



This week at Magdalen Road church we reached a famous prayer in 2 Chronicles 7. Remember that Chronicles is generally not often preached on, however this passage, or at least v14, is often preached on with the topic of revival!

We noted though that it's not *really* about revival in a land, but rather the promise of God to forgive his people when they humbly turn back to him.

We initially noted the context of this section:

- 1) this verse is God confirming that it is 'all systems go' with the temple. The place of meeting *had* been the tabernacle but now they are settled in the land and the temple will be the centre for the worship of the people of God. God does not need a temple (see Acts 17) but this will be the geographical location of where he relates, at the heart of his people, to his people.
- 2) God does not speak v14 in a vacuum but rather it is a direct answer to Solomon's prayer in the previous chapter. Perhaps have a look back (eg 6v24 onwards) and note how God answers Solomon's request. God will now answer if his people turn to him when they are being disciplined.

We then broke v14 down into each phrase...

...if my people, who are called by my name,

We noted how God closely, intimately associates himself with his people. It's as if he's written his name on us in sharpie. Literally it reads 'over whom my name is called'. We have esteem and value because we are His. We traced this idea through the scriptures including in Acts 9 where Jesus says to Saul 'why do you persecute me' as Saul is persecuting the church. Jesus ties himself and his own well-being with the church. We also noted in Rev 14v1 that for eternity, it's as if God puts his name on us. These truths matter especially when life is messy and hard and we are suffering whether at the hands of others or simply in living in a broken world.

...will humble themselves and pray

'Humbling themselves and praying' is a thread that runs through the rest of the book. Eg 2 Chr 12:6-7 or 2 Chr 34v27. Throughout the scriptures God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Proud people do not pray. Humble people turn to him. It's a lifelong battle. Pray that we might be humbled. God promises that when his people turn back to him (having turned from him and so received his discipline) he will hear their prayer.

...and seek my face

Seeking God's face is the idea of enjoying and treasuring him. Seeking his presence. We noted the distinction between our unchanging **union** with God - objective - secured by him as Jesus dies in our place, as opposed to our **communion** with God. Much more subjective - the daily relationship that what we do does affect. If we don't pray, or read his word or follow him - that will impact on our daily walk and enjoyment of him - our relationship with him. If you want more on this - there's an interview with Tim Chester here: <https://thathappycertainty.com/book-reviews/enjoying-god-interview-with-tim-chester/>

...and turn from their wicked ways,

Repentance is more than just saying sorry but changing our direction and priorities. Turning towards him. Stopping (with his help) from following self (however that is seen for you in daily life). They were running after Canaanite gods - we run after the gods of comfort and joy that promise us life. We're to be those who turn from them, to him

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

We noted how God promises to hear and answer this prayer, but the 'Land' here is an old covenant idea. God has not promised to heal our land in the UK, or the USA, rather we ought to pray for the church to be revitalized and so bring blessing as it lives and speaks the gospel to a world who needs to hear it.

Here are a few questions to kick things off

- How does it affect things to understand that we are the people 'over whom my name is called'? We are his?
- Why do you think humility and prayer are intimately tied?
- What does it mean to seek God's face? Discuss the difference between union and communion? Have a look at the Eph 3v14-18 prayer if you have time. How does this point to the idea of 'communion' with God?
- How does God promise to respond to their repentance and turning back to him? What relevance does this have for us?