

Hearing from God

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[0 : 0 0] Brothers and sisters, we need the Lord more than ritualism, more than routine. We need the Lord because if the Lord is not the center of what we do this week, then what we do will be no more than a hunger strike and nothing more than a religious ritual.

And so though our time of corporate consecration officially starts tonight at 9 p.m. As we prepare to hear God's word this morning, let's posture our hearts to hear what I pray will be a guiding word for us as we head into corporate consecration.

For this morning's message, our attention will be focused on a single verse of scripture in 2 Chronicles 7, 14. But I want to start reading from verse 11.

2 Chronicles 7, 14 is our focus, but I will begin reading at verse 11. Thus Solomon finished the house of the Lord and the king's house.

And all that Solomon had planned to do in the house of the Lord and in his own house he successfully accomplished. Then the Lord appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him, I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice.

[1:50] When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain or command the locusts to devour the land or send pestilence among my people.

If 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 and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you this morning for your word. Lord, we thank you this morning for your word.

And Lord, we recognize that we need your help as we engage your word. We recognize that we need the Holy Spirit to convict us of the truth.

[illegible]

[3 : 44] Lord, there are ways that we have in mind in which we need to come before you, but Lord, you know person by person, and you know fully in this local church, exactly how you would have us come before you.

And so Lord, would you help us now as we open your word? Would you give us an endowment this morning, Lord, that we can truly build upon this week?

Lord, this week is not about endurance. This week is not about mind power. This week is not about personal and self-discipline. Lord, this week is a week that we need your grace.

So pour out your grace abundantly upon us, and pour out your grace upon us even now, as we sit under the instruction of your word. So Father, will you do this, we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, 2 Chronicles 7.14 is, without a doubt, one of the most misinterpreted and misapplied verses of Scripture in the Old Testament and perhaps in the Bible as a whole.

[4 : 56] And for this reason, I need to set a context for this verse and clarify some of the important issues before we are able to really consider it, as I believe the Lord would have us to do for this week.

I'm sure many of you have heard this verse quoted in relation to the many national problems that we have. The breakdown of family life and the resulting social problems that are all around us.

Increased immorality, increased poverty, spiraling crime, failing institutions. No doubt some quoted it this past week in the aftermath of the highly publicized invasion of Dr. Rex Major's home.

In response to our sea of problems, they say, well, if the church would only humble itself and pray and see God's face and turn from their wicked ways, then God will hear from heaven.

He will forgive their sins and He will heal our land and all of these problems will go away. But here's the problem with that line of thinking.

[6 : 13] The promise that God makes in 2 Chronicles 14, that promise was given to the nation of Israel and it does not apply to the Bahamas and it does not apply to any other nation for that matter.

In the Old Testament or under the Old Covenant, the people of Israel were unique in the sense that they were God's chosen people. They were God's people.

They were His people and He was their God. They were a theocracy and God ruled them through His representative, the king. And in 2 Chronicles 7, Solomon was the king and the background to 2 Chronicles 7 is really in 2 Chronicles 6 where we see Solomon built a temple for God, a place dedicated for the worship of God and Solomon dedicated that temple in prayer to the Lord.

And a major part of Solomon's prayer was that the temple would be a place where people would come, where the people of Israel would be able to pray to God in the midst of various difficulties and that God would hear and answer their prayers.

In his prayer in chapter 6, Solomon actually lays out some specific examples of the kinds of situations the people of Israel might face. And we find that what the Lord did in verses 13 and 14 in 2 Chronicles 7 is He actually lists some of the very words that Solomon prayed and He responds back to Solomon with those words.

[8 : 09] If you could just turn back to chapter 6 in 2 Chronicles and look at verse 26, 2 Chronicles, chapter 6 starting in verse 26.

This is Solomon praying a prayer of dedication for the temple. And he says to God, When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against you, if they pray toward this place and acknowledge your name and turn from their sin when you afflict them, then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel, when you teach them the good way in which they should walk and grant rain upon your land which you have given to your people as an inheritance.

if there is a famine in the land, if there is pestilence or blight or mildew or locust or caterpillar, if their enemies besiege them in the land at their gates, whatever plague, whatever sickness is there, whatever prayer, whatever plea is made by any man or by all your people Israel, each knowing his own affliction and his own sorrow and stretching out his hands toward this house, then hear from heaven your dwelling place and forgive and render to each whose heart you know according to all his ways.

for you, you only know the hearts of the children of mankind that they may fear you and walk in your ways all the days that they live in the land that you gave to our fathers.

So what we see is 2 Chronicles 7, 12-14 really is God's direct response to that particular part of the prayer that Solomon prayed.

[10:18] And notice that the language could not be clearer. It is very specific to God's Old Testament people and to the Old Testament land that he gave the nation of Israel.

That land that he gave them as an inheritance. they were his people, they were a theocracy that was land inherited and the prayers that Solomon prayed and the promises that God made were unique and specific to that geographical piece of land.

So that's the reason that we can't apply 2 Chronicles 7, 14 to the Bahamets. All the people in the Bahamas, first of all, are not God's people.

Not all love God. Not all serve God. And the same is true for the United States. And it's true for every nation on the face of the earth. And I know this may concern some of you. It's also true for the nation of Israel today.

That promise does not even apply to the nation of Israel today. It's important to note that even though God did elect the nation of Israel above all the nations of the earth, it was always God's plan to be God of all the nations.

[11:44] It was always God's plan to bring salvation to all peoples that he would have people from every nation and every tongue and every tribe.

Not just one nation. And this really could never be clearer. It could not be clearer than what we see now in the New Testament. For example, here's what the Apostle Paul writes in Romans 2 verses 28 through 29.

He says this, For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical, but a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart by the Spirit, not by the letter.

His praise is not from man, but from God. So notice how Paul here in the book of Romans is interpreting and explaining who the true Jews are.

He says, The true descendants of Abraham, the true people of Israel, the true people of God, are those not from an outward way, but it's a matter of the heart.

[12:55] It's not referring to birth or descent, but really by the heart, by the Spirit, is by faith. Again, in Romans 9 verses 6 through 8, the Apostle Paul restates the same point in clearer and even stronger language.

He says this, beginning in the second part of verse 6, For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but through Isaac shall your offspring be named.

This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

So Paul's point is that there are two Israels. There's a natural one and there's a spiritual one. And he also says that not every single person who can trace his ethnic descendants to Abraham is a true child of Abraham.

And so the same is true of the people of God. the true people of God are those who are part of the spiritual nation of Israel who are children of Abraham by faith and not simply only by birth.

[14 : 21] So what does this mean? What it means is it means that the spiritual nation of Israel is comprised of people of all nations. Those who have put faith in Jesus Christ.

Those who have been justified by God and made to be the people of God. So the spiritual nation of Israel the true people of God are both Jews who have been converted and Gentiles who have been converted.

You can read more of that if you would like. You can certainly look at Romans chapter 4 that elaborates on it even more and then in Ephesians chapter 2 verses 11 through 22 Paul talks about how God made these two who were separate to be one people and one nation.

Now I've gone to that great length to explain and make the point that the call and the promise that we find in 2 Chronicles 7 14 were exclusive to the Old Testament covenant people of God at a specific time and in a specific place there were promises that if they would meet certain conditions God would hear them and he would bring healing to their land he would bring forgiveness to them.

But today God has no people that are all located on one geographical piece of land.

[16 : 02] His people are scattered among the nations of the earth and we heard this in the first message of the year that they are pilgrims in this earth.

They recognize that here we have no continuing city no lasting city no permanent dwelling place we look for one whose maker and builder is God and so that's why 2 Chronicles 7 14 cannot be applied to any specific nation today.

And so the logical question then is if it doesn't apply to any specific nation today including the nation of Israel what is the relevance for us this morning? Well this verse of scripture is relevant for us this morning because although it no longer specifically applies to any geographic nation or people it generally applies to God's people the church.

And here's how it generally applies to God's people today. God will hear and bless his people when they turn to him in prayer and repentance.

That's how it applies. Even though it no longer applies to any nation of people on the earth in terms of geography, it is still a principle and it remains true that God will hear and bless his people when they turn to him in prayer and repentance.

[17 : 41] 2 Chronicles 7.14 as I said earlier is not only the text for this morning's message but it is also the primary scripture upon which we are seeking to build this week of corporate consecration.

And so this morning in our remaining time I want to try to help us in terms of how we should think about this verse, how we should meditate on this verse both this morning and during the course of the week.

And this morning I have two encouragements that I want to give us concerning this verse and I pray they'll help us to posture our hearts for this week of corporate consecration.

The first encouragement is this, as we read and engage and meditate on this verse, number one, let's remember who we are.

Let's remember who we are. If you have repented of your sins and you have come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, you belong to him, you are a child of God, you are included in the two key words at the beginning of this verse, and those words are my people.

[18 : 55] If you have come to Christ, if you have trusted Christ, if you know the forgiveness of your sins this morning, you are included in those two words, my people. God makes us his people when he saves us from a life of sin and rebellion against him and he brings us into his family.

We cannot make ourselves. God's people. We cannot choose on our own just to say I'm going to be one of God's people. No, God does that by his own divine initiative.

God makes a people. He redeems a people to himself. And we see this foreshadowed in the Old Testament and we see it fulfilled in the New Testament where God redeems a people to himself.

God is not speaking to unbelievers. He is speaking to his people who are related to him through redemption.

And so as we consider this verse of scripture this morning, as we consider this verse of scripture this week, we must do so as those who have been redeemed through Christ and we must remember that this is why we're able to do what God is calling us to do.

[20 : 15] This is the basis upon which we are being called to do these things because we are the people of God. And we need to remember this because after calling us his people, this verse goes on to say some pretty hard things to hear, some difficult things to hear.

It references our sin and calls us to repentance. And I think if we bear this in mind, if we bear in mind what God calls us and we bear in mind the issues that God raises, what we see is God's grace is on display in this verse.

One sin against the holy God is sufficient to justify our death. God but God in his mercy punished his own son, laid our sins, the sins of his people upon his son and poured out his wrath upon his son so that we don't have to bear those sins and pay the price for those sins.

And he calls us his people still in the midst of those sins. He doesn't brush them aside and pretend that they're not at times a part of his people's lives.

He says you're my people but you have these sins and you have to deal with them and I believe that we will hear this differently, we will engage it differently if we remember we are the people of God.

[21 : 57] And again God's grace is displayed here. Because he would call the filthy clan, he would call people like me and you his people.

So as we pointed this verse this week, let us remember who we are in spite of our sins, in spite of the things that the Lord may bring to our attention this week, we remember if we have been forgiven by God, if we have repented of a life of sin and turned away from a life of sin, let us remember that as God brings conviction to us, because even though we have repented of sin and we have turned away from sin as a lifestyle, there's still indwelling sin in us.

We have not yet been set free from the presence of sin. sin is still around us and indeed within us. But as we remember this, that we are the blood-bought people of God, we are the blood-washed people of God, then we can engage this without fear, without trepidation, other than the fear of the Lord.

My second encouragement for us as we engage this verse this week is this, let us ponder what God says. First, let's remember who we are, and second, let's ponder what God says.

And by ponder I mean, let's not just gloss over this verse, and it's so easy to do because we've heard it so much, it's so easy to do because we can quote it most of us from memory, but let us take time to consider it, let us take time to think about it and to meditate about it, in terms of what does it mean for me, what does it mean for us as a local church.

- [24 : 06] God is saying so much in this little verse, but we will miss it if we don't take the time to slow down and ponder what he's saying to us. In this verse, God calls his people to four specific acts of obedience, and then he makes a threefold promise to them if they obey.
- He promises that he would hear, he would forgive, and he would heal. Now this morning, I'm not even attempting to be exhaustive in what the Lord is saying to us in this particular verse, but I want to try to be representative to help us to honor what God is saying, to spark our hearts as it were, to just consider, God, what are you saying to me?
- What are you saying to us as a church? First of all, notice the first act of obedience to which we are called. God calls his people, he calls us to humble ourselves.
- I think it's instructive to us this morning that the first call that God gives us is to humble ourselves. And when you come right down to it, the root cause of sin is pride.
- It is because of pride that we disobey God, when we believe that we know better than he does. It is because of pride that we desire what God forbids and hate what God commands, and in the end, we disobey because of pride.
- [25 : 47] It is because of pride that we look down upon others and mistreat others and think of ourselves more highly than we should. It is because of pride that we sometimes engage in high-handed sin and premeditated sin and presume upon the grace of God.
- You know, I can't give enough illustrations this morning that would resonate with every single one of us seated in this room. But here's what I know.
- For every single one of us this morning, the question is not, do I have pride in my life? That's not the question. The question for every one of us this morning is, where do I have pride in my life and how much?
- Where do I have pride in my life and how much? a number of years ago, I heard a pastor friend say, he said, pride is like an onion.
- He said, when you lift, when you take off one layer, when you peel back one layer, there's another one underneath it to be peeled away.
- [27 : 02] pride in our lives because oftentimes we're blind to pride.
- Oftentimes we are indifferent to our pride. Oftentimes we would relegate our pride to our personalities. Well, I'm just that way. People in my family are that way. We're all that way. And in addition to the Spirit's help, we need the help of others.
- We need the eyes of others. We need the observation of others. And those observations are a gift to us when they can help us to see in areas where we just for whatever reason aren't seeing.
- I remember a number of years ago, some of you may remember Danny Jones when he was caring for our church within the structure of sovereign grace.
- And he was meeting with me and David and Lyndon. Both David and Lyndon at the time were a part of the eldership. And I was there and he just began to ask them about me in my presence.
- [28 : 19] One of the questions he asked them, he said, how do you rate Cedric in the area of pride? and they weren't sure how to respond. He said, well, okay, scale from one to ten, ten being humble and one being prideful, how do you rate him?
- And I sat there and they both rated me a three. I dismissed it. I just said, I mean, I know I'm not a three.
- I'm not a ten, but certainly not a three. And I just dismissed what they said. I mean, I wasn't hearing anything else that they said and I thought, you know, they were just, I don't know what they were looking at.

I thought I was a very humble person. But later, maybe the next day or so, the Lord just kind of shook me out of the blindness that I was in and really just helped me to see that the mere fact that I dismissed the observation was an expression of my pride.

That was an expression of my pride. The fact that I just dismissed it, I didn't ask them any questions to say, why do you say that? Give me some examples of that. None of that.

[29 : 42] I just dismissed it. And so they served me in, and even in that moment, though I could not know exactly what they had in mind.

I was sensitized to the fact that they saw something that caused them to say to me, to my face, you're three out of ten.

And that was a gift to me. It was a gift to me because they were willing to speak the truth to me. And it reminded me that I could be so blind to what others clearly see.

They weren't going to sit there and lie to me. Why would they do that? Or try to embarrass me. But that was a gift to me.

And by the grace of God, today, I know I'm still not a ten, but I don't believe that they would say I'm still a three. They would probably say you're four.

[30 : 52] Lyndon would probably give me eight or nine, something like that. That's just the way those guys are. I've always said, listen, if you need a recommendation or anything, go to Lyndon.

I mean, he sees what nobody else sees. But no, I mean, there was a gift to me. It's helped me. And by the grace of God, I've made progress.

Whatever degree that progress is, I have made progress. And the biggest progress is just being aware that I have more pride than I'm aware of. And left to myself, I would not have seen it.

And left to myself, I will not see it. So in addition to praying and asking the Holy Spirit to help us to see pride in our lives and to deal with pride in our lives, I encourage us, let us ask others who are close to us about observations they may have for us where they might see pride in our lives.

Husbands, let's ask our wives. Wives, let us ask, not us, but you, ask us, your husbands.

[32 : 03] Parents, ask children. Children, ask parents. And then let's listen and let's not try to defend. And if you feel that an observation is unwarranted, if you feel that it is inaccurate, I encourage you, rather than defend right away or even question, receive it, bring it before the Lord this week, and then maybe you may need to follow it up at another time, or you may just need to thank that person for sharing that observation.

The second action to which we are called by the Lord is to pray. And here again, it is fitting that after being called to humble ourselves, we're called to pray.

And the reason is that oftentimes prayerlessness is an expression of pride and self-dependence. prayerlessness. when we don't pray, what we're silently saying is, God, I don't need you.

I can do this by myself. And when we consider this call to pray, let us consider the personal and corporate aspects of our prayer lives.

And let's be honest with the Lord. let us be honest with the Lord concerning this important aspect of the Christian life, this call to pray.

[33 : 42] And let us ask the Lord to help us to be a people of prayer, to be marked by prayer, and to grow in faith as we pray. I was encouraged as I thought about this call to pray by the words from James as he concluded his letter in chapter 5, beginning in verse 13.

He writes, Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick?

Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up.

And if he is committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months, it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

[35 : 04] Here in these verses, James gives us great encouragements to pray personally, to pray with others, calling the elders to pray for us, and he reminds us that we can pray like Elijah because Elijah was a man with a nature like ours.

So, brothers and sisters, as we engage this week, let us ponder and obey this call to pray. And the third act of obedience which God calls us to is to seek his face.

And this naturally flows from prayer. While it does not mean that we cannot ask God for anything, we cannot make petitions to the Lord, it doesn't mean that at all.

We can do that, we ought to do that. He calls us to do that. What is clear, though, is that we are primarily seeking his face this week, not his hands.

We are seeking his face and not his hands. John Piper makes the point that the term seek God's face means to seek his presence in the Hebraic idiom.

[36 : 18] That it generally means that seek his face means to seek his presence. And I think what is clear as we consider this is that it will take time.

It implies that it is not automatic. When we talk about going to seek something, the implication is not that we are going to just go there and pick it up and it's all done. No, we are going after it and we are just not sure, we are not just certain about that approach to finding whatever it is we are seeking.

There is this sense of time. God sometimes is a God who hides himself. He is a God who sometimes does not make himself and his presence very evident to us because he desires that we would seek him.

And I know, I know representatively from the lives of some of you that there are many of us, there are many needs represented in our lives personally and in our families and their needs in our local church.

And these needs are worthy of seeking the Lord. One of the things the Lord has really graciously checked me on over the years is really helped me to see sometimes how I would be approaching what would be considered grave and major and serious matters in a routine and a typical way.

[37 : 55] Brothers and sisters, there are some things that call us to seek the Lord. Yes, there's a sense we're seeking his presence, but also there's a sense we're seeking to know his will, we're seeking to do his will.

Some of you young people who are getting ready to graduate and thinking about your future, thinking about what you want to give yourself to. This would be a great week to carve out some time and say, God, I want to seek you concerning this.

I want to seek your face, I want your approval, I want you to lead me, I want you to direct me in this. We're going to gather on Wednesday night and we are going to have an extended time of singing more than the other nights during the week.

The whole idea would just be to come together and to really be seeking the Lord, just listening as we sing and just seeking his presence but also seeking his will and asking for his guidance.

The fourth and final action to which we are called as God's people in this verse is to turn from our wicked ways. He calls us to turn from our wicked ways.

[39 : 19] And this is quite shocking. It tells us, again, that even as God's people, we have wicked ways that we need to turn away from.

Let me ask you, what comes to your mind when you think of this term, wicked ways? sin. Well, I know for some people, what comes to mind is major, major sin, like adultery and fornication.

sin. But you know, every sin, every sin before a holy God is wickedness.

Every sin before a holy God is wickedness. it's quite interesting when we consider in Proverbs chapter six, it says the six things the Lord hates.

Some of the weighty things that we think about don't make the list. It doesn't mean he doesn't hate those other things, but they don't make that list in that passage.

[40 : 47] I wonder if sins like anger and selfishness and gossip and backbiting and complaining come to mind when you think of wicked ways.

I wonder if unthankfulness and ingratitude comes to mind. Children who feel entitled to what their parents do that it doesn't cross their minds to express gratitude.

Husbands who feel entitled to what their wives do and vice versa and so they are ungrateful. Jerry Bridges calls these sins that we would not put in the category of wicked.

He calls them respectable sins. Turn with me for a moment. Try to keep your place at 2 Chronicles 7.

Turn with me Ephesians chapter 4. And I want us to consider some of the sins that may not come to mind when we think about wicked ways.

[42 : 06] Ephesians chapter 4. verse 17. The apostle Paul takes the first three chapters of this letter and he reminds believers of the great work of salvation that God has worked in them and then starting in chapter 4 he begins to lay out for them the life to which they are called in light of that salvation in view of that salvation because of that salvation and this is what he says in verse 17 now this I say and testify in the Lord that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do in the futility of their minds they are darkened in their understanding alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to their hardness of heart they have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality greedy to practice every kind of impurity but that is not the way you learned

Christ assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him as the truth is in Jesus what he's saying is you've been taught to put off your old self this is turning from our wicked ways to put off your old self which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds and to put on the new self created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness therefore having put away falsehood let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor for we are members one of another be angry and do not sin do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil let the thief no longer steal but rather let him labor doing honest work with his own hands so that he may have something to share with anyone in need let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths but only such as is good for building up as fits the occasion that it may give grace to those who hear and do not grieve the

Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption that all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you along with all malice be kind to one another tender hearted forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you and you can go on and also read what he says in chapter 5 as well this week let us ponder these words let us ponder what it means for us individually to turn from sin to turn from wicked ways to turn from sins with which we have become cozy and comfortable and here let me say that for us one of the one of the temptations for us those of us who believe in the eternal security of those who have come to trust in

Jesus Christ one of the traps we can sometimes fall in is to believe that because we have been saved and we will always be saved then we dabble in sin and we don't take sin seriously we don't fight sin as we ought to fight sin we do what some people say I'm going to lay my salvation down deal with you and I'm going to pick it up again I'm sure you've heard people say that and it's that kind of smugness it is that kind of high handedness that we need to watch and be so careful with this doctrine of return security is a precious doctrine it is a doctrine for comfort it is not a doctrine for smugness it is not a doctrine to be cozy with sin and to play with sin and when we do that we lose the comfort of the doctrine we cannot have comfort in believing that we belong to

Christ when we act as those who do not one of the most scariest verses in scripture is found in the sermon on the mount as Jesus is concluding it in Matthew 7 verses 21 through 23 here's what Jesus says not not everyone who says to me Lord Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven but the one who does the will of my father who is in heaven on that day many will say to me Lord Lord did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do many mighty!

[47 : 40] works in your name then I will declare to them I never knew! depart from me you workers of lawlessness those are scary words brothers and sisters and we get no comfort when we see how close we can go to the line and we play the game because I'm saved it really doesn't matter I'm secure I'll just do this for the moment and then I'll be okay no we could you could find yourself if that is your attitude among these people here that Jesus refers to in Matthew 7 21 through 23 so as we consider 2nd Chronicles 7 if you turn back there with me now and verse 14 the four action words in it they are humble pray seek and turn humble pray seek and turn what is this this is nothing short of a call to prayer and repentance this is a call to prayer and to repentance and since these words are directed to

God's people what they do is they remind us that repentance is not something that is relegated to that moment some years ago when I came to Christ repentance is not just relegated to that prayer I prayed when I asked the Lord to save me no repentance is something that is ongoing in the lives of believers repentance the Christian life is a repenting life not for us to be saved again but that we may grow in sanctification that we may become less sinful and we may become more Christ like now after calling us to repent and to pray notice that the Lord makes a promise he promises to hear he promises to hear his people's prayer to forgive his people's sin and to heal his people's land and again these words were initially directed to the nation of

Israel but for God's people today because we don't have some physical land that the Lord is going to drive out the locusts from and he's going to remove the enemies from what we need to be doing as New Testament people is we need to be thinking about the land of our lives let us think about the land of our local church even I would say let us think of the land of our families the Lord is essentially promising restoration if we would humble ourselves and seek his face and turn from our wicked ways and if we repent God will bless us God will bless us if we repent God will bless us and so let us do business this week and here's the minimum blessing that we can expect from God we can expect to the end of this week to be nearer to

God the psalmist says that the presence of the Lord is our good seeking his presence being near to him that is our good we can expect the blessing of having grown and made progress in sanctification second chronicles 7 verse 14 is one of those verses in the old testament that foreshadows and helps us to see why Jesus needed to come they are throughout the old testament but second chronicles is one of them it helps us to see why God had to send and why he sent Jesus Christ as savior one of the first things we should notice about second chronicles 7 14 is it is a conditional promise the Lord says if you do this I will do that brothers and sisters

I think we can all be honest with ourselves this morning and say that we could never in and of ourselves truly meet the condition to humble ourselves to pray to see God's face and to turn from our wicked ways in order to attract God's blessing of hearing and forgiving and healing our sins if left to ourselves left to ourselves none of us none of us would ever meet that condition and this whole request of Solomon for God to forgive the bulls and the goats whose blood were being shed as the basis for God to forgive his people were only foreshadowings of the ultimate blood that was going to be shed to be the basis upon which

[53 : 24] God would forgive all people and so this verse anticipates this verse anticipates the coming of Jesus Christ and the sacrifice that he would make on the cross that God would be able to forgive us of our sins this verse contemplates the death of Christ that makes all of this possible and so as we consider this verse this week and ponder it let us not leave Christ out of it we must remember him because he will perfect before God our less than perfect humbling of ourselves and praying and seeking God's face and turning from our wicked ways we will never do that perfectly and this is no appeal for us to not make genuine effort no we make genuine effort we avail ourselves of the grace of

God but we do so knowing that at the end of this week we will not depend on those works because scripture says they're filthy rags every work of righteousness that we can possibly conjure up this week that we can produce this week falls short in and of ourselves it is only through Jesus Christ that it becomes acceptable to God so let us make grace motivated efforts this week to obey!

what God is saying to us coming before him humbling ourselves praying seeking his face turning from our wicked ways but let our confidence be that there is one who has done all of those things on behalf of his people see Jesus not only died for us he lived for us he lived a life that we could never live and God credits that life to all those who put their trust in him let's pray