

## Teaching for 10-1-08

### Praying In These Challenging Days

These are indeed challenging times. Fellow countrymen are still trying to recover from natural disasters; financial collapse seems to be right around the corner; our national leaders are bickering and fault-finding; and political ads seem to be getting harsher by the day. In the midst of this, it appears that the church has lost her voice. Those who name the Name of Christ argue over political candidates and platforms. Churches seem entrenched in self-centered programs and activities, and everyone seems afraid to speak up for fear of being labeled as “narrow” or “unloving.” So, in such a chaotic world, how should we pray? How do we know what God would want us to pray for? Of course, there could be any number of answers to that question, but what if we returned to that very familiar, yet true verse from 2 Chronicles 7:14. And before you dismiss this as the same old stuff, let’s look at it piece by piece, and see what we might learn for today’s situations. Just because it has been quoted so often does not make it any less true.

#### Pray From Position

The background of 2 Chronicles 7:14 is the realization of a people who had turned their backs on God. Chapter 6 is filled with the prayers of Solomon asking God to hear and answer “when” His people have acknowledged their sins and have not trusted in Him. The conditional phrase of 2 Chronicles 7:14 is, *If my people who are called by my name*. The conditions for change begin with the people of God. God recognizes that there is a mutually understood relationship that allows these particular people to approach Him in order to bring about desired change. In the Old Testament the people called by His Name were Israel. In the New Covenant the people called by His Name are the Church—not one denomination or theological group, but those who by faith name the Name of Christ. So we begin by praying from our position as the children of God. John states this in I John 3:1, *How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God!* And that is what we are! As the children of God, we have been invited into the very throne room of God to bring our requests to Him (Hebrews 4:16). In these difficult days, let us approach God’s throne based upon our position as His children.

#### Pray In Humility

*Will humble themselves.* One of the main reasons humility is so difficult is that we keep looking in the wrong place. Those who keep looking at others, waiting on others, comparing themselves to others will never come to a place of true humility. Those are all the wrong comparisons. If we think somehow we have to be right, or better, or holier, we will never understand humility. Isaiah, the Apostle John, the Apostle Paul and so many others knew humility because they stopped looking at others and were confronted with the absolute holiness of God. Standing before the supreme throne of ultimate holiness precludes any comparisons, any blaming, and any justifying. All of that evaporates and all who stand before God’s holy throne know only total brokenness and emptiness. There is no more of self-anything, only Him. Jesus spoke this truth when He taught us to pray, *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven* (Matthew 6:9). When we pray in humility, it’s no longer about our agendas, but His.

## **Pray With Focus**

*And pray and seek my face.* It is very interesting to note that nowhere in this verse does the Lord tell us what to pray for. But He does tell us that the focus of our prayers is to be His Face. Many have understood this to emphasize relationship with God rather than what He can do for us. Of course, this is God's own wisdom. If we truly focus in humility on His character, His attributes, and His Kingdom (as Jesus taught) then the outcome is not in our hands but His. This is called faith—to turn our lives, our hearts, our ambitions, our futures, our families, and our nation over to Him for His purposes and not ours. This becomes more about how we pray than what we pray for because that becomes God's responsibility. Issues and agendas melt away as we turn our focus to who He is. What if we tried it? We might just find that He knows what to do.

## **Pray With Honesty**

*And turn from their wicked ways.* The greatest honesty is when we confess our own sin. Not the sins of others, but the wickedness of our own hearts. It seems like there is a lot of time spent pointing out the sins of others, when our own hearts are full of wickedness. And if we have been focusing on the holiness of God, we will have no lack of things that will be exposed in our own hearts for us to confess and turn from. The Lord speaks clearly in Jeremiah 17:9 that none of us know our own heart, it is desperately wicked. God's call is for us to acknowledge our wicked ways and turn from them in honesty. It is about time that we do that, for the sake of our destiny as a people and a nation.

## **Pray With Expectation**

The promise of God is not complicated or convoluted. He says that if we, as His people, will pray in this way that He will hear from heaven, forgive our sin, and heal our land. If we really want God to heal our land we need to pray with the expectation that if we keep our part of this verse, He will keep His. He is no deceiver or liar. His Word is always true and faithful. It is up to us to pray with the expectation that He will indeed keep His word. God is faithful! He is always faithful to His Word. He can be nothing else. It is a part of His very nature. When we are ready to believe that, He will manifest Himself and bring healing to our land. Will we begin today to pray from our position as His people, with humility, focus, honesty and expectation?

