抗亞述。希西家第二次顯示出他愚昧的驕傲。他帶領巴比倫官員參觀他的財富和武器。稍微有點常識的人都會謹慎地接待外國的使節。當發生利益衝突時，朋友很快就會變成敵人。這一切都是為了權力和財富。在歷代志下 32:31 中有一個有趣的附注：**...這件事神離開他，要試驗他，好知道他心內如何。**在這件事上，神沒有給希西家任何指示。神選擇不干預。就像父母教孩子開車，

或是學徒向師傅學習技能。接受足夠的培訓後，學員應該知道如何處理某些狀況。老師保持沉默並觀察學生的反應。聖經中一個很好的例子是神試驗亞伯拉罕。祂要求亞伯拉罕在祭壇上獻上他唯一的兒子以撒。最後，神阻止了亞伯拉罕。然後神對亞伯拉罕說：「…現在我知道你是敬畏神的了；因為你沒有將你的兒子…留下不給我。」神當然知道亞伯拉罕會如何回應。神是要亞伯拉罕明白他對神的信心有多大。亞伯拉罕通過了考驗。相比之下，希西家失敗了。因為神是無所不知、無所不能的，祂的計劃不會因希西家的驕傲而被破壞。但這個王卻要承擔後果。神差遣以賽亞在 17 至 18 節中宣告祂的審判：17「日子必到，凡你家裡所有的，並你列祖積蓄到如今的，都要被擄到巴比倫去，不留下一樣。這是耶和華說的。18 並且從你本身所生的眾子，其中必有被擄去在巴比倫王宮裡當太監的。」希西家驕傲地炫耀的所有財富都會被巴比倫人奪走。他的一些後代將成為太監。以賽亞的預言在希西家去世一百年後應驗了。巴比倫逐漸成為一個強大的帝國。它征服了亞述和其他國家，包括猶大。難民分三批被送往巴比倫。但以理和他的三個朋友就在其中。他們最終成為巴比倫皇宮裡的高級官員。希西家這位敬虔的王以悲劇收場。在之前的事件中，當神揭開希西家的驕傲時，他請求神的饒恕。但這一次，希西家並沒有認罪。他對以賽亞的回答顯示出他的心靈狀況。第 19 節說：希西家對以賽亞說：「你所說耶和華的話甚好！若在我的年日中有太平和穩固的景況，豈不是好嗎？」我們應該如何理解這句話？我同意一些解經家說希西家不太關心神未來的審判。反正他還有十五年可以享受生活，他就讓他的後代去擔心巴比倫。直到離世時，希西家都沒有為自己的驕傲表現出任何悔意。作者最後概要地描述希西家的成就作為終結。

結論 CONCLUSION

不要只讓人們看到你的外面，也要讓他們看到你內心的神。希西家有一個美好的開始，因為他信靠神。他勝過了絕症和外邦敵人。然而，當他陷入驕傲時，他的信心便瓦解了。我們是否迫不及待地向人炫耀自己的成就？或者我們是否迫不及待地向人介紹那一位偉大的救主？在準備這篇信息時，我讀到了一個有趣的故事。一位父親在他女兒的房間裡放了一幅耶穌的畫。第二天早上，當小女孩睜開眼睛時，她可以從鏡子裡看到那幅畫的倒影。然後她站起來看著鏡子，希望能更清楚地看見影像。但由於她的位置在畫和鏡子之間，她實際上擋住了視線。於是，她又躺在床上。她可以從那個角度看到畫像。接下來，她反復起床和躺下。最後，女孩把爸爸叫進了她的房間。她說：「爸爸，這很有趣。當我看不到自己時，我可以看到耶穌。但每次我看到自己，我卻看不到耶穌。」那是事實。只有當我們站到一旁並挪開我們的所有獎座時，別人才能從我們身上看到耶穌。