2 Chronicles 33:1-20 - The power of true repentance

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[0:00] If you'd like to turn in your Bibles to page 466, the reading is from 2 Chronicles 33 verses 1-20. Manasseh was 12 years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for 55 years.

He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, following the detestable practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites. He rebuilt the high places his father Hezekiah had demolished. He also erected altars to the Baals and made Asherah poles. He bowed down to all the starry hosts and worshipped them. He built altars in the temple of the Lord, of which the Lord had said, My name will remain in Jerusalem forever.
In both courts of the temple and of the Lord, he built altars to all the starry hosts. He sacrificed his children in the fire in the valley of Ben-Hinnom, practiced divination and witchcraft, sought omens, and consulted mediums and spiritists.
He did much evil in the eyes of the Lord, arousing his anger. He took the image he had made and put it in God's temple, of which God had said to David and his son Solomon, In this temple and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my name forever.
[1:29] I will not again make the feet of the Israelites leave the land I assigned to your ancestors, if only they will be careful to do everything that I commanded them concerning all the laws, decrees, and regulations given through Moses.

But Manasseh led Judah and the people of Jerusalem astray, so that they did more evil than the nations the Lord had destroyed before the Israelites. The Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention.
So the Lord brought against them the army commanders of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh prisoner, put a hook in his nose, bound him with bronze shackles, and took him to Babylon.
In his distress, he sought the favor of the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors. And 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. Afterwards, he rebuilt the outer wall of the city of David, west of the Gihon Spring in the valley, as far as the entrance of the fish gate and encircling the hill of Aphial also made it much higher.
[2:48] He stationed military commanders in all the fortified cities in Judah. He got rid of the foreign gods and removed the image from the temple of the Lord, as well as all the altars he had built on the temple hill and in Jerusalem, and he threw them out of the city.

Then he restored the altar of the Lord and sacrificed fellowship offerings and thank offerings on it, and told Judah to serve the Lord, the God of Israel. The people, however, continued to sacrifice at the high places, but only to the Lord their God.
The other events of Manasseh's reign, including his prayer to his God and the word the seers spoke to him in the name of the Lord, the God of Israel, are written in the annals of the King of Israel.
His prayer and how God was moved by his entreaty, as well as all his sins and unfaithfulness, and the sites where he built high places and set up asher poles and idols before he humbled himself. All these are written in the records of the seers. Manasseh rested with his ancestors and was buried in his palace, and Amon, his son, succeeded him as king.
[4:04] Great, thank you for reading for us, Amy. There's an intriguing promise in Acts chapter 3. This isn't the sermon, by the way. This is just a bit of waffle before I start.

But there's an intriguing promise in Acts chapter 3, where Peter is preaching to a crowd in Jerusalem. And he says this, let me just read what he says.

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He says to the crowd, he says, Repent then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah, who's been appointed for you, even Jesus.
I mean, I said that's not our passage for this morning, but just have a look at it. Look at the blessings, the wiping out of sins. I don't know how you feel when you sit there this morning, but I would love that.
Would you not love for your sins to be not just temporarily or partially covered, but totally wiped out? Your moral guilt gone before a holy God?
[5:08] Times of refreshing. Don't you long for that? Don't you long for experiences of the blessing of the Lord, to know, to see, to experience his love and his presence with us?

Don't you long for that? And then what's the other one? The return of the Messiah. That he may send the Messiah, whom heaven has received for a while, he goes on to say.
Now, those are the three great blessings that Peter talks about, but to whom does he give them? The question, to whom are those blessings given?
Maybe you think, which you really think, well, he would give those to the deserving. He would give them to the good. He would give them to the moral. He would give them to the religious. Or maybe you think, oh, no, that's not right. He gives them to everybody. Anybody gets those blessings.
It doesn't matter who you are. Your sins will be wiped out. It doesn't matter who you are. You'll receive times of refreshment. It doesn't matter who you are. The Lord will be sent for you. No, Peter doesn't say that, does he? He says that those blessings are for those who repent, who turn to God.
[6:14] You just need to be careful. As you look at it, repentance isn't a work that earns the blessing. Repentance is the opposite of work, right? We're going to find that in a moment. But repentance is the sort of antithesis of work.

Not because it does nothing, but because it's the recognition that works are hopeless. Everything I've done is hopeless. And so it's not the deserving, but the repentant that receives the blessings that we long for.
To know God, to experience God, to have our sins wiped away, to be rescued from darkness for light, all things made new. That's for the repentant. So I want to suggest to you this morning, and this is the waffle before I start.
I want to suggest to you this morning, there is nothing more important for you as an individual, or for us as a church, then you understand what repentance is and do it.
And so that's been the idea behind this kind of little mini-series that we're doing over the summer. Picking up stories of repentance in the Bible. And we're starting this morning with 2 Chronicles 33 as a story of repentance.
[7:20] I'm going to pray and ask the Lord's help as we look at this passage together. Let me pray. Father, we acknowledge that the blessings of forgiveness, of times of refreshing, of the Lord Jesus coming to restore us, those are for the repentant.

And so we want to pray this morning that you might bring in us repentant hearts that turns from their sin and trusts in you. And we pray that you might even do that work in our hearts right now as we open your word together.
As you speak, may you be at work by your spirit in our hearts, drawing us to love and trust you. As we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. I want us to begin by sort of walking through the story.
So if you've got 2 Chronicles 33 open in front of you, that's going to help you. And we're going to work through the story together. I hope as it was read by Amy, you got a sense just of how wicked Manasseh is.
It's hard, I think, to imagine a worse king than King Manasseh. In fact, I think it's hard to imagine a worse person than King Manasseh. And the way the story is told is meant to deliberately underline that for you over and over again.
[8:41] You're meant to see that Manasseh is effectively taking God's law and God's rules and ripping them up word by word. You don't have to turn to it, but in Deuteronomy 18, God says this to the people before they enter the promised land.

He says this through Moses. When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft or casts spells, or who is a medium or a spiritist who consults the dead.

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Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord because of the same detestable practices the Lord your God will drive out those nations before you. And when you read 2 Chronicles 33, if you've got that sort of echoing in your mind, you realise that that list of don'ts has become the list of do's for Manasseh.
So much so that in verse 9 of our passage, you're told that Manasseh's Jerusalem is not just as wicked as the nations that occupied the land before Israel, but more wicked.
The parallel account in 2 Kings 21 tells you that Manasseh filled Jerusalem with innocent blood from one end to the other.
[10:12] And notice the detail of what's going on here in verse 3. Manasseh is leading people into idolatry. We're told that he rebuilds the places of worship outside the temple to offer sacrifices to gods other than Yahweh, the God of Israel.

The high places, the writer calls them. The high places that Hezekiah had pulled down. As well as those high places, Manasseh also builds altars to false gods inside the temple.
In 2 Chronicles 4, we're told that King Solomon builds the temple and he makes an outer court for the people and an inner court for the priests. And in verse 5 of our passage this morning, you're told that Manasseh has built altars to the starry host in both the inner and the outer courts.
Verse 7 tells you that he put an image in Asherah pole, according to 2 Kings, inside the temple, encouraging priests and people to worship the stars and the Baals instead of Yahweh.
But really the horror of all of this is in verse 6, isn't it? Look at verse 6. He sacrificed his children in the fire in the valley of Ben-Hinnom.
[11:23] The valley of Ben-Hinnom was along the southwestern edge of the city of Jerusalem and it was notorious for pagan worship. And here, notice Manasseh sacrificed not a child, but children.

Plural. We're told in other Bible passages that it was Moloch to whom the children were sacrificed on an installation called a tophet. Now, we're not really exactly sure what that looked like or what that involved, but church history suggests that it was a giant brass statue with its arms held out. Look at this. Below the statue was a great fire pit. And worshippers would light a fire in the pits so that the bronze statue was heated up.
And so that then, when the worshippers put their children in the arms of the gods, the children were burnt to death. The ceremony was accompanied by loud drums designed to drown out the screams of the children.
And that, you're told, is Manasseh's Jerusalem. And it's a horrible image, isn't it? But what I think we really need to see here is this link between Manasseh's idolatry and Manasseh's immorality.
[12:41] I think most of us, probably in our kind of city and culture, we have been conditioned to think, kind of pluralistically, that all religions are basically the same.

Right? That it doesn't really matter what or who or if you worship a god. You know, religion is like a private thing. Right? It has very little effect. You can worship no god or any god and you can still be a good person.
It's fine. And then you come across 2 Chronicles 33 and you see, don't you, that the Bible says, no, actually, what you worship, who you worship, is linked to how you live.
Intimately linked to how you live. And so, who we are morally, says the Bible, reflects what or who we worship. You know, what or who we worship is seen in our moral actions.
Perhaps it helps to put it another way. If the God or perhaps thing that you worship is false. That is, the thing that you worship is not true.
[13:41] It's not a true God. It's not the true God. It's not there. Or it's not really just worthy of our worship. It's not true. It's not true. It's not true.

of that heart of worship will also be unworthy, untrue, false, fake. You know, if you, Calvin used to put it this way, if you lose God, if you don't know the God who is real, the God who has made you, you also lose yourself.
You lose yourself. And so Manasseh here has lost the real God, swapped him out for Molech, and has lost himself in the process.
So Molech says to him, do you know what, Manasseh, you are more important than your children. Your children's lives are cheap. What really matters, Manasseh, is your fertility, your power, your strength.
What really matters, Manasseh, is that you prosper. And say, the idolatry of Molech fuelled the immorality of child sacrifice. And while we find that deeply offensive, it's not actually that unlike

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modern Western materialism, is it?
[14:56] Modern Western materialism says, sure, there is no God. Life is about you. Your rights, your achievements, your prosperity, your wholeness.

Life is about getting what you want, doing what you want, and being who you want to be. Worship you, it says. And if we worship ourselves, we necessarily sacrifice others in the act of that worship, don't we?
Even children in the pursuit of glory. You know, so think about the person who spends endless hours at work, achieving goals, getting promoted, living their best life, and gives no time to their friends, their family, or even their children, when they need them.
Or think of the advice that we give to a pregnant woman who is distressed at the prospect of having a child. You choose, we say. Your life is more important than theirs. Modern child sacrifice.
The bars and the asteroid poles of Manasseh's day were linked to fertility and ritual prostitution. The gods kind of promised power and legacy and influence and dominance. And so the idolatrous acts of worship took then what has been created as intimacy between a man and a woman in the institution of marriage and used it as currency, power, and abuse.
[16:21] And we think, oh, we're way too modern to worship Baal or Asherah. But instead we worship pleasure and fun and experience. We're hedonists, aren't we? But we too divorce sex from marriage and we too use what was made sacred for our selfish pleasure with little regard for the consequences.

And so here's the point. Idolatry doesn't just offend God. It does offend God. But it also damages us and those around us. Because it makes us less than who we were meant to be.
And so when you read in our passage in verse 6 that the Lord's anger is aroused by Manasseh, you're supposed to go, well, no. Now, obviously, a good God would have to be angry at that.
And graciously, God tells Manasseh that he is angry, doesn't he? In verse 10, we find that the Lord sends messengers to Manasseh and the people to warn them, you're going the wrong way, you're doing the wrong thing.
But he pays no attention. He's immoral, pagan, proud, unjust, selfish, idolatrous, murderous. And to top it all off, verse 1, I think, is probably some of the most harrowing words, isn't it?
[17:29] He was king for 55 years in Jerusalem. Longer than any other king. Year after year after year after year after year of idolatry and immorality.

Now, I think you're meant to read all that and you're meant to see the bleakness of it. But let me ask you a question just as we pause at this point in the story. What hope do you think there is for someone like Manasseh?
Can people like Manasseh change? Should there be any hope for people like Manasseh? Now, we know the rest of the story because Amy's already read it for us. But I guess if we hadn't heard the rest of the story, we might imagine that there was no hope for people like Manasseh.
Manasseh is really too far gone, isn't he? Surely for the Lord. His record is too bad. His sin is too deep. His commitment to idolatry and immorality has gone too far and gone on far too long.
And perhaps you're sitting here this morning and you feel the same about you. Oh, you know, you might not be as bad as Manasseh, but still the patterns of false worship and immorality are all over your life. And you assume, well, it's all lost.
[18:36] I am way too bad for God. God can't fix someone like me. Maybe somebody else. But he's not interested in me. Let me tell you, if that's what you think, 2 Chronicles 33 is in the Bible for you.

For me. To show us that if God can save Manasseh, he can save you as well. Whoever you are and whatever you've done.
No one is beyond God's reach. Now, for Manasseh, this big change starts in verse 11, doesn't it? In verse 10, he's ignoring the prophets who speak God's word. In verse 11, God sends the army of the king of Assyria, who capture Manasseh and take him prisoner, marching him to Babylon.
Now, we know from the Assyrian carvings at the British Museum that the Assyrians' technique for humiliating their captives and making sure they didn't escape or run off as they dragged them back to Assyria or to Babylon was to string a hook through their cheek or through their nose and chain it to the person next to them.
And that's what happens to Manasseh in verse 11. He's humbled. He's captured. He's shackled on his hands and his feet, probably. And also through his nose, he has a hook chain to the person next

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to him so he doesn't run off.
[19:52] Notice the Lord has not abandoned him. This is God's judgment in verse 11. It's God who's brought the army. And this judgment is used by God to wake Manasseh up. And verse 12 tells you that he humbles himself and seeks the Lord.

And notice verse 12 that God is the God of his ancestors. That's what he sees. Oh, God is the creator. God is the rescuer. God is the promise keeper. God is the God I should worship.
And he prays, calls out to God in repentance, and the Lord hears. Look at verse 13. And 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. If you're in any doubt how deep the change was in Manasseh, the rest of the passage spells it out.
He rebuilds the city in verse 12. He protects the temple and the city with bigger walls and bigger fortifications. He gets rid of the foreign gods from the temple in verse 15. He tears down the altars and throws the rubbish out of the city.
[20:54] In verse 16, he rebuilds the altar of the Lord and worships with fellowship offerings and thank offerings, telling the people to serve and worship the Lord. Now, here's the story in a nutshell.

God takes the worst sinner in the Bible and makes them a saint, a leader of worship. And he does that through repentance.
And the point is that if God can do that for Manasseh, he can do that for you, he can do it for me. He can take us with all our sin, our mess, our dirtiness, our failure, and he can make us saints, people who worship, praise, lead others even.
And he can bring to us a repentance that changes everything. So just notice with me, sort of as we finish, but not really finished, as we finish, four things about repentance. Let me just show you them quickly.
Notice firstly, repentance is a work of God. It is a big mistake to read 2 Chronicles 33 and go, wow, Manasseh did a pretty good job of turning over a new leaf. No, he didn't come to his senses.
[22:06] It wasn't that he pulled his moral socks up or he got his act together, and so God blessed him. It's easy to read the story like that and just to assume that we need to do the same, that somehow the power to change relies within us.

But that's not the story, is it? The whole of the Bible points in the opposite direction. The story of Manasseh here is to show you just how bad Manasseh is, so far gone that it would be impossible for someone like him to change.
Instead, this is a death-to-life story. It's a miracle story. A blind person receiving their sight, a dead person receiving resurrection life. And you can see that because all the way through the story, God is pursuing Manasseh even in his sin.
Manasseh is going in that direction and God is chasing him down. You see it, don't you, in verse 6. His evil is seen by the eyes of the Lord. What is God doing looking at Manasseh?
Well, he's after him, isn't he? In verse 10, the Lord speaks to Manasseh and reaches out to him. In verse 11, the Lord brings the army against them. But we can say a bit more about it as well, can't we, than just that.
[23:08] We can say not only that repentance is a work of God, we can say how God goes about bringing repentance. Notice that he does it through a revelation of just how sinful sin is.

Manasseh was warned, but he didn't listen. But then he tasted God's judgment at sin. And then he was brought to his senses by the Lord. So for repentance is a work that God does in us.
And he does it by revealing to you the horror of your sin. Often in the taste of its judgment. And it's not because he hates you or because he hates Manasseh, but because he is pursuing us, chasing us down.
Perhaps that's you this morning. Perhaps you see the horror of your sin. Perhaps you're tasting its consequences in your life. Well, don't think that that means that you're way too bad for God. Knowing and seeing the horror of your sin is a tool that the Lord uses to bring repentance to us. Because the repentance that is a work of God starts by us seeing and acknowledging how horrible our sin is. What an offence it is to God.
[24:24] God sends, doesn't he, Manasseh to Babylon with a ring through his nose, being dragged along.

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And I guess that the king of Assyria thought, you know what, I've captured the king of Israel. But really what is going on is that the king of Israel is not being dragged to Babylon.
But really it's God, isn't it? With his ring through Manasseh's nose, dragging him back to himself. Come, follow me.
Turn back to me. Drawing faith and repentance. Transforming him from the inside out. Maybe that's you this morning. Maybe you know that God's got a ring through your nose and is pulling you back. Because you see the horror of your sin. How you've been living. What you've been worshipping. Don't ignore the poor. Secondly, notice that true repentance is humble.
[25:29] True repentance is humble. Told twice in the story that Manasseh humbles himself. Once in verse 12 and again in verse 19. Literally, he bows down or is made low.

Suddenly the one who is so proud to think that his life and his wealth mattered more than anyone, even his children, now sees that he's a sinner. And notice he's not making a bargain with God, is he?
He's not saying, listen God, if you get me out of this mess, I will be so kind to give you my worship. He's not saying that, is he? Instead he's saying, I don't deserve anything from you, Lord.
I deserve your judgment. Please show me mercy. He sees his helplessness. And again, this is so important for us to see. Real repentance begins when self-confidence ends.
Repentance is not a commitment to change ourselves. Repentance is a commitment to humble ourselves. In the 1689 London Baptist Confession, it says this about repentance.
[26:29] It says, this saving repentance is a gospel grace. In other words, it's given to us by God, which we've already seen. In which those who are made aware by the Holy Spirit of the many evils of their sin, by faith in Christ, humble themselves for it with godly sorrow, hatred of it, and self-loathing.

Now we read that and we shy away from self-loathing. That sounds like someone who needs counseling, right, for low self-esteem. Please get the counselor. But self-loathing in the Confession, it doesn't mean hating oneself in that sense.
It means, you know, I realize I have nothing to offer you, Lord. Anything that I would have put before you, Lord, as a reason that you should show me mercy, or forgive me, or be kind to me, or accept me.
Anything that I would put before you, I loathe it now. Because I can see that it's hollow and empty and worth nothing. And so that's Manasseh, isn't it?
He looks at the horror of child sacrifice and the worship of the fertility gods. He sees the wickedness of it and he says, that was me. I did that. That was my sin.
[27:43] And I hate the fact that I did it. I hate myself for doing it. Because I did it. Interestingly, the 17th century reformers who wrote the London Baptist Confession and the Westminster Confession go on to point out two other things about repentance.

One, is it's supposed to be specific, right? It's not a general malaise of the sinfulness of our hearts. It's a specific hatred of the sins that we're guilty of. We looked at that with the kids.
The second thing it points out is that because it's like this, repentance goes on throughout the life of the Christian. Repentance isn't just a thing that you do at the start of the Christian life, but it is the ongoing work of the Christian as we continue to battle with indwelling sin.
The confession concludes by saying, that means that the constant preaching of repentance is necessary for God's people. We need to continue to humble ourselves before God.
So perhaps I can ask you gently, and I know these are sensitive things, so I'm trying to hold them gently. Can I ask you, if you're a Christian this morning, what is it that you should be repenting of?
[28:55] What is it that you should be repenting of? What is it that you humbly need to bring to God, not in general, but specifically, and say, Lord, this is mine. I did this.

Let me say to you, that is, it is really, really hard to do that. And it gets harder, I think, the longer you go on as a Christian. I mean, if you're a pastor, or a leader, or a parent, or a Sunday school teacher, people start to think that you don't need to repent anymore, because you must know enough by now.
You must be better than that by now. You must be beyond that by now. Some churches even teach Christians that, don't they? And then churches end up being places where you have to come and pretend that you're better than anybody else, because you don't want to show anybody that you actually need repentance.

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But that's the very opposite of the Bible's teaching on repentance. The Bible's teaching on repentance is that we are continually humble before the Lord. I'm sorry, Lord.
I thought that. I'm sorry, Lord, I did that. I'm sorry, Lord, I said that. I went there. I did that. Because repentance is humble, not proud.
[30:08] Thirdly, repentance is active. We're going to consider this more in weeks to come. So we're going to just see it quickly. But notice that repentance here for Manasseh was not just a humble acknowledgement that he's done something wrong.

It's also an eager desire to put it right. So he tore down the Asherah poles. He removed the idolatrous altars, didn't he? He led the people to worship the living and true God instead of the idols. And really, in a way, that's how you know that his repentance is real and not fake. Anybody can be sad at their sin. But real and genuine repentance is earnest in the unpicking of it, in the eagerness to walk away from it, to change.
Real repentance comes with God's power to change. And so repentant faith that humbly acknowledges its sin takes hold of the Spirit's power to change, to give up its idolatry, to break its sinful habits, to take radical action against its sin.
Jesus says that you should cut out your eye, chop off your hand, he says. Where does the strength and power to do that come from? It comes from the Lord's. The power to lose the smartphone, to cancel the subscription, to leave the friendship group, to be open to accountability, to seek help, to be reconciled in a broken relationship.
[31:28] That is the mark of real repentance. Real repentance is active. So we need to ask, don't we, what is the fruit of repentance in my life?

What is it that I am doing as a Christian because I am turning deliberately and specifically from sin? Fourthly, finally, true repentance is accepted by God.
I think probably the greatest line in this story is the Lord was moved by his entreaty. Again, it gets repeated. It's amazing, isn't it? God, the holy God, the one who dwells in unapproachable light, who has made everything, who is holy, holy, holy, listens to the prayer of the wickedest man in all the Bible.
It's an amazing story, isn't it? And that is really the power of repentance, if you can put it well. It's not our power, is it? It's rather that God, this God-given awakening to the horror of sin, is the means by which God hears and answers.
It's why I notice in verse 16 that when Manasseh gets back to Jerusalem and sets about rebuilding the altar, you know, what do you think that Manasseh would do if he didn't know this about God, right?
[32:51] If he didn't know that God listens to the prayer of the repentant. When he got back to Jerusalem and rebuilt the altar, what would be the first sacrifice that he'd make on the altar? He'd make a sin offering, wouldn't he? For sure he would.

Well, I've got to put it right. But he doesn't do that, does he? The first sacrifice that he makes on the altar he's rebuilt is what? It's a fellowship and thanksgiving sacrifice in verse 16.
Why is that? Because Manasseh knows intuitively, what we know clearly because we read it in the light of the Lord Jesus Christ, is that forgiveness has already been paid for by God himself.
It's why when King David repents from his sin with Bathsheba in Psalm 51, he says, sacrifices and offerings are not what you want, Lord. Why does the Lord not want sacrifices and offerings?
Why does he not want sin? Because he himself has paid the price. And instinctively, the forgiven sinner knows that God has paid the price. He must have done.
[33:51] Because the repentant sinner knows there's nothing that we could do, nothing that we could give. Only thanks and praise. Now we know that, don't we, even more clearly, that God accepts the truly repentant sinner, not because we offer him anything that is worthy of our forgiveness, but because he gave us his son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And he sacrificed himself in his body on the cross that we might be forgiven. And so the convicted, humble, changed sinner is more than anything thankful, joyful.
I once was lost, but now I'm found. I wonder if you found Manasseh in glory, right?
And you say to him, listen, Manasseh, this has been a burning question. I've always wanted to ask you, how do you feel about the fact that you are the worst person in the Bible?
You know, it must be a great honour to have been included in the word of God, but you were terrible, right? When the writer of Kings recorded your story, he didn't even include your

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repentance.
[35:12] He just included all the bad stuff that you did. He didn't even end it. How do you feel about that? That must be awful, isn't it? Are you a bit embarrassed to be here? What do you think Manasseh would say?

He'd say, you know, I know that the way that that story was written means that you get to see how I went through all of God's laws and ticked them off, breaking all of them. He says, but now I see, I read those lists of the things I did.
And again, idolatry. Forgiven. Divination. Forgiven.
Sacrificing my children. Forgiven. And so, you might think I'm a bit embarrassed. I love it.
Because that list is a list of how much my father loves me. How great his mercy is to me. It's a sign of his forgiving power.
[36:12] And he'd say to you something like this. He said, do you know what? The more I know I don't deserve to be here. The more I enjoy it. And so, for you, for me, for us as a church, when we come to the Lord in repentance, convicted that the list of our failures can really be the list of his forgiving power.

That really, we grow in joy and delight in the Lord Jesus. And that times of refreshing come to us personally and corporately.
Because we're trusting in him and his forgiving power. And not ourselves. As we see the horror of our sin and our brokenness.
Let's pray together. Let's take a few moments, just of quiet, in our own hearts, to pray to the Lord.
Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, thank you that you love us enough to reveal to us the horror of our sin.
So that we might experience the forgiving power of the Lord Jesus. Let's pray together. Lord, there might be people in this room this morning who have your hook in their nose.
[38:07] Showing them the horrors of what they've done. Lord, we pray that you would bring them to repentance. To trust in the one who alone can forgive their sin.

And Lord, we pray for each of us this morning that this wouldn't just be how we begin our Christian lives, but how we go on living them. Not so that we sort of wallow around in sorrow, saying how terrible we are.
But so that we delight in joy, knowing how forgiven we are in the work of the Lord Jesus. And so we praise you in his name. Amen.

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