

## GOD'S ANSWER TO SOLOMON'S PRAYER

2 Chronicles 7:14

**Intro:** If a person were to graph the spiritual life of the children of Israel in OT times, chapters 5, 6, and 7 of 2 Chronicles would prove to be one of the highest points spiritually that the children of Israel ever attained. Solomon's temple (which David had originally wanted to build), had been completed, and dedicated. The dedication included the sacrifice of thousands of animals, as 7:5 indicates. But even more importantly it was marked by Solomon's prayer which is recorded for us in chapter 6, beginning with verse 12. Solomon built a scaffold which was about four and a half feet high and seven and a half feet square. And it was on this scaffold that he first stood, and then kneeled, spreading out his hands toward heaven, *and then he prayed!* And what a prayer it was! It seems that Solomon was seeking to anticipate any problem that could arise in the lives of the people, any way in which they could bring judgment upon themselves. And he sought assurance from the Lord that when the people would pray, confessing their sins or seeking God's help out of their problem, then the Lord would hear them from heaven, forgive their sins, and restore blessing to the people. The prayer begins in 6:14 and concluded at the end of chapter 6, verse 42.

So it was quite a lengthy prayer, but a very wonderful prayer. It is very apparent that Solomon knew the human heart very well. And he knew their past history. And so as a godly king and leader of the people, he gave himself to prayer for his people, and let them listen as he prayed.

As we come to chapter 7, verses 1 through 11, we see the description of the dedication. The temple was completed and dedicated, and the king's house was finished as well. On the night that it was all completed, the Lord appeared to Solomon, and answered his prayer. We have the answer in verses 12 through 22. (Read.)

The verse that I want to consider with you tonight is verse 14 – 2 Chronicles 7:14. This is really the heart of what the Lord said to Solomon that night. It is what we can call *a conditional promise to answer prayer*. The Lord told Solomon that "if" the people would do certain things, "then" He would meet their need and "heal their land." The "if" tells us what the people were to do, and the "then" introduces God's promised response. And verse 15 tells us that the Lord would be watching the people, and His ears would be listening *for* their prayers, and *to* their prayers. And now I want to consider with you these words from the Lord, and then make the

application to our own situation in America as it is tonight.

The promise that the Lord gave to Solomon specifically involved those whom the Lord said were

### **I. "MY PEOPLE."**

I think that we would have to say, in one way, that this term applied to the whole nation of Israel, all twelve tribes, plus the priests and Levites and the leaders including Solomon himself. But, in another way, it applied to those in Israel who truly knew the Lord. We know that the people of Israel were not the people of God just because they were Israelites. In those days, as it is today, only those were truly His people who had by their faith shown that they had been saved. And this was confirmed by the words which the Lord added after He said, "If my people." He went on to say, "which are called by my name."

In Deut. 28 when Moses was telling the people what blessing the Lord would give them *if they would hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord (see verse 1)*, then he went on to say this in verse 10:

And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee (Deut. 28:10).

When the Lord spoke through Isaiah about the final gathering of His people from all parts of the earth where they had been scattered, He said this:

5 Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west;

6 I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth;

7 Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him (Isa. 43:5-7).

The Lord is not going to gather *all* Jews, but only those who are *called by His Name!* He will gather His elect.

So what the Lord was telling Solomon was (and this is the point that I want all of us to see very clearly) that in times of national trouble and sin in Israel, *everything depended upon how the true people of God responded to the Lord. This message from the Lord to Solomon was to be passed on to all believers in Israel. They may all have been responsible for the*

*judgment of God upon the nation, but they were the ones upon whom the Lord was looking, and it was their voices He was waiting to hear!*

Let us take special note of this. In times of national crisis I think that we are all more inclined to look for a special work of the Lord in the hearts of people who do not know the Lord, but here the Lord made it very clear that He was looking to see what was taking place in the lives of His people. And so the Lord said, "If my people, who are called by my name." It really goes without saying that in the situation that we face in our country today, the big question is not how unbelievers are responding. Most of them do not give a single thought to God. No, the important thing is how you and I who know the Lord are responding.

What was the Lord asking of His people? I will call it

## **II. A FOURFOLD RESPONSE TO THE LORD.**

You can see in your Bibles what the Lord wanted His people to do. And the first was:

### **A. "Shall humble themselves."**

I hope we all realize what damage our own pride has done to us. In one way or another pride is involved in every sin we have ever committed, or will ever commit. Every time we do our will instead of the will of God, it is because of our pride. It was pride which made Lucifer, the Devil, say, as the Lord reminded him in Isa. 14:13-14.

13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High (Isa. 14:13-14).

Paul told Timothy that elders should not be novices, that is, men who had recently been saved. And he gave this as the reason:

Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil (1 Tim. 3:6).

The NKJ renders it this way:

Not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.

And when in 2 Timothy the Apostle Paul was listing the sins which now characterize the days in which we live, he said this:

1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

*As you read that passage, think for just a moment about each sin, and you will find that pride is responsible for each one!*

That which keeps us from following the Lord “fully” as Caleb and Joshua did is *pride*! And that which makes us blame others for the trouble we are in as a Nation, and excuse ourselves completely, is pride!

In OT times, trouble in the nation was a call for every believer to search his own heart, and to sincerely humble himself, or herself, before the Lord. By definition to humble ourselves means that we submit ourselves to the Lord. We make sure that we are submissive to the will of God, that we are not disobedient to the Word of God. This calls for real heart-searching. It means that we look upon the condition we are in as being at least partially responsible for it. Others may be more responsible. Others may be very rebellious against God. But we need to make sure that everything is right in our hearts in relation to God.

There is much more that could be said on this point, but I must move on.

After we humble ourselves, and see the needs in our own hearts, then the Lord added

### **B. “And pray.”**

To “pray” means that we talk to the Lord, and the context of the verse means that we talk to the Lord about ourselves. And if we have truly been humbling ourselves, it would seem that the kind of prayer the Lord was speaking about was *the confession of sin* – not the confession of the sins of our leaders, or of the sins we know are being committed by others, *but the confession of our own sins*! It is probably true of all of us that this is one place where we all fail miserably – *we are not as aware of our own sins as*

*we ought to be, and so we neglect the confession of sin.*

We need to remember that when the Lord spoke these words, He was speaking to Solomon. And Solomon was certainly a man who was called by the Lord's Name. And so he needed to humble himself, and then to pray, just as much as anyone else in the nation. No one was excluded among the people of God, and the same is true whatever the trouble may be, and in whatever generation the Lord's people may live.

How thankful we should all be for the words, familiar words, which the Apostle John has given us about sin:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

And let me remind you that the word "confess" in Greek, which the Apostle John used, means *to say the same thing*. That is, true confession is saying about our sins what God says, and admitting that they are just as bad as God says they are.

The third thing that the Lord said that His people needed to do was

### C. "And seek My face."

Several years ago when I was reading through 2 Chronicles in my regular daily Bible reading, I noticed that it was said about five of the kings of Israel and Judah, mainly Judah, that *they sought the Lord*. This included Solomon, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, Hezekiah, and Josiah when he was only sixteen years old.

Sin affects our fellowship with the Lord. It affects our enjoyment of the Lord's presence. To seek His face is *to seek Him*. It means that we are not primarily concerned about the Lord's blessing, but we are concerned about the Lord. We want Him for Himself. We long to have that realization that we are pleasing to Him. This is not something that we do just when we are in trouble, but it is to be our way of life. In the Lord's presence is fulness of joy; at His right hand there are pleasures forevermore.

Salvation to Isaiah the prophet meant seeking the Lord as we learn in Isa. 55:6-7 where we read,

6        Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

7        Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man

his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

All of us need a greater realization of the presence of the Lord in our lives. And that is why we need daily to seek Him, to seek Him just because we love Him and want to be with Him, and desire to please Him. When the Lord told His people to seek Him, it was always a call to fellowship, or to greater fellowship than what they had enjoyed in the past. Let us pay particular attention to this word: “And seek My face.”

The last word is:

**D. “And turn from their wicked ways.”**

The Lord does not tone down the words that He uses. He calls our ways, “wicked ways.” This word “wicked” in Hebrew speaks of the consequences of our sin. It pictures sin as having a ruinous effect upon ourselves as well as upon the society in which we live. It speaks of a breaking up of that which is “good and desirable in man and in society” (Girdlestone, p. 80). So our sin, regardless of how we may try to hide it, and regardless of how slight we might think that it is, has a bad effect upon us, upon those around us, and upon the society in which we live. Oh, how we need to learn to hate what the Lord hates, and that is sin in all of its forms.

Solomon gave us a good word regarding turning from our wicked ways. It is found in Prov. 28:13:

He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

We are not to confess our sins with the idea that we are going to be confessing the same sin again in the future, but we confess it with the desire that we will be finished with it. We can only “turn” from our “wicked ways” by the grace of God. And we need to continue to trust in God’s grace so that we will not have to confess the same sin over and over again.

Where do we get our understanding and consciousness of sin? God has placed some of that in our hearts, but most of it comes to us from the Word of God. And one of our purposes in reading the Word should be to keep our hearts sensitive to what pleases the Lord, and what displeases Him.

What we have been considering up to this point, is our responsibility. But

from this point on we are dealing with the promise of God which we can expect to see fulfilled when we meet the conditions express in what we have just covered. Now let us look at

### **III. GOD'S PROMISE.**

It is given to us in these words: "Then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

Here we have three things which the Lord told Solomon that He would do.

#### **A. "I will hear from heaven."**

This is truly amazing, isn't it? Without the aid of modern technology, we speak to the Lord in the quietness of our rooms, away from anyone else. No one on earth knows what we are doing, but the Lord in heaven hears every word we speak and He knows every thought we think. To pray as Solomon was told that the people of God should pray, is certainly to pray according to the will of God, and the Apostle John wrote later:

14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him (1 John 5:14-15).

So, if we know that the Lord hears us, we know that "we have the petition that we desired of Him." What is our petition? The forgiveness of our sins. And so we should not be surprised to read the second statement:

#### **B. "And will forgive their sin."**

We know that the forgiveness of sin does not mean that God will overlook what we have done. It could not in righteousness do that. To Solomon it meant that through the promised Redeemer, and the sacrifice He would offer, sin would be forgiven for those who confess it because the sin was atoned for by the blood of the Savior.

One servant of the Lord has said that "forgiven" is the sweetest word in the English language – and the same goes for the same word in any other language if it refers to God's forgiveness of our sins. And when God forgives us of our sin, He cleanses us from sin's defilement. It is not that He *may* or *might* forgive our sins, but He definitely "will."

So this means the restoration of fellowship with God. This means that our lives can be, and will be, different.

But notice the third and final word:

**C. “And will heal their land.”**

Now I know that this verse has its primary application to Israel. And I know also that we in the United States do not have the special relationship with the Lord that Israel had. But I believe there is a basic truth here that applies to believers wherever they may live.

As our Lord said in the Sermon on the Mount, we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. So it follows from that that we are to have a good influence on the countries in which we live. But it is not primarily in praying for our country (even though we should do that), but it is in praying for ourselves, and in making sure that our lives are pleasing to the Lord. If there should be a great revival among the Lord’s people in this country of ours, there is no telling what the result would be. But we can be sure that it would be great, and it would be far-reaching.

**Concl:** We all are concerned about our country. We are already under the judgment of God. Behind El Nino is God. Behind the homosexuality and abortions and the crime and the return of diseases we thought we had conquered, is the hand of God in judgment. And the judgments will get greater and greater. We are being lulled to sleep by a strong economy, but that could change so fast that we would forget the prosperity we have had. War is another way in which nations are judged. Our country is riddled from top to bottom with immorality to the point that people don’t care how things go as long as they have all that they want.

And while all of these things are going on, the professing church has become more and more like the world. We are seeking to serve the Lord using the world’s ways. And so in a day when the church should be ministering to a world that has gone far, far astray, the church needs to be ministered to herself.

2 Chronicles 7:14 is hundreds of years old – almost 3,000 years old to be specific. But its truth has not changed. May the Lord cause each one of us to respond to it believing that if we do, it may be that others will see what needs to be done, and we may yet see, as bad as things are, a mighty work of the Lord even in our day. We need guidance, and here it is!