

## **2 Kings 21:1-15 – (EHV)**

**Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned for fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Hephzibah. <sup>2</sup> He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, following the disgusting practices of the nations which the Lord had driven out before the people of Israel. <sup>3</sup> He rebuilt the high places which his father Hezekiah had destroyed. He erected altars to Baal and made an Asherah pole, just as Ahab king of Israel had done. He bowed down to the whole army of the heavens, and he served them. <sup>4</sup> He built altars in the House of the Lord, about which the Lord had said, “In Jerusalem I will put my name.” <sup>5</sup> He built altars to all the army of the heavens in the two courtyards of the House of the Lord. <sup>6</sup> He made his son pass through the fire. He practiced fortune telling and sought omens and dealt with mediums and spiritists. He greatly increased the evil he did in the eyes of the Lord and provoked him to anger. <sup>7</sup> He put an image of Asherah, which he had made, into the house about which the Lord said to David and to his son Solomon, “In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel, I will put my Name forever. <sup>8</sup> I will not make the feet of Israel wander again from the land which I gave to their fathers, if they will just be careful to do whatever I commanded them and to observe the whole law which my servant Moses commanded them.” <sup>9</sup> But they did not listen. Manasseh led them astray so that they did more evil than the nations whom the Lord exterminated before the people of Israel.**

**<sup>10</sup> Then the Lord said through his prophets: <sup>11</sup> Because Manasseh king of Judah has engaged in these disgusting practices and has done more evil than all that which the Amorites who had gone before him had done, and he has caused Judah to sin with his filthy idols, <sup>12</sup> therefore, this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says. Pay attention! I am bringing such disaster on Jerusalem and Judah that the ears of all who hear of it will tingle. <sup>13</sup> I will stretch out over Israel the plumb line that was stretched out over Samaria and the level used on the house of Ahab. I will wipe away Jerusalem just as someone wipes a bowl clean and turns it upside down. <sup>14</sup> I will hand over the remnant of my possession and give them into the hand of their enemies, so that they become plunder and spoils for all their enemies, <sup>15</sup> because they have done what is evil in my eyes and have provoked me to anger from the day when their fathers came out of Egypt until today.**

Dear fellow children of God’s grace and mercy,

Out of all the people you know, who would you say is the most stubborn person you know? You may not want to answer that question out loud, but I bet you can think of someone pretty quickly. Perhaps that person that you have in mind is you or maybe someone you had a heated discussion with this last week. It is easy to remember people who are stubborn and rarely would we ourselves want to be labeled as stubborn.

But let me ask you another question, What is the difference between being stubborn and being steadfast? Stubborn by definition means: *“Refusing to move or to change one’s opinion”*. Such as, “That person is pretty **“stubborn”** about their political beliefs, so why bother arguing with them?” Steadfast on the other hand by definition means much the same thing: *“Fixed or unchanging; steady”* Such as, “That person is very **“steadfast”** in what he/she believes.” In both of those examples that I used the person is

holding strongly to their beliefs. It is interesting that generally speaking stubborn has a more negative connotation while being steadfast is most often considered a positive quality, yet there seems to be a very fine line between these two qualities. It seems that the attitude in our hearts is what makes them one bad and the other good. On a more personal level, would you consider yourself stubborn or steadfast? More importantly, as we look at these words from 2 Kings, would you consider God to be Stubborn or Steadfast or maybe both? No matter what view we might have on these words we will clearly see:

### **Sermon Theme: God's Grace Is Steadfast/Stubborn**

- 1. Sin always leads us away from God**
- 2. But God is always looking to bring us back**

King Manasseh was stubborn and not in a good way. His father, King Hezekiah had been one of the greatest and most god-fearing kings of Judah. Hezekiah had seen how stubborn the people of Judah had become. They did not want to follow God, and Hezekiah set out to change everything. He tore down and destroyed all the false temples and idols. He prayed to God and very visibly let everyone know that God was in control, even if troubles were all around them. Most importantly Hezekiah once again helped the Israelites to follow God and worship him as their LORD and Almighty God.

However, Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, didn't care about what his father had done. When he became king of God's people at the age of 12, he inherited a thriving kingdom. It was a kingdom that was blessed by God on account of the rule of his father, but Manasseh would take idolatry to a new low. As you read the account of Manasseh here in 2 Kings and its corresponding account found 2 Chronicles 33, you can see how stubborn he became about falling away from God. Manasseh wasn't only stubborn, he was evil! He would be one of the worst kings that Judah would ever see. He was an idol worshipper and Baal worship. He worshiped the stars and planets. He had little regard for life. He would even sacrifice his own sons to these false gods. He practiced black magic. Basically, Manasseh stubbornly refused to follow God. He turned his back on his God, and didn't care at all and even worse than that he led God's people away from the true God, **"Manasseh led them astray so that they did more evil than the nations whom the Lord exterminated before the people of Israel."**

God wanted to be close to Manasseh, and Manasseh would have nothing of it. **"The Lord spoke to Manasseh and to his people, but they paid no attention."** (2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 33:10) Manasseh's heart had been filled with too much pride. He was too arrogant and too stubborn and he refused to listen to God. When you look at this account of stubborn Manasseh, you see a man that wasn't just slapping God in the face, he was punching him in the nose. He paid no attention. He was about as far from God as you can be.

I don't think that most of us here today would consider ourselves as being anywhere near as stubborn as Manasseh was in disobeying God and leading people away from God., but we all do have that same stubborn streak of sin running through us. Even as Christians, there are many times that we know what God says, and what he wants, and we just say "No!" There are times that we just simply choose to ignore God's Word. There are times that we don't like what God has to say to us. We come up with all kinds of excuses. We blame others and often times find false comfort in the fact that everybody else seems to also be doing it. We have too much pride. We are too set in our ways to give in. We are too stubborn! Our God wants to be close to us, and we have pull away from him over and over again with each and every one of our sins.

I'm guessing that this account of King Manasseh is not a familiar account. Yet, it is one of the most beautiful pictures of stubbornness in the pages of Scripture. We see on full display the stubbornness of

Manasseh and his sin, and we see on full display the stubbornness/steadfastness of God for a lost sinner and the people he was leading astray. Because as stubborn as Manasseh was, God was even more stubborn than him – using stubborn in a good way. God never gave up on King Manasseh. He wanted to help Manasseh to see that what he was doing was wrong. When he wouldn't listen, God disciplined his child by sending the Assyrians to attack Judah. King Manasseh would be captured. In 2 Chronicles the Bible tells us: **“So the Lord brought the officials of the army of the king of Assyria against them. They led Manasseh captive with hooks. They bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon.” (2 Chronicles 33:11)**

How could God love a guy like Manasseh? That's God's incredible grace! God loved Manasseh. No matter how many awful things that Manasseh had done, no matter how much damage he had caused to God's people, no matter how stubborn Manasseh had been over the years, God still loved Manasseh. His mind was set. He was going to seek to turn Manasseh's heart around with the Word of God. He was going to bring Manasseh back to faith. It took a crushing defeat by the Assyrians and a hook through the nose and a time in bronze shackles in a foreign country to get Manasseh's attention, but in the end God won out.

We read in 2 Chronicles 33: **“When he was in distress, he sought the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself deeply before the God of his fathers. <sup>13</sup> He prayed to the Lord, and the Lord responded to his prayer and heard his plea for mercy. He brought him back to Jerusalem into his own kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord is the true God.” (2 Chronicles 33:12-13)** It broke God's heart to see Manasseh turn away from him and he wanted to restore his heart back to him. He was stubborn or I guess we could say he was steadfast in his love for Manasseh and his people. That's grace. That's pure stubborn grace. That's pure stubborn/steadfast love. If you think about that, it just blows your mind away. How could God love a man like this? That's the beauty of God's grace.

By God's power and love, Manasseh's heart was changed and God allowed him to return from being in jail in Assyria to ruling again over Judah. This time was 100% different. He would now worship and serve the true God and seek to lead God's people to see the true God by destroying the false gods and the false temples. He now directed God's people to worship the true God of Israel. What a change!

God didn't just love a man like Manasseh or the wicked people of Israel. He loved this wicked world, **“For God so love the world that he gave his one and only Son.”** In God's Stubborn/Steadfast love, Jesus came into this world to save it. Even though we and many others don't always want to hear him, that didn't stop him from loving this world. Even though many (including us) would turn their backs on Jesus, he didn't turn his back on this world, and he doesn't turn his back on us. Jesus doesn't even flinch in still loving us. Even though we hurt him by our sins, he still let the nails be pounded through his hands. With his enemies laughing and mocking him, he still shouted out: **“It is Finished!”** Even though it looked like death had defeated Jesus, the grave could not hold Jesus. God was just too stubborn in loving this world.

God loves us like he loved Manasseh. It is a stubborn and steadfast love – a love that will never give up. He keeps after us until he gets us back in his arms – using all the tools at his disposal. He keeps using his Law to pound and crush our sinful hearts and the soothing Gospel to bring healing to our broken and battered souls. Isn't it a wonderful truth to know that God will stop at nothing to bring us to faith and to keep us in that faith and if we heaven forbid fall away God with all of his love and stubbornness will seek to find us and lead us back to him, just like he did with Manasseh? No matter what we've done, no matter how often we've done it, no matter what we may do in the future, God is not going to let us go! His love for us does not waver. Who's the most stubborn person you know? I would say that in a good way, God is! This is grace. This is what God is like. This is who God is! His grace and his love will never let us go. Amen!