

The conversion of Manasseh

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[0 : 00] You can turn to the passage that we read together in 2 Chronicles chapter 33. 2 Chronicles chapter 33.

And just to get the passage in context or to bring a point of emphasis to the passage, we'll read verse 12. When Manasseh was in distress, he entreated the favour of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers.

He prayed to him and God was moved by his entreaty and heard his plea and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom.

Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God. There's a story of a man called Joshua Milton Bly. That was his proper name. And he had a nickname. And he was one of the Liberian warlords who ruled and ran amok in the 1990s where Liberia was subject to civil war and where many thousands, tens of thousands of people were killed.

[1 : 26] And it was a very dark and a very dangerous place to live in. And there was this man, Joshua Milton Bly, who admitted to being responsible for up to 20,000 people's deaths.

He claimed to have spiritual powers. He claimed to be protected by the devil. He claimed to be untouchable and unharmable.

And his claim to fame was that he fought against bombs and bullets. He fought completely naked because he believed nothing could touch him and nothing could harm him.

And he was never wounded, let alone killed. He was a vicious, vicious man who was responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of people and admitted it.

And one day, in the amazing providence of God, through an absolute miracle, a Christian man in the city where this fellow lived was moved by God, spoken by God, to go and preach the gospel or share the gospel with this Joshua, this man.

[2 : 35] And he did so. And he shared the good news of Jesus with him. And he was saved. He was converted. And he repented of his sin and turned his life over to Jesus and began living a life that proclaimed Jesus Christ is Lord.

Proclaimed the salvation of God by grace alone. And the transformation of a life by grace alone. And as I read this story of Manasseh, it reminds me of this man, Joshua Milton Blighy.

A fearful man. A man that everyone in his day was fearful of. And the Lord saved him. And here we have a similar man, Manasseh. A fearful man. And the writer of Kings tells us that Manasseh slaughtered so many people that the streets of Jerusalem flowed with the blood of these people.

He was a cruel, vicious, vicious man. And yet the Lord saved him. The Lord saved him. And this brings us hope tonight.

It brings us hope to one and to all. That there is nobody beyond redemption. There's nobody that the Lord cannot save. There's nobody that the Lord will not save.

[3 : 57] Whether it be a Manasseh or a Joshua Milton Blighy. There is a word that I think helps us navigate through this passage. And that word is move.

Move. The word move seems to describe the way this passage is presented to us. And that's what I want to do tonight. To look at this passage. Looking at how Manasseh moved or was moved throughout this passage.

First of all we see Manasseh was moved from God. In verses 1 to 9 we read of this Manasseh. He was a young boy, 12 years old when he began to reign.

Reigning for 55 years. The longest reign in Judah. And then verse 2 tells us he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.

This was a man who moved away from God. This was a man who was a king of Judah. He was set up by God and for God. He was meant to show the people how to follow God.

[5 : 04] How to worship God. He was a representative of God to the people in many ways. And yet we find him moving away from God. How did he move away from God?

Well first of all we know or we read. Part of the influence that moved him away from God was peer pressure. In verse 2 it says he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.

According to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel. So Israel was a nation.

They were surrounded by other nations who practiced certain things. In fact everything that Manasseh was practicing. He was copying the nations around them.

And this is what we would call a modern day example of peer pressure. Manasseh wanted to be like the other nations. Manasseh wanted to copy the way his neighbors were behaving and acting.

[6 : 03] He wanted to be like them. Peer pressure. And you might find it hard tonight to think that such a ruthless cruel man like Manasseh would succumb to peer pressure.

But peer pressure is a huge challenge to us today. Peer pressure was a huge challenge. It has always been a huge challenge. King Herod beheaded John the Baptist partly due to peer pressure.

The Bible tells us that when Salome was, he said to her, ask whatever you want. Because she pleased him so much with her dancing. Ask whatever you want up to half of my kingdom.

She said, give me the head of John the Baptist on a platter. And because he had said that, and because of his guests, the Bible says, he gave in to that request.

Peer pressure is a huge reality. And there's a lot of greyheads in here tonight. A lot of us are older tonight. But you guys who are young, these young folk, those of us who are older, we have to remember the younger people.

[7 : 10] Peer pressure is a massive influence in their lives. It is suggested that peer pressure is more of an influence than even parental pressure. Peer pressure means more to our young people than anything else.

And that's quite a thought, isn't it? Those of us who have children and we're bringing them up and we think that we are in control and we are in charge. We have to wake up to the reality that there are more influences than ourselves on our young people.

And we have to surely then, if this is an influence in moving somebody away from God, as Manasseh, this influence can move our young people away from God.

Our young people are under huge pressure to deny God, to deny Christ. Than ever before, I believe. It's becoming dangerous almost to say you're a Christian or to express Christian opinions. And so here's one of these influences that moved Manasseh away from God. And we would be wise to take this on board. Protect, support and encourage our young people.

[8 : 19] Help them in as many ways as we can. Because there's this draw away from Christ. There's this draw away from God.

Peer pressure. There's something else there. Parental rejection. We're told in verse 3 that Manasseh rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had broken down.

And set up all these altars of Baal and Asherah and all these other gods. He rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had broken down. So his dad set an example.

His dad said, son, this is how to live. Don't worship these gods. Don't do these things. But Manasseh said, I'm not listening to you, dad. I'm going to do what I want to do. Parental rejection.

This is what it is. It's modern day parental rejection. And what I want to say tonight is this.

Manasseh was born into a Christian family. Hezekiah was a godly man. Hezekiah was a godly king.

[9 : 21] Did that make Manasseh a Christian? Did that make Manasseh a godly young man? No, it didn't. And so young people, if you're here tonight.

Don't think just because you're in a Christian family. You immediately and automatically are going to continue to be. Or grow up to be a Christian. Because you're under peer pressure. And there's something in us that always rejects.

Or wants to reject good and godly counsel. And those of us who are parents. Who are Christian parents. Who are family men and women.

Don't assume that just because we're bringing up our children. And as we should. In the ways of the Lord. In family worship. And in coming to church. And teaching them to read their Bibles.

Themselves. That that is going to be. Enough. To keep them. We have to pray. That the Lord himself. Will keep them.

[10:21] And open their ears and their eyes. To listen and to see. And to accept. Good and godly counsel. Manasseh moved away from God.

Because of peer pressure. He moved away from God. Because of parental rejection. He rejected his father's advice. And because ultimately. He had a purpose driven life.

He had a purpose driven life. What do I mean by that? Look at all that Manasseh did. From verse 3 and following. It tells us he started worshipping other gods.

Pursuing other. Other gods. Pursuing other activities. He rebuilt high places. He erected altars of these gods. Baal and Asherah. He worshipped the host of heaven.

And he served them. He brought into the house of God. Into the church. Foreign gods and foreign idols. And he even. In verse 6. Burnt his sons. As an offering.

[11:21] In the valley of the son of Hinnom. He used fortune telling. And omens. And sorcery. In verse 6. And dealt with mediums. And necromancers. He did much evil.

In the sight of the Lord. The scripture tells us. What is this? He had a purpose driven life. He was driving after something. In his life. He was looking for meaning. And purpose in his life. And he was going about it.

The wrong way. But it's a way that he wanted to go about it. It's as if he was looking for purpose. And meaning in his life. In every other quarter. Except with the Lord himself. And this is what happens.

This is what. One of the ways in which we move away from God. If the purpose of our life. If we're looking to find purpose. And meaning in our life. Satisfied by something other than the Lord.

You might say tonight. I'd never offer my son. As a sacrifice on an altar. To any God. But no. I wouldn't expect anybody to take a child. And put him on an image of an idol.

[12:20] That is heated. This is what they did. Heated. And the child to be put on this idol. And burnt. I wouldn't expect anybody to do that. But I'm asking you tonight. Do we offer our children.

On the altar of prosperity. Do we offer our children. On the altar of popularity. And success. And wealth. In other words. Are we wanting more than anything.

For our children. To be popular. To be successful. To have families. To get a job. Because of that. Is the main purpose. That you want for your children.

We are. Coming alongside. Manasseh. And what he was doing. We're offering our children. To a foreign God. Other than to Jesus. So it's not as brutal as this.

But in principle. It's the same thing. And you might say. I don't bow down to starry hosts. But do we ever. Or are we inclined to.

[13:19] Check our horoscopes. Oh it's just a bit of fun. Or go and speak. To a fortune teller. Just a bit of fun. Or maybe even dabble. In a wee seance.

Here and there. Or watch it on even the TV. There's so many channels. On Sky now. That dabble with these things. You might. Tune into them. And just out of interest. But it's so fascinating.

People talking to the dead. You might even laugh about it. But the fact is. You see. We're becoming. Manasseh. In our thinking. In a very modern.

And in a very. Yet in a very same. In a very similar. Way. Manasseh's. Life. Was purpose driven. And what he was doing. He was investing. In all of these things. It's like somebody. On the stock market. Who invests. In commodities. Expecting a return. And that's what he's doing.

[14:17] He's investing. In everything. He could almost. Get his hands on. Hoping. That somehow. He would get a return. And the return is this. That he would find. Purpose. In his life.

That he would find. Satisfaction. In his life. And this is how. Part of the reason. He moved. Away. From God. So you see. Tonight.

We can move away. From God. So easily. So easily. If we allow. Peer pressure. To dictate. Our lives. If we allow. Parental rejection.

To guide. The way. That we're going. Or if we're looking. For that. Purpose. In our life. To be driven. By anything. Or anyone. Other.

Than. Jesus. Jesus. Alone. Is Lord. Jesus. Alone. Is the meaning. Of life. And the one. Who satisfies. That deepest need.

[15:11] Within our souls. Manasseh. Moved. From God. And secondly. Manasseh. Was moved. By God. In verses 10.

And 11. Was told. The Lord spoke to him. And to the people. But they paid no attention. Therefore. The Lord brought upon them. The commander of the army. Of the king of Assyria. And he came.

And captured Manasseh. With hoots. And bound him. With chains. Of bronze. And brought him. To Babylon. So. Manasseh. Was moving away. From God. And then. Manasseh. Was moved by God. God said. He spoke to him. He didn't listen. And God said. Then. I'm going to give you over. I'm going to hand you over. To the nation. Assyria. Beside him. Who practiced all the things. That he was dabbling in. God is moving him. Saying. Is this the way you want to live? Do you want to live. [16:05] Worshipping the starry hosts? Do you want to live. Worshipping. Gods. By offering your child. As a sacrifice. Do you want to set up. Altars. Anywhere. And everywhere you like. Do you want to practice.

Syncretism. Worship as many gods. As you want. Do you want that. Manasseh. Well I'll tell you what. I'm going to give you. What you want. And he moved him. He actually moved him. To a land. That is without hope. And without God. That's exactly what he's done. So when he was in Israel. Or in Judah. He had hope. He was disobedient. He was moving away gradually. But then he's moved to Assyria. And he has no hope. He's in a foreign land. God is not without these boundaries. It reminds me so much. Of Romans 1. Romans 1. Is a picture of humanity. Though we know God. The Bible says. There's no such thing. As an atheist. A true atheist. God has set eternity. [17:03] In every one of our hearts. Right. Solomon says that in Ecclesiastes. God has put in us. The. Calvin called it. The *sensus deitatis*. The sense of God.

Within us. So every one of us knows. God is. But when people know that God is. There is a God. They reject that. And they turn their backs on that. Then the Bible says. Romans 1. 24. 26. 28. Says. God gave them over. God gave them over. God gave them over. To the desires of their hearts. To unnatural lusts. And to a life and lifestyle. That is destructive. And will ultimately lead it to death. This is Romans 1. 24. 26. And 28. Happening in the life of Manasseh. God says. You want to live this life. There you go. I'm going to. I'm going to hand you over. To the desires of your heart. Our hearts friends tonight. [17:58] Are absolutely not good. Our hearts are corrupt. And if God should give us over. To the desires of our hearts. My word. What is our life going to become like?

We're going to end up. Like Manasseh. With a hook in our nose. And shackled. If God should hand us over. To the desires of our hearts. We'll become imprisoned. We'll become prisoners. To a life and a lifestyle. That's going to lead to death. And I want to ask you tonight. Do you really want that for your life? Do you really want that? Do you really want to live a life. Without God and without hope? Tonight there will be people in here. Who are dabbling. In these things. Who are tinkering with these things. Who may even be here. But some other context. You're looking for this purpose. In your life. To be satisfied in some other ways. And maybe you're here tonight. [18:54] And thinking. Maybe this is the answer. I'm not sure. I'm asking you tonight. Do you really want a life. Without God and without hope? Do you want to end up like Manasseh?

Do you want God to say. Have it your own way then. You're withdrawing from me. I will withdraw from you. That can happen. Because God has a thing. What we call patience. And as patience runs out. You know that. The Bible tells us that. I don't believe. Anybody tonight. Really wants that. I think that's where you're here. But stop fooling about with God. Stop tinkering with things that. That matter. Not just for time. But for the whole of eternity. Stop playing about with Jesus. Jesus is either Lord of all. [19:54] Or not Lord at all. As another said. And Manasseh kept on. And kept on. And kept on. And then. He was moved.

By God. To a place without hope. And without God. The third movement is this. Manasseh moved from God. He was moved by God. And then Manasseh moved in God. And this is. I think this is one of the most. Incredible. Verses in the whole of the passage. In verse 12. There he was. Bound. And shackled. And down. And depressed. Because he didn't want to be there. Really. And when he was in distress. He entreated the favor of the Lord his God.

And he humbled himself greatly. Before the God of his fathers. He prayed to him. And listen to this. And God was moved. By his entreaty. God heard.

[20 : 53] His plea. And he brought him back. He brought him back. To Jerusalem. And into his kingdom. And then Manasseh knew. That the Lord. He was God.

This is amazing. God was moved. God was moved. How was he moved? He was moved. By a broken spirit. And a contrite heart. God was moved.

By a man. Who was broken over his sin. Broken over his failure. Broken over his folly. He was moved. By this man. Who said. I don't want you. I don't want you. I don't want you. And then he turns around.

He says. Oh Lord. I'm so sorry. I want you. I want you. I want you. And he accepts him back. God is moved. Do you believe that tonight? That God has a heart.

That is moved. By pleas and entreaties. I know tonight. We believe in the impassibility of God. He's without body parts and passions. But let's always remember.

[21 : 49] Never ever. Take that to mean. That God has no feeling. Or no emotion. Or no character. Of love. Or compassion. Or kindness. The impassibility of God.

Is adopting us. To teach us. He's not like us. Fickle. Up one day. Down the next. It certainly doesn't mean. That God has no feeling. Or passion.

Or compassion. Because he does. This reminds me so much. Of the story. Of the prodigal son. The son. Who like Manasseh.

Said dad. I don't want you. Give me my money. I want to do my own thing. And the father said.

Have it your own way. And eventually. He ended up in a pigsty. And he was filthy.

And he was dirty. And he was depressed. And he came back to his father. And he didn't get around.

The father welcomed him back. The father was pleased.

[22 : 45] To have him back. And he threw his arms around us. Luke chapter 15 tells us. And welcomed him back. Manasseh. Moved in God.

He moved his heart. God is moved. By a broken spirit. And a contrite heart. I think tonight. This is a wonderful encouragement.

For every Manasseh to return. We can be a Manasseh. And suited and booted. We can be miles away from God. In our hearts. Sitting in a pew in church.

But there's hope for you tonight. Because if you're miles away from God. Yet you're sitting here tonight. You come back. Return. Because God receives Manasseh.

Doesn't he? He does. If you're sorry for your sin. If you're sorry. For seeking this purpose in your life. In any and every other way. Other than the Lord himself.

[23 : 42] It's not too late. What an encouragement tonight. To return. To return to him. If the Lord.

Can save and accept back Manasseh. Then he can save. And accept back you. He did it. Jesus did it in the New Testament. Those people who.

Whose society had given up on. I call them the legions. The lepers and the leeches. The legions and the lepers and the leeches. Of the New Testament. The legions.

The demon possessed men. Who were so angry. So wild. So out there. That they couldn't even mix of society. Jesus went to him. To legion. And he. He saved him.

He cleaned him. He restored his mind. The lepers. Who were. Outcast in society. Dirty. Filthy. He received them.

[24 : 38] Nobody else would. But he did. He received them back. And the leeches. Those Matthews. And these Zacchaeuses. These tax collectors. Who were doubly hated. Because they took money.

Off the Jews. And they worked for the Romans. They were thoroughly hated. Nobody wanted them. Jesus did. And Jesus received.

Matthew. And Zacchaeus. We know. Into his kingdom. What an encouragement tonight. To return. Maybe tonight. You're here. And everybody's giving up hope on you.

Jesus. Has not. What an encouragement. To remember. The Manasseh. Of this world. Let's be praying. For Manasseh. Every one of us.

Will think of somebody. Who you really believe. Is beyond redemption. Who you think. Has gone beyond the pale. Maybe they're in your family. Maybe they're your son. Or your daughter.

[25 : 34] Imagine Hezekiah. Imagine how broken hearted he was. There's my boy. I brought him up. To know better. What in the world. Is he doing? Well.

Don't you give up. On. These Manassehs. Don't you give up. On them. Remember them. Before God. Because. God is able. To do for us. Above and beyond. What we can ask or imagine. He can do it. You can't. But he can. And what an encouragement. To retell. The old. Old story. Of Jesus. And his love. When we leave.

Communion are great. And. This congregation. You're doubly blessed. You've got communions. This week. And next week. This is. Double blessing. About.

Ten services. Over two weeks. It's brilliant. But the fact of the matter is. We need to get into. Ordinary living. And please. Don't leave. The blessings of communion. Behind.

[26 : 30] In your day to day living. And your families. And your workplace. And wherever you go. Retell the old. Old story. Of Jesus. And his love. Retell the old. Old story. Of a God. Who receives back.

Manassehs. Tell people. That we were talking about. How God saves the worst sinners. And how there's hope for us all. Tell people. Gossip the gospel. Be known as a gossip.

But God's been the right things. And the good things. Manasseh. He moved from God. Manasseh was moved by God. Manasseh moved in God.

And then finally. Manasseh moved. To God. In verse 13. And following. Manasseh prayed to him. And God was moved by his entreaty. And he brought him back.

And then verse 14. Afterward. He built an outer wall. For the city of David. West of Gihon. In the valley. And for the entrance. And verse 15. He took away the foreign gods.

[27 : 27] And the idols. From the house. Of the Lord. And all the altars. That they had built. And then verse 16. He also restored. The altar of the Lord. And offered on it. Sacrifices.

Of peace offerings. And of thanksgiving. And so on. What a difference. In the life of Manasseh. God's forgiveness.

Had in him. What was the difference? What change came about. In Manasseh's life. When he came back to God. First of all. He rebuilt his defenses.

In verse 14. He rebuilt the defenses. Around the city. And you know what that says to us. When we come to Christ. When we repent. And come to Christ.

That's just the beginning. Of a very long story. We need to. Rebuild. Our lives. We need to be watching. And praying. We need to make a priority.

[28 : 22] That we are spending time. With the Lord. Every day. Because we need to guard our souls. Because the devil. Is going to come out. After you. So as. As Manasseh. Rebuild the defenses.

So we need to rebuild. If you have come to Jesus. Tonight. Or if you recently. Come to Jesus. Make this a priority. That you rebuild your life. Defensively.

Watch and pray. Watch and pray. Meet with others to pray. Read your scripture every day. And meet with others as well. And pray. Because the prayer of. Of righteous people.

Is powerful and effective. Then you remove the idols. In verse 15. The spirit of God. Will not tolerate.

Any idols in their hearts. When the spirit of Jesus. Comes into our hearts. He wants rid of everything. That is going to take. Or occupy space. That he should occupy.

[29 : 17] And so as Manasseh. Began to remove all these idols. So this is. What we call. Daily repentance. Turning our lives. Over to Jesus.

And turning away from the things. That we know. And taking a place in our lives. That they ought not to be. We need to be repenting every day. And asking the Lord.

To wash our hearts. And to give us the strength. To turn away from the things. The sins that so easily beset us. And then he restored.

He restored. The worship. Of God. In verse 16. Make it your practice friend. To worship the Lord every day. To worship him with God's people.

Regularly. Be in church. Be at meetings. Not for the sake of meetings. But because it's a place where we gather. To worship the Lord together. As a body.

[30 : 12] Of the Lord's people. These are necessary for us to grow as Christians. To rebuild. To remove. And to restore. Manasseh.

A man that looked beyond hope and redemption. But who was saved. And that gives us hope tonight. Joshua Milton Blaggy. A man who looked as if he was beyond redemption.

And he was saved. And may we believe tonight. That what God can do for Joshua. And for Manasseh. He can do for you. And for me. And for anyone.
In the whole. Of this island. Amen. Let us pray. Our loving Father in heaven. We want to thank you for your word. And for the great hope. That this word gives us.
We thank you for your power. The power of grace. The power of the Holy Spirit. And we pray Holy Spirit. That you will move amongst us tonight. That you will take these words.
[31 : 12] And that they will not just. Go over our heads. Or in one ear and out the next. But that they will find. A lodging place in our hearts. That the word of God will take root.
And bear fruit. For your own glory. So here is our Father. Bless us we pray Lord Jesus. Fill us we ask. Holy Spirit.
In Jesus name. Amen. Our final singing tonight. Is in Psalm 119. In the Scottish Psalter.
Psalm 119. On page 405. Psalm 119. On page 405. And we are singing there. The ninth part. Verses 65.
To 72. Psalm 119. On page 405. Verses 65. To 72. Well hast thou with thy servant.
[32 : 16] Dealt. As thou didst promise give. Good judgment me. And knowledge teach. For I thy word believe. Ere I afflicted. Before I afflicted.
Was I strayed. But now I keep thy word. Both good thou art. And good thou dost. Teach me thy statutes. Lord.
And so on. Psalm 119. Verses 65. To 72. And we stand to praise God. Well hast thou with thy servant.
And tell us. And tell us. And tell us. That it's promised give.
Good judgment me. And knowledge teach.
[33 : 15] For I thy word believe. Be good. For I afflict Leahy.
My afflicted was I strayed, but now I keep thy word.
Both good the warm and good the dark, teach me thy statutes, Lord.
The man that I puffed up with pride against thee for a lie, yet I, O mind, rest, observe with my whole heart will I.
Their hearts through worldly ease and well, as fat, as gleecee they be.
[35 : 05] But in thy holy law I take delight continually.
If I be very good for me, that I'm afflicted was, that I might dwell, instructed me, and learn thy holy laws.
The word that cometh from thy mouth is better unto thee than many thousands and great sons of gold and silver be.