

The Prayer God Hears

2Chronicles 7:12-16 Then the LORD appeared to Solomon at night and said to him, "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. **13** "If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, **14** and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land. **15** "Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to the prayer offered in this place. **16** "For now I have chosen and consecrated this house that My name may be there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually.

CONTEXT: Solomon has just dedicated the temple, the replacement for the Tabernacle that had traveled with the people thru the wilderness and had been in Shiloh and later in Jerusalem.

- * Solomon had build something permanent, not to contain God's presence, but that God could inhabit
- * Solomon realized he needed to not only dedicate the house, but the people. His prayer was an appeal for God to be faithful even should they make wrong choices. Give us a door of "re-entry" back into God's presence.
- * Solomon heard God's prayer & "the fire of heaven" fell. But God doesn't hear all prayer.
- * God doesn't hear wrongly motivated prayer -- all our hearts are wicked, and we all have a responsibility to maintain the garden of our hearts.
- * Solomon recognized the weakness of human nature, that all of us "lean" toward disobedience. He prayed that when God's people did so, that God would respond w/ mercy.
- * "If" we fall -- this prayer was not a resignation to the inevitability of weakness & falling
- * "I'm only human..." is never to be an excuse. Rather, made in the image of God, we have real significance, a true capacity to trust God and do right.
- * Prayer of humility recognizes our need for God to be right. Christianity alone of world's religions CANNOT be lived by humans on their own; we are too flawed and must die that God can live thru us.
- * We must surrender that we may enter into God's victory; by this we "win".
- * It's like the Lord's prayer, "Lead me not into temptation..." We need God's grace not to go the wrong way. We know Adam is on the inside and we need God to sustain us and help us come into His victory for us.

I. Consequences Of Disobedience

vs. 13 "If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people..."

God said He heard Solomon's prayer and said, that if Israel finds itself subject to God's punishment & justice they must remember this word and pray
* We must not assume that God is unfair or unjust. What we deserve is death; that we continue to live in spite of our wrongdoing is an expression of God's great mercy and grace

A. Restraint of Blessing

B. Appointing a Devourer

C. Sending Pestilence

When we find ourselves in the place of God's judgment, it is God's mercy when He brings calamity to keep us from going to the full end, the full realization of destruction our behavior leads us to.

- * God uses glimpses, impressions of judgment to get our attention.
- * God works to get our attention, not so we can come to a "new normal", adjusting to the difficult and thinking it is now normal, but that we might turn to Him.
- * God uses us to reach out to people who are in sin, but we need to raise the standard and hold it up.
- * God sprinkles us with judgment, but if there is not a change among His people, if God's people don't respond, He will broad brush this nation with judgment.

II. Correct Response

vs. 14a My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways,

A. God's People Humble Themselves -- recognize who God says who we are; sometimes that is more, sometimes less than what we think of our selves; He is God alone & we must recognize He is sovereign & right.

- * Ananias died because he lied to God. This is not a cause to judge God.
- * Problem: we want 100% blessing/recognition for a 50% commitment. How does a God who demands perfection, who is purely holy & perfect allow us to live when He knows we are not wholly committed, wholly given over to Him and indifferent to His provision. We must never judge God for His actions; He is

kind, compassionate, and we don't deserve His goodness.

* God paid twice for us -- He made us & died for us; we must never blame Him or judge Him

B. God's People Pray -- speak with Him, draw near to him

C. God's People Seek His Face -- Get to know God, not just for provision but to find & know Him for Himself

D. God's People Repent -- quit the things we do that are wrong and begin to figure out how to do what is right.

III. Compassionate Reply

vs. 14b then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

A. He will Hear -- God will respond

B. He will forgive

C. He will heal the land -- fix what is wrong; heal what is broken

God will always do what He says

* If we will do this, He will do that...

* Have mercy on us as God's people

* We need to be the people of God to do what God requires of His people -- this is the key to changing our nation.