

HOW EVIL IS TOO EVIL?

My point in asking the question above is simply, is there a point at which an individual becomes so “evil” that they will no longer respond to the word of God? I have heard people say, “I would come to God, but my life is just a mess, I can’t come to God until I get my life straightened out.” Are they right? On the other hand how many of us would volunteer to go into a jail or prison to teach the inmates? How many of us would attempt to teach such people as a homosexual or even a prostitute? Would we consider them to be just too evil for the purity of the gospel? When we see someone and think “there is someone I believe would be open to the gospel.” What are the qualities in that individual that causes us to think they would be open to a Bible class? I remember a preacher many years ago speaking to a group in southern California. He related how he had preached in Las Vegas for several years and was so happy to get away from there because of all the sin that was in that city. Should this be our attitude about a place that is so evil? If so what of the Bay area with all of its sexual immorality?

I want us to take a look at an individual who is found in the Old Testament. He is found in 3 Kings 21:1-18. His name is Manasseh. He was king of Judah and is described as one of the most evil men in the Bible. If we are to find an individual who was so evil he could not be led to repentance this would be the one. Let us look at what he is said to have done:

1. “He did evil in the sight of the Lord” – vs. 2
2. “according to the abominations of the nations” – vs. 2
3. “he rebuilt the high places” – vs. 3
4. “he erected alters for Baal” – vs. 3
5. “made an Asherah” – vs. 3
6. “worshipped all the host of heaven and served them” – vs. 3
7. “He built alters in the house of the Lord” – vs. 4
8. “he built alters for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord” – vs. 5
9. “He made his son to pass through the fire” – vs. 6
10. “practiced witchcraft and used divination” – vs. 6
11. “dealt with mediums and spiritists.” – vs. 6
12. “He set the carved image of Asherah” in the house of the Lord – vs. 7
13. “Manasseh seduced” the people “to do evil more than the nations” – vs. 9

I don’t have the space that would allow me to explain each of these things. We can be certain though, each of the things listed above are in violation of the Law of God. These abominations were so many and Manasseh was so evil that he would be the straw that broke the camel’s back.” God would no longer tolerate this evil. “Because Manasseh king of Judah has done these abominations, having done wickedly more than all the Amorites did who were before him, and has also made Judah sin with his idols; therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Behold, I am bringing such calamity on Jerusalem and Judah, that whoever hears of it, both his ears will tingle. ‘I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab, and I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. ‘I will abandon the remnant of My inheritance and deliver them into the hand of their enemies, and they will become as plunder and spoil to all their enemies; because they have done evil in My sight, and have been provoking Me to anger since the day their fathers came from Egypt, even to this day.’” 2 Kings 21:11-15 NASU. Manasseh then will be the cause for Judah’s captivity.

As Paul Harvey would say “But what is the rest of the story?” Here is a man who was so evil we are told that he “made his son pass through the fire.” Most believe that this meant that the child was cast into the fire alive and sacrificed to the god Moloch. How evil can one man get? But the rest of the story is found in the book of Second Chronicles. In 2 Chr. 33:11 we read that Manasseh was captured by the armies of Assyria and taken, bound, to Babylon. Now look at 2 Chr 33:12, “When he was in distress, he entreated the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers.” NASU Note that we are first told that he was distressed. All of this being captured and carried away had gotten poor Manasseh down. So we are told “he entreated the Lord his God and humbled himself

greatly.” Surely God would not hear the prayer of this man who was so evil? But we are told that God did hear his prayer and not only heard it but answered it in a positive way. See God returned Manasseh home and reestablished him as king over Judah. When Manasseh got home we are told that he set about to right the wrongs that he had done. We are told, “Now after this he built the outer wall of the city of David on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, even to the entrance of the Fish Gate; and he encircled the Ophel with it and made it very high. Then he put army commanders in all the fortified cities of Judah. He also removed the foreign gods and the idol from the house of the LORD, as well as all the altars which he had built on the mountain of the house of the LORD and in Jerusalem, and he threw them outside the city. He set up the altar of the LORD and sacrificed peace offerings and thank offerings on it; and he ordered Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel.” 2 Chronicles 33:14-16 NASU I believe we can know of Manasseh’s repentance because we can see the fruit of that repentance, we can see it in what he accomplished when he came home.

So If Manasseh can return to God after all those years of doing “much evil in the sight of the Lord provoking Him to anger” (2 Kings 21:6) why would anyone not be able to? One of the greatest barriers to individuals to God is not that we are sinners “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” Ro 3:23 NASU. I believe that human pride (which can be a sin) is what keeps many from obeying the truth. “Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling.” Proverbs 16:18 NASU People just don’t want to admit they are wrong. But note again what is said of Manasseh, that he “humbled himself greatly.” Without such humility one will never have the wisdom to come to God. “When pride comes, then comes dishonor, but with the humble is wisdom.” Proverbs 11:2 NASU As it was for Manasseh so it is for every sinners who wishes to come to God, we must first humble ourselves greatly before the throne of God. We must be willing to recognize that we are wrong and God is right. This is a choice that we must be willing to make. Remember that we will all confess that Jesus is Lord, either in this life or when we stand before Him to be judged, “so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:10-11 NASU