

WEEK 4 - 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:

Our journey so far:

- The Lord has withdrawn his blessing from South Africa (vs 13) – we have already discussed this and established the fact beyond doubt.
- In reaction to the current situation, the Lord requires 4 actions from His children (2 outward, 2 inward)
 - Humble yourselves – we discussed this last week.
 - Turn from your wicked ways – we start to examine this command today.
 - Pray – we still need to discuss this
 - Seek My face – we still need to discuss this.

This week then: We commence a study on the second pre-requisite for revival – turn from your wicked ways.

Lesson 4: Christian – turn from your wicked ways.

You will recall we divided the 4 pre-requisites into 2 categories. Outwardly (God) focused, and inwardly (person) focused. We discussed the first of the inwardly focused, (humble yourselves) and now proceed to discuss the second inwardly focused action – turn from your wicked ways.

It is, however, important to note that the inwardly focused actions comprise a once off repentance from pride, and also a once off repentance from sin (wicked ways). Although we may consider the matter dealt with once we have repented, there remains a continual, and subtle danger that we may fall back into old ways and sins. In that case, repentance will be required again, and as often as the Lord convicts us of ongoing pride or sin. For now, we may consider the matter “closed” as soon as sin has been exposed, confessed, and repented of in prayer. Just keep in mind that repeated sin needs to be confessed repeatedly. (1 Joh. 1:9)

Inward action nr. 2: Christian, turn from your wicked ways. (vs 14)

To our shock and surprise we discovered that the Lord needs to forgive the sins of the Christians, before He can heal their land (vs 14). Surely it is the sins of the non-believers which grieve the Lord, and stand in the way of restoration. But no – its crystal clear, the sins of the Christians in South Africa are preventing revival and restoration in our land. The Lord states it clearly – if **My** people, called by **My** name (none other than the Christians) will repent, then I will forgive and heal the land. Whether we want to know it or not, it is the sins of the Christians in South Africa which have formed a barrier between our country and God (See Isaiah 59:1-3). To put it bluntly, you and I, my fellow South African Christians, must repent, and turn from our wicked ways, before God will heal our country.

Let's examine this in a bit more detail:

Sin, per definition, is disobedience to God's will, as outlined in His word. We may sin in our actions, thoughts, words, intentions, attitudes, or by omission (failure to do that which God expects in certain situations). Sin may be committed on my own (individually), against others, or with others, (collectively) but also corporately – by association with a group of people, an organization such as the church, or as part of a nation.

As far as restitution and confession of sins it's important to note the following principles;

- Sins committed individually are confessed individually (alone) before God. This is matter purely between myself and the Lord, and no human mediator is required (1 Tim 2:5)
- Sins committed against others are confessed to God, but also between the parties involved. (See James 5:16, Matthew 5:24)
- Sins committed publically are confessed publically (Zacchaeus confessed his theft of tax monies openly, and made restitution openly)
- Sins committed corporately are also confessed corporately. There are many examples of Christians confessing the sins of their church and nation openly, on behalf of those who committed the sins. (Nehemiah 1, Daniel 9) I believe the Christians in South Africa need to do something similar, on behalf of our Church, but also on behalf of our entire country and government. (more on this later)

Today's lesson: Turn from your wicked ways – sins committed individually.

My dear South African Christian brother and sister. If we are to be serious about revival in our country, we need to take the Word of God seriously. God instructs us (His children) to turn from our wicked ways (sins), and that's exactly what we are going to do. To deny that we have sinned, and are sinners, is to deny the clear teaching of the gospel (1 John 1:8)

We will commence by confessing sins which we individually commit, as the Holy Spirit has laid it on our hearts to confess. Obviously the list of sins to confess is not complete, merely those we feel the Lord has led us to confess. It's critical that we continually confess sin in our lives, as the Spirit convicts (John 16:8). When we, as South African Christians begin to confess our sins openly and honestly before almighty God, we have a wonderful promise to hold on to: *"If (when) we confess our sins, He (the Lord) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* (1 John 1:9) As with all God's promises, however, there is a pre-condition – if (when) we confess our sins. The Lord cleanses and forgives that which is confessed.

Let's ask the Lord, right now, to show us the sins committed by South African Christians which are grieving His heart.

"Dear Lord. Thank you for your promise of forgiveness and cleansing from sin. We, as Your children, wish nothing more than to be obedient to your word and your instructions. Please convict and convince us of the sins closest to your heart, we will be obedient to confess and rectify those sins. Amen.

Sins to confess:

1. **Our lack of prayer.** None of us can say we have a perfect and complete prayer life. Indeed, most of us (including myself) fall woefully short of God's standard. The Lord invites us to continually petition Him and commune with Him in prayer. (James 4:8) (1 Thes 5:16) We are all lax in prayer in times of ease, and only when a crisis comes do we earnestly petition the Lord in prayer. The Lord has opened a door wide open to approach Him, at any time, with

freedom and boldness, (Hebrews 4:16) and, just as any Father, He wishes that His children would spend more time in communion with Him. Let's confess this sin of prayerlessness together:

"Dear Lord. We confess that we have neglected our prayer lives, and grieved You and Your Spirit in the process. We confess that we are often "too busy" to spend time with You, but never too busy for our sport, television or other pastimes. Please forgive us this sin, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Please help us to become men and women of prayer, a people who love to spend time in Your presence. Amen."

2. **Our neglect of the Word.** Let's be honest: We have become lazy and ill-disciplined at reading and studying the Bible. And then we wonder why Christians are carried about by every wind of doctrine (Eph 4:14) and are so gullible. *We are mistaken (err) not knowing the scriptures (julle dwaal omdat julle nie die skrifte ken nie) Matthew 22:29.*

Some of us take time to listen to You-tube sermons, or other electronic media. Others still take the trouble to read a daily devotional piece, or a few verses before bedtime. But very few take the time and trouble to really study the Word of God in depth, for ourselves. There is so much teaching material and help available on the internet, we really have no excuse. The Lord has given as a precious gift – His perfect Word. Don't you think it breaks the Lords heart to see how little His children make of His Word, how little effort is expended to get to know His Word better?

It has been said of the book Romans – "this is the most profound piece of writing available in the English language." (Samuel Taylor Coleridge) How few of us have bothered to try to understand the depths of this or any other Bible book?

We read in John 17:17 – *Sanctify them by the truth, Thy Word is truth.* The Bible is God's instrument for our sanctification (the process of being made holy). If the Word is God's chosen instrument for making us holy, how on earth can this happen if we neglect study of that very Word?

My dear Christian brothers and sisters – we are all guilty. We have time for newspapers, magazines, television, movies, Facebook, etc., but we make little or no time for prayer and Gods word, (the 2 go together.) We are going to, with God's help, do 2 things: Firstly confess our sin to a merciful God, but also secondly commit ourselves to, by God's grace, spend more time in earnest study of the Word.

Prayer

"Dear Lord. We confess that we, your Children grieve your heart by the continued neglect of Your Word. We confess that we have time for many other things of no eternal value. Please forgive us. In addition, we commit ourselves to study your precious word. Please help us, and guide us, by your Spirit, as we endeavor to become true students of your Word, to the glory of Your name.

In summary.

We have already repented of our pride, lack of humility and self-sufficiency. At the moment we are busy repenting of sins common to all children of God (turning from our wicked ways) Next time, by God's grace, we continue to confess sins which we commit as individual Christians.

Blessings

MPC prayer team.