“If My People … Will Pray”

September 20, 2015

John 15:1-7

Please open your Bible today with me to a chapter on prayer; II Chronicles six. The Bible is clear that we *must* pray. And the Bible is filled with people who do pray. I, for one, was surprised to find that this sixth chapter of II Chronicles deals with the topic of prayer more than any other chapter in either first or second Chronicles. And here’s what find. Solomon is King. And Solomon prays a very manly prayer; no less than 28 verses in your King James Bible.

Solomon knows that God’s heart is toward His people. And Solomon is concerned for the Jews. When you pray, are you aware of the needs of those you pray for? Are you concerned, like Solomon, for their hearts? Solomon knows how greatly the people of the LORD need to pray. That’s the essence of II Chronicles chapter six and Solomon’s 28 verse prayer. Here’s some of what he prays.

What if the LORD’s people are defeated because of sin? Look with me at II Chronicles 6:24. *“And if thy people Israel be put to the worse before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee; and shall return and confess thy name,* ***and pray*** *and make supplication before thee in this house;*

*(25) Then hear thou from the heavens, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel, and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest to them and to their fathers.”*

What if there’s no rain? *(26) “When the heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; yet* ***if they pray*** *toward this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou dost afflict them;…”*

What if they go out to battle? *(34) “If thy people go out to war against their enemies by the way that thou shalt send them, and* ***they pray*** *unto thee toward this city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name;…” (37)* *If thy people go out to war against their enemies by the way that thou shalt send them, and* ***they pray*** *unto thee toward this city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name;…”*

What if they’re captured in a war? *(38)* *If they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captives,* ***and pray*** *toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name*:

 *(39) Then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling place, their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee.”*

Next, turn with me to II Chronicles seven and find God’s answer to Solomon after his prayer. Look with me at 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. (2) And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house.*

*(3) And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth forever.”*

The burnt offerings and the sacrifices are burnt up. Then, the glory of the LORD fills the house; the glory being the presence of the LORD. And they worshipped.

The LORD’s people needed to pray in 970 B.C. And the LORD’s people need to pray in 2015.

I’ve titled today’s sermon “If My People … Will Pray.” Shall we pray?

Now, what would you expect after Solomon’s prayer; after the sacrifices are burnt up; after the glory of the LORD fills the house? What comes next? Please read with me what your Bible says happened.

II Chronicles 7:12 “*And the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice. (13) If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people;*

*(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.”*

God always has a way to get His people to come to Him in true prayer. Maybe you’ve never noticed it before. But often the LORD allows, let’s say pressure or problems to come into our lives for just this exact reason. He wants His people to pray.

Look again at verse thirteen. II Chronicles 7:13 “*If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; (14) If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray,…”*

Would you agree with me that trouble might be the first indication that God is calling you to pray? And wouldn’t the same hold true for our Church family? Trouble is not out of God’s realm to use to bring us to our knees, is it? Actually, trouble is sometimes the only reason people turn to the LORD in prayer.

Look with me at the LORD’s words to Solomon and see if there isn’t a message here for you today.

One, the LORD hears. II Chronicles 7:12 *“I have heard your prayer.”*

I’m sure you’ve sometime thought “Does the LORD hear *my* prayers?” Well, let me ask you this. If your son or your daughter came to you with a request, would you or would you not listen? What does the Bible say?

Psalm 34:15 *“The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.”*

I Chronicles 5:20 *“…they cried to God in the battle, and he was intreated of them; because they put their trust in him.”*

Psalm 34:3 *“I sought the Lord, and he heard me,…”*

Psalm 66:19 *“…God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer.”*

Have you ever said “I just had to pray”?

A few weeks back someone in our Church lost a check. She needed the money. But eh check was nowhere to be found. She, like the woman with the lost coin, searched everywhere. She mentioned it in our Prayer Service. We prayed. The next week she came and said “I was sitting in the doctor’s office reading a book. And that check fell out of the book right into my lap. It’s as if the LORD just dropped it into my lap.” To you that may not be very significant. But what if you were that woman?

Someone else came to me this week and said “I lost this much income. So, this morning I prayed and asked the LORD if He would send me enough to make up for the lost income. And the same day the LORD sent them just what they needed; the same amount.”

One, the LORD hears.

Two, the LORD knows exactly what sort of trouble to send into your life to get you to pray.

II Chronicles 7:13 “*If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; (14) If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray,…”*

Folks, the LORD sees the *big* picture. Rain affects everyone. Locusts in the trees affects everyone. Pestilence affects all of us.

When you pray if you are only thinking about just you and just your problems and you forget that God sees your life in conjunction with a whole lot of other people, you will miss His hand at work.

Yet, trouble and trial, suffering and sorrow, are often the very things that speak to us the most clearly. And folks, remember this, God-sent trouble isn’t just an indication that God is displeased with you. He just knows that you need to pray.

Yes, we mess up. We sin. Yet, aren’t we the sons and daughters of Almighty God? Is not the King of Heaven your Father?

Psalm 50:15 *“And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.”*

Psalm 91:15 *“He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.”*

Change your mind along with me today. Let’s see that our troubles are shared troubles. When I have a need or I am experiencing a problem, a God-sent problem, should I keep it from my wife? Or should we not pray?

Is it any different in our Church? A large group of our EBC family moved away over the last year. Now, have you considered that you need to surrender to pray? Some in our Church family are hurting. Our weekly income has dropped significantly in the past twelve months? Is that not a call from Heaven to *you* to pray?

Now, why is it that the LORD sends trouble? Here’s why. The LORD wants to change your desires. He wants you to desire Him. And, as sad as it may be to have to admit, the reality is this. We can get along without God until something major happens.

Psalm 119:71 *“It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.”*

One of God’s plainest statutes is this. I Thessalonians 5:17 *“Pray without ceasing.”* And here’s another. Philippians 4:6 *“Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”*

One great prayer warrior of days gone by, Pastor E.M. Bounds said this. “The prayer power has never been tried to its full capacity. If we want to see might wonders of divine power and grace wrought in the place of weakness, failure, and disappointment, let us answer God’s standing challenge.” Here’s that challenge.

Jeremiah 33:3 *“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”*

Prayer is a basic need of the Christian’s existence. God invites us to live right next to Him daily and hourly; and moment-by-moment. He wants your fellowship. And when we don’t choose to fellowship with Him, He provides us a reminder. That reminder might come in the form of trouble.

One, the LORD hears.

Two, the LORD knows exactly what sort of trouble to send in order to get us to pray.

Third, there is only one group who *must* pray; one group who are called to pray; a group designated in Scripture as “My people.”

Here is the verse that will change everything. 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.”*

The LORD’s people are those people God has put on planet earth to pray. The heathen pray. They pray to their gods. Yet, who is it that God calls to pray? Is it not His people? And, when have you seen the Church at prayer? When have *you* joined the Church at prayer?

Folks, the LORD’s people respond differently to trouble than the world.

Who really are we? I Peter 2:10 *“Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.”*

Think about what this phrase God’s people” means. It means that we belong to God. We are *His* people. We are not our own. I Corinthians 6:19 *“What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? (20) For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”*

God’s people are the people who belong to the LORD. Do you belong to Him? Have you been bought with the price of the Son of God? Has Christ died for your sins?

Those who are called to pray are those who have been to the Cross. We are the redeemed of the LORD. So, we are the ones who are called to pray.

One, the LORD hears.

Two, the LORD knows exactly what sort of trouble to send in order to get us to pray.

Third, God speaks to His people.

Fourth, the key to prayer is humility.

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.”*

Before prayer comes humility. Before anything comes humility. The one quality that sets your prayer on fire before God is humility.

The great prayer warrior E.M. Bounds said this about humility and prayer. *“Humility is a rare Christian grace, of great price in the courts of heaven, entering into and being an inseparable condition of effectual praying. It gives access to God when other qualities fail. It takes many descriptions to describe it, and many definitions to define it. It is a rare and retiring grace. Its full portrait is found only in the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Our prayers must be set low before they can ever rise high. Our prayers must have much of the dust on them before they can ever have much of the glory of the skies in them. In our Lord's teaching, humility has such prominence in His system of religion, and is such a distinguishing feature of His character, that to leave it out of His lesson on prayer would be very unseemly, would not comport with His character, and would not fit into His religious system.”*

Can you see which comes first? Humility, then prayer. Maybe the main reason we who pray haven’t learned the secret of prayer is because there is something missing in our lives – the Christ-like character quality of humility.

Can you see how God works? He sees that we are not men and women of prayer. So He permits trouble to come our way. Then He watches the heart. Will he or she humble themselves in light of the trouble? When we do, then, we pray.

E.M. Bounds again. *“Humility is an indispensable requisite of true prayer. It must be an attribute, a characteristic of prayer. Humility must be in the praying character as light is in the sun. Prayer has no beginning, no ending, no being, without humility. As a ship is made for the sea, so prayer is made for humility, and so humility is made for prayer.”*

I Peter 5:6 *“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:…”*

And why do you think humility comes before prayer? James 4:6 *“But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.”*

Now, let me remind you of one more thing regarding humility. Your humility is not your own. It is the humility of Christ in you. Please don’t think that you need to work up a measure of humility. Simply come to your Heavenly Father with your needs. You are already covered with the garment of Christ. Go to Him in faith that the only humility you have is a God-given humility. Rest in the One Who came humbly into Jerusalem as their King, the humble King of the Jews.

 One, the LORD hears.

Two, the LORD knows exactly what sort of trouble to send in order to get us to pray.

Third, God speaks to His people.

Fourth, the key to prayer is humility.

The last thing that needs to be said is this; God’s promises never fail.

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.”*

God promises to hear from Heaven, to forgive sin, and to heal the land. There are people all around us who need forgiveness and healing. America, CT, Old Saybrook needs forgiveness and healing. Can you think of anyone who doesn’t need forgiveness and healing? God has called us to pray so that He then can and will be both our Forgiver and our Healer.

There isn’t a soul here who doesn’t want God to hear our prayers, to forgive our sins, and to heal our land. And, folks, that’s what God has promised. And the One Who promised cannot lie.

Answers to prayer are rooted in the character of God Himself. He’s promised. So, when you come to pray this week, come with one of His promises on mind.

For example, Jeremiah 33:3 *“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”*

And James 5:16 *“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”*

And Matthew 19:20 *“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”*

Matthew 7:7 *“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: (8) For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”*

Matthew 21:22 *“And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.”*

John 14:14 *“If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.”*

Any promise God makes is an Absolute Promise. He will do just what He says since His promises are tied to His character.

One, the LORD hears.

Two, the LORD knows exactly what sort of trouble to send in order to get us to pray.

Third, God speaks to His people.

Fourth, the key to prayer is humility.

Fifth, God’s promises never fail.

In closing, let me remind you of the first Church prayer meeting. Those early disciples met for prayer in the Upper Room? Acts 1:13 *“And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.*

*(14) These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.”*

They prayed together and here’s what happened. And what happened when the prayed? Acts 4:31 *“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. (32) And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul:*…”

And what else happened? Acts 2:41 *“…the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls?*

Would you count yourself among those who obey God’s word? Will you count yourself among those who pray? And do you believe the message of II Chronicles 7:14?

Lastly, there’s a fictional story told about a man who got a permit to open the first tavern in a small town. The members of a local Church were strongly opposed to the bar. So they began to pray that God would intervene. A few days before the tavern was scheduled to open, lightning hit the bar and it burned to the ground. The people of the Church were surprised but pleased –

until they received notice that the would-be tavern owner was suing them. He contended that their prayers were responsible for the burning of the building. They denied the charge. At the conclusion of the preliminary hearing, the judge remarked as follow, “At this point I don't know what my decision will be, but it seems that the tavern owner believes in the power of prayer and these Church people don't.”
[found on <http://www.snopes.com/humor/iftrue/> prayer.asp#8zpCwckmzmEzX7SH.99]

Would you count yourself among those who believe in the power of prayer?

If so, would you join us for Wednesday prayer this week? We are continuing our study called “For Me To Live Is Christ.” But we first take time to pray for your specific needs.

And finally, a word to those who have never put their trust in Jesus Christ.

The greatest need in your heart and the largest problem in your life is your sin and the fact that your sin is what separates you from God. The Prophet Isaiah said. *“But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.”*

Yet, out of love, Jesus became the Substitute for your sins.

The Apostle Paul in the Book of Romans says this. Romans 3:23 *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” and (Romans 6:23) “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

There’s only one way to receive God’s Salvation. It’s through God’s Son. And here’s how. The Bible says Acts 20:21 *“… repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Will you repent and exercise faith towards Him?

Today is the day of Salvation? What will you do about the condition of your heart for eternity?

REPENT - “Will you change your mind about God, Christ, your sin, and God’s free gift of salvation?”

BELIEVE - “Will you simply trust Jesus Christ alone as the One Who paid the entire penalty for your sins?”

Here’s a simple salvation prayer for you to pray if you’ve never trusted the LORD for His free gift of eternal life. Salvation Prayer

* “LORD, I admit that I am a sinner and in need of your grace. I believe that You sent Your Son to the Cross to die for me. Please forgive me of all my sins and make me Your child. Thank you.”

Everyone who calls upon the Name of the LORD will be saved.

Now please turn with me to Hymn # 639 “Sweet Hour of Prayer”