

## 2 Chronicles 33-34 Our Gracious God

Good evening and thank you for joining us! Would you please turn in your Bibles to 2 Chronicles 33? If you can believe it, we're almost done with 2 Chronicles. We'll finish the book next Wednesday and continue in the OT as we study the book of Ezra.

For the last 2 weeks PL has taken us through the incredible life of one of Judah's godly kings, you recall his name was Hezekiah. Tonight, we see his the exploits of his son, Manasseh, the worst king in Judah's history  
We're gonna study chapters 33-34, and the title of tonight's message is Our Gracious God  
Let's pray

Chapter 33 is really all about Hezekiah's son, Manasseh. In fact, the name "Manasseh" means "one who causes to forget" – and this was the evil king's legacy. His idolatry caused the people of Judah to forget God.

Manasseh was the 14th ruler of the divided kingdom of Judah. Six more kings and 57 years will come after him, but make no mistake Manasseh was the beginning of the end for the southern kingdom.

You'll remember the Babylonians will conquer Judah. And God provides His people an explanation of why He allowed it to happen. **Jeremiah 15:4 "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.

God identified Manasseh as the painful cause. Of Judah's 20 kings – all but 8 were evil – and none were more so than Manasseh.

1 Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. No king reigned longer. He ruled Judah from 697-643bc – 5½ decades of depravity.

Which means that Manasseh was born in the last fifteen years of Hezekiah's life, the additional fifteen years that Hezekiah prayed for.

And now, almost like a prosecutor laying out his case, the Bible describes what made Manasseh so evil...

2-3

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<sup>[fn]</sup> and served them. What evil king Ahab was to Israel, Manasseh was to Judah. Both of them drove their nations to national idolatry.

4 He also built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "In Jerusalem shall My name be forever." Manasseh brought his idols into the Temple.

A heretic strays from the truth. A blasphemer attacks the truth. Manasseh was both a heretic and a blasphemer.

5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. The Temple went from consecration to constellation worship. Astrology corrupted the house of God.

We can't gloss over verses 4-5. The Temple in Jerusalem was the one place the Hebrews knew they could meet with God. Yet Manasseh turned the house of the living God into a museum of idols. And it gets even worse...

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. Manasseh even invoked Satanic powers to do his bidding.

7-9

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; 8 and I will not again remove the foot of Israel from the land which I have appointed for your fathers—only if they are careful to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses." 9 So Manasseh seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel. Manasseh worshiped a lewd, fertility

goddess in the very place where God had promised to give life to His people. The worship of Asherah meant they were even practicing ritualistic prostitution in the house of the Lord. This is shocking conduct from the king of Judah, yet 2 kings 21 gives us a further detail...

**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.**

On top of all this, Jewish tradition says that Manasseh was the king who had the prophet Isaiah sawn in two.

**10 And the LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they would not listen.** Perhaps God spoke to Manasseh through Isaiah.

**11 Therefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the army of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh with hooks,[fn] bound him with bronze fetters, and carried him off to Babylon.** The Assyrians come into the nation of Judah and arrest the Judean king. Manasseh was taken into exile in chains. Notice, we're told the king of Assyria took Manasseh "with hooks." He put a hook in the conquered king's nose and led him along like he would an animal. This would be an incredibly degrading moment.

Verses 12-13 are 2 of the most shocking, and amazing verses in the Bible.

12 Now when he was in affliction, he implored the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, 13 and prayed to Him; and He received his entreaty, heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was God. King Manasseh is to the Old Testament what Saul of Tarsus is to the New Testament. Both were ruthless enemies of God's people who were converted right in the midst of their wickedness. Both men experienced miraculous conversions. And both of their examples give us hope.

If God can save a Manasseh He can save anyone! No one is beyond His reach – no matter how heinous their crimes. Ted Bundy, the serial killer – and Jeffrey Dahmer the cannibal – both claimed to come to Jesus at the end of their lives. Will we see them in heaven? Why not? If Manasseh repented and God forgave him – God can forgive anyone. Hey, the reason it's called "amazing grace" is because of people like Manasseh.

Sometimes we wonder why the Lord allows certain people to go on and on in this life. "Lord, why don't You destroy them?" we wonder. The Bible says that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance **2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us,[fn] not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**

**Ezekiel 33:11 Say to them: '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. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'

Our Father is so patient. He extends Himself so far, waiting for even the most wicked person to come to repentance. The Lord waited fifty-five years for Manasseh to turn to Him.

The psalmist said in Psalm 119:71, It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.

It's when folks are afflicted that, perhaps for the first time in a long time, they cry out to God, and pick up the Bible. It's when they're afflicted that many finally cry out to the Lord in sincerity and desperation.

One more point...

I love to think about the grace of God because I need it. I love the way God my Father has been so very gracious to me. The problem is, when I hear about people like Manasseh, who I think are awful and who have done evil, I don't want to hear about the grace of God extended to them.

14 After this he built a wall outside the City of David on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, as far as the entrance of the Fish Gate; and it enclosed Ophel, and he raised it to a very great height. Then he put military captains in all the fortified cities of Judah. After realizing the Lord is God, when Manasseh went back to his city, he built up the walls to keep out the enemy. This is a

good practice-When God has extended you grace, the first thing you ought to do is to reestablish the walls of discipline in your own life, to set boundaries in order to keep out the enemy.

15-16

15 He took away the foreign gods and the idol from the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD and in Jerusalem; and he cast them out of the city. 16 He also repaired the altar of the LORD, sacrificed peace offerings and thank offerings on it, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel. Here's a sign of true repentance - Manasseh tried to repair the damage he'd done and lead the people to God.

17 Nevertheless the people still sacrificed on the high places, but only to the LORD their God." This reminds us of the distinction between two different kinds of high places. Some were altars to pagan idols; others were unauthorized altars to the true God. Manasseh stopped all the pagan worship in Judah, but unauthorized (that is, outside the temple) worship of the God of Israel continued.

As we're about to see, Manasseh is the classic example of someone whose sins are forgiven – but though he tries he can't erase his sin's consequences.

The question is never "Can God forgive me?" Of course He can. But there's no guarantee repentance will erase the consequences of the sin. Manasseh repented, but the evil impact he had on the nation remained.

18-21

18 Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, his prayer to his God, and the words of the seers who spoke to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, indeed they are written in the book<sup>[fn]</sup> of the kings of Israel. 19 Also his prayer and how God received his entreaty, and all his sin and trespass, and the sites where he built high places and set up wooden images and carved images, before he was humbled, indeed they are written among the sayings of Hozai.<sup>[fn]</sup> 20 So Manasseh rested with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house. Then his son Amon reigned in his place. 21 Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. His father reigned 55 years. Amon ruled just 2 years.

22-23

22 But he did evil in the sight of the LORD, as his father Manasseh had done; for Amon sacrificed to all the carved images which his father Manasseh had made, and served them. 23 And he did not humble himself before the LORD, as his father Manasseh had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more. Amon was influenced more by his fathers rebellion than by his repentance.

24-25

24 Then his servants conspired against him, and killed him in his own house. 25 But the people of the land executed all those who had conspired against King Amon. Then the people of the land made his son Josiah king in his place.



Sometimes people say, “Because God is gracious and full of mercy, if I go astray, I can always come back and He’ll hear me when I call on Him.” That may be true.

But what they fail to consider is that the repercussions of sin aren’t ever what we think they’ll be. We count the cost sin and think we can pay the price. But when the repercussions come—and they will—they always hit us in ways we hadn’t planned.

Chapter 34 is all about a Godly king named Josiah

1-3

1 Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. 2 And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. 3 For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images.”

Notice the phrase, “while he was still young”. Josiah’s 8th year would make him 16 years old – the same age a lot of adolescent males start fighting authority, and sowing some wild oats. But Josiah decided to get serious with God.

According to the MacNiel / Lehrer’s Generation Next Project, a group of 18-25 year olds were asked to name their number one goal in life... 81% said, “be rich” - 51% said, “be famous” - 30% said, “help people in need” - 22% said, “become a leader in my community” - and only 10% said, “Become more spiritual.”

Obviously, a high percentage of today's youth are in for a real letdown.

I heard the story of an evangelist who came home after a crusade. His wife asked how it went. He answered, "We had 2½ salvations." She remarked, "That's great - 2 adults and 1 young person." He corrected her, "No, 2 young people and 1 adult... The young people have a lifetime to live for God. The adult has wasted half his life."

I want to encourage you youngsters here to serve the Lord while you're young. Invest your whole life in the pursuit of God. Not only will you have longer to chalk up eternal rewards - you'll also save yourself some scars.

4-6 talks about Josiah's reforms

4 They broke down the altars of the Baals in his presence, and the incense altars which were above them he cut down; and the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images he broke in pieces, and made dust of them and scattered it on the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. 5 He also burned the bones of the priests on their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem. 6 And so he did in the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, as far as Naphtali and all around, with axes.<sup>[fn]</sup> 7 When he had broken down the altars and the wooden images, had beaten the carved images into powder, and cut down all the incense altars throughout all the land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem. Massive reforms were ordered by this godly king,

Josiah. But the next big turning point in his life came during the Temple renovations.

After 50+ years of Manasseh's idolatry, depravity, and neglect of the Temple - major repairs needed to be done on the house of the Lord. And while repairs were underway an incredible discovery occurred...

8-14

8 In the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land and the temple,[fn] he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of the LORD his God. 9 When they came to Hilkiah the high priest, they delivered the money that was brought into the house of God, which the Levites who kept the doors had gathered from the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, from all the remnant of Israel, from all Judah and Benjamin, and which they had brought back to Jerusalem. 10 Then they put it in the hand of the foremen who had the oversight of the house of the LORD; and they gave it to the workmen who worked in the house of the LORD, to repair and restore the house. 11 They gave it to the craftsmen and builders to buy hewn stone and timber for beams, and to floor the houses which the kings of Judah had destroyed. 12 And the men did the work faithfully. Their overseers were Jahath and Obadiah the Levites, of the sons of Merari, and Zechariah and Meshullam, of the sons of the Kohathites, to supervise. Others of the Levites, all of whom were skillful with instruments of music, 13 were over the burden bearers and were overseers of all who did work in any kind of service. And some of the Levites were scribes, officers, and gatekeepers.

14 Now when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law of the LORD given by Moses. Under the reign of Manasseh it would appear that all the copies of Scripture were either abandoned or destroyed. But 20 years later, in the midst of these Temple repairs someone finds a scroll in a back corner of the Temple. It's a long, lost copy of the Hebrew Scriptures.

15-17

15 Then Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD." And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan. 16 So Shaphan carried the book to the king, bringing the king word, saying, "All that was committed to your servants they are doing. 17 And they have gathered the money that was found in the house of the LORD, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers and the workmen." 18 Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read it before the king. Josiah was a good king who while he was still young sought God's will – now he finds God's Word.

This discovery also had a profound impact on another man at the time. Some scholars identify Hilkiah the priest as the prophet Jeremiah's father. If so, the old priest hands his son the greatest gift a dad can pass on to a child – God's Word.

And Jeremiah remembers the moment he was handed the Book. He says to God in **Jeremiah 15:16**, "Your words were found, and I ate them,  
And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart;

For I am called by Your name,  
O LORD God of hosts.

19 Thus it happened, when the king heard the words of the Law, that he tore his clothes. For the first time the king heard God's Word and realized how far the nation had fallen from God's standards. This is why he tore his clothes-Josiah knew that the kingdom of Judah deserved judgment from God.

This is why people resist the word of God. Because it shows us how far we fall short! John 3 19 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

There is no measuring ourselves to others-it's not 'well I didn't kill anyone', or 'i never robbed anyone', 'i'm not the bad'. No, other people are not the measuring stick of that which is good. God is the measuring stick-and He is perfect! So then I realize that I'm not perfect and I need a savior!!

20-21

20 Then the king commanded Hilkiyah, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Abdon[fn] the son of Micah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king, saying, 21 "Go, inquire of the LORD for me, and for those who are left in Israel and Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found; for great is the wrath of the

LORD that is poured out on us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do according to all that is written in this book.” Josiah wants to know if there’s any hope for the nation – they’ve fallen so far short of the Lord’s demands.

22 So Hilkiah and those the king had appointed went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tokhath,[fn] the son of Hasrah,[fn] keeper of the wardrobe. (She dwelt in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter.) And they spoke to her to that effect. Huldah was one of four female prophets mentioned in the Old Testament, the others being Miriam Exodus 15, Deborah (Judg. 4:4), and Noadiah (Neh. 6:14).

Today the Old City of Jerusalem is still divided into four quadrants – the Jewish, Christian, Armenian, and Muslim quarters.

23-25

23 Then she answered them, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel, ‘Tell the man who sent you to Me, 24 “Thus says the LORD: ‘Behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants, all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah, 25 because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands. Therefore My wrath will be poured out on this place, and not be quenched.’ ” ’The nation has passed the point of no returned as Josiah feared  
But Gods judgment is going to be tempered by His grace...

26-28

26 But as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, in this manner you shall speak to him, ‘Thus says the LORD God of Israel: “Concerning the words which you have heard— 27 because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and you humbled yourself before Me, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you,” says the LORD. 28 “Surely I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; and your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place and its inhabitants.”’ ” So they brought back word to the king. Huldah’s message from God was both good news and bad news. Judgment would come, but not in the days of King Josiah 29-32

29 Then the king sent and gathered all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. 30 The king went up to the house of the LORD, with all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem—the priests and the Levites, and all the people, great and small. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant which had been found in the house of the LORD. 31 Then the king stood in his place and made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD, and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if our leaders did this?

32 And he made all who were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin take a stand. So the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. But note the problem,

Josiah “made all who were present... take a stand.”

Righteousness was enforced. Obedience to God didn't come from the people's hearts. They were made to take a stand.

Under King Josiah reforms occurred, but not revival. The king's passion for God never trickled down to the people.

33 Thus Josiah removed all the abominations from all the country that belonged to the children of Israel, and made all who were present in Israel diligently serve the LORD their God. All his days they did not depart from following the LORD God of their

fathers. Josiah never killed a lion, slew a giant, made an ax-head float, caused it to rain, or killed a Philistine. What made Josiah so great? He loved God with everything he had!

You and I will probably never be famous in the eyes of this world. But you know what-God knows us!