

Dear Friends,

The most basic method to arrive at the correct lesson a Bible passage teaches, aside from context is to ask these simple questions of the text. 1) Who wrote the text? Who was the human author? 2) To whom did he write or address these words? 3) What was his objective in the writing? When we apply these questions, plus context, to our study verse, we realize that the Lord intended these words to us, not to "Those other people." If we look in the New Testament mirror at ourselves, we shall see areas where each of us fails, and we need to seek the Lord's forgiveness and direction to overcome our own weaknesses and find His restoration and healing. Few passages in the Bible as simply and clearly lead us gently, step by step, through this process or

turning to the Lord and realizing His healing balm and His restored joy in our lives.

This is the reason the gospel is described in Scripture as good news. It teaches us the glorious good news about Jesus and what He has done for us. It also teaches us the glorious good news of His loving and gracious forgiveness when we turn away from ourselves and turn to Him. I need this lesson every day. Don't we all? Lord help us to take it to heart and apply its balm to our hearts today.

Lord bless,  
Joe Holder

**God's Prerequisite for Blessing "My People"**

*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. (2 Chronicles 7:14 KJV 1900)*

In my last article from 2 Timothy 2:15, I referenced a man who claimed to allow his Bible to “Drop open” with his promise to preach a sermon from the first verse he noticed on the open page. Over a few years, he did the same thing several times and always spoke from our study verse. I sincerely confess my fault. Enduring this man’s charade at preaching (He confessed to slothful lack of study, and then professed qualification to “Preach” from

supposedly any verse in the Bible); and hearing multiple sermons over the years in which the speaker either ignored or misrepresented “my people,” I confess to struggling with the respect this verse rightly deserves in my study and preaching. Please say a special prayer for me to overcome this “History” and honor the passage with its correct teaching.

By “Then” which links God’s commanded conduct from “my people” to what follows, God makes it clear that His stated blessings, hearing their prayers, forgiving their sins, and healing their land are contingent on His people following the stated model of conduct from the passage.

We can’t rightly apply the lesson as the Holy Spirit intended until we answer a basic question. Who are “my people” in this verse? God’s words in this verse were part of His response to Solomon’s dedication

prayer upon completing the building of the temple. Most of the writings and teachings I've heard from this verse wrongly defined "my people," so their application of the blessings was wrong as well.

All too often, I hear "Red Christians" "Preach" this sermon to "Blue Christians," accusing them of their failure to follow God's ways, or "Blue Christians" preaching the same sermon to "Red Christians." There is nothing in this verse or its context that leads us to conclude that God addressed these words or their intended blessings to all the citizens of any nation, as a whole, not even ancient Israel. As Paul wrote by the direction of the Holy Spirit—

*For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.* (Romans 9:6b KJV)

Whether we think in terms of Solomon's lifetime and his dedication prayer or Paul's lifetime, every person identified as a citizen of any given nation is not saved, is not rightly to be described as "my people." While we may humbly look back on our nation's beginning and believe the Lord's providence aided in gaining independence and in the framing of our form of government, this does not rationalize the popular idea of our day among Christians that our country is "God's nation" today, leading them to preach sermons, write endlessly from our study verse and apply it to our country.

Further, nothing in this verse or context teaches that we "Preach" the verse to justify ourselves and use it to accuse others and think they need repentance. Above all, this lesson turns the mirror of God's righteous judgment on the person

looking in the mirror, on ourselves, and impose His warnings and provision for blessings on us, not someone else. This point is of premier importance in our day because of the prevalence of pride (“Me, humble myself? How dare you suggest that I need repentance or humility.”) or its inevitable fruit, prideful refusal to repent (“Are you telling me you think I’m doing something wrong?”).

If each of us were to read this verse and apply its teachings to our personal Christian life or to our own church’s conduct, what might the impact be? If I learn the Spirit’s message to seven different churches in Revelation, chapters 2-3, almost every believer and every church in the country needs to repent of some attitude or behavior which the Lord disapproves. Almost every believer, myself included along with you, has some pet ideas and

behaviors that we fiercely defend and justify, but which the Lord rejects in Scripture. Want a simple example? In Matthew 18, Jesus taught one of the clearest lessons we could read regarding how an offended believer should attempt to resolve his/her personal grievances with another believer. The last time you were offended by a brother or sister in your church, did you follow Jesus' teaching in this lesson? And, if we refuse to obey Jesus' simple instructions in this manner, do we not need to repent of our failure to obey Him? Why do we profess to be Christians? To live the Christian life? Is it to please our personal philosophy and pride? Or is it to strive to please Jesus? If we want to please Him, shouldn't we hear, believe, and practice His instructions? What might be the outcome if you and I, upon confronting our own failures in this or any other teaching of Scripture, applied 2



Chronicles 7:14 to ourselves? That, my friends, is the point the Lord made to Solomon in this verse when we read it in its full context.

The verse further reinforces this point regarding “my people.” *“If my people, which are called by my name ....”* Why would they be called by His name? Why would people who knew them identify them by the name of God? The conclusion is that they lived by the teachings of God. Yes, the verse reminds us, as it reminded them. Even the most devoted professing believer can never attain perfect discipleship, perfect obedience. Perhaps the most instructive point of the verse rests in this teaching. The verse showed Old Testament Israel, as it shows us, how to confront and deal with our failures to measure up to that perfect model. I suggest that our Christian testimony to others may well prevail or fail based on how

we deal with our own failures. If we confess and deal with them in godly humility, even in our weakness and stumbling, we grow a reputation for living according to the “Name” of our God, for we do what He commanded us to do when we sin.

Now we are ready to examine the actual conduct the Lord requires of “*My people*” in this verse. As we study the verse and all its teachings, do not forget; God is the speaker. As born-again children in the family of God, we answer to Him, not to popular opinion or even our own opinion. Failure to address our lives and conduct to Him, ordering our lives according to His teachings in Scripture, ensures His chastening hand upon us. He will not hear our prayers from heaven. He will not forgive our sins.

1.     ...*shall humble themselves*. Our sinful pride tries to avoid acknowledging, much less taking responsibility for our sins. We see this sinful pride in today's sinful culture. A wrong view of sin in any of its forms in our culture says far more than its advocates realize. We are commonly told that anything you do that does not become public information is not wrong, not sin. You are only called to account for being so careless as to be caught and exposed. This warped attitude contradicts every righteous principle of Scripture, of the lifestyle of a person who works to be known, to be "...called by the name of God."

Whether people know our sin or not, God knows, and God directs us to acknowledge our sin and humble ourselves under His "Name," His

commandments of righteousness. Humility acknowledges God as our superior and submits to Him and His commandments, including His commandments for how to deal with our sins. The ancient Hebrew pictogram dictionary, E-Sword Bible app, identifies the early pictogram definition of “Humility” by the image of a man bowed down under a large heavy burden. From that beginning, the word developed into the idea of bowing in submission. In this meaning, humbling ourselves is the mirror opposite of our sinful pride that stand up with rigid posture in defiance of God and His way when His ways do not agree with ours. Pride expects God to bow to us. Humility freely and willing bows before Him in submission.

2. ...*and pray*. Prayer, at its heart, is communicating with God, talking to

Him. If we follow His teaching, His commandments, we confess our sins to Him in submissive, broken-hearted humility. In this setting, to pray directs us to take our sins to the Lord in confession and prayer for His forgiveness, one of the blessings the Lord named in the verse to His people who follow His ways in the verse. Jesus included this point in His model prayer, *“And forgive us our sins; **for** we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.”* (Luke 11:4 KJV) Read Jesus’ words carefully. If we refuse to forgive others, we forfeit our privilege to pray for the Lord to forgive us.

3. *...and seek my face.* When we sin, Scripture teaches us that the Lord shall “Hide His face” from us.

*“Behold, the LORD's hand is not*

*shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and **your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.***” (Isaiah 59:1-2 KJV; emphasis added)

When we continue in our sins, we suffer the Lord’s “Hidden face” from us. But our study verse gives us instruction and hope. When we take our sins to Scripture and follow the Lord’s teaching for how we deal with our sins, our study verse says that we effectively “Seek His face.” We seek His counsel and humbly strive to follow it.

In 1 John 1:9, we learn that the Lord commands us to “Confess” our sins.

***“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”***

In this verse, “confess” was translated from a compound word which literally means that we say the same thing that God says about our sins. No more rationalizations. No more denials. No more blaming circumstances or someone else. We look directly at our sins and confess to the Lord exactly what He says about our sins. Both passages give us the same healing assurance of the Lord’s forgiveness.

Think about this solemn warning. David affirms our point.

***“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.”*** (Psalm 66:18 KJV)

Can you imagine living your life, including dealing with all your troubles, without the Lord's help? A true nightmare!

4. *...and turn from their wicked ways.* All the things the Lord teaches us to do so far are good and righteous. However, the process is incomplete until—and unless—we actually cease our practice of the sins we've confessed. Talk without repentance guarantees the Lord's chastening, not His forgiveness. True repentance, ceasing the practice of the sin, the Lord requires for us to find our way back to Him and His fellowship.

We now arrive at the Lord's promised response to our abandoning our sins and submitting humbly to His



commandments regarding returning to Him and to His ways.

1. “...*then will I hear from heaven.*”

Take strong assurance, my friend. When we follow this verse, the Lord’s first promise is that He shall again open His heart and ears to our prayers, which means that He shall answer them and send His protective sustaining providence to our aid.

2. “...*and will forgive their sin.*”

Can you think of any words more encouraging? You’ve spent your season in the spiritual wilderness all alone. You went through the motions of prayer and godliness, but you knew the Lord was not responding. Prideful denial or rationalization of your sins did nothing to heal the breach between Him and you. You went through all the right motions

but void of fulfilling joy. Then you bowed in humble submission to Him and to His ways, and you repented and confessed your sins to Him. You have read the Scriptures. You know what they teach regarding the Lord's forgiveness, but do those words truly apply to you? To your case? In this moment, you realize the truth of His loving promise. You sense His presence, His forgiveness. Above all you sense the amazing wonder of restored joy! (Psalm 51:12 KJV)

3.       “...*and will heal their land.*” The season of chastening has ended. The ordeal of the Lord's refusal to hear and answer our prayers ends. And glorious wonder. His joy is restored! Instead of one thing after another going the wrong way in our life, we begin to sense our life

taking on new and good meaning. Things start turning out right again. Truly our God is the best of all physicians. And we now experience His amazing healing. Instead of wrongly applying this verse to a whole nation, apply it to you. Apply it to your church. Do you need the Lord's healing for your sin-sickness? Does your church need His healing for duties neglected or blessings taken for granted? Every duty commanded and every blessing promised in this verse relates to individuals or to a collective group of children of God. The Bible never applies "My people" to wicked sinners, but to His own blood-bought children.

I close this study as I started it. We only experience the blessing of our study verse when we cease "Preaching" it to "Those other lesser Christians" and start

applying every word of the verse to ourselves, to our own life. And that, my friends, is the Lord's timeless truth to "***My people.***"

Elder Joe Holder