

Fact Sheet for **“Standing Strong When the Heat is Off”** **Isaiah 38:1-22**

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03/01/2015

What are we to be about?

Evangelism & Discipleship (Matthew 28:18-20)

The greatest gift anyone can receive is salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. We teach children at home, in Church, at AWANA, in youth group, in CEF. We invite people to church. We speak to people during the week. We are always ready to give a reason for the hope that is within us (1 Peter 3:15)

When someone believes in Jesus Christ and is saved there are several changes that take place. We, as a chosen people, have been called out of darkness into Light (1 Peter 2:9). We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). God seals us in Christ with the Holy Spirit Who is the guarantee of our inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14). We are freed from slavery to sin (Romans 6). We are instructed by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:12). You see, salvation is not the end of the process but the beginning. We now embark on the process of discipleship.

The word “disciple” means “pupil, apprentice, learner”. We are to grow in our knowledge and maturity in Christ. How far we go as disciples is up to us.

Last week we saw how God’s plan is never thwarted. Remember the 185,000? This week we are reminded that any of us can either follow God poorly or with wisdom.

Hezekiah has generally been a good king in Jerusalem. He has followed after God. He cleansed the temple and restored worship there. A great Passover was celebrated under his reign. He removed the places of idol worship from the land. And, once he ran out of options, he trusted in God for victory over Sennacherib. But Hezekiah wasn’t perfect. He initially tried to protect himself against Assyria with silver and gold (2 Kings 18:13-16). But it was God Who gave a great victory (185,000). God would test Hezekiah, and we have in that story one of the great miracles of the Bible.

Parallels: 2 Kings 20:1-11; 2 Chronicles 32:24-26

Read Isaiah 38:1

Hezekiah got a terminal diagnosis from God!

“In those days” does not indicate “after these things”. These events may well have happened before the 185,000 (consider verse 6).

Read Isaiah 38:2-3

Hezekiah was about 39 years old at this time (2 Chronicles 29:1; Isaiah 36:1).

Read Isaiah 38:4-6

ESV 2 Kings 20:4 And before Isaiah had gone out of the middle court, the word of the LORD came to him:

Read Isaiah 38:7-8

ESV 2 Kings 20:8-11 And Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "What shall be the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up to the house of the LORD on the third day?"⁹ And Isaiah said, "This shall be the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that he has promised: shall the shadow go

forward ten steps, or go back ten steps?" ¹⁰ And Hezekiah answered, "It is an easy thing for the shadow to lengthen ten steps. Rather let the shadow go back ten steps." ¹¹ And Isaiah the prophet called to the LORD, and he brought the shadow back ten steps, by which it had gone down on the steps of Ahaz.

This may be a different looking sundial than what you are used to.



In any case the shadow (on steps or on a sundial) would go backwards instead of forwards ten steps. This is one of the great miracles of the Bible! And it was not worldwide (2 Chronicles 32:31).

Read Isaiah 38:9-22

But there was a problem.

NLT 2 Chronicles 32:25-26 But Hezekiah did not respond appropriately to the kindness shown him, and he became proud. So the LORD's anger came against him and against Judah and Jerusalem. ²⁶ Then Hezekiah humbled himself and repented of his pride, as did the people of Jerusalem. So the LORD's anger did not fall on them during Hezekiah's lifetime.

This would not be the last of Hezekiah's difficulties either.

Here's the point. Being a good disciple of Jesus Christ is *not* equivalent to being saved.

I can have placed my faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins, but I can be a poor disciple at the same time.

I can also be a good disciple today and a poor one tomorrow.

I can passionately progress towards being a mature Christian during my life, or I can end my years on this earth as a poor disciple, and an immature Christian.

I can also go backwards in my discipleship.

We began this morning with one of the favorite passages in the NT (Matthew 28:18-20).

Evangelism we will never give up.

But... how are you doing on your discipleship? We need to be constantly vigilant on where we stand with God.

Will you falter, as Hezekiah did when his back wasn't to the wall, or will you stand strong in the relatively easy times also?

What level of Christian maturity do you want to achieve in this life?