

The Revival We Need

Text: II Chronicles 7:15

Friday marked one of the saddest anniversaries in American history. It has now been 19 years since nearly 3,000 of our best citizens died at the hands of Islamic terrorists. On a day like today there will be many a devout Christian that will be reclaiming II Chronicles 7:14: "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." As Christians, not only do we not want to see our country go through this again, but we are also disturbed with the direction our country has gone since 9/11.

Our passage of Scripture from which our text is drawn was a most momentous time in Jewish history. It was the dedication of the Temple. This was the most elaborate and famous structure to have been constructed in all of Jewish history. The Temple was so glorious that Jesus even used this phrase in His personal ministry: "And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (lilies of the field) (Matthew 6:29). What grandeur, pomp and ceremony took place in the Temple dedication! The Bible says in II Chronicles 7:5, "And king Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty and two thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep: so the king and all the people dedicated the house of God." God honored these sacrifices, for it says in II Chronicles 7:1, "Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house." The LORD revealed to Solomon that one day He may express His displeasure with Israel by stopping the rain, commanding marauding locusts into their coasts or by sending pestilence (II Chronicles 7:13). In II Chronicles 7:14 God gives a way back to Him and His will. Let's take a closer look at:

1. THE CHOSEN

"If my people, which are called by my name..." (II Chronicles 7:14a). Whether in the Old or New Testament, any of us who are granted the fellowship of our holy God is a recipient of the grace and mercy of God. Deuteronomy 7:7: "The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people." John 15:16: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."

I John 4:19: "We love him, because he first loved us."

2. THE CHASTENING

I am going to piece together two phrases from our verse, "...shall humble themselves...and turn from their wicked ways..." (II Chronicles 7:14b). We can never deal with our wicked ways until we humble ourselves.

God has placed a conscience within us that is a superb warning system when we do wrong or even contemplate doing wrong. In the world we are living in today, we are not hearing much about the conscience. In my childhood, conscience was very much

applauded. One of my very favorite movies was Walt Disney's *Pinocchio*. Jiminy Cricket was the representation of Pinocchio's conscience - because, you cannot be a real boy without a conscience. Jiminy said, "When you get in trouble and you don't know right from wrong, give a little whistle." The Blue Fairy dubbed the little cricket as Pinocchio's conscience, the "...keeper of the knowledge of right and wrong, counselor in moments of temptation, and guide along the straight and narrow path." That quote came directly from a secular story, very popular in the world in which I lived. Things have changed, haven't they?

The conscience doesn't lay down the law; it does, however tell us that there is a law. Romans 2:14, 15: "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another."

In 1984 an Avianca Airlines jet crashed in Spain. Investigators studying the crash made a macabre discovery. The "black box" cockpit recorders revealed that several minutes before impact a shrill, computer-synthesized voice from the plane's automatic warning system told the crew repeatedly in English, "Pull up! Pull up!" The pilot, evidently believing the system was malfunctioning, snapped, "Shut up, Gringo!" The captain turned the warning system off. In a matter of a few minutes the jet hit the side of a mountain. Everyone died. Like many today, when the conscience speaks, people are turning the warning system off.

The Greek word for "conscience" is found more than thirty times in the New Testament - *suneidesis*, which also literally means "co-knowledge." The conscience is that voice inside talking to you. It is the knowledge of oneself.

In salvation, God fully activates our conscience. Hebrews 9:14: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." Hebrews 10:22: "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

One must beware that to ignore the speaking conscience is to become defiled. Titus 1:15: "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." To continue muting the conscience brings a person into the category of I Timothy 4:2, "Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron."

Turning from our wicked ways requires convicting from the Holy Spirit and responding in humility and repentance. I Corinthians 11:31, 32: "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." Let us therefore respond to our conscience, listen to the message of the Holy Spirit and avoid further chastening from God.

3. THE CALLING

"...And pray and seek My face..." (II Chronicles 7:14b). Praying is asking God for what we need. Seeking God's face is seeking God for who He is. It is not just getting things from God; it is receiving the Lord's presence and power in His person. In Song of Solomon 3:1-4, we see illustrated how we should enthusiastically seek our Lord for who

He is. We see four phrases that stand out: "I sought Him; I found Him; I held Him; I...brought Him." The Shulamite maiden is determined to bring the love of her life home. I am reminded in Mark 5:19 of what the Lord told the maniac of Gadera after his conversion:

"Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." That's when Christianity is real, when we bring the truth that has changed us home. Jesus said to Zacchaeus, "And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house" (Luke 19:50).

When Christ saves us, His intention is to be involved in all of our life. Psalm 27:8: "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek."

4. THE CLEANSING

II Chronicles 7:14c: "...Then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." Although answered prayer is withheld from the unrepentant, great mercy is granted to the praying repentant one. Psalm 66:18-20: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me: But verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me."

A beautiful illustration of God healing a people and the land is found in the promise of when the kingdom of God will be set up in the earth. Isaiah 33:6-8: "Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein."

God described the condition of Judah as being sin-sick from the sole of her foot to the head (Isaiah 1:1-17). But thank God for the promise found in Isaiah 1:18: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

America needs healing today; let's pray for her revival!

-Pastor Pope-