

2 CHRONICLES 33:3-25

¹Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. ²And he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel.

Last week we looked at the opening verses of 2 Chronicles 33 where we were introduced to a man named Manasseh — the son of king Hezekiah. Apart from king David, Hezekiah was the most godly king in the history of Israel. Hezekiah ruled in Judah for 29 years. Manasseh will prove to be the most wicked king that the southern kingdom of Judah would ever see. And to make things even worse, this most wicked king would sit on the throne longer than any other king of Judah — 55 years!

A Big take away from last week was the fact that Manasseh would be the vehicle by which God would **reveal the idolatry** that was residing deep in the hearts of the citizens of Judah. Without a doubt Manasseh rebelled against God — but his wickedness and idolatry provided the spiritual and moral environment that brought out the idolatry and wickedness that was resident in the hearts of the people of Judah. Have you ever seen or heard of someone drink, or under the influence of some substance say some really nasty things? Most people say, *“That was just the alcohol speaking.”* No! The Bible tells us that our actions and words flow from our heart. The alcohol just unlocked the gates. It depressed the higher functions of the brain. When you’re sober you have the capacity to filter what is really in your heart. When you’re drunk you say the stuff that you’ve been thinking all along — do things you’ve been wanting to do all along. Manasseh’s godlessness and idolatry provided the green light for most of the population of Judah to openly live for idols. So it was during his rule that we discover how far the hearts of Judah had drifted from God.

The large part of our study last dealt with the name, Manasseh. The name Manasseh means “forgetting” — and it took on a horrible and deadly meaning during his rule in Judah. During his rule the people

had forgotten what they should remember! They had forgotten the redeeming love and power of the God of Israel. But they didn't forget it like amnesia — or post head trauma. We learned that this Hebrew carries the sense of *laying something aside*.

Another big take away for us was that we don't simply "forget" about God, like we forget a computer password or where we put our car keys. After we trust Him to save us we set Him aside, and neglect Him by making Him an addendum to our lives. We set Jesus aside for some good thing He has blessed us with — and over time that good thing becomes a god (little "g") thing! And there He is forgotten!

The amazing thing in all of it is that we forget — we lay aside — we neglect God — who NEVER forgets us, NEVER neglects us, NEVER sets us aside. And when we have pushed Him out of our lives we find Him standing at the door of our hearts knocking, desiring us to open our lives to Him, allow Him to be at the very center of our being, and there enjoy intimate fellowship with Him.

We closed by saying that as we walk through the reign of Manasseh, and see the idolatry that was in the hearts of the people come into the open — we should look at what happens to a nation that forgets God, neglects God; sets God aside and ultimately turns away from God. We can make that an overlay and put it on our present history here as a nation.

We pick up in Verse 3

³For he rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had broken down, and he erected altars to the Baals, and made Asherahs, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them.

Remember — this man's dad was passionate to see the God of Israel worshipped. He made it his priority as king to restore the House of the Lord for worship, restore the vessels used for worship, rededicate those serving in the House of the Lord offering worship to

the Lord. And beyond promoting the true and legitimate worship of God he led the way in tearing down idols.

FIRST — Repentance, reform, and revival are not permanent standing conditions. These things can change in the lifetime of an individual. How many of you with us tonight know someone whose life was once blazing for Jesus — but now they have forgotten, neglected and laid Jesus aside? Maybe some of you with us tonight ARE that person! Repentance, reform, and revival are not trans-generational. They don't automatically carry over to the next generation! What is accomplished at one time can be opposed and turned back at another time.

REMEMBER — Satan is relentless in his opposition to the worship of the True and Living God. He makes war against the worship of God in the hearts and minds of the individual, and against every successive generation. Though the worship of God flourishes in a generation, he will not give up the fight against the next generation. MONDAY NIGHTS @ METRO are so crucial to every individual as a place where the worship of God is promoted and the Word of God is proclaimed so that each of us might grow in grace and in the knowledge of our great redeemer and savior! MONDAY NIGHTS @ METRO are crucial for the next generation — those of you between the ages of 18-30; 18-40. This isn't about hip or cool or fun. By the grace of God they have been and still are going to be be real, raw, vertical and above all — all about Jesus. Again — look at your peers. How many are living complacent, compromised and spiritually apathetic lives — they are merely consumers in a church culture? I'm not saying that as judge and jury. I'm not talking about fashion or tattoos or piercing. I'm just asking the question. How many of them build their Christian life on hip, cool and fun?

SECOND — Hezekiah has passed from the scene — but I believe this speaks very powerfully to the pain and heartbreak of those parents who have a child, or children, who are determined to **tear down** everything that their parents have built, and to **build** everything that their parents have torn down. If we have given ourselves to the cause of Christ, if we have lived our lives for His

Story and His glory it is utterly heartbreaking to see a generation follows us, who we love, who we raised in the nurture and admonition of the Lord to say, *I want nothing to do with this Jesus that my parents lived for, gave their lives to. Not only will I not build my life on Jesus — I will tear down anything that looks like that and build my own Kingdom of One.*

³.....he erected altars to the Baals, and made Asherahs, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them.

Asherah — Essentially pornographic images carved on poles in the worship of the pagan goddess *Astarte*. In **1 Kings 16** we are told that Ahab, who *did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him*, made an Asherah. Today the pornography isn't carved — it's just pumped into our houses via satellite, cable and the internet.

worshiped all the host of heaven and served them — Manasseh was worshipping the creature more than the creator.

True worship is living for and to the glory of God, the Creator. We were **created** to worship God and to enjoy and steward creation to the glory of God and for the glory of God. At its core — idolatry is the inversion and perversion of true worship — it is putting something created in the place of God the creator. Idolatry is when a created thing is glorified; when a created thing becomes the source of our identity and our joy, the object of our affection.

HERE'S THE DEAL — When you chose to not worship the True and Living God you **will** worship someone or something else.

QUOTE: Timothy Keller — *Since we were made to worship, we cannot eliminate God without creating God-substitutes.*

Outside of God, the Creator — what's left to worship? Only things created!

Romans 1:25 they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

worshiped all the host of heaven — Two more thoughts on this.

1. Ahab was the wickedest king in the history of the Northern kingdom. He was so wicked that he imported a form of idolatry that not even Ahab practiced. Manasseh was trendy in his idolatry! He was on the cutting edge of wicked and idolatry!

QUOTE: Spurgeon — *“But this Manasseh sought out for himself unusual and outlandish sins. Bad as Ahab was, he had not worshipped the host of heaven. That was an Assyrian worship, and this man must needs import from Assyria and Babylonia worship that was quite new.”*

QUOTE: Payne — *Manasseh’s worship of the “host of heaven” going as far back as the time of Moses (Deuteronomy 4:19; Acts 7:42), but such practices were a particular sin of Assyro-Babylonians, with their addiction to astrology.”*

We don't want to forget this when we finally see Judah taken away into captivity. To cure them of their idolatry God allowed them to spend 70 years in Idol Central — Babylon.

2. Worship implies that we submit to, and recognize the rule, the influence and authority of that which we worship. Worship implies making the object of your worship the object of your trust. Manasseh did not want to submit to, recognize the rule of, the influence and authority of the True and Living God. Instead he chose to be ruled by the Zodiac. He chose to order his life — not by the rule, the influence and authority of God, and the Word of God. He chose to be governed by the stars — looked to Astrology as his guide and authority.

At the core of worship is that which governs your Life! Who or what governs your life? THE LIE of Genesis 3 and Romans 1 is that

God is not worthy of your trust and adoration. If you believe that lie you worship someone or something created. We've said this before — It's an absolute truth that idols absolutely lie. Without fail idols always fail. Created things can never deliver what God the Creator alone can deliver. God has gone out of His way to reveal Himself as the One who alone is worthy of our worship — worthy of serving — worthy of trusting. The Creator God who possesses all wisdom and all power has the heart of a shepherd — a loving shepherd who laid down His life to save the sheep!

⁴And he built altars in the house of the Lord, of which the Lord had said, “In Jerusalem shall my name be forever.” ⁵And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord.....⁷And the carved image of the idol that he had made he set in the house of God, of which God 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,

AGAIN — Remember Satan's great battle against the worship of God the Creator. He is not only relentless in waging his war against the worship of God — but he is bold in his battle plans. He wanted to rob God of worship and establish the worship of created things in the one place dedicated for the worship of the true and living God. The Temple Mount was the ultimate piece of real estate on the planet for him to take! God had set His Name on that city and that place. It was reserved for the worship of the One, True and Living God. There was to be but one altar in the temple court — and it was dedicated to the worship of the One True and Living God. Manasseh set up altars dedicated to various gods and reduced the Creator God to being just another “god” among many gods.

THAT is the lie of ONE-ism. **Peter Jones** — **coined the terms** ONE-ism and TWO-ism. ONE-ism says that God is creation and creation is God. ONE-ism is THE lie that Paul speaks of in **Romans 1**. There is no God — there's just everything. There is no distinction between creator and creation. There is no God outside of creation who says, “*That is wrong.*” ONE-ism is what drives post-modernism. There is no truth and error. There is no darkness and light. There is no truth

and lies. It is all about perspective and ideology and culture. Not only is there no one outside of creation to define right and wrong — There is no one outside of creation to save you! Salvation can only be found within creation — only within you.

TWO-ism says that there is one God who created — and that He is separate from His creation. God is eternal — creation has a beginning. God is INDEPENDENT — Creation is DEPENDENT upon God. There are TWO – not one. THAT God has a NAME — Jesus? God the Creator entered into HISTORY because He KNOWS we have exchanged THE truth for THE lie. Yet He loved us and He came to DIE in OUR place. That’s why we are passionate about worshipping Him. That’s why we are passionate about the Word of God, because it’s all about Him. That’s why we are passionate about you knowing Him!

A couple of other thoughts on Manasseh setting up these idols in the house of the Lord.

¹ Satan is still radically bold in his war against the worship of the True and Living God. He still tries to set up altars for the worship of idols within the house of the Lord — known in the New Testament as the church. He boldly works to set up within the local church altars to the idol of ministry where what one does becomes more important than Jesus; where what one does is not for Jesus but for pride and position. He boldly works to set up within the local church altars to the idol of self-gratification and consumerism where church becomes all about what I want and what I get.

² Satan is still radically bold in his war against the worship of the True and Living God by trying to set up altars for the worship of idols within the hearts of redeemed men and women — whose very bodies now are the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

⁶ **And he burned his sons as an offering in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom,**

Molech was the god of fertility and sensual pleasure. He was worshipped in every kind of sexual practice. The children conceived in the worship of this idol were sacrificed to Molech.

Lives are still being sacrificed on the altar of sexual pleasure. If you're under 18 years old, about half of your generation never made it out of the womb. At one point since Roe v Wade there were over 34 million abortions performed over a 20 year period of time. What a horrifying holocaust!

and used fortune-telling and omens and sorcery, and dealt with mediums and with wizards.

Omens — to hiss, to whisper..... specially used of the whispering of soothsayers..... to whisper.... *to practise enchantment, to use sorcery*, i.q. Arab. **فَشَنَ**. Lev. 19:26; Deu. 18:10; 2 Ki. 17:17; 21:6. Some understand this to mean divination by serpents;¹

Sorcery — [*kashaph /kaw·shaf/*] Six occurrences; AV translates as “sorcerers” three times, “witch” twice, and “witchcraft” once. **1** (Piel) to practice witchcraft or sorcery, use witchcraft. 1a sorcerer, sorceress (participle).²

Let's turn to the New Testament real fast —

Galatians 5:19 *Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God*

¹ Gesenius, W., & Tregelles, S. P. (2003). *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures* (544–545). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

² Strong, J. (1996). *The exhaustive concordance of the Bible : Showing every word of the text of the common English version of the canonical books, and every occurrence of each word in regular order.* (electronic ed.). Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship.

Galatians 6:7 *Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.*

When Paul warns against **sorcery** in **Galatians 5:20** he uses (by inspiration of the Holy Spirit) the word *pharmakeia*. It means medication (“pharmacy”), that is, (by extension) *magic* (literal or figurative):—sorcery, witchcraft (Strongs Hebrew and Greek Dictionary). The Holy Spirit inspired the very words of Scripture. He was very intentional because throughout history cultures have used drugs in their pagan religious rituals. The Bible is not naïve concerning spiritual realms of darkness and principalities and power in high places. Drugs open the human mind to that very real spiritual realm —that looks to destroy you.

There are those who defend the use of drugs by saying “It’s natural”! First of all, what isn’t? Are you going to get something from another dimension that is “un natural?” Lead is natural so feel free to shoot each other. Uranium is natural so feel free to blow each other up. Of course, it’s natural — but ever since **Genesis 3** sin is natural.

He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger. ⁷And the carved image of the idol that he had made he set in the house of God, of which God 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, ⁸and I will no more remove the foot of Israel from the land that I appointed for your fathers, if only they will be careful to do all that I have commanded them, all the law, the statutes, and the rules given through Moses.” ⁹Manasseh led Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem astray, to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the people of Israel.

THAT IS A BLACK BACKGROUND. But it’s against the black background of man’s sin that we can actually understand what grace means!

¹⁰The Lord spoke to Manasseh

THAT is so radical. Manasseh did not deserve anything from God but judgment! This is an absolutely staggering demonstration of the grace God to a man who did everything in his power to reduce the living God to the status of any man made idol — served and worshipped created things and sacrificed his sons by fire to an idol — and yet God SPOKE to Manasseh! There were prophets in Jerusalem. God spoke to Manasseh. Isaiah and Nahum were prophesying during this time.

It tells us in 2 Kings 21:16 that Manasseh shed a lot of innocent blood in Jerusalem. The Talmud (The most significant collection of the Jewish oral tradition interpreting the Torah) tells us that Manasseh had Isaiah sawed in half. That's what Isaiah got for remaining faithful to the Lord and for trying to encourage Manasseh.

¹⁰The Lord spoke to Manasseh and to his people, but they

Manasseh and the people

paid no attention. ¹¹Therefore the Lord brought upon them the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria, who captured Manasseh with hooks and bound him with chains of bronze and brought him to Babylon.

The Assyrians were still in power. Babylon is still a province of Assyria at this time. The Babylonians would come to power in the not too distant future. The Assyrians were famous for taking a big hook and putting it through the nose of their captives and tying a line to it. When somebody has a hook through your nose, they have no trouble leading you wherever they want to take you. They led him to Babylon, the origin of idols! You want idols, you got them.

What follows is so utterly beyond our ability to understand — but it **IS** within the scope of experience in our hearts and lives! Look what the Holy Spirit writes about this man whose wickedness exceeded the wickedness of any before him!

¹²And when he was in distress, he entreated the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers.

That would be the God that Hezekiah worshipped but he tried to de-god.

¹³He prayed to him,

How long is he there in that dungeon before he says *I give*? I don't know. When you're being stubborn and rebellious and God puts a hook in your nose — how long does He have to wrestle with us before we say *I give*? How long do you and I have to be in the dungeon before we surrender? God's wrestling with us and He says, *Do you give*? And we say *Uh-uh*. He says, *Do you give now*? And we say, *Uh-uh*. It is mind blowing how stubborn we can be, but the longsuffering of God outlasts our greatest stubbornness because His longsuffering has no beginning and no ending. The patience of God is inextricably bound up in His eternal nature! He does because of what He is!

We don't know long it was — but in that moment he wasn't calling on Molech. He wasn't calling on Baal. In his brokenness he humbled himself and cried out to the Lord. **THAT** is what God wants to tell us here in 2 Chronicles 33!

and God was moved by his entreaty and heard his plea and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God.

QUESTION — In the worst of your days, in the your worst of your rebellion, and you seek to comeback to the Lord, how do you perceive the Lord? Looking at the life of Manasseh we would think that God would say — *You think that after you built altars to idols in my house, and after you led the nation I trusted to your care into every form of idolatry and immorality, then slaughtered your children*

and shed the blood of countless righteous people in Jerusalem that you can waltz right back into my presence and ask for forgiveness?

That is exactly everything Manasseh had done. But Manasseh was broken. He was humbled — genuinely humbled — the Holy Spirit said he was *greatly humbled!* He sought the Lord and he asked forgiveness. Some of us here tonight have been wronged by somebody like this. Even the thought that God would possibly hear them and forgive them makes you mad at God. If you lived in Jerusalem and Manasseh had shed the innocent blood of someone you loved, and then years later you see Manasseh waltzing back into Jerusalem saying, *The Lord forgave me* — you would say, *What a hypocrite. He had his Come to Jesus moment in a Babylonian prison cell and we're all supposed to forget everything he did and actually believe he's a man of God!*

It is hard to comprehend the reach of God's grace. That's a problem for us. We intellectually know that **grace** means (God's unmerited favor — God doing for us that which we don't deserve or could never earn); but we somehow think that some people are more deserving of grace than others! There are men and women who, in our minds, are beyond the reach of grace — off the radar of His grace, if you would! That's the way the first Christians looked at Saul of Tarsus — who would, by the grace of God, become Paul the apostle, the greatest advocate and defender of the Gospel, author of a huge portion of the New Testament, and would die for his faith in Christ.

HERE'S THE POINT — Before we give up on someone (husband, wife, child, co-worker, neighbor) — we have to remember that we were ALL Manassehs!

Romans 5:10 *For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.*

Colossians 1:19-22 *For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰and through him to reconcile to himself all things,*

whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. ²¹And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²²he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,

THAT is the WILLINGNESS of God to save sinners!

I wonder what you think when you're in Babylon in some dungeon. I wonder if in that dungeon he remembered the words of his dad's old friend who said —

***Isaiah 1:18** “Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.*

***Isaiah 43:25** “I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.*

God doesn't say that he'll forget our sins. He can't forget because He is omniscient! He can't learn because He doesn't learn — He simply knows everything. He can't forget. But he can choose to not remember them in a judicial sense — choose to never bring those charges against us!

HOW AMAZING is God's grace? SO amazing that he not only hears forgives Manasseh — but check this out: In Matthew's genealogy God traces the line of the Messiah through Manasseh's sinful veins. Grace upon grace upon grace upon grace. Without the slightest bit of cliché, by the grace of God Manasseh finished well.

I wonder if he thought he'd ever see Jerusalem again. I wonder what it was like for him to come walking back in to the city of Jerusalem as an old man — with this big funky nose that was swollen and disfigured by that Assyrian hook had been shoved through it. I wonder what it was for him to walk back in the gates, for him to look around, and for his heart to be broken remembering all the places that he had shed the blood of innocent righteous people — where he

had built altars to pagan gods. I wonder what it was like for him when he smelled the fires from the Hinnom Valley where he had burned his sons alive as sacrifices to Molech.

Maybe this evening you're a Manasseh. Maybe you've destroyed the lives of your children. Maybe you've ruined those that are around you — and you've lived with guilt for years. You sneak in and out of church and you think — *Surely God could never forgive me!*

But you know what was going to happen? Here's what God did for the original Manasseh — God allowed this broken and forgiven man to sit in the cool afternoons with a young baby boy named Josiah — and instill into him the truths of God's grace and mercy. That grandson would be the greatest reformer that Judah would ever see. We serve the living God who is a restorer and a redeemer and a reconciler.

That's the God that we serve. If he isn't like that, there isn't any sense for any of us to be here tonight because none of us deserve to be on His radar except the one that is labeled JUDGEMENT! Not only is He the God of the second chance, He's the God of the third chance and the fourth chance and the fifth chance and the sixth chance...

There isn't anybody here tonight who has sinned more than Manasseh. There isn't anybody here tonight that's shed more blood than Manasseh. There isn't anybody here tonight that murdered more people than Manasseh. There isn't anybody here tonight that perverted more people than Manasseh. There isn't anybody here tonight with a more guilty conscience or with a greater mountain of sin they're accountable for than Manasseh.

CLOSE BY READING FROM PSALM 130

Psalm 130

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord!

² O Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive

to the voice of my pleas for mercy!
3 If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities,
O Lord, who could stand?
4 But with you there is forgiveness,
that you may be feared.
5 I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,
and in his word I hope;
6 my soul waits for the Lord
more than watchmen for the morning,
more than watchmen for the morning.
7 O Israel, hope in the Lord!
For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
and with him is plentiful redemption.
8 And he will redeem Israel
from all his iniquities.