



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

Oct. 2, 2022

Jump Start #3169

2 Kings 21:1 "Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Hephzibah."

As I write this, the Queen of England has died. The heads of most countries will be gathering to celebrate her life at a state funeral unlike witnessed in many years. The Queen's son is now the reigning King of England. The Queen ruled for seventy years, longer than any of England's monarchs.

And, this takes us to our passage today. Manasseh became the king of Judah and reigned fifty-five years. That's the longest for any of the kings in the Bible. That's longer than David. That's longer than Solomon. That's longer than his father, Hezekiah.

With Elizabeth, the press is highlighting all of her accomplishments and good that she accomplished. God doesn't have good to say about Manasseh, in fact, nothing. He built idols. He built altars for pagan gods. He introduced the sacrifices of children. He practiced witchcraft. He dealt with mediums, divination and spiritists, all of which were condemned in God's law. Manasseh caused the people of God to do more evil than the nations around them. And, this downward spiral continued for fifty-five years. The righteous in the nation must have grown weary, embarrassed and disgusted with all the evil taking place among their leaders. Why did God allow this to go on for so long. Of all the kings, why was the most wicked the longest reigning one?

Some thoughts for us:

First, many see the direction of our country going south. Leaders in Washington are not leading us toward Heaven. It seems all decency and all that is right and makes sense has been tossed to the road side. Yet, we are not experiencing what the righteous did during Manasseh's days. The nation back then could not vote. Their only hope for change would be if the king died. History has a way of reminding us that our worst isn't the worst that God has seen.

(OVER)

Second, why did God allow a wicked Manasseh to be in power for so long? Great question. We are not to question God and we don't know what all the Lord was doing behind the scenes. Could we say that the Lord was patient with Manasseh, wanting him to stop doing wicked? Could we say that God was testing His people by putting them through trials and troubles? Lots of theories that we can come up with, but we simply do not know.

Third, it is during these troublesome times that God's people need to let their lights shine. It's not a time to go underground. It's not a time to put a basket over our light. It's not a time to find excuses for not doing what God expects. Hard times makes it difficult for God's people to be faithful, but they must. We cannot be fair weather people who are only gathering to worship when the sun is shining and people like us. We must continue on with what God wants, even when it is very, very difficult.

Fourth, God holds those in leadership roles responsible for what they do and for how they influence others. The greatest tool a leader has is his influence. As Manasseh continued to built altars and idols for false gods, others would follow suit. Others would be conducting these pagan services. Others would be building the fires for the sacrifices of those children. Manasseh led, but others followed. And, God held Manasseh responsible.

That's a lesson for us. When the family falls off spiritually, God's going to hold dads responsible. They are in the place of leading the family. Passing this off to mom, while dad sleeps away on Sunday morning won't fair well with the Lord. When Eve ate the forbidden fruit, God held Adam responsible. He was there. He did nothing. When a church drifts and error fills the hearts of the people, God will hold the leaders responsible. They may have paid all the bills on time, but they have allowed wolves to enter in and destroy the flock.

Fifth, God doesn't stop error. He has allowed it and will continue to allow it. If someone wants to believe that a lie is true, God will allow that. If a person wants to deny His Creator and believe that he came from pond slime, God will allow that. If people want to believe that the Bible is a product of myths that have been woven together through the years, God will allow that. He allowed Manasseh's wicked reign to last decades. Because God does not stop these things, does not mean He approves or doesn't care. Within the context of Manasseh's story, we find that the Lord was provoked to anger. He saw what was going on. He was not happy with it. And, as with each of us, a person must account for the choices he makes in life. Manasseh would be judged by the Lord. You and I will also be judged by the Lord.

Salvation is not a balance in which as long as we have more good than bad, the scale tips in the right direction. That idea is not Biblical and is based upon salvation by works and not by grace. That idea implies good deeds take care of bad deeds. They do not. Only the blood of Jesus can wash away sins.

The Queen has passed away. I expect many years ago, the news of Manasseh's death was a source of relief for the righteous of God. However, Manasseh's son, Amon, was just as wicked as his dear ole' dad. Amon's reign was short. Then came the reformer Josiah and the direction of the nation turned back towards God.

And, all of this reminds us, good years, bad years. Good kings. Bad kings. God still ruled the universe and God's people still trusted and followed Him.

Lessons for all of us in these times.

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)