

## ***Romans 2:1-4***

### ***The Goodness of God***

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There was a man in the Old Testament who was one of the most wicked men to ever live. In fact, I call him the Hitler of the Bible. His name was Manasseh, and Manasseh did more evil and more wicked than any king that had ever lived in Israel. And you read about him in 2 Chronicles, chapter 33. When he was 12 years old, he came to the throne and ruled for 55 years, most of those years was hell on earth. Tradition tells us that he killed Isaiah the prophet, he sawed him in two. That's what a sicko this guy was. He had babies, his own babies, he would murder them by offering them as an offering on the arms of a hot idol where he would actually barbecue them to death in worship to this god [Molech]. And then he got everyone else in Israel [the southern kingdom of Judah] to do this. He took an image and took temple prostitutes and put them in the temple of God, he put an image into the Holy of Holies of God's temple. He persecuted those who followed God. God bore with him for many years. God put up with him for a long time. God is patient, God is longsuffering. God is good. Finally, time was up for Manasseh. **Verse 9 says, "Thus Manasseh misled Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the sons of Israel. And the Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention."** So, **verse 11, "Therefore the Lord brought the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria against them, and they captured Manasseh with hooks and bound him with bronze chains, and took him to Babylon."** And I say "good." I think a man like that ought to have a hook put in his nose and let him be transported 500 miles with a hook in his nose, pulled along by his nose. A man that

had murdered that many little babies, murdered the prophets of God, destroyed the work of God and led a whole nation astray, he deserves what he gets. That's what something inside of me says. But I just can't get over what God is. He's so much better than you are. He's so much better than anything we could have ever dreamed up of God to be, because it says that when Manasseh got there in the pit, he looked up. **Verse 12** says "**that when he was in distress he entreated the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. When he prayed to Him, He was moved by his entreaty and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God.**" You see, that fits in with my closing thought, that verse 4 of Romans 2 says, "**Don't you know that the goodness of God, the kindness of God, leads to repentance?**" Some of you have got the hook in your nose right now, you didn't listen to God earlier. Some of you are in the pit right now and you're thinking *'There's no way I can call on God, I look at my past life and what I've done, how could I call on God now? He wouldn't accept me anyway.'* Some of you have done everything you can to destroy the faith of somebody else, like Manasseh did. And now you're saying, *'How could I possibly, after devoting my life to being against Christianity, how could I ever accept Christ now?'* I'm sure all of those thoughts went through Manasseh's mind. But there in chains, there in darkness, he knew where to call. 'And he called upon the name of God' and listen, I cannot describe it, I cannot explain it, and I can hardly understand it, but God's grace is so great that he lifted Manasseh up and restored him. God can do that for you too. There are Manasseh's listening to what I'm saying. And God can accept you, and will accept you, and forgive you, and will give you a new beginning if you will call to him. How do I know? Because I was a Manasseh. Oh, maybe the things I did were a little bit different from Manasseh's but there was a time in my life when I was 17 years old, when because of a lot of different circumstances I was pushed to the point where I lost my

faith in God. I didn't have a personal relationship with Jesus. Because of that, life was just too much to bear, and one day I got so mad at God that I decided I'd never have another thing to do with God as long as I lived. One day in particular I'll never forget, and I've shared this with some of you, and I don't do it to bore anybody. It just fits in that it's the goodness of God that leads us to repentance. One day I remember I was so upset, I knew God hated me, so I hated him, and I was going to hate him more than he hated me. I was going to win him at this game, you know. And I shook my fist at God and I called him every foul name I knew, every dirty word I could think of. I flung at him in heaven, smeared it on his face-- "*you blankety blank God, I hate you.*" I was so blasphemous, lightning bolts should have fallen down. After I smeared this filth all over him I said, "*I'm never gonna have anything to do with you again as long as I live, unless you tell me you love me.*" I mean, walk up to somebody, and tell him every foul name you can and then tell him 'unless you tell me you love me I'll never have anything to do with you as long as I live' and he'll say, 'Good! Good!, Never come back again!' That's how (God) he should have responded. You see, God was forbearing, God was good toward me. God was patient to me. And in the midst of this cry and this command, I knew I wasn't going to have anything to do with him if he didn't tell me he loved me. I had this urge, this compulsion to find a Bible, and the only Bible I could find was this Bible in this green box. My mom had given it to me for Christmas, it's a Living Bible. And it's called the Living Bible. And I just threw it open, it fell open to Leviticus, a bunch of rules and regulations. I threw the Bible across the room, [saying] '*Just like you, rules and regulations nobody can live up to, I hate you.*' I don't know how much time went by, something compelled me to pick that book up. It's just I had to pick it up. I picked it up and threw it open again, and it fell open to this page right here, because there underlined, there's a Scripture underlined, I hadn't underlined it, my eyes fell upon the only place in Scripture where God says he loves you. I

said, *"Unless you say to me, unless you tell me you love me, I'll never have anything to do with you again as long as I live"*, cursing and swearing, and this is what God said to me in reply, **"But now the Lord, who created you O Israel says, don't be afraid for I have ransomed you, I have called you by name, you're mine. When you go through deep waters and great trouble I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression you will not be burned up. The flames will not consume you, for I am the Lord your God, your Savior the Holy One of Israel. Others died that you might live. I traded their lives for yours, because you are precious to me and honored, and I love you."** Gang, it's the only place in the Bible where God says "I love you." That it would just fall open, when this little punk on earth was shaking his dirty measly hand at God?--that God would even respond. Why didn't he say "Good riddance!, Go to hell!"? No, that isn't the way he is. He didn't want me to have nothing to do with him for the rest of my life, because you see, he loves me. And he **loves** some of you, today. Today, if you hear his voice speaking to you, then don't get hard, don't say no, but instead today call on his name." [transcript of an expository sermon on Romans 2:1-4, given by Pastor J. Mark Martin, Calvary Community Church, P.O. Box 39607, Phoenix, Arizona, 85069]