

December 5 Su (Optional) — 2 Timothy 2:14-26 — Guarding Against Drifting

It seems like Manasseh did everything he could to depreciate the exclusive worship of Yahweh when he introduced to Judah the worship of multiple false gods. The one true God must be the sole object of our worship so that we don't drift away. As we read the following passage today from the Apostle Paul's instruction to Timothy, look for warnings about deviating from the truth.

¹⁴ *Remind them of these things, and charge them before God^[fn] not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers.* ¹⁵ *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved,^[fn] a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.* ¹⁶ *But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness,* ¹⁷ *and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus,* ¹⁸ *who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some.* ¹⁹ *But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."*

²⁰ *Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable.* ²¹ *Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable,^[fn] he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.*

²² *So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.* ²³ *Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels.* ²⁴ *And the Lord's servant^[fn] must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil,* ²⁵ *correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth,* ²⁶ *and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.*

ESV Footnotes

(2:14) Some manuscripts *the Lord*

(2:15) That is, one approved after being tested

(2:21) Greek *from these things*

(2:24) For the contextual rendering of the Greek word *doulos*, see Preface

This instruction by Paul concentrates on two general ways we can go astray, both of which are things to avoid. The first is summarized as getting involved in “*ignorant controversies*” (v. 23). As examples, we are told “*not to quarrel about words*” (v. 14) and to “*avoid irreverent babble*” (v. 16). Quarreling about words could involve nitpicky arguments about the meaning of words; an example of “*irreverent babble*” was given as proposing “*that the resurrection has already happened*” (v. 18). Paul certainly didn't walk away from those who opposed the truth; he stood fast for what was right but he didn't hang around to argue about it as if the truth had to be determined by discussion or compromise. The other warning about what we ought to do to keep from going astray is to “*depart from iniquity*” (v. 19), which includes the warning to “*flee youthful passions*” (v. 22). A focus on righteous living will help to keep us on track with the truth. Let's follow Paul's instruction rather than Manasseh's example!

2 Kings 21

2 Chronicles 33

¹⁰ And the LORD said by his servants the prophets, ¹¹ “Because Manasseh king of Judah has committed these abominations and has done things more evil than all that the Amorites did, who were before him, and has made Judah also to sin with his idols, ¹² therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Behold, I am bringing upon Jerusalem and Judah such disaster^[fn] that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle. ¹³ And I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line of Samaria, and the plumb line of the house of Ahab, and I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. ¹⁴ And I will forsake the remnant of my heritage and give them into the hand of their enemies, and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies, ¹⁵ because they have done what is evil in my sight and have provoked me to anger, since the day their fathers came out of Egypt, even to this day.”

¹⁶ Moreover, Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, besides the sin that he made Judah to sin so that they did what was evil in the sight of the LORD.

ESV Footnote
(21:12) Or evil

¹⁰ The LORD spoke to Manasseh and to his people, but they paid no attention. ¹¹ Therefore the LORD brought upon them the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria, who captured Manasseh with hooks and bound him with chains of bronze and brought him to Babylon.

Sin’s Consequences — God is long-suffering but there is a limit, which Manasseh discovered later when going after other gods and leading the people of Judah to follow him. Judgment was coming upon them “because Manasseh ... committed these abominations” (2 Kings 21:11) and “because they have done what was evil” (v. 15) throughout their history. Manasseh was captured by Assyria and brought in chains to Babylon. (At some point around this time, the king of Assyria was the younger brother of the king of Babylon.) Many people today rely on the patience of God, knowing that they will likely get away with their sin. The Christian must remember that Jesus said, “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent” (Rev. 3:19). Don’t push the limits! Disobedience is both deteriorating and disastrous.

2 Kings 21

¹² 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.

¹⁴ Afterward he built an outer wall for the city of David west of Gihon, in the valley, and for the entrance into the Fish Gate, and carried it around Ophel, and raised it to a very great height. He also put commanders of the army in all the fortified cities in Judah. ¹⁵ And he took away the foreign gods and the idol from the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built on the mountain of the house of the LORD and in Jerusalem, and he threw them outside of the city. 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.

¹⁷ Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh

and all that he did, and the sin that he committed,

are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?

¹⁸ And Manasseh slept with his fathers and was buried in the garden of his house, in the garden of Uzza, and Amon his son reigned in his place.

2 Chronicles 33

¹⁸ Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer to his God, and the words of the seers who spoke to him in the name of the LORD, the God of Israel, behold, they are in the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. ¹⁹ And his prayer, and how God was moved by his entreaty, and all his sin and his faithlessness, and the sites on which he built high places and set up the Asherim and the images, before he humbled himself, behold, they are written in

the Chronicles of the Seers.^[fn]

²⁰ So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his house,

and Amon his son reigned in his place.

ESV Footnote

(33:19) One Hebrew manuscript, Septuagint; most Hebrew manuscripts of Hozai

Humbled Himself — Twice in this reading, it says that Manasseh “*humbled himself*” (2 Chron. 33:12, 19). In both places, it involved his prayer and was followed by, “*God was moved by his entreaty*” (vv. 13, 19). God responds positively to a person’s humility. There were only four other people recorded in the Bible who humbled themselves. We have read about three of them already—kings who humbled themselves after being confronted with their sin: Ahab (1 Kings 21:29), Rehoboam (2 Chron. 12:12), and Hezekiah (2 Chron. 32:26). The last one “*humbled himself*” but there was no sin involved: “*And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross*” (Phil. 2:8). We should humble ourselves after committing sin but we should also humble ourselves by just being obedient.

2 Kings 21

¹⁹ *Amon was twenty-two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem.*

His mother's name was Meshullemeth the daughter of Haruz of Jotbah.

²⁰ *And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as Manasseh his father had done.*

²¹ *He walked in all the way in which his father walked and served the idols that his father served and worshiped them. ²² He abandoned the LORD, the God of his fathers, and did not walk in the way of the LORD.*

²³ *And the servants of Amon conspired against him and put the king to death in his house.*

²⁴ *But the people of the land struck down all those who had conspired against King Amon, and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his place.*

²⁵ *Now the rest of the acts of Amon that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? ²⁶ And he was buried in his tomb in the garden of Uzza, and Josiah his son reigned in his place.*

2 Chronicles 33

²¹ *Amon was twenty-two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem.*

²² *And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as Manasseh his father had done. Amon sacrificed to all the images that Manasseh his father had made, and served them.*

²³ *And he did not humble himself before the LORD, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself, but this Amon incurred guilt more and more.*

²⁴ *And his servants conspired against him and put him to death in his house.*

²⁵ *But the people of the land struck down all those who had conspired against King Amon. And the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his place.*

ESV Footnotes

(33:19) One Hebrew manuscript, Septuagint; most Hebrew manuscripts of Hozai

Parental Influence — It is a bit hard to know the timeframe for some of the events in Manasseh's life. His son, Amon, was only 22 years old when he began to reign. How much of his young life had been spent under the influence of his father before Manasseh became a prisoner in Babylon is not clear. During the first part of Manasseh's reign, he had flagrantly worshiped false gods before he was humbled and returned to serving Yahweh alone. Whatever influence Manasseh's apostasy had over Amon, it certainly didn't take the young king long before he "*abandoned the LORD*" (2 Kings 21:22) to worship other gods. It seems significant to me that he sacrificed "*to all the images that Manasseh his father had made*" (2 Chron. 33:22). Hadn't those images been destroyed by Manasseh? Looking back in this chapter, we see that after Manasseh humbled himself, "*he took away*" the images "*and he threw them outside the city*" (2 Chron. 33:15). He didn't destroy them completely, however, to prevent their being used again. This action may have also been an element of influence on his son, Amon. It is not only our children but also many other people who are watching our actions. When we give up something in order to better serve the Lord, do we really destroy it or do we only set it aside? We should not be like the recovering alcoholic who left a bottle of whiskey on a shelf in his garage. We must forsake all—burn our bridges behind us—to follow God seriously and wholeheartedly.

2 Kings 22

¹ *Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem.*
His mother's name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath.
² *And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in all the way of David his father, and he did not turn aside to the right or to the left.*

2 Chronicles 34

¹ *Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem.*
² *And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, and walked in the ways of David his father; and he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.*

³ *For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet a boy, he began to seek the God of David his father, and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the Asherim, and the carved and the metal images.*
⁴ *And they chopped down the altars of the Baals in his presence, and he cut down the incense altars that stood above them. And he broke in pieces the Asherim and the carved and the metal images, and he made dust of them and scattered it over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them.* ⁵ *He also burned the bones of the priests on their altars and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem.* ⁶ *And in the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, and as far as Naphtali, in their ruins^[fn] all around,* ⁷ *he broke down the altars and beat the Asherim and the images into powder and cut down all the incense altars throughout all the land of Israel. Then he returned to Jerusalem.*

ESV Footnotes

(34:6) The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain

Thorough Reform — What happened to Josiah as a 16-year-old boy seems almost like what we know today as a spiritual conversion, when the Holy Spirit comes into one's heart to make one a new person: "...*he began to seek the God of David his father*" (2 Chron. 34:3). It changed his life. When he was 20 years old, "*he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem*" (v. 3) of the objects of false worship. Whereas his grandfather, Manasseh, only "*took away [images] ... and threw them outside the city*" (33:15), Josiah "*chopped down ... cut down ... broke in pieces ... [and] made dust of them*" (34:4). The exclusive worship of Yahweh was so important to him that he extended his pulverizing reform into the former northern kingdom of Israel, by that time only weakly controlled by the deteriorating Assyrian empire. In a spiritual sense, that is what Jesus commanded His followers to do in the Great Commission: "*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*" (Matt. 28:19). The dramatic change God has made in our lives should widely influence others who do not know Him.

Meditation: Josiah became king when he was only eight years old. Since his father, Amon, was 24 years old when he was killed (2 Kings 21:19), Josiah was born when Amon was only 16 years old. This shows a very different cultural situation than what we encounter today. We wouldn't think of allowing our 15-year-old boy to get married. However, God certainly provided for early marriage by introducing puberty at that early age. The culture at that time was also different in that the family structure incorporated married children into their homes, not requiring them to be financially independent or emotionally mature before starting a family; the parents helped them learn how to raise their children. Life expectancy was also much shorter in those days, so it was expedient to start marriage early.

2 Kings 22

³ *In the eighteenth year of King Josiah, the king sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, son of Meshullam, the secretary, to the house of the LORD, saying,*

2 Chronicles 34

⁸ *Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had cleansed the land and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz, the recorder, to repair the house of the LORD his God.*

⁴ *“Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may count the money that has been brought into the house of the LORD, which the keepers of the threshold have collected from the people. ⁵ And let it be given into the hand of the workmen who have the oversight of the house of the LORD, and let them give it to the workmen who are at the house of the LORD, repairing the house ⁶ (that is, to the carpenters, and to the builders, and to the masons), and let them use it for buying timber and quarried stone to repair the house. ⁷ But no accounting shall be asked from them for the money that is delivered into their hand, for they deal honestly.”*

⁹ *They came to Hilkiah the high priest and gave him the money that had been brought into the house of God, which the Levites, the keepers of the threshold, had collected from Manasseh and Ephraim and from all the remnant of Israel and from all Judah and Benjamin and from the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ¹⁰ And they gave it to the workmen who were working in the house of the LORD. And the workmen who were working in the house of the LORD gave it for repairing and restoring the house. ¹¹ They gave it to the carpenters and the builders to buy quarried stone, and timber for binders and beams for the buildings that the kings of Judah had let go to ruin. ¹² And the men did the work faithfully. Over them were set Jahath and Obadiah the Levites, of the sons of Merari, and Zechariah and Meshullam, of the sons of the Kohathites, to have oversight. The Levites, all who were skillful with instruments of music, ¹³ were over the burden-bearers and directed all who did work in every kind of service, and some of the Levites were scribes and officials and gatekeepers.*

Spiritual Neglect — The last mention in our readings about the physical upkeep of the temple building happened 76 years earlier when, in the first month of King Hezekiah’s reign, “*he opened the doors of the house of the LORD and repaired them*” (2 Chron. 29:3). He repaired only the doors. And who knows how many decades the temple had been deteriorating before Hezekiah?! Following Manasseh’s humbling imprisonment, he “*restored the altar of the LORD*” (33:16), which stood outside the building, but there is no mention of any restoration of the house itself. So, “*the kings of Judah had let [the temple] go to ruin*” (34:11). As soon as King Josiah had cleansed the land of the worship of false gods, he went to work on restoring the center of the worship of Yahweh, the temple building. Money for temple maintenance had been collected for many years but no work had been done, so Josiah organized the Levites and put the money to work. There were two things about the workers that struck me as I read about this restoration: 1) there was no accounting required of them because “*they deal honestly*” (2 Kings 22:7), and 2) “*the men did the work faithfully*” (2 Chron. 34:12). These Levites had a reputation of being of good moral character and they proved their quality through their work. Do you have any “*doors*” or “*beams*” that need to be repaired in your spiritual house? You haven’t been neglecting reading God’s Word but might there be another area that used to be in better shape than it is now? Maybe it is in the use of your spiritual gift. How can you take a step today toward repairing that neglected ministry?

December 11 Sa (Optional) — Matthew 3:1-12 — Outward and Inward Worship

We read that, four years after King Josiah “*began to seek the God of David ... he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem*” (2 Chron. 34:3) of the physical objects of the worship of false gods. Genuine commitment to God changes one’s life and results in godly action. Today, we read about John the Baptist, who criticized the religious leaders of Israel in his day because their outward lives did not reflect an inward change.

¹ *In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea,* ² *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*^[fn] ³ *For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said,*

*“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
‘Prepare^[fn] the way of the Lord;
make his paths straight.’”*

⁴ *Now John wore a garment of camel’s hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.* ⁵ *Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him,* ⁶ *and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.*

⁷ *But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”* ⁸ *Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.* ⁹ *And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.* ¹⁰ *Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*

¹¹ *“I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”* ¹² *His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”*

ESV Footnotes

(3:2) Or the kingdom of heaven has come near

(3:3) Or crying: Prepare in the wilderness

- Both John and Josiah were strong leaders. How were their leadership styles different? How different do you think their personal image was in the eyes of the people they led?
- On what were the Pharisees and Sadducees depending for a good standing with God?
- What is the difference between the fire mentioned in verse 11 and the fire in verse 12?
- Of what do you need to repent today?