

**FINISHING STRONG;
GOING THE DISTANCE FOR
YOUR FAMILY
BY
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CHAPTER 7

LOUSY START, STRONG FINISH.

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CHAPTER 7 OUTLINE

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INTRODUCTION

Today we want to look at the bible character called MANASSEH. Manasseh was one of the kings of Judah at the time of Prophet Isaiah. He was the son of King Hezekiah, one of the best kings of Israel. He took over from his father at a very young age and turned out to be very disobedient to the ways of God. The case of the son not being like the father. We will see in his story that the grace of God and the forgiveness of God could cover everything.

It does not matter who you are, or what you have done, or how evil you have been. If God could forgive Manasseh He can forgive you. We will see how God did this.

In Manasseh, we see a man who ran what may have been the wickedest, bloodiest and most rebellious race a man could ever run. But much later in life, Manasseh changed direction- by 180 degrees.

And amazingly, he finished strong.

OUTLINE I

THE LIFESTYLE OF MANASSEH.

- We all make choices everyday about the way we live our lives. If you are here today listening to these words, you are making choices
- The most significant, life-shaping choices we will ever make will come in the course of what seems like ordinary, everyday living. That is why it pays to walk with God moment by moment.
- Manessah did not walk with God. He started off on his own path very early in life, and kept at it until it was very late.
- But not too late.
- Manasseh became King at the very young age of 12. (2Kings 21:1) and reigned for 55 years. As a king you rule until you die.

- Manasseh did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord dispossessed before the sons of Israel (2Kings21:2)
- He did exactly the same kind of sick (sinful) stuff the Canaanites were guilty of which made God to command Joshua to wipe them out of the promised land. Sexual perversion and child sacrifice were everyday stuff during his reign. He was as guilty as the Canaanites that were driven out of the land.
- He built high places (shrines and place of worship of idols) and served the idols of Baal. 2Kings21:3
- He did not allow the worship of God but built altars in the house of the Lord for the repulsive imported gods. (v.4:15). He even used his own son in sacrifice to these evil gods. (2Kings21:6)
- He practised witchcraft and used divination and related with the occultic people.

- Let us remember that this man had a godly heritage. He should know better. His father was a godly king by the name Hezekiah who had taught him the truth. He was taught about the true God. But he deliberately turned his back on the God of his father.
- God does not let this kind of behaviour go unpunished. We make choices and God responds.
- Manasseh eventually came to the end of the rope.

OUTLINE 2

GOD'S RESPONSE TO MANASSEH

God responded by pronouncing judgment on Manasseh. (2Kings21:10-31)

- Manasseh surpassed the Ammonites in debauchery and pervasion. He even did them in God's special city of Jerusalem.
- When we deviate from God's plan for us, He speaks to our hearts in a quiet and still voice.
- If we continue in our sin, He often send people around us to carefully and lovingly challenge us about our sin.
- Obviously, Manasseh was not open to correction. God spoke through the Prophets in V13. God said "I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down"
- Bible historians tell us that it was Manasseh who took Prophet Isaiah and sawed him in half. He killed Isaiah to silence him.

- The Lord brought the commanders of the army of the King of Assyria against Israel and they captured Manasseh, bound with bronze and took him to Babylon. (2Chronicles33:10-11)
- But God allowed a different ending for Manasseh. He humbled himself greatly before God and God heard his supplication and brought him back to Jerusalem to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God.
- Most of us like the author of this book, would have wanted Manasseh to suffer for his wrongs. We would not want him to get off easy and enjoy God's grace. But God is not like you and me.
- We don't like it when God grants grace to the object of our anger and wrath. We are angry at God for forgiving bad sinners. We are judgmental. Just like Jonah, we don't want our enemies forgiven.

- We feel that way because we don't appreciate how close to Manasseh we all are. No one was just enough to throw the stones at the woman accused of adultery in John 8
- The human heart is generally as corrupt as Manasseh's heart. We might not have sinned as he did, but it is not because we are better. If not for the grace of God, we all have the potential to do precisely what he did. If we had the position and privilege.
- The author has offered the following principles after a sober reflection of the story of Manasseh

OUTLINE 3

GENUINE REPENTANCE UNLOCKS THE DOOR OF GOD'S MERCY

There are two kinds of repentance in the world. REAL and FAKE

- Genuine and true repentance come from the heart. It is always accompanied with great remorse. It is an attitude that says “if I had this to do over again, I wouldn't do it. I wish I could go back and change it, if possible”
- The genuine repentant person is repulsed and sick by his/her sin. You truly abhor what you did and if given opportunity to do it again, you wouldn't
- You want to be a different kind of person and want nothing to do more with the sinful way. You want to demonstrate your change of heart by a change in your behaviour

- While men may not be able to tell the difference between genuine and fake repentance, God always knows the difference. You cannot fool God.
- God saw that Manasseh's repentance was genuine and God listened.
- Genuine repentance always brings evidence with it. You recognise it through the evidence.
- John the Baptist says "Bring forth fruit in keeping with your repentance". In other words, DEMONSTRATE your repentance. Show it by your fruit.
- Manasseh showed the fruit of his repentance. After he was restored to the kingdom, he went about undoing the evil he spent so many years doing.
- He also removed the foreign gods and the idol from the house of the Lord, as well as all the altars which he had built on the mountain of the

house of the Lord and in Jerusalem, and he threw them outside the city.

2Chron33:15-16

- He set up the altar of the Lord and sacrificed peace offerings and thanks offerings on it; and he ordered Judah to serve the Lord God of Israel.

OUTLINE 4

MY PAST LIFE DOES NOT EXCLUDE ME FROM PAST SERVICE

Another principle we learn from the story of Manasseh is that our past life does not exclude us from present service. God does not write us off the way men do.

- The story of the Higher Power Church in California, USA.
- The church is made up of people who have had very rough past life. The choir or band is made up of former professional musicians who have given their lives to Christ. They can still boogie, but now they do it for Jesus.
- The Pastor has the special ability or gifting to relate the gospel to people who did not come out of a church culture. He teaches the Truth but in a relaxed way that gets the congregation laughing and crying

- The congregation is made up of heroin addicts, people with immoral lifestyles, people with AIDS. People that really need to know Jesus Christ.
- The Pastor has over the years disciplined them. Some of them have become strong leaders. The three top leaders have a combined prison experience of forty five years.
- Like Manasseh these men had their old life. But now, because of what Jesus Christ has done in their hearts, they have new life. And they are being used by Him.
- They had a lousy start, perhaps were not even in the race at all until later-in life, but they will finish strong like Manasseh eventually did.
- They will finish strong because they have rejected their old way of living. They are repulsed by their old lifestyle and never want to go back. They want to know Christ and want to obey Him. Apostle Paul said to the church in Corinth.

- (ICor6:9-11) “Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate by perversion, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the spirit of our God”.
- Manasseh would fit perfectly into the congregation in this church in California. He might even have played the Keyboard or sang “Amazing Grace” in the choir. Because if anyone could ever sing with his whole heart about the grace that is so amazing, it would be Manasseh.

OUTLINE 5

DEALING WITH OLD MEMORIES

- As human beings we often and most likely wrestle with terrible feelings of guilt after we have been forgiven. Manasseh probably remembered his past evil ways. He likely grieved over the sacrifice of his baby son and the many innocents souls he killed.
- Circus elephants are usually chained to a stake as babies. But the strange thing is that when they become massive adults, they are held down by the same shackle as the one used on the baby elephants.
- This is possible because elephants have great memories and are not very bright animals. After struggling as a baby to be free of the shackles, he resigns himself to the believe that he could never get away from the shackles. So, now as an adult he doesn't even try. He is chained to the stake, he is chained, to the idea that he can never get away.

- Some of us are tied to our past like the circus elephant chained to a stake. This is one of the primary tools and schemes of the enemy to defeat Christians and to keep us from finishing strong.
- The devil simply throws our past back at us. It may be one major sin from years past and we still grieve over it and deeply regret it. Yes, we have been forgiven but the failure keeps drifting back to our minds, especially when we seek to move out and do something significant for the Lord. We are like that elephant chained by its memory.
- It may be sexual immorality or cruelty or lying to get your job or neglect. Whatever it was, the enemy keeps throwing the sin up in your face. He uses it to paralyse you. He cannot take away your salvation. But he can rob you of your salvation.
- You cannot run a race when you are pulling that kind of shackle. You need some strong help to cut through the gate of brass and bars of iron that hold you down to the past. The rusty old links

OUTLINE 6

THE JAWS OF LIFE

The Jaws of Life is the instrument that rescue crews use in cutting through when there is a terrible car accident and someone is trapped inside. It can cut through anything: steel, brick, metal and the twisted Chassis and body of a car that has been hit head-on by an eighteen wheeler (a trailer).

- We need the Jaws of Life to cut through the chains of past sin and guilt that is holding us back and keeping us from finishing strong.
 - a. We need the jaws of life to cut us free from biblical ignorance**
- Many Christians don't understand what the scripture teaches about forgiveness.
- We are ignorant of what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross. We only partially understood it. John19:29. "It is finished" means Jesus had accomplished the work His Father had sent Him to do. He was the Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world.

- Our sins, the sins of the whole world was paid for by the death on the Cross of Calvary. (IJohn2:2) says He died not only for my sins, but for the sins of the whole world. Our sins has been paid for.
- The gospel is that we owe a debt of sin that we can never pay for. So Jesus paid the debt He did not owe. That was our debt. He got us covered. That is grace. Unfortunately not all Churches teach about the fullness of grace. Grace covered sins now and the future including that of our seeds unborn. Ps103:10- says “He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities”. He did not deal with Manasseh according to his sins. He does not deal with you and I according to our sins. He does not reward us according to our iniquities. He rewards according to grace.

Ps103:11-12- says “for as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness to those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us”

b. We need the jaws of life to cut us free from unbelief

- We have trouble really believing in the extent of Christ's work for us on the cross. We are slow and reluctant to believe in the truth of IJohn1:9.
"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness".
- In his book "WILL DAYLIGHT COME? Robert Heffler told this moving story.
"There was a little boy...etc.
- Jesus Christ was standing at the window like that Grandma. And He saw the whole thing. But because He loves you, He has forgiven you. He is wondering how long you will let the enemy make a slave out of you.
- Manasseh means "FORGOTTEN" in Hebrew. That is what Jesus has done with our sin according to Hebrews10:17
"And their sins and their lawless deeds, I will remember no more"
- If He is not remembering it, why are you remembering it? When next the enemy throws up one sin in your face, tell him to go take a jump into the Lagoon. And tell him to take the shackle chain with him.

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING.

GOD BLESS YOU.