

No Guarantee for Godly Children (Manasseh)

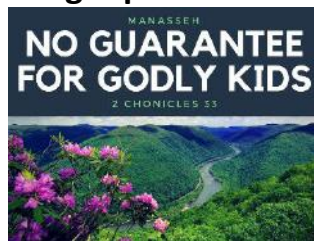
2 Chronicles 33

The King is Coming (2 Chronicles)

Prepared by: Matthew S. Black

Sunday, March 5, 2017, 10:30am at Living Hope Church of Roselle, Illinois

livinghopechurch.net



“...equipping a child with spiritual truth is no guarantee he or she will follow Christ. I know many diligent parents and grandparents whose hearts have been broken by a family member’s rejection of Christ. We can only plant the seeds by teaching and living out the truth. How they respond is out of our hands.”¹ ~ **John MacArthur**

Open your Bible to **2 Chronicles**. We are in a 15-message series in the book of 2 Chronicles entitled “The King is Coming.” This morning we are looking at a message number fourteen entitled: “No Guarantee for Godly Children (Manasseh).”² Next week is our last message in this series.

Proposition: Only God’s grace can save our children.

The Story of King Manasseh (2 Chronicles 33)

The story I’m about to tell comes from 2 Chronicles 33. You can follow along in your Bible or just listen. What I’m about to tell you is a true story from the Bible. History tells us that one of the most godly kings in the whole Bible was king Hezekiah. He was a powerful and godly king who had a son named Manasseh when he was about 42 years old. That’s how old I am.

¹ John MacArthur, from a May 17, 2004 letter to supporters of MacArthur’s radio ministry “Grace to You.”

² Some ideas for this message are taken from Pastor Brad Bigney’s teaching to counselors, “Hope and Help for Hurting Parents” given at Faith Biblical Counseling Training Conference, 16 February 2017 in Lafayette, Indiana.

Many world religions have stories that are not true, but the Bible is not at all like that. All the Bible narratives are actual recorded history.

The Seal of King Hezekiah

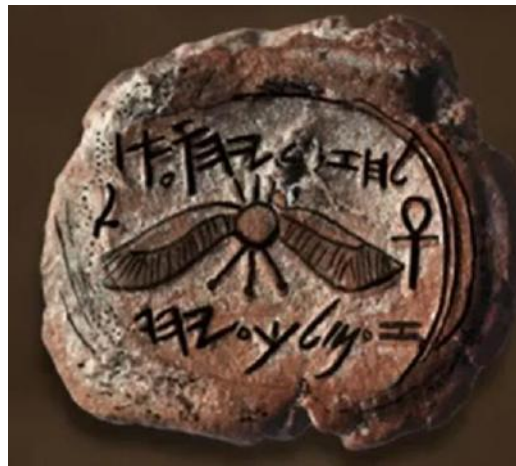


For example, recently, the royal seal of King Hezekiah was discovered. It reads, “Hezekiah, Son of Ahaz, King of Judah.”

There is an “Ankh” which is a staff in the shape of a cross with a circle at the top. It is the most ancient symbol in human writing – it symbolizes “eternal life.”

The Winged Sun

And there is the symbol of the winged sun – a symbol that God’s grace and protection will follow you wherever you go. This was a very common symbol that the prophet Malachi refers to in Malachi 4:16.



“But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings” (Mal 4:16).

In other words, “the sun of God’s grace will follow you where ever you go!

The Epic Stories of Hezekiah

Hezekiah lived 54 years. He was one of the most godly kings Israel (Judah) ever had. Hezekiah was my age (42) when his son Manasseh was born. Can you imagine what it would have been like being raised by Hezekiah? Hearing the epic stories about God’s grace and deliverance. Three years before Manasseh was born, a great

battle was won in Judah. God destroyed the Assyrian army of 185,000 men. Just after that battle, King Hezekiah got very ill, to the point of death. He prayed to the Lord, and God gave him 15 additional years to live (2 Kings 20:6).

You can just imagine the stories that Manasseh must have heard growing up about the power and mercy of the Lord. Hezekiah did not allow any other idols or gods to be worshipped in Judah, and so Manasseh must have been trained in good theology. He likely heard his father often recount the faithfulness of the Lord. It's likely that if you looked at the Hezekiah family, it would have looked ideal with Manasseh as a compliant and submissive son.

But something changed. Something went wrong! Manasseh was a great kid from a great family. But somehow he turned far away from the Lord. We read about it in 2 Chronicles 33.

Manasseh's Rule, 55 Years

Manasseh began to reign in Judah at 12 years of age, and he did evil in God's sight. He ended up reigning for 55 years in Judah, longer than any other king of Judah or Israel (vs. 1). "And he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel" (vs. 2).

His father had torn down the idols, but Manasseh made sure that each shrine in the high places of the idolatrous fertility gods was rebuilt. He worshipped all the idols and gods of heaven he heard about (vs. 3). If he heard of a new god or idol, he wanted to worship it.

He even went to the holy Temple in Jerusalem and cleared it out and built pagan shrines to Baal and Asherah there. There was no limit to the pagan shrines he built in the two large temple courtyards. They were crowded with every kind of idol under heaven.

Manasseh knew better. He grew up worshipping YHWH in the Temple, but he now desecrated the holy Temple in Jerusalem, "of which the Lord had said, "In Jerusalem shall my name be forever" (vs. 4-5).

Manasseh's Children Sacrificed in the Valley of Hinnom

As Manasseh grew older and was married, his heart grew harder and colder. He had the Molech and Baal shrines rebuilt at the Valley of Hinnom. Outside the craggy walls of Jerusalem were steep hills that went down in to that dark valley.

It would later become a garbage dump, perpetually burning, but at this time King Manasseh wanted it burning with the sacrifices of little ones.

As you approached the valley, you could hear the priests chanting "Baal, Baal, Baal!" A furnace blazed inside the hideous looking bull statue. Baal stared down at Manasseh from a throne of brass as the fire in the pit beneath the hollow statue blazed

with a loud roar. Flames blazed around the edges of his open mouth. His arms reached out as if waiting to be filled, forming a steep incline that ended in his wide open mouth.

The drums would begin to beat to cover the cries of pain. The mothers were not allowed to cry upon penalty of death. The men in the procession joined in, chanting louder and louder to the throbbing beat of the drums. All of this was approved by King Manasseh. He offered his own sons and daughters to be put to death as infants in the blazing furnace of Baal worship (vs. 6).

Communication with the Dead

Manasseh also “used fortune-telling and omens and sorcery, and dealt with mediums and with necromancers” (vs. 6). Necromancers were those who would contact the dead. He would try to conjure up spirits of people from the past. You can just hear him – “Let me talk to Sennacherib!” And a demonic spirit impersonating Sennacherib or some other dead dignitary would speak. How horrifying to see how low this one who was raised in a believer home could go!

God had instructed David and Solomon and all the kings of Israel not to go astray. Verses 7 & 8, “God said to David and to Solomon his son, “In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my name forever, 8 and I will no more remove the foot of Israel from the land that I appointed for your fathers, if only they will be careful to do all that I have commanded them, all the law, the statutes, and the rules given through Moses” (vs. 7-8).

If only they would be careful to love God and his law! If only! But that’s not how it worked out. Not only did Manasseh break God’s law and worship idols, it says he was worse than any other pagan king. In fact, “Manasseh led Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem astray, to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the people of Israel” (2 Chron 33:9). Manasseh was far worse than the pagans around him had been. His heart was harder than the worst of the pagans. There seemed to be no hope for such a person.

How could this happen? Manasseh knew better. He was raised with God’s law and God’s love. Though raised in the godliest of homes, King Manasseh was one of the wickedest kings to wear the crown of the house of David. How could a child raised in such a godly environment with the most faithful of parents turn out to be so wicked?

Many godly parents have to ask that same question. *I did everything I could to raise my child. How could they turn away from the Lord?*

Devastating to Parents

When a child turns away from the Lord and is wayward, it’s more than just

disappointing and heart-breaking. For some Christian parents, it leads to a major crisis of faith.

A parenting crisis with a wayward child can also lead to a fracture in your marriage as you begin to cast blame back and forth between each other.

So let's understand today: A godly home does not guarantee godly kids, but a godly home can lay the foundation for the grace of God and the Gospel of Christ that alone can produce godly kids.

We must never forget (as Rom 1:16 says) that it is "the gospel" alone that "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes."

My formula for child rearing is not the power. The good news of Jesus is the power.

I. **Stop looking for a parenting guarantee**, (33:1-10).



Before I was married, I thought I had all the answers for parenting children. Then I had children, and now I have no answers, except one: they need to know Jesus.

But hear this: Parents are often looking for some kind of guarantee or special ingredient or **puzzle piece** for raising godly children, but **there isn't one**. There has to be some kind of method, system, or formula so that we can make sure our kids turn out well. Dear mother and father, you need to pray like it all depends on God, because it does.

The grace of God and the Gospel of Christ are better than all the systems, recipes, and formulas that men and women could ever come up with.

MacArthur quote



John MacArthur said it this way: "...equipping a child with spiritual truth is no guarantee he or she will follow Christ. I know many diligent parents and grandparents whose hearts have been broken by a family member's rejection of Christ. We can only plant the seeds by teaching and living out the truth. How they respond is out of our hands."

Prov 22:6, The Money Back-Guarantee for Parents

So where did we get this idea of a money-back 'guarantee' that if we raise our kids in a godly home they'll follow hard after God?

Many will look to Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." This text does seem to prove the case of those who claim, "If you follow the right formula, you'll be a successful parent," doesn't it? It also seems to imply that if something goes wrong with the child, there must be something wrong with the formula and the parent. Sadly, sometimes this leads to parents judging other parents.

Some theologians have given a different translation. The text literally says, "Train up a child in his way..."

So the verse could read, "If you bring up a child in his way [i.e. the way he is bent as a sinner] when he is old he will not depart from it." In other words, this verse is a warning for parents more than it is a promise.

This interpretation is also consistent with the whole book of Proverbs, which teaches that generally speaking, good parents turn out good children and bad parents turn out bad children. But it is not always the case. The Proverbs are maxims. They are divine guidelines and wise observations, which are not absolute promises. They express general truth, but do have "exceptions," due to the uncertainty of life and unpredictable behavior of fallen men.

So regardless of which way you look at Proverbs 22:6, both ideas are ring true. Children if left to themselves as sinners will often stay in that pathway. And if taught right, they will often not depart from it. But there are exceptions. Proverbs 22:6 is not a 100% money back guarantee for child raising. It's a maxim. So, let me give you a few things to remember.

A FEW THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. Watch out for false hope in a substitute Savior.



Let me be clear: God alone can change my child. Methods and systems of child rearing can be helpful, but there is only one Savior. Unless your child knows the Savior, no system or special recipe of child rearing can save him or her. We must never look to a substitute Savior. Systems and ways of child rearing are necessary and helpful. There are several ways and there is not a one size fits all. But we must remember this: there is only one Savior!

The Dangers of Living by a Formula

Unless we understand that it is only the grace of God that can transform our children. If we think there is some special formula or guarantee, unhealthy spiritual guilt or spiritual pride will prevail in our church. If you put your hope in a method, a formula, or system, you produce:

- Needless **guilt** in the parent who worked so hard to raise their kids for God
- Foolish **pride** in the parent who is seeing good results
- And a false sense of **hope** for parents to cling to instead of looking to God's grace and the Gospel.

Only God Can Change Our Child's Heart

Ultimately, however, we must rely on God to do, in our lives and in the lives of our children, what we are unable to do for ourselves. **Psalm 127:1** says, "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain."

The Lord has to pour out just as much grace to save a child from a believing family as He does to save one from a more worldly environment! We parents need to embrace this humbling (yet liberating) truth: We are not in control of our children's destiny. We are powerless to create faith in our children's hearts. While we can encourage our children to hunger for Wisdom's Feast, we cannot make that choice for them. Only the sovereign Lord can change our children's hearts, and that's because, as dear as they are to us, our children are sinners by nature.³

³ Fitzpatrick, *When Good Kids*. Kindle Locations 365-370.

2. Watch out for pride in your system instead of your Savior.



For those who have godly children right now, be careful of pride and self-righteousness. Don't be a glory thief! If your kids are godly, be careful that you don't take too much of the credit and keep pointing everyone to your **'system'** instead of your **Savior**, or getting everyone fired up about your particular **resources** instead of your **Redeemer**.

A parenting trial can expose our pride and put a stop to your own judging. Godly people are often not aware of how proud and self-righteous their own parenting dream was blowing up in their face.

Paul says in **2 Corinthians 10:12** that it's not wise to be comparing ourselves with one another. Paul warns us, "For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."

3. Watch out for despair and self-condemnation.



We are not the Savior. Each of our kids is born "dead in their trespasses and sins." They are born by nature and by choice as sinners. There are no good kids. There are no perfect parents on earth. There is only one perfect Parent, our Father in heaven. None of you is a perfect parent. We need to drink deeply of the fact that God loves your children more than you ever could.

Despairing and self-condemnation may reveal that you think you are the Savior.

4. Realize kids rebel from the best of families.



Some of the most diligent families I know have wayward children. They seemingly did everything right, but somehow a child has gone wayward. Before we start judging, let's consider that the Lord is the perfect parent, and he has wayward children.

The Lord's Children were Wayward

The Lord Himself knows what it is like to be rejected by His children.



“Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me” (Isa 1:2). This was true with Adam and Eve and also with the entire nation of Israel.

It is not right or healthy to put yourself in the place of someone who can save your kids. You are not the Savior. You can point them to the Savior, but only He can save them.

5. Remember, God saves plenty of kids who grow up in ungodly homes.



By the way, doesn't God save kids out of very ungodly families? God saved me out of one of those homes. My mother didn't want to take me to church. I had to beg her and nag her to do it. She didn't care if I grew in godliness. But God saved me! Several young people here have been saved where your parents don't serve God, yet God saved you.

God doesn't need a godly home to save children.

6. Remember, children are responsible for their own behavior.



In other words, God doesn't have any grandchildren – only children. If you come to Christ it will not be through your parents. You have to come on your own.

And parents, you can't live your children's lives for them. You can't make them follow Christ. You can't take out their heart of stone and give them a tender heart of flesh.

In the book of Ezekiel, God makes it clear that children are responsible for their own choices. “The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.”²¹ “But if a wicked person turns away from all his sins that he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is just and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die” (Eze 18:20-21).

We need to understand that **living as a godly parent** does not ensure that your children will be godly. Children may, and sometimes do, choose to reject their parents' holy ways. And this passage clearly states that the Lord doesn't blame godly parents for the choices of their children, but rather, holds the children accountable.⁴

7. Remember as parents, you can have a lot of influence, but you have absolutely no power to change a life.



You should be thankful for any movement of God in your child's life, even if it is short of conversion. Just look at the snapshot of the kings of Judah, and you'll see that there's no guarantee that says, “If you live a godly life as a parent, then you'll have godly kids. They'll follow hard after God... guaranteed.” It doesn't exist.

Think of **Jehoshaphat**. He was a godly king who ruled for 25 years.
 ...but his son – **Jehoram** was a wicked king
 ...and his son – **Ahaziah** was a wicked king

⁴ Fitzpatrick, Elyse (2005-07-01). *When Good Kids Make Bad Choices* (Kindle Locations 334-342). Harvest House Publishers. Kindle Edition.

...but his son **Joash** was a godly king
 ...and his son **Amaziah** -godly
 ... **Uzziah** – godly
 ... **Jotham** - godly
 ... but his son **Ahaz** – wicked
 ...and his son **Hezekiah** – godly
 ... but his son **Manasseh** – wicked (but he repented and became **godly**)
 ...and his son **Josiah** – godly

We could go on, but understand, there is no formula that will guarantee godly parenting will 100% of the time lead to godly children. It does often, but there is no guarantee. As parents, we are required by Scripture to lay a godly foundation, but **we have no power to change our precious child’s heart.**

The Example of the Garden

Let me illustrate this with the example of the garden. Imagine you have a garden. There’s a lot of work you have to do in the garden. You have to plant. You have to water the best you can. But what if there is a drought? You cannot have fruitful garden **without rain**. We really don’t understand this in our modern day of advanced irrigation systems. Back in ancient days, in order to have a good crop, you had to *pray for rain!*



“I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. 7 So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.” (1 Cor 3:6).

So what do we need to do as parents? Pray for rain! When he sends the rain, he gets all the glory!

II. The only hope for our kids is the grace of Jesus Christ, (33:10-20).



So let's go back to Manasseh's story and see if there is any home for parents who have wayward children. When I think of this story, I'm always reminded of my wife Jill's wise words. When people see our five children and comment on how godly or well-behaved they are, Jill almost always says, "The jury is still out on our children." Listen if our children turn out godly, all glory goes to God! If any of us have godly children, it is in spite of us, not because of us.

Now we need to lay a godly foundation for our children, but it is God who must give the increase.



The Rest of the Story

Let me tell you the rest of Manasseh's story – how we have such a merciful God! We will be summarizing verses 10-20 of 2 Chronicles 33.

The Lord is so patient. He continued to speak "to Manasseh and to his people, but they paid no attention" (vs. 10). The king of Assyria at the time, Asshur-banipal, sent commanders to Jerusalem to search out Manasseh. Of course, all of this was from the Lord who was directing them. Manasseh's fate was not in Assyria's hands (cf. 32:7–8) but in God's.⁵ God had defeated the entire Assyrian army in the days of Hezekiah, and he could do it again. Nevertheless, they bound Manasseh hands and feet with shackles and put a hook in his nose to humiliate him before his captors (vs. 11).⁶ They brought him, not to Assyria, but to Babylon, which was under their control.

We read in verses **12-13**, "And when he was in distress, he entreated the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. 13 He prayed to him, and God was moved by his entreaty and heard his plea and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God" (vs. 12-13).

Manasseh in his deep trouble, sought the face of the Lord. Manasseh demonstrates the deepest and most profound act of repentance in the entire record of

⁵ Selman, M. J. (1994). *2 Chronicles: an introduction and commentary* (Vol. 11, p. 542). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

⁶ Thompson, J. A. (1994). *1, 2 Chronicles* (Vol. 9, p. 369). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

the kings. His repentance is not recorded in 2 Kings 21, but it is recorded here.

Manasseh reigned until he was 67 years old, so he would have been about 61 years old at the time of his conversion.⁷ It was at the last hour, but God changed Manasseh's heart! How did he come to the Lord? He prayed! And God "was moved" by his prayer!

The story of Manasseh underscores the grace of God like no other text in Scripture. The evil perpetrated by God's anointed leader is unimaginable. Its depth and extent rivals Ahaz. But, the grace of God abounds more than sin.⁸ "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom 5:20, KJV).

There was a great amount of change. Manasseh heightened the walls around Jerusalem (vs. 14). He built up the city and the areas surrounding the Temple court. He cleared out the idols from the Temple and restored the worship of Yahweh.

"16 He also restored the altar of the Lord and offered on it sacrifices of peace offerings and of thanksgiving, and he commanded Judah to serve the Lord, the God of Israel. 17 Nevertheless, the people still sacrificed at the high places, but only to the Lord their God" (vs. 16-17).

"So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his house, and Amon his son reigned in his place" (vs. 20).

It is only God's grace alone that can give us godly children.

So what can I do for my wayward child so that God works in them?

WHAT CAN
I DO FOR
MY CHILD?

I want to diligently raise them. I want to be sincere in how I raise them. I want to catechize them of course. I want to confess my sins when I am wrong. I want to instruct them and pray with them. But what if they have gone wayward? What can I do for my wayward child?

1. You can **pray** for your children.

⁷ Since the effect of Manasseh's conversion seems to have been limited (cf. v. 17 and 2 Kgs 21:10-16), it most likely belongs to his last few years, between the end of the Babylonian rebellion in 648 BC and his death in 642 BC, FROM Selman, M. J. (1994). *2 Chronicles: an introduction and commentary* (Vol. 11, p. 543). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

⁸ Hicks, J. M. (2001). *1 & 2 Chronicles* (p. 505). Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co.



Let me read to you the story of Jim Cymbala from *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*.

Jim writes, “All my talking about prayer faced a severe test several years ago when Carol and I went through the darkest two-and-a-half-year tunnel we could imagine. Our oldest daughter, Chrissy, had been a model child growing up. But around age sixteen she started to stray... Chrissy not only drew away from us, but also away from God. In time, she even left our home. There were many nights when we had no idea where she was.

As the situation grew more serious, I tried everything. I begged, I pleaded, I scolded, I argued, I tried to control her with money. Looking back, I recognize the foolishness of my actions. Nothing worked; she just hardened more and more. Her boyfriend was everything we did not want for our child.

Were we calling on the Lord through all of this? In a sense, we were. But I couldn’t help jumping in to take action on my own, too. I was still, to some degree, the point guard wanting to grab the basketball, push it down the floor, make something happen, press through any hole in the defense I could find. But the more I pressed, the worse Chrissy got.”⁹

Chrissy did eventually come back to the Lord. But Cymbala had to pray like never before! James 5:16, “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”

2. You can patiently **love** them where they are.



2 Timothy 2:24-26 (NIV) “And a servant (or a parent of a prodigal son or daughter) of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”

⁹ Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire, Jim Cymbala, p. 59-62

One mother wrote about her estranged daughter:

“The pain of watching my older child move in wrong directions, knowing that no word of rebuke or instruction will reach them, can be overwhelming. The work of God’s grace in a parent’s heart is most fully revealed when, after admitting their helplessness to bring about the change they deeply desire in their children, they persist in love. There’s more to love than we think. The implications of our Lord dying for us ‘while we were yet sinners’ are staggering. Perhaps the great need of the church today is to face how badly we love and then to enter more fully into the costly grace of our forgiving Lord.”¹⁰

What a sobering story. But isn’t it true? We have to ask ourselves, do I love my children even while they may be enemies of the Lord? Do I love them like God loves me? Do I love them where they are?

Paul says in Romans 5:5, “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” He goes on to say, “But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8).

We are to pour out that kind of love to our child right where they are.

3. You can **rest** in God.



Jim Newheiser writes about how after homeschool all three of his children they each went astray:

“Until three years ago, our family was all my wife and I had hoped it would be when we married in 1979. I would have been pleased to invite you into our home to meet our three children. We had much to be proud of. My wife had faithfully homeschooled our sons for 14 years. Our sons could have told you about their studies of the great books from a Christian perspective. You would have observed their willing participation in our family devotions. All of them were active in our church’s youth group and in other profitable activities such as Christian worldview camps and

¹⁰ *Come Back, Barbara*, C. John Miller & Barbara Miller Julian, pg. 11

summer missions trips...

Two of our sons were National Merit Scholars with the ambition of using their gifts to serve the Lord. Our oldest son was attending a prestigious liberal arts college where he was involved in a sound church...

In light of all this, perhaps you can imagine our shock when our oldest son informed us that he no longer believed that Jesus Christ was the only way to God or that the Bible was authoritative. Although that phone conversation took place over three years ago, I still feel its aftereffects deeply.

The shock and heartbreak my wife and I experienced was unlike anything we had ever known before. Indeed, it seemed to me that up until that day, I could have taken all the tears that I had seen my sweet and cheerful wife shed over the past 25 years and put them in a thimble. Over the next several weeks, I would have needed buckets."¹¹

There is nothing more devastating than pouring many years into your child, praying and training and trusting they will follow the Lord, and then they don't. What could be more devastating than that.

Newheiser goes on to say, "It's not uncommon for us parents to be filled with despair when our kids rebel. We feel devastated that our children are rejecting us and our values. Grief over a child who is lost to us is similar to the grief we would feel if a child had actually died. But grief from a rebellious child goes on and on and never seems to find a place of closure. It's not like we can go visit a grave and put flowers on it. Instead, this feels like an ongoing 'death' and our grieving won't go away until our child has a change of heart. Because our hearts are filled with such woe, we can be tempted to crawl into a protective coffin of our own and withdraw from friends, other family members, and even God, pulling the heavy lid down firmly over us."¹²

It is so devastating that it could define your life, but it must not. Children are the most precious gifts that God gives us, but they are not more precious than your walk with God. Don't let your sorrow for your children overtake your walk with God.

¹¹ Jim Newheiser. When Good Kids Make Bad Choices (Kindle Locations 78-101). Harvest House Publishers. Kindle Edition.

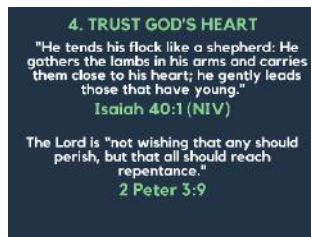
¹² Jim Newheiser. When Good Kids Make Bad Choices, 36-37.

Habakkuk 3:17-19 “Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, 18 yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. 19 God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places.”

Do you have deer's feet on high places with the Lord? You may be fearful for your child, but rest in the Lord who is moved in his heart by the lostness of your child more than you.

All may be lost, but you can say, “I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.” Our greatest joy is in the one who understands. He carries your sorrows. He bears your griefs.

4. You can **trust** God's heart.



“He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young” (Isa 40:11, NIV).

God wants to gather your lambs. He says, “Let the little ones come to me for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.” He loves the little children. But you know how it is. You can have a child who is 50 years old and they are still your baby. God loves your babies, even if they are adults.

The Lord is “not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (2 Pet 3:9). Dear saint, the best thing you can do is trust the good heart of God.

God loves your children more than you do. Manasseh was likely around 61 years old, when the circumstances of his capture took place. It looked like the end not only for Manasseh, but also for Israel as well.

I can imagine Hezekiah praying for his son Manasseh. And though it was many long years after Hezekiah had gone to be with the Lord, Manasseh repented.

Where Sin Abounded



Maybe you've given up hope in God saving your child. Remember "**Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound**" (Rom 5:20, KJV). Where sin has multiplied, God wants to superabound in grace to your child.

Barkeley Escareno

We prayed for Barkeley Escareno, Amy's son, for many years. He hung with gangs and delivered drugs and was known for evil living. He had so much light. He had been raised right.

But we Barkeley will tell you, God did a miracle in him. People never gave up on him. They kept showing him the love of Christ. One day God took away his health. He was laid up for months with mono. During that time he had a lot of time to think. The result: God did a miracle of salvation through the prayers of God's people.

Conclusion

When it comes right down to it, we are all wayward and astray. Salvation is not a method, a system or a formula. It's a miracle. Think back to when God saved you. Aren't you amazed at God's grace? It's that same grace that we need for God to save our children.

He did it for you. He can do it for them. God alone can bring the miracle of the new birth.