

Praying for Our Nation

The Point: God blesses those who humbly look to Him.

Session Passage: 2 Chronicles 7:1-3,12-20

1 When Solomon finished praying, fire descended from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple.

2 The priests were not able to enter the LORD's temple because the glory of the LORD filled the temple of the LORD.

3 All the Israelites were watching when the fire descended and the glory of the LORD came on the temple. They bowed down on the pavement with their faces to the ground. They worshiped and praised the LORD: "For he is good, for his faithful love endures forever."

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12 Then the LORD appeared to Solomon at night and said to him: "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a temple of sacrifice.

13 If I shut the sky so there is no rain, or if I command the grasshopper to consume the land, or if I send pestilence on my people, 14 and my people, who bear my name, humble themselves, pray and seek my face, and turn from their evil ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land.

15 My eyes will now be open and my ears attentive to prayer from this place.

16 And I have now chosen and consecrated this temple so that my name may be there forever; my eyes and my heart will be there at all times.

17 As for you, if you walk before me as your father David walked, doing everything I have commanded you, and if you keep my statutes and ordinances,

18 I will establish your royal throne, as I promised your father David: You will never fail to have a man ruling in Israel.

19 However, if you turn away and abandon my statutes and my commands that I have set before you and if you go and serve other gods and bow in worship to them,

20 then I will uproot Israel from the soil that I gave them, and this temple that I have sanctified for my name I will banish from my presence; I will make it an object of scorn and ridicule among all the peoples."1 When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple.

2 The priests could not enter the temple of the LORD because the glory of the LORD filled it.

3 When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the LORD above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, "He is good; his love endures forever."

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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.

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, 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 I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

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

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.

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

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

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, 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."1 Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house.

2 And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD's house.

3 And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.

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12 And the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice.

13 If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people;
14 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.

15 Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place.

16 For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever: and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.

17 And as for thee, if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and shalt observe my statutes and my judgments;

18 Then will I stablish the throne of thy kingdom, according as I have covenanted with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel.

19 But if ye turn away, and forsake my statutes and my commandments, which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods, and worship them;

20 Then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have given them; and this house, which I have sanctified for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and will make it to be a proverb and a byword among all nations.

2 Chronicles 7:1-3

Connection to the Point. God made His glory and presence known to the people, and they bowed before Him in humility and worship.

Context of 2 Chronicles 7. This chapter follows Solomon's prayer (2 Chron. 6:14-42) during the dedication ceremony (5:1-7:22) at the site of the newly constructed temple in Jerusalem (3:1-4:22). All of Israel had come to celebrate the completion of the temple and to participate in this solemn and holy dedication.

Solomon (v. 1). Solomon was the son of King David and Bathsheba. Although he was not the eldest son of David, he ascended the throne after Bathsheba and the prophet Nathan intervened with David to secure the throne for him. He became king around 970 BC and reigned for forty years. Remembered for his great wisdom, Solomon composed 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs (1 Kings 4:29-34).

When . . . finished praying **When Solomon had made an end of praying** (v. 1). Solomon's prayer (1 Kings 8:12-53; 2 Chron. 6:12-42) was more than just a list of supplications to God. Solomon praised God and interceded on the part of the people because he knew their tendency to sin and forsake God (vv. 36-39).

Fire descended **Fire came down** (v. 1). The word *fire* (*esh*) here also is used in association with a theophany, a personal encounter with God in a way that can be observed (Gen. 15:17; Ex. 3:2).

From heaven (v. 1). *Heaven* is the eternal abode of God. That fire came down from heaven indicated that God had accepted Solomon's prayer, offerings, and the temple. The Lord also had endorsed the temple when His glory filled it (5:13-14).

Consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices **Consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices** (v. 1). *Consumed* (*akal*) literally means "to eat" either figuratively or literally. The fire of God devoured or ate up the burnt offering and sacrifices. The burnt offering and sacrifices refer to the offerings of sheep, goats, and cattleoxen (5:6).

The glory of the LORD (v. 1). The meaning of the Hebrew term for *glory* (*kabod*) is heavy in weight. In this context, the term emphasizes the weighty importance of the dignity, splendor, majesty, and awesomeness of God. *LORD* is a substitution for the Hebrew *YHWH*, God's covenant name which emphasizes His eternality and self-sufficiency.

Filled the temple **Filled the house** (v. 1). The *house* is the temple. The glory of God had earlier filled God's house in the form of a cloud (5:13-14). Its presence filling the temple indicated that the Lord had consecrated (set apart) Solomon's temple as His chosen place for worship, prayer, and sacrifice.

The priests (v. 2). The priests were members of the tribe of Levi, which God had set apart to be His priests (Deut. 10:8-9). Though not all the members of the tribe of Levi were priests, all had functions related to the temple and the ark of the covenant.

Were not able to enter/Could not enter (v. 2). Due to the presence, power, and majesty of the glory of the Lord in the temple, the priests were unable to enter to perform their duties. For a similar event regarding the tabernacle, see Exodus 40:34-35.

The LORD's temple/The temple of the LORD/The house of the LORD (v. 2). Although the first temple is often called Solomon's temple in relation to the time period in which it was built, the temple was in actuality the Lord's temple, where He chose to live among and relate to His people.

All the Israelites were watching/All the Israelites saw/All the children of Israel saw (v. 3). Seeing the glory of the Lord fill the temple would have communicated to the Israelites that the Lord their God was among them.

They bowed down on the pavement with their faces to the ground/They knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground/They bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement (v. 3). *Bowed down/Knelt/Bowed (kara)* literally means "to bend the knee." The Israelites bowed down, a position of humility before God.

They worshiped and praised the LORD/They worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD/And worshipped, and praised the LORD (v. 3). The word *worship (shachah)* means to bow down in an act of honor and respect, in this context in worship of God. The Israelites recognized that God is the only One who deserved their worship. They *praised/praised* the Lord by giving thanks. God made His glory and presence known to the people, and they bowed before Him in humility and worship.

For he is good/He is good (v. 3). *Good (tob)* here refers to God's characteristic of His innate moral goodness. The people were probably thinking back upon God's goodness toward the Israelites throughout their history, particularly the exodus from Egypt.

For his faithful love endures forever/His love endures forever/For his mercy endureth for ever (v. 3). The term for *faithful love/mercy (chesed)* is also translated "loving kindness," "faithful love," and "covenant faithfulness." It refers to God's mercy, faithfulness, kindness, and goodness in relation to the covenant He had made with the Israelites. That His faithful love endures forever speaks not only of God's great mercy and faithfulness, but also emphasizes He alone can truly be counted on always. God's love is everlasting (1 Cor. 13:4-8).

2 Chronicles 7:12-16

Connection to the Point. God promised Solomon that forgiveness and healing to the land would come as the people humbly sought Him.

Then the LORD appeared to Solomon at night/The LORD appeared to him at night/The LORD appeared to Solomon by night (v. 12). The text does not indicate whether the Lord was visibly present with Solomon (known as a theophany) or whether the Lord appeared to Solomon in a waking vision or a dream. The parallel account in 1 Kings 9:2 notes that this was the second time God had appeared to Solomon, the first having been at Gibeon in a dream (1 Kings 3:4-15).

I have heard your prayer/I have heard thy prayer (v. 12). *Have heard (shama)* here means that the Lord had listened to Solomon's prayer (1 Kings 8:12-53; 2 Chron. 6:12-42), regarded it, and granted Solomon's request. We can be confident as believers that God answers our prayers in ways that He sees best.

Have chosen this place for myself as a temple of sacrifice/Have chosen this place for myself as a temple for sacrifices/Have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice (v. 12). With the manifestations of His presence in

the temple (5:13-14; 7:1-3), God approved of the temple that Solomon had built as the place where the Israelites would come to worship and offer sacrifices to the Lord. The word *temple* (*bayith*) means “house”; The word *house* (*bayith*) means temple; the temple was to be God’s house among His people.

If I shut the sky so there is no rain . . . command the grasshopper to consume the land . . . send pestilence **When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague** **If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence** (v. 13). These conditional punishments would have reminded the people of what the Lord did to Egypt when Pharaoh wouldn’t release the Israelites from slavery (Ex. 7–12). *Grasshoppers*, also known as locusts *Locusts*, also known as grasshoppers, would devour any and all plant life in the land. *Pestilence* *Plague* refers to deadly diseases that would infect and kill people.

On my people **Among my people** (v. 13). God’s punishments would fall on the Israelites, God’s people, if they failed to live in obedience to the covenant stipulations (Deut. 28:15-68).

My people, who bear my name **My people, who are called by my name** **My people, which are called by my name** (v. 14). The Israelites were God’s chosen people, set apart out of all the nations of the world to be His own possession. They were owned by God and their behavior reflected back upon Him. The word *bear called by* (*qara*) here means appointed to be called by God’s name.

Humble themselves **Will humble themselves** **Shall humble themselves** (v. 14). *Humble* (*kana*) literally means “to bend the knee” in the sense of being humiliated or vanquished. It also means “to be brought low” in the sense of being subjugated. Once God inflicted on them the catastrophes (v. 13) because of their sins, the proper response was to fall down before the Lord in humility and repentance. As God’s people today, we can also come before God in humility and repentance when we have sinned.

Pray and seek my face **Pray, and seek my face** (v. 14). Repentance means turning away from sinful actions, but it also means turning toward God. In humility one must *pray* to God and *seek* His face (presence). “Seeking God’s face” is a Hebrew idiom which in this context refers to turning from one’s evil way turning from one’s wicked ways and turning back to God and His ways.

Then I will hear from heaven **Then will I hear from heaven** (v. 14). God promised to hear those who turn away from their sin and seek Him and His ways with repentant hearts. As in verse 1, *heaven* here refers to God’s abode.

Forgive their sin (v. 14). To *forgive* (*salach*) means to pardon one’s sins. God is the only One who can forgive sins. There was no forgiveness of sins without the shedding of blood (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22). Offering sacrifices at the temple on the Day of Atonement was how the Israelites received God’s forgiveness (Lev. 16). This action looked forward to the atoning sacrifice of Christ for all who will repent and place their faith in Him as their Savior and Lord (Heb. 9:11-28).

Heal their land (v. 14). *Heal* (*rapha*) means to make healthy again. God promised that the Israelites’ *land* (earth, *erets*) would be restored to favorable conditions to bring forth abundant harvests if they sought Him in repentance. In light of how God said He would judge the land if Israel was unfaithful to Him (Deut. 28:15-18, 23-24, 38-40; 2 Chron. 7:13), this would have been a particularly meaningful and welcome blessing to Israel’s agrarian economy in which they relied heavily on what the ground produced. While the historical context of this promise is the people of Israel in Solomon’s day, this promise has application for our time as well. God desires to bless our country with His presence and guidance. Such revivals which make profound impacts for Christ on society begin when individual believers and churches turn back to God in repentance and submission. Revival spreads from there.

My eyes . . . my ears **Mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent** (v. 15). This is what is known as anthropomorphic language, where human characteristics are associated with God who is Spirit and does not have literal eyes or ears. Such language is used to communicate a point or idea.

Will be open . . . attentive to prayer **Will be open . . . attentive to the prayers** **Shall be open, . . . attent unto thy prayer** (v. 15). God promised that if His people turned to Him in humility and repentance, He would see their devotion to Him

and hear their prayers. Specifically, He would forgive them of their sins and heal their land. He would bless them and meet their needs.

From this place Offered in this place Made in this place (v. 15). Solomon's temple was the place in which God resided among His people and from which He would hear the Israelites' prayers.

Chosen and consecrated this temple Chosen and sanctified this house (v. 16). God had *chosen* and *consecrated/sanctified* Solomon's temple. Just as He had chosen the Israelites to be His people (Ex. 19:5; Deut. 7:6-11), He now had chosen the temple to be His dwelling place among His people. To *consecratesanctify (qadash)* is to sanctify/consecrate or dedicate. In this case, because God is holy the temple became hallowed ground, set apart as His dwelling place.

My name may be there forever My Name may be there forever That my name may be there for ever (v. 16). *Name (shem)* is related to God's character—particularly His power, authority, and holiness. To know God's name was to be in relationship with Him. That His name would be there *foreverfor ever* emphasizes that the Israelites would always be His people.

My eyes and my heart will be there at all times My eyes and my heart will always be there Mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually (v. 16). Again using anthropomorphic language, God declared that the temple would be where He dwelled (*my heart will be there my heart will always be there mine heart shall be there*) and from which He would watch over and care for (*my eyes mine eyes*) His people. *At all times Always Perpetually* echoes "foreverfor ever."

2 Chronicles 7:17-20

Connection to the Point. God made this promise personal as He told Solomon of the blessing he would receive if he was obedient.

As for you, if . . . if . . . As for you, if . . . And as for thee, if thou wilt (v. 17). As the blessings on God's people were conditional upon their faithfulness to God, so too Israel's king would receive blessings if he remained faithful to God.

Walk before me Walk before me faithfully Walk before me (v. 17). *Walk Walk . . . faithfully (halak)* refers to how one lives life, the character of one's lifestyle. As Israel's king, Solomon was accountable to God both for how he lived personally and how he ruled God's people.

As your father David walked As David your father did As David thy father walked (v. 17). David was a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22). David was not perfect. He committed adultery and murder (2 Sam. 11–12). But in general, he walked in God's ways and when confronted with his sins, he repented and sought God's forgiveness (Pss. 32:1-5; 51).

Doing everything I have commanded you Do all I command Do according to all that I have commanded thee (v. 17). The word *doingdo (asah)* means to observe and accomplish. *Commanded Command (tsavah)* refers to all that God revealed to the Israelites concerning how they were to live in relationship with Him. Solomon was to live (walk) before God "with a heart of integrity in integrity of heart with integrity of heart" and doing what was right (1 Kings 9:4).

Keep my statutes and ordinances Observe my decrees and laws Observe my statutes and my judgments (v. 17). This clause repeats the thought of the previous part of the verse. *Keep Observe (shamar)* means to guard and observe/keep, to build a hedge of protection around. *Statutes Decrees (choq)* refers to all that God communicated to the Israelites concerning how they should live in His ways. *Ordinances Laws Judgments (mishpat)* or judgments/ordinances refers to the justice or moral virtue of God, and pictures here the decisions of God, much like the legal decisions in a court. It encapsulates the rights, privileges, blessings, and penalties related to keeping or failing to keep God's commands.

I will establish your royal throne Then will I stablish the throne of thy kingdom (v. 18). This was a promise specifically to Solomon. If he was faithful to God's covenant, God would establish his throne as king of Israel. *Establish* *Stablish* (*qum*) means confirm, ratify, and impose. It carries the sense of strengthening and upholding Solomon's kingdom.

As I promised your father David As I covenanted with David your father According as I have covenanted with David thy father (v. 18). The word *promised* (*karath*) *covenanted* (*karath*) here means "covenanted," from a Hebrew verb that means to cut a covenant, where in the covenant ceremony the animal's body was cut in pieces. The parties to the covenant walked between the pieces, symbolically acknowledging that if they violated the covenant may they suffer the same end as the sacrificial animal (Gen. 15:9-17; Jer. 34:18). The promises of the Davidic covenant God made to David are found in 2 Samuel 7:8-16.

You will never fail to have a man ruling in Israel You shall never fail to have a successor to rule over Israel There shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel (v. 18). The Hebrew word for *fail to have* (*karath*) is the same word as "promised covenanted" earlier in this verse. God promised Solomon that there would never be a time when Israel would be without a king. God would not break the promise that He cut (covenanted) with David and now with Solomon.

However, if you turn away and abandon my statutes and my commands But if you turn away and forsake the decrees and commands But if ye turn away, and forsake my statutes and my commandments (v. 19). God's covenantal blessings were conditioned on the king and his people being faithful to the covenant stipulations. So, if Solomon and Israel didn't follow God's covenantal requirements—instead turning away from God's *statutes* *decrees* and *commandments*—then God would not fulfill His promises to bless Israel and its king.

That I have set before you I have given you Which I have set before you (v. 19). It is God who both initiates and sets the terms of His covenants with people.

If you go and serve other gods and bow in worship to them Go off to serve other gods and worship them And shall go and serve other gods, and worship them (v. 19). This expands on the previous part of the verse. *Go* *Go off* *Shall go* (*halak*) is the same Hebrew term used in verse 17 to describe David's faithfulness to the Lord. Here it refers to one's faithlessness to God's covenant through a lifestyle characterized by going after other gods. *Serve* (*avad*) means to work, here in the sense of becoming a servant of other gods. To *bow in worship* (*shachah*) can have the meaning of ministering to.

I will uproot Israel from the soil that I gave them Then I will uproot Israel from my land, which I have given them Then I will pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have given them (v. 20). While God gave the promised land to Abraham and his descendants, remaining in the land was contingent upon the Israelites living in covenant faithfulness to Yahweh, their God (Deut. 28).

This temple . . . I will banish from my presence (v. 20). *Banish* (*shalak*) means to throw, fling, or cast. God would tear down the temple and throw it away. Just as God would abandon His faithless people, the temple in which God had chosen to dwell among His people ("that I have sanctified for my name") He would now abandon as well. *Presence* (*paneh*) means "face," and is the same term used in verse 14 in the phrase "seek my face." If the Israelites and their king would not seek God's presence (face), Yahweh would banish them from before His face (presence) by forsaking the temple in which He had dwelled among His people and exiling the Israelites from the land. **Will reject this temple** (v. 20). *Reject* (*shalak*) means to throw, fling, or cast. God would tear down the temple and throw it away. Just as God would abandon His faithless people, the temple in which God had chosen to dwell among His people ("I have consecrated for my Name") He would now abandon as well. **This house, which I have sanctified for my name, will I cast out of my sight** (v. 20). God would tear down the temple and throw it away *out of my sight*. Just as God would abandon His faithless people, the temple in which God had chosen to dwell among His people (*which I have sanctified for my name*) He would now abandon as well.

I will make it an object of scorn and ridicule among all the peoples I will make it a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples Will make it to be a proverb and a byword among all nations (v. 20). The destruction of the Israelites' nation and temple would be a humiliating example for the other nations (Deut. 28:37). If Israel would not

fulfill their purpose of being a nation in faithful covenant relationship with God, then God would make them an example for the nations of the consequences for a people who forsake their covenant with Him.