



Writing Life Faith



Life of a King: Manasseh's name

The Seventeenth King.

You can read King Manasseh's story in 2 Kings 21:1-17 and 2 Chronicles 33:1-20.

When I, Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, became king, I set out to make my name the greatest. My name would be the name above all other names. I constructed altars for Baal, bowed to the powers of the heavens, and sacrificed my sons in the fire. I also had lots of fun with sorcery, divination, witchcraft, and medium consultation. Plus I stuck an idol in God's Temple. Many people died during my reign.

Some time later, the Assyrians returned. This time, they captured Jerusalem and took me prisoner. They led me to Babylon. There, in my moment of darkest despair, I humbled myself before the LORD. I finally realized that He alone is God.

Manasseh, son of Hezekiah and Hepzibah, becomes king at age twelve. His early years closely mimic those of his grandfather, Ahaz. Except midway through his life, God does something that no one expected. In turn, Manasseh's life spins in the opposite direction. How does this happen? Let's find out how God uses all circumstances for His glory.

Manasseh: The Beginning.

"He rebuilt the pagan shrines his father, Hezekiah, had broken down. He constructed altars for the images of Baal and set up Asherah poles. He also bowed before all the powers of the heavens and worshiped them." (2 Chronicles 33:3)

This verse sums it up pretty well. If you can picture a "typical" Old Testament sin, Manasseh commits it. Pagan altars, Asherah poles, consulting psychics, sorcery, idolatry, child sacrifice, pride, ignorance, and so on. You get the picture. We don't know why Manasseh was so bent on evil (other than his sin nature), but we must at least somewhat blame Hezekiah.

Hezekiah's sin made it easy for Manasseh to reject God. After revealing Judah's treasures to Babylon, Hezekiah was rebuked by Isaiah. His response: "Well, at least Judah won't suffer during my lifetime." **Manasseh didn't grow up with a proper fear of the LORD.** Now we see where that leads.

Manasseh: The Middle.

"The LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they ignored all His warnings."

(2 Chronicles 33:10)

Again, ignorance. Sometimes I wonder why God allowed countless kings to make the same mistakes. It's as if someone ran out of original ideas and opted to copy/paste the previous king's rule and substitute the names. I believe God allowed Manasseh to do what he did to show His mercy. **It also serves as a reminder that human nature doesn't change.** I keep realizing this the more I read Kings and Chronicles.

In every case, we see wicked rulers reject God. And in every case, God sends enemy nations to correct them. If Manasseh had just listened to God, he could have spared himself all the trouble. But sometimes God uses our punishments to bring us closer to Him. This is the case with Manasseh.

God has put up with him for too long. So the LORD brings the Assyrians, who put a ring through Manasseh's nose, bind him in bronze chains, and lead him away to Babylon. You'd think this is God's judgment. *Ha, Manasseh got what he deserved.*

Except that isn't the God we serve.

Manasseh: The End.

"And when he prayed, the LORD listened to him and was moved by his request. So the LORD brought Manasseh back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh finally realized that the LORD alone is God!" (2 Chronicles 33:13)

In his distress, Manasseh genuinely seeks the LORD. He humbles himself before God - the Name above all names - and prays. Moved by his request, the LORD uses this circumstance to correct Manasseh. God even allows Manasseh to return to Jerusalem.

Once he gets back, Manasseh's reign builds momentum - in the opposite direction from before. He tears down the pagan idols, restores the altar of the LORD, encourages the people to worship God, and rebuilds the wall of Jerusalem. As great as this is, the people are so entrenched in paganism that nothing changes. Yet.

When Manasseh dies, he goes down in history as Judah's worst king. In a poetic twist, the worst king finds himself in God's Kingdom. A sinner, rescued from despair by grace. This is the second consecutive week in which I've picked up glimpses of what Jesus would do one day.

What Defined Manasseh?

If you're walking in sin right now, God wants to bring you back. No matter what you've done, He loves you. If God can win the soul of the worst of Judah's kings, He can win your soul. But to do that, you must...

Seek the LORD

"Then Manasseh restored the altar of the LORD and sacrificed peace offerings and thanksgiving offerings on it. He also encouraged the people of Judah to worship the LORD, the God of Israel." (2 Chronicles 33:16)

Manasseh sought to make his name great. In his pride, he imagined himself worthy of worship. God quickly humbled him. Manasseh was left with the usual two choices: reject God or turn to Him. Remembering the fruit of Ahaz's example, Manasseh opts for the other path.

In distress, Manasseh turns to God. **God is always there for us.** He always offers us a way out of our brokenness. But choosing His way requires sacrificing our pride and honour. We need to relinquish our desires and turn to Him. We must realize that our name is nothing compared to His Name.

God used Manasseh's captivity to remind him that human aspiration amounts to nothing. **God allowed Manasseh to suffer out of love.** It was this suffering that brought Manasseh to repentance. When people tell us that a good God would never let us suffer, tell them about Manasseh. If Manasseh hadn't suffered, he would be suffering eternally in hell. But as 2 Corinthians 4:17 says, *"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all."* Amen.

Good/Bad.

All this said, Manasseh still falls under the bad king category. He's kinda the opposite of Solomon, who started really well, then slipped into sin. Despite Manasseh's conversion, the people of Judah continued to sin.

Which is why we need to put Manasseh in his place on the [Kings Chart](#). He is our ninth king on the 'BAD' side.

Please don't let Manasseh's rule discourage you. God remains at work. Next week, Manasseh's son gets his turn in control. We'll also examine the nation of Israel and why the kings could (or couldn't) draw them to the LORD.

As 2 Chronicles 33:12 tells us, *"But while in deep distress, Manasseh sought the LORD his God and sincerely humbled himself before the God of his ancestors."*



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