

## IF MY PEOPLE

### INTRODUCTION

As we face the crisis that covers the world at this time, have you wondered, or even asked God for perspective or an understanding of what is happening all around us? Is the devil behind it? Is there a big conspiracy? Is this the one world order setting itself up? Have you asked God if He is judging the world?

We need to be very careful who we accredit this crisis to. Be careful not to blame God by saying, "how can a good God allow something like this to happen to good people".

We may not have all the answers, but I believe that God has been directing His people. Right now, I believe that it's much more important to look at what we will learn from this crisis, than why it is happening. What can we learn from the Bible about crises, whether allowed by God, or caused by God, and what it took to end them.

God is still on the throne. He remains in control. He rules and reigns. He allows and disallows, and He is the answer to ending this crisis.

We can learn much from **2 Chronicles 7:14** the verse that we often use for prayer at times like this. This verse has some absolute keys in it that we must take note of to allow for God to move and bring the crisis to an end and that's what we will look at today.

### MESSAGE

**2 Chronicles 7:14** (NKJV) if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

### WHAT WAS THE CONTEXT?

Solomon and the Israelites had just completed building the temple. He had prayed a prayer of dedication where he laid out various scenarios when the people of Israel would come and lay out their petitions before God at the temple. In it he described situations like the one we are facing right now:

**2 Chronicles 6:28** (NKJV) "When there is famine in the land, pestilence or blight or mildew, locusts or grasshoppers; when their enemies besiege them in the land of their cities; whatever plague or whatever sickness there is; 29 whatever prayer, whatever supplication is made by anyone, or by all Your people Israel, when each one knows his own burden and his own grief, and spreads out his hands to this temple: 30 then hear from heaven Your dwelling place, and forgive, and give to everyone according to all his ways, whose heart You know (for You alone know the hearts of the sons of men), 31 that

they may fear You, to walk in Your ways as long as they live in the land which You gave to our fathers.

When Solomon finished praying, God's glory fell and He consumed the sacrifices, and the priests could not stand to minister. Later, after the feast was completed, God appeared to Solomon and responded to his prayer:

**2 Chronicles 7:12-14** (NKJV) Then the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him: "I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. 13 When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, 14 if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

### **THE FOUR KEYS TO ANSWERED PRAYER IN 2 CHRONICLES 7:14**

1. "If My people who are called by my name" – This promise was made to God's people. He wasn't speaking to the world at large; He was speaking to His own people. In today's context, He would be speaking to the Christians, to those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. We are the people called by His name!
2. "Will humble themselves" – God is not interested in our sacrifices; He wants us to be humble before Him.
3. "and pray and seek my face" – When we need God to move, we, His people need to pray! We need to seek His face! Don't expect God to move on your behalf if you are not willing to seek Him and spend time with Him in prayer!
4. "and turn from their wicked ways" – God would allow these things to take place because of His people's wickedness! The requirement was that they turn from their wicked ways. When we explain the meaning of the word "repent", we say it means a change of direction. It means a 180-degree rotation to head in the opposite direction! To "turn from our wicked ways" means we must repent!

Then, and only then, will God hear from heaven and heal the land!

***Friends, this is the challenge. When troubles come, we may even come before the Lord in prayer. We may even glibly say, "please forgive us", but have we truly spent time considering our ways? Have we truly repented? Are we different, have we learned what it is that God is wanting to teach us through the crisis that He has allowed us to experience?***

### **IF MY PEOPLE WILL HUMBLE THEMSELVES**

Humility is the opposite of pride, Our Saviour Jesus is the prime example of humility. In Philippians 2 we read He didn't consider it robbery to be equal with God, but he made Himself of no reputation. He was willing to come as a

man and be humble and obedient, even to the point of death on the cross! Satan is the opposite; he is proud, and this is the cause of his rebellion and fall. It is also the tool he will use to make us fall if he can.

Arrogance and pride, haughtiness and the loftiness of man have caused God to bring about circumstances to humble His people in the past. I believe that this is the major reason that God is allowing both the world, and His people to go through this hour of trial we are facing right now.

**In Isaiah 2, Isaiah pleaded with his people,** “come, let us live in the light of the LORD”, and he gives the reason that God has forsaken His people:

- They are filled with eastern ways and are involved with soothsaying (fortune telling) false prophecies???
- They are pleased with children of foreigners – i.e. they mix with whoever they want.
- Money and riches are their focus.
- Their land is full of idols.
- They worship the work of their own hands!

In verses 17-18 we read: **Isaiah 2:17-18** (NKJV) The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, And the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; The Lord alone will be exalted in that day, 18 But the idols He shall utterly abolish.

Chapter 3 carries on:

**Isaiah 3:8-9** (NKJV) For Jerusalem stumbled, And Judah is fallen, Because their tongue and their doings Are against the Lord, To provoke the eyes of His glory. 9 The look on their countenance witnesses against them, And they declare their sin as Sodom; They do not hide it. Woe to their soul! For they have brought evil upon themselves.

Sin, and more sin, and particularly haughtiness - in the midst of God's people who are not even interested in trying to hide it. This is haughtiness and arrogance at a level which brings evil upon God's people. Could it be that God allowed this virus to come, or even have sent it Himself, because of our lack of humility and the sin in the church?

We need to learn reverence and godly fear once again. Here's a picture of true humility means:

In Isaiah 6 we read about God's throne room and the Seraphim that fly around His throne crying “Holy, holy, holy”. They are magnificent fiery creatures with 6 wings.

**Isaiah 6:1-2** (NKJV) In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. 2 Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

- They have six wings, but they use the absolute minimum in God's presence. Surely their majesty would be much greater if they used all 6?
- But in humility, they set their created, God-given glory aside.
  - They use 2 wings to cover their faces so that they don't look upon God's glory – this is absolute humility.
  - They use 2 wings to cover their feet – this is absolute modesty.
  - It is a picture of lowliness of self!

**Hebrews 4:16** (NKJV) Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

We can come boldly into God's presence. I even preached about us being hidden in God's presence two weeks ago, but is it possible that but that we have been coming in without reverence and modesty? Is it possible that we have come in with a haughty and arrogant attitude, thinking that we can live in compromise and still come into God's presence demanding that He heal our land? Is it possible that we have taken glory that belongs to God?

**1 Corinthians 1:29 & 31** (NKJV) that no flesh should glory in His presence.... 31 that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord."

How do we do it:

**1 Corinthians 2:5** (NKJV) that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

- We glorify preachers, worship teams and buildings
- We rely on our money, our ability, our facilities, our position in life, our, our, our...
- We exalt ourselves instead of God!

God won't tolerate it, not even for New Testament believers. How quickly has He shown us that it can suddenly all be taken away!

Our ONLY glorying should be in the Lord. We need to repent of our self-opinionated, self-righteousness, self-achievements and all compromise where we have been seeking recognition and glory. **We simply have to come back to doing ALL things for God's glory.**

## **A HEART OF REPENTANCE**

Before we can effectively pray 2 Chronicles 7:14, we need to come before God with heart felt repentance. In several places, the Bible teaches that God will hear those who come with a broken spirit and a contrite heart. This speaks of a return to humility! "If My people will humble themselves and turn".

**Psalms 51** (NKJV) Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,

Blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me. 4 Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight— That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge. 5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. 6 Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom. 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8 Make me hear joy and gladness, That the bones You have broken may rejoice. 9 Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities. 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit. 13 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You (The church's role!). 14 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation, And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. 15 O Lord, open my lips, And my mouth shall show forth Your praise. 16 For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart— These, O God, You will not despise. 18 Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion; Build the walls of Jerusalem. 19 Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, With burnt offering and whole burnt offering; Then they shall offer bulls on Your altar.

## **CONCLUSION**

We need to realise that regardless of the source of our hour of trial, God is the answer.

- God will allow things to happen to get our attention and even to chastise us, but He will answer and relent,
- He is a good, good Father and it is not His plan for us to suffer indefinitely.

We also need to realise that Jesus is coming back for a church without spot, wrinkle or blemish and we need to seek His help so we will be ready.

We need to pray and seek His face but there are some conditions:

- The greatest obstacle to God answering our prayer for deliverance is our own haughtiness, pride and arrogance and our lack of repentance, and we need to humble ourselves before Him once again.
- We need to repent not only of obvious blatant sin, but also of our "loftiness" and "self-exaltation" which I believe God is addressing through this crisis.

Then we can come boldly into His throne room and make our requests known and we can trust God to move on our behalf and heal our land.