

March 3, 2024 – Sermon Notes

“Oh Say, Can You See – Part 2” 2 Chronicles 7:12-14

Prel Rmks

Text ~ Title

The Elders have called on the church to enter into a season of earnest prayer; and that we would find more time in our lives to spend before the face of God getting right with him ourselves, and then crying out to Him that He might have mercy on our nation and grant us repentance and stay his judgment which is so heavily upon us.

In conjunction with this call to prayer, my attention has been turned to that often quoted verse in 2 Chronicles 7 – verse 14.

Let's read that verse in its immediate context:

(12) Then the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him: "I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. **(13)** When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, **(14)** if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

INTRO

Last week, the entire message was an introduction to what we are going to preach about today. We spent the entire message establishing these verses in their broader context, and answering the question: do these verses apply to us as God's people today in the United States of America; and if they do apply, how do they apply?

You might wonder – why go to such lengths in an introduction? Well, here's why. There are two mistakes people make in the interpretation of verse 14.

Some say the promises God made to Solomon and to His people Israel in verse 14 are iron-clad promises that hold just as true for the people of God in any nation at any time.

There are other people who say there is no application of verse 14 for modern readers of the Bible. They say this is interesting Biblical history, but there's no application at all for New Testament believers in any modern country.

Obviously, I don't have time to go back over that entire introduction from last week. If you missed it, you can find it online and listen, but let me just summarize it all like this: we demonstrated in the message last week that both of those interpretations are wrong.

The iron-clad promises in verse 14 are NOT directly applicable to any other nation in the same way they were to the Biblical theocracy of Israel in Solomon's day. God is under no obligation to stay His heavy hand of judgment upon the United States or any other nation because of what's in this verse, even though we often hear it applied in that way. Perhaps another way to state this is: God doesn't look at the United States of America and say "My people" – not in the way He said that about Israel in the days of its Kingdom.

It is also NOT true that there is no application at all for New Testament believers like us --- We tried to show in the message last week that every passage anywhere in the Bible has application for our lives today.---

So, with that in mind, I want us to see how these verses do apply to us as believers here in a nation that has departed from God and is on the brink of destruction. And I want us to see how these verses do call us to seek God in earnest prayer.

(12)

Then the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him: "I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice.

God is answering Solomon's prayer of dedication of the Temple.

7 years – 153,600 workers including 3,600 overseers

Solomon had asked God to hear the prayer of the people when they sinned, and when they turned toward the Temple and cried out to Him – that He would hear and forgive.

We'll come back to v. 12 later in the message.

I want to ask 3 questions in the remainder of the message today.

And really what I am doing in this message is delivering a burden that is heavy on my heart.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (Lutheran Pastor during the Third Reich in Hitler's Germany):

"Silence in the face of evil is itself evil. God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act."

These 3 questions are "Oh say can you see" questions:

I. Oh say, can you see? Can you see that we are under the judgment of God as a nation here in the United States of America? 13

Verse 13 describes a time when God's judgment would be upon His people.

(13)

When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or **command** the locusts to devour the land, or **send** pestilence among My people,

These things would indicate that the judgment of God was already upon them.

Drought

Famine

Because of the destruction of the crops by locusts

Because of the destruction of the cattle by disease

Plague ~ Murrain

This could even suggest disease among the people themselves

So, God tells them here: when you under My judgment, if you will humble yourselves, and pray, and seek My face, I will hear and forgive.

Folks, that's our situation in our nation today:

It's not that we are expecting God's judgment to fall ...

We are already under the judgment of God!

No one disputes that we are a nation that has departed from God in a great way in the last 60 years. It would be impossible to dispute that! Let me trace how that departure played out for us as a nation:

1962 – Engel v Vitale: USSC decision = organized official prayer banned in public schools

1963 – a single atheist, Madalyn Murray O'Hare, took a case to the USSC = Bible reading banned. In another case, the Lord's Prayer was banned.

Those decisions were like untying a boat at the dock ...

Psalms 2:1-3 Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? **(2)** The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His Anointed, *saying*, **(3)** "Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us."

Late 1960s and 1970s – we began a decline into open sexual immorality and pornography and rebellion against God's design for family and marriage ... feminism began to take root in the culture and dominated relationships in the home – the divorce rate skyrocketed.

1973 – the infamous Roe v Wade decision = legalized abortion ... this decision devalued all of human life and led to an explosion of violence and bloodshed and immoral lifestyles and further rebellion against God in the culture of our nation.

1980 – Supreme court ruled that the 10 commandments were unconstitutional in public schools and could not be posted ...

Continued on: homosexuality began to be promoted as an acceptable lifestyle in the popular culture or pop culture: in the 4 M's: media and magazines and movies and music

All along the way, as these departures were taking place we can look back and see God allowing things to happen to get our attention.

One of our Presidents was assassinated in 1963

There were other assassinations in the late 1960s

The great Watergate scandal of the early 1970s

The calamitous ending to the war in Vietnam in the mid 70s

We had American hostages taken by Iran in the late 70s

A near economic collapse of the late 70s and early 80s

Then in the 90s God put a sordid picture of our own immorality as a nation right in the White House, in the oval office itself, day after day ...

2001 – 9/11 ... for a brief while ...

Collapse of the banking industry in 2008.

Continued moral decline until a watershed moment came:

2015 – Obergefell decision legalizing homosexual marriage ... a watershed moment in the spiritual history of our nation. It seemingly passed by with a yawn ... a great marking-off point!

Today: woke ideology and transgenderism - mindlessness

There's no dispute we have greatly departed from our God as a nation – the God who blessed us and shed His grace on us.

But what we need to understand is that our departure doesn't indicate that we are ripe for the judgment of God, as I've heard some preachers express it.

NO! The extent of our departure indicates that we are already under the judgment of God.

The best place to see that:

Romans 1:21 ... although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Romans 1:24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,

Romans 1:25-27 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. **(26)** For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. **(27)** Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

Romans 1:28-32 And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, **reprobate = unapproved mind; a useless mind; a mind unable to reason to sound conclusions** to do those things which are not fitting; **(29)** being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; *they are* whisperers, **(30)** backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, **(31)** undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; **(32)** who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

How do we know we are a nation currently under God's judgment?

Because we are a nation with a reprobate mind!

Can you see that is exactly where we are today in our nation?

We've lost our mind!

We can't think clearly about anything!

We are unable to solve any of our problems!

We're an insane society and culture: there's no other way to describe it!

If you are having trouble seeing that, let me just say a few words to support the thesis:

Open borders

Defund the police

No bail release of violent criminals by district attorneys

There are more than 2 genders

Gender is a matter of how you feel, not biology

Still not convinced, here's one for you: Men can have babies!

Supreme court justice – what is a woman? “I’m not a biologist.”

Border issue – Senate design a bill to stop it – Baptist Preacher
from Oklahoma = 5,000 / day = 1.8 million a year

Need I go on.

All of this kind of insane thinking has burst on the scene and out into the open since the that Obergefell decision in 2015 ...

It's brought to us primarily by one political party in our nation. You may think I'm being political here, but I'm really not.

John MacArthur several years ago – in 2020:

“From a Biblical standpoint, Christians could not vote Democratic. Because there's no way that a Christian can affirm the slaughter of babies, homosexual activity, homosexual marriage, or any kind of gross immorality. No way we could stand behind a candidate who was affirming transgender behavior, which, of course, is really the reprobate mind of Romans 1 ... these things aren't even political for us ... these things are Biblical. These things are laid down by the Word of God. We love God. We desire to honor Him, and upholding righteousness in a society is what a church is supposed to do. Any real, true believer [cannot vote that way – for a Democrat]. It's not just an individual. It's an entire set of policies that Christians cannot in any way affirm.”

So, all of this is a sign that we are already under the judgment of God!

As a society, as a nation, God has given us over to a reprobate mind! That indicates we are under His judgment and may have reached the point of no return.

So, first of all, oh say can you see?

Can you see we are already under the judgment of God?

II. Oh Say, Can You See? Can You See the Urgent Need to Pray? 14

What should be our response to the present judgment of God we are under?

(14)

if My people who are called by My name

will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways

If we are already under God's judgment, is it too late to pray?

Joel 2:12-14 "Now, therefore," says the LORD, "Turn to Me with all your heart, With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning." **(13)** So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm. **(14)** Who knows if He will turn and relent, And leave a blessing behind Him—A grain offering and a drink offering For the LORD your God?

Article for The Connection Newspaper: "Jonah Speaks to America: Is It Too Late for Our Nation" (copy available as you leave)

Jonah 3:1-9 Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, **(2)** "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you." **(3)** So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey *in extent*. **(4)** And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" **(5)** So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. **(6)** Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered *himself* with sackcloth and sat in ashes. **(7)** And he caused *it* to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. **(8)** But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. **(9)** Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?

THERE'S AN URGENT NEED TO PRAY. WE MUST PRAY.
If we should pray, how should we pray?

Humble ourselves

James 4:6 But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "GOD RESISTS THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

1 Peter 5:5 Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to *your* elders. Yes, all of *you* be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "GOD RESISTS THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." (Quoted from Proverbs 3:34)

Proverbs 6:16-17 These six *things* the LORD hates, Yes, seven *are* an abomination to Him: **(17)** A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood,

Proverbs 8:13 The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the **perverse perverted or fraudulent** mouth I hate.

Pray = prayer is an expression of dependence on God. Not prideful independence from God ...

What should be the first order of business as we begin to get serious with God in our praying?

Seek My face – turn back to Him ~

Turn from our own wicked ways

Are we willing to set aside business-as-usual and sacrificially find time to humble ourselves in prayer?

III. Oh Say Can You See? Can You See That It Is Only Because of the Sacrifice of Jesus On Our Behalf That We Can Pray? 12b

v. 12 – God says: I have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice.

2 Chronicles 7:1-3 When Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. **(2)** And the priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD's house. **(3)** When all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD on the temple, they bowed their faces to the ground on the pavement, and worshiped and praised the LORD, *saying: "For He is good, For His mercy endures forever."*

Conclusion

“So what?” --- We need to pray! Like never before, we need to pray!

We need to pray because it will take a work of God to turn this nation back to Himself.

The election of a new President won't do it ... on the brink ...

One 4 year term of a new administration won't do it ...

We certainly can't do it – none of us have the power to turn this nation back to God. We can do what we can and we should do what we can, but without God all our human effort will come to nothing.

So, where do we begin. Maybe we begin where Jeremiah ended the book of Lamentations. Maybe this should be our prayer:

Lamentations 5:21-22 Turn us back to You, O LORD, and we will be restored; Renew our days as of old, **(22)** Unless You have utterly rejected us, *And* are very angry with us!

We need to pray because it will prepare us for the future no matter what that future is:

Habakkuk – how long oh Lord ...

Habakkuk 3:17-19 Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls— **(18)** Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. **(19)** The LORD God is my strength .

**A Call for All Members of Grace Baptist Church
To Enter a Season of Earnest Prayer
Issued by the Elders of Grace Baptist Church
Grand Bay, Alabama
February 25, 2024**

In 2 Chronicles 7:14, God gave His people Israel these conditions for deliverance from His judgment and healing from the consequences of His judgment:

“if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

The need for God’s people in our nation to seek Him in this way has never been greater. Our country is deeply divided spiritually, morally, ideologically, and politically. What we see happening at a spiritual level is that God, in His righteous judgment, has given our nation over to a “reprobate mind”, which means a useless mind (Romans 1:28). This explains the insane ideas currently being promoted and the dangerous and damaging policies currently being employed. Unless God in His wrath remembers mercy (Habakkuk 3:2), we are ultimately facing destruction. Jesus said, “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand” (Matthew 12:25). Unless God stays His hand of judgment, this will certainly be the fate of the United States.

Meanwhile, at the very time when our nation needs strong churches and believers to be salt and light, churches in America have never been weaker, more leavened with worldliness, and more “at ease in Zion” (Amos 6:1). 2 Chronicles 7:14 applied in our day is not a call for unbelievers to be converted. It is a call for God’s people to repent and seriously seek Him. It is a call for us to turn from our ignorance and apathy, see the spiritual condition and physical peril we are in, and turn earnestly to God for His help and healing. It is a call to end our contentment with our own ease and comfort, to be willing to discontinue “business as usual” in our lives, and to sacrificially set aside time to be before God, seeking His face and getting right with Him.

Accordingly, we, as Elders of this church, are praying that such a revival in our nation will begin with us at Grace Baptist Church. We, therefore, call on our fellow members to join us in an extended season of earnest and sacrificial time spent in prayer; a season that will involve sacrifice for each of us in our personal life, our family life, and our corporate life together as a church body. We call on each member of the church to immediately begin this season of prayer by arranging their personal schedules to give priority to daily time spent praying.

We may later expand this call to our brothers and sisters in Christ in other churches, but for now let it begin with us. In the words of the old hymn we used to sing, “Lord, send a revival, and let it begin in me.”

Your servants in Christ,
Eugene Conway
Fred Leonard
Craig McCarter
Paul Meredith

Jonah Speaks to America

Is It Too Late for Our Nation?

By Paul Meredith

Pastor of Grace Baptist Church

Grand Bay, Alabama

When we think of the prophet Jonah in the Bible, we usually think of him in the belly of a whale. (Actually, it was not a whale, but a large fish.) He got there by trying to run away from God, which is never a good idea. God wanted him to go to the city of Nineveh and cry out to the people living there against their wickedness. Jonah didn't want to do that, so he caught a ship going in the opposite direction. It's quite a story and you can read all about it in your Bible, but he ends up getting thrown overboard by his fellow travelers into a stormy sea and it looked like the end for the reluctant prophet. But the Bible tells us God had "prepared" a "great fish" to save Jonah's life and take him back in the right direction (Jonah 1:17). After three days, when God spoke to that fish and it spit Jonah up on dry ground, he realized he best go and do what God wanted him to do!

What do we know about Nineveh? It was built by Nimrod, and was, therefore, one of the oldest cities mentioned in the Bible (Genesis 10:11). It was located along the east bank of the Tigris River where the modern city of Mosul, Iraq is today. The Bible calls it a "great" city, meaning that it was a large and powerful city. It was so large that it took three days just to walk all the way through it. At its height, Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, making it the power center for the kingdom and one of the great power centers of the world.

But as great and powerful as it was, the Bible tells us that Nineveh was also great in its wickedness. God told Jonah to go "and cry out against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me" (Jonah 1:2). History records that Nineveh was filled with every form of vile sin and gross immorality that could be imagined. Lewdness and debauchery of every sort, including rampant incest, characterized the moral nature and lifestyle of its leaders and inhabitants. It was notorious as an evil and exceedingly violent city.

What was Jonah's message to Nineveh? When he arrived in Nineveh, Jonah walked about 20 miles inside the city and delivered a very simple message: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" (Jonah 3:4). No fancy alliterated outline. No funny stories. No moving illustrations. No alter call given at the end. Just the prophet of God delivering the message from God: "Destruction lies just ahead!"

What happened next? What happened next was as improbable as the "great fish" portion of the story. What happened next can only be described as a genuine work of God, an unexpected revival, an unanticipated great awakening! When the people of Nineveh heard Jonah's prophecy of coming destruction, they were cut to the heart and God brought them to repentance. When the king of Nineveh heard what was taking place among the people, repentance toward God became the law of the kingdom by his decree (Jonah 3:6-9). "Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it" (Jonah 3:10). Nineveh was spared, at least for a few more generations.

How does this speak to our nation today? It should be obvious but let me spell it out in no uncertain terms. Taken as a whole, and based on our laws and our public policies, we live in a wicked nation that has forsaken God. And just like Nineveh, our wickedness has come up before God. The evil and violence of America is unsurpassed in the earth. Think of abortion and other forms of murder that are so rampant throughout the land. Think of the pornography, sexual perversion,

transgenderism, and other forms of immorality and rebellion against God's created order that are so open and openly endorsed by our leaders and our laws.

Because of this, we are already experiencing the judgment of God. He has turned us over to a "reprobate mind" as described in Romans 1. That means we can no longer distinguish between right and wrong. We "call evil good, and good evil" (Isaiah 5:20). It also means we can't think in a sane and rational way about the issues we face, and we can no longer reason our way to correct conclusions about how to solve our problems. Just think of our open borders. Think of city governments all over the nation deciding to "defund the police". Think of the unbelievably confused, chaotic and disastrous plan we had for withdrawing from Afghanistan. We make decisions as a nation and implement policies that are immoral and insane. We've obviously lost our way! God has turned us over to a reprobate mind! We are already experiencing His judgment!

Is it too late for America? The answer is: we don't know. It may be too late. One thing is certain. We are on a path that will certainly lead to destruction. Unless God does in this nation what He did in Nineveh, destruction lies just ahead. Nothing short of a heaven-sent revival along the order of those historic Great Awakenings will save this nation now, and that kind of revival always begins with God's people. God's church must first repent and get right with Him. One church in Grand Bay keeps 2 Chronicles 7:14 on their sign continually to remind us of God's invitation: "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." Who knows if God will spare our nation by granting us repentance like He did for the people of Nineveh? But it is time, in fact it is past time, for the reluctant prophets in America to cry out against the wickedness all around us and sound the warning!

Is it too late for you? Regardless of what happens to the nation, even in these last days God is still saving individual people who come to Him based on what His Son did. And what did Jesus Christ do? He died on the cross as the only sacrifice God will accept as the satisfactory payment for the penalty of sin. Then three days later He rose from the dead to be the living Lord of all creation.

Jonah's time in the belly of that fish was a gospel sermon preached more than 800 years before the time of Christ. In Matthew 12:40 Jesus Himself made the connection for us: "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." If you will trust in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross as the payment for your sins, and believe that He is now the living Lord, and if you will submit to Him as your Lord, then it is not too late for you. This is the gospel. This is the good news!

