

WEEK 3 - REVIVAL, 2 CHRONICLES 7: 13-15.

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¹³ ***(When)*** I shut up the heavens and there is no rain, or ***(when I)*** command the locusts to devour the land or ***(when I)*** send pestilence among my people, ***if (as soon as)*** My people, who are called by My Name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, ***then(once they have done that)*** I will hear from heaven, and ***I will (most definitely)*** forgive their sin and I will heal their land. Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place.”

Introduction:

We learned last week that when the Lord withdraws his blessing from a country (vs 13), He is calling Christians to react in 4 ways. (vs 14).

This week – we start to examine the 4 responses required of us by the Lord. (vs.14)

1. Humble ourselves.
2. Pray.
3. Seek the Lord’s face.
4. Turn from our wicked ways.

Firstly, it is interesting to note that these 4 actions may be divided into 2 groups, namely 2 outwardly (God) focused actions, and 2 inwardly (person) focused actions.

Inwardly (person) focused actions:

- Humble ourselves.
- Turn from our wicked ways

Outwardly (God) focused actions:

- Pray.
- Seek the Lords face.

In any time of national crisis the Lord requires 2 inward focused actions, but also, mercifully, 2 outwardly focused actions, taking our eyes off our own shortcomings, and focusing on the Lord. We start with the inwardly focused actions.

Action 1: Humble themselves (ourselves)

The very fact that Christian people are called upon to humble themselves is distressing. The implication is that we, as Christians have not attained the level of humility and dependence on the Lord that is required of us. It also implies something more, it implies that we are suffering from the opposite of humility – pride. Can this be? Most certainly, God would not require us to repent of pride if it were not a reality, even in the lives of Christian people.

Billy Graham is quoted as saying: – “Pride is the one sin that keeps more people out of heaven than any other” Let’s take it one step further – **Pride is the one sin which has kept more Christians from God’s fullness and blessing than any other.**

What is the essence of pride? It is a spirit which says: “I know better. I can do it myself, I don’t need help or advice.” As the poet said: “I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul.” (Invictus, W E Henley)

Of course we as Christians would not state it so crassly, we are much more subtle than that, but it boils down to the same. Pride is a spirit among Christians by which we think we can do the Lords work with our own plans, own strengths, own abilities, and our own intelligence. We think we can solve our country and our church’s problems in our own way. The essence of spiritual

pride is living our Christian lives independently of God, as if for the most part we really don't need Him or His guidance.

We may be sure that the Lord will never bless our own man-made plans and ideas, but that's exactly what we ask Him to do! What is our natural reaction as Christians in time of crisis - Back to the drawing board! More meetings, more analysis, more consultations, more ideas, new action plans. Yes, we ask God to bless us and help us as we implement our plans – but we never enquire from Him in humility, earnest prayer and total dependence on His guidance.

Shouldn't the essence of "humble yourselves" be to collectively pray this prayer: *"Lord – we cannot manage this situation (or any other situation) in our own strength. Even if we should find a solution, we are incapable of implementing the solution in our own strength. We desperately need your guidance and wisdom Lord, and we lay down our own plans and ideas at your feet."* Psalm 127:1 puts it perfectly: *"Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain."*

To sum up: God's first requirement of His children, in time of crisis is the following: Humble yourselves. Come to the point where you, once and for all, abandon the idea that we as Christians can fix anything in our own strength and wisdom. Admit this fact to yourself, fellow Christians, and most importantly to God.

This first requirement – humble yourself, is a once off realization and repentance required from God's children. However, having repented from our pride, we must "watch and pray" not to fall into the same trap again. Pride is so subtle – the flesh will always want us to go back to doing things in our own way, and there will always be this subtle temptation, so that we can take the credit ourselves. God shares His glory, and His honor, with no man!

Prayer:

We have seen that 2 Chr. 7: 13-15 contains a heavenly "recipe" for God's blessing and favor in times of national crisis. We have just examined step one of this recipe: Christian people – humble yourselves before almighty God. We will find He is standing with wide open arms, waiting to pardon and to bless! In obedience to the word, we are going to join together in prayer, all who read this, and repent of this sin of pride, in other words, humble ourselves.

Let's pray:

"Lord – we confess that we are guilty of that which you warn against in your Word – the sin of pride. We as South African Christians often leave You out of our plans, and do our own thing. We confess this, and humbly repent of this sin. We undertake, with Your help and guidance, never to act independently of You again. Thank you Lord for Your perfect Word. Thank you for the assurance that You have heard our prayer, and forgiven our sin. Thank you for your promise to heal our land, as we are obedient to that which you require of us as we read in 2 Chronicles 7."

Next week:

We start to examine the second injunction in vs 14 – turn from your wicked ways, step 2 of the heavenly recipe for revival.

Blessings,

MPC prayer team.