

When God Moves

2 Chron. 7:14

Series: "IF"

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The year is 1953. A new President is preparing to be sworn into office and is writing up a draft of the speech he will deliver to the nation in five days. With a sense of feeling that it was the hand of God that helped get him elected, he wants to include a verse of scripture in his inaugural address.

And so, General Dwight D. Eisenhower calls the great evangelist, Billy Graham to meet him at the Commodore Hotel in New York. They talk about the state of the nation. They discuss spiritual matters, and in the process Billy Graham shares with Eisenhower a couple of verses of scripture that he might use in his upcoming speech.

The first was Psalm 33:12 – “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage.” The second...the verse we’ve been looking at in detail these last four weeks:

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.”

President Eisenhower opened his inaugural speech with a public prayer and concluded it by placing his hand on two opened Bibles.

The first Bible was his personal Bible that he received at West Point. It was opened to Psalm 33. The second Bible was the very one that George Washington placed his hand upon when taking the oath of office, and it was opened to 2 Chron. 7:14.

In a very real way, President Eisenhower was expressing his faith and as the leader of the United States, he was calling on the nation he was just elected to serve to follow the Lord.

We are concluding our series today: *IF: Our Responsibility/God's Response*

And the title of our message is: **When God Moves**

Now, we preached this four-week message series around the presidential election on purpose, and if you missed any of the messages, please go back and listen! What we’ve emphasized is while there is A LOT surrounding the election and coming out of it that we CAN’T control, as believers in Jesus, there are some things we CAN control.

And what we CAN control is how much and to what degree, we:

- Humble ourselves...
- Pray and seek God’s face...
- Posture ourselves toward repentance...

The FOCUS for the most part has been on WHAT we can control...WHAT we can do as believers in Christ...our attitude...our actions...our behavior.

Today, we're going to look at what God can do should he choose to respond in a favorable manner toward us.

Now, in order to understand this text fully, we have to go to the original context. If you remember from week one, this is God speaking to Solomon after he has built the temple and dedicated the temple to the Lord.

2 Chron. 7:14 is actually a response FROM God TO a prayer that Solomon had prayed in 2 Chron. 6.

Israel, as God's chosen people were in a special and unique covenant with him. And the prayer that Solomon prayed as he dedicated the temple is that God's eyes and ears would always be open to his people knowing that what would turn the face of God away from his people and what would shut God's ear to the cry of his people was sin.

And so, the prayer (just read 2 Chron 6) is Solomon praying IF we go astray...and as a result:

- we are defeated by our enemies...OR
- heaven withholds rain...OR
- there is a famine in the land...OR
- we are carried off into exile...

If God, ANY of this happens, if we will turn and pray and seek you and repent, will you hear from heaven and send your help? This is the prayer of Solomon.

2 Chron. 7:14 is what God whispers to Solomon. It's God answering his prayer and saying:

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.”

IF my people move, I'll move. This is the promise from God to his people. Now, historically this verse has been used as sort of a recipe for revival if you will and that's not all bad or untrue!

Illus. Coffee-cup Christianity/Trite, Not True – The goal is to look at verses and put them in context or take a part phrases that sound good but need clarity around them! Verses like Phil. 4:13 OR phrases like “God helps those who help themselves”.

2 Chron. 7:14 would be included in this series or book BECAUSE while it is to a degree a recipe for revival, we need clarity around what God is saying here.

Is it true that if WE do these things THEN God is obligated to move and bless? Let's look at it in detail and get clarity around what it means for God to move.

First of all, we read that if God's people who are called by his name, humble themselves and pray and seek his face and turn from their wicked ways THEN:

1. God will hear

Now, we know that God is Spirit. But in order for us to better understand WHO God is and HOW God moves, the scripture ascribes to him what we call anthropomorphic language.

This is language that ascribes human attributes and traits to God. We read things in scripture like:

- He has eyes to see...
- He has a mouth to speak...
- He has ears to hear...

And God DOES hear our prayer! In fact, the invitation to call upon the Lord is one of the greatest invitations God gives us in scripture.

We all enjoy receiving invitations...we have been issuing you an invitation to our Christmas Tree Lighting next week. You're all invited...it's going to be great! **(SHOW IMAGE)**

Perhaps you have invited someone to join you at the Christmas Spectacular OR you are having a Christmas party that you are inviting people to. We love receiving invitations!

Well, one of the greatest invitations God has ever given is the invitation to pray to him...to call upon his name!

And the promise of scripture here is that if we will do what we've talked about these previous three weeks THEN he will hear from heaven when we pray!

Remember what stops his ears? Sin...that will cause him NOT to hear our prayer!

Psalm 66:18 – “If I had cherished (to hold onto, to care for, to protect) iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.”

Isaiah 59:1-2 – “Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that is cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.”

Illus. Dropped call – Have you ever known the frustration of a dropped call? Debbie and I got away for the week to celebrate our anniversary, and I was on the phone checking in with Chris Todd and the phone call dropped! So frustrating!

Sin will cause the call to drop between you and the Lord. You can't hold onto sin and get ahold of God at the same time! But once you humble yourself and pray, and turn from your sin, your

voice will be crystal clear to the Lord – there will be no dropped calls when you are sincerely seeking the Lord.

Not only will there NOT be a dropped call, but we're told in scripture that the prayer of a righteous man or woman is powerful and effective.

James 5:16b – “...The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”

When we are a child of God (we've been born again...we've been brought into a relationship with God by faith) AND we are living a life practically that lines up with who we are positionally, our prayers are not only heard, they are powerful!

Psalm 34:17 – “When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.”

So, we really need to ask ourselves when our prayers aren't being answered, “is it because we are cherishing sin? There's a blocked call?” OR is what we are asking just not lining up with the will of God” – this *could* be the case.

What's clear from scripture though is that God hears the prayers of his children, and those prayers are powerful.

Do you want the Lord to hear your prayer? Of course you do!

God hearing our prayers starts with being in a relationship with God and he continues to hear our prayers as we continue in a RIGHT relationship with God.

This leads to the second move of God. IF we humble ourselves...IF we pray and seek God's face...IF we turn from our sins. Not only will God hear us, but secondly:

2. **God will forgive**

Now, there are two types of forgiveness in the scripture. There is what we call judicial forgiveness AND what we call parental forgiveness.

Let's address first: **Judicial Forgiveness.**

Judicial forgiveness is the forgiveness that takes place in our lives when we enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ.

The Bible teaches that once we turn from our sins and trust in what Christ did in his death, burial and resurrection, instantaneously, our sins are forgiven and our standing in Christ is forever secure.

The penalty of our sin is paid for, and Christ's blood is applied once and for all as payment for our sin. God the righteous Judge looks upon us and because we have trusted in Christ by faith, he declares us righteous and forgiven once and for all. This is judicial forgiveness.

This is the wonderful news of the Christian faith and if you have never experienced the judicial forgiveness of God, that is the reason you're here today....to hear this message that God desires to have a relationship with you and he will forgive you of all your sin – past, present, and future.

This is judicial forgiveness. But that is NOT the forgiveness that's addressed in 2 Chron. The people of Israel were in a relationship with the Lord.

The forgiveness that is mentioned here in 2 Chron. 7 is another aspect of God's forgiveness.

It's what we call: **Parental Forgiveness.**

When we enter into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, he becomes our Father, and we become his child. And the Bible teaches that when we choose to sin against him, we grieve him.

This doesn't mean we are not his child anymore, but because of our sin, there is a rift in our fellowship. We just noted this...it causes him not to hear our prayer!

It's kind of like the relationship between parents and children. If the children are disruptive and disobedient and not listening to what mom and dad says...when they go by the grocery store that evening and the children begin to beg for candy in the checkout line on the way out, it's not that mom and dad, don't hear the begging, they just aren't going to respond to it!

Imperfect illustration, but it highlights parental forgiveness. Until that rift is bridged by confessing sin and asking for forgiveness...until there is a change in the behavior, there will be a separation in the fellowship. This truth is the same with God.

Our sin causes a separation in our fellowship with God, NOT our relationship with God and because we are sinners, we are continually in need of parental forgiveness.

This is the forgiveness that is mentioned in 2 Chron 7:14. The word "forgive" here means "to pardon".

It's used almost exclusively of the divine pardon that only God can give. One commentator noted that it: "underscores the merciful and compassionate nature of God, who desires reconciliation with His people despite their transgressions."

What a beautiful thought – the "compassionate nature of God". The palmist put it like this in:

Psalm 103:8-14 – "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.⁹ He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. ¹⁰ He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear

him;¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.¹³ As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.

¹⁴ For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.”

God knows who we are...and he desires to have a relationship with us. It's his forgiveness and his pardon that shows his desire for this relationship.

And notice – it's forgiveness of sin...it's NOT overlooking sin. To forgive, God's wrath and justice had to be satisfied. This is the point of Jesus going to the cross! And it's because Jesus goes to the cross that we can experience judicial forgiveness and be in a right relationship with God and then continue in the right relationship because of the parental forgiveness God offers on a daily basis.

Don't cover your sin...don't try to conceal your sin...confess your sin and receive the forgiveness of God.

1 John 1:9 – “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Listen, there is NOTHING worse than being at odds with someone you love. And from a spiritual standpoint, there is NOTHING worse than not being on the same page with God!

Illus. Adrian Rogers – this past Friday marked 19 years since he went home to be with the Lord. I'm reminded of one of his sayings...they called them “Adrianisms”.

Adrian Rogers – “The most miserable man on Earth is not an unsaved man, but a saved man out of fellowship with God.”

WHEN...IF...we humble ourselves and pray, and seek God's face, and turn from our wicked ways, THEN God WILL hear from heaven, forgive our sin and thirdly:

3. God will heal

More specifically, the scripture says, “God will heal our land”? What does this mean?

Well, remember, this verse is specifically written to the people of Israel, and this is ONE of those promises that is ONLY for Israel.

The land that makes up Israel was a gift from God to his people. You could say, it was God's greatest gift to his people UNTIL he gave them his son.

This land was marked for them by God. It was a land that was flowing with milk and honey! It was a land that was fertile. In fact, it's still to this day referred to as the “breadbasket of the Middle East”.

God had promised Israel when he gave them the land that IF they walked with him in obedience, the land would cooperate! In fact, just listen to Deut. 28

Deut. 28:1-5, 8-9 – “And if you faithfully obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. ² And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the Lord your God.³ Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field.⁴ Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground and the fruit of your cattle, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock.⁵ Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. ⁶ Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out... The Lord will command the blessing on you in your barns and in all that you undertake. And he will bless you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. ⁹ The Lord will establish you as a people holy to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in his ways.”

If you were to keep reading Deut. 28, you would see the EXACT opposite take place if the people of God rejected God’s voice. Instead of blessing there is cursing. As it relates to the land specifically, listen to:

Deut. 28:15, 20-24 – “But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you... “The Lord will send on you curses, confusion, and frustration in all that you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and perish quickly on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken me. ²¹ The Lord will make the pestilence stick to you until he has consumed you off the land that you are entering to take possession of it. ²² The Lord will strike you with wasting disease and with fever, inflammation and fiery heat, and with drought and with blight and with mildew. They shall pursue you until you perish. ²³ And the heavens over your head shall be bronze, and the earth under you shall be iron.²⁴ The Lord will make the rain of your land powder. From heaven dust shall come down on you until you are destroyed.”

Now, put this in context with what Solomon prayed. When the land isn’t cooperating it’s because God’s people haven’t been cooperating with him. There isn’t blessing but cursing! How does the land start working again for us? Where does blessing come from?

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.”

Healing of the land would only come when God’s people humbled themselves, prayed and sought his face and turned from their wicked ways...this was the pathway AND the only pathway to healing.

Now, again...to stress...this land being healed speaks specifically to Israel. However, blessing...the pathway to spiritual healing – it's NOT a stretch to build an interpretational bridge – which this is our job in Bible Study!

Our job when we study the Bible is read it and interpret it rightly.

Illus. Grasping God's Word (SHOW IMAGE)

- Step 1 - Grasping the text in their town. What did the text mean for the original author and his original audience?
- Step 2 - Measuring the width of the river to cross. What separates us today from those original writers and readers?
- Step 3 - Crossing the “principlizing” bridge. What timeless/theological principles exist in this passage?
- Step 4 - Grasping the text in my town. How can I apply those principles to my own life so that I learn from the text what the original audience learned?

So, if we do this with 2 Chron. 7:14. We can say this is what this meant to the people of Israel and to Solomon when he heard this spoken from God. We do our work and we look at context and language, and style and covenant. Then we build an interpretational bridge...or what Hayes and Duvall call a “principlizing bridge” and WHAT is the principle?

We can look at this and say:

- IF we foster humility...that's as good for us today as it was for the people of that day...
- IF we seek God...that's as good for us today as the people of that day...
- IF we turn from sin...as good for us as the people of that day...

IF we do these things then certainly, we are putting ourselves in a position for God:

- To HEAR – check!
- To forgive – check!
- To heal – well...the “our land” part doesn't make it over the bridge, but certainly healing in the sense of restoration and blessing – that's a check!

So, this series, *IF – Our responsibility/God's response* – NOT a lot we can control when it comes to the election or what comes after it.

We can't even control really HOW God responds to us. What we can control is whether or not and how much we are fostering humility...whether or not or how much we are praying and seeking God's face...and whether or not or how much we are turning from sin.

I do KNOW this...if we will worry about what we CAN control, we can trust God to do what is only under his control. And according to this verse AND building THIS bridge – he WILL hear our prayer, forgive our sin and bring healing to our hearts and lives.

Will you pray with me?

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.