

COMING BACK TO GOD

Message 7

Words: 6269 104-122

INTRO: Our subject is coming back to God. We come now to a fourth and final step in man's return to God and it forms a most important doctrine in the Bible. Our passage says, "If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways..." When it says, "...and turn from their wicked ways..." in the word 'to turn' we have an important Biblical doctrine and in introduction this message, I want to introduce that doctrine.

The doctrine under consideration is the doctrine of conversion. Conversion is one doctrine within the larger doctrine of salvation. The doctrine of salvation has within it many doctrines. Let me give you some of the most important ones: election, predestination, regeneration, justification, sanctification, adoption, and vocation. All of that is included within the doctrine of salvation.

By the way, let me say that a biblical doctrine is simply a teaching of some biblical subject. For example, in this doctrine of conversion, if you take many or all the areas in the Bible where it deals with this subject and you put that together into one teaching, you have a biblical doctrine.

Now, there are many kinds of conversions. For example, one can be converted from being a Ford man to being a Dodge or GM man. But the doctrine of conversion in the Bible speaks of turning from something wrong, to that which is right. So the doctrine of conversion is one doctrine in the doctrine of salvation but in Scripture it has two doctrines within it. You see, when you turn, you turn away from something, and you turn toward something. You cannot simply turn away from something. One must at the same time turn toward something else.

These two doctrines within the doctrine of conversion are repentance; a turning away from sin, and faith, a turning toward God. Years ago I got an illustration of conversion from someone

else. Conversion is like a coin. What happens when you take away one side of a coin? Well, you have no coin left. So it is with conversion. When you take away repentance, you have no conversion. You cannot have biblical faith without true repentance. When you take faith out of biblical conversion, you are left without the entire doctrine. And the reverse holds true as well.

There is this very foolish notion today by a growing number of evangelicals that repentance is a work, and since we are not saved by works, repentance is not necessary. Some of these teachers say that the Gospel of John is written to the Church, and it does not mention repentance, only faith or believing. Conclusion? Repentance is not necessary to salvation! But you see, if the doctrine of conversion has two sides like a coin, you cannot speak of repentance without the idea of faith being present, nor can you speak of faith without the idea of repentance being present.

So, our passage says, "If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways..." we have in the word 'to turn' the doctrine of conversion. So with that in mind, let us consider this passage.

4. Conversion

Well, we have come to man's last step in coming back to God. It is to turn from his wicked ways. He has turned His attention to God by humbling himself before God and by praying, and by seeking His face, but now that he has gotten a glimpse of God, he is to turn from his wicked ways.

There comes a crucial moment for everyone of us. It is this: when we have gotten to see something of God and it has revealed something in us that needs to be dealt with, then we have this crucial moment of decision. Will I turn from my wicked way? And when I do not turn from my ways, neither can I say I have faith in God.

A.W. Tozer, in the book, "Man The Dwelling Place Of God", puts it like this: "Faith and morals are two sides of the same coin. Indeed the very essence of faith is moral (he is talking about biblical faith). Any professed faith in Christ as personal Savior that does not bring the life under plenary obedience to Christ as Lord is inadequate and must betray its victim at the last. The man that believes will obey; failure to obey is convincing proof that there is no true faith present...Where real repentance is, there is obedience; for repentance is not only sorrow for past failures and sins, it is a determination to begin now to do the will of God as He reveals it (Man: The Dwelling Place Of God, 33).

Recently a FOI missionary, Larry Mitchel, posted the miraculous conversion of Alice Cooper on social media. One look at the pictures Alice Cooper, a man, and what was written about Alice Cooper and I would have said this guy needs to be saved, but apparently he was saved already. As a matter of fact, he had been saved in the 1980's but didn't come out with it until 2002. He was, for some 20 years, as Guy Doud would say, an underground Christian. So when we come to this subject of conversion, it is a fitting place to warn about what passes for Christian conversion among so called Christians.

On a video interview Cooper talks about his great conversion then says of himself he is still a rock and roller and going on tour again. Then he said, "I certainly don't do it in the same spirit I used to. I watch the songs lyrically, a lot of the songs I used to do were way over the line, but I think a lot of my hits were fine. They were socially blistering but I think they were fine."

He was asked how God changed his life? The question was, what sort of characteristics were before and after? He said, "Well, you know, before its always

about yourself. You're your god, you know, and we make lousy gods. But we've got to let God be God and be what we are. So there's a change on who you're serving. You're not serving you", end quote. Now there is a change on whom a true Christian serves, but that is not first in initial salvation. Conversion in initial salvation is not a matter of service, it's a matter of dealing with sin first, then comes service. Nowhere, in what I heard, did he recognize the horror of the sins he had been in. He also said that his dad was a pastor and that his grandfather was a pastor, but what he did not say is that they were Mormon pastors.

His original name was Vincent Damon Furnier. He was born February 4th, 1948. He moved to Phoenix, Arizona, from Detroit Michigan. He had several bands and one was called 'Alice Cooper'. Later he changed his name from Vincent Damon Furnier to Alice Cooper. Now I cannot believe that he was truly saved. It seems to me he would have immediately changed his name from Alice Cooper to Vincent Damon Furnier. It seems unthinkable that he would still do Rock and Roll.

Now I do not doubt his conversion, what I wonder is what he got converted to? Unless I do not know God, he did not convert to Christianity. He is now twice as lost as he was before, and so called Christians accept that he has become a Christian. Almost every evidence of conversion to Christianity is lacking, including his long hair and rock music and his name.

You see, our text says, "...and turn from their wicked ways..." That is true conversion when we have done wrong. Sin is always the crucial matter in true conversion; ALWAYS. It is NEVER otherwise. There are no exceptions. And if it is otherwise, it may be conversion, but it is not a biblical conversion to God Almighty.

Turn to 1 Thessalonians 1. Here is a biblical example of conversion. This passage uses the word 'to turn'. Look at it in 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 which says:

9 For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,

10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

You see, these Thessalonians did not go on serving idols for 10 or 15 or 20 years, and then come out of the closet with their Christianity. They were delivered on the spot! Here we also see that conversion has both repentance and faith within itself. And note that first they turned to God from idols, and then they served God.

So we want to look at these two elements in conversion, repentance and faith. It may good to be refreshed on the word repentance. The NT word for repentance is *metanoia*. It is the word *meta*, to change; and the word *nous*, which is, as I understand it, the data storage part of the mind. Repentance is a most incredible doctrine. A change of mind does amazing things. It brings about a change of behavior. On a computer, when you make a mistake in word processing, you can change what you have written by backspacing over it or highlighting what is unwanted and pressing the delete button, and zap, it's gone!

When we have sinned, we cannot undo by backtracking. Nor can we highlight it and press the delete button. That sin is stored in the mind. There is no human way to remove it. By the way, let me warn once more of computer games. My knowledge of these things so very limited. I am dependent on others. But I was told recently by a man who knows computers and he said to me that there are computer games that are very, very evil.

And like sin in the mind, once these games are on your computer, you cannot get them off. I am sounding a warning about computer games. But some of those games are like sin in this respect. Once it is recorded in the mind, there is no human way to get it off.

But there is something that can be done with a computer hard drive to successfully deal with things you cannot get off. Destroy the hard drive. And there is something God can do with the human being in whose mind sin is recorded. Destroy that human being. I gave you an illustration of destruction in the last message. But here there comes a very big BUT.

Listen to Ephesians 2:1-3:

1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,

2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,

3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

There we have a description of mankind. That is where we all were to one extent or other. But it is the very next verse that is so amazing. It says:

4 BUT... Here we have a very big BUT. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,

Here is a most amazing thing. It is phenomenal. The devil did not know this could be done. God in His great love found a way to appease His anger against our sinfulness and to justly deal with sin in the mind, and to save man from the record of what was stored on his

hard drive. God paid the price for man's sin. And now, to put that price into effect He made a way to cleanse man's hard drive. It is here: Metanoia. Repent! A change of mind. A change of data in the hard drive. Repentance. Change the data in a computer and it will run differently. Change the data in the mind of man, and he will operate differently. Nothing will change man like true repentance and true faith!

When we repent and confess our sins they are taken care of. But that confession is much harder than pushing a delete button. I have told you the parable of the man who went into 'The Room'. That room was his mind. And it had drawer upon drawer of files that listed sinful thoughts and actions and wasted time listening to things etc...etc... And he shared how the Lord cleansed that room.

Repentance is an absolutely incredible thing. And what is required is so small, and yet so very, very big to us. Repent! When John the Baptist came preaching, his message is reducible to one word: repent. The same holds true for Jesus. This is a subject of utmost importance!

Today, more and more evangelical teachers are saying that since repentance is a work, it is not necessary for salvation. That is without question, a doctrine that has its source in demons. No true repentance, no true salvation.

But the other side of the coin of conversion is faith. Faith is believing in something. There are all kinds of faiths and multitudes of false faiths. But when we repent, we replace what was wrong in our minds with faith in the Word of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance is a change of mind. It causes one to turn from sin. Faith is a turning to the Lord. The one who confesses must now believe that God will do what He said He would do.

Turn now to Acts 19. Some of the Thessalonians heard the Gospel and changed their minds about their idols. I would gather this was their chief sin and included with idols are all kinds of sin, immorality being very high among them. And they turned from that. When the Apostle Paul was in Ephesus, he delivered many from evil spirits. And there were Jews, whose father was a chief priest there. And they tried to do the same, and the demons overcame them. Let us begin reading at verse 14:

14 Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so.

15 And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?"

16 Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

17 This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

18 And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds.

19 Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver.

So there is a picture of a complete conversion. It is a turning from sin and a turning to the Lord. Nothing short of that will do. There is a tract by A.W. Tozer called, 'The Old Cross And The New.' It is most fitting here. In this tract you will see what happened to Alice Cooper. The tract says:

*Unannounced and mostly undetected there has come in modern times **a new cross** into popular evangelical circles. It is like the old cross, but different: the*

likenesses are superficial; the differences, fundamental.

From this new cross has sprung a **new philosophy of the Christian life**, and from that new philosophy has come a new evangelical technique -- a new type of meeting and a new kind of preaching. This new evangelism employs the same language as the old, but its content is not the same and its emphasis not as before.

The old cross would have no truck with the world. For Adam's proud flesh it meant the end of the journey. It carried into effect the sentence imposed by the law of Sinai. The new cross is not opposed to the human race; rather, it is a friendly pal and, if understood aright, it is the source of oceans of good clean fun and innocent enjoyment. **It lets Adam live without interference.** His life motivation is unchanged; he still **lives for his own pleasure....**

The new cross encourages a new and entirely different evangelistic approach. The evangelist... preaches **not contrasts but similarities.** He seeks to key into public interest by showing that Christianity makes no unpleasant demands; rather, it offers the same thing the world does, only on a higher level...

The new cross does not slay the sinner, it redirects him. It gears him into a cleaner and jollier way of living and saves his self-respect.... **It is false because it is blind. It misses completely the whole meaning of the cross.**

The old cross is a symbol of death.... The race of Adam is under death sentence. There is no commutation and no escape. God cannot approve any of the fruits of sin, however innocent they may appear or beautiful to the eyes of men. God salvages the individual by liquidating him and then raising him again to newness of life.

That evangelism which draws friendly parallels between

the ways of God and the ways of men is false to the Bible and cruel to the souls of its hearers. The faith of Christ does not parallel the world, it intersects it. In coming to Christ we do not bring our old life up onto a higher plane; we leave it at the cross. The grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die.

God offers life, but not an improved old life. The life He offers is life out of death. The life He offers is life out of death. It stands always on the far side of the cross. Whoever would possess it must pass under the rod. He must repudiate himself and concur in God's just sentence against him.

What does this mean to the individual, the condemned man who would find life in Christ Jesus? How can this theology be translated into life? Simply, he must repent and believe. He must forsake his sins and then go on to forsake himself. Let him cover nothing, defend nothing, excuse nothing. Let him not seek to make terms with God, but let him bow his head before the stroke of God's stern displeasure and acknowledge himself worthy to die.

...let him gaze with simple trust upon the risen Saviour, and from Him will come life and rebirth and cleansing and power. The cross that ended the earthly life of Jesus now puts an end to the sinner; and the power that raised Christ from the dead now raises him to a new life along with Christ....

***Dare we, the heirs of such a legacy of power, tamper with the truth?** Dare we...alter the pattern shown us in the Mount? May God forbid. Let us preach the old cross and we will know the old power.*

Tozer had a mighty pen. Truth is under attack on every hand in both the spiritual realm and the material realm today. And I think it is in order to say that nothing less than the old cross will do in the conversion of those who have left God and are turning back. Turn to 1

Chronicles 33. Let us look at a Biblical example of true conversion in the OT.

We find it in one of Judah's most wicked kings ever, Manasseh. In our previous messages, which I called, "Leaving God", we looked at how man leaves God. I took those from Isaiah 57:11. This verse says, *And of whom have you been afraid, or feared, That you have lied And not remembered Me, Nor taken it to your heart? Is it not because I have held My peace from of old That you do not fear Me?*

In this verse Isaiah speaks directly to our day. I think that Isaiah gave the last part of his book during the reign of King Manasseh, the one we want to look at now. He was one of the most wicked kings Judah ever had, and he reigned 55 years; longer than any other king of Judah. God's people had left God.

We begin in verse 1:

1 Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem.

2 But he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.

Hezekiah, the father of Manasseh, was classed as a good king. I see him as a weak king. I think Manasseh shows his father was a weak king. I do not know how long Manasseh reigned before he began to do all these abominations. But I suspect he grew up among a younger generation that was already leaving God, and he fit right into the youth movement. Now as we go on, note just how wicked this king is:

3 For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down; he raised up altars for the Baals, and made wooden images; and he worshiped all the host of heaven and served them.

Manasseh is causing the nation to leave God. Verse 4:

4 He also built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "In Jerusalem shall My name be forever."

5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.

God's people are drifting, drifting and drifting. Verse 6:

6 Also he caused his sons to pass through the fire in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom; he practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft and sorcery, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger.

7 He even set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had 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 not again remove the foot of Israel from the land which I have appointed for your fathers – only if they are careful to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses."

9 So Manasseh seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel.

Manasseh is living in sin. He is causing the people of God to live in sin. And in all this, God is doing nothing. And while God does nothing the people just grow worse and worse. We are there today. And God's people begin to lie about God. They are failing to remember Him and keep Him on their hearts. And then God spoke to them in words. You see, the first matter important to coming back, is to realize that one is

away from God. One cannot come back until one realizes one is away. Many in churches today are away from God, but they have no idea about that. When we put people like Alice Cooper forward as Christians, we keep people in their blindness.

So God spoke to Israel through the prophet Isaiah and others. But talking very often fails when people are leaving God. So, verse 10:

10 And the LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they would not listen.

Now note that the Lord spoke to Manasseh in words, but it would not do. Yes, I suppose that is where the prodigal son was when his dad gave him his inheritance and he went out into the wide, wild world. I suppose his dad had talked to him. He had told his dad he knew what he was doing and he would go make a big name for himself. And then one day, the father just simply said, "Here is your inheritance. You may go." And go he did. Verse 11:

11 Therefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the army of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze fetters, and carried him off to Babylon.

I do not know how long it was from when God spoke to Manasseh until God took action, but the time for action was finally ripe, and God moved. Now picture a king, dressed in all his finery, and he lives in wickedness and has for years. The prophets have spoken, but he continues in his sin and God does nothing. So he is assured there is really nothing to God anyway. He is living in sin and God doesn't do anything. Where is He anyway. And besides, look at what Baal and the soothsayers say. They have the life. They are the one's that allow the flesh to live and things are great. No, nothing will happen. And so he heeps sin upon sin. And then one day, God speaks by action. The armies of

Babylon come. God's people are slain until they lie in heaps, and the king is overcome and then he is apprehended by Babylon. His gorgeous clothes are removed and he becomes a prisoner. His soothsayers, and nay sayers have been wrong, and now he is a prisoner. No matter how much he fights, the hooks and fetters of Babylon hold him fast. God has spoken by action. You see, that is what our passage speaks about when it says, "When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people..."

Before backsliding Christians come back to God, they have to be caught with hooks and fetters. When righteousness is preached, they harden their hearts. There are all kinds of ways of hiding. Liars lie, and hide their lies. We have seen that. Wickedness prevails, over, what would have seemed like righteous people. There is nothing that will break their pride. They are bound in fetters by their own words, things they have said. They join themselves to those who think like they do, and they are bound. Like the prodigal son, humility is the gate out to the pig pen, so pride is the fetters and hooks that holds the sinner.

But when God puts us in fetters and catches us by the hooks of the conscience, great pressure is exerted on the heart of man, and he begins to rethink. You see, the word to repent, metanoia, means to change the mind. Well, in this verse God spoke by disciplinary action, and note what happens in verses 12-13:

12 Now when he was in affliction, he implored the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers,

Notice step one in returning. If My people which are called by My name humble themselves... That is where Manasseh is now. Verse 13:

13 and prayed to Him;

Here is our second step. Manasseh, who had bowed to all kinds of strange Gods, turned to the LORD whose name is written all in capitals in verse 12. Now it does not record here that he turned from his wicked ways, but later it does. And we look at the rest of the verse:

and He (that is the LORD) received his entreaty, heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was God.

Now notice several things here. It was when he was in affliction that he could begin to start to hear. We might say that now he began to get ears that can hear. Oh how hardly we come to this place. Listen to Psalm 119:67 once more, *Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word.*

I know of no greater affliction than to have the Holy Spirit begin to speak to someone's heart. Oh what a prison He can put us in, and we cannot come forth. There is a door. It is wide open. But we all flee from that door, because it requires repentance and confession. All over our community are hurting families. Parents have children that are in the pig pens. That is true all over our community. But how do you get parents to repent? And until we become ready to repent and confess, we are behind the bars of pride. The doorway out is repentance and confession, but oh, how hardly we are brought to do that.

Oh that once more God would come down in action, and professing Christians be brought to where they take the kingdom by force. They will no longer be held from repentance and confession. They can hardly wait for their turn to confess. Is this really possible? I am saying it could happen.

First he humbled himself. That is step one after discipline. And second, he prayed. And last, he was restored to Jerusalem. And now we will see the results of his repentance. You see when repentance and revival comes, life has to change.

But note now as I read a little further, *Now when he was in affliction, he implored the LORD his God...* Now here is another principle. Revival always comes in answer to prayer. Those who have studied this say so. And here is what I have seen. Christians have said, "Well, here is a principle of coming back to God. We will get on our knees and pray. And if we pray, revival will come." So they pray, and pray, and revival does not come. Why? Because our souls are often not truly burdened for prayer. That is where we are. That is where this church is. That is where I am. We do not have a burden for prayer. Now I am not saying we should not pray if we don't have the burden. We have a Wednesday night prayer meeting. I believe in united prayer. The NT teaches us united prayer. United prayer is very important. People say, "We can pray at home." You can and should, but it not united prayer like the NT clearly teaches. I think revival comes after Christians have a true burden to pray.

And what happened to Manasseh? Before he had a burden to pray, He was afflicted. He was drawn by hooks and put in fetters, and it opened his ears, and he began to pray.

But, let me read a little further now in verse 12:

12 Now when he was in affliction, he implored the LORD his God, and... Oh yes, there was more. Once we are brought to prayer, now we begin to be ready for something else. A burden of prayer comes first, and then this comes. What is it? Listen, he *humbled himself greatly...* Oh how hardly a king comes to this. How hardly preachers come to this. There has been a little

acknowledgment of wrong by preachers in this community, but true brokenness has never happened, I think. The acknowledgment there was came, as I see it, from pressure from people. But the acknowledgment was couched in such false humility that no real heart change was clearly evident. Oh how hardly those in ministry humble themselves.

And now Manasseh has been afflicted. He has begun to pray. Look at this man who had Baal and soothsayers. They are of no use to him now. They have all been wrong. And now that he is afflicted, he starts to pray, and then he begins to humble himself. But I want you to notice where he humbled himself. Not before Baal. It was not at some shrine. It was not on some high place. Have you ever noticed how they worshipped in high places? No, he had now come to a low place. Here is where you meet the real God.

So notice that our verse says that he humbled himself, *before the God of his fathers*. Let me tell you what I see. He always knew who the real God was. Richard Dawkins knows who the real God is, and if he does not know now, he has known at some time in the past. Manasseh set up all these other gods, but he was deceiving his own wicked heart. He knew where the true God was, but he did not want him. And in his affliction, when Babylon took him, he now had his ears opened.

What might his humbling have sounded like? "Oh, Lord God, I am not worthy to come before you. I am an extremely wicked man. There is no one to compare me to but the devil himself. I cannot believe how horribly, horribly wrong I have been. Oh God, I have let sin rule in my life. I have committed every kind of sin. Oh, Lord, I have burned my children in the fire. Oh God, how can I go on?" No doubt he was a long time in the low place. And then maybe he called for his people and

said, "Oh, my people. I have misled you. I have been a very wicked king..." and on and on.

Now notice verse 14:

14 After this he built a wall outside the City of David on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, as far as the entrance of the Fish Gate; and it enclosed Ophel, and he raised it to a very great height. Then he put military captains in all the fortified cities of Judah.

Now why does it not say how he was let go? Why not spell out what happened and how he was miraculously restored to Jerusalem? When anyone comes where he came to, restoration to God is a certainty. So notice what he does when he gets back in verse 15:

15 He took away the foreign gods and the idol from the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD and in Jerusalem; and he cast them out of the city.

Now you see, when real repentance takes place, you don't need to be told what to get rid of, nor what to do. You know what to do. The old life has to go. You should not need to be told a lot of things. They should fall in place. Many things today are not in place, not because we don't know it; it is because we don't want to believe it. But not only do you get rid of the old, you put in order what now lies before you. It is now evident that he had turned from his wicked ways when he humbled himself before God. And so look at verse 16:

16 He also repaired the altar of the LORD, sacrificed peace offerings and thank offerings on it, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel.

Then notice what he did. He got his worship life, his spiritual life with God in order. That is what happens when we come back to God. Today we have all kinds of church services, but they need to be repaired and

become real once more. There is very little reality in the Church today. I am speaking in general, of course.

But, Manasseh, like father like son, did not do a thorough job. That often wants to be a problem. He stopped short, and he will set Israel up for their next failure. We go on in verse 17:

17 Nevertheless the people still sacrificed on the high places, but only to the LORD their God.

18 Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, his prayer to his God, and the words of the seers who spoke to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, indeed they are written in the book of the kings of Israel.

When Israel entered Canaan they were to drive out or kill all the inhabitants of the land. But they disobeyed God and tribe after tribe failed to do so. Each one they failed in became irritants in their eyes, and thorns in their sides. They failed time after time, and Manasseh, with all he had experienced, still, in the end he failed.

May I ask you, is there some pet sin for you? Is there something you know should go and you don't do it. It will come back to bite you. These then are the principles in coming back to God.

CONCL: So, in conclusion, the final step in returning to God when one has left, is conversion; to turn back to God from the wrong done in leaving God. Today, the doctrine of salvation is under attack in many ways and one of those is to exalt the doctrine of faith in Christ. Believe in Jesus, and you will be saved; that is the message of today. The reason salvation is needed is sin. Sin must be dealt with. When faith in Christ is promoted to the exclusion of repentance, the doctrine of conversion is completely destroyed.

In the larger doctrine of salvation, the two things required of man are repentance and faith. These two man can and must do to be saved. He cannot regenerate himself, elect himself,

predestine himself and so on with all the rest of the doctrines within this doctrine. But he can and must repent and believe. So, to destroy salvation completely, all the devil has to do is undermine repentance, and the whole coin is lost, and salvation has successfully been destroyed. And that is what has happened in the time in which we live in a large part of the church today.