

MANASSEH'S CONVERSION

(2 Chronicles 33; 2 Kings 21)

The story of King Manasseh shows that what is impossible with man is possible with God. Manasseh had no thought, place or time for God; in fact, he openly resisted and rebelled against God. If anyone could be beyond hope, and be written off for good, it would have been that immoral, wicked, apostate king. But God did not write him off. God mercifully saved him.

Manasseh's Rebellion

Manasseh was the son of the godly king Hezekiah. He came to the throne at age 12 and reigned for a total of 55 years. He was the longest reigning king in the history of Judah and Israel. But in spite of his father's godly example, Manasseh quickly turned the kingdom from a spiritual high to a detestable low. He caused Judah to do ***more evil than the nations which Israel had dispossessed from the land*** (33:9).

Manasseh's sinful "reign of terror" would eventually provoke God to such anger, that He would subject the nation to 70 years of captivity in Babylon. In scripture, the greatest blame for the exile is plainly ascribed to Manasseh.

How did it all begin?

It was not as if he had never heard about God and His commandments. His father was the godliest king after David. Besides Hezekiah there was Isaiah the prophet and other righteous men in the kingdom. The priests and Levites were teaching people the law of God. There was such a spiritual heritage there!

Why did his Manasseh, the son a good king, turn out so bad?

We can't answer that question with certainty, because the text gives no clue. One thing is for certain. The bible says, ***"The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?"*** (Jer.17:9). That is to say every heart, yours and mine included.

While all unbelievers are the servants of sin, not all are daring, bold sinners. On the surface many are decent, law-abiding people. They have a sense of respectability and shame. They make sure that their sin remains within socially acceptable limits or behind shut doors. However, Manasseh's corruption exceeded community standards! He had no sense of shame. He sinned against great light; he sinned boldly. He brought sin to a higher level.

Take a good look at the list of his sins, found in 2 Chron. 33—

2 But he did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel.

3 For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down; he raised up altars for the Baals, and made wooden images; and he worshiped all the host of heaven and served them.

4 He also built altars in the house of the Lord, of which the Lord had said, "In Jerusalem shall My name be forever."

5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord.

6 Also he caused his sons to pass through the fire in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom; he practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft and sorcery, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger.

7 He even set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon his son, "In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever."

As if that wasn't bad enough, 2 Kings 21, fills us in with more of his evil works.

2 Kings 21:16— **Moreover Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, besides his sin by which he made Judah sin, in doing evil in the sight of the Lord.**

Manasseh was a cold-blooded murderer. He slaughtered many innocent people, including many prophets. The prophet Isaiah's brutal death is attributed to him, who apparently had the prophet placed in a hallow tree and sawn in half (Heb. 11:37). The progression of evil in his life is simply astonishing: it went from evil (v2), to much evil (v6), to more evil (v9).

Manasseh's Affliction

Verse 10 tells us, that Manasseh and the people wouldn't listen to the prophets that God was sending them. And so, the time of judgment finally came; and in verse 11, we read; **"Therefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the army of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze fetters, and carried him off to Babylon."**

God afflicted him by "dragging him away", but not without warning. God afflicted him for his good. Drastically as the action may have been, it was all with a view to bringing him to his senses. We can say afflictions are blessings in disguise. Pain can be the gateway to heaven.

Psalms 119: 67— **Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word.**

Jonah 2:2— **And he said: "I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction, And He answered me." "Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, And You heard my voice."**

Manasseh's Conversion

If anyone was a candidate for Hell, you would have thought Manasseh would be. He deserved every part of Hell, for the entire evil he cooked up. But the good news is that God is merciful, long-suffering and patient, and with Him there is hope for the worst of sinners who repents. As with Saul of Tarsus, the Lord delights to take the chief of sinners and turn him into the best of saints as a trophy of His grace.

In that distant prison, Manasseh had lots of time to reflect over his evil, wretched life. His name means "made to forget", but as he lay down cornered as a fox, in that Babylonian hole, he couldn't put out of your mind his life of multitudinous sin. He came face to face with his sins and made a complete surrender to the Lord of heaven for forgiveness. The great "I", surrendered to the great "I AM".

We read (33:12-13) that ***"Now when he was in affliction, he implored the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed to Him; and God received his entreaty, heard his supplication."***

God heard his prayer. He was moved by it and answered it. What mercy! What grace!

1 Peter 5:6—***Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of god, that he may exalt you in due time:***

Psalms 34:18—***The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit.***

Then, then ***"He knew that the Lord was God"*** (33:13). His repentance was real. His salvation is one of the greatest displays of God's mercy for an undeserving, rebellious soul. Manasseh was saved in the slammer at the age of 47.

Manasseh was an illustration of how God would one day punish his rebellious people with seventy-years of captivity in Babylon. But he was also an illustration of the mercy God would show to His rebellious people once they repented; and of how He would restore them to the land when their captivity was over.

Manasseh's Restoration

Look at verse 13: God ***"brought him again to Jerusalem to his kingdom."*** For the next 20 years left to Manasseh, he sought to undo the wrong of the past. Read 2 Chronicles 33:14-17.

But consequences of sin remained. ***"The people still sacrificed in the high places"*** (33:17). Albeit, only to the Lord God. The nation was damaged by Manasseh's sin. His son Amon served his father's former idols, and did not repent, and was assassinated after two years on the throne. Manasseh's repentance did not restore to life Isaiah and the lives of others he had murdered, including his sons. He had to live with the

consequences and scars of his sins. Sin always leaves scars. But his resolute faith would now lead his heart, peacefully for the rest of his days.

The lesson of the story is that everyone is redeemable! We don't have to write anyone off! No one is beyond the hope of God's mercy and grace. ***Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*** (1 Tim. 1:15). ***God wills that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth*** (1 Tim. 2:4).

No matter how terrible your sins and the scope of them may be, God can forgive you. His mercy and grace are greater than our sins. Jesus Christ saves and forgives. He took Manasseh's sins and the sins of the world upon Himself on the cross.

Isaiah prophesied that the coming Messiah would as a sacrificial lamb be crucified and punished for our iniquities and transgressions (Isaiah 53:4-7). He came, He died, He was buried and He rose triumphantly to do away with sin once and for all.

The promise of faith is this: ***For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*** (Romans 10:13). ***Salvation is found in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved*** (Acts 4:12).
