

CHAPTER 33

In this chapter we have the history of the reign,

I. Of Manasseh, who reigned long.

1. His wretched apostasy from God, and revolt to idolatry and all wickedness (v. 1-10).
2. His happy return to God in his affliction; his repentance (v. 11-13), his reformation (v. 15-17), and prosperity (v. 14), with the conclusion of his reign (v. 18-20).

II. Of Amon, who reigned very wickedly (v. 21-23), and soon ended his days unhappily (v. 24, 25).

<430>2 CHRONICLES 33:1-10

THE REIGN OF MANASSEH

We have here an account of the great wickedness of Manasseh. It is the same almost word for word with that which we had <1200>2 Kings 21:1-9, and took a melancholy view of. It is no such pleasing subject that we should delight to dwell upon it again. This foolish young prince, in contradiction to the good example and good education his father gave him, abandoned himself to all impiety, transcribed the abominations of the heathen (v. 2), ruined the established religion, unravelled his father's glorious reformation (v. 3), profaned the house of God with his idolatry (v. 4, 5), dedicated his children to Moloch, and made the devil's lying oracles his guides and his counsellors, v. 6. In contempt of the choice God had made of Sion to be his rest for ever and Israel to be his covenant-people (v. 8), and the fair terms he stood upon with God, he embraced other gods, profaned God's chosen temple, and debauched his chosen people. He *made them to err, and do worse than the heathen* (v. 9); for, if the unclean spirit returns, he brings with him *seven other spirits more wicked than himself*. That which aggravated the sin of Manasseh was that God *spoke to him and his people by the prophets, but they would not hearken*, v. 10. We may here admire the grace of God in speaking to them, and their obstinacy in turning a deaf ear to him, that either their badness did not quite turn away his goodness, but still he waited to be gracious, or that his goodness did not turn them

from their badness, but still they hated to be reformed. Now from this let us learn,

1. That it is no new thing, but a very sad thing, for the children of godly parents to turn aside from that good way of God in which they have been trained. Parents may give many good things to their children, but they cannot give them grace.
2. Corruptions in worship are such diseases of the church as it is very apt to relapse into again even when they seem to be cured.
3. The god of this world has strangely blinded men's minds, and has a wonderful power over those that are led captive by him; else he could not draw them from God, their best friend, to depend upon their sworn enemy.

2 CHRONICLES 33:11-20

THE REIGN OF MANASSEH

We have seen Manasseh by his wickedness undoing the good that his father had done; here we have him by repentance undoing the evil that he himself had done. It is strange that this was not so much as mentioned in the book of *Kings*, nor does any thing appear there to the contrary but that he persisted and perished in his son. But perhaps the reason was because the design of that history was to show the wickedness of the nation which brought destruction upon them; and this repentance of Manasseh and the benefit of it, being personal only and not national, is overlooked there; yet here it is fully related, and a memorable instance it is of the riches of God's pardoning mercy and the power of his renewing grace. Here is,

I. The occasion of Manasseh's repentance, and that was his affliction. In his distress he did not (like king Ahaz) *trespass yet more against God*, but humbled himself and returned to God. Sanctified afflictions often prove happy means of conversion. What his distress was we are told, v. 11. God brought a foreign enemy upon him; the king of Babylon, that courted his father who faithfully served God, invaded him now that he had treacherously departed from God. He is here called *king of Assyria*, because he had made himself master of Assyria, which he would the more easily do for the defeat of Sennacherib's army, and its destruction before

Jerusalem. He aimed at the treasures which the ambassadors had seen, and all those precious things; but God sent him to chastise a sinful people, and subdue a straying prince. The captain took *Manasseh among the thorns*, in some bush or other, perhaps in his garden, where he had hid himself. Or it is spoken figuratively: he was perplexed in his counsels and embarrassed in his affairs. He was, as we say, in the briars, and knew not which way to extricate himself, and so became an easy prey to the Assyrian captains, who no doubt plundered his house and took away what they pleased, as Isaiah had foretold, ~~2~~2 Kings 20:17, 18. What was Hezekiah's pride was their prey. They bound Manasseh, who had been held before with the cords of his own iniquity, and carried him prisoner to Babylon. About what time of his reign this was we are not told; the Jews say it was in his twenty-second year.

II. The expressions of his repentance (v. 12, 13): *When he was in affliction* he had time to bethink himself and reason enough too. He saw what he had brought himself to by his sin. He found the gods he had served unable to help him. He knew that repentance was the only way of restoring his affairs; and therefore to him he returned from whom he had revolted.

1. He was convinced the Jehovah is the only living and true God: *Then he knew* (that is, he believed and considered) that the *Lord he was God*. He might have known it at a less expense if he would have given due attention and credit to the word written and preached: but it was better to pay thus dearly for the knowledge of God than to perish in ignorance and unbelief. Had he been a prince in the palace of Babylon, it is probable he would have been confirmed in his idolatry; but, being a captive in the prisons of Babylon, he was convinced of it and reclaimed from it.

2. He applied to him as *his* God now, renouncing all others, and resolving to cleave to him only, the God of his fathers, and a God on covenant with him.

3. He humbled himself greatly before him, was truly sorry for his sins, ashamed of them, and afraid of the wrath of God. It becomes sinners to humble themselves before the face of that God whom they have offended. It becomes sufferers to humble themselves under the hand of that God who corrects them, and to accept the punishment of their iniquity. Our hearts should be humbled under humbling providences; then we accommodate ourselves to them, and answer God's end in them.

4. He prayed to him for the pardon of sin and the return of his favour. Prayer is the relief of penitents, the relief of the afflicted. That is a good prayer, and very pertinent in this case, which we find among the apocryphal books, entitled, *The prayer of Manasses, king of Judah, when he was holden captive in Babylon*. Whether it was his or no is uncertain; if it was, in it he *gives glory to God as the God of their fathers and their righteous seed*, as the Creator of the world, a God whose *anger is insupportable*, and yet *his merciful promise unmeasurable*. He pleads that God has *promised repentance and forgiveness to those that have sinned*, and has *appointed repentance unto sinners, that they may be saved, not unto the just*, as to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but to me (says he) *that am a sinner; for I have sinned above the number of the sands of the sea*: so he confesses his sin largely, and aggravates it. He prays, *Forgive me, O Lord! forgive me, and destroy me not*; he pleads, *Thou art the God of those that repent*, etc., and concludes, *Therefore I will praise thee for ever*, etc.

III. God's gracious acceptance of his repentance: *God was entreated of him, and heard his supplication*. Though affliction drive us to God, he will not therefore reject us if in sincerity we seek him, for afflictions are sent on purpose to bring us to him. As a token of God's favour to him, he made a way for his escape. Afflictions are continued no longer than till they have done their work. When Manasseh is brought back to his God and to his duty he shall soon be *brought back to his kingdom*. See how ready God is to accept and welcome returning sinners, and how *swift to show mercy*. Let not great sinners despair, when Manasseh himself, upon his repentance, found favour with God; in him God *showed forth a pattern of long-suffering*, as ^{<5016>}1 Timothy 1:16; ^{<2318>}Isaiah 1:18.

IV. The *fruits meet for repentance* which he brought forth after his return to his own land, v. 15, 16.

1. He turned from his sins. He *took away the strange gods*, the images of them, and that idol (whatever it was) which he had set up with so much solemnity *in the house of the Lord*, as if it had been master of that house. He cast out all the idolatrous altars that were *in the mount of the house* and in Jerusalem, as detestable things. Now (we hope) he loathed them as much as ever he had loved them, and said to them, *Get you hence*, ^{<2312>}Isaiah 30:22. "*What have I to do any more with idols? I have had enough of them.*" 2. He returned to his duty; for he *repaired the altar of the Lord*, which had either been abused and broken down by some of the idolatrous

priests, or, at least, neglected and gone out of repair. He sacrificed thereon peace-offerings to implore God's favour, and thank-offerings to praise him for his deliverance. Nay, he now used his power to reform his people, as before he had abused it to corrupt them: *He commanded Judah to serve the Lord God of Israel*. Note, Those that truly repent of their sins will not only return to God themselves, but will do all they can to recover those that have by their example been seduced and drawn away from God; else they do not thoroughly (as they ought) undo what they have done amiss, nor make the plaster as wide as the wound. We find that he prevailed to bring them off from their *false gods*, but not from their *high places*, v. 17. They still sacrificed in them, *yet to the Lord their God only*; Manasseh could not carry the reformation so far as he had carried the corruption. It is an easy thing to debauch men's manners, but not so easy to reform them again.

V. His prosperity, in some measure, after his repentance. He might plainly see it was sin that ruined him; for, when he returned to God in a way of duty, God returned to him in a way of mercy: and then he *built a wall about the city of David* (v. 14), for by sin he had unwall'd it and exposed it to the enemy. He also put captains of war in the fenced cities for the security of his country. Josephus says that all the rest of his time he was so changed for the better that he was looked upon as a very happy man.

Lastly, Here is the conclusion of his history. The heads of those things for a full narrative of which we are referred to the other writings that were then extant are more than of any of the kings, v. 18, 19. A particular account, it seems, was kept,

1. *Of all his sin, and his trespass, the high places he built, the groves and images he set up, before he was humbled.* Probably this was taken from his own confession which he made of his sin when God gave him repentance, and which he left upon record, in a book entitled, *The words of the seers*. To those seers that *spoke to him* (v. 18) to reprove him for his sin he sent his confession when he repented, to be inserted in their memoirs, as a token of his gratitude to them for their kindness in reprov'g him. Thus it becomes penitents to take shame to themselves, to give thanks to their reprovers, and warning to others.

2. *Of the words of the seers that spoke to him in the name of the Lord* (v. 10, 18), the reproofs they gave him for his sin and their exhortations to

repentance. Note, Sinners ought to consider, that, how little notice soever they take of them, an account is kept of the words of the seers that speak to them from God to admonish them of their sins, warn them of their danger, and call them to their duty, which will be produced against them in the great day.

3. Of his *prayer to God* (this is twice mentioned as a remarkable thing) *and how God was entreated of him.* This was written for the generations to come, that the people that should be created might praise the Lord for his readiness to receive returning prodigals. Notice is taken of the place of his burial, not in *the sepulchres of the kings*, but *in his own house*; he was buried privately, and nothing of that honour was done him at his death that was done to his father. Penitents may recover their comfort sooner than their credit.

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~~2 CHRONICLES 33:21-25

THE REIGN AND DEATH OF AMON

We have little recorded concerning Amon, but enough unless it were better. Here is,

I. His great wickedness. He did as *Manasseh had done* in the days of his apostasy, v. 22. Those who think this an evidence that Manasseh did not truly repent forget how many good kings had wicked sons. Only it should seem that Manasseh was in *this* defective, that, when he *cast out the images*, he did not utterly deface and destroy them, according to the law which required Israel to *burn the images with fire*, ~~
~~Deuteronomy 7:2. How necessary that law was this instance shows; for the *carved images* being only thrown by, and not burnt, Amon knew where to find them, soon set them up, and sacrificed to them. It is added, to represent him exceedingly sinful and to justify God in cutting him off so soon,

1. That he out-did his father in sinning: *He trespassed more and more*, v. 23. His father did ill, but he did worse. Those that were joined to idols grew more and more mad upon them.

2. That he came short of his father in repenting: *He humbled not himself before the Lord, as his father had humbled himself.* He fell like him, but

did not get up again like him. It is not so much sin as impenitence in sin that ruins men, not so much that they offend as that they do not humble themselves for their offences, not the disease, but the neglect of the remedy.

II. His speedy destruction. He reigned but two years and then his servants *conspired against him and slew him*, v. 24. Perhaps when Amon sinned as his father did in the beginning of his days he promised himself that he should repent as his father did in the latter end of his days. But his case shows what a madness it is to presume upon that. If he hoped to repent when he was old, he was wretchedly disappointed; for he was cut off when he was young. He rebelled against God, and his own servants rebelled against him. Herein God was righteous, but they were wicked, and justly did the *people of the land* put them to death as traitors. The lives of kings are particularly under the protection of Providence and the laws both of God and man.