

2 Chronicles 34

Judah is now cresting upon their final wind of revival before the fate of captivity rests upon them. A pin hole of light is now piercing through the darkness as young Josiah takes the throne. Although Ch 33 is only 25 Vs from start to stop it composes a time period of nearly 60 yrs of which included the darkest times the kingdom of Judah every knew.

Manasseh who had the longest reign of any of the kings (55yrs) was by far the single most wicked king that ever took the throne as well. For decades he wrought wickedness, evil, idolatry, he shed innocent blood until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to the other, there was just nothing he didn't do if it was in some way wicked. Yet for all of that when because of his hard heart and refusal to heed the word of God, God sent him into captivity with a hook through his nose, bound in bronze fetters by the Assyrian army we read that Manasseh (in his affliction) humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. He prayed and cried out to God and God received his entreaty, He heard his supplication and brought him back to Jerusalem. God saved Manasseh right there in the twilight yrs of his life.

And of the many things we're able to learn from the life of Manasseh the 2 things that tend to stand out the most are #1 God's ability to save to the uttermost, or as we say from time to time even to the "guttermost" all who come to Him, cry out to Him, and trust in Him for the forgiveness of sin. There is no sin or series of sins that is beyond the reach of the grace of God. The bible tells us, "...*the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" Rom 5:20-21 All the combined total of the sin of humanity is swallowed up in but a thimble dipped from the ocean of God's grace, there's simply no consuming it. Jesus said, "...*the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.*" John 6:37 Jesus isn't looking for loopholes to keep you out of heaven. You humble yourself *before* God, cry out *to* God, place your trust *in* God and He'll forgive your sin guaranteed, when Jesus said that God so loved us that He gave His son for us so that whoever would believe upon Him would never perish but have eternal life, whoever means *whoever*. Manasseh becomes for us an illustration of the immeasurable grace of God, if God can save that guy, he can save anyone; believe me you don't come close to the bottom of the barrel in human depravity and immorality where Manasseh was found. God has said, "*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 Surely Manasseh testifies of that reality.

The other thing we learn from Manasseh is that it's never too late to come to Christ. Some people feel like they've gone too far, it's too late, they've lived a life of rebellion and hard heartedness toward the Lord and now they're beyond redemption, too much time has passed their fate is sealed. Not so, *today* if you will but hear His voice and not harden your heart God will receive you right where you're at. When we're willing He's ready. Manasseh was 12 when he became king and he reigned for 55 yrs. It wasn't until he was an older man that he received the Lord, and He sought from that point forward to serve the Lord, it's never too late to come to Christ. And he sought to make some reforms, he regretted the fact that his life was spend toward ungodliness, but he took the time he had left and sought to serve the Lord and lead a life set apart to the Lord from that time forward.

Then his son Amon took the throne, he only reigned 2 yrs, but not after the latter example of his father, but unfortunately he followed after the former pattern of ungodliness.

And he was assassinated by his own servants, it's true that it's never too late to come to Christ, the problem with taking the chance to come later is that we're never guaranteed we'll have "later" to come to Him. Amon's life was cut off while he was still young. Why wait, why take the chance and gamble on eternity? But that brings us to Ch 34 whereby Amon's son Josiah has been made king now in his place.

Vs1-2

Remember David serves as the quintessential example of a king who followed the Lord from a pure heart and with everything that was in him. The bible is clear regarding his humanity but David is the one who received the marks from the Lord as being a man after His own heart. And so here we have Josiah being likened, not unto Hezekiah who was a great king, or Joash, or any of the kings before him who did a good job, but rather he gets props that take him back and compares him to David the man after God's own heart. And we read that he did not turn aside to the right hand or the left. Which is to say that when he grabbed a hold of the plow and he never looked back, he didn't commit himself to the Lord and then begin to question what he'd done, or perhaps things might've turned out for him had he chosen another way in life. I think this is such a good testimony, God help me that when it's all said and done it could be said of me that I did what was right in the sight of the Lord and never turned aside to the right hand or to the left. Just stayed on the straight and narrow with the Lord, and I pray that be your testimony as well; just a life lived full on with out compromise as unto the Lord.

Vs3

Couple things here; #1 I'd have you notice that he began to seek the Lord while he was still young, in the 8th yr of his reign. In other words, "When he was 16 yrs old" he came to the throne when he was 8; 8 yrs later he really began to seek the Lord. God loves to use young people. We have a tendency to think young people are just that, young and inexperienced, but in the Lord we've got to get away from that mentality. Because often times it's our "experience" that hinders what God wants to do. But when God gets a hold of a young person's life, they're just on for the ride and fired up for Jesus Christ. And God can do incredible things. The bible says, "*Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you say, 'I have no pleasure in them'.*" Ecclesiastes 12:1 If you're a young man or a young lady, seek the Lord, inquire of Him search after Him with all your heart, in every aspect of life. Don't live up to the stereotype that people have a tendency to accredit to youth. Seek the Lord set your life apart to the Lord, be an example to us as to what it means to serve the Lord. Paul told Timothy, "*Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*" 1 Tim 4:12 "Don't fall into the stereotype Timothy, raise the bar, set the standard, be an example to the believers around you;" he went on to say give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine; seek the Lord while you're still young. Give to God the 1st fruits of your life.

The other thing I noted in this Vs was that when he began to seek the Lord it brought about evident change in his life and the standards that he deemed as acceptable. In the 8th yr he began diligently seeking the Lord; in the 12th yr (when he was 20) he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images.

Another way to understand that is that it didn't take long for him to realize and recognize the ungodliness he was surrounded with. And if it was within his power to do something about it he did. You cannot come to Christ and be ok with being subjected to the same standards of worldliness and ungodliness as you were before.

Things have to change; because it's on your heart to lead a life that's holy, not ungodly. He began to look around and say, "Wow, these things gotta go." and You can apply that however you like, you come to Christ and you realize your Cd collection, or your DVD collection, the books you have on your shelf or the things you've got hanging on your walls or lining your mantle are completely ungodly, unholy and blasphemous. It's time to change your surroundings, not out of legalism, but because you love the Lord and want to honor the Lord in both your life, and the things that you allow into your life. Josiah said, "It's time to do some purging."

Vs4-7

Evidently he started in Jerusalem and then worked his way out from there, which is always the proper order. I find that often times people are concerned for the ends of the earth while their own home town lies in spiritual shambles. And it's true we've been commissioned to go but not to the neglect of the lost and dying right where we're at. Remember Jesus said that when we received the Holy Spirit that we would be witnesses to Him in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, Samaria and to the end of the earth. And the idea there was begin right where God has placed you, then begin to branch out from there. That's what Josiah did, he began purging Jerusalem of idolatry, then he went out from there and when he'd be throughout all the land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem. When it mentions the areas of Ephraim, and Simeon as far as Naphtali, Naphtali was in the northernmost region of Israel. So he didn't just stick around in Judah, at this point the 10 tribes up north had been carried off into captivity and all that was left was but a weak and anemic remnant, they were in desperate need of someone to lead them and take care of them. So Josiah went on the purging/purifying campaign of the land throughout all Israel. Grinding the idols and molded images into powder, scattering the ashes over the graves of their worshipers; in Vs 5 we read that he also burned the bones of the priests on their altars and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem.

So not only did he purge the nation of the sinful acts, but he purged the sinful people that promoted the sinful acts as well. Those idols didn't just pop up, the pagan priests who promoted the worship of them were responsible for them, so Josiah dealt with that as well. It's one thing to deal with sinful things (removing the idols) but if you don't deal with the sinful people you're not really purging out the old leaven, they'll just bring those things back when you're not around. So he had the pagan priests executed and their bones burned on their altars (which was a way of ensuring they'd never be used again, desecrated). Sometimes when it comes to cleaning house as unto the Lord, it involves more than just ridding ourselves of a few things. Sometimes there are people in our lives that bring us down and encourage our compromise, they've gotta go as well. We've got to love Christ more.

But it's interesting to me that God had said this day would come a few hundred yrs before it took place. When Jeroboam was king an unnamed prophet came on to the scene, and we read in 1 Kings 13:1-3, "*And behold, a man of God went from Judah to Bethel by the word of the Lord, and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. Then he cried out against the*

altar by the word of the Lord, and said, 'O altar, altar! Thus says the Lord: 'Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and men's bones shall be burned on you.'" God calling Josiah by name 300 yrs before he was born telling of what he would do and how he would desecrate the pagan altars by burning the bones of the priests on them. Now that didn't happen the next day, or the next yr, or even in the next 100 yrs, but 300 yrs later here's Josiah and it's coming to pass exactly like the Lord said it would.

God will always bring the promise of His word to pass. Maybe God has revealed something to you, placed a promise in your heart and you're wondering why it hasn't yet come to pass. Because God's timing is different than ours, but if He's promised it, it'll happen. Remember we read that Abraham obtained the promise after he'd "patiently endured" (Heb 6:15), wait upon the Lord. If He's promised it, He'll bring it to pass.

Vs8-13

Few things; after he'd completed his energetic campaign to cleanse the land of idolatry he focused his efforts on the restoration of the temple much like his great granddad Hezekiah had done before him.

When the funds were raised for the restoration they gave it to the high priest Hilkiah and he overseen the work from that point on out to the contractors, craftsmen, so on and so forth. Now when you read Jeremiah you discover with in the 1st 2 Vs that he was the son of this high priest Hilkiah, so Jeremiah's ministry actually began here in the days of Josiah.

But as for the builders I think it's interesting that when you read of the construction of the tabernacle you find that God placed His Spirit on a couple of guys to oversee that work and make sure it was done right. Often times when we think of spiritual gifts we think of prophecy, or tongues, or perhaps healings, teaching various things of that nature. The fact is that God will anoint people, gift people for good ol fashion gitter done elbow grease. To fix things, carpenters, mechanics, trades people, and He gives them wisdom and skill in the practical things that need attention construction-wise in the body of Christ. And it's a real blessing, I wish there were more and more of them.

And of course we note in Vs 12 that the men "did the work faithfully." Man when you've committed to a work, or a work has been committed to your trust in the Lord, how important that we do the work *faithfully*. "*Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.*" 1 Cor 4:2 It mentions that other Levites all who were skillful with instruments of music were over the burden bearers, they overseen the actual labor being done. And I'm not sure there that the application there is so much that they were musicians as it is that they were worshipers. Those who were overseeing the work of the temple, the practical aspects of preparing the temple for ministry were worshipers. There's a sensitivity to the Spirit that comes with being a worshiper of God, God inhabits, is enthroned upon the praises of His people. How important to be one who is a worshiper of God, in Spirit and truth. Remember when Elisha was waiting on a word from God so he called for a minstrel to play music and as the music played the Spirit of the Lord came upon Him. It was as David played before Saul that evil spirit would flee from him and give Saul relief. God has just wired us in such a way as to draw near to Him through worship. It was the worshipers who were the overseers of the work around the temple.

Vs14-16

Here the fact that the servants were committed to the work is again underscored, and we're not sure if perhaps during the reign of Manasseh and Amon the scrolls/books of the word of God were being destroyed and displaced or what. But evidently there hasn't been one around to be read for quite some time. And as the temple is being prepped and restored Hilkiah the priest rediscovers the Word of God. Some say it was a copy of Deuteronomy, other's the entire 1st 5 books of Moses, we're not told, the bottom line is this is an exciting and encouraging thing. God's Word re-enters the scene.

Vs17-19

Why? Because the bible says, "...by the law is the knowledge of sin." Rom 3:20 Josiah knew that what the nation had been apart of was wrong, but he had no idea what God's word said about it. And how seriously God took it, you start reading through Deut 28 where God starts speaking of all the things that will come upon the people and upon the land should they not heed the word it's absolutely staggering. And so here's Josiah hearing of how if they don't obey the word of God that they'll be cursed coming in and going out, their land will be cursed, the fruit of their loins (their off spring) will be cursed, God will send confusion, sickness, disease, plagues, fever, He'll harden the earth so that it won't produce crops, shut up the heavens so there'll be no rain. Neighboring nations will plunder them, their corpses will feed the birds of the air and the beasts of the field, the tumors, boils, itching soars and un-healing scabs that plagued Egypt will be upon them, other men will take your wives, you'll be stripped of all that you own, you'll be crushed continually and driven man and God will take you and the king over you and give you over to another nation to serve them... and We're just getting started, now imagine you're Josiah and you're thinking of the things your dad has done, the things your granddad did, you know the nation has been immersed in idolatry and in absolute rebellion to what you've just heard that the word requires and what's to come because of it. Now what do you do?

You tear your clothes, cry out from a contrite and broken spirit and you do anything you can to hear from the Lord as to whether or not there's *anything* you can do that will cause His wrath and His judgment to be appeased. I mean you've got the information, now you need application, what am I supposed to do?

Vs20-28

It's interesting to me that even though both Jeremiah and Zephaniah was on the scene at this time they sought the word of the Lord from this prophetess whom really we know nothing about other than her name (Huldah) that she was the wife of a certain Shallum whose family was apparently the keeper of the wardrobe. And I think it's good for us to realize that at times though there may be prominent men around us sometimes our wife (the keeper of the wardrobe) can be the most sensitive person with regard to spiritual insight that we can appeal to.

And she in essence says, "Hey, don't be deceived God will not be mocked." God's faithfulness to His word is demonstrated every bit as much in his judgment upon the wicked as it is His mercy toward the repentant. You sow seeds, a crop will come up, you sow to sin and rebellion, though repentance may take place, repercussions will follow.

However (God says) I'm going to with hold My judgment till you've been gathered to your grave. Why? #1 Because your heart was tender, #2 you humbled yourself, and #3 you tore your clothes and wept before Me (you repented). Because Josiah had a tender heart toward the

word of God and the conviction of the Holy Spirit, because he in turn humbled himself, and repented before God with a broken spirit; God said He would stall His judgment until he died. The bible says, *“The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit.”* Psalms 34:18 and Again, *“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart — These, O God, You will not despise.”* Psalms 51:17 God says, “I’m going to wait until you die before My wrath is poured out.” Man I’d be trying to keep him alive as long as I possibly could, you wouldn’t want him to come out of his room! ;0) But because of the position of his heart he wasn’t subjected to God’s judgment. The same holds true for me and you, God’s looking to the heart, a heart of tenderness, of brokenness, of repentance. The bible is clear that all who call upon the name of the Lord, turn to and trust in Him will be saved, coming to Christ causes God’s judgment to pass over us.

Vs29-31

He testified publicly of his commitment to follow the Lord, and to keep His commandments, he wasn’t a “closet” or “secret service” type of a Christian. He made sure people knew what he was about, and not only was he a hearer of the word, but involved in the commitment of all his heart and all his soul to keep God’s commandments and His testimonies and His statues was to *“perform* the words of the covenant that were written in the book.” What does that mean? It means that he wasn’t a hearer of the word only but he was committed to being a *doer* of the word as well. Jesus said that the one who was a hearer but not a doer was like a foolish man who built his house on the sand, and when the storms came the house fell and great was it’s fall. But the one who heard the word and did it was like a wise man who built his house on the rock and when the storms cam and blew against it, it remained standing because it’s foundation was upon the rock. Or to understand that another way, obedience leads to endurance. If you’re a doer of the word God’s going to sustain you, and strengthen you in turbulent times. If you’re one who doesn’t really make use of the Word of God, when those tough times are upon you you’re going to fall apart, you won’t make. We’re to be doers of the Word.

Vs32-33

We love the fact that Josiah was able to tow the line all the days of his life and that his example rubbed off on the people around him. Yet we’re given a clue as to the depth of the reform outside of Josiah when we read that he “made” them take a stand, and he “made” them diligently serve the Lord. What that means is they did what he said, but it wasn’t really in their heart as a nation. When he passes from the scene they’ll revert right back to evil. But for now he serves as a refreshing wind of change, a light piercing the darkness, and the Word of God will revive the nation for the season that makes for his life.

Prayer Points:

God we want to be those whom You find tender in your sight, humble before you, repentant and broken in spirit. That You might look upon us, and use us in this our generation to be a light piercing the darkness of this world. We desire to be instruments of revival, committed to Your word, not in hearing only, but help us to be doers, that we might be founded on the rock, good and faithful servants till the day we see You face to face.

