

“Encountering God Through Humility”

By Senior Pastor Tom Harrison

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2 Chronicles 7:11-22

*When Solomon had finished the temple of the Lord and the royal palace, and had succeeded in carrying out all he had in mind to do in the temple of the Lord and in his own palace,¹² the Lord appeared to him at night and said: "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a temple for sacrifices.¹³ "When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people,¹⁴ **if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.**¹⁵ Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place.¹⁶ I have chosen and consecrated this temple so that my Name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there.¹⁷ "As for you, if you walk before me as David your father did, and do all I command, and observe my decrees and laws,¹⁸ I will establish your royal throne, as I covenanted with David your father when I said, 'You shall never fail to have a man to rule over Israel.'¹⁹ "But if you turn away and forsake the decrees and commands I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them,²⁰ then I will uproot Israel from my land, which I have given them, and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my Name. I will make it a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples.²¹ And though this temple is now so imposing, all who pass by will be appalled and say, 'Why has the Lord done such a thing to this land and to this temple?'²² People will answer, 'Because they have forsaken the Lord, the God of their fathers, who brought them out of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, worshiping and serving them — that is why he brought all this disaster on them.'"*

Solomon had accomplished a lot – he built the Temple of the Lord + the royal palace. But they experienced problems in the land. God told him what to do when national problems exist.

4 points:

1.) **“If my people who are called by my name”** –

“If” is conditional. “Then” follows. Something good will happen “if” something happens.

“my people” = they were Jews, not Christians. But the principle and the application is for us, too. We think Christians are now also “my people.” Paul said Gentiles were grafted into the tree of faith.

They were Israelites not Americans. Conventional wisdom says Solomon died in 913 BC – or 2,930 years ago. America is about to celebrate our 243rd birthday (Canada celebrated her 150th yesterday)

We've started an "**International Fellowship**" at Asbury. We have about 100 people from 25 other nations in our congregation. I will read the names of these countries and would like for you to stand, too. Please stand and remain standing if you are native to one of these countries. Please let us know if I don't read your native country's name: **Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Cuba, Dutch Guiana, Ecuador, Germany, India, Indonesia, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Northern Ireland, Pakistan, Persia Peru, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Ukraine, Vietnam.**

Our next International Fellowship = **July 21st** (Friday p.m.).

I believe patriotism is a good thing. Paul was proud of being a Roman citizen. We are grateful for our heritage and for those who have given their lives, and for those like, Jay, who have/are serving. We should show our respect for our nation, for our laws, our leaders, and our system of government. If we fail to do so, we will end up in anarchy.

But like any good thing, patriotism can become idolatry. Being a Christian is not the same thing as being an American and being an American is not the same thing as following Jesus.

Christians believe that "my people" applies to us. I've chosen you to receive the blessing. But I've also chosen you to be a blessing.

2.) *humble yourselves and pray and seek God's face*

*Humility literally means "of the earth" ("humus," "adam"). Not everyone has always thought humility was such a great virtue. If "humus" means "close to the earth" or "lowly," then why would one lower themselves to the earth? Why would a great person stoop to bring themselves down. That seems like foolishness to many. If you have great status, don't stoop. It's appropriate if you are of low birth.

Our verse tells us to humble ourselves before God. God is the great ruler, not Solomon. God is the great rule, not a kingdom. God is the great ruler, not me. Jesus embodied this, too. He came in lowly birth in a manger in Judea to poor parents. He did not hang out with the rich and famous, but with the poor and lowly. He was willing to be with the outcasts, misfits and undesirables. He touched lepers. He washed the feet of His proud disciples. He lowered himself to the ground, touched the lowermost parts of the lowliest people and said that He did not come to be served but to serve. "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the humus." He loved the least expected and unpopular. He loved children

and said if we wanted to inherit the KOG we had to become like them. His was not about self-promotion. Sharp elbows, wrathful words and swords had to go. * Jesus told a story about a person who didn't get it. Luke 18:9-14 *To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men — robbers, evildoers, adulterers — or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'* "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

It's possible to "pray" but not seek God's face. Some are self-directed prayers. This Pharisee wasn't promoting the Kingdom of God but had been completely absorbed by the Kingdom of Self. Part of the value of prayer is the awareness of who we are in contrast to who God is. We tend to forget that.

The greatest people never make themselves the focus. Humility helps us look to God as our north star and it gives us direction on how to look at other people.

3.) **turn from their wicked ways** There must not only be humility, prayer and seeking God's face, there must be action. There is both an individual and a national response.

A Frenchman, Alexis de Tocqueville came to America in 1831 to study our prisons. He toured the 25 United States of America and had a very perceptive analysis of our country: ***"Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great because she is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, she will cease to be great."*** Democracy in America (1831)

If Tocqueville had come 40 years later to Dodge City, KS, I wonder if he would have said the same thing. I've just read, "Dodge City: Wyatt Earl, Bat Masterson and the Wickedest Town in the West". Alcohol, gambling, prostitution and murder were the norm. Dodge City had ceased to be "good" and was a great illustration of Tocqueville's point. The more corrupt and vicious we become, the more marshals, sheriffs, deputies, soldiers we must have. Only virtuous people can be capable of freedom. The "Wild, Wild West" sounded like the Book of Judges where everyone did what was right in their own sight.

Bat Masterson and some of his friends devised something they called "The Dodge City Keeley Cure." In a day before A.A., they came up with a unique intervention. When a guy known for his chronic drunkenness was at a bar in a saloon, they would encourage him to have more. After he passed out they took him to the jail

as normal. Only this time, they laid him out in a casket and painted his face white, opened the casket lid and put a mirror about the casket so when he became sober and opened his eyes he would see his reflection in the mirror and hear all his friends murmuring prayers around his casket. When he realized he wasn't actually dead, he would, like Ebenezer Scrooge, be so delighted that he often would swear off liquor for the rest of his life.

Another story is of a wagon train headed east into Dodge City. It had been a miserable caravan – all kinds of obstacles and adversities. Just before heading into Dodge, they got off their wagons, formed a circle and the preacher led them in prayer. This is what he prayed: *"O Lord, protect us with Thy might hand, we pray. On our long journey Thy divine providence has thus far kept us safe. We've survived cloudbursts, hailstorms, floods, thirst and parching heat as well as horse thieves and raids by hostiles. But now, O Lord, we face our gravest danger. Dodge City lies ahead and we must pass through. Help us, save us, we beseech Thee."*

Like the Book of Judges where everyone did what was right in their own sight, chaos and mayhem were consequences.

Jon Odom pointed out this week that there were 3x in the Bible where people turned from evil, but it was not actually THEIR evil.

Job repented on behalf of his **children**. **Abraham** repented on behalf of his **city**.

Nehemiah repented on behalf of the **nation**. Nehemiah 1:4-11

When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. Then I said: "O Lord, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house, have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses. "Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.' "They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man." I was cupbearer to the king.

4.) then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. God's promises.

(Give people the opportunity to cluster together and pray for our land)