

AUGUST 3

2 Chronicles 33:14-34:33

2 Chronicles 33: 14-25

Vs. 14-17 How in the world did God arrange it that Manasseh repented, was released and returned to be king? This is a miracle all the way around. Not only that, but God had already begun bringing punishment against Judah that would not stop. So here comes Manasseh back to Israel, working against all hope to make up for some of the damage that he had done. Notice that he stopped idol worship in Judah. My theory is that he did more good than we realize or that is mentioned in the text. Ezra's message is, "Never, never, never give up."

Vs. 18-20 This is a somewhat bland summary on his horrible reign. In 2 Kings it says that he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood. And regarding the prophets, tradition says that he killed Isaiah.

Vs. 21-25 It is interesting here that Amon was evil like his father, but Ezra mentions that he didn't humble himself as his father did. Apparently any "father-son" talks that took place didn't work. Both the Lord and Ezra are putting the focus on humility. Everyone sins, but sin without repentance and humility is fatal. The key element in repentance is humility both in heart and in action, submitting to God.

2 Chronicles 34

V. 1 Notice that Josiah was eight when he began to reign. That's kind of young. This would mean that when Josiah's father became king, and when Manasseh died, Josiah was six. My theory is that the repentant and humbled Manasseh couldn't change the heart of his son Amon, but he was able to influence the heart of his grandson Josiah. I'll bet there were a lot of grandfather-grandson talks that went on. Amon was busy taking the reigns of control, and Manasseh was basically retired. Manasseh would have had lots of time with Josiah during all of those young years. I've done a lot of work with kids and those first six years can be incredible. I think that the humbled and godly Manasseh made an impact on the boy who would become one of Israel's greatest kings. Never, never, never give up.

Vs. 1-2 Notice the comparison to David and seeking after God. This will be an amazing king with a hopeless task. Verse 2 is incredible. We will not find anything bad in Josiah. He served the Lord and Israel with a burning intensity until he died.

Vs. 3-7 We have a progression in Josiah's walk with the Lord. When he was 16 he began to seek the Lord. Actually, he sought the Lord according to the promise to David. This would also have held the redemptive promise of the Christ, the Son of David. He would have been trained by the priest and Levites, but he, himself, had a thirst and passion to seek God. We'll see that whatever was taught to Josiah was basically all oral tradition, history and the writings of David and Solomon. They didn't have the first five books of the Bible, the law.

When Josiah was 20 he began cleansing Jerusalem and Judah. This may have been in preparation to restore the worship in Jerusalem. Notice that Josiah took ownership for the entire country. The northern areas still had some Jews in them but were largely vacant or populated by a mixed race of people. Josiah went into all the land west of the Jordan and up to the Sea of Galilee. These were a very "religious" people back then. If you burned a man's bones on something you made it cursed. We don't have this sense of the spiritual at all. We'd just get our power washer and make it "clean" again. These people may have been superstitious, but they held a pagan awe for the spiritual. For us, if we can't see it, it doesn't exist.

At this point, I think Josiah and his leaders thought they had done a great job and had honored the Lord. They had, but they only had their perspective on the matter. God's perspective was about to come.

Vs. 8-13 We've seen this before. Josiah was now 26 years old. Remember, Hezekiah was 25 when he began to lead Israel spiritually. Josiah now led in restoring and organizing the worship of Israel. Ezra's point?

Apparently the temple was wrecked and needed tons of repair. It's interesting that the song leaders were also overseers of the work. I wonder if they played during breaks.

Vs. 14-21 I am still awed by the fact that Josiah didn't have a copy of the OT until now. Manasseh must have had them all destroyed. I'm humbled by Josiah's immediate understanding and emotion. They had done well in trying to restore Israel, but when they heard the law and the curses in Deuteronomy, they realized that God had planned for the entire removal of Israel from the land as a punishment. Josiah understood and was humbled.

You will notice that this account is not a summary of what happened in 2 Kings. That this entire story is retold here is like God underlining it ten times. What Josiah did is not only to be an example; it is a vital understanding and response to God's truth. It was vital not only for the nation of Israel, but I think it is vital to us as disciples following in the harvest making disciples. The storm is approaching.

Vs. 22-25 God tells Josiah his task was "hopeless." Nothing is said here of the guilt from the innocent blood that Manasseh shed, but we find that mentioned in other places.

Vs. 26-27 I think these are some of the greatest discipleship verses in the Bible. I wonder what God heard from this man's heart. Notice the role of humility.

V. 28 While this seems to be God's response to Josiah's sincerity, God will now accomplish something amazing through Josiah. The promise of peace during his time motivated Josiah. Instead of sliding for home like Hezekiah did, Josiah burst into action. In spite of certain punishment, he sought to see the people and country honor God.

Vs. 29-33 Not only was Josiah sincere and intense, but he also led and modeled. Hezekiah had the people make a covenant with God. Josiah, himself, read the law out loud to the people and made a covenant with God; and the people followed. What a heart and what a man of God. I'm willing to bet that Josiah made his own copy of the law and read from it daily, exactly as it says in Deuteronomy 17:19.

V. 33 You don't read this about any other king. The people totally followed him.

I wonder if those who survived the exile and if those who came out of it realized how much grace God showed them through this amazing king and his hopeless reform. It was God's grace to save Manasseh, provide a godly king like Josiah and energize this incredible revival before the coming storm that would sweep Israel out of its land. We'll see why it was grace and how it worked when we get to the book of Daniel.

It makes me think that if our hearts are focused on following our Lord in the harvest, our expectations and emotions do not have to be subject to the events of our times. Our goal is making disciples as a storm approaches. Within that coming storm God is working. Abiding in Christ means we confidently know He is leading and therefore we are always looking for His direction. In disasters He guides us into hand-crafted opportunities to share with the lost and make disciples. Sometimes disasters and disappointments get the adrenaline flowing and open up big "unopenable" doors.

Romans 16:8-27

Vs. 8-16 The only thing in particular that stands out to me here is that Paul had another relative mentioned. It should be noted that although Paul had never been to Rome, he sure knew a lot of people there.

Vs. 17-20 After everything that Paul wrote about unity in chapters 12, 14 and 15, he now issues a command to avoid those who destroy unity. And again, this is a command.

V. 20 Notice that if they obeyed God and avoided these people, the *God of peace* would *crush Satan* under their feet. There is a correlation between Satan's work and the absence of God's peace in a church. We need to deal with those who cause problems and divisions, although we seldom do.

Vs. 21-23 These were the people in Corinth with Paul. Paul had a great group of workers with him.

Vs. 25-27 There's a 3-point sermon in here somewhere. Look at where the harvest is present in this benediction. This would make a good message on being a disciple in the harvest.

V. 25 How does this strengthen you? What was Paul's gospel? Look at Romans 1.

V. 26 What impact does this verse have on you? What is *the obedience of faith*? You'll find this phrase also in chapter 1.

V. 27 Of all the things Paul could have said about God's irresistible sovereignty, he says that God is wise. When we read Job, the only thing God really says about Himself has to do with the infinite depth of His wisdom. He is righteous, and He is loving, and we can absolutely trust Him and His plan.

As a disciple, what do you think about Romans and how these last verses are meant to motivate you in the harvest?

Psalm 26

Vs. 1-3 It is interesting that the confidence David had in his integrity was that he had kept God's *steadfast love* before his eyes.

Vs. 4-5 This seems like a "no brainer," but we are actually surrounded by people like this, often in church. These are like the people Paul just warned the Romans about. They appear godly and are knowledgeable, but they bring unrest. They also keep the church from its work in the harvest.

Vs. 6-8 You almost wonder if David used to sneak into the tabernacle at night and pray there and walk around the altar and sing to God. I know people who do stuff like that.

Vs. 9-10 Apparently David was presently in the company of some of these people. Joab, the commander of his army, was a man like this. When David was married to Saul's daughter, before he had to run for his life, he was surrounded by people like this. Sometimes we can't get away from them. But we can live for the glory of God.

Vs. 11-12 Our obedience should never be an if-then proposition; that is, "if I obey, then you are obligated to bless me." Our obedience is the very least we can give. It is normal behavior, not something extraordinary. And knowing God's love, whether He blesses us with life or death on earth, still means we will live forever with Him, enjoying the kindness of Christ and the riches of His glory. We know that what's coming next is better than this, so we work in the harvest, leaving it all on the planet, because of who Christ is.

Proverbs 20:19

A lot of us fall into this one. This is interesting. You have a note that says, "simple in his lips." As in all the proverbs, we can be wise in 47 areas in our lives, but still be a fool and simpleton in a few areas. The point for us, from God's perspective, is that if He puts His finger on something we need to work on, we should take it to heart, humble ourselves and submit to His wisdom.