

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

SERMON TITLE: It's Prayer Time in America

SERMON REFERENCE: 2 Chronicles 7:14

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Would you take your Bibles and open to Second Chronicles chapter 7 and verse 14. You will recognize that verse as a time-worn verse. We've heard it over and over again, but we must, in these days, revisit that verse.

I wonder if the American dream that was placed into the bosom of our fathers will become a national nightmare. I ask this question this way; is it too late for America? Have we already crossed the place, the state, of no return? I submit to you that we have not.

Second Chronicles 7 and verse 14 here is an ancient promise. Obviously, it was given to Israel. But the Bible says of Israel in First Corinthians 10 verse 11, "*All these things happened to them for examples to us.*" Here's what God says, Second Chronicles chapter 7 and verse 14, "*If My people, which are called by My name, shall 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.*"

This wonderful nation born in 1776 must be born again or it will join the graveyard of the nations. God says in Jeremiah 10 verse 10, "*At His wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide His indignation.*" Now God, I'm certain, is indignant with America. We have insulted the Almighty, and we are ready for judgment, but we need mercy.

There was a time in America, some of you can remember, when pregnancy outside of marriage was a scandal, when homosexuality was a sin, when pornography was a moral sickness, when marriage was sacred, and living together without marriage was a disgrace. When child abuse was almost never heard of; when women, ladies, did not smoke or curse; when we did not have to lock our houses and our automobiles. When drugs were something you got at the drugstore; when alcoholism was considered a sin, not a disease; when eastern religions were still in the east; and in public schools our students were allowed to pray, and the Ten Commandments were posted on the walls. In public schools where Creation could be taught as an answer to godless evolution. In America, I can remember a time when high school students could read their diplomas, Ten Commandments were still legal, and humanism, godless humanism, was considered a curse.

We have become a proud nation, wallowing in materialism and rotting in sin in the search for what we call pleasure and freedom. But America has become the greatest moral polluter of the world with the films that we're sending overseas, and that's what people think of when they think of America.

And prophets of God are shunned and laughed at today. When the message that I'm going to preach this morning will be preached, if a pundit, a newspaper reporter were here, he would call that, "Extreme right-wing rhetoric." But, friend, it is the Word of God. The matter is not right or left; the matter is right or wrong. And God's Word is right.

Now there is hope for America. And I don't stand before you as a pessimist, but a glowing optimist. But I tell you this much; America must turn to God or she will die.

Now I want us to look at this verse of Scripture again this morning, and I have picked four truths out of this verse, "*If My people.*" First of all, I want you to see what I'm going to call **the people God has**, the people God has. God says, "*If My people.*" Now this whole promise that I'm about to give to you is predicated on what God's people do. Now so many times we say, "Oh, if only Hollywood would. Oh, if only the government would, only if the pornographers would, only if the abortionist would." But God does not look to them. Folks, God is looking at us. He's looking to you. Are you one of His people? Are you? Then stop putting the blame on somebody else. Listen to me, if America falls and fails, it will be our fault. Well, you say, "Well, if only God would." No, we're not waiting on God. Do you think God is to blame for the mess that we're in? Do you think that the reason we're in the state that we're in is because God has been indifferent? Ladies and gentlemen, it is not our duty to persuade God to send revival; we must permit Him to do so. And it begins at the house of God. "*If My people.*"

A woman got involved in politics, and it's all right to be involved in politics, but she was so enthusiastic she told her husband, "It looks like we're going to sweep the state." He said, "I suggest you start at the back door." And the church must start at the back door. The Bible says in First Peter 4 verse 17, "*For the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God.*" I'm telling you again that the hope of America is not in the White House, not in the State House, not in the court house, not in the school house, it is in God's house. That's the first thing in this promise, the people, the people God has.

Now, secondly, I want you to notice **the pride God hates**. He says, "*If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves and pray.*" What is wrong with America? We reek with pride. We strut in the face of God. And God cannot bless you as an individual, God cannot bless this church, God cannot bless our nation when we have such pride. Pride is the root of all kinds of evil. We today in America are filled with humanistic haughtiness, and the Bible says we're to humble ourselves. Have you ever prayed, "God, make us humble?" Don't do that. He can. He can bring us to humiliation, and He may, but how much better if we would humble ourselves. The Bible says we're to humble ourselves.

James 4 verse 6, "*But He giveth more grace. Wherefore He saith, 'God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.'*" Think about that, God resisting you; God resisting America. God setting Himself in battle array against us. "*God resisteth the proud.*" But now, listen, "*He gives grace to the humble.*" What America needs is not judgment but grace.

Do you know what grace is? Grace is both the desire and the ability to do the will of God. God puts a desire in your heart. That is grace. God gives you the strength to live as you ought to live. But, "*God resists the proud. He gives grace to the humble.*"

Let's move to the third thing in this promise. Not only the people God has, not only the pride God hates, but **the prayer God hears**. God doesn't hear every prayer. God puts some qualifications on His prayers. God says, "*If we will pray and seek His face, and turn from our wicked ways.*" The prayer that God hears is the prayer that seeks God's face. Do you know what is wrong in America? We're not seeking the face of God; we're seeking the hand of God. Revival is when God has not turned His back on us, when God can smile upon us, when God can find favor in us, when God can turn His countenance to us. Do you think that God can smile at America today? No, God says we need to seek His face. Do you know what most Americans are seeking? Not God's face. They're seeking God's hand. And they say, "Oh, God! Do something!" Beloved, can't you see that God is doing something? God is judging this city. God is judging this nation. And we need to seek, not the hand of God, but the face of God.

Well, you say, "God is our only hope." Well, that is true, but I want to tell you something else. And this may shock you, but God is our biggest threat. I'm not as much afraid of what some terrorist nation may do to America, as I am, as to what God may do to America. God is a God of vengeance and God will judge us. And so the Bible says, "*We're to seek His face and we are to turn from our wicked ways.*"

Thus far, the message has been fairly simple, and thus far you say, "Well, I believe that I can do that." But now listen to this; we are to turn from our wicked way. Prayer for revival without repentance is a religious farce. So many of us have the idea that God's going to bless us. Now we're not going to turn from our sin, but we're going to sing, "God Bless America" while we're killing little babies. We're going to sing, "God Bless America" when sodomy struts down main streets with pride. We're going to sing, "God Bless America" when He is cursed and maligned and when He cannot be mentioned in our public concourse. Why should God bless America? He will not unless we turn from our wicked way.

Actually, to pray without repentance angers God. Listen to this verse, Psalm 80 verse 4, "*How long, O LORD of hosts, how long wilt Thou be angry against the prayer of Thy people?*" Not only does God not hear the prayer; it angers God. "*How long, O LORD wilt you be angry at the prayer of Thy people?*"

There was a time when the Israelites had crossed Jordan. There were battles to be fought. There was mighty Jericho. And Joshua led the children of Israel against Jericho, and the walls came a'tumbling down, you remember that. And then they, with their pride, went against another little city, Ai, read the seventh chapter of Joshua. Two letters in the name, a small city, a small name; but Israel was ignominiously defeated, and they ran like whipped puppies from the face and the army of Ai. Joshua, the leader, fell on his face and said, "*Oh, God, why have You failed us? Oh, God, why have we been defeated?*" And God said to Joshua, "*Joshua, get up off your face. Israel hath sinned.*" What's He saying to Joshua? "Joshua, you can pray all you want, but until you deal with repentance, prayer is not some sort of a smokescreen in which you can hide your pride and your sin. You've got to repent."

Now repentance is a shop-worn term also. Let me tell you what repentance is. Friend, repentance, by the way, the word is used 969 times in the Bible. The first message that Jesus gave when He came preaching was repent. The last message that Jesus gave from Heaven to the church was to repent. The message that God is giving to you today is repent. God has said in Luke 13:3, “*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*” Now what is repentance? **Repentance is more than a conviction of sin.** You may be today living in sin. This message may have convicted you. When I talked about living together without the benefit of marriage, you may have felt a little stab in your heart because that’s what you’re doing. But repentance is more than conviction of sin.

I read in the Bible where Paul preached to a man named Felix. And the Bible teaches that Felix trembled like a leaf in a storm. Why did he tremble? Because he was convicted of sin. Acts chapter 24 verse 25, “*And as he,*” that is, Paul, “*reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered,*” listen to this, “*Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.*” But history tells us that he never did call. He was convicted of sin, but he would not repent.

Repentance is more than confession of sin. You say, “If I confess my sin, have I repented?” No, you’ve not, if that’s all there is to it. Pharaoh confessed his sin. Listen to this verse in Exodus chapter 9 verse 23. You remember that God sent plagues to Egypt to convict Pharaoh that he might turn from his sin. And the Bible says in Exodus chapter 9 verse 23, “*And Moses stretched forth his rod toward Heaven; and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along the ground; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt.*” Now what happened when the fire and the hail came, or when the lightning was running on the ground? Pharaoh confessed his sin. Exodus 9 verse 27, “*And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, ‘I have sinned.’*” But what happened when the storm died? The conviction that was born in the storm died in the calm.

I can remember when Desert Storm, that mighty battle there with Iraq, I can remember when it was taking place. And God’s people that Sunday came to church. It seemed like there were 25% more of us in church. And we were saying, “Oh, God, have mercy.” But I am telling you since Desert Storm, America has descended down, down, down, down, and almost reached the bottom of the garbage pail. The repentance that was born in the storm died in the calm. Repentance is more than conviction of sin. Repentance is more than confession of sin.

And **repentance is more than contrition for sin.** Tears may accompany repentance, but tears are not repentance. The Bible says in Second Corinthians chapter 7 and verse 10 that, “*Godly sorrow worketh repentance.*” I’m not asking today are you sorry for your sin. I’m asking today, will you turn from your sin?

What is repentance? God says, “*We are to turn, to turn,*” get that word, “*to turn from our wicked way.*” A repentance is a turning. The word literally means a change

of mind. Now it is both negative and positive. We turn from our wicked way; we seek the face of God. Acts 20 verse 21, *“Testifying both to the Jews and to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Repentance and faith are the heads and tails of getting right with God. We seek God’s face. We turn from our wicked way.

Repentance is a heart change, and repentance, listen to this now, **is a wholehearted change**. Do you have the idea that you can get right with God in one area without getting right in every area? Do you think you can do it by gradualism? You say, “Well now, Lord, I’ve dealt with my cursing. Now tomorrow I’m going to deal with my adultery.” No! It is a change. It is a wholehearted change where you say, “Once and for all, now and forever, I’m sick of my sin. I’m tired of my sin, and I turn.”

Listen to Ezekiel chapter 14 and verse 6, *“Wherefore, say unto the house of Israel, ‘Thus saith the Lord God; ‘Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols, and turn away your faces,’”* listen, *“‘from all, all your abominations.’”* That’s what repentance is. It is a heart change, and it is a wholehearted change. Don’t be like the little girl who prayed, “Lord, make me good, just good enough not to get a spanking.” Now if that’s the way some are here. You say, “Now if I could just repent of this thing or that thing, then perhaps God would bless America.” Congregation, not only must we be broken over our sins; we must be broken from our sins.

Now look at the man in the pulpit. I am not much. I’m weak. I am made of clay, but I can testify to you there is no unconfessed, unrepented of sin in my life. You say, “Well, aren’t you wonderful?” No, that is the normal Christian life; the normal Christian life. Not a mother’s child in this building ought to go out without saying, “There is no unconfessed, unrepented of sin in my life.”

Repentance is a heart change. It is a wholehearted change. And Jesus said in Luke 13 verse 3, *“Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”* America will perish unless she repents. Well, you say, “What about the pornographer? He needs to repent. What about the dope dealer? He needs to repent.” No, God says, *“If My people, if My people.”*

Can you image what would happen if, in America today, if our churches, from sea to shining sea, had a man of God, each one of them, in the pulpit, opening the Book of God with the Spirit of God, preaching the Christ of God to the people of God, and calling America to repentance. There’s little that would not be changed in America almost overnight if that would happen.

“If My people, who are called by My name, shall humble themselves and pray.” And, by the way, the reason we don’t pray is because we reek with pride. Did you know that pride is number one on God’s hate parade? *“These six things doth the Lord hate; yea, seven are an abomination unto Him.”* And the number one thing on the list is, *“A proud look, a proud look.”* Some people can strut sitting down. *“A proud look;”*

number one. Pride is behind every sin. It was pride that made the devil the devil. And if you're not willing to humble yourselves, you're not going to get very far with God.

Listen; the people God has; the pride God's, hates; the prayer God hears. Now here's the good part, **the promise God honors**, the promise God honors. "*If My people, who are called by My name, shall humble themselves and pray, and turn from their wicked way,*" here's the promise, "*then will I hear from Heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*"

Now, don't you tell me it's too late for America. The God that sent revival to England in the 16th Century, the God who sent revival on Mount Carmel, the God who sent revival to Nineveh, the God who sent revival to Jerusalem, that God is alive and well. And I'm telling you that God will hear from Heaven because He rules in the Heavens.

May I tell you that God is not a Republican, and God is not a Democrat. He is King. He is King. He is Lord. Democrats, Republicans, Independents, Libertarians, and whatever, need to bow before Him, and God, the mighty God who rules from the Heavens, God will hear from Heaven. He will forgive their sins.

I want to remind you of something I've already said in this message. God would rather pardon than judge. Now God is angry at our sins, but He is full of compassion. He is full of mercy. And God will forgive our sins. God will forgive America. Well, you say, "Pastor, what about the sins of all these wicked people? We can't deal with that." That's right. He's not talking about the sins of all these wicked people: the liquor dealers, and Hollywood, and the pornographer, and the drug pusher. God is talking to His people. God says, "*If My people, if My people, 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,*" now watch it, "*and will heal their land.*"

When the church gets right, when we begin to do what we ought to do, then we'll begin to deal with all of these other problems. Stop pointing fingers. Bow the knee before God. Get right with God. Don't worry about the man to your right or the man to your left. You want a revival? Draw a circle on the floor. Get inside that circle and say, "God, begin a revival inside this circle." One by one.

I'm only one, but I am one.

I can't do everything, but I can do something.

And what I can do and ought to do,

That, by the grace of God, I will do.

"If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek My face, then will I hear from Heaven; I will forgive their sin, and I will heal their land."

I don't know whether we've crossed the threshold or not, whether we've crossed God's deadline or not. But I'm telling you if there were ever a time that we need to repent, this is the time, this is the day, this is the age. Don't put it off till tomorrow in your own personal life. Tomorrow you will only have less time to repent in and more sin to repent of.

Say, "Well, I'm saved." Well, I'm saved, too. When I was saved, I repented of my sin and I turned to the Lord Jesus Christ. But I'm going to tell you something. I've done far more repenting after I got saved than I did when I got saved. And the reason for that is I've learned far more about God and I have learned far more about me. I remind you again that the hope of America is not in the White House, not in the school house, not in the court house, but in the church house.

Now we sing, and we mean it, "God Bless America." But you know what we need to do? What America needs to do is bless God. Bless God. May we, as blood-bought Christians, inheritors of a great legacy, say, "Oh, God, we want to bless You. Make this nation a blessing to Heaven."

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed. Eyes are closed. And would you take this text this morning and personalize it? Don't think about anybody else. Don't think about the pastor. Don't think about the pornographer. Don't think about Hollywood. Don't think about the Democrats, the Republicans. Don't think about the terrorists. Think about you! Beloved, would you get your heart right with God today? Say, "O God, if there is any unconfessed, unrepented of sin in my heart and in my life, let me know it. *'Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts. And lead me in the way everlasting.'*" Pray. Seek God's face.

Now, Heavenly Father, in this little short time we've said, "Lord, we want to be clean," and I'm grateful for this little time. But, God, help us to set our hearts to seek You. Lord, not just for a few moments on Sunday morning, but, God, it will be our lifestyle. That, Lord, we will live by repentance and faith. O God, have mercy upon America and may America bless God. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

The most patriotic thing that you can do is not to sing, "God Bless America," or to say, "America, my country, right or wrong." The most patriotic thing you can do, the wisest thing you can do is to get your heart right with God, to be saved. Now I know that most of the people in our churches are confessing, professing Christians, but there're people today who need the Lord Jesus. You need to be saved. And I have wonderful news for you. God will save you and God will keep you saved if you trust Him. So many times we say, "Well, you know, if I give my heart to Jesus Christ, I may not be able to live it." Well, you won't be able to live it. I'm not able to live it. The God in you will live it through you and for you. You just give all you know of you to all you know of Him and I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, He will save you. To be saved means that every sin is forgiven. Christ dwells in your heart. Heaven is your home. He will save you instantaneously just like that. He will keep you eternally. He will never, never, never leave or forsake you.

Now, if I could give my heart to Jesus on your behalf, I would, but I cannot. I've preached the best I know how. But God sent me to tell you that He loves you. He wants to save you. He wants to give you a new heart, a new hope, and new home if you'll trust Him.

Now the devil will begin to argue against this decision right now. The devil will say, "You're not good enough, you don't understand enough, or you'll make a fool of yourself, or you'll not be able to live it." He'll give you all of these excuses. You listen to me. They are lies. They're lies. Jesus says, "*Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden; I'll give you rest.*"

Come to Jesus. Believe that He died on the cross for your sins. Believe that He is raised again to be proven the Son of God. Believe that He can save you and wants to save you and will save you if you'll trust Him.