

INTRO: One of the best kings of Judah was King Hezekiah, who did his best to bring the nation of Judah back to God and in 2 Chronicles 32:33 we read, "**So Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the upper section of the tombs of the sons of David; and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem honored him at his death. And his son Manasseh became king in his place.**" And in verse 2 of chapter 33 we read, "**And he (Manasseh) did evil in the sight of the Lord...**" Manasseh was born around 702 B.C., about 22 years before his father's death (depending upon who you believe, some say at the age of 12 he co-reigned with his father) and reigned longer than any of the other kings of Judah. Many times in the Word of God we read of godly fathers and their wayward sons -- many kings had such, some of the judges, etc. and I have often wondered if they were so busy with doing the things of the Lord that they forget they also had a responsibility to those children that God had entrusted to their care. But apparently the influence of Ahaz, who were idol worshippers, was strong on Manasseh and he became an idolater as well. Here was another case, a godly dad, a wayward son and a nation that suffered. Tradition says that Isaiah was sawn asunder by order of Manasseh, and after his death the prophetic voice was no more heard till the reign of Josiah. God often spoke to the kings in those days, whether by vision or primarily by the prophets, but it would appear there was contact there and even in the case of Manasseh we read God saying, "**...I will not again remove the foot of Israel from the land which I have appointed for your fathers, if only they will observe to do all that I have commanded them according to all the law, the statutes, and the ordinances given through Moses.**" With God there always seems to be an "if" because we are free moral agents with the power of choice and in order for a covenant relationship to work, both sides of the agreement must do their part. Time and again we read of the nations doing those things that were forbidden and we generally read that the king was the one that led them to that goal. Though in our nation we do not have a king, we have political leaders that are supposed to be "leaders" and the same responsibility should fall upon them as well for they are supposed to do what is good for the nation of which they have been elected to lead, but sad to say, they have set bad examples and often the nation has followed their lead. But I want us to look at Manasseh for a while and see if we can find some applications to our day in his story.

A. Note that God even speaks to those that are in rebellion as Manasseh was a first class rebel but God seems to have continued to deal with him as verse 18 says God spoke to him through his "**seers**". God still deals with the sinners and every man, woman, boy and child will have to decide what they will do with the Man, Jesus Christ. Everyone will give an account unto God for their actions, even their rebellious actions. Though God is merciful and patient, there will come a time when He will no longer "strive" with man, for as in the case of Noah, there came a time when the floods came and when the people cried out for help, there was no salvation left for them. In their case, they had 120 years to get their "house in order" before destruction, but they refused until finally God closed the doors to the Ark of safety and there was no entering in after that. In Manasseh's case, he reigned for over 55 years and though he seems to have recognized God in his later years, he is known for his wickedness and for his influence in driving the entire nation of Judah into idolatry.

B. Most of us will never come close to the influencing as many people as this old King did, but we all have an influence. Look at the legacy he left behind for in 2 Kings 21:16 we read: "**moreover, Manasseh shed very much innocent blood until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; besides his sin with which he made Judah sin, in doing evil in the sight of the Lord.**" Look at his legacy compared with that of his dad who was honored by the inhabitants of Jerusalem at his death. I recall people over the years that have left this earth and think about what they left behind. I remember the legacy of my dad and my oldest brother and those memories are good memories and I know where they are today so there is no sorrow for them; but I have known others that had similar opportunities and wasted their lives. I have known preachers that were bitter disappointments as they once stood with God, but then for some reason they turned away and their memories are ones of sorrow because a life had been wasted. Certainly I would want God to be pleased with my life, but I also want to leave a legacy that my family and church friends would not be ashamed of. Even if Manasseh recognized God in his later life, look at the waste he had been up to that point.

C. Manasseh was the leader, he was looked up to by his nation and he led them astray. And look at verse 10 of our text, "**And the Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention.**" This is a sad commentary on this individual -- the opportunity was there, he could have made a difference for good rather than evil, he must have known the right way to go for the Lord spoke to him, but he did not listen, therefore the people did not listen. Is this not the problem we have today as God's word is all around us. Even if finding a good Bible-teaching church is difficult to do, we still have the Word of God readily available to us, but we must pay attention. I fear too many are sitting in the pews of our congregations and as the Word is preached, even in its fullness, they are paying no attention.

1. Manasseh was no doubt more concerned about his everyday activities, perhaps his position as king and ruler than he was his relationship with God. I fear we are often too concerned about our everyday activities, our job, planning our vacations or some short trips, visiting friends and relatives, partying here and there, etc. and we tend to forget those things that are important and that is following the leading of the Lord.

2. Perhaps as a young man, he thought he had plenty of time to follow his desires and later on he would turn to the Lord. But those times turned into years and before he knew it, he was an old man with nothing to show but evil and wickedness. 55 years he could have governed as a godly king and could have brought that nation back to God, rather he helped destroy the nation and as a result of his evil, the streets were filled with violence and bloodshed.

3. Manasseh finally turned to God, but only after the Assyrians captured him **"...with hooks, bound him with bronze chains, and took him to Babylon."** God had mercy on him and he returned to Jerusalem and tried to undo what he had done but by this time we read in verse 17, **"...the people still sacrificed in the high places, although only to the Lord their God."** He tried to turn it around but it was too late to complete the job, his evil influence had been great and now it was a difficult thing to try and undo.

CONCLUSION: How are we living our life? Are we wasting it? How will we be remembered? What does God see? Are we trying to wait till the time is right in our eyes? Will we be ashamed of our legacy?

Rather humorous story but it makes the point: It was New Years Day, 1929. The University of California at Berkeley was playing Georgia Tech in the Rose Bowl. Roy Riegels, A Cal defensive back recovered a Georgia Tech fumble, ran laterally across the field, turned and scampered sixty-five yards in the wrong direction — straight toward Cal's goal line. One of his teammates, Benny Lomm, tackled Riegles just before he scored for Georgia Tech. On the next play Georgia Tech blocked the punt and scored. From that day on Riegles was saddled with infamy: "Wrong-way Riegles" was his name. For years afterward, whenever he was introduced, people would exclaim, "Oh, yeah. I know who you are! You're the guy who ran the wrong way in the Rose Bowl!"

Though he lived for some time and never made that mistake again, that mistake is what he is remembered for. I am certain he wanted to take that day back and start over again many times but was just too late. I think Manasseh hoped and prayed that he could have started over, but the years were behind and the pages had been written and he could not change the evil influence he had in the past. Louis Fletcher Tarkinton once wrote:

"I wish that there were some wonderful place
Called the Land of Beginning Again,
Where all our mistakes and all our heartaches
And all of our poor selfish grief
Could be dropped like a shabby old coat at the door
And never put on again."

I say there is a place you can go to that will give you a chance of starting over. It cannot undo what has been done, but forgiveness of that past can be found. You can make what time you have left count for the right and not for evil. You can have an influence as those you once lived in sin with will take note of the change and perhaps, you will be able to bring them out into the light. You can even find forgiveness of that past life of wickedness, even if you had been involved in it for years. But you must come before God Almighty and seek His forgiveness, His help and do what Manasseh did not do, "pay attention". How long will you continue to hear God's word and not pay attention? This could be your last chance, do not lose it.