

# I Have Heard Your Prayer

2 CHRONICLES 7:12-14 • PART 2

Baxter T. Exum (#1558)  
Four Lakes Church of Christ  
Madison, Wisconsin  
August 9, 2020



***\*\*COVID-19 SPLIT SERVICE\*\****

It is good to be with you this morning! If you are listening from home, watching from your living room, if you are joining us on the interstate, or watching with your family in a car in a parking lot somewhere, we are glad you are here! I hope everybody has the elements for the Lord's Supper (either from home or from the table in the entryway). We'll be partaking of the Supper immediately after today's lesson, and then we plan on singing "Praise Him! Praise Him!" before we head outside to do our visiting outside in the fresh air.

As you can see, we are starting with a summary of God's plan for our salvation. God sent his Son to die for our sins, and we respond by believing his word, by turning away from sin, by confessing Jesus as the Son of God, and by allowing ourselves to be immersed in Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. And once again, we have a few examples this morning, starting with Christopher who was baptized just a few days ago at the Northwest Church of Christ in Fort Worth, Texas.

The second example comes to us from the Goodlettsville congregation, just north of Nashville, Tennessee. Some of you might remember Cara Brickles who has come to Madison with her daughter Olivia twice over the past few years to help with the clothing give-away. This is Cara's husband, Scott, baptizing their youngest daughter, Ellie, just a few days ago. They were at their church camp, and got a call in the middle of the night, letting them know that Ellie was ready to obey the gospel. So, we rejoice with Ellie and the Goodlettsville congregation this morning.

The last example this morning comes to us from Ox Bow Lake in southern Nigeria. I don't have the man's name, only the name of the woman who posted it. Her name is Igiri Abigail of the Okaka Church of Christ. We are thankful for these good examples. If you have any questions about God's plan, we would invite you to get in touch, either in person, online, or on the phone (either by call or by text). The church phone number is 608-224-0274.

This morning, we return to 2 Chronicles 7:12-14, a passage we started looking at last Lord's Day morning. You might remember we started thinking about the chaos we see in the world around us, and we looked at 2 Chronicles 7:14 as a passage that is often quoted during times of national tragedy. And yet we noted that verse

14 is often taken completely out of context and applied to the nation (to the United States of America) instead of being applied to God's people, as it was originally intended.

Last week, then, to put this in context, we noted that this passage is basically God's answer to King Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple. And last week, we looked at God's reply as basically a reminder that God has an agreement (or a covenant) with his people. It is a two-sided agreement, with responsibilities and benefits. And last week, we looked at the responsibilities. If his people will only humble themselves, and pray, and seek his face, and turn from their wicked ways, then God will respond as he has promised, with blessings. Today, then, we move on from the conditions to the blessings. Last week, we looked at what God's people must do, and this week, we focus on what God has promised to do.

And again, we need to remember that to apply this passage properly, we need to look at it through New Testament eyes. In other words, we need to be careful to consider not only the context in which this was first written, but we also need to consider what passages from the New Testament might apply here.

With this, let's go back and look again at 2 Chronicles 7:12-14 – God's response to the dedication of Solomon's temple – 2 Chronicles 7:12-14,

***<sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> 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, <sup>14</sup> 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.***

So again, last week, we looked at this passage as God reminding the people that they are in a covenant relationship. God has made some promises, but those promises are conditional. As far as their part of this, they need to humble themselves, and pray, and seek God's face, and turn from their wicked ways. And today, we come back to look at what God has promised to do in return.

#### **I. And we start with God's promise that he will HEAR FROM HEAVEN.**

So, when his people humble themselves, and pray, and seek his face, and turn from their wicked ways, God will hear from heaven. When we pray as he has taught us to pray, God will hear. We don't need to worry about going unnoticed or getting God's attention, but he is always listening – 24/7, 365 days a year. At all times and in all circumstances, God is always available and is always eager to hear from us. I think about Caller ID. There are some calls I do not answer, both on my own phone and on the church line. But when my children call, those are calls that I always answer. In the same way, God is always interested in hearing from us, as his children.

Over in Psalm 121, the anonymous author writes a song that was used by God's people as they traveled to Jerusalem for worship, and he starts with a question,

***<sup>1</sup> I will lift up my eyes to the mountains;  
From where shall my help come?***

***<sup>2</sup> My help comes from the Lord,  
Who made heaven and earth.***

- <sup>3</sup> *He will not allow your foot to slip;  
He who keeps you will not slumber.*
- <sup>4</sup> *Behold, He who keeps Israel  
Will neither slumber nor sleep.*

The main point here is: God is available, ***“He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.”*** However, we also know that sin is a barrier to prayer. Another unknown author realizes in Psalm 66:18 that, ***“If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear.”*** And this is why God makes sure King Solomon knows that his hearing our prayers is conditional. He listens, but only as we humble ourselves, as we seek his face, and as we turn from our wicked ways. And this, of course, is also found in the New Testament. In 1 John 5:14-15, John says, ***“This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.”*** When we ask anything ***“according to His will,”*** John says that God ***“hears us.”***

- II. As we return to 2 Chronicles 7:14, we find a second blessing or benefit to upholding our end of the covenant, and that is: God promises to **FORGIVE SIN.** **\*\*PPT\*\***

The same word translated here as ***“forgive”*** is also used in Isaiah 55:7, where the prophet says,

***Let the wicked forsake his way  
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;  
And let him return to the Lord,  
And He will have compassion on him,  
And to our God,  
For He will abundantly pardon.***

When God pardons, he forgives, it is as if the offense has never happened. In the New Testament, forgiveness is promised when we obey the gospel. On the Day of Pentecost in 30 AD, just a few weeks after the Lord’s death, burial, and resurrection, Peter preaches to the crowd and accuses them of murdering the Son of God. And in response, the people interrupt and ask, ***“Brethren, what shall we do?”*** And, of course, Peter answers immediately by announcing the terms of God’s pardon, ***“Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins....”*** In one sense, forgiveness happens at the point of baptism. But in another sense, forgiveness is ongoing in the Christian life, as we sin and as we confess, turning back to God continually. As John goes on to explain in 1 John 1:7, ***“...if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin....,”*** and then (in verse 9), ***“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*** So, under both the Old Law and the New Law, forgiveness is conditional – we humble ourselves before God, and we must also turn away from sin.

- III. As we come near the end, we come to a third and final blessing of being faithful to the covenant, and that is: God promises to **HEAL THE LAND.**

Obviously, when these words are first spoken, God is talking about lifting the curse he refers to back in verse 13, when he talks about ***“...shut[ting] 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.”*** These are direct consequences of disobedience. What’s strange is: God is speaking to King Solomon at one of the most prosperous times in the history of God’s

people. They've just dedicated a temple worth multiple billions of dollars in today's economy. The kingdom is expanding, everything is going well, and yet in the middle of this, God speaks about cutting off rain, sending locusts, and sending a plague among the people. God is looking ahead, and he foresees disobedience. He sees the need for punishment. However, he also says that if the people humble themselves, and pray, and seek God's face, and turn from their wicked ways, God promises to undo these things; he promises to **"heal the land."**

And this, of course, is where many people make the leap, that God will **"heal"** the United States of America. We need to remember, though, that our nation is not in a covenant relationship with God and we never have been. It seems, then, that any application needs to be spiritual and needs to apply to us, not as a nation, but us as God's people. And we do find a similar concept in the New Testament, in James 5:16, where he says, **"Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."** And it is especially interesting to me that James then brings in the example of Elijah, who prayed that it would not rain, and it did not rain for 3-½ years, but when he prayed again, it rained. So, we see the connection between sin, and punishment, and prayer, and healing. Now, whatever **"healing"** means in this passage, we know, 1.) That healing is good, and 2.) We get this healing by confessing our sins and by praying. So, it is good for us as God's people to confess our sins and to pray.

### **Conclusion:**

As we close our thoughts on 2 Chronicles 7:14, I want to make sure we don't miss the love, and the mercy, and the grace in this passage. Yes, we can see some judgment if that's what we're looking for. But don't we see God looking to the future? He's anticipating a time when things are not going well, and he's making sure his people have a way back. And I'm especially impressed with how simple this is. In a sense, the conditions are easy. We are not cheapening this, we aren't dismissing anything. After all, Jesus said that his yoke is easy and his burden is light. God could have demanded huge donations, he could have made unreasonable demands. But as it is, he wants his people to humble themselves, to pray, to seek his face, and to turn from their wicked ways. In other words, he wants the heart. And that's what God continues to want from us today.

Before we partake of the Lord's Supper, let's go to God in prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

You know our hearts, you know our sins as well as our thoughts. And so, this morning, we are thankful that you have provided a way back, a way for us to be forgiven.

We praise you as our loving Father. We know you want what is best for us. Only you have the power to truly heal and forgive. Thank you for hearing our prayers. As the world around us continues to challenge us spiritually, and emotionally, and physically, we ask that we would not get distracted, that we would always stay focused on you – not getting discouraged, and always finding ways to help others and share your word with those around us.

We come to you this morning in the name of your Son, Jesus. Lord, come quickly. AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: [fourlakeschurch@gmail.com](mailto:fourlakeschurch@gmail.com)