2 Chronicles 33 - The Worst King and the Most Merciful God

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Life Bible Ministry

2 Chronicles 33. It's probably important for us to review just for a moment what has been happening here in the southern kingdom of Judah. And just to remind ourselves that 2 Chronicles is all about the southern kingdom of Judah. It does not deal with the northern kingdom of Israel, except as it relates to the southern kingdom of Judah. And this is all about the kings of Judah. Meaning, the kings who are in the Davidic line. All of the kings that are on the throne during the course of the existence of the nation of Judah, the kingdom of Judah were all in the line of David.

And you'll remember that when we last studied 2 Chronicles, the kingdom of Judah went through an unparalleled time of blessing from the Lord. And that was largely due to king Hezekiah. King Hezekiah did a great deal to bring Judah back to a true worship of the one true God. He cleared the land of all the pagan idols and altars that had been established. Furthermore, Hezekiah re-instituted the required feasts. He repaired the temple of the Lord. And even though there were a few hiccups during his rule, he ultimately got back on track and he found his way back to the Lord.

I can relate to Hezekiah, I think, in a lot of ways. And I think you can too. Because he was not a perfect man by any means. But he was a man who experienced some severe tests from the Lord. He had some health tests. (2 Kings 20:1-3) He also had some military tests. And you'll remember that one of the biggest ones was when the king of Assyria who had been invading all of the land around that area, came to Judah and began to overtake the cities on the outlying area of Judah. (2 Kings 19) And then finally made his way to the capital city of Jerusalem and there the king established his military presence, meaning the king of Assyria.

And you'll remember that Hezekiah cried out to the Lord. (2 Kings 19:15) And that's one of the hallmarks of his rule. He cried out to God and he put his trust in the God of his fathers. And he told the people, Trust in the Lord, He's going to deliver us. He's going to see us through.

You'll remember that this was during the ministry of Isaiah the prophet. And he called upon Isaiah to pray for the nation of Judah. And you'll remember that

God delivered the southern kingdom in a powerful way, sending an angel from the Lord to decimate the army of the Assyrians. (2 Kings 19:35) And it was just an amazing deliverance. Amazing! And as I said, even though Hezekiah had his bouts and issues, he dealt with pride and some other things, ultimately, he was a good king.

But one of the areas where he failed was the area which is fairly common for the kings of Judah, and that is the area of parenting. He failed pretty miserably as it relates to his children and raising a godly son. And we're told as we begin chapter 33 that his son, *"Manasseh was* (just) *twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-five years..." (ESV)* That's a long time to be on the throne.

But what we learn about Manasseh in verse 2 and following, is that he completely reversed everything that his father Hezekiah had done. We're told that, *"...he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abomination of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel."*

Do you understand the comparison that's being made there? With some kings it says, he did evil in the eyes of the Lord like the kings of Israel, or, he did evil in the sight of the Lord like his father. But in this particular case it says, Manasseh did evil in the sight of the Lord, like the nations that were there before, like the nations that had been driven out by the Lord.

And it tells us here, he, verse 3 that, *"...he rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had broken down, ...he erected altars to the Baals, ...*(he) *made Asheroth,* (which is the worship of Asherah) *and worshiped all the hosts of heaven and served them. 4 And he built altars in the house of the LORD,* (in other words, he put them in the temple) *of which the LORD had said, 'In Jerusalem shall my name be forever.' 5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD."* He scattered all over these courts of the temple, these altars, these pagan altars and so forth.

Now it even goes further than that. Look at verse six. *"6 And he burned his sons as an offering in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom,* (or the valley of Ben-Hinnom as it was called) *... he used fortune-telling...* (He used) *omens,* (he was involved in) *...sorcery,* (It says that he) *...dealt with mediums* (which are those who speak to spirits) *and necromancers."* Which is the communication with the dead.

And *"He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger. 7 And the carved image of the idol that he had made he set in the house of God, of*

which God said to David and 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 no more remove the foot of Israel from the land that I appointed for your fathers, if only they will be careful to do all that I have commanded them, all the law, the statutes, and the rules given through Moses." (2 Chronicles 6:4-6, 1 Kings 8:15-16)

Look at verse 9. This is very important. *"Manasseh led Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem astray*, (and this is important) *to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the people of Israel."*

And even though in verse 10, The Lord sent many prophets to speak *"to Manasseh and to his people,* (we're told that) *they paid no attention."*

In 2 Kings, let me put this passage on the screen for you, because this goes a little bit farther. There's quite a few verses here. I put it in two different slides. It says,

2 Kings 21:10-13 (ESV)

And the LORD said by his servants the prophets, "Because Manasseh king of Judah has committed these abominations and has done things more evil than all that the Amorites did, who were before him, and has made Judah also to sin with his idols, therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel:"

And the LORD said by his servants the prophets, "Because Manasseh king of Judah has committed these abominations and has done things more evil than all that the Amorites did, who were before him, and has made Judah also to sin with his idols, therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel:"

2 Kings 21:10-13 (ESV)

Behold, I am bringing upon Jerusalem and Judah such disaster that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle. And I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line of Samaria, and the plumb line of the house of Ahab, and I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down.

Behold, I am bringing upon Jerusalem and Judah such disaster that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle. And I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line of Samaria, (which by the way had already fallen. Okay?) *and the plumb line of the house of Ahab,* (one of the notorious kings of Israel. And look what the Lord says here,) *and I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down.*

What interesting sort of graphic wording for the Lord to use and why? Because He says specifically here in 2 Kings, it was because Manasseh, because of Manasseh, committed these abominations, which were greater than the land, the people who lived in the land before Israel.

And you remember why God ousted the people who lived in Canaan, it was because of their abominations and because they refused to repent. And so God brought the Israelites in to take over the land, to bring judgment upon the people of Canaan. And now the people of Israel have become worse than the people of Canaan specifically, as he mentions here in this passage, the Amorites. And so the Lord makes a promise.

Let me show you another prophecy that is given from the prophet Jeremiah. This is an interesting one. He says,

Jeremiah 15:3-4 (ESV)

I will appoint over them four kinds of destroyers, declares the LORD: the sword to kill, the dogs to tear, and the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth to devour and destroy. And I will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth because of what Manasseh the son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, did in Jerusalem.

I will appoint over them four kinds of destroyers, declares the LORD: the sword to kill, the dogs to tear, and the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth to devour and destroy. (And look at this.) *And I will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth because of what Manasseh* (the king, or excuse me) *the son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, did in Jerusalem.*

You can see that Manasseh went beyond, went above and beyond the other kings of Judah to bring the abominations of the nations into the land of Judah and among the Jewish people. And the Lord spoke prophetically and said, Because of Manasseh, because of what he has done, I'm going to bring judgment upon the kingdom of Judah.

Okay, look what it goes on to say in verse 11. It says, *"Therefore the LORD brought upon them the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria, who captured Manasseh with hooks and bound him with chains of bronze and brought him to Babylon."*

This is where the Lord makes good on His Word. The Lord brings the king of Assyria into the area of Judah. They capture Manasseh, they bind him with hooks and chains, they drag him off to the Persian Empire and there you go.

And all of us are sitting around saying, yeah, good for him. The guy deserved it. He was the worst of the worst. It didn't get any worse than this guy. Nobody did worse than this guy. And we're all having a sense or a feeling of somewhat, a little bit of satisfaction here, as it relates to king Manasseh.

Well, good for him. I guess he now learned his lesson, huh? Yeah, a few hooks and chains; that's all it takes to get a guy's attention. Let him know. This is, this is God you're dealing with here. And he's a God of justice. And you know how much we love to remind people of that. We love to say, He's a God of justice. And we love to tell people, God is just. And there's nothing... It's not untrue. It's not untrue at all.

But what the book of 2 Chronicles does for you and I, after painting this absolutely horrific picture of the worst of the worst, is it begins to open our eyes to another attribute of the Lord God of whom we belong. And that is the attribute of mercy. And what you're going to see here in 2 Chronicles, is something you won't read in 2 Kings because it's not there.

The chronicler adds information that is not found anywhere else. And here's what he says, beginning in verse 12, look with me in your Bible. *"And when he was in distress, he entreated the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers.* 13 *He prayed to him,* (and look at this) *and God was moved by his entreaty and heard his plea and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom.* (And then I love this last phrase.) *Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was God."*

It's interesting, many times I'll hear people talking about the Old Testament, you've heard me say this before. And they'll talk about it and characterize it as a mean collection of books. And often you'll hear people say, I don't really like studying through the Old Testament, because there's just a lot of judgment. And I much prefer the writings of the New Testament, where Jesus is writing in the dust, and pardoning people, and saying, go your way and sin no more. And let him who is without sin cast the first stone. (John 8:3-11) and eating with sinners. (Mark 2:16) And that's... I like that. I like that much better. But the Old Testament, yeah, the Old Testament just bugs me a little bit.

I wonder if they've ever read 2 Chronicles chapter 33? Because in this chapter you have this picture painted by the chronicler of the worst of the worst kings. A man who is infamous for the sin and abomination that he brought into the southern kingdom of Judah. Worse than the nations which God ousted before his time. And it says here that, he humbled himself, and he prayed to God, and God was moved. Isn't that amazing?

How many of us would have been moved? When somebody has, and think about this, Manasseh really offended God, most of all. I mean, his sin was ultimately against God, wasn't it? In fact, that's the way it is for all of us. Isn't that what David said in his own prayer of repentance? He said, *"against you,* (and) *you only, have I sinned."* (Psalm 51:4) You ever remember reading that?

The fact of the matter is, he violated a woman who was married, he arranged the death of her husband in war. A man who was very faithful to him and his kingdom. And yet David said, ultimately it's *"against you,* (and) *you only, that I have sinned."* David knew and understood that ultimately he had offended a Holy God, and it was a Holy God who is going to hold him to that sin.

And so, if you had been the one that was offended, what would you have said when Manasseh began to cry great tears and express his repentance. Might you and I have said, well, it's too late, pal. It's too late. Sorry! I mean, too little, too late, buddy. Too late for you. Do you realize Manasseh just how far you went with this whole game? You were worse than not only the kings of Judah who came before you, you were not only worse than the kings of Israel who came before you, of which there was not one single good one. You were worse than the peoples of this land whom God judged. You were worse! And now, you have the gall to petition me? You have the guts to come before... Isn't that funny? Isn't that funny?

I've talked to so many people over the years who are afraid to pray for forgiveness because of the things that they've done in their life. They're afraid. I've literally talked to people who have said, I just, I can't bear to go before God and ask for forgiveness because of the things that I've done. And I get that. I get that. I know where that comes from. It comes from an intense centeredness on the things and the sins of self. And it also comes from the enemy stirring up accusations inside the human heart. I get that. But that is the voice of the enemy who wants to keep that person from coming to the Lord and asking for forgiveness.

We deal with people, from time to time, who are just bound up with fear that they have committed such horrific sins that they are now beyond the point of any saving grace. I think it was just last week, Ken spent about two and a half hours on the phone with a guy who just found us on YouTube and started listening to messages. And he was just absolutely a mess over this issue of, I think I've sinned beyond the reach of God. And actually I didn't even tell Ken, but the same guy followed up with an email to me, laying out his same issue. And he made it very clear to me that he believed that the Holy Spirit had been taken from him. And I said,

Well, that's interesting in light of the fact that in Romans it says, *"the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable."* (Romans 11:29) And the Bible says that, the Holy Spirit in us is a gift. (1 Corinthians 6-19)

And so I said, if God revoked that gift from you, then I guess we've got a contradiction on our hands. In other words, I was telling him, I don't believe it. And I believe that this man and many others like him, have succumbed to the voice of the enemy and the accusations of the evil one. And many times their own, their imaginations, which are unchecked. And it just rolls over them like the waves of the ocean. And they have nothing. It's like they can't control it. And they're just absolutely thrown into a tailspin because they believe they are beyond the mercy of God.

And I want to take them to stories, like Manasseh. I want to take them to passages like this in the Bible, or even some of the ones in the New Testament. I want to say, have you... Did you deny the Lord three times, even when the Lord told you, you were going to do it? Did you do it anyway just to save your skin? Did you ever do... (Matthew 26:69, Mark 14:66, Luke 22:54 and John 18:17, 25, 27)

Well, no, but... Oh boy! They start, well, you don't know what I did. Yeah, I, yeah, I suppose maybe I don't.

But when you begin to confront the mercy of God, and all that it is in our lives, the power that it is in our lives to transform us, and to accept us, and to embrace us, even in the midst of our horrific sin.

This whole story about Manasseh crying out to the Lord, is a reminder of a promise that God made earlier in this book. And I'll put it up on the screen for you. It's way back in the second chapter, if you remember way back then. In 2nd Chronicles, I'm sorry the 7th chapter, 2 Chronicles chapter 7 says,

2 Chronicles 7:14 (ESV)

"...if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

"...if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

God made that promise back during the time of Solomon. Right? And then all these years forward in the time of Manasseh, when it got so bad, the Lord responded when he heard the voice of repentance.

Let me show you another passage from Daniel. I love this one.

Daniel 9:9 (NIV)

The LORD our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him;

The LORD our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him;

Listen, I'm not sharing any of these verses to in any way give us a permission to rebel or be sinful against the ways of the Lord. I'm simply saying that where sin abounds, grace abounds much more. And God's mercy is powerful to reach out and grab us at the worst place of our lives. And I mean the worst place and bring us into the place of His love and grace and acceptance and forgiveness.

Boy, don't ever forget, don't ever forget the story of Manasseh. No matter how bad it gets, Maybe you're ministering to someone who feels like they've stepped over the line. You take them to 2 Chronicles chapter 33, show them the story of Manasseh.

Let's keep going. Verse 14 in your Bible, after all this repentance, it says that, after all this, *"...he built an outer wall for the city of David west of Gihon, in the valley, ...for the entrance into the Fish Gate, and carried it around Ophel, and raised it to a very great height. He also put commanders of the army in all the fortified cities in Judah.*

15 And he took away the foreign gods and the idol from the house of the LORD and all the altars that he had built on the mountain of the house of the LORD and in Jerusalem, and he threw them outside of the city. (And) *16 He also restored the altar of the LORD and offered on it sacrifices of peace offerings and of thanksgiving, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD, the God of Israel.* (We're told in verse 17 that) *Nevertheless, the people still sacrificed at the high places, but only to the LORD their God."*

Now that's an interesting statement there in verse 17. What are the high places? You'll remember *"high places"* are motivated by pagan thinking. Pagans believed that the higher up you got on a hill, the closer you were to communicating and reaching the gods.

And so they would often climb hills in order to worship their pagan deities. And the people of Israel adopted this practice. And they created high places where they would worship. And when they, in their times of worship, horrible pagan idolatry, they would worship pagan idols there. In this case, they are worshiping the Lord, but they're doing it on the high places.

Now you got to remember that the Lord had commanded the Jews to worship and to sacrifice at the temple. You can see that this was a forbidden thing that they were doing, but they were at least worshiping the Lord there, but there was some compromise.

Verse 18, *"Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer to his God, and the words of the seers who spoke to him in the name of the LORD, the God of Israel, behold, they are in the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel."*

You might say, well, aren't we reading the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel? Well, keep in mind the chronicles or the annals, as the NIV puts it, of the kings basically are the official written historical record that the kings themselves kept. And what we're reading in 1st and 2nd Kings and 1st and 2nd Chronicles, this isn't the official record. This is a record that was written down in addition to that.

And so whenever they make reference to the writings or the historical annals of the kings, it's talking about their official documents documenting the things that happened during their reign.

"19 And his prayer, and how God was moved by his entreaty, and all his sin and his faithlessness, and the sites on which he built high places and set up the Asherim and the images, before he humbled himself, behold, they are written in the Chronicles of the Seers. (meaning the prophets) *20 So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his house, and Ammon his son reigned in his place."*

Interestingly enough, 55 years of ruling and reigning for Manasseh and he died in peace. Not terribly old, I might add, but he died in peace, nonetheless, because he had turned his heart back to the Lord. And that is such an important thing to remember.

And we, again, we have difficulty with this sometimes. We are challenged by this. We learn about people... Have you ever read about some serial killer who apparently had a conversion to Christianity somewhere in prison. And they're locked away for life and they've done just horrific things.

And then we learn how they came to Christ and a lot of Christians really struggle. Is that person really going to be in heaven? Is that person really going to be in heaven with the rest of us. As if we deserve to be there. Right? Which is a great... I got no problems with serial killers being in heaven. I got none. Not that I'm in any way condoning anything they've done by any stretch of the imagination.

The reason I have no trouble with them being in heaven is because if I have trouble with them being in heaven, I have to have trouble with me being in heaven, bottom line. Because in my sinful nature I am no better. And even though they, maybe, carried out heinous acts, Jesus told us in Matthew during the sermon on the Mount, you have heard that it was said, you shall not commit murder. But I say to you, if you are even angry with your brother, you have potentially committed murder in your heart. Right? (Matthew 5:21) How many of us have been angry with people?

You see the point is God's Word raises the bar of righteousness and the understanding of sin, and what's in our hearts. And we think if I haven't committed the physical act, somehow I'm okay. Never cheated on my wife, never killed anybody, never stole anything. Have I ever coveted someone else's stuff? It's the same as stealing, and on it goes.

"20 So Manasseh slept with his fathers... buried him in his house," and his son took over. His son, we're told in verse 21, was a fairly young man too. "*He was twenty-two years* (of age) *when he began to reign and he reigned two years* (just two years) *in Jerusalem. 22 And* (it says) *he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as Manasseh his father had done."* Obviously before his repentance.

And *"Amon sacrificed to all the images that Manasseh his father had made, and served them. 23 And,* (but) *he did not humble himself before the LORD, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself, but this Amon incurred guilt more and more. 24 And* (then look what happened. It says) *his servants conspired against him and put him to death in his house. 25 But the people of the land struck down all those who had conspired against King Amon. And the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his place."*

This is an interesting turn of events because once again Manasseh failed to pass along to his son, the new life that he had gained through his repentance and favor with the Lord. But the people understood that it was through the unrighteousness of the kings that they were being made vulnerable to their enemies. And they watched it happen with king Manasseh for years and years.

Then they saw king Manasseh repent and turn back to the Lord. And they saw the kingdom restored.

And so, now Ammon takes over the throne, young man, 22 years old and they see it happening all over again. And it's like a really bad movie playing in front of their eyes all over again. Now, what are we going to do? Well, it tells us here that some of the servants of the king conspired against him and they assassinated him.

Now, here's the question. Was Amon wrong in the things that he was doing? Obviously, there's no question about that. Amon had given in to the same paganism that his father Manasseh had done previously. Was it wrong that the servants put him to death? Yes, now you've got two wrongs that have happened here. And as we like to say, two wrongs don't make a right. And what is going on is that the people of Judah are panicking. And they're taking matters into their own hands.

And so it says that, they assassinated the king. And then these very people paid with their lives. This is a common sort of a thing that happens when we panic and we see a situation and we're like, this has to stop, this has to end. And we just take matters into our own hands. But we create yet another wrong in our actions. And we end up paying for it. And that is exactly what happened to the people here.