

## **Fostering Humility**

2 Chron. 7:14

Series: "IF"

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I am very excited to begin this new series with you this morning. There's a lot that goes into planning these series and the messages we preach in a given year:

- We of course look at what is going on in the life of the church to help give us direction...
- We think about where we are as a congregation...where we are going...this plays into the decision regarding what we will be preaching.
- We also look at the calendar and work around major holidays and see where the breaks in the year are...

There's a lot of praying and asking the Lord to lead us and guide us in this, because as Pastor, the single greatest way I can shepherd you as a whole is by giving you a steady diet of God's word each and every week. And I need God's wisdom on what to preach. He knows what you need more than I do AND he knows what you need more than you do!

I am a firm believer in preaching and teaching what the Bible refers to as "the whole counsel of God".

This is why we will never let what's going on in the world drive the messages we preach – if we did, we would be responding to something different every week.

Instead, we take the Scripture and in a systematic and strategic way, we preach the Word knowing that as we faithfully and continually do this over time, God by his Holy Spirit takes that word and builds His Church...he strengthens us in our faith.

That being said, there are seasons and times of the year that we need to pay attention to what is going on and make sure that we are speaking to and allowing God to speak to what is happening in a given moment in the world in which we live.

And as we were look at the calendar and thinking through and planning what to preach, we knew 2024 was an election year!

This is one of the main reasons we chose to preach through the first six chapters of the book of Daniel. I wanted to draw the parallel between Babylon and the world in which we are living today, AND I wanted us to learn from Daniel's life:

- how to make wise decisions and be bold and courageous...
- where and when to draw lines in the sand as it relates to being witnesses for Christ...

- what do we need to do when facing an increasingly secularized and hostile society...

This being an election year is also why we are starting this series today based off the Bible verse that is found in:

**2 Chron. 7:14 – “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.”**

We're calling this series: IF: Our responsibility/God's response. **(SHOW SERIES IMAGE)**

Now, as your pastor, I've told you before the only person you will ever hear me prop up from this pulpit is the person of Jesus Christ!

My philosophy on elections from a pastoral standpoint...I don't see it as my job nor my responsibility to tell you WHO to vote for.

I do see it as my role...I see it as my duty...my obligation...to speak to where the Bible speaks regarding issues that confront us, and to encourage you to:

- Look at the different platforms and policies of a candidate...
- Look at the different people a candidate puts around them and the partnerships with various organizations they include or exclude...

And I see it as my role to encourage you to participate in the process – that means advocate and influence how God leads, vote if able AND most of all do what all of us who name the name of Christ have been commanded to do in scripture and that is to PRAY.

2 Chron. 7:14 is a passage of scripture that is very popular during election season. There is no doubt you've heard this verse quoted often. It's a favorite verse for pastors to preach and teach as it relates to the subject of revival.

What I want to do over these next four weeks is unpack this verse and use it to both challenge and encourage us in this political season to fixate and concentrate on that which we CAN control...and NOT get so worked up over that which we CAN'T control.

- We can't control who gets elected – we can participate in the process, but we can't control it!
- We can't control the media and what or how they report – we CAN control our chosen media consumption, but that's another sermon for another day!
- We can't control a chosen candidate's behavior or the worldview they've adopted!

- We can't control our aunt's Facebook post or what political sign or flag our neighbor has in their yard!

Why are we getting worked up and spun out over that which we have ZERO control over!

I want in this series to challenge us as believers to rise above the fray and fixate in this election season...concentrate on...spend our time focusing on what we CAN control and that is HOW and to WHAT extent we call on God in prayer!

This is so important because what we all want is God's blessing on our country...the way to it is PRAYER! Because IF we pray God may just hear and respond – that's what this series and these next four weeks are all about!

We must do what we can control – prayer – how much and to what extent is our responsibility. What God does in response to our prayer is up to him.

Two small letters in the word “if” – HUGE consequences!

This verse is written in the context of King Solomon having just built and dedicated the Temple in Jerusalem. Nothing like it had ever been seen before! You can read all about how ornate and exquisite it was in 2 Chron three and four.

In chapter five, he brings the ark of the covenant representing the very presence of God into the Holy of Holies and listen to:

**2 Chron. 5:13b-14 – “...the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God.”**

This is a special moment in the history of the nation of Israel. Now they had a permanent place they could meet with God...a place where they could offer sacrifices and worship and pray. In chapter six, Solomon does just that – he prays a prayer of blessing over the people of Israel as he dedicates the Temple to the Lord.

Allow me to highlight some of his prayer – it will help give some color to the promise or precept of 2 Chron. 7:14. Remember, the people of Israel are in a special covenant with God. He is their God, and they are his people. Solomon prays!

**2 Chron. 6:18-21 – “But will God indeed dwell with man on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, how much less this house that I have built! Yet have regard to the prayer of your servant and to his plea, O Lord my God, listening to the cry and to the prayer that your servant prays before you, that your eyes may be open day and night toward this house, the place where you have promised to set your name, that you may listen to the prayer that your servant offers toward this place. And listen to the pleas of your servant and of your people Israel, when**

**they pray toward this place. And listen from heaven your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.”**

Key terms: Listen...hear...let your eyes be open and see! I’m going to come back to this in just a moment and really throughout these next four weeks!

If you were to continue reading the rest of Solomon’s prayer, conditions are listed out! I’m not going to read his prayer in its entirety, but let’s briefly sweep over and highlight some of it!

**2 Chron 6:22-23a - “If a man sins against his neighbor and is made to take an oath and comes and swears his oath before your altar in this house, then hear from heaven and act and judge your servants...”**

**2 Chron. 6:24-25a - “If your people Israel are defeated before the enemy because they have sinned against you, and they turn again and acknowledge your name and pray and plead with you in this house, then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your people Israel...”**

**2 Chron 6:26-27a - “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...”**

It goes on and on. Solomon concludes the prayer and look at:

**2 Chron. 7:1-2 – “As soon as Solomon finished his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. And the priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD filled the LORD’S house.”**

Sacrifices are made...there’s a weeklong party – what we know of as the Feast of the Tabernacles and then everyone goes home.

Solomon after years of building...after years of preparation...after months and months of getting ready and then after a week of finally being able to dedicate the building and celebrate with God’s people this HUGE accomplishment and endeavor, Solomon pillows his head...and look at what happens next.

**2 Chron. 7:12-14 – “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. When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people (reference to Solomon’s prayer in chapter six. God’s blessing to his people was contingent upon them walking with him and obeying his commands. If they failed in this, he’d send as judgment an discipline these things – locust and pestilence and withhold the rain – however “IF”), 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.”**

**Illus. Charlie Dates** – a few weeks ago at our *Let's Talk Preaching* Conference, one of our speakers talked about how much he loved the gumbo that came from one of his grandmother's old recipes.

And he spoke of how his grandmother passed down this recipe to his mother and she has now passed it onto him – and it's delicious!

What makes the gumbo super special though is that there is a wooden gumbo spoon that has been passed down with that gumbo recipe. And that spoon for years and years and years has only been used in the gumbo, and so there is a seasoning...there is a certain flavoring that is baked into that wooden spoon.

And when making the gumbo, you can put all of the ingredients in that make up that gumbo, but it's NOT his grandmother's gumbo until you take the old wooden spoon with its years of savory goodness and stir it around.

I see a picture of that wooden spoon and gumbo in 2 Chronicles 7:14. The ingredients for blessing and national revival are there, and they are at our disposal. We're going to talk about them in this series!

Ingredients like humility – that's today...In fact, if I was titling this specific message today, I would call it: **Fostering Humility**

That's the first ingredient. Next week we'll talk more specifically about prayer and what it means to seek God's face...and the next week, repentance.

You mix them all these together, you get a pretty good gumbo - BUT you don't get revival and blessing UNTIL God by his grace decides to show up and take the wooden spoon of his Spirit and stir it all together – that's when he starts to move...that's when he responds!

Now, I am VERY aware having gone to seminary and studied my Bible that this verse in 2 Chronicles is a promise that is made to the people of Israel. I understand that this is a covenantal promise from God to his people. I get that!

However, just because it was a promise to Israel does NOT mean it's not a precept for us today. Our North Klein campus pastor, Steven Morris is preaching today, he had a line in his notes that said, "this verse may not be a national promise to us, but it is a spiritual promise that can impact our nation."

And he's right! While Old Testament Israel was in a covenant with God, we too as New Testament believers are in a covenant with God as well.

When you enter into a personal relationship with God by trusting in his son, Jesus for the forgiveness of your sin, you enter into a covenant with God. He becomes your Father, and you become his child. You do know that we are not ALL children of God in the same way.

You become a child of God and enter a covenant with him once you are born again...or born from above. This is a spiritual birth!

Those who have been born again have been “called by his name” and this recipe for blessing and revival, it comes the same way to us as it did to Old Testament, Israel.

Humility...crying out in prayer...and repentance! Take note from Solomon’s prayer and from God’s response to it that he sees, he hears, and he acts!

You and I serve a living God! Don’t miss this! Our God sees...he hears...and because of this, he acts.

Let’s look at each of these briefly: **God sees**

Solomon’s prayer in 2 Chron. 6 is that God’s eyes (v. 20) would be open day and night toward his holy Temple. Solomon knew God was a God who (Psalm 121) doesn’t slumber or sleep! God sees everything!

- He sees our secret sins (Ps. 90:8)...
- He sees our motives – why we do, what we do (Prov. 21:2)...
- He sees the invisible war taking place around us (1 Pet. 5:8)...
- He sees you A&M fans when you gloat over a win against LSU...

God sees everything...he sees when we sin and that’s why he can send discipline and judgment and he also sees when we are humble and repentant and he can send healing and blessing.

You want to know why it’s important that we pray? God sees it! He takes note of it...we’re showing we’re dependent and reliant upon him!

He doesn’t just see though. Notice: **God hears**

Look at Solomon’s pray again! **2 Chron 6:21 – “And listen to the pleas of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. And listen from heaven your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.”**

Does prayer work? Can God really hear us? The Bible teaches that he does. Why else would he command us to pray?!

And think about what we have in Jesus. When he died, the veil of the Temple tore from top to bottom. This represents the access we have to God!

- We don’t have to make a sacrifice to get his attention and have our sins forgiven...

- We don't have to schedule a time with a priest and have someone serve as an intermediary between us and God...

No! Now that Jesus lives in us, we have complete and total access to God and can call upon him in prayer KNOWING that because of Jesus he hears our prayer. Goodness, the scripture teaches that at this very moment Jesus is interceding and praying for us!

We're going to talk about prayer more next week, but what I want you to see is that our God is not like any other God!

Listen to how the false gods of the other nations are described:

**Psalm 115:3-8 – “Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them.”**

What is the Psalmist saying? He's saying there is no one like our God! Our God sees...Our God hears...therefore our God can and does respond and act!

And let me tell you what God consistently responds to in scripture: It's one word: Humility. We see it throughout scripture. God can't stand pride and it seems like he can't refuse humility.

**Illus. Questions we used to ask - Can God make a rock so heavy he can't lift it?**

Well, here is something that it seems God can't do – refuse the humble! He's drawn to humility like it's a magnet!

What is humility? It's not insecurity or weakness or a lack of self-confidence. The word actually means to “bend the knee” or “to bring down”. At its core, it represents this idea of placing yourself under another.

**Illus. Arkansas Baptist Convention and FBC Owasso – “never more like Jesus when humble, never more like the enemy than when in pride.”**

I've said it before, but if you want to get the stiff arm from God, refuse to bend the knee...refuse to humble yourself before him!

Pride is something God hates (Prov. 6:16-19). To walk in pride is to put yourself in direct opposition to God.

**2 Peter 5:5b – “...God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”**

**C.S. Lewis – “True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it's thinking of yourself less.”**

Humility is a state of brokenness that understands one's true condition before the Lord. And if we want God to respond to our prayer than we must respond to his lordship in a humble way.

Let's not have that attitude of "What if I'm really humble and no one notices?" – that's not it! God will notice...and that's all that matters!

**Illus. Time alone – 2 Kings** – Josiah (talked about him in our study in Daniel) – he would have reigned after Solomon of course and was most likely the king during the childhood days of Daniel's parents, which NO DOUBT would have affected the way they raised him.

Josiah was responsible for spiritual reforms that took place after years and years of disobedience and rebellion and sin.

In fact, when Josiah was ruling, the Temple that was originally dedicated by Solomon was after years of abuse and neglect in disrepair. He had it refurbished if you will, and when those cleaning up found the book of Law, they came and read it to Josiah and he was broken by what he heard!

Talk about humility! Listen to what the Bible says:

**2 Kings 22:18-20a** – “**Thus says the Lord, Behold, I will bring disaster upon this place and upon its inhabitants, all the words of the book that the king of Judah has read.** <sup>17</sup> **Because they have forsaken me and have made offerings to other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore my wrath will be kindled against this place, and it will not be quenched.** (this is exactly what God had promised would happen in 2 Chron. 6 – blessing for obedience, the opposite for sin and disobedience ) <sup>18</sup> **But to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, thus shall you say to him, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Regarding the words that you have heard,** <sup>19</sup> **because your heart was penitent (God sees!), and you humbled yourself before the Lord (how did he do this? He welcomed the word of God. He submitted to it! God and his word was authority – PERIOD – and look at how it manifested itself), when you heard how I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and (how humility manifested itself) you have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, declares the Lord.** <sup>20</sup> **Therefore, behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, and your eyes shall not see all the disaster that I will bring upon this place...”**

God saw Josiah's heart and the expression of outward expression of his humility...he heard his prayer...and he responded to it! And God I believe will respond to our humility WHEN he sees it!

So, let's make sure we foster humility in or hearts and lives. How do we do this? Let me give you this acrostic.

I'm calling this the **7:14 Challenge** (Set alarm on phone)



**H – Honest assessment of self** (Psalm 8)

**U – Understand the greatness of God** (standing before a mountain or ocean and think “I’m awesome”).

**M – Make others a priority** (“It’s not about you!” – care, listen, give undivided attention, take the back seat)

**B – Begin each day with the Lord** (acknowledgement and awareness)

**L – Listen more than speak**

**E – Engage in secret acts of service** (constant reminder and reinforcement that it’s not about you – I encourage you to find something that may not get you a pat on the back or your name in the headlines, something that takes you out of your comfort zone and stretches you, AND/OR do it for someone that can’t pay you back in some way).

I want to give us today an opportunity to humble ourselves before God. We’re going to take time these next four weeks to respond in prayer to the preaching of the word of God.

We’re going to have our invitation as well, we’re just going to have a time of prayer first.

We want revival? It begins by humbling ourselves before him...it’s the first ingredient to showing the Lord we’re serious about him. **THIS** is something in this political season, we **CAN** control – humbling ourselves before God.

“Humble” – it means to “bend the knee” – let’s do that if able. And let’s pray and ask God to take his spoon of the Spirit and stir it in our lives. in our church, and in our country.

Let’s pray.

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*Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.*