

Title: **2 CHRONICLES**
“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee!”

Text: 2 Chronicles 7:14

Subject: *God’s Faithfulness to His Own*

Date: Tuesday Evening—May 6, 2003

Tape # X-56a

Readings: *Larry Criss and Bob Duff*

Introduction:

How often we are, like the children of Israel, brought into captivity because of our own sin, because of our disobedience, because we turn aside from the Word of God and walk contrary to the will of God! How often we forsake him! But he never forsakes us! If we had what we deserve, we would be forsaken of him. But, as he swore to Jacob, he has sworn to us, *“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee!”* How I thank God for his word of promise! He says to you and me, *“I am the Lord, I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.”*

He may scatter us, in loving chastisement, and hide his face from us, to make us know our need of him. He may bring us, as it were, into bondage and captivity spiritually; but our God will not utterly forsake us. Neither will he let us forsake him. It is written, *“They shall lie down in the evening: for the Lord their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity”* (Zeph. 2:7).

DAY OF DIVINE VISITATION

This day of divine visitation is described by the prophet Isaiah like this...

(Isaiah 12) "And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. {2} Behold, God *is* my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH *is* my strength and *my* song; he also is become my salvation. {3} Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. {4} And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. {5}

Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this *is* known in all the earth. {6}
Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great *is* the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee."

The Book of 2 Chronicles is a portrayal of God's goodness and grace in visiting, reviving and refreshing his people after they have forsaken him and have been brought into bondage because of their sin. That which is recorded in these 36 chapters of Judah's history is written of our learning and admonition, that we might be inspired by God's faithfulness to his people to walk faithfully with him.

GOD'S PROMISE

Let's begin with God's promise to his people in 2 Chronicles 7:14.

(2 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."

I do not know of any one verse in the Old Testament Scriptures that is more often quoted and more completely misinterpreted than this one. This verse is neither a formula for revival, nor a formula for the healing of any earthly nation's woes. This is a promise from God for his people, the people called by his grace and called by his name, because of his choice of them.

Here, the Lord God promises that if we who are his people humble, pray, seek his face, and turn from (repent of) our wicked ways, he will forgive our sins and heal our land (the land of his heritage, the church and kingdom of God).

The promise appears to be conditional and, in a sense, it is. God promises forgiveness and healing grace upon condition of our repentance. But, if you will turn back to chapter 6, where we have Solomon's prayer, to which God gives answer in chapter 7,

you will see clearly that our repentance is always the result of God's grace and never the cause. Look at verses 26-27. It is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance (Rom. 2:4). Christ, our exalted Prince and Savior, gives repentance and forgiveness of sins to the Israel of God. Clearly, Solomon understood this. In this part of his magnificent prayer, he declares plainly that when we have sinned, we will pray and turn again to our God, only when the Lord God himself has graciously taught us to walk in the good way wherein we should walk.

(2 Chronicles 6:26-27) "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; {27} Then hear thou from heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, when thou hast taught them the good way, wherein they should walk; and send rain upon thy land, which thou hast given unto thy people for an inheritance."

THE TEMPLE

The first seven chapters of this Book are taken up with the building of the temple in Jerusalem. Up to this point in Israel's history, there was no fixed, permanent place for the ark of God, no fixed, permanent place of divine worship, no fixed, permanent place to which men and women would gather in solemn assembly to hear from and worship the Lord God. The temple at Jerusalem changed all of that. Still, we must not fail to remember, that the temple itself was but a carnal, physical, temporary type of something far greater, far more magnificent, and far more delightful.

The temple was a picture, a type, a symbol of our Lord Jesus Christ. The New Testament makes this abundantly clear. Our Savior referred to his body as the temple that must be destroyed and raised again in three days. The whole Book of Hebrews relates the temple, its furniture, its priesthood, its sacrifices, and its services to our blessed Savior and his great work of redemption.

Because the temple Christ and his great work of redemption it also represents his church, the people redeemed by his blood and saved by his grace.

- Considered as a whole, the church is called the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16-17).

(1 Corinthians 3:16-17) "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? {17} If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which *temple* ye are."

- Because every saved sinner is part of God's church, each particular member of the church, every believer, is also called the temple of God (2 Cor. 6:16).

(2 Corinthians 6:16) "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

- As the stones used to build the temple were hewn, and shaped, and marked for their place outside the temple itself, so that there was no sound of hammer, or saw, or chisel in the temple, so God's elect were chosen from eternity, marked out in divine predestination for their place in the building of God, and made a part of the temple by a work of God's free grace in Christ. Still, there is no jarring sound of human effort heard in the building of God's temple! The household of God is a household of grace.

(Ephesians 2:8-9) "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: {9} Not of works, lest any man should boast."

(Ephesians 2:19-22) "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; {20} And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*; {21} In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: {22} In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

When the temple was finished, God was honored and worshipped in a solemn ceremony that lasted seven days. It was declared that God had fulfilled his word, that all the people of Israel were “*glad and merry in heart for the goodness that the Lord had shown,*” and that everything Solomon had set his heart to do “*he prosperously effected.*” “*Behold, a greater than Solomon is here!*”

(2 Chronicles 7:10-11) "And on the three and twentieth day of the seventh month he sent the people away into their tents, glad and merry in heart for the goodness that the LORD had showed unto David, and to Solomon, and to Israel his people. {11} Thus Solomon finished the house of the LORD, and the king's house: and all that came into Solomon's heart to make in the house of the LORD, and in his own house, he prosperously effected."

SOLOMON'S PRAYER

As we read Solomon's prayer of dedication in chapter 6, we must never fail to remember that he was a type of Christ. He made intercession for Israel, and even for the strangers and sojourners (God's elect among the gentiles) who would be numbered among the children of Israel; and all that he sought on behalf of God's people the Lord God promised to perform. What a blessed, delightful thing it is for us to know that our God will do all that Christ seeks on our behalf! He who makes intercession for us must and shall prevail!

In his prayer, Solomon, spoke of God's people praying toward the temple (6:21).

(2 Chronicles 6:21) "Hearken therefore unto the supplications of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, which they shall make toward this place: hear thou from thy dwelling place, *even* from heaven; and when thou hearest, forgive."

He was not instituting an idolatrous practice, like that of a Mohammedan bowing and praying toward Mecca. When he spoke of men praying toward Jerusalem, toward the temple, and

toward the mercy-seat, he was talking about praying toward heaven, looking to God in heaven through Christ and his finished work which was portrayed in the temple and the mercy-seat. We see this clearly in the publican's prayer, described by our Lord in Luke 18:13.

(Luke 18:13) "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."

Solomon's request in this verse (6:21), was but the foreshadowing of our Savior's promise.—"*Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.*"

In his prayer, Solomon specifically mentions numerous situations into which the children of Israel might because of their sins: famine, pestilence, captivity, etc. By the exercise of his chastening rod, using these things, the Lord would teach his own to walk in his way, and graciously turn them again to himself, confessing their sins, calling upon his name, turning from the evil, and seeking his face. When they did, Solomon asked God to hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal the plague sin had brought upon them. The basis upon which Solomon made this great request was threefold:

- They are "*thy people.*"
- The mercy-seat.
- The honor of God's name.—"*That all people of the earth may know thy name and fear thee*" (6:33).

Let's read the conclusion of Solomon's prayer together (6:36-42).

(2 Chronicles 6:36-42) "If they sin against thee, (for *there is* no man which sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before *their* enemies, and they carry them away captives unto a land far off or near; {37} Yet *if* they bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn and pray unto thee in the land of their captivity, saying, We have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt wickedly; {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. {40} Now, my God, let, I beseech thee, thine eyes be open, and *let* thine ears *be* attent unto the prayer *that is made* in this place. {41} Now therefore arise, O LORD God, into thy resting place, thou, and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness. {42} O LORD God, turn not away the face of thine anointed: remember the mercies of David thy servant."

FILLED WITH GLORY

Then, in chapter 7, the Lord God put his stamp of approval upon the whole thing. Fire fell from heaven and consumed the sacrifices, symbolizing God's acceptance of Christ's sacrifice for us, declaring that justice has been satisfied. Then, "*the glory of the Lord filled the house*" (7:1). Now, look at verse 3.

(2 Chronicles 7:3) "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* for ever."

That is exactly what happens when God saves a sinner, when he sees the glory of God in the sacrifice of Christ and the Spirit of God, "*the blessing of Abraham*," comes upon him (Gal. 3:13-14).

(Galatians 3:13-14) "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree: {14} That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

Then (7:12-16) the Lord God appeared to Solomon in a dream and said, "I have heard your prayer and will do all that you have asked."

DECLENSION AND RESTORATION

Chapters 8 and 9 described the greatness of Solomon, his wisdom, his riches, and his works—(Picturing Christ). Then we read the history of Judah after Solomon’s death. What a checkered history it is! It is the history of a nation favored of God above any people or nation in the world, a people chosen of God, redeemed and saved by his mighty arm, a people to whom God had revealed himself, a people who continued to live and exist only because God kept them. Yet, it is the history of a people ever turning from him!

But that is only part of the story. The history of Judah is the history of a people that God would not leave to themselves, a people he would not allow to leave him! Needless to say, as I read the history of Judah again, I could not help thinking, this is the history of my own life. It is a portrayal of my many declensions from my God and of my many restorations by his indestructible grace!

JUDAH’S KINGS

Chapters 10 through 36 give us the record of Judah’s kings of up to the time of their captivity. Nine of them were good kings. Eleven were bad. Manasseh, who reigned for fifty-five years on the throne of Judah, started out as the worst king in Judah’s history and ended up as one of the best, because God revealed himself to him and saved him.

REHOBOAM—As we read through these accounts, these wicked kings reveal the pattern of temptation, sin, and spiritual declension. It begins with Rehoboam following the counsel of his young men, following the counsel of the flesh. A little later, in chapter 12, verse 1, you will find a further lowering of the standards. When the rule of Rehoboam was established and was strong, he forsook the law of the Lord. He turned a deaf ear to God’s word. The kingdom was invaded by the Egyptians.

The moment we turn away from the rule of God (of Holy Scripture) in the temple of God, we invite Satan to take over. It was only by God's grace that the Egyptians were turned back. When Rehoboam humbled himself and returned to God, the Egyptians were repelled.

JEHORAM—The next wicked king, Jehoram, appears in chapter 21, verse 4. When Jehoram had ascended the throne of his father and was established, he killed all his brothers with the sword, and also some of the princes of Israel.

Jealousy was next. First, there was the refusal to give heed to good advice. Then a deaf ear was turned to the law. Now, the spirit of jealousy begins to assault the kingdom. This is immediately followed, as we read in verse 11, by another downward step. He added human inventions to the worship of God and mingled the worship of God with idolatry.

(2 Chronicles 21:11) "Moreover he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit fornication, and compelled Judah *thereto*."

In one sense, the high places did not yet represent open idolatry, just its beginnings. They were high hills where the people of Israel worshipped Jehovah with their neighbors and their neighbors' idols.

The problem was that that was not the place where God had told them to worship Jehovah. He had put his name in the temple and it was there that they were to worship and offer sacrifice. They were worshipping out on the hills because that was where their neighbors and friends were worshipping. They were simply down-grading and reducing the true worship of Jehovah to a lower level. This, too, was quickly followed by invasion and by disease. As you read, you find that King Jehoram was immediately afflicted by an invasion from the Philistines---

representing the desires of the flesh.

AHAZ—The next evil king is King Ahaz (28:1-2).

(2 Chronicles 28:1-2) "Ahaz *was* twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: but he did not *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD, like David his father: {2} For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim."

Here is the actual introduction of vile, despicable practices of idolatry which were primarily sexual in nature. Israel was increasingly afflicted by these practices. The kings were responsible for introducing them, as we read of King Ahaz (vv. 3-4):

(2 Chronicles 28:3-4) "Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. {4} He sacrificed also and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree."

Again Judah was invaded and some of her people were taken captive by Syria (v. 5).

What woes we bring upon ourselves, our families, our neighbors, our nation and the world, when we depart from our God, his Word, his worship, and his revealed will!

GOOD KINGS

By contrast, Judah's faithful and good kings reflect the grace of God in cleansing and restoring his people. They also reveal the instruments he uses. There are five great reformations recorded in Israel as God intervenes in grace to keep his people.

ASA—The first of these periods of reformation was under King Asa found in chapters 14 through 16.

(2 Chronicles 14:2-4) "And Asa did *that which was* good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God: {3} For he took away the altars of the strange *gods*, and the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves: {4} And commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment."

Asa destroyed the altars, images, and groves of the gods of the heathen. Then the Lord delivered his people (v. 9). The first mark of God's visiting his people is the restoration of his worship.

This seeking is followed by deliverance, (verse 9)

JEHOSHAPHAT—Then in the reign of King Jehoshaphat, the next king on the throne of Judah, there is another time of restoration after a time of failure. Jehoshaphat cleans out the idols of the land.

Later, in great weakness, Jehoshaphat made a league with Ammon, Moab, and Edom (the lusts of the flesh). But God graciously delivered him in a way that teaches us exactly how we can and must overcome the lusts of our flesh (20:15-21).

- The battle is not yours, but God's.
- You do not need to fight in this battle.
- Believe God!

(2 Chronicles 20:24) "And when Judah came toward the watch tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they *were* dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped."

Believe what God has done to the flesh in the cross of Christ. We do not have to fight the flesh. Nail it to his cross, rendering it absolutely worthless. When we believe and act on that principle, these things disappear. Even if they come back again five minutes later, they can always be overcome by this principle.

JOASH—Under Joash we see the people of Judah (Chapters 23-24) giving for the support of God’s cause. When God visits us in grace, we give ourselves to him.

HEZEKIAH—Hezekiah’s reign is marked (29-32) by the cleansing of the temple and the restoration of the passover.—When God visits us in grace, the sacrifice of Christ is prominent. All the garbage is taken out of God’s house.

JOSIAH—The last of the good kings in Judah was Josiah. His reign is distinctly marked by another thing that always identifies the day of divine visitation. When God visits his people in mercy, when God restores our souls, he brings his Word again to the forefront and makes it precious!