

Manasseh, A Profile of Amazing Grace

¹³And when he prayed to him, the LORD was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD is God. – 2 Chronicles 33:13

In the annals of the Old Testament, there may be no more notorious sinner than Manasseh. As evil as any king who ever led Judah, he was the son of Hezekiah. Hezekiah was not a perfect king, but he walked as closely with God as any king since David, and no king more righteous ever followed him.

⁵Hezekiah trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him. ⁶He held fast to the LORD and did not cease to follow him; he kept the commands the LORD had given Moses. ⁷And the LORD was with him; he was successful in whatever he undertook. – 2 Kings 18:5-7

Great advantages, a great legacy and a great fatherly example did not prove sufficient to restrain Manasseh from the vilest sins conceivable. Everything that his father had built in terms of restoring the worship of *JEHOVAH* in Judea, Hezekiah dragged down. Hezekiah fought against idolatry. Manasseh reintroduced it with brazen abandon. He even erected idols in the temple of God. But, that barely scratches the surface of the despicable things he did. He worshipped the heavenly bodies. He practiced divination, sorcery, witchcraft and consulted mediums. He offered his own sons as sacrifices to pagan deities. Under Manasseh, Judah fell into such a deep spiritual morass that God's judgment against the nation could not be reversed. In fact, it was the sins of Manasseh that would be referenced in later days as the cause of the captivity.

Though it was the apostle Paul who thought of himself as the "chief of sinners", Manasseh could have easily challenged him for the title. Nevertheless, a remarkable development took place. The military commanders of the king of Assyria attacked Manasseh and took him captive. Since their prisoner was Judah's king, it was necessary to do all that they could to humiliate him. They carried Manasseh away to Babylon bound in bronze shackles and with a hook in his nose.

Down isn't the worst place to be, especially if it causes a man to see the helplessness of his own estate and to cry out to God. That is precisely what Manasseh did. It would be difficult for even the most tender of Christians to look upon Manasseh's repentance without some degree of skepticism. But, the great Reader of human hearts sees that which we cannot and God was moved with compassion in response to Manasseh's pleas. Not surprisingly, God was right when the skeptics were wrong. The repentance of Manasseh was genuine. Once he was restored to his home in Jerusalem, he did what he could to reverse the harm he had done. The damage was too great, and the future of the nation was sealed, but Manasseh was a changed man.

Have you ever wondered if there is such a thing as going one sin too far? Take comfort in knowing that Jesus came to save sinners and simply put, God's grace is greater than our deepest sin.

*Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace,
Freely bestowed on all who believe!
You that are longing to see His face,
Will you this moment His grace receive?*

*Grace, grace, God's grace,
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within;
Grace, grace, God's grace,
Grace that is greater than all our sin.*

- *Julia H. Johnston*

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