

King Manasseh: You Can't Undo the Past

2Kings 21:1-9

King Manasseh: You Can't Undo the Past

- Do people really change? Can they really be forgiven?
 - Ez. 18:20-24 - “The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself. 21 But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. 22 None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live. 23 Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? says the Lord GOD, and not that he should turn from his ways and live? 24 But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die.”

King Manasseh: You Can't Undo the Past

- “Oh, you don't understand; I've done such terrible things that God would never forgive me of them.”
- The truth is, when one truly repents, God not only forgives the sins, He chooses to forget them, too.
 - Isa. 38:17 - “You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, For You have cast all my sins behind Your back.”
 - Heb. 8:12 - “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”

King Manasseh: You Can't Undo the Past

- However, the temporal, earthly consequences often remain.
- While God forgets forgiven sins, we carry the record of them in our memory and their scars in our lives.
- Manasseh understood this well.

King Manasseh: You Can't Undo the Past

- Three aspects of Manasseh's religious policy condemned in Kings:
 - Abandoned his father's reforms to be popular,
 - Restored pagan shrines for economic reasons,
 - Persecuted the prophets who criticized his sins.

Manasseh Had A Good Beginning

- Hezekiah, his father, was praised by God - 2Kings 18:3
- He was born in the later years of his father's reign, three years after Hezekiah nearly died from illness - 2Kings 20:5-6
- Manasseh was a king of the Kingdom of Judah. He was the only son of Hezekiah with Hephzibah.
- He became king at an age of 12 and reigned for 55 years (2Kings 21:1; 2Chron. 33:1).
- He commenced his reign as co-regent with his father Hezekiah in 697 BC, with his sole reign beginning in 687 BC and continuing until his death in 643 BC.

Manasseh Had A Good Beginning

- It was in Hezekiah's later years that we see a flaw in his character, he was more focused on himself than those who came after.
 - 2Kings 20:16-19; 2Chron. 33:25
- Hezekiah died just before Manasseh's adolescence.
 - 2Kings 21:1

Manasseh Turned To Evil

- He restored worship of Baal and Asherah in the Temple - 2Kings 21:3
- He introduced astrology, worshiping the host of heaven and sponsored the Assyrian astral cult throughout Judah - 2Kings 21:3
- He brought idolatry into God's temple - 2Kings 21:4-5
- As often happens, once one starts down the slippery slope of sin, there is little to stop him - 2Kings 21:6

Manasseh Turned To Evil

- As he got older, he sacrificed his own children, probably following the worship of Molech - 2Chron. 33:6
- The valley where he committed these atrocities was the valley of Hinnom, later called Gehenna. The place Jesus used to illustrate hell came from Manasseh's valley of worship.
- He sought fortune tellers, omens, consulted mediums and wizards. He was troubled about the future and wanted to know what was ahead.

Manasseh Turned To Evil

- Manasseh, like most people, spread his beliefs to others around him - 2Kings 21:9
- Ironically, in seeking a way out of his troubles, he hastened their arrival and severity - 2Kings 21:10-15

Manasseh Turned To Evil

- His was a reign of terror - 2Kings 21:16
- Jewish tradition holds that Manasseh killed Isaiah by sawing him in half.
- He executed supporters of Hezekiah's reforms.
- The prophets were put to the sword; innocent blood reddened the streets of Jerusalem - Jer. 2:27-31, 34

The Turning Of Manasseh

- What Manasseh feared came to pass with Assyria's commanders - 2Chron. 33:11
- Assyrians didn't treat their captives well - 2Kings 19:28
- Imprisoned and with proof of the uselessness of his idolatry, Manasseh returned to the one true God - 2Chron. 33:12
- God heard his prayers - 2Chron. 33:13

Manasseh's Efforts To Reform

- On his return, Manasseh changed completely. But he could not completely erase the consequences of his sins - 2Chron. 33:15-16
- They still practiced idolatry, they just changed the name of the god they claimed to be worshiping - 2Chron. 33:17
- His son, raised in his father's idolatry didn't change - 2Chron. 33:22-23

Manasseh's Efforts To Reform

- Often people say, “I’ll serve God later on.”
Manasseh faced the hard truth that he couldn’t do it successfully. Sin creates wounds not easily healed and scars that won’t go away.
- Better to have never caused the wound.
 - Ecc. 11:9 - 12:1

Manasseh's Efforts To Reform

- Despite his great repentance, Manasseh's legacy was evil - 2Chron. 33:2
- His repentance wasn't enough to stop the evil he set in motion - Jer. 15:4-6
- Which is sadder, the evil that one does or realizing that he is helpless to stop his evil from spreading out of control?

Even While We Were Sinners

- While it is wonderful that we can be forgiven, our forgiveness will not erase the scars on Jesus's hands and feet and back and side and head.
 - Rom. 5:6-8 - “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Even While We Were Sinners

- So do we remain in our sins, allowing the harm to increase, or do we change and start battling the evil we once were a part of?
- Join with those who have left sin and take up arms against it.
 - Acts 2:38-41 - “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.’ 40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, Be saved from this perverse generation. 41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.”