

Manasseh Humbles Himself**Lesson Scope:** [2 Chronicles 33](#)

References in brackets relate to Lesson Scope unless noted otherwise

Lesson Focus

Hezekiah's revival came to an abrupt end. His twelve-year-old son Manasseh rebuilt the high places Hezekiah had broken down. Manasseh desecrated the temple of God by building in it altars to other gods. He even followed the heathen by sacrificing his children to these gods! As likely the worst king of Judah, he made the children of Judah to do worse than the heathen they drove out. His fifty-five-year reign is the longest of the kings of Judah but has only a brief record in Scripture, possibly because he slaughtered the prophets who were the historians.

The judgment that God's prophets had proclaimed eventually fell upon Manasseh, and the Assyrians carried him captive to Babylon. Here Manasseh humbled himself greatly and entreated God. God heard his prayer and restored Manasseh to his kingdom. Now Manasseh knew that the Lord is God. He tore down the altars in the temple. He repaired the altar of the Lord, sacrificed to God, and commanded all Judah to serve the Lord. This reform seems to have involved only a brief period near the end of his reign.

The history recorded in 2 Kings does not even mention it.

This lesson should help us to understand that everyone is a candidate for salvation. The divorcee, the person living in adultery, the person covered with tattoos, those in perverted lifestyles, and suchlike are not beyond the reach of God. The change in attitudes and actions demonstrates that repentance has taken place. This is how we know that the Spirit of God has changed someone's life. God is able to work with anyone who is humble enough to admit his need and accept His direction.

God, who is not willing that any should perish, works with the most wicked men to lead them to repentance. When men humble themselves, He hears their prayer and extends to them His mercy.

Lesson Aim: To portray principles related to true repentance.

Theme Verse: [Isaiah 57:15](#). For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

Lesson Text

The Course of Ruin

[2 Chronicles 33:1-9](#) ^(KJV) Manasseh *was* twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem: ² But did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. ³ For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them. ⁴ Also he built altars in the house of the LORD, whereof the LORD had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever. ⁵ And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. ⁶ And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger. ⁷ And he 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 before all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever: ⁸ Neither will I any more remove the foot of Israel from out of the land which I have appointed for your fathers; so that they will take heed 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 made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, *and* to do worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel.

The Cry of Repentance

[2 Chronicles 33:10-13](#) And the LORD spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken. ¹¹ Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried

him to Babylon. ¹² And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, ¹³ And prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he *was* God.

The Challenge of Revival

2 Chronicles 33:14-20 Now after this he built a wall without the city of David, on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, even to the entering in at the fish gate, and compassed about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height, and put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah. ¹⁵ And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of 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 cast *them* out of the city. ¹⁶ And he repaired the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed thereon peace offerings and thank offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel. ¹⁷ Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the high places, *yet* unto the LORD their God only. ¹⁸ Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer unto his God, and the words of the seers that spake to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, behold, they *are written* in the book of the kings of Israel. ¹⁹ His prayer also, and *how God* was intreated of him, and all his sin, and his trespass, and the places wherein he built high places, and set up groves and graven images, before he was humbled: behold, they *are written* among the sayings of the seers. ²⁰ So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house: and Amon his son reigned in his stead.

Questions for Study

The Course of Ruin

1. What was Manasseh willingly ignorant of?
2. How far will we go if we turn away from God?

The Cry of Repentance

3. What attributes of God does His chastisement show?
4. What elements of prayer are necessary for God to hear us?
5. What is essential for true repentance? What is the opposing force?

The Challenge of Revival

6. Where did Manasseh need to return to in order to have a revival?

7. What was the purpose of the wall that Manasseh built outside Jerusalem? How is the very great height of it significant?
8. What does it take to keep the fire of revival burning?

Analysing the Passage

The depth of sin that Manasseh resorted to makes his repentance most remarkable. Child sacrifice, defiling the temple, witchcraft, immorality, and shedding innocent blood are some of the vilest of sins. It would seem that even the imagination of his heart was evil. Nothing that God forbade was off limits for Manasseh.

The fact that God spoke to Manasseh and his people shows His great mercy. God does not desire to cast anyone into outer darkness. He has ways of bringing man to the end of himself. While firm, His hand of mercy is extended to even the worst of sinners.

Manasseh humbled himself greatly. When a man truly humbles himself, God moves with compassion. He does not despise the contrite heart.

Manasseh did what he could to undo the wickedness of his past actions. But he found, as many have, that it is easier said than done. Many of the ripples from his evil influence could only be slowed, not stopped.

Principles and Applications

The Course of Ruin

1. Sinful men do evil in the sight of God (33:2). We have all “gone astray” and have “turned everyone to his own way.” No one is exempt from the need of repentance. All sin is evil. When we sin, we are evil in God’s sight. The only way to restoration is to repent and turn from our evil way.

2. Sin leads people deeper into the bondage of sin (33:6). Satan has power, and we cannot deliver ourselves from his power. However, we have the promise “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4). This power is available only through repentance.

The Cry of Repentance

3. God gives people repeated opportunities to repent (33:10). Every day that Noah built the ark was another opportunity for someone to choose to build with him. Every day that God spoke by His prophets and withheld judgment was another opportunity for Manasseh to repent. Every day that God withholds judgment is an opportunity for someone to re-

pent and be spared from His wrath. Oh, the greatness of His mercy, and His ways past finding out!

4. God brings people to the end of themselves to bring them to repentance (33:11-12). As long as we feel capable of handling our temptations, God is limited. God can work only when we are finished with ourselves, and in faith cast ourselves upon His mercy.

5. Humility is an essential element of repentance (33:12). Man's very nature is to be proud. To admit to having done wrong is very difficult. Both Peter and Judas sinned in betraying Jesus. One sold Him; the other denied Him. Both repented of their actions, but only one found forgiveness. Why? Peter went out and wept bitterly. He greatly humbled himself. He had godly sorrow for his sin.

6. God in His mercy answers the prayer of all those who repent, even the worst of sinners (33:13). God heard the prayers of King David when the prophet confronted him about his sin. God heard the prayers of the people of Nineveh who repented in sackcloth and ashes. God heard the prayer of Naaman, the Syrian, and of Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon. God does not refuse the contrite heart.

The Challenge of Revival

7. Those who repent rectify the points of failure (33:14-15). It was when Zacchaeus said he would make restitution that Jesus said, "This day is salvation come to this house." When Manasseh repented, he began fortifying the city against the enemy. True repentance requires us to make things right as best we can.

8. True repentance means forsaking sin (33:15). When Saul (Paul) repented, he stopped persecuting the Christian church. When Peter repented, he stopped denying his Lord. When Manasseh repented, he cast the heathen altars outside the city walls. Sin must become repulsive; we may not secretly indulge in it. We live in a day when technology has made it easy to engage in secret sin. But be aware that "your sin will find you out." God is not asleep.

9. True repentance inspires people to true worship (33:16-17). Manasseh was not willing to stop with destroying wrong worship. He rebuilt the altars of God that he had earlier destroyed. He instituted proper worship patterns. His command to the people was to "serve the LORD God of Israel."

10. Repentance cannot erase all the sinful influences on others (33:17).

The people were changed to sacrificing to God, but they still did it in the groves and not in the house of God. Parents may make right choices later in life, but that may not change the course their children have been led into. After we repent and forsake sin, we strive to do all we can to leave a consistent influence. Then we leave the outcome with God.

11. Willing obedience to God's commands is an essential element of true repentance (33:16-18). Unwilling obedience will benefit us as little as it did Haman when he paraded Mordecai around on a horse, proclaiming whom the king wished to honour. Willing obedience gives men peace, contentment, and joy. Haman experienced none of these. Manasseh found this peace as he worshiped the Lord according to His command.

Important Teachings

1. Sinful men do evil in the sight of God (33:2).
2. Sin leads people deeper into the bondage of sin (33:6).
3. God gives people repeated opportunities to repent (33:10).
4. God brings people to the end of themselves to bring them to repentance (33:11-12).
5. Humility is an essential element of repentance (33:12).
6. God in His mercy answers the prayer of all those who repent, even the Worst of sinners (33:13).
7. Those who repent rectify the points of failure (33:14-15).
8. True repentance means forsaking sin (33:15).
9. True repentance inspires people to true worship (33:16-17).
10. Repentance cannot erase all the sinful influences on others (33:17).
11. Willing obedience to God's commands is an essential element of true repentance (33:16-18).

Answers to Questions

1. What was Manasseh willingly ignorant of?

He rejected the example of his father Hezekiah, who destroyed the gods of the land. In defiance he reintroduced them. He knew, or should have known, that God chastised his father when his heart was lifted up in pride. Manasseh had no excuse for not knowing the consequence of his actions.

2. How far will we go if we turn away from God?

We will go farther than we can ever imagine. When Jonah took the ship to Tarshish, did he imagine being cast into the sea or having seaweed wrapped around his neck in the belly of a fish? Did the prodigal son expect to wish for hog feed to eat when he left his father's house? After we reject the truth we have been taught, there is no convenient stopping place in running away from God.

3. What attributes of God does His chastisement show?

It is easy to see God's justice and His sovereignty, but as long as we are living, it is His compassion and love that brings us to our wits end and leads us to repentance. His enduring mercy becomes evident as we dig deeper into the core of His chastisement.

4. What elements of prayer are necessary for God to hear us?

Humility—"If my people . . . shall humble themselves . . ." God does not refuse a broken and contrite heart. He heard the prayer of Jonah in the belly of the great fish. He heard the prayer of the publican who prayed, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). He hears our prayer when we come to Him in true humility and repentance.

5. What is essential for true repentance? What is the opposing force?

Humility is a prerequisite for repentance. God gives grace to the humble. Humility is a tender plant that can easily be harmed. It must be carefully tended. When Zacchaeus humbled himself and promised to make restitution, then Jesus said salvation had come to his house.

Pride is the opposing force.

6. Where did Manasseh need to return to in order to have a revival?

He needed to go back to where he went wrong. He had to destroy the heathen altars he had set up, especially those in the temple. He needed to cast the idols outside of the city. He needed to worship and thank the Lord in the beauty of holiness. He needed to instruct the people in the ways of righteousness.

7. What was the purpose of the wall that Manasseh built outside Jerusalem? How is the very great height of it significant?

The wall provided additional fortification from the enemy. It also helped to protect the people from the idols and heathen practices outside the wall. Apparently Manasseh was fortifying the city well. He attempted to do all that he could to protect the people.

8. What does it take to keep the fire of revival burning?

It takes the commitment of each generation. Manasseh was enthused about his newfound conviction. He worked to spread it among his children and grandchildren. Each of us has an important responsibility. If revivals fizzle out, it is because someone loses the vision. Are you inspired this morning? If so, it is far more likely that your children and grandchildren will be. Revival must begin in each of us. It Works best when it begins in youth. But Manasseh is proof that those who begin late are still accepted by God. As long as our sun has not set, there is place for repentance and for experiencing God's forgiveness.

Summarizing the Lesson

Sin is an awful thing. We must become aware of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. When Manasseh saw it, he did a complete U-turn. Although he tried, he was unable to undo all his evil influence. Howbeit, his repentance was genuine and God accepted him. We should not judge anyone to be beyond repentance. Only God can make that call.

Research Guide

1. Read the parallel account in 2 Kings 21.
2. Spend some time considering why God accepted the repentance of Peter and Paul but not of Judas and Esau. What is true repentance?