

## GREAT AWAKENING #2 - "PRAYER"

My text for this series on praying for Great Awakening is found in **2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 7:14**: **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.** I do not expect that you all have this passage committed to memory, but I would challenge you to do so. In fact, if memorizing scripture is not something you have typically done, I'd encourage you to resolve this year to write at least one passage per month on the tablet of your heart. It can change your life.

As we saw last week, after dedicating the temple in Jerusalem, the Lord God responds positively with a pledge to manifest His presence there. He also, however promises to withdraw His hand of blessing if His people ignore Him. Yet, it is also in that context that God promises to once again shower them with forgiveness and healing \_ providing certain conditions are met. He promises to be there when they need Him.

We also saw last week that the first step in this process is the need for God's people to humble themselves\_ admitting personal responsibility for the part they may have played in the lethargy that exists in the community of believers; Accepting blame for unfruitfulness; and confessing their own sin of negligence, if not out-right rebellion. Then, the next phase: **"...if My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and PRAY.** This is one of the most fundamental, but most neglected disciplines in the life of so many of God's children.

**Calling out to God in need should come natural.** Whenever my kids are hurt or afraid or in desperation, they cry out. Oh, depending upon the issue, they may call for their mommy instead of their daddy, but they cry out, nonetheless. It's what children do\_ especially if they have a relationship with those who nurtured and raised them. Even today, when my daughters are worried or afraid, they call. When they don't know where else to turn, they always know they can turn to us. For all intents and purposes, we only have one spiritual parent\_ and it's our heavenly Father, and He wants His children to know that when they humble themselves and pray to Him, He responds. He can heal our hurts and calm our fears. He can handle our biggest problems and deal with our greatest needs\_ even the ones we don't realize that we even have. Jesus teaches us in what we call the Lord's Prayer that He knows what we have need of even before we ask. Yet still, we are instructed to ask\_ but not just to save us when we get into trouble. He says we are to ask for daily bread and victory over temptation\_ and even more importantly, to ask for the resolve and the follow through to live according to His will for us.

**Communicating with God should be our daily practice.** Too many of God's children only call when they need something, but He wants to hear from us every day. Nearly every evening when I get home, I ask Nina if she's heard from the girls. The answer is usually "yes". Mandy calls from Florida almost every day\_ and Sara calls like clockwork from Michigan on her **20** minute drive home from work. They aren't calling in crisis mode necessarily. Oh, they may have questions about parenting and domestic responsibilities like cooking and cleaning or how to deal with their knucklehead husbands\_ .I mean that in all love, because I am also a knucklehead husband. They ask her about other relationships as well, knowing that their Mom really has a heart like Jesus when it comes to dealing with people. But, Nina can tell you that it often appears like they aren't really looking for answers so much as they just want to talk with their Mother.

And me? Well, not many days go by that they don't text me or poke me on Facebook. Often, it's asking me to call when I get a chance. Maybe they want some advice: *"Daddy, I have this person at work or at the church that I need to talk to...and I was wondering how you'd handle it."* Sometimes they want to tap into what they seem to think is the human concordance. *"Dad, where in the Bible does it say this or that?" / "What are some good verses on this subject?"* And sometimes, they call just to tell me that they miss me and just wanted to hear my voice; they love me and long to see me.

Now, I want to hear from the girls when they are in trouble\_ but I think you can probably guess which of these kind of calls bless me the most. Don't you know that God wants us to call Him this way, too? More about this next week...

**Confessing our sin to God should also be our normal routine.** This is the heart of our text in **2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 7:14**. The people of God, those who were called by His name, were to humbly pray to Him, confessing their sin. This is not something we delight in doing\_ but until it is done, we can't honestly expect the forgiveness and healing we need so dearly. John writes, <sup>8</sup> **"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."**

I think we have trouble admitting our sin. Oh, we generalize pretty easily, especially in prayers we say by rote. *"Forgive us our trespasses (or debts) as we forgive those who trespass against us."* That sounds better to our ears, than sins. Others sin. We just have faults or failings or shortcomings. I'm afraid generic prayers of confession can too often leave us un-convicted\_ and un-changed.

Don't get me wrong, I am not saying we have to itemize all our sins in order to be forgiven. The list of my sins is longer than my memory. Yet, we can be more specific than we often are.

*"Father, forgive me of my greed and lust, my pride and arrogance. For too often caring more about what people think of me than what you think of Me. Forgive me for my angry outbursts and my insensitivity. Forgive me of my selfish attitudes and critical judgements. Forgive me for making worship more about me than you. God, cure me of my discontent\_ always wanting more from You instead of more of You."*

In the process of baring our soul to God, we may find ourselves even getting more specific. *"Lord, I know I was too harsh with my kids, today." / "I was disrespectful to my parents." / "I spoke without thinking to my friend." / "I neglected my wife." / "I broke my promise to my brother in Christ." / "I looked at that woman inappropriately." / "I shouldn't have taken that stuff from work". / "I lied to my boss." / "I harbored jealousy toward my co-worker." / "I held back on my tithe." / "I misused the blessings You gave me." / "I abused my position to get things I wanted."*

Yet, with every confession, a barrier is removed and the distance between us and the God we seek is reduced. We take steps closer to the One we claim as our Father.

So, before we sing this next song, let us hear the plea of Jesus. He says, **"Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."** And in the book of Revelation we're told that both the Bride (His church) and the Spirit say **"Come."** If you realize the need today for healing and forgiveness, humble yourself, and come and pray\_ call out to Him, communicate with Him, confess to Him that you need Him every hour. He will listen. He's waiting...