

later life and all that he tried to repair of the wrong he had done could not wholly arrest the evil tides his sinful ways had started. Although he repaired the altar of the Lord, the people did sacrifice still in the high places. And see what he had to suffer before he came to his right mind and gave up his sins. The king of Assyria "took Manasseh among the thorns and bound him with fetters." It is the story of every soul that goes away from God. Thorns of conscience, disappointment, bitter regret, lost opportunities—how they prick and tear the heart when it wakes up to see the folly of wasted years. Chains of habit, doubt, discouragement, lost self-respect, lost confidence of friends—how they hold the soul captive from doing its best. Thorns and chains—yet all might have been saved him if from twelve years old to sixty-seven Manasseh had been a humble, faithful follower of his father's God. One sentence in the seventh verse of the chapter of our lesson tells the cause of all his mistakes and consequent sorrows. He "set the idol which he had made in the house of God." There it is; everyone begins a wrong course of life just that way. The heart is God's temple; he has said, "I will put my name there forever;" our hearts belong to him, and every blessing is promised if we keep them sacred to his service. But the idol of self is set up in the place of God. What can I do for myself? What can I get for myself? How can I please myself? These are the questions that rule the life, and even those who have been trained in right ways, as Manasseh no doubt was in his youth, go so far astray that they do worse than the heathen, who know no better. The lesson appeals very seriously to you, my young friends. Do not think you can sow "wild oats" now and reap good grain later. Wasted years are wasted. O, do make the most of these precious days of youth! But thanks to a merciful and loving God, it is not quite hopeless, although a part of life has been thrown away. Manasseh came to a better day, but not without affliction and humbling himself greatly before the God of his fathers. We may be thankful for sorrows that bring us to God; thankful for anything that shows us the folly and emptiness of a selfish life. Manasseh prayed, God heard, and brought him to Jerusalem into his kingdom, a captive no more; he sat upon the throne where God meant he should reign. So it is with every truly repentant soul. It is the breaking of fetters, it is the restoration from captivity to kingship; it is coming to Jerusalem, the "place of peace." If you have strayed like Manasseh, come back as he came, prayerful, humble, repentant; take the idol from the house of the Lord, repair the

altar, bring thank offerings, and prove to yourself and to all who know you that "the Lord he is God."

### The Teachers' Meeting.

Consider Manasseh's character in four lights: I. *The sinner.* He was the worst of all the kings of Judah. He was bad in religion, bad in politics, bad in private life. Several of his ancestors, such as Ahaziah, Ahaz, and others, had been wicked; but their wickedness had been largely due to self-indulgence. Without at all apologizing for self-indulgence we must recognize a new and worse sort of depravity in the youthful Manasseh, who sets out to break down all goodness and kill the good. II. *The sufferer.* The "stars in their courses" fight against the wicked ruler of a state. Manasseh's realm sank into helplessness; his armies were overpowered; he himself was captured, and in extreme degradation was taken to Babylon. There his sufferings were beyond measure. III. *The seeker.* Men who would never come to God in gladness are brought by sorrow. Manasseh forgot God in his palace, but remembered him in his prison. Five steps to follow sin and sorrow: (1) Turning to God; (2) Humble confession; (3) Earnest prayer; (4) Salvation and restoration. If Manasseh, the chief of sinners, can be saved, then any man or woman may have hope. IV. *The servant of God.* When discipline has wrought its work indulgent blessing takes its place. Watch Manasseh as in the fear of Jehovah he fortifies his city, organizes his army, destroys his idols, reconsecrates God's house, and strives to lead his people back to godliness. There is joy in even such tardy service as his.... V. *What was the cause of Manasseh's wicked life?* His own bad will. His father was one of the best of monarchs and one of the best of men. There is nothing to indicate that his mother was bad. His surroundings were good. But he loved badness and was bad simply because he so chose.... VI. *What was the net result of Manasseh's life?* To-day he is not remembered so much for his penitence as for his wickedness. When in 2 Kings 21. 11, 12 the sacred historian seeks the cause of the calamities of the kingdom of Judah he finds them in the sins of Manasseh. Doubtless he was a thoroughly good man in his later years, and doubtless God accepted him, but the largest part of his life's activities had been evil.

### Before the Class.

*Introduction.* Manasseh, the most wicked of all the kings of Judah, succeeded his father, Hezekiah. He began to reign at the age of twelve,