



God's Hearing, Forgiveness, and Healing Pt 5: Turning from our Wicked Ways!

January 29, 2023

Holy Text:

2 Chronicles 7:14 (KJV) *If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and **turn from their wicked ways**; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*

Review:

- The last piece of this five part "IF my people" promise from the LORD has to do with turning away from wickedness.
- To recap, we've put forward the following propositions:
 1. We believe that there will be no lasting healing of the land without repentance; no Revival without a heart to return to the Scriptures (Reformation).
 2. We believe 2 Chr 7:14 (and verses like it) have some NT applicability because of the Great Commission and the power of the Gospel to transform nations! (Matt 28:18-20)
 3. Although we deny salvation by works, we believe these promises for practical blessing and restoration (and those like them) are **conditional upon obedience**.

So far, we've been reminded of 1) Our identity with God in Christ and what that means for our life and living, 2) God's command for and love of humility in His creatures, 3) The privilege, process, and purposes of prayer, and 4) The inner (or heart) conditions upon which we desire or long after God...seeking His face.

Today, we look at God's command to turn from our wickedness or wicked ways.

What is Wickedness?

- The term for wicked in 2 Chr 7:14 is *râ'âh*. A primary way it is translated in the Old Testament besides **wicked** or **wickedness** is **evil**.
- Another Hebrew word translated wickedness in the OT is *zammâh*. It can be translated as *lewdness*. It means "the unlawful indulgence of lust; fornication, or adultery. In Scripture, it generally denotes idolatry. Licentiousness; shamelessness." (Strong's)
- One more in Hebrew is *resha'*. It means "iniquity."
- In the New Testament, one word is *ponēria*. It means *depravity*.
- The Webster 1828 dictionary says of wickedness and evil:
 1. Wicked: Evil in principle or practice; deviating from the divine law; addicted to vice; sinful; immoral. This is a word of comprehensive signification, extending to every thing that is contrary to the moral law, and both to persons and actions. We say, a wicked man, a wicked deed, wicked ways, wicked lives, a wicked heart, wicked designs, wicked works.
 2. Evil is natural or moral. Natural evil is any thing which produces pain, distress, loss or calamity, or which in any way disturbs the peace, impairs the happiness, or destroys the perfection of natural beings. Moral evil is any deviation of a moral agent from the rules of conduct prescribed to him by God, or by legitimate human authority; or it is any violation of the plain principles of justice and rectitude. There are also evils called civil, which affect injuriously the peace or prosperity of a city or state; and political evils, which injure a nation, in its public capacity.
- Here are a few examples. Note the results: judgment!

Genesis 6:5-7 (KJV) And GOD saw that the **wickedness** of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only **evil** continually. **6** And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. **7** And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

Deuteronomy 4:23-27 (KJV) Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, which the LORD thy God hath forbidden thee. **24** For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God. **25** When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and ye shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image, or the likeness of any thing. and shall do **evil** in the sight of the LORD thy God, to provoke him to anger: **26** I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed. **27** And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you.

2 Kings 17:1-2 (KJV) In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria over Israel nine years. **2** And he did that which was **evil** in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of Israel that were before him.

2 Kings 17:7-14 (KJV) For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods, **8** And walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made. **9** And the children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right against the LORD their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city. **10** And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree: **11** And there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the heathen whom the LORD carried away before them; and wrought **wicked** things to provoke the LORD to anger: **12** For they served idols, whereof the LORD had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing. **13** Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your **evil** ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. **14** Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God.

Here are a few more examples of the usage of **wickedness** and similar terms:

Genesis 13:13 (KJV) But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.

Genesis 19:7 (KJV) And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly.

Leviticus 18:22 (KJV) Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.

Leviticus 18:27 (KJV) (For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled;)

Leviticus 19:29 (KJV) Do not prostitute thy daughter, to cause her to be a whore; lest the land fall to whoredom, and the land become full of wickedness.

1 Kings 21:25 (KJV) But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.

2 Kings 21:11-12 (KJV) Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations, and hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, which were before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols: **12** Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle.

Psalms 5:4 (KJV) For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee.

Jeremiah 3:1 (KJV) They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD.

Jeremiah 13:27 (KJV) I have seen thine adulteries, and thy neighings, the lewdness of thy whoredom, and thine abominations on the hills in the fields. Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem! wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?

Mark 7:20-23 (KJV) And he said, *That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: 23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.*

Generally, when terms like *wickedness*, *lewdness*, *abomination*, *pollution* or *corruption* and the like are used in the Bible, they denote three things: **1) Idolatry, 2) Murder/inordinate violence, and 3) Sexual perversions.**

Beloved, look around! Not only is our Nation not turning away from wickedness, it is celebrating such things at every turn!

Getting over our dislike of terms like Wickedness

However, there is a problem with this last conditional IF-area in 2 Chr 7:14. We want to see our land healed, but we generally do not like discussions of sin and calls for repentance. Why?

1. **“We don’t like to face our misery.” -Pastor Harry Profit**
 - This is the essence of why we strongly dislike and avoid biblical terms like wickedness, evil, abomination, uncleanness, lasciviousness, or corruption. They show us...us. We much prefer feeling good about ourselves.
 - Indeed, we often don’t think of ourselves as sinners or those capable of wickedness.
2. **Similarly, human nature is to simply prefer “happier” terms: love, mercy, grace, patience, etc.**
 - These biblical realities are needful—and critically so!

- But, amazingly, understanding our true misery (without Christ) and how God feels about sin and wickedness is the key to truly embracing and rejoicing over His great forgiveness and love toward us!
 - Words like wickedness (or abomination, corruption, debasement, etc.) can be both nouns and adjectives: both what has been done AND a descriptor of the deed. As a result, they are emotional...even visceral. They create a sense of disgust because they highlight human depravity. Frankly, they make us feel bad, and we do not like to feel bad.
3. **Cultural conformity is another reason.** This includes the adoption of a secular humanist worldview (man is his own god), the popular view of moral relativism (man's creates his own truth based on his feelings and desires), and false beliefs about man's innate goodness (and incredible hubris). In our pride, we often consider any labeling of behavior as wicked judgmental and unloving.
 4. **Finally, we dislike these terms is because they paint a vivid picture of how our majestic King and Creator feels about our transgression.** They demonstrate how far our wicked and sinful actions are from the holiness of Almighty God. They depict the "stink" of sin in God's nostrils. They remind us that we are accountable before Him. This tends to be unpleasant for us.

In order to get over this, we must realize that the light of Gospel is made brighter against the darkness of our sin. If a person does not know he is sick, why would he run towards the cure? This is why the Law of God must be preached. This is why we must not think we know better than the Scripture. This is why we must use words and terms that are lifted from God's Word and not cede the use of language to the world!

God's Hearing, Forgiveness, and Healing: Putting it all together

IF...we understand who we are in Christ, have humbled ourselves, are constant in repentant prayer, and are seeking the Face of the LORD, willing to turn away from wickedness, know that these things are the heart-borne fruits of brokenness and contriteness, which God loves:

- ***Psalms 34:18 (KJV)*** *The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*
- ***Psalms 51:17 (KJV)*** *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*
- ***Isaiah 57:15 (KJV)*** *For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*

Such a heart-state should move God's children to action. What action? A turning away from the very things that caused God's judgment! Remember the context of 2 Chr 7:14....

Solomon had prayed:

2 Chronicles 6:36-39 (KJV) *If they sin against thee, (for there is no man which sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before their enemies, and they carry them away captives unto a land far off or near; **37** Yet if they bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn and pray unto thee in the land of their captivity, saying, We have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt wickedly; **38** If they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captives, and pray toward their land, which thou gavest*

unto their fathers, and toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name: 39 Then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling place, their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee.

In other words, when God's people are judged and punished because of their sin, and then they repent and turn back to God, Solomon prayed that God would be merciful and extend grace to hear, forgive, and essentially, heal them!

What got them punished? Their sin. What is the solution? Their repentance..their fervent desire to turn back to God!

Beloved, is our spiritual and practical situation any different? What must we do? We too must repent. This word, *metanoēō* in Greek, means thinking differently or changing one's mind, which implies a different action or a turning away!

Mark 1:14-15 (KJV) *Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.*

Matthew 4:17 (KJV) *From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

Matthew 9:13 (KJV) *But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

Luke 24:46-47 (KJV) *And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*

Acts 2:37-38 (KJV) *Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? 38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

Acts 17:30-31 (KJV) *And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: 31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.*

Can we acknowledge that some of our ways are wicked? If so, are we willing to “turn” from them? Are we willing to live and preach in such a way that those in “the land” are lovingly confronted with this wickedness as well?

Closing Encouragement

What are some truths about “turning away” we might have to face? To turn away from wickedness is to:

1. Turn your back on worldliness/carnality
 - **1 John 2:15-17 (KJV)** *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*

2. Choose the narrow path

- **Matthew 7:13-14 (KJV)** *Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

3. Lose popularity

- **John 15:18-20 (KJV)** *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. 19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. 20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.*

4. Risk persecution

- **2 Timothy 3:12 (KJV)** *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*
- **1 Peter 4:16-17 (KJV)** *Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. 17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*

5. Fight against demonic forces

- **Ephesians 6:10-12 (KJV)** *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

None of these things are easy. There will be emotional and cultural costs for desiring the healing of the land and living accordingly. Are you willing to pay it?

May the LORD heal our hearts, homes, communities, and nation. May we hear obey the call to run to Him for salvation and restoration.

Amen.