

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF SOLOMON

SESSION #14: 1 Kings 9:1-9 & 2 Chronicles 7:11-22

THE LORD APPEARS TO SOLOMON

TEXT:

1 Kings 9:1-9

v. 1 When Solomon had finished building the temple of the Lord and the royal palace, and had achieved all he had desired to do,

v. 2 the Lord appeared to him a second time, as he had appeared to him at Gibeon.

v. 3 The Lord said to him: "I have heard the prayer and plea you have made before me; I have consecrated this temple, which you have built, by putting my Name there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there.

v. 4 "As for you, if you walk before me in integrity of heart and uprightness, as David your father did, and do all I command and observe my decrees and laws,

v. 5 I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father when I said, 'You shall never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.'

v. 6 "But if you or your sons turn away from me and do not observe the commands and decrees I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them,

v. 7 then I will cut off Israel from the land I have given them and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my Name. Israel will then become a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples.

v. 8 And though this temple is now imposing, all who pass by will be appalled and will scoff and say, 'Why has the Lord done such a thing to this land and to this temple?'

v. 9 People will answer, 'Because they have forsaken the Lord their God, who brought their fathers out of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, worshipping and serving them—that is why the Lord brought all this disaster on them.'"

2 Chronicles 7:11-22

v.11 When Solomon had finished the temple of the Lord and the royal palace, and had succeeded in carrying out all he had in mind to do in the temple of the Lord and in his own palace,

v.12 the Lord appeared to him at night and said: "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a temple for sacrifices.

v.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,

v.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.

v.15 Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place.

v.16 I have chosen and consecrated this temple so that my Name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there.

v.17 "As for you, if you walk before me as David your father did, and do all I command, and observe my decrees and laws,

v.18 I will establish your royal throne, as I covenanted with David your father when I said, 'You shall never fail to have a man to rule over Israel.'

v.19 "But if you turn away and forsake the decrees and commands I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them,

v.20 then I will uproot Israel from my land, which I have given them, and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my Name. I will make it a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples.

v.21 And though this temple is now so imposing, all who pass by will be appalled and say, 'Why has the Lord done such a thing to this land and to this temple?'

v.22 People will answer, 'Because they have forsaken the Lord, the God of their fathers, who brought them out of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, worshipping and serving them—that is why he brought all this disaster on them.'"

INTRODUCTION:

Everyone needs a little Erma Bombeck now and then.

(Forever, Erma: Best-Loved Writing From America's Favorite Humorist by Erma Bombeck)

I defy any parent who has been on a trip with a child who kicked the seat for 50 miles, threw his shoes out the window, lost his pet snake in Cleveland during the five o'clock traffic and spilled his slush down your back to tell me she has never considered abandoning him at the next Shell station.

What mother has never fallen on her knees when she has gone into her son's bedroom and prayed, "Please, God. No more. You were only supposed to give me what I could handle."

pp. 18-19

How about a little cowboy poetry:

BELLE OF THE COWBOY BALL

By Less Buffham

Well it was a Cowboy Ball, the biggest grandest one they had.
 Looked forward to by one and all, 'specially the young both lass and lad.
 The band was hot tho the night was not, thru the snow the folks had drove.
 And many spent the night around, that old pot bellied stove.
 The hardwood floor was waxed and slick, to the benches 'long the wall.
 And laughter filled the rafters, of that country dancin' hall.
 There were punchers there and ladies fair, from every ranch aroun'.
 They'd come to stomp and t' visit friends, some even came from town.
 All the lads were in their wildest rags, and the ladies wore their best.
 The talk would be for days to come, how each and all were dressed.
 The fiddles sang and the guitars rang, to the square dance callers cry.
 Throughout it all at the Cowboy Ball, one young girl had my eye.
 She was such a thing of beauty, possessed with style and grace.
 As she whirled across the floor, a shining smile upon her face.
 She laughed and clapped and gave a bow, at the end of every song.
 When they would play all the old favorites, then she would sing along.
 And it really wasn't hard to see, she was the Belle of this Cowboy Ball.
 As she floated around with grace and ease, on the floor of that old hall.
 With a smile wide as a river, she danced with every hand.
 That had come from miles around, across that snowbound land.
 When the Ball was finally over, and they called out the last dance.
 I'd not had my turn with her, and feared I'd lost my chance.
 When she floated them into my arms, eyes a shinin' like the mornin' dew.
 And whispered then into my ear, "I'll dance this one with you."
 She looked across her shoulder then, at those faces long and sad.
 And said, "I'm sorry guys but I saved this one for Dad!"

(Chuck Pritchard-C BAR T-Belle of the Cowboy Ball by Less Buffham:
<http://www.dtx.net/~cbart/belle.html>)

As the scene of our study opens in the life of King Solomon, we are standing at HALF-TIME in his life. Since it is half-time, it is time for a word from the coach.

I am reminded of this passage as we prepare for this particular study:

1 Samuel 3:1-10

The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions. One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called Samuel. Samuel answered, "Here I am." And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he went and lay down. Again the Lord called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." "My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord: The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. The Lord called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

How precious the Lord is to reveal Himself to us at critical times in our lives! We have reached that stage in the kingdom of Solomon. He has been ruling now for twenty-four years. He started the building of the temple in his fourth year and that took seven years to accomplish. Then his own palace campus took thirteen years, giving us a total of twenty-four years of his forty year kingdom. He still have sixteen years left. Just like the Lord revealed himself to Solomon at Gibeon earlier, at the beginning of his reign, now once again the Lord returns at this critical juncture to speak with His servant.

(A Man to Match the Mountain: Overcoming the Obstacles of Life by David Roper)

During half-time of that Rose Bowl game in 1929, Riegles hid in a corner of the UCLA locker room with a towel over his head. His coach, Nibbs Price, said nothing to him and very little to the team.

Three minutes before the second half he said quietly, "The team that started the first half will start the second half. Riegles called out: "I can't, coach; I can't go back in. I've humiliated the team, the school, myself. I can't go back in." "Get back in the game, Riegles," Price replied, "it's only half over."

What a coach! What a God!
pp. 64-65

(Inspiring Quotations compiled by Albert M. Wells, Jr.)

The long, dull, monotonous years of middle-aged prosperity or middle-aged adversity are excellent campaigning weather for the Devil.

—C. S. Lewis

p. 133

(No More Excuses: Be the Man God Made You to Be by Tony Evans)

ROUTINE-ITIS: THE MODERN MAN'S EPIDEMIC

This is why the twentieth-century American man is such an empty creature. Legions of modern men suffer from what I call the "same old same old" disease. You ask them how it's going, and they answer, "Oh, you know, same old same old."

What they mean is, every day they get out of that same old bed and go to that same old bathroom to stare in the mirror at that same old face. They go to that same old closet and thumb through those same old clothes to put on that same old body. They go to that same old kitchen, sit at that same old breakfast table, and eat that same old breakfast cooked by that same old wife (I'm treading dangerous ground here).

Then they go to that same old garage, get in that same old car, and drive down that same old road to that same old office. There they work with those same old people, doing that same old thing, receiving that same old pay. At five o'clock they end that same old work and get back in that same old car to drive that same old road back to that same old house.

At home they hear the same old noise from the same old kids while sitting in that same old easy chair reading that same old newspaper. They finish their day by sitting in front of that same old television watching those same old shows. Then they retire to that same old bed with that same old wife, so they can get up and start it all over again.

p. 70

McNeely says it well:

In a sense, Solomon's life was divided into two parts. The words that open chapter 9 mark the beginning of the second half of his forty-year reign. This period began with another appearance of the Lord to Solomon.

The nation had reached a high point. A magnificent center of worship had been completed, national prestige had never been higher, and the grandeur of the Solomonic era was beginning to attract international notice. No situation could have been more conducive to decay. Someone has commented that individuals and society go through the same stages. Both experience birth, infancy, childhood, adolescence, and robust adulthood, followed by deterioration and old age. The Solomonic society was at its robust best in chapters 9 and 10.

p. 52

Lange observes:

In the divine address to Solomon the goodness and the severity of God are shown (Rom. xi. 22): his goodness in the establishment of His promises (vers. 3-5), his severity in the chastisement of backsliding (vers. 6-9).
p. 115

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown say:

The record of this second vision, in which were rehearsed the conditions of God's covenant with Solomon and the consequences of breaking them, is inserted here as a proper introduction to the narrative about to be given of this king's commercial enterprises and ambitious desire for worldly glory; for this king, by encouraging an influx of foreign people and a taste for foreign luxuries, rapidly corrupted his own mind and that of his subjects, so that they turned from following God, they and their children (vs. 6).
p. 256

Parker says:

Now the prayer is done. We have seen Solomon rise from his knees, and unclasp his hands, and stretch them forth and bless the people; and thus opening a new page in the history of Israel, and thus representing the dawn of a new era, in which surely there could have been no rebellion, no unkindness, no alienation, no war, no sin.
p. 317

The Bible Knowledge Commentary sets the stage for our study of these two passages in Kings and Chronicles:

As God had revealed Himself to **Solomon . . . at Gibeon** (3:4-5), so He did again, probably in Jerusalem. First, **the LORD** assured Solomon that He had **heard** his **prayer** of dedication and that He would **always** abide in the **temple** in a special sense. His people could always count on His **eyes** resting on them and His **heart** compassionately responding to their needs as Solomon had requested.
p. 505

v. 1 When Solomon had finished building the temple of the Lord and the royal palace, and had achieved all he had desired to do,

There are THREE KEY PHRASES in verse 1:

1. "HAD FINISHED,"
2. "HAD ACHIEVED," and
3. "ALL HE HAD DESIRED TO DO."

As we had said earlier, these two projects took twenty years of his forty year kingdom and he started these projects in the fourth year so there are yet sixteen years remaining in his kingdom leadership at this point.

Luke 12:19, 20

And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry." But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?'

McNeely says:

Solomon's desires for his kingdom had been realized. The house of the Lord and the house of the king were no longer sketches on planning boards but beautiful, functional buildings. Now the drive that had motivated the king and his subjects for twenty years was in danger of being inert.
p. 52

Baxter says:

The completion of the temple and the palace mark off the first twenty years of Solomon's reign (see ix. 10). The remaining twenty are briefly dealt with in chapters ix. to xi. The two chapters ix. and x. mark the peak period. Their eloquent description needs almost no comment here. They leave us in no doubt as to the material splendour of that time.
p. 100

Lange says:

Because men endure uninterrupted prosperity with much greater difficulty than they do crosses and afflictions, therefore, when they are at the summit of their wishes, and their hearts' desire, it is most necessary that the grave importance of God and of eternity should be held up before them, so that they may not fall into security, and forget to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling; for what availeth it a man, &c. (Matth. xvi. 26). He who thinketh he standeth, let him take heed lest he fall (1 Cor. x. 12).—The more abundantly God displays his mercy and love towards an individual or towards a nation, so much the more fearful will be the righteous sentence if the riches of His mercy are despised.
p. 115

Bob Buford describes Solomon's experience at this point:

He is a man who has achieved success and now the challenge is to switch from success to significance for the last half of his life and kingdom.
(Source Unknown)

v. 2 the Lord appeared to him a second time, as he had appeared to him at Gibeon.

1 Kings 3:5

At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."

Our greatest vulnerability comes at this time in our lives when we have enjoyed a certain measure of success and we have accomplished many of our goals. It is then that the temptations come thick and fast.

David his father had a very similar experience recorded in 2 Samuel 11, the experience with Bethsheba. David is probably fifty years old, he has twenty years left of his kingdom, he has realized all of his goals, he has done his thing, he is physically beginning to wear down. When you look at his life, he has accomplished the six major goals that he wanted to accomplish:

1. the kingdom,
2. the capital city,
3. a palace to live in,
4. extensive military victories,
5. the ark is in the city of Jerusalem, and
6. he has collected all the materials necessary for Solomon to build the future temple.

He has played the concerts, made the recordings, and written the books.

I think he also realizes that he only has twenty years left and he is half-way to the finish line or the turn-around time in the marathon of life. "Deathday" is now closer than his birthday.

2 Samuel 11:1-5

In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem. One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (She had purified herself from her uncleanness.) Then she went back home. The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant."

How precious and timely is this appearance from the Lord at the critical juncture in the life of Solomon.

The Lord lovingly comes at the hour of our greatest need.

Gaebelein says:

All depended upon the faithfulness of Solomon. Therefore the Lord appeared unto him the second time, not to say once more: "Ask what I shall give thee," but to assure him that He would keep His promise made to David and if he would be faithful his throne would be established. Then He warns against disobedience. If he serves other gods, Israel was to be cut off from the land and the house would be forsaken. How all this came to pass, Solomon's idolatry, disobedience, the subsequent shameful history of Israel's apostasy, we shall soon have to follow.

pp. 267-8

v. 3 The Lord said to him: "I have heard the prayer and plea you have made before me; I have consecrated this temple, which you have built, by putting my Name there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there.

The Lord assures Solomon that He has "HEARD THE PRAYER AND PLEA" that he gave on that dedication day of the temple. In response to that prayer He says:

"I HAVE CONSECRATED [or set apart, chosen] THIS TEMPLE, WHICH YOU HAVE BUILT, [and I did it] BY PUTTING MY NAME THERE FOREVER."

This verse CONCLUDES with some fabulous words:

"MY EYES AND MY HEART WILL ALWAYS BE THERE."

Psalm 34:15

The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous
and his ears are attentive to their cry;

In essence, the Lord is saying:

"You can count on My constant availability and My unceasing compassion toward you."

Patrick & Lowth say:

By his eyes and his *heart* he means his gracious providence, and his tender love and affection, should always have regard to what was done there; and it should be most acceptable to him.

p. 325

Parker says:

Was the answer worthy of God? We reply: It was a great answer, and, therefore, was by so much worthy of him who "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Solomon had desired in this prayer (see chap. viii. 52) "that thine eyes may be open unto the supplication of thy servant." Solomon desired that God's eyes might be upon the temple. What does God reply? He says, "Mine eyes shall be there perpetually." But that is simply covering the line of the prayer, and not extending that line by one point. Then look again; for we must have omitted somewhat in our quotation—"Mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually" (v. 3). Solomon asked for observation: God promised the presence of His heart: his love should glow in the place; his heart should be rendered available to the uses of the people. A sanctuary without a heart! what is it but a gilded sepulchre?

p. 319

v. 4 "As for you, if you walk before me in integrity of heart and uprightness, as David your father did, and do all I command and observe my decrees and laws,

"I did what you said, now you do what I said!" In essence, this is what the Lord is saying here.

The word "IF" allows us to understand that it is Solomon's choice how he invests these final sixteen years of leadership that he has before him.

There are THREE KEY WORDS in verse 4:

1. "WALK,"
2. "DO," and
3. "OBSERVE."

We could summarize it with the TWO WORDS:

1. OBEY and
2. "OBSERVE."

This is very familiar language, coming both from Moses and Joshua.

Deuteronomy 12:28

Be careful to obey all these regulations I am giving you, so that it may always go well with you and your children after you, because you will be doing what is good and right in the eyes of the Lord your God.

Deuteronomy 28:1, 2

If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the Lord your God:

Joshua 22:5

But be very careful to keep the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you: to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to obey his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and all your soul."

The Lord defines the "WALK" that he expects from Solomon by using his father as an illustration.

"IF YOU WALK BEFORE ME IN":

1. "INTEGRITY OF HEART" and
2. "UPRIGHTNESS,"

"AS DAVID YOUR FATHER DID."

J. Vernon McGee says:

David is a human standard, not a high standard according to God's standards. David had a tremendous capacity for God. He loved God but he failed, fumbled, faltered, and fell. But he got up and came to God in confession. He wanted to have fellowship with God. God told Solomon that He wanted him to walk before Him as David his father had done—in integrity of heart. . . .

My friend, we don't fool God. We might as well tell Him the facts because He already knows them. David walked before God in integrity of heart. When he sinned, he confessed it and asked for cleansing. Although his faith failed for a moment, beneath the faith that failed was a faith that never failed. Imperfect though he was, God set him up as a standard: "walk before me, as David thy father walked."
p. 266

Psalm 37:3, 4

Trust in the Lord and do good;
 dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.
Delight yourself in the Lord
 and he will give you the desires of your heart.

(Inspiring Quotations compiled by Albert M. Wells, Jr.)

The problem with most people is not in finding the truth, but in facing it.
p. 211

(Churchill on Courage: Wisdom for Perseverance by Frederick Talbott)

You must never make a promise which you do not fulfil.

Winston Churchill

House of Commons, November 11, 1942

(quote 104)

v. 5 I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father when I said, 'You shall never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.'

The word is:

"if" in verse 4 and

"I WILL" in verse 5.

Verse 5 is the LORD'S RESPONSE to:

"walk,"

"do," and

"observe" from verse 4.

"I WILL ESTABLISH YOUR ROYAL THRONE OVER ISRAEL FOREVER."

(Borden of Yale '09 "The Life that Counts" by Mrs. Howard Taylor)

The secret of William Borden's life, as it seems to a fellow-student, was his belief in the sufficiency and abiding presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. For this was more than a belief, it was with him an experimental reality.

p.184

The KEY TO BLESSING AND ABUNDANCE in the final sixteen years of Solomon's life centers on those words in verse 4:

"walk before me in integrity of heart and uprightness . . . and do all I command and observe my decrees and laws."

v. 6 "But if you or your sons turn away from me and do not observe the commands and decrees I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them,

The word "BUT" forms the CONTRAST.

The word "if" in verse 4 points to the fact that it is Solomon's choice. The same is true of the "IF" in verse 6.

I am reminded of the words of the Lord in the Sermon on the Mount in:

Matthew 7:13, 14

"Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.

There are THREE HOT WORDS in verse 6:

1. "TURN AWAY,"
2. "DO NOT OBSERVE," and
3. "GO OFF TO SERVE."

"IF YOU [Solomon] OR YOUR SONS [after you]:"

1. "TURN AWAY FROM ME."

This phrase takes us back to verse 3 when the Lord says:

"My eyes and my heart will always be there."

Revelation 3:14-22

"And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich, and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed, and eyesalve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me. He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

"BUT IF YOU OR YOUR SONS:"

1. "TURN AWAY FROM ME" and
2. "DO NOT OBSERVE THE COMMANDS AND DECREES I HAVE GIVEN YOU."

Just like always, there are CONSEQUENCES for disobedience.

1. "TURN AWAY FROM ME,"
2. "DO NOT OBSERVE THE COMMANDS AND DECREES," and
3. "GO OFF TO SERVE OTHER GODS AND WORSHIP THEM."

The progression here in verse 6 has been repeated too many times to number.

1. FOCUSING on the relationship when love grows cold—
"[YOU] TURN AWAY FROM ME."
2. Having turned away from the relationship the responsibility for that relationship is no longer there—So you "DO NOT OBSERVE THE COMMANDS AND DECREES I HAVE GIVEN YOU."
3. Without the relationship and the responsibility the normal pattern is to replace it with a new relationship—"GO OFF TO SERVE OTHER GODS AND WORSHIP THEM."

Patrick & Lowth say:

In the Hebrew the words are, "if in turning you turn from me:" which signifies more than their "at all turning from him." Rather it should be translated, "if they altogether turned from following him;" that is, fell to idolatry: for he did not intend to forsake them for every offence; but only when they forsook him, as the next words explain it.
p. 325

(Abba's Child: The Cry of the Heart for Intimate Belonging by Brennan Manning)

As Blaise Pascal wrote, "God made man in his own image and man returned the compliment."
p. 15

(Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul: 101 Stories of Life, Love and Learning by Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, and Kimberly Kirberger)

Experience: that most brutal of teachers. But you learn, my God do you learn.

C. S. Lewis

p. 160

(The Seeking Heart: Volume 4: The Library of Spiritual Classics by Fenelon)

Woe to anyone who tries to widen the narrow way!
p. 138

Stephen Ambrose has written an excellent book tracking the Lewis & Clark expedition to the Pacific northwest:

(Undaunted Courage by Stephen E. Ambrose)

When Clark returned, he brought back three hundred pounds of blubber and a few gallons of rendered oil. He had hoped for much more, but the carcass had been stripped by the time he arrived, and he had to buy what he got from the natives.

Despite Clark's disappointment, Lewis was more than satisfied. After eating, he felt so good he ventured a small joke.

"Small as the store is," he wrote, "we prize it highly, and thank the hand of providence for directing the whale to us, and think him much more kind to us than he was to jonah, having sent this monster to be *swallowed by us* in stead of *swalling of us* as jona's did."

p. 323

(A Man to Match the Mountain: Overcoming the Obstacles of Life by David Roper)

*There is a line, by us unseen,
That crosses every path;
The hidden boundary between
God's patience and His wrath.*

—Joseph Addison Alexander

p. 56

v. 7 then I will cut off Israel from the land I have given them and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my Name. Israel will then become a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples.

In this message from the Lord He says, "This is the way of blessing. If you do this, I'll do this. But this is the way of cursing, if you do this, then I'm going to do this."

I think it is very sobering to look at the words that the Lord uses here in verse 7:

"CUT OFF,"

"REJECT,"

"BYWORD," and

"OBJECT OF RIDICULE."

In essence, the Lord is going to do TWO THINGS and when He does them the RESULTS will be that:

"ISRAEL WILL THEN BECOME A BYWORD AND AN OBJECT OF RIDICULE AMONG ALL PEOPLES."

Those TWO THINGS are:

1. TAKE AWAY THE LAND and
2. LEAVE THE TEMPLE.

This is actually what happened because:

ISRAEL in the north was deported to the land of Assyria in 721 B.C.

JUDAH in the south was deported to Babylon in 586 B.C.

Ezekiel graphically describes, too, the departure of the Lord from the temple in:

Ezekiel 10:18, 19

Then the glory of the Lord departed from over the threshold of the temple and stopped above the cherubim. While I watched, the cherubim spread their wings and rose from the ground, and as they went, the wheels went with them. They stopped at the entrance to the east gate of the Lord's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them.

I am reminded of those tragic happenings when the children of Israel are defeated by the Philistines and the ark is captured. This is recorded in:

1 Samuel 4:17-22

The man who brought the news replied, "Israel fled before the Philistines, and the army has suffered heavy losses. Also your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been captured." When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell backward off his chair by the side of the gate. His neck was broken and he died, for he was an old man and heavy. He had led Israel forty years. His daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant and near the time of delivery. When she heard the news that the ark of God had been captured and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she went into labor and gave birth, but was overcome by her labor pains. As she was dying, the women attending her said, "Don't despair; you have given birth to a son." But she did not respond or pay any attention. She named the boy Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel"—because of the capture of the ark of God and the deaths of her father-in-law and her husband. She said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured."

Charles Colson in his devotional book A Dangerous Grace says:

The record of gore and inhumanity of this century, from the ovens of the Holocaust to the killing fields of Cambodia to the nightly slaughter on America's streets, ought to jar us into sober reality. The truth is, the human race hasn't outgrown sin, nor can we. It lives within us. Jesus put it succinctly: "From within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit . . . All these evils come from inside and make a man unclean" (Mark 7:21-23).
p. 125

(From A Dangerous Grace by Charles Colson with Nancy R. Pearcey)

(The Roots of Inner Peace: Finding Fresh Courage and Strength in the Face of Fear and Worry by Don Hawkins)

I grew up in Alabama, loving Crimson Tide football and relishing the legends about Bear Bryant. This native of Moro Bottom, Arkansas, inspired fear in his players, including professional stars like Joe Namath and Kenny Stabler. Six times Bryant's Crimson Tide wound up ranked number one, and they played in twenty-nine consecutive bowl games.

I remember hearing a story about how Alabama led by six points with only a minute left near the end of a crucial conference game. Instead of calling a safe running play, the quarterback called a pass play. When the pass was intercepted, it looked like the defensive back had a clear path to score which would be the winning touchdown.

Out of nowhere, the Alabama quarterback rushed to tackle the defensive player at the five-yard line. The defense held and the Tide won the game.

After the contest, a member of the opposing team asked one of Alabama's players, "How did your quarterback ever catch our guy? Our defensive back is a world-class sprinter, and your quarterback isn't known as a speedy runner."

The Alabama player replied, "Your guy was only running for a touchdown; my guy was running for his life. He was scared to death of Coach Bryant! We all are."

p. 134

v. 8 And though this temple is now imposing, all who pass by will be appalled and will scoff and say, 'Why has the Lord done such a thing to this land and to this temple?'

The QUESTION is:

"WHY HAS THE LORD DONE SUCH A THING TO THIS LAND [that is, "cut off Israel from the land"] AND TO THIS TEMPLE [that is, "reject" it]?"

The ANSWER is obvious back in verse 6. They:

"turn away" from the relationship,

"do not observe" the responsibilities, and

indulging in replacement by going off "to serve other gods and worship them."

Patrick & Lowth say:

Out of scorn and derision shall ask what is the matter, that this famous place, which boasted so much of the favour of God, is laid in ruin.
p. 326

Wiersbe says:

Because He loves us, God warns us not to disobey Him. Solomon did not heed this warning, and God kept His promise and sent discipline. God would rather destroy His holy temple than permit His people to pollute it with their sin.
p. 201

v. 9 People will answer, 'Because they have forsaken the Lord their God, who brought their fathers out of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, worshipping and serving them—that is why the Lord brought all this disaster on them.'

The TWO KEY PHRASES in verse 9 are:

1. "HAVE FORSAKEN" and
2. "HAVE EMBRACED."

These two phrases find their COUNTERPARTS in verse 6:

"turn away" with "HAVE FORSAKEN" and

"go off to serve" with "HAVE EMBRACED."

The REASON for all of this action on the part of God is:

"PEOPLE WILL ANSWER, 'BECAUSE THEY HAVE FORSAKEN THE LORD THEIR GOD, [this is the God] WHO BROUGHT THEIR FATHERS OUT OF EGYPT, AND [they] HAVE EMBRACED OTHER GODS, WORSHIPPING AND SERVING THEM—THAT IS WHY THE LORD BROUGHT ALL THIS DISASTER ON THEM.'"

What a sobering statement. One thing that we can be assured of here is that the Lord is not going to sit by indefinitely and do nothing in the face of disobedience.

McNeely says:

One of the great lessons to be learned and not necessarily experienced is that God does deal with sin.
p. 53

Wiersbe says:

The spiritual life of the nation was gradually decaying behind the veneer of prosperity.
p. 202

J. Vernon McGee says:

This also has come to pass literally. If you go to the spot where the temple once stood, you will see that it has been destroyed. The Mosque of Omar now stands there. Why is the land of Israel like it is? Why is the Mosque of Omar there? Israel forsook God, friend. That is the answer.
p. 267

Deuteronomy 32:28, 29

They are a nation without sense, there is no discernment in them. If only they were wise and would understand this and discern what their end will be!

Verse 9 is both PROPHETIC and PATHETIC!

(Heaven Help Us! Truths About Eternity That Will Help You Live Today by
Steven J. Lawson)

In a similar context of adversity and affliction, the exiled Apostle John was given the same vision of God reigning in absolute sovereignty. How comforting and encouraging that must have been to be reminded that God was still on His throne.

At the time, John desperately needed this divine perspective. From his limited vantage point, Christianity was becoming a lost cause. By the end of the first century, it had been sixty long years since Pentecost, and the gospel enterprise had hardly become a world movement. Under the tyranny of Caesar, the Roman Empire was overshadowing and persecuting the early Church.

Hadn't Jesus promised the gates of Hades would not prevail against the Church (Matthew 16:18)? Didn't Jesus promise that John and the disciples would perform greater works than He (John 14:12)? Hadn't John heard it with his own ears?

But just the opposite seemed true. The Church was being persecuted. Her preachers killed. Her voice muzzled. Her progress stymied. Her witness all but snuffed out. It just wasn't happening. John must have wondered, *Where is God in all this?*

Have you ever asked that same question? I do just about every time I watch the evening news or read the newspaper. This world is sinking deeper and deeper into a quagmire of iniquity, while the cause of evangelical Christianity seems to be on the short end of the stick. The Church appears to be making less of an impact upon our culture, not more. High-profile preachers have fallen into sin. Other churches have stopped preaching the gospel altogether. Like salt that has lost its savor, the Church seems to be impotent.

I find myself asking, "God, are You still in control?"

As we see our world falling apart around us, we all must be reminded that God is doing something. He has not resigned. He has not been impeached. Nor put out of office. He's not even up for reelection. There are no term limits to His being God.

pp. 32-33

(No More Excuses: Be the Man God Made You to Be by Tony Evans)

I like the final verse of the first chapter of Jonah: "But the LORD provided a great fish to swallow Jonah." (verse 17) You might call this a "whale-o-gram." Now it doesn't say that God created a great fish, but that He "provided" one. God didn't make a special fish just for Jonah.

People get hung up on this story, but there are known cases of people being swallowed by a large fish, like a great white shark, and surviving. The fish swallowing Jonah is not the big deal here. The big deal is that the fish did what Jonah didn't do. The fish obeyed God. So now we have the wind, the sea, and the fish obeying God. But we still have problems with the preacher.
p. 92

"Jonah, boy, I called you to preach. You can't preach, but I called you. I sent you to Nineveh, but you ditched Me. I had to send a fish after you. You finally obeyed, and you delivered your little old short sermon. I empowered your sermon so that it did something, and you got mad. You want to die because I'm good! What color coffin you want, boy?"

If I had been God, this would have been one dead prophet. This dude would have gotten on my nerves. But our gracious God says, "Jonah, it's a little hot outside today, isn't it? Why don't I provide a plant to give you some shade?"
p. 98

(Prayer—The Great Adventure by David Jeremiah)

I recently read an article that featured “The New Lord’s Prayer,” a felt-needs version:

Our audience which art on earth,
 hallowed (or at least greatly esteemed) be our name.
 Our destiny come, our will be done in heaven as it is on
 earth.
 Give us today our daily indulgences,
 and help us to love and forgive ourselves just as we love and
 forgive others.
 Lead us not into difficulty, suffering, or unhappiness,
 but deliver us from unmet needs.
 For ours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, at
 least here and now, which is what counts anyway.²

2. Michael Horton, “Our Father in Heaven,” *Modern Reformation*, 3.
 pp. 126-7

The Bible Knowledge Commentary points out that the word "scoff" in verse 8:

. . . literally means "whistle in amazement."
 p. 505

People "will be appalled" and amazed at what the Lord has done in response to the deliberate disobedience of His children.

It will be our plan in this particular study to turn to the COMPARABLE PASSAGE in 2 Chronicles 7:11-22 where we will pick up several other phrases that will be helpful to us in understanding what the Lord is saying to Solomon on this second appearance to him.

v.11 When Solomon had finished the temple of the Lord and the royal palace, and had succeeded in carrying out all he had in mind to do in the temple of the Lord and in his own palace,

"SOLOMON HAD FINISHED" his projects and "SUCCEEDED IN CARRYING OUT ALL HE HAD IN MIND TO DO."

From reading verse 11 Solomon is in a perfect position to have either a mid-life crisis or to get his gold watch and enter into retirement. "I have done what I wanted to do, so now it is time to play."

v.12 the Lord appeared to him at night and said: "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a temple for sacrifices.

We have the APPEARANCE:

PLACE in the Kings account and

TIME in the Chronicles account.

"I HAVE HEARD YOUR PRAYER AND HAVE CHOSEN THIS PLACE FOR MYSELF AS A TEMPLE FOR SACRIFICES."

The writer to the book of Chronicles would look at this from a PRIESTLY PERSPECTIVE and would be focusing on the sacrifices.

Dillard says:

This second appearance (1 Kgs 9:2) of God to Solomon provides the divine response to his prayer (6:14-42). In spite of its proximate juxtaposition to the prayer in both Kings and Chronicles, this second appearance came about thirteen years later, after Solomon had completed the work on his palace as well (7:11; 1 Kgs 7:1; 9:10).
p. 58

Gaebelein observes:

A second time the Lord appeared unto Solomon. At this time He did not say again "Ask what shall I give thee," but He assured him that Solomon's prayer had been heard and He had chosen the dedicated place for Himself. He graciously assures the King that if He has chastised His people by sending drought, locusts or pestilence and they humble themselves, and seek His face, turning away from their wicked ways, that He will forgive and heal their land. There can be no recovery apart from the conditions mentioned in these verses. His people who have failed must first humble themselves, pray, seek His face, and turn away from their evil ways. The warning given in verses 19-22 has passed into history and found its literal fulfillment.
pp. 427-8

Wiersbe says:

What an encouragement to know that God hears our prayers! God graciously granted what the king asked for, but He added a word of caution: "These blessings are given when My children obey." Disobedience brings discipline, not because God hates us but because He loves us and wants to bless us even more.

Prayer went up, fire came down, and glory moved in. Could you ask for more?
pp. 239-40

v.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,

You will notice it is the word "WHEN" and not "if" in this verse.

This takes us back to the PRAYER in:

1 Kings 8:35, 36

"When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because your people have sinned against you, and when they pray toward this place and confess your name and turn from their sin because you have afflicted them, then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel. Teach them the right way to live, and send rain on the land you gave your people for an inheritance.

The REASON for this action in verse 13 on the part of God is:

THE SIN OF HIS PEOPLE.

This is part and parcel of the chastening process the Lord goes through with his sons and daughters.

Exodus 6:7

I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.

Verse 13 is a very sober warning of what happens when His people sin.

(Our God Is Awesome by Tony Evans)

These "omni" attributes of God operate in tandem with each other. For instance, God can do anything He wants to do (He's omnipotent) anywhere He wants to do it because He's everywhere (He's omnipresent). God knows everything there is to know (He's omniscient) because all knowledge originates from somewhere, and God is present in every one of those places.

More than that, God can do with that knowledge whatever He chooses because His omnipotence gives Him the power to act on what He knows. And since He is omnipresent, He is always wherever He needs to be to do whatever needs to be done. God's full-orbed character allows Him to function in every sphere of existence.

p. 143

(No More Excuses: Be the Man God Made You to Be by Tony Evans)

Today we have a generation of men who suffer from "loser's limp." Anyone who has competed in sports knows what I mean by "loser's limp." It's what happens when an outfielder misjudges a fly ball and misses the catch, or when a wide receiver drops an easy pass. They fall to the ground and get up limping.

The purpose of the limp is to camouflage their failure. The impression they want to give their teammates and the fans is that the reason they didn't make the catch was because of a cramp or a muscle pull or some other sudden malady of the leg rather than their misjudgment.

So the limp becomes the athlete's excuse, his attempt to be exonerated of blame for his misplay. But while the consequences of a misplay in a ball game are relatively small, the unfortunate fact is that many men have developed a "loser's limp" when it comes to life. Instead of owning up to their failures and responsibilities, they excuse them, giving the impression that forces beyond their control are responsible for their circumstances.

p. XI

(Inspiring Quotations compiled by Albert M. Wells, Jr.)

God is holy; He hates sin.
 God is just; He condemns sin.
 God is sovereign; He punishes sin.
 God is gracious; He forgives sin.

—George Gritter

p. 79

v.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.

The little word "IF" takes us back to chapter 9:4:

"As for you, if you walk before me in integrity of heart and uprightness, as David your father did, and do all I command and observe my decrees and laws, [then the Lord will bless].

It is also a reminder of chapter 9:6:

"But if you or your sons turn away from me and do not observe the commands and decrees I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them, [then there are consequences for that as well].

This verse is used an awful lot in our day as the key for the restoration of America. It is the verse used by those who are hoping and praying and fasting that God will pour out a blessing in great revival on our land.

I think we need, first of all, to look at the verse in its context and expositionally. We then need to take the things from this verse that can be applicable to the situation in America today.

I do not know of any other verse that could summarize a fantastic half-time talk. This truly is one of the great verses of Scripture.

Whereas, you have:

the CHASTENING in verse 13 you have

a RESPONSE in verse 14.

"IF MY PEOPLE" takes us back to verse 13 where, once again, the Father speaks of them as "my people." They are the ones who are "CALLED BY MY NAME."

The Lord says if they will do FOUR THINGS here then He will respond properly:

1. "HUMBLE THEMSELVES,"
2. "PRAY,"
3. "SEEK MY FACE," and
4. "TURN FROM THEIR WICKED WAYS."

The Lord then gives you the RESPONSE to doing these four things. The Lord will do THREE THINGS for the nation Israel. "HE WILL":

1. "HEAR FROM HEAVEN,"
2. "FORGIVE THEIR SIN," and
3. "HEAL THEIR LAND."

All of these things can be applicable to the church, the bride of Christ, with the exception of "HEAL THEIR LAND."

The TWO THINGS that are in focus here are the:

"LAND" and

KINGDOM.

These things are part of the covenant relationship that Israel has with God. God has promised them a land and He has promised them a kingdom. Israel is an earthly people. We are a heavenly people. They are looking for a kingdom upon earth. We are looking for a heavenly Jerusalem.

The Lord is saying, in essence, to both Israel and the church, "IF [you] WILL:"

1. "HUMBLE [yourself],
2. "PRAY,"
3. "SEEK MY FACE," and
4. "TURN FROM [your] WICKED WAYS"

"THEN WILL I HEAR FROM HEAVEN AND WILL FORGIVE [your] SIN."

The BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATERS involves doing these four things.

Selman, in his commentary, says:

This paragraph reveals the heart of the book of Chronicles, and is actually Chronicles' summary of the essential message of the Old Testament. It invites people to take advantage of the enormous and unexpected benefits God gives through prayer.
p. 337

Let us take a little time to examine these **FOUR CONDITIONS** that the Lord wants to see in our lives before He will move into action:

1. "HUMBLE THEMSELVES"

The Lord is, first, looking for that humble and broken spirit.

I am reminded of that parable that the Lord Jesus told in:

Luke 18:9-13

And He also told this parable to certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer. The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'

The Lord then explains in:

Luke 18:14

"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted."

Psalm 34:18

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Psalm 51:17

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart,
O God, you will not despise.

(The Transforming Power of Fasting and Prayer: Personal Accounts of
Spiritual Renewal by Bill Bright)

Proud Spirits and Humble Hearts

Nancy Leigh DeMoss contrasts characteristics of proud, unbroken people who are resistant to the call of God on their lives with the qualities of broken, humble people who have experienced God's revival. Read each item on the list as you ask God to reveal which characteristics of a proud spirit He finds in your life. Confess these to Him, then ask Him to restore the corresponding quality of a broken, humble spirit to you.

Proud, Unbroken People	Humble, Broken People
Focus on the failure of others	Overwhelmed with a sense of their own spiritual need
Self-righteous; have a critical, fault-finding spirit; look at their own life / faults through a telescope but at others with a microscope	Compassionate; forgiving; look for the best in others
Look down on others	Esteem all others better than self
Independent / self-sufficient spirit	Dependent spirit; recognize need for others
Maintain control; must be their way	Surrender control
Have to prove that they are right	Willing to yield the right to be right
Claim rights	Yield rights
Demanding spirit	Giving spirit
Desire to be served	Motivated to serve others
Desire for self-advancement	Desire to promote others
Driven to be recognized / appreciated	Sense of unworthiness; thrilled to be used at all; eager for others to get credit
Wounded when others are promoted	Rejoice when others are lifted up and they are overlooked
"The ministry is privileged to have me."	"I don't deserve to serve in this ministry."
Think of what they can do for God	Know that they have nothing to offer God
Feel confident in how much they know	Humbled by how much they have to learn
Self-conscious	Not concerned with self at all
Keep people at arm's length	Risk getting close to others; willing to take the risk of loving intimately
Quick to blame others	Accept personal responsibility—can see where they are wrong

Proud, Unbroken People	Humble, Broken People
Unapproachable	"Easy to be entreated"
Defensive when criticized	Receive criticism with a humble, open heart
Concerned with being "respectable"	Concerned with being real
Concerned with what others think	All that matters is what God knows
Work to maintain image / protect reputation	Die to own reputation
Find it difficult to share their spiritual needs with others	Willing to be open and transparent with others
Want to be sure nobody finds out about their sin	Willing to be exposed (once broken, they don't care who knows—nothing to lose)
Have a hard time saying, "I was wrong; will you please forgive me?"	Quick to admit failure and seek forgiveness
When confessing sin, deal in generalities	Deal in specifics
Concerned about the consequences of their sins	Grieved over the cause or root of their sins
Remorseful over their sin—got caught / found out	Repentant over sin (forsake it)
When there is a misunderstanding or conflict, wait for the other to come and ask forgiveness	Take the initiative to be reconciled; see if they can get to the cross first!
Compare themselves with others and feel deserving of honor	Compare themselves to the holiness of God and feel desperate need for mercy
Don't think they have anything to repent of	Continual heart attitude of repentance
Don't think they need revival (think everybody else does)	Continually sense their need for a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit

You may reproduce this as a handout for use in a fasting and prayer gathering. © 1995 Nancy Leigh DeMoss. From *Preparing for the Coming Revival: How to Lead a Successful Fasting & Prayer Gathering*, NewLife Publications, Orlando, FL. Used by permission. pp. 197-9

(Prayer, Praise & Promises: A Daily Walk Through the Psalms by Warren W. Wiersbe)

P. T. Forsythe said, "The purpose of life is not to find your freedom. The purpose of life is to find your Master." Authority demands submission (Matt. 11:29).
(Day 5)

(The Seeking Heart: Volume 4: The Library of Spiritual Classics by Fenelon)

True humility comes from seeking the interests of God before your own. Humility comes in no longer living for yourself but in letting Jesus Christ live His life in you.
p. 158

(1001 Humorous Illustrations for Public Speaking by Michael Hodgin)

The Power Crowd

Fuller Seminary recently celebrated its fortieth anniversary with the inauguration of the President's Lectureship in early November. The four speakers included such heavy hitters as Carl F. H. Henry, theologian; Samuel Hugh Moffett, professor emeritus of ecumenism and mission at Princeton; Mary Steward Van Leeuwen, professor interdisciplinary studies at Calvin College; and Carl Wisiger III, retired pastor.

In his opening address, Wisiger displayed characteristic humility in the company of such academic luminaries: I have been a pastor, by the grace of God. If I could do it all over again, I would be a pastor. I have never, frankly, regarded myself as a scholar. I have tried to be studious, and I want to thank Dr. David Hubbard for including me in this program today. A farmer once put his mule in a horse race and his friends said to him, "Silly, that mule can't run with those thoroughbreds." The farmer said, "I know it, but you have no idea how good it makes him feel to be with all those horses!"
p. 186

(Inspiring Quotations compiled by Albert M. Wells, Jr.)

If you are willing to admit you're all wrong, when you are, you're all right.
p. 92

(Time-Out Leadership by Donald Luce)

“Humility must always be the portion of any man who receives acclaim earned in the blood of his followers and the sacrifices of his friends.”

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

p. 165

(Future Grace by John Piper)

Humility is not a popular human trait in the modern world. It's not touted in the talk shows or celebrated in valedictory speeches or commended in diversity seminars or listed with corporate core values. And if you go to the massive self-help section of your sprawling mall bookstore, you won't find many titles celebrating humility.

The basic reason for this is not hard to find: humility can only survive in the presence of God. When God goes, humility goes. In fact you might say that humility follows God like a shadow. We can expect to find humility applauded in our society about as often as we find God applauded.

In my local newspaper recently a guest editorial captured the atmosphere of our time that asphyxiates humility:

There are some who naively cling to the nostalgic memory of God. The average churchgoer takes a few hours out of the week to experience the sacred . . . But the rest of the time, he is immersed in a society that no longer acknowledges God as an omniscient and omnipotent force to be loved and worshiped . . . Today we are too sophisticated for God. We can stand on our own; we are prepared and ready to choose and define our own existence.¹

In this atmosphere humility cannot survive. It disappears with God. When God is neglected, the runner-up god takes his place, namely man. And that, by definition, is the opposite of humility, namely, the haughty spirit called pride. So the atmosphere we breathe is hostile to humility.

1. Ralph Georgy, "If God Is Dead, Then the Late 20th Century Buried Him," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, September 12, 1994.
pp. 85-86

(The Seeking Heart: Volume 4: The Library of Spiritual Classics by Fenelon)

All I ask is that you rest in faith with a teachable spirit. Do not listen to yourself. Give in to the will of God with a humble heart. God will work everything out for you. The things that look the largest and most impossible will be accomplished without your even knowing how.

p. 67

We come now to the SECOND WORD:

"PRAY."

1. "HUMBLE THEMSELVES" and
2. "PRAY."

Before a person can pray he must humble himself by acknowledging that he has a need and by seeking the face of God for intervention in his life and circumstances.

(The Seeking Heart: Volume 4: The Library of Spiritual Classics by Fenelon)

Listen to God, live in His presence, and avoid things that draw you away from Him. Find Him within you, and pour out your heart to Him. Love Him above everything. Submit your plans to His will. Find out what He wants for you and then do it quickly. Small things become great when they are done as God wills.

p. 74

We come now to the THIRD PHRASE:

"SEEK MY FACE."

1. "HUMBLE THEMSELVES,"
2. "PRAY," and
3. "SEEK MY FACE."

This takes me back to:

Psalm 27:4, 8

One thing I ask of the Lord,
 this is what I seek:
 that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
 all the days of my life,
 to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord
 and to seek him in his temple.
 My heart says of you, "Seek his face!"
 Your face, Lord, I will seek.

The Lord turns His face away from those who do evil; so part of the process is to once again seek the Lord's face.

Zephaniah 3:17

The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing."

There is no greater joy than being aware of the fact that the Lord is looking upon you and He is smiling.

The FOURTH PHRASE is:

"TURN FROM THEIR WICKED WAYS."

No longer justifying their sins, but taking action to deal with them and "TURN[ing] FROM THEIR WICKED WAYS."

(A Man to Match the Mountain: Overcoming the Obstacles of Life by David Roper)

“We remain such creeping Christians,” said George MacDonald, “because we gaze at the marks of our own soiled feet, and the trail of our own defiled garments . . . We mourn over the defilement to ourselves, and the shame of it before our friends, children or servants, instead of hastening to make the due confession and then forget our own paltry self with its well-earned disgrace and lift up our eyes to the glory which alone will quicken us.”
p. 62

(Walking With Saints: Through the Best and Worst Times of Our Lives by Calvin Miller)

C. S. Lewis said in *God in the Dock* that sometimes God has to say, speaking to our hostility, “If you’ll put down your guns we’ll talk.” How true! But more important than talking with God is our confession, for it is confession that begins the talk. Only when we have quit gunning for God can we take up the confessing life.
p. xxvi

(Inspiring Quotations compiled by Albert M. Wells, Jr.)

God isn't so concerned with delivering us out of the mess we're in as He is in seeing us grow out of the mess we are.

—L. Thomas Holdcroft

p. 130

The purpose of prayer is not to inform God of our needs, but to invite Him to rule our lives.

—Clarence Bauman

p. 158

(Prayer—The Great Adventure by David Jeremiah)

You are an omnipotent God! You indeed do have power! You can do anything! Nothing is too hard for You! There is no sickness that You cannot heal! There is no problem that You cannot solve! There is no challenge that You cannot meet! There is no financial deficit that You cannot overcome! There is no man who can overthrow Your purposes! There is no committee that can thwart Your work in the church of Jesus Christ. You are the all-powerful, magnificent, amazing, beyond comprehension, God! Lord, You are more than anything that I could say about You. There are no words to describe the greatness and glory and majesty of Jehovah-God!

p. 80

"IF MY PEOPLE, WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME, WILL" do these FOUR THINGS:

1. "HUMBLE THEMSELVES,
2. "PRAY,"
3. "SEEK MY FACE," and
4. "TURN FROM THEIR WICKED WAYS"

then I am going to do THREE THINGS:

1. "WILL I HEAR FROM HEAVEN."

Isaiah 59:1, 2

Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

2. "I . . . WILL FORGIVE THEIR SIN."

Isaiah 1:18

"Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."

3. "I . . . WILL HEAL THEIR LAND."

Isaiah 1:19, 20

If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

v.15 Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place.

1 Kings 8:52

"May your eyes be open to your servant's plea and to the plea of your people Israel, and may you listen to them whenever they cry out to you."

"With your eyes and your ears, Lord, look and listen." Now the Lord says, "I'm going to do just that!"

"NOW MY EYES WILL BE OPEN AND MY EARS ATTENTIVE TO THE PRAYERS OFFERED IN THIS PLACE."

(Standing Tall by Steve Farrar)

Barton's booklet is worth obtaining to read to your family. Briefly, he recounts a fierce battle that Washington, then a twenty-three-year-old colonel, took part in during the French and Indian War. This particular battle was so intense that his life literally hung in the balance for two hours. Washington's assignment was to communicate orders from the general to the other officers in the field. This necessitated Washington being on horseback during the entire battle. The Indian sharpshooters had been given specific directions to shoot the officers. As a result, sixty-three of the eighty-six officers were casualties.

After the battle, Washington wrote a letter to his brother, describing his acknowledgment of the hand of God that secured his safety:

By the all-powerful dispensations of Providence, I have been protected beyond all human probability or expectation; for I had four bullets through my coat, and two horses shot under me, yet [I] escaped unhurt, although death was leveling my companions on every side of me!

Fifteen years later, the Indian chief who was in charge during the battle, met Washington and related to him the following account:

I called to my young men and said, "Mark yon tall and daring warrior [Washington]? . . . Himself alone is exposed. Quick, let your aim be certain, and he dies." Our rifles were leveled, rifles which, but for you, knew not how to miss—'twas all in vain, a power mightier far than we shielded you. Seeing you were under the special guardianship of the Great Spirit, we immediately ceased fire at you. . . . I come to pay homage to the man who is the particular favorite of Heaven, and who can never die in battle.

p. 73

v.16 I have chosen and consecrated this temple so that my Name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there.

We saw this basic statement made by the Lord back in 1 Kings 9:3:

". . . My eyes and my heart will always be there."

We said at that time this is the exceeding abundant from the Lord. Not only will His "eyes . . . be open and . . . ears attentive" but His "HEART" is also going to be there.

When thinking of His "EYES AND . . . HEART," I always think of the parable of the prodigal son in:

Luke 15:20

And he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him [he was looking for him], and felt compassion for him [his heart was going out to him], and ran and embraced him, and kissed him.

What a wonderful God we have! His eyes are upon us and His heart is moved with our need.

v.17 "As for you, if you walk before me as David your father did, and do all I command, and observe my decrees and laws,

This takes us back to 1 Kings 9:4. The THREE KEY WORDS are:

1. "WALK,"
2. "DO," and
3. "OBSERVE."

Here when he speaks of walking "BEFORE ME . . . AS DAVID YOUR FATHER DID," the Kings passage defines this with the TWO PHRASES:

1. "integrity of heart" and
2. "uprightness."

v.18 I will establish your royal throne, as I covenanted with David your father when I said, 'You shall never fail to have a man to rule over Israel.'

This is similar to what we read back in 1 Kings 9:5.

v.19 "But if you turn away and forsake the decrees and commands I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them,

Here, again, we have the word "IF."

This is very similar to what we read in 1 Kings 9:6.

The words "from me" in verse 6 are not here in verse 19:

"BUT IF YOU TURN AWAY AND FORSAKE" [instead of "do not observe"].

The rest of the verse is pretty much the same.

The word "YOU" is SECOND PERSON PLURAL so this is not only speaking to Solomon but to the whole nation at this point.

The word "BUT" forms the CONTRAST with the BLESSINGS which have just been spoken of in the previous verses.

Selman says:

If the temple encouraged fresh hope of national restoration and the continuation of David's line, it must also symbolize Israel's commitment to God's written will. It must be a house of obedience as well as a house of prayer and of sacrifice, as the people are now reminded . . .
pp. 341-2

Dillard observes:

Having spoken to Solomon, God now speaks to the people; note the shift to 2d person plural in 7:19. At the dedication of the temple in all its magnificence, there is the reminder of what it could and did become; an object of ridicule, the butt of a joke, the point of a proverb (Deut 28:37; Jer 24:9).

p. 59

v.20 then I will uproot Israel from my land, which I have given them, and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my Name. I will make it a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples.

This takes us back to 1 Kings 9:7:

Whereas he uses the word "cut off" in chapter 9,

here the writer to the Chronicles uses the word "UPROOT."

I think it is a very sobering reflection to look at the words that describe God's action toward His sinning people.

Back in 1 Kings it was:

"cut off Israel from the land,"

"reject this temple,"

"then become a byword and an object of ridicule," and

"the Lord brought all this disaster on them."

In the Chronicles passage it was:

"shut up the heavens,"

"command locusts to devour the land,"

"send a plague,"

"UPROOT ISRAEL FROM MY LAND,"

"REJECT THIS TEMPLE,"

"MAKE IT A BYWORD AND AN OBJECT OF RIDICULE," and

"HE BROUGHT ALL THIS DISASTER ON THEM."

Hebrews 10:31

It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

v.21 And though this temple is now so imposing, all who pass by will be appalled and say, 'Why has the Lord done such a thing to this land and to this temple?'

This verse is comparable to 1 Kings 9: 8. The only addition in the Kings passage that is left out here is the word "scoff." We said early that in the Hebrew this word means "whistle in amazement."

Selman says:

If Israel forsook the covenantal and historical foundation of their faith, the *temple* and the *land* would become meaningless.
p. 342

v.22 People will answer, 'Because they have forsaken the Lord, the God of their fathers, who brought them out of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, worshipping and serving them—that is why he brought all this disaster on them.'

This verse is very similar to the concluding verse in the Kings passage.

Both of these records conclude with the final phrase:

"THAT IS WHY HE BROUGHT ALL THIS DISASTER ON THEM."

I am reminded of the Lord speaking to Belshazzar through the Daniel, the prophet in:

Daniel 5:27

You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting.

Parker says:

But let any man try to cross God's law, and he will never return from that fool's journey. It is one of two things: either we have to fall upon the stone, Christ, and be broken; or the stone will fall upon us, and grind us to powder. We hear the crash of that grinding—may we never know it!
p. 220

(The Things that Matter Most by Cal Thomas)

Barbara Reynolds, a politically liberal columnist for USA Today, wrote a remarkable column for the June 25, 1993, edition of that newspaper in which she listed the now-familiar litany of symptoms of cultural breakdown.

In addressing the lawlessness and lack of social order that grips too many cities, she wrote, "Those murderous habits aren't based solely on financial poverty, but on a bankrupt human spirit caused by an absence of the spirit of God. If it weren't for the religious faithful [in cities and schools], life would be utterly hopeless.

"The downward drag started in 1963 when the court kicked prayer out of the public schools. Our moral foundation crumbled. Violent rap music, drugs, guns, and illicit sex leaped into the vacuum.

"While I don't want mandated prayers or Bible readings churning out robotic prayer warriors, you must find ways for schools and the workplace to implement values based on love, justice, and mercy, principles most religions adhere to. . . .

"My generation blew it by pushing God out of public life. Undo their mistakes. Many lives depend on it."

p. 212

(When Nations Die: Ten Warning Signs of a Culture in Crisis by Jim Nelson Black)

As a nation we need to concentrate on the beliefs and values we have in common and hold firmly to those things that bring us together. And as individuals, we need to find comfort and security in that dynamic connection with the eternal that unites us to the ultimate Source of meaning and truth.
p. 148

(Politically Incorrect: The Emerging Faith Factor in American Politics by Ralph Reed)

Society is the loser when their unique contribution to building a better America is lost. Before their voice can be heard, we must make attacks on religion as unacceptable as slurs against race or gender. None of the preceding vision can become a reality as long as the law, politics, and the culture treat faith like a toxic substance instead of the healing force that it is.
p. 40

(Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions by Kenneth W. Osbeck)

Blessed is the national whose God is the Lord, the people He chose for His inheritance. (Psalm 33:12)

Men must be governed by God or they will be ruled by tyrants. —William Penn

p. 166

(A Heart Like His: The Shaping of Character in the Choices of Life by
Rebecca Manley Pippert)

As tragic as the king appears, and as much as Saul calls forth our sympathy, we must recognize the stubborn strength of his willfulness. There was something in Saul that would not bend. His refusal to accept defeat, acknowledge his sinfulness, and submit to God is almost unbelievable. But if his life teaches us anything, it is that we must not cling to willfulness against God. If we continue in our rebellion, the only fruit awaiting us is despair and, in the end, destruction. No more dangerous path could we take than opposition to God.

pp. 203

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: How careful we must be when we reach half-time in our lives and we have succeeded in accomplishing many significant tasks.

LESSON #2: The Lord lovingly comes to us in the hour of our greatest need.

LESSON #3: The Lord says, "my eyes and my heart will always be there" (1 Kings 9:3). He is saying, "You can count on My constant availability."

LESSON #4: Obedience is the key to God's blessing in our relationship with Him.

LESSON #5: There are serious consequences when we turn away from the Lord and do not accept the responsibility of obedience and seek a replacement for Him.

LESSON #6: The Lord is not going to sit idly by indefinitely in the face of our disobedience.

LESSON #7: The Lord's discipline involves "cutting off Israel from the land, rejecting the temple, shutting up the heavens, commanding the locusts, and sending a plague."

LESSON #8: The four-fold prescription for the restoration of the relationship is "humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways" (2 Chronicles 7:14).

LESSON #9: "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time (1 Peter 5:6).

LESSON #10: The Lord responds to these acts of repentance in a three-fold way. He: (1) "will hear from heaven;" (2) "will forgive their sin;" and (3) "will heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14).

LESSON #11: Will you make a commitment right now that you will become a candidate for revival by humbling yourself and praying and seeking His face and turning from your wicked ways.

(Time To Get Serious: Daily Devotions to Keep You Close to God by Tony Evans)

The Bible teaches that there are degrees of punishment in hell (Matthew 11:21-24). By the same principle, there are degrees of blessing in heaven. So when some Christians show up at Christ's judgment seat, all their stuff will burn up, and they will be sent to the penalty box, like an ice hockey player who has broken the rules and has to miss the action.

What a tragedy to know what we could have had. Sometimes we can do something to fix our regrets. At the judgment seat, there'll be no fixing of anything. That's why we must be faithful stewards today. Amen?

p. 102

(A Man to Match the Mountain: Overcoming the Obstacles of Life by David Roper)

We will fall; as C. S. Lewis pointed out, we will be very dirty children by the time we get home. The only fatal thing is to give up.

p. 136

(Loving Those We'd Rather Hate: Developing Compassion in an Angry World by Joseph M. Stowell)

What we know to be true about God is that He uses even the worst things that He permits to come to His ultimate praise, gain, and glory. His long-range perspectives transcend the daily dealings in the corridors within the beltway of Washington, D.C. His plan is a macro movement, managed by His sovereign purposes, over which He has full and unchallenged control.

Yet somehow we have forgotten these truths. And our despair on that day matured through the months that followed into a sense of defeat that has us by the heart. That sense of defeat has given rise to a church that presents itself in this political environment as cynical, disrespectful, intimidated, insecure, angry, and often irrational. We shout cruel and demeaning taunts at gay activists, shoot at abortionists, spread rumors about and speak disrespectfully of authorities God has placed in our lives.

p. 9

(Roaring Lambs: A Gentle Plan to Radically Change Your World by Bob Briner)

I'm calling for individual Christians to become roaring lambs—informed citizens who will enter their community dialogues on social and political issues. I'm also calling for local congregations to develop strategies for making sure they are always a part of their community's policy-setting process. In his small but monumentally important book The Company of the Committed, Elton Trueblood wrote, "The test of the vitality of a religion is to be seen in its effect on culture." If a religion is really vital, meaningful, relevant, and important, it will make a difference not only in the lives of individuals but also in society itself. Evangelical Christians in America must face up to this challenge. Our churches must help us do a better job of being salt—of being roaring lambs.
p. 56

(The Seeking Heart: Volume 4: The Library of Spiritual Classics by Fenelon)

Accept what God chooses for you. This is more important than what you choose for yourself, for you are much too easy on yourself. Day by day give yourself to God. He carries you in His arms like a mother carries her child. Believe, hope, and love like a child. Look with love and trust to your heavenly Father.
p. 72

(In the Hands of God: Inspiration From Daily Life by William Barclay)

Paul Sangster tells of an incident when his father went to visit a girl in [the] hospital who was going blind, and whom no human skill was able to help. "Mr. Sangster," Jessie said, "God is going to take my sight away." For a little while Sangster did not answer. Then he said, "Don't let him, Jessie. Give it to him." "What do you mean?" she asked. "Try to pray this prayer," he answered: "'Father, if for any reason I must lose my sight, help me to give it to you.'"
p. 139

What a joy to conclude this study knowing that we have a living Savior who is intimately involved in our lives. He is our great High Priest. We can draw near at any time and find grace to help in time of need. He is also totally available to receive our confession of sin and provide forgiveness.

(1001 Humorous Illustrations for Public Speaking by Michael Hodgin)

Part-Time Tomb

Someone asked Joseph of Arimathaea, "That was a great tomb. Why did you give it to someone else to be buried in?" "Oh," said Joseph, "he only needed it for the weekend."
p. 303

(Prayer—The Great Adventure by David Jeremiah)

The Anglicans of old certainly recognized this. In one of their prayer books this plea is found:

From sin, from the crafts and assaults of the devil . . . from all blindness of heart; from pride, vain-glory and hypocrisy; from envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness . . . from fornication, and all other deadly sin; and from all the deceits of the world, and the flesh, and the devil . . . from sudden [unexpected and unprepared-for] death . . . from hardness of heart, and contempt of thy Word and Commandment, Good Lord, deliver us.⁴

4. The Anglican Prayer book for Epiphany IV quote in J.I. Packer, *I Want To Be A Christian* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1977), 222.
p. 164

(In the Grip of Grace: You Can't Fall Beyond His Love by Max Lucado)

Dear Mrs. Smith,

I'm writing in response to this morning's request for forgiveness. I'm sorry to inform you that you have reached your quota of sins. Our records show that, since employing our services, you have erred seven times in the area of greed, and your prayer life is substandard when compared to others of like age and circumstance.

Further review reveals that your understanding of doctrine is in the lower 20 percentile and you have excessive tendencies to gossip. Because of your sins you are a high-risk candidate for heaven. You understand that grace has its limits. Jesus sends his regrets and kindest regards and hopes that you will find some other form of coverage.

Many fear receiving such a letter. Some worry they already have! If an insurance company can't cover my honest mistakes, can I expect God to cover my intentional rebellion?

p. 70

(Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions by Kenneth W. Osbeck)

William O. Cushing said that, when he wrote this hymn text in 1876, "it was the outgrowth of many tears, many heart conflicts and yearnings of which the world could know nothing." After the death of his wife in middle age, Cushing was forced to retire from an active ministry because of poor health. He had been a successful pastor in the eastern areas of the United States. He began to be intensely interested in writing hymns, collaborating with many of the leading gospel musicians of that time. One day when Ira Sankey made a special request for a song in his gospel work, Cushing felt it was a direct call from God. He explained:

I prayed, "Lord, give me something that may glorify Thee." It was while thus waiting that "Hiding in Thee" pressed to make itself known. Mr. Sankey called forth the tune and by his genius gave the hymn wings, making it useful in the Master's work.

William Cushing knew personally the sorrows and turmoil of life, but he also knew where he could find safety and rest—in the "blest Rock of Ages." When this hymn was first published, the author prefaced it with Psalm 31:2—"Be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me."

O safe to the Rock that is higher than I my soul in its conflicts and sorrows would fly. So sinful, so weary—Thine, Thine would I be: Thou blest "Rock of Ages," I'm hiding in Thee.

In the calm of the noon-tide, in sorrow's lone hour, in times when temptation casts o'er me its pow'r, in the tempests of life, on its wide, heaving sea, Thou blest "Rock of Ages," I'm hiding in Thee.

How oft in the conflict, when pressed by the foe, I have fled to my Refuge and breathed out my woe. How often, when trials like sea billows roll, have I hidden in Thee, O Thou Rock of my soul.

Chorus: Hiding in Thee, Thou blest "Rock of Ages," I'm hiding in Thee.

p. 211