

Two Men Chiefs of Sinners Manasseh and Saul

by Svend Christensen

The sermon explores the transformative power of God's grace through the stories of Manasseh and Saul, two of the Bible's chief sinners who found redemption.

Duration: 41:57

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 33:10, Acts 9:3-10, Acts 9:15-16, Acts 9:23-27

Topics: "God's Grace", "Repentance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Saul, who later became the apostle Paul. Saul was initially a persecutor of Christians, but he had a life-changing encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. The preacher emphasizes the power of God's grace and how sometimes God has to humble us before we can fully surrender to Him. He also highlights the importance of not leading others astray through our sinful actions. The sermon concludes with an invitation for people to accept Jesus into their hearts and be transformed.

Transcript

Thank you so much. Now, tonight, maybe we can have a quick review. Last night we spoke on the two men that lost a great possession, Adam and Esau.

We spoke on two masters and on their comparison, Abel and Stephen. Last night we spoke on the two men that went to heaven without dying. Now, tonight, we want to see if you can get these two subjects.

Two chief of sinners. One of the old testament, one of the new. May I say there are several similarities between these two as well.

I don't want two people speaking at once. We want one person to try to give both names. So let's see if we have a hand.

Who has that? Yes sir, you're right. This is Manasseh and Paul the Baptist. Does anybody else have that? You have the same? That's good.

Oh, that's fine. Let's turn then to the scriptures. Second Chronicle, chapter 33.

Two chiefs of sinners. I believe Manasseh outstripped all the others. For this reason, he has such an opportunity.

He's such a godly heritage. He's such privileges that others didn't have. One lady said to me last night, it's African Ether.

So I said, we'll see if it is. But, you see, African Ether was a heathen king. He didn't have the right that Manasseh had, and he didn't sit against the right that Manasseh did.

And, as you'll see in these scriptures, Manasseh had a wonderful conversion. Now, if you read the second Kings, chapter 21, with the account there, you don't see anything about his conversion. He doesn't mention it.

But, Chronicles dealing more with the spiritual side of a man's life tells us how he's converted. You never know that he's converted unless you have this account in the 33rd chapter of the second Chronicles. Beginning to read at verse one, Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem.

For he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, like unto the abominations of the heathen whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up all that were vailom, and made bowls, and worshipped all the hosts of heaven, and served them. Also he built altars in the house of the Lord, where the Lord had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be forever.

And he built altars for all the hosts of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord, and he caused his children to pass through the fire of the valley of the son of Enam. Also he observed times, and used enchantment, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards. He wrought much evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger.

And he set up a carved image, the idol which he had laid in the house of God, of which God had said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name forever. Neither will I any more remove the foot of Israel from out of the land which I have appointed for your fathers, so that they will take heed to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole law, and the statutes, and the ordinances by the hand of Moses. So Manasseh made Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to err, and to do worse than the heathens whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel.

And the Lord spake to Manasseh and to his people, but they would not hearken. Therefore the Lord brought upon them the captives of the Oaks, from the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with feathers, and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him, and was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem, into his kingdom.

Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God. Now after this he built the wall of the city of David, on the west side of Gihon, the valley even to the entering end at the fifth gate, and contested about wholesale, and raised it up in a very great height, and put captives of war in all the cities of Judah. And he took away the strained swords, and the idols out of the house of the Lord, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city.

And he repaired the altar of the Lord, and sacrificed thereon peace offerings, and thanks and commended Judah to serve the Lord God of Israel. Why wasn't that a tremendous conversion to God there? A very, very wicked name. And, of course, the other one is Saul of Tarsus.

We read about him in verse 71-15, where he says that Christ is a faithful saint, and worthy to be accepted by all. But Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. And we'll talk more about him soon after a little while.

First we're going to talk a little bit about Manasseh, and why we believe he was the chief of sinners in the Old Testament, and how God dealt with him. And what a wonderful setting for the grace of God here. We sang about that tonight, the grace of God.

Well, here you see the grace of God in this place, in both of these nets. If you want to paint a picture, and you need to get a good contrast. And a great contrast is the dark background of these two chiefs of sinners, and then as you paint the grace of God, it really shows up.

And if a sample of God can save men like that, he can save anybody. No one is to harm for the Lord to save. That gives encouragement for the worse, doesn't it? And at the same time, as far as these two men go, quote, religious men.

They're religious, as you'll see. But religion is not the answer. The answer is found in that person, and that person is our Lord Jesus Christ.

That's where you find the answer to that need of the human wicked heart. All the heartless wicked. Think of what the heart is capable of doing.

Now, here's a man, a young man, Lord of Sorts is privileged in this portion. I go back to the previous chapter, chapter 32, verse 32. Now, the rest of the act of Hesychiah and of his goodness, behold, are written in the edition of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Hema, and in the book of the king of Judah and Israel.

Hesychiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the chapels of the sepulchres of the son of David. And all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did to him honor his death, and the naft of his son reigned in his death. Now, here was a boy that had a great and a glorious father.

One of the greatest kings in Judah, Hesychiah, known for his great fear of the Lord, and honoring the Lord, and living for God, and casting out what was evil, and purifying things. A great man of God, Godly king. So, he had a wonderful father, a father that opened the temple doors, a father cleared out all the rubbish, a man that put the Levites back in the office.

He restored the worship. He lit the lamps in the temple. He stamped out idolatry.

This type of a father, I'm sure, prayed for this boy, this boy that would follow him. This boy that was born after you met the Lord, and said to Hesychiah, set your house in order, you're going to die. You remember how he prayed, he turned his head to the wall, he wept, and he prayed, and God says, I'll give you 50 years.

And that means, for another 50 years, Hesychiah wouldn't have been born, right? So, he was a child of grace, you see. God extended a man's life in order that this boy might be born, and sit in the cold. And

what an age he's got his life at, 12 years old.

The age when the Lord went up to the temple with his family. The age when the Lord Jesus raised Jerry, his father. An age when many people trust the Lord Jesus Christ.

When you're young, your life co-opted you with death. And this is when he started to reign. The man that was 12 years old, when he began to reign.

Think of the life he was raised in. He lived near the temple. He knew the great prophets of God who were pestering him that day, with all these wonderful privileges, and yet turned his back on it.

I wonder if there's someone here tonight, you've had this godly father, a godly mother, you've had known some godly preachers, and godly people that love the Lord, and have a real heart for God, and live godly lives, and you turn your back on all that. You've gone your own way, like Manasseh. We'll go on a little more.

Notice how early he began this rebellion, 12 years. And I'll tell you the evil he did, he did with both hands. Like someone said, he sinned with both hands earnestly.

What his father built up, he tore down. What his father had torn down, he builds up. You talk about a rebellious young man.

Here was a generation gap, if you like. We have rebellious youth today, but here was a rebellious youth, and hope, doesn't matter how rebellious anyone is, the grace of God can reach him. And if you look at these verses when I write down from verse three, you'll see the catalogue of sins that are piling up there.

However, as I've already said, he tore down what his father built up, and vice versa. And then, how defiant and disrespectful he was, that he built all this in the house of the Lord. Back to religious.

He had no fear of God. He had no respect of the things of God. He had no fear of God.

He even carved an image and set it up in the temple, the holy temple of God. Any ordinary person raised in an atmosphere he was raised on would have been afraid to do it, but he was a bold and a rebellious sinner. Not only that, but he practiced heathenism and superstition, spiritualism and wickcraft.

Notice all that's been here. Verse six, when he called his childless children there through the fire in the valley of the son of Ginnom. Heathenism, all the absurd times of youth enchantment, wickcraft.

In fact, we have so much of today, and that one that time might spend the Lord coming to see us. There's so much worship, even of Satan today. Evil spirits are working very, very openly in many areas.

We spoke last night about the rapture and the catching up, and you remember when Enoch was taken, he could not be found. They'd been having church party up for him. Elijah and his church parties up from the wonder where he had gone, and pray when the Lord Jesus comes to take us up, I'm sure that church party was looking for us all over, wondering what's happened to all these people.

They won't find us because we'll be with the Lord. But all this type of thing that you see here will become very prevalent in the last days of your life. So, I want you to turn to 2 Kings, if you have your Bible, 21.

There's a few things there. I just want to show you how wicked this man was. Verse 9 of 2 Kings, 21.

Manassas is, into that verse, is a little bit. Manassas is seduced, that is, the children of Judah, to do more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel. He made them sin worse than the heathen nations did.

It's bad enough to do a thing yourself, but he got others to do it. Overkill to this man. There's a great radio preacher up in eastern Canada, and one of the things that haunts this man of God is, from before he was saved, he got a young and nice boy from a respectable family, got him down behind the railway station and poured a few drinks into him.

And the man had shown up to be a drunkard, a hopeless drunkard. And this man, he just feels so bad how he let this man into that city. It's a terrible thing to go into sin yourself, but when you take others with you, and when that's what you do, then you live this type of a life.

We, the leading people, upward or we're leading them downward, we have a tremendous influence on a lot of people. And then, verse 16 of this chapter, Moreover, Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, he's a real murderer, till he has spilled Jerusalem from one end of another beside his sin wherewith he made Judah a sin in doing that which is evil in the sight of the Lord. And verse 11, But Manasseh, king of Judah, had done these abominations, and had done wickedly above all the Ammonites dead which were before him, and had made Judah altered of sin with his idols.

What a monster sinner this fellow was! And now God speaks to him. We stop back here in, while you are here in 2 Kings, look at verse 10 of verse 21, And the Lord spake by his servant the prophet. This is wonderful that the Lord would even bother with a man like this.

He spoke to him by the prophet. Now, he didn't listen to them. Maybe the Lord has been speaking to you by his preachers today, and you're not listening.

The Lord says, all right, well, you won't listen to my servants. And he spoke to him through the word of God as well. Notice in verse 10 here of 2 Chronicles 33, And the Lord spake to Manasseh.

The Lord himself directly speaks to him, and he won't listen. All right, the Lord says, you don't want to listen? Then I've got another way to speak to you. I'll humble you, I'll humiliate you, I'll bring you into a place where you'll be in pain.

Wherefore, the Lord brought upon them the captor, the host, the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, who was hiding, bound him with fetters, put him in chains, carrying him to death, babbling. I tell you, he was down there, he was a miserable man. But you won't listen to me the other way, I'll get your attention.

Why the Lord is long-suffering, isn't he? Not willing that any should tarry, but that all should come to his attention. And when he was down there in that prison, and the poor man, he just thought the Lord is God. Now, if I had been the Lord, I'd say, now you just stay there for a while, and you just cry out for a while, you just complain a while, it's good enough for you, you deserve it, you have a coming to you, you have done so much evil that I want to leave you there a good long while.

Now, you have made your bed and you lie in it, good enough for you. Isn't that how he treated him? But he said, sir, I'm not going to listen to you for a good while, you can keep on. All the torture you've brought people through, all the wickedness you've done, all the evil you've brought upon others, all the dishonor you've done to me, oh, how gracious the Lord is.

Know this, he besought the Lord as God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto heaven, and he, the Lord, was entreated of him. I tell you, wherever there's a repentant sinner, it doesn't matter how wicked you've been, how awful you've been, if you cry to the Lord in all sincerity, he'll hear you. And that's what the Lord did.

He heard him, and he took him out, he brought him again to Jerusalem, back to the place where God had put his name. And I tell you, then and after knew that the Lord, he was gone. You see, this man had genuine repentance because it came out.

After he got back there, then now he started to build up the faith he'd gone down. He started to make restitution if you like, he started to put things right he'd made wrong. This is the evidence of real salvation.

When a man is really saved, he has put things right in as much as he can that he did wrong before. That's what he did. And not only that, notice verse 15, he took away the strain caught in the idol.

Things were cleaned up. The word of God says that any man being Christ is a new creation. The old things passed away, all things become new.

When the Lord really changes you, then it has changed, and it's a wonderful change for the better. You're never the same again when the Lord saves you. May I ask you tonight, have you had this wonderful transforming change in your life? Has the power of God had an effect on you? Are you different? Have you been renewed? Has the old thing passed away? Are you a new creation? Do you have a love for the Lord Jesus? Has it turned from the old way? That's the evidence, and that's why this is such a wonderful conversion.

He took away the drain caught, he filled up the house of the Lord, it says in verse 15, he repaired the augers, he sacrificed himself, he's offering his feet upon us, and thanks offering. He's saying it in words, thank you Lord for saving us all, thank you Lord for making me whole, thank you Lord for giving to me thy great salvation, so rich and so great. He offers thanks offering.

And if anyone should thank the Lord, those are the ones who have been saved by his grace. Can you thank him tonight for saving you, for lifting you, changing you? And not only that, but he became a witness. First, in verse 18, notice his prayer.

He had a prayer, and it also says he commanded Judah to serve the Lord. That's something, isn't it? That shows the evidence of this man's salvation was absolutely real. Thank God when the Lord really reaches down, he's at the work in the heart of a man like that.

So, you have a wonderful conversion here of the wicked man that became afterwards, and that prays to the Lord after he has been brought down. I find it so much better for it to come this evening. Now, let's turn to Acts chapter nine to see about this Saul of Tarsus.

Acts chapter nine, because I can only briefly touch on a tremendous conversion like this. So, Saul of Tarsus, in a sense, was similar to Manasseh. He started out young, persecuting, putting the Christians in prison, tearing down what the Lord Jesus had been building up through his service.

He was sinning with both hands, yet trying to think he was doing the will of God. Saul of Tarsus, I understand, was just a little man, but he was a giant, intellectual giant. But the one thing he wanted to do, he wanted completely right out of existence the name of Jesus.

He wanted to do is get rid of all the Christians. He had great animosity against the Lord, so did Manasseh. Manasseh sought to tear down the whole true Christian of God into them.

So did Saul of Tarsus, and he was very successful. He was clearing the land that there were all around Jerusalem to the past. He got permission from the high priest to go all the way down to Damascus, some 160 miles there, to find the Christians, to put them in prison.

You remember previously to this, he had stood by and witnessed the death of the first master Stephen. They came and laid down their clothes, so the young man's name was, the young man whose name was Saul. And Saul was just breathing out threatenings against the Lord, against the church of God.

And as he was going down getting closer to Damascus, suddenly he was smitten to the ground, as the Greek would have said in Act 9, verse 3. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus, and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven, and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, who thou persecutest. It is hard for me to kick against the face. And he trembling in that stunning said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? The Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

Verse 8. He saw the Lord from the earth, and his eyes were opened. He saw no man, but there by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. So here you have a man that's tied up with his awful persecution.

Here he is prostrated before the Lord. The Lord had to lay him low, just like he did with Manasseh. I tell you, when you resist the power of God and the grace of God, sometimes God has to take severe measures to bring it to himself, very painful measures.

And afterwards, oh, how thankful we are for it. But you don't have to be so truly severe, lest that you can come so easily. The Lord Jesus invites you to come.

He says, Them that cometh to me, I will know why it cast out. He says, Come unto me, all ye that live, and every lady I'll give you rest. All things are ready come.

All you have to do is come as a sinner, and admit it, and acknowledge your sin, and say, Lord, save me a sinner. You can come without having to be put through all this, but if you resist, and you continue to resist, God may put you through some of this. And isn't it gracious here on this experience? The Lord speaks to him.

So, so. One of these double calls. Here's the Lord speaking to a man that's been so much said against him.

Again, we see the marvelous grace of God. The Lord Jesus has been so persecuted to his people. I mean, he that has done it unto all these little ones, my little one has done unto me.

And Paul has persecuted so many of his people, and now the Lord reaches down to him in grace, and he speaks to him, and says, Go, go, go. What are you persecuting me for? What have I done to you? I've never done anything else but good things for you. Now, what are you persecuting me for? Did you ever stop to think why? Have you never accepted all Jesus? What are you resisting him for? What are you going your own way for? Why are you so obstinate? What are you so self-willed for? The Lord wants you eternal good.

He died. He shed his blood in order to bring you to heaven. What more can he do? I suspect that those people in Damascus, and the people at New Saul have passed, but none of them ever suspected that man would ever be converted.

I don't suppose to have any hope for a man like that. There's no one too hard for him. Doesn't that give you encouragement? There are people that you have no hope for.

If I'm getting saved, my friend, keep praying and keep working. God is not through with them yet, but still can hope. Oh, the Lord Jesus spoke to Saul.

Saul, why persecute me? He brought him right down, right down, and he recognized the Lord. See, he was blinded by that light that was plated, and the new day sun, he tells us, and there that holds the mask of this proud fair tree was humble right down into the dust where he took the low place at the center and his Lord. And that's the only way to be saved.

You have to become there, come right down before the Lord and take the humble place and acknowledge him as the Lord, not just Jesus. And then, for the Lord Jesus Christ, God manifests in the flesh. God who came down and is of dead went to the cross and died for you and for your sins.

That's the only way to be saved. And the first thing he said that day in Saul, that he would want to acknowledge him as Lord, he said, he wants to. Before that, he ran his own course.

He was out to make a name for himself, to be an outstanding religious leader in Judaism. Hardly he thought he could bring the Messiah to come because he so zealously lived for God and tried to fulfill the law. Tried to do this extra for him to exhibit all these natural needs, all of the natural needs.

But now he met him. Lord, when you meet the Lord Jesus, when you meet the risen Christ, see the difference. And it happens again.

This man who was never the same again, the sin that he had before, the vicar by which he persecuted the saints, was completely turned over to the Lord Jesus Christ to be used for him. And the church has never had a greater apostle than Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. That's the greater God, and the power of God to operate in a man's life to completely change him.

Then tonight, if he could do that for Manasseh, I believe the chief of sinners in the Old Testament completely revolutionized his life that turned him from a sinner into a saint that prayed and that mellowed him down in the ways of God. Let's take a chief of sinners in the New Testament. Take that man who was so obstinate and so much against the Lord Jesus and to change him.

And you read some of the letters of Paul afterwards. How he writes to those different Christians, how he loves them, how he prays for them day and night, how he's just living for them, willing to spend and be spent for them. What happens? The greater God has changed him.

Christ has come into his life. He's a new man. No longer living for him.

He says, no, for me to live is Christ and to die is Him. I want an object in life and that's to be accepted of Him. Say, whatever I do that I do, that's on the Lord.

At the end of his life's journey, Paul came to the end of the road. He said, I fought the fight. He fought and stood for it.

He kept the faith. Now, he says, laid up for me a cross, I said, just looking forward to it. He spent many, many years serving the Lord and what a joy he counted that.

And now he looked forward to going to see this one, his next on the road to the master. Marvelous grace of God, reaching at first the night he can reach you. Now, you may not be an outstanding sinner like these two we have mentioned.

You may not be openly against the Lord like they were. You may not have gone to the extent of murdering like they did. But I'll tell you, they should still need to be saved.

You need to be saved just as much as they did. And if you're not saved, you need to be saved now. The Bible says, behold now is the accepted time.

Behold now, this is the salvation. And right now, you can receive the Lord Jesus as your personal Savior. Before they choir sing, so let's sit down and read with a prayer.

Our loving Father, we thank you tonight as we have seen a little bit about thy wonderful power and grace. We thank thee, the Lord is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. We thank thee for the marvelous transformation that took place in Manasseh's life, and in Saul Acosta's, the man that became the great apostle to the Gentiles, writing all these letters to the Christians after his wonderful Christ.

How we thank thee, and we pray that same grace and power might be made known to some life here tonight. Lord, at this closing invitation, hymn goes out. May someone right there in their heart, in their seat, say, Lord Jesus, come into my heart and save me, and make me a new person.

We pray in our Lord Jesus Christ's name. Amen. The Word of God says, Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth, but a day to hear his voice.

Harden not your heart. This is the only moment you may have. As we just close in prayer, will you take this moment and trust the Lord Jesus right now.

Father, we thank you that Jesus is still tenderly calling. Thank you the door is still open. The Lord Jesus said, I am the door by me.

If any man enter in, he shall be saved. And we pray someone will enter in that door right now. Use thy words of eyes and glory.

Pay us back again tomorrow night. Take each one home in safety. We pray in our Lord Jesus' precious name.

We'll be back at the door. You're not saved, but you're interested. Pay an officer if you want to help.

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