

FALLING UP

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Presented at Trinity Community Church, San Rafael, California, on Sunday, July 5, 2009

“No man stands so tall as when he bows on his knees to pray.”

King David reigned over the nation of Israel for forty years. The dream of his heart was to build a permanent structure for the worship of the God of Israel. While he gathered all of the necessary materials for doing so, it fell to his son, Solomon, to complete the Temple in Jerusalem. At its dedication, Solomon prayed, committing the place and the people to the worship of Jehovah. In response, God spoke to Solomon wondrous words of promise connected with the Temple that he had built.

We, of course, find no Temple in Jerusalem today, nor do we live in that part of the world. How, then, do those words of promise relate to us? Because the God who spoke them does not change, and because we have been introduced to a new and living relationship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ, the principles of the promise relate directly and perpetually to us. Let's see how.

When You See

God urges us to be alert and watchful, taking note of the general circumstances around us, for it is often through them that God speaks to and informs those who are listening.

2 Chronicles 7:13 *When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people...*

Note that God did not say “if,” but “WHEN.”

Drought, infestation, epidemic — these are natural disasters. Insurance companies call them “acts of God,” against which they will not insure. Such events are not “accidents,” as if they happened in a vacuum apart from God's oversight. They are God's efforts, not to beat us up, but to wake us up. He knows how to get our attention (if only we would turn our attention to Him!).

Economically, socially, culturally, spiritually... today, we're in trouble. It's not just the stock market or the politicians or the terrorists or the unbelievers.

Every nation has a purpose. If we cease to fulfill our purpose — as a nation or a church — God can shut us down. But before He shuts us down, He'll try to wake us up and get us to return to Him, for *with God* all things are possible, we can do anything He wants us to do.

Philippians 4:13 *I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.*

These acts of God are wake-up calls, to signal that it is time for us, also, to act.

If My People

2 Chronicles 7:14 *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 will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

Plainly, these words are not addressed to the general population but to those God calls *“My people...called by My name.”* A radical turn of events is not waiting on the world to get its act together, but on the church. It is *we* who must respond to these dreadful events, not in panic, but in deliberate, faithful response.

First, we are to humble ourselves. This is a call to fall down on our faces, to lower ourselves before the Almighty, as we lift Him higher.

There are four ways in which you may nurture your pride:

1. Dote on your own accomplishments
2. Keep a record of others' failures
3. Put your own interests first
4. Gossip about others

And there are four ways to develop your humility:

1. Confess your sins
2. Praise God
3. Obey God
4. Serve others in love

Then, we are to pray. We are not told to call not on politicians or celebrities, but on God. The sins of the world do not hinder revival; sin “in the camp” does.

Here are four ways to pray:

1. According to God's will
2. With faith
3. With obedience
4. Regularly and frequently

And we are told to seek God's face. Seek is a passionate verb of personal relationship, describing a sense of necessity, a longing. His face is His favor, His mercy, His grace, His kind disposition towards us because of Jesus.

There are four places to seek God:

1. In worship
2. In the Word
3. In prayer
4. In life's circumstances

The first three are familiar to most. The last is more seldom employed. However, considering the conditions of this passage which precipitate our response, it is critical. Can you read the handwriting on the wall? Can you discern the Lord's message in the natural languages of this world? Do you see His hand in the circumstances of your life? Or, do you wrestle with them blindly, trying to make sense of them? It is through the first three means of seeking God that He will give you understanding of the fourth.

Finally, God calls us to turn from our own wickedness. Again, it is not the wickedness of others that will undo us. For the moment, look past obvious wickedness, like murder or theft or abuse, to recognize the anti-God posturing of self-reliance, pride, idolatry, or simple lack of confidence in God. It is these “little things” that trip us up most often and cut off our heavenly resources.

The turning God requires of us is a *re*-turning to Him. Not in name only, but in the way we conduct our lives. This is more than being sorry.

Regret is being sorry—mentally (like King Saul, for example, who blamed others when his sin was revealed).

Remorse is being sorry—mentally and emotionally (like Judas, who failed to repent, “even though he begged with bitter tears”).

Repentance is being sorry—mentally, emotionally, and volitionally (like Peter, after he denied the Messiah, and other true disciples of Christ) — admitting the wrong, feeling badly about it, and making amends or changing behavior.

To such responses, God makes three radical promises: *“I will hear, forgive, and heal!”*

God *must* hear our hearts and know our needs. If we cannot get God’s attention, if our heart’s cries go unanswered, we shall never have rest.

But here is His promise in black and white: “I will hear from Heaven.”

And, though He hears us, if there is no tender-hearted mercy for us, no compassionate grace to meet our faltering faith, we shall never know His peace. Only divine pardon can soothe our fears and give us peace of mind.

And He answers with clear assurance: “I will forgive their sin.”

Attention and forgiveness, as deeply as we crave them, cannot keep us for long, if the world around us remains empty and foreboding. The growl of empty stomachs and the grimace of pained faces do not vanish by well-wishing prayers alone. If God will not restore fruitfulness and productivity for the hand and color for the eye and flavor for the palate, there can be no strength, no endurance.

Yet He plainly pledges: “I will heal their land.”

When God listens and forgives and blesses with health and productivity — that is life to the full; that is abundant life!

Now I Will

2 Chronicles 7:15 *Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place. My eyes and my heart will always be there.*

From this verse we may deduce that once God was not open and attentive, but *now* He is. He *always* listens to the sincere prayer offered in Jesus’ name. Jesus Christ, having fulfilled all that God required of a man, has opened a new way — begun a new day — not only for the Jewish people, but for all people who put their confidence in Him.

Jesus has promised to those who follow Him, *“I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”* (Matthew 28:20)

Hebrews 13:5 *God has said, “I will never fail you. I will never abandon you.”*

⁶ *So we can say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?”*

These results are long-term, not limited to the immediate need, because they are the result of an enhanced relationship with God. And that's what it's all about!