

## God's Covenant- 2 Chronicles 7v1-22 -

I have been impressed by the many Christians who have said they've found this time to be really helpful for them to develop their prayer life. KBC meets online daily to pray, thanks to Susan and Craig and they have ensured prayer at 20.20 on the 20th each month. Likewise, Emmaus Road Church has an online prayer meeting every morning at 8am and a shorter one at 9.15pm. I'm not proud but I've not made any of these !

But even in my lack of prayer, I want to encourage us all to be more committed to prayer.

A couple of weeks ago I mentioned the international church movement to pray at 7.14am and 7.14pm words based on 1Chron 7v14 so I thought I'd use that verse as a basis for study now.

This well-known verse comes in the midst of a monologue from God when Solomon had finished building the Temple. God sets out very clearly that when Israel follows the Lord and puts him first, there will be blessing. But when Israel goes off and worships other gods, the Lord will uproot them and bring disaster upon them.

Verse 14 offers the way back and comes in 9 phrases, the longest of which only has 6 words.

Let's look at them:

### ***if my people,***

Notice that little word "if". The whole verse is conditional on 4 distinct actions to which we'll come in a moment. Then notice the "my people" - there is ownership of this people group and they are distinctive because... ***who are called by my name,***

This people group carry the name of the Lord. They were known as the people of God. Today, we are known as Christ followers. That's what "Christian" means. So, we can apply the remainder of the verse to ourselves because we are the people of God.

### ***will humble themselves***

This is the first of the 4 actions. To humble yourself before God is to recognise his superiority and sovereignty. We don't know it all, have all the answers. Pride tells us that we are better than we are really and humility gets us in right relationship with God.

### ***and pray***

Prayer is the means of communication between us and God. It is again acknowledging that we need God's involvement in our lives.

### ***and seek my face***

The third action is the intentional seeking after God. The idiom again speaks of relationship - we have face to face meetings (well, we did before Covid!). There is the suggestion of intimacy.

### ***and turn from their wicked ways,***

Finally, we have the crux of the matter. God is holy, totally other and distinct from the sinfulness of the world. In order for us to be in right relationship with God we have to leave our sin behind. Repentance means turning around and walking away from sin. The same image is here.

So, these are the 4 conditions of the "if". When met, there are 3 promises of God which can be relied upon. So from "if" to "then" ***then I will hear from heaven,***

The first promise is that God will hear. A necessary step for a response if we are calling out in prayer and petition. God gives us this assurance - he will hear. This is God's first action. His next action is also a promise -

### ***and I will forgive their sin***

When we turn from sin, when we repent, when we choose not to seek after other gods

(whatever they might be) there is this glorious promise of forgiveness. We live in Anno Domini - the year of our Lord. His death on the cross guarantees our salvation when we choose to follow him. **and will heal their land.**

This is the third promise. Healing of the land can be a number of things - better harvests, reduced famines and pestilences, peace from warring neighbours.

Notice this is secondary to the healing of relationship between God and his people.

Unite 7/14 is a collection of churches across the globe that encourage individual Christians to pray morning and evening for our nations.

We might think it strange and presumptuous to pray for our nation but Nehemiah sets the example for us as people of God to pray for our nation - Neh 1v6b-7 I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

This is the role of the intercessor - one who stands in the gap as Ezekiel (30v22) puts it. We can all intercede for our nation. We can, with confidence, use our time to pray for our nation, asking God to hear, forgive, and heal. Let's do it!

*Mike Stanbrook*