

## 2 Chronicles 33

We come tonight to another one of those quandaries that we find ourselves confronted by occasionally whereby we just sorta scratch our head and say, “How did this happen?” Hezekiah has just died, probably the single most godly king Judah ever knew outside of David himself, but Manasseh (his son) seems to be the “Anti-Hezekiah.” I’m not sure he could’ve been more *ungodly* even if he’d tried to be. And it’s a mystery to me but we see it happen more often than we’d care to even admit and that is ungodly children springing forth out of godly homes. It doesn’t make sense to me, yet nonetheless it’s a reality. I mean we could see an ungodly person coming out of a home that was full of neglect or abuse, parents always at each other’s throat, an environment of self-centeredness and indulgence in the flesh. We could perhaps see how that might cause one to become disillusioned with life and say, “You know what, I’m done with this.” and They see life as one let down after another and feel as though they may as well take what they can because it’s either take, or be taken from. And it’s tragic ( and of course Christ is the cure, He’s the solution to such a problem) but my mind can compute along those lines and see how that could happen. But when a child has been raised in the fear and the admonition of the Lord, not perfect parents but godly parents, parents who love the Lord, serve the Lord, want to bring honor and glory to the Lord, their child is subjected to the Word of the Lord and yet they just walk away from all that to serve the wicked tendencies of the flesh and set themselves on a path of self-destruction...I don’t get it. Oh we can speculate regarding the influence of their peers, or a rebellion against the idea of being identified with mom or dad and wanting to be recognized for themselves or whatever, but that doesn’t help make sense of such a circumstance.

Yet it happens, and such is the situation with the case that’s before us tonight. From an incredibly godly king, to the single most ungodly king Judah ever knew in his son. Notice.

Vs1-2

So we’re able to note a couple of things straight out of the shoot about this guy who would go down in the chronicles of Judah as the most evil king that was ever upon their throne. #1 We see that he was 12 yrs old when he became king. You say, “So what, what does that mean to me?” Well perhaps you remember that there was a point whereby his dad (Hezekiah) was on his death bed and Isaiah the prophet came to him and told him to set his house in order because he was going to die and not live (as opposed to live and not die). And then Isaiah turned around and proceeded to leave the palace, and as Hezekiah was laying there no doubt stunned by the news we read that he turned his head toward the wall and began to weep and to pray. And he said, “Remember now, O Lord, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what is good in Your sight.” and Really what that boils down to is that he was crying out to God that he might live, he didn’t want to die. And we can’t really blame him for that death isn’t really a natural thing for us, we were programmed for life, death is an enemy. However we also realize it’ll serve as a snare to us anytime we set our passion, our affection upon the things of this world. And that’s the undercurrent of Hezekiah’s request, “I’ve got a good life, don’t want to leave this planet, my affections are here.”

And again that's a natural type of a thing, but how careful we need to be when it comes to "coming against" the word, or the plan and purpose of God for our lives. You see the 1<sup>st</sup> word of God to him, the plan of God *for* him was, "Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live." But rather than simply accept it, or say, "Lord you know what's best for Your eternal glory and my eternal good, so Your will be done."

He began to barter with the Lord, ask a favor from the Lord. Which brings up an interesting concept to consider, is it possible to actually change God's plan through prayer? I'm not speaking of His ultimate sovereign purpose, but can I alter the details of God's will for my life or a certain situation through prayer. Well, it would seem as though the answer to that would be "Yes" at times you can. Remember God had ordained that the children of Israel were to eat manna, they cried out, prayed and pleaded for meat, so God said, "You want meat? Fine, I'll send you meat till it runs out your nose." and You recall that didn't work out so well for them. I'm reminded of Balaam, how Balak promised him a fortune if he'd come curse the children of Israel as they were advancing toward the Promised Land. God told Balaam "No, don't go." Long story short Balaam whined and begged and pleaded until God finally said, "Ok, go but only say what I tell you to." and You remember that he ultimately (though he blessed them over and over again) told Balak how to seduce them through the Moabite women and bring a curse upon themselves. The bible says he forsook the right way and went astray having followed after the wages of unrighteousness. So it would seem as though should you pursue the Lord enough regarding the course you want to take that at times He'll give you what you want. But mark my words it'll never turn out for the better.

You're never going to get a better path for your eternal good, and God's eternal glory than what God has purposed for you as the priority of His heart. It only goes down hill from there, and so we're reminded, "Be careful what you ask for, you just might get it." How much better to couch our requests (because we're to let our request be made known there's no doubt, that's biblical) in the context of, "Nevertheless not my will, but Your will be done."

You see Hezekiah was praying asking God to heal him and before Isaiah got ½ way out of the court yard God turned him around and said, "Tell Hezekiah I've heard his prayer, I've seen his tears, and I'll heal you." Sounds great, God gave him 15 more yrs. But it was during those 15 yrs that he showed his treasures to the Babylonians which set them in motion to advance on Judah in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. And we read here in Vs 1 that Manasseh was 12 when he took the throne which means he was born in that extended 15 yrs of Hezekiah's life. Had Hezekiah died Manasseh would've never taken the throne. And God makes it real clear in His word that Manasseh is the one who set the irreversible chain of events in motion that led to Judah's being carried away in captivity. So which was the better option? To accept God's word, God's will initially as it's portrayed to you originally, or to ask God for an alternate experience, plan B (if you will).

Now having said that with out Manasseh there would've been no Josiah, and Josiah just outside of Hezekiah was the best king Judah ever knew under David. So you delve too deeply in that whole subject and your head will start swimming. I'm just glad God is the One who's in control, but best to submit yourself to the will of God and not ask for other options. If it's not God's will we want deliverance, if it is we want the grace to bear up under it whatever the case may be.

In Vs 2 we read that he did evil in the sight of the Lord (notice) according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. What's the implication? That if God judged such sins in the life of a pagan nation, casting them out of the land, what do you think He'll do with the children of Israel who are indulging in the very sins, in fact going beyond those sins (as we'll see in a minute)? How can God not judge them as well? He has to, or His righteousness will be compromised.

Think about it, He judged a nation who didn't know His word on the basis of their abominations before Him. Now, if you know His word but walk in willful rebellion against His word to the same if not a worser degree, how much more is His judgment an inevitability? The bible is clear, "*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*" Gal 6:7 You cannot sin against the word of God and not expect ramifications to find you, your sin *will* find you out.

Vs3-8

Obviously that was a conditional clause which they didn't walk according to the condition, they weren't careful to do all that God had commanded them, according to the law and the statutes and the ordinances of Moses. Therefore God was going to remove their feet from the land. But this is the short of the things Manasseh was apart of, hey if it was evil, or wicked, if it somehow indulged the flesh, he was in on it. He worshiped the stars (which dated back as far even as ancient Babel), he was into astrology which the scriptures expressly forbade. God had said through Moses, "*...take heed, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the Lord your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage.*" Deut 4:19 In Ch 17 of the book of Duet we read where the worship of the sun or the moon, or any of the hosts of heaven was a sin punishable by death, it was a capital offense. Here's Manasseh building altars to the hosts of heaven in the very courts of the temple of the Lord. He sacrificed his sons in the fires of Molech, (another sin punishable by death). He practiced soothsaying (or fortune telling, looking into the future via various enchantments), he used witchcraft and sorcery, (speaking of casting spells, seeking to invoke spirits under his command), he consulted mediums and spiritists, (those who would contact the dead, and invite spirits to possess them so as to communicate with others), he was just into every aspect of the occult that he could get his hands on. Of which the bible condemns all of the above mentioned.

Deut 18, *“There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord,”* Deut 18:10-12 and So where we read that he did “much evil” in the sight of the Lord, that seems to me to be an understatement. And it “provoked Him to anger.” Manasseh was simply in full fledged rebellion against the word and ways of God. You couldn’t get any farther out there, human sacrifice, idol worship, black magic, demonic invocations, he’d reached the bottom of the barrel as it pertains to human depravity, immorality, and corruption.

He even set a carved image in the temple itself, 2 Kings tells us it was the goddess Asherah who was worshipped through ritual prostitution. And so we’re seeing here that all these yrs that his dad had served the Lord, walked in revival, renewal, were all torn down and done away with in really in the grand scheme of things but a moment in time. Something you’ve spent your whole life dedicated to, has been wiped out in what seems to be really no time at all, and that by none other than your own son. And here’s the real kicker, we read in 2 Kings that during all this the people paid no attention, they took a, “Whatever it doesn’t really matter to me” approach. I can’t help but think of the lethargic, apathetic attitude of a significant chunk of the church today with regard to our own nations leaders, what they’re doing, the laws they’re passing. Just sitting by figuring “Ah, what am I going to do anyway, the bible says it’ll only get worse toward the end,” and justifying the position of paying no attention. The bible exhorts us to be involved, to be praying for those in office, rulers, those who are over us on the governmental level.

Because we’re but a pen stroke away from having our freedom to worship God openly, and proclaim His word in totality taken away from us legally. Do you realize that there are motions being made right now that could make it against the law to teach what the bible says about homosexuality declaring it a hate crime punishable by time in prison? How far we’ve come from the foundations of our nation, “But they paid no attention.”

Vs9

He took them beyond the point of the pagan nations that God had eradicated and eliminated before He brought them into the land.

Vs10-11

A perfect picture of the way sin enslaves you, the Assyrians ran a hook through his nose and bound him with brass chains and led him away captive, humiliated. Now the Lord spoke to him, didn’t leave him with out an opportunity to hear His word, respond and repent. Leave the book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles and look quickly at 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 21:10-16

Now God was under no obligation to warn them, send a witness to them or anything else, yet because of His mercy He did. But the people just pressed on and Manasseh got progressively worse, shedding innocent blood till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to the other with the innocent blood he'd spilled. There's no way to verify it but tradition says that Manasseh took the prophet Isaiah, placed him in a hollowed out log and had him sawn in two. Of course the book of Hebrews speaks of those who stayed committed to God by faith mentioning those sawn in two and the general consensus is that, that's a reference to Isaiah at the hands of Manasseh. But no one was willing to listen to God's word, therefore the only recourse was God's judgment. Repent of our sin, or receive God's judgment, there's no 3<sup>rd</sup> option, Judah wouldn't repent, Manasseh wouldn't repent. So God sent the Assyrian army in to utterly humiliate him, they bound him with bronze fetters, led him off to Babylon with hooks through his nose.

Vs 12-13

Manasseh becomes the quintessential picture of the principle found in Rom 5:20, "*But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,*" the chief of sinners shown mercy that in him first God might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. "Man if God can forgive that guy...He can forgive me." We're seeing here the amazing grace of God on display, there is no sin that you can commit you that God can't forgive, you can not go so far down that God won't lift you up in the person of Jesus Christ Implore the Lord your God, humble yourself greatly before Him, cry out to Him and He will receive your entreaty, and hear your supplication. Manasseh was a wicked, wicked man, had been apart of things that we can't even imagine they were so grotesque and unutterable, yet he cried out to God from the bottom of his heart and God forgave his sin and we'll see him on the other side, incredible.

God's not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. "*As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.*" Ezek 33:11 and God is so concerned for our *eternal* well being that He'll allow and at times even orchestrate the crumbling of our *temporal* world that we might look to, and come to depend solely on Him. The psalmist said, "*Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word.*" Ps 119:67 He said, "*It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.*" Ps 119:71 There's something about affliction that drives us to the Word of God, we begin to seek Him much more earnestly, Manasseh had afflicted countless people, spilled their innocent blood. Now he finds himself in that place and so what does he do, what anyone should do when they're in that place, he genuinely humbles himself before the Lord, cries out to God and God hears him and forgives him.

God has said in His word, "*Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.*" Ps 50:15 Remember Manasseh was raised in a godly home, but then he rebelled, now all these yrs later when he finds himself in jeopardy what did he do, he returned to his roots, he knew. And if you have a "wild child," you've trained them up in the fear and admonition of the Lord yet they've gone astray, they know where they need to be and in Whom it is that they should trust.

And when they find themselves at the bottom of the barrel they'll know they can cry out to God and God will be there for them, don't lose hope, pray for them, and don't quit praying for them, God knows how to rattle their cage. I don't know that there's any better illustration of an OT prodigal than Manasseh, completely left the fold, but at the end of himself he begged for God's forgiveness and God was right there for him, what a gracious and merciful God we serve. It's not Manasseh's sin that we marvel at so much as it is God's grace and mercy, His willingness to forgive, renew, and restore the repentant.

Vs14-17

What is this? We're seeing here the fruits of repentance. You can not turn *toward* God with out simultaneously turning *from* your sin, true repentance *always* brings a change. Remember James said, "...*Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.*" James 2:18 Remember when Zacchaeus came to Christ, he'd been ripping people off for yrs. Once he'd met Jesus Christ he decided to give ½ his goods to the poor, and if he'd cheated anyone he restored 4 fold. And Jesus said, "Today salvation has come to this house." Why? Because of his works? No, his works didn't save him, his works were the result of salvation. There's is something about repentance that will bring restitution, restoration, it'll make things right, tend to those areas that have been long neglected. He restored walls, he cared about the kingdom, he removed the foreign gods and pagan altars, he repaired the altar of the Lord, sacrificed peace offerings and thank offerings on it. His life was radically different, he'd met the Lord.

And he commanded the people to serve the Lord God of Israel, and they did, but not seemingly from the heart, they didn't tear down the high places, the places of unauthorized worship, they just used them to sacrifice to the Lord instead. Unfortunately you can't undo in a few yrs a life time of wickedness and ungodly influence upon a nation. It's so much easier to move people away from godliness, than it is to take them from ungodliness, because ungodliness appeals to my flesh. Godliness brings death to my flesh, causes me to crucify the flesh along with its passions and desires. So Manasseh sought to set things right, but the people were reluctant to make the changes.

Vs18-20

So Manasseh died a forgiven man, yet the ramifications of his sin would ripple out for generations to come. We read in Jeremiah regarding Judah's judgment, "...*I will appoint over them four forms of destruction, says the Lord: 'the sword to slay, the dogs to drag, the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the earth to devour and destroy. I will hand them over to trouble, to all kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, for what he did in Jerusalem.'*" Jer 15:3-4 God will not be mocked, sin can be forgiven, but the ramifications for that sin will play out. Now Amon his son was placed on the throne.

Vs21-24

No doubt one of the greatest sorrows in Manasseh's life was the fact that he'd led such an ungodly life that his own son wouldn't turn to the Lord. Manasseh repented, no doubt shared his experience with his son, but his son wanted nothing to do with it and died in his sin. He took the throne, and immediately began to reverse the latter reforms of his father, waxed worse and worse, followed his dad's example up to the point of repentance, he didn't follow that example.

Only grew more and more wicked, and his reign only lasted 2 yrs and he was assassinated by his own servants. Maybe he thought, "Hey, dad did this until he was old and then he repented, God will forgive me when I'm old to." How many young people presume upon the grace of God thinking they'll live their sinful lives now then when they're old they'll repent. But you're never given the guarantee that something won't take your life suddenly and unexpectedly while you're still young, then what? You die in your sin to be eternally separated from God and the people you love ( and the people who love you). Why take the chance? Better to repent now, live your life set apart to the glory of God that He might use you to the full, don't give God only the dregs of your life, once it's all used up. Hey, most definitely coming to Christ at *any time* is better than coming to Christ at *no time*. My point is that today is the best day to get right with the Lord, lead your life from this day forward for Him.

Vs25

And Josiah will surface as a ray of light shining through the darkness of the this period in Judah's history. For over 50 yrs Judah had been immersed in pagan religions and various practices of the occult. Manasseh sought to set some things straight toward the end of his reign only to have Amon come along and plunge things straight back into darkness. Josiah is a welcome breath of fresh air.

But what a display we're given of the grace of God in Manasseh's life. What hope for humanity lies in his testimony, there's nothing you've done whereby you can stand and say, "God can't forgive me," hey as long as there is breath in your lungs and you're on the top side of this earth God can forgive you. And He wants to forgive you, pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall, but if we humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord, He will lift us up.

Prayer Points:

God we want to walk in humility before You. Forgive us of pride and self confidence, with out You we can do nothing, but through You all things are possible. God Your mercy and Your grace staggers us, it's so abundant, so overwhelming, so inexhaustible, that You would look to and be mindful of us blows us away. Father we want to give You the 1<sup>st</sup> fruits of our lives. I pray that be there anyone here not right with You, contemplating surrendering their hearts fully to You, that they wouldn't hesitate, thinking there's another time, another day, but instead that they'd take the time to do so right here, right now. Thank You Lord for drawing us to repentance in Your goodness...

