

## ***Matthew Shepard, Barnett Slepian, and Manasseh*** ***Carlton L. Coon, Sr.***

Point: We Christians must not forget that God's mercy of time, longsuffering and forgiveness is extended to even the most despicable of sinners.

Deal with and discuss the sins of each man

Manasseh (2 Ki 21:1-7) *Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hephzibah. {2} And **he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD**, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel. {3} For **he built up again the high places** which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he **reared up altars for Baal**, and made a grove (asherah - sex worship), as did Ahab king of Israel; and **worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.** {4} And **he built altars in the house of the LORD**, of which the LORD said, In Jerusalem will I put my name. {5} And **he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.** {6} And he **made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.** {7} And **he set a graven image of the grove** that he had made in the house, of which the LORD said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever:*

God's warning: (2 Ki 21:10-13) *And the LORD spake by his servants the prophets, saying, {11} Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations, and hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, which were before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols: {12} Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle. {13} And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab: and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down.*

(2 Ki 21:16) *Moreover Manasseh **shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another**; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of the LORD.*

Tradition has it that it was Manasseh who took the prophet Isaiah, put him in a hollowed out log and sawed him in half (hebrews 11:37). He wanted to silence the voice of the man of God.

The obituary of Manasseh is found later in the chapter. It would seem that Manasseh died in peace, having served 55 years as a harsh intolerant king.

(2 Ki 21:17-18) *Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and all that he did, and his sin that he sinned, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? {18} And Manasseh slept with his fathers, and was buried in the garden of his own house, in the garden*

*of Uzza: and Amon his son reigned in his stead.*

*The rest of the story(2 Chr 33:10-11) And the LORD spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken. {11} Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.*

*(2 Chr 33:12-13) And when he was in affliction, (Hebrew: Literally “ when he was hemmed in the dungeon) he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, {13} And prayed unto him: and he 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.***

It is not God's will that any perish, but that all come to repentance! Destruction is not just something accomplished with a rifle or a knife. We can often accomplish the same thing with our attitude and the words of our mouth.

Judgment is not in our hands!

Repentance is God's choice, mercy his vocation. I agree that our world is going downhill in a hurry. Every negative thing that happened in Rome is happening in North America. If God tarries we are living in the fall of the American empire.

Use scriptures that deal with the negative nature of homosexuality and abortion.

If God will be so longsuffering and merciful to Manasseh - (how many years was he a despicable Godless man)?

*Manasseh's real repentance: (2 Chr 33:14-16) Now after this he built a wall without the city of David, on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, even to the entering in at the fish gate, and compassed about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height, and put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah. {15} And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city. {16} And he repaired the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed thereon peace offerings and thank offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel.*

I think God is saying: Get off the throne of judgment!!

The rest of Manasseh's story is told

Look at the resume in bold type

Television and newspaper stories are portraying Christians in twisted stereotypes after two recent tragedies, Christian ministries say. The events are the murder of a homosexual student in Wyoming and the shooting of an abortion doctor in New York.

...Denominations and parachurch groups were quick to condemn the violence. "There should be zero toleration in a civilized society for people who commit such acts of senseless violence," Randy Tate, executive director of the Christian Coalition, said after the killing of University of Wyoming student Matthew Shepard this month. "A young man was brutally murdered. Our hearts and prayers go out to the Shepard family," said Carmen Pate, president of the conservative policy group Concerned Women for America.

...Some media focused on comments from fringe groups. Troy Perry of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, a predominantly homosexual denomination, received wide press coverage. He criticized an advertising campaign intended to convince homosexuals that God can help them change their lifestyle, saying it "gives fuel to the fires of intolerance in our society." The campaign is sponsored by a number of conservative Christian groups.

...Newspapers focused on the actions of Fred Phelps, whom Jerry Falwell calls "a first-class nut." Phelps, pastor of the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kan., led a dozen protesters who picketed Shepherd's funeral carrying signs such as "God hates fags." Most picketers were members of Phelps' family, the Associated Press reported. They also have picketed the funerals of Sonny Bono because his daughter Chastity is a lesbian activist; President Clinton's mother because, Phelps says, she raised a son who supports homosexuals; and numerous people who died of AIDS.

..."I found it almost impossible to believe that human beings could be so brutal and vicious to a hurting family," Falwell said. Phelps plans to picket Falwell next month in Lynchburg, Va., where he is a pastor and chancellor of Liberty University. Robert Knight of the Family Research Council, a conservative public-policy group, said he telephoned Phelps to implore him to call off the picketing because "it misconstrues the message of Christ, which was one of love."

...Inferring that criticism of homosexuality foments violence against homosexuals is "an outrageous falsehood," Knight told the Associated Press. The plan of homosexual-rights groups in reaction to the Shepherd tragedy has been "to say that any opposition to homosexual activity or any restatement of biblical beliefs is a form of hate-filled bigotry that can lead to crimes of this type," Knight said. Homosexuals are saying in effect "we're going to shut you up by falsely blaming this murder on you," he said.

...Pro-life groups condemned the Oct. 23 fatal shooting of Amherst, N.Y., abortion doctor Barnett

Slepian, who was standing in his kitchen when a bullet fired from a high-powered rifle ripped through his back. The FBI, U.S. marshals, and other federal agencies are working with state, local, and Canadian police to track down the killer, suspected in four similar attacks. Funeral services were held Oct. 26.

...Several news reports about Slepian's death discussed a web site that supports abortion-related violence. ABC News reported that Slepian had warned in a 1994 letter to the editor of the Buffalo News that protesters who picketed his home and office could provoke a renegade activist to violence. Non-violent protesters had picketed Slepian's home wearing large "Slepian Kills Children" buttons and displaying at the entrance to his neighborhood a six-foot banner with the same quotation.

...Slepian feared that violence would occur. "Please don't feign surprise, dismay, or certainly not innocence when a more volatile and less-restrained member of the group decides to react to their inflammatory rhetoric by shooting an abortion provider. They all share the blame," Slepian said in his letter to the News.

...The killing of Slepian is "exactly what the right-to-life movement has been against for years," said Sally Winn and Stephen Ertelt, directors of Women and Children First, a pro-life group. "Vigilante acts of violence such as this are reprehensible because no one's right to life should ever be denied by another person." The group extended its "deepest condolences" to Slepian's family.

..."Anyone who is glad Barnett Slepian was brutally killed because he will no longer be able to perform abortions is both morally and factually wrong," Women and Children First said. "Morally wrong because taking life is anathema to everything we believe. Factually wrong because ridiculous acts of violence do nothing to stop the violence of abortion.

..."No one who is truly pro-life would commit such senseless anti-life violence. Instead, we ask the pro-choice community to join us in assisting authorities in any way possible to find this perpetrator and bringing him or her to justice."

## **MANASSEH**

### **Sermons On Biblical Characters by Rev. Clovis G. Chappell, D.D.**

Jeremiah 15:5

*"And I will cause them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth because of Manasseh."*

When God sought the man upon whose shoulders rested the chief responsibility for the wreck of the nation, He fixed on this man. When Manasseh stood on trial before Him, charged with the terrible crime of blasting a kingdom, he was found guilty.

Manasseh in the 1st years of his life was a good man. And his career of godlessness was all the more inexcusable because of the good opportunities that he had. He was the son of a great and good father. His father was Hezekiah. And Hezekiah was one of the best kings that Judah ever had. It is no small privilege to be the child of a godly father or of a saintly mother. Manasseh was repeatedly warned. Though he turned his back on God and though he gave himself up to a perfect orgy of wrong doing, God did not forget him and did not give him up. He sent to him messenger after messenger to bring home his guilt and to invite him back to the pardon and peace of his Father's presence.

When he went away from God he carried a kingdom with him.

There came a time when this great sinner began to pay penalty for his sin. Retribution slipped in by the guards at the door one day and took the king rudely by the shoulder. It shook him and shook him so roughly that his crown fell from his head and his scepter dropped from his hand. Then it dragged him from his throne and dressed him in chains sent him a captive into a foreign country.

He came to hate the sin that had been the ruin of him. He asked god for forgiveness. And God did forgive him. Truly, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." No man ever goes so far away from God, no man ever lives in sin so long but that if he will return to God, God will receive him and will give him abundant pardon.

He found that it was easier to lead folks astray than it was to bring them back after he had led them astray.

"I will cause them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth because of Manasseh." And Manasseh is good and pure and blood-washed, but the influences that he set in motion have gone beyond his reach forever more.

### **Sons Of Adam by Samuel M. Zwemer**

Manasseh was the most wicked, most idolatrous, most ungodly of all the kings of Israel; nay, of all the characters portrayed in the gallery of the Old Testament.

Isaiah the prophet was Court-preacher!

To many readers of the Bible, Manasseh is a forgotten and his long reign of fifty-five years (fourteen terms of our Presidents) is an unknown story. Yet he was in many respects the most remarkable of all the kings of Judah.

Manasseh, like David and Saul of Tarsus, greatly sinned but also greatly repented. And, as Paul tells us, "the things written aforetime were written for our instruction, that we through faith and patience might inherit the promises."

There is an old Tradition given by Josephus, that Manasseh, when he shed innocent blood, also killed Isaiah the prophet by sawing him in twain.

These Baals were no mere creations of idle speculation. They were symbols of the powers of reproductivity. Therefore, their worship (like that of the old Canaanites) not only legalized but promoted sensual indulgence, especially when the cult of the female symbol Ashtoreth, added its peculiar seductiveness. Hosea the prophet describes the nature of this worship and how it grieved Jehovah, in the second chapter of his prophecy: “Their mother hath played the harlot, she that conceived them hath done shamefully. For she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink. . . And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers none shall deliver her out of my hand. . . And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers and forgot me, saith the Lord (Hos. 2:5, 10, 13).” The whole chapter describes with wonderful power and pathos the almost uncontrollable force of the appeal of this nature-worship on Israel. Symbols of vice became objects of devotion and in their sexual frenzy they offered up little children to the god by fire-sacrifice.

“He cause his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom” (Ii Chron. 33:6). No wonder that this gorge, used for such idolatry and infamy, should at a later date have become Gehenna (the valley of Hinnom, or *hell*) (Jer. 2:23; 7:31 ff.; 32:35).

### **Bible Cameos by Ivor Powell**

When he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers.” In the search for gold, man’s tenacity of purpose is truly amazing. The dirty, unattractive ore is mined and brought to the surface; it is crushed, and treated in many ways until the fine yellow dust is safely in man’s possession. There is another kind of gold—real gold embedded deep in the hearts of sinners. Sometimes God has to crush the human ore in order to make it yield its treasure; but since a soul is of more value than the entire world, God never hesitates to do this once the procedure becomes necessary.