

## **Reading 2 Chronicles 7:1-16**

**Text: 2 Chronicles 7v14** *If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*

### **I. Introduction**

It's much easier to see things on a bigger scale than on a smaller scale.

For example, when a nation goes bankrupt (like Greece), we can see and feel the pain much better than when, say, just one person goes bankrupt.

That's one of the reasons why the Old Testament focuses so much on Israel. God uses Israel to teach us things on a large scale that we would not see so easily if it were just happening in one individual's life.

In 2 Chronicles 7v13 God draws a large-scale national picture of disease and death to teach us what to do in a time of personal disease and death.

And this is such a time. As you know, our dear friend suffered many diseases for many years, and after a long struggle she finally succumbed to them in her death.

So what does this text teach us to do in times of disease and death?

*If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*

Here's the principle teaching of this text: A time of disease and death is (1) a time of humbling and (2) a time of hoping.

These are my two points:

**(1) A time of humbling**

**(2) A time of hoping**

But just before looking at these two points, notice briefly that the text is specifically addressed to "my people who are called by my name." This is the covenant community of God which is comprised of two groups:

- Those who are called by God's name and yet whose lives contradict this calling
- Those who are called by God's name and live up to that calling

But while addressed specifically to those who profess to be the Lord's, the principles hold true for all sinners everywhere.

### **II. A Time of Humbling**

#### **A. Humble yourselves**

When we are well and life is going well, we tend to grow in self-confidence and self-reliance. We don't need God and we don't want God.

But even when we are sick and life is not going well, we can still be very self-sufficient and even self-reliant. Notice that verse 14 begins with: "If my people shall humble themselves.

You would think that given the circumstances of verse 13, it would say "**When** my people shall humble themselves."

But no, it's not automatic that when we are sick and afflicted that we humble ourselves. In fact, sometimes we can grow even more rebellious and defiant. "how dare God deal with me like this...After all I've done and been, that God should do this to me!"

There's a big "if" over everyone in this congregation today. "If you will humble yourselves..."

How do we know if we are humble?

There are different layers to humility, layers that we pray that God in His mercy will lead us through and to:

Layer 1: I am not the best at everything

Layer 2: I am not the best at anything

Layer 3: I am weak, frail, vulnerable, fragile

Layer 4: I am foolish, ignorant and prone to making mistakes

Layer 5: I am a sinner deserving punishment

Layer 6: If am a sinner against God deserving eternal punishment

It's in the last layer that we reach the bedrock of humility.

## **B. Pray**

Prayer is one of the greatest marks, maybe the greatest mark of humility.

When we don't pray, we are saying we can do just fine by ourselves. We have enough strength, wisdom, and talent to live our lives without any outside help.

When a person prays, he is saying "I cannot do life myself...I need outside help. I cannot deal with sin myself...I need outside help. I cannot face death myself...I need outside help.

## **C. Seek my face**

Nothing tells us more about a person than their face. I might be able to guess how a person is feeling by the way they walk, or by their shoulder posture. A handshake reveals a lot. And so does the voice. But it's the face that is most revealing.

God says here: "Seek my face." But how can we? God is spirit; God is invisible. How can we or the Israelites seek his face?

In the OT at this time, God showed his face at and through the Temple, which Solomon had just finished building. The Temple was the supreme OT revelation of God.

God says that "His name shall be there forever" (v. 16), meaning that he will make Himself and His character known there.

Also, time and again in Solomon's prayer of dedication he calls the people to "pray towards this place." Why? It wasn't some superstitious veneration of a building, but because God and His mercy were revealed there.

God's face was seen in its orderly and strong structure, its beautiful and valuable materials, its varied and intriguing furniture, its joy-filled festivals, and especially in its blood sacrifices.

There God showed His face of mercy, mercy through shedding of blood, mercy through substitution, mercy through the prophetic picture of the coming sacrificial substitute Messiah.

But while the Old Testament shows us God's face of Messianic mercy in shadowy pictures, especially in the shadowy pictures of the sacrifices, the New Testament shows us God's face in sunlit reality, in the person of Jesus Christ, especially in the crucifixion of Christ.

In the NT God showed his face through His Son Jesus Christ. He is the image of the invisible God, the express image of his person (Heb 1:3). He makes God known (John 1:18). He who has seen Jesus has seen the Father (John 14:9).

#### **D. Turn from your wicked ways**

We all have wicked ways. We stray from God's good way and walk in wicked ways. But no matter how far and how long we've strayed, God calls us to turn back. He does not give up on us.

Notice the order: God's face turns us back to God's ways. We may think, I'll clean up my act then face God. I'll get my life back into God's ways and then I can face him. No, seeing the face of God in Jesus Christ will clean up your act.

### **III. A Time of Hoping**

#### **A. I will hear**

"I will hear." What a promise! To have God listen to us! What more can we ask? What more do we need?

Take this promise to the bank and cash it. And unlike other checks, you can cash this every day.

See how this promise is underlined in verses 15&16. It is in this place, the place of God's face, the place where He reveals Himself that he promises to hear.

And again, we are called to the place of God's face, to Jesus Christ through whom God looks upon us and by whom God listens to us. He is God's eyes, and ears towards us.

#### **B. I will forgive**

Implies that God has been listening to confession, not excuses, not defenses, not blame-shifting. Indicates that someone has taken responsibility for their sin, admitted it, acknowledged it, begged for mercy, and sought pardon.

So many biblical images of forgiveness:

- I feel so dirty: I will make you whiter than snow
- I can't forget: Your sins and iniquities I will remember no more
- Sin follows me: I will remove sin so far as east is distant from the west

#### **C. I will heal**

God promises to heal the land. Remember the national and the physical is there to give us a picture of the personal and the spiritual. Try to picture a land full of disease and death being renewed and rebuilt.

That's the vision held in front of us here.

But just as Israel never saw this in its fullness on this earth, neither do we.

The time of full healing lies ahead.

We believe that our friend knows this in a way she has never known this before. Her healing began here – in the saving of her soul – that’s Stage 1 of healing.

Stage 2 was completed the exact same moment she breathed her last. “The souls of believers **are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory**; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection” (Westminster Shorter Catechism 37).

Stage 3 is still future – when her perfect body will be reunited with her perfect soul.

What a hope! I will hear...I will forgive...I will heal.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Many have hope without being humbled. False hope.

Many want the healing...but are not willing to go through the God ordained way of getting it...through humbling.

What hope there is in humbling!