

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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Sermon title: God's Formula For A Successful Nation (If My People),
2 Chronicles 7

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INTRODUCTION: The Book of Chronicles features the construction of Solomon's temple and his palace. To do all this construction took 70,000 men to carry the supplies, 80,000 men as stonecutters, and 3,600 foremen over them.

When it was all finished, it was quite a sight to behold. Solomon decided to have lots of ceremonies to consecrate the new temple. Keep in mind, this was at a time when the nation of Israel was unified and prosperous. They honored God and had their focus on him. They loved their king, and he loved them.

SCRIPTURE: [Read 2 Chronicles 7]

So, there you have it in one chapter, the dedication of the new temple. It must have been incredible: a time when the normal business of the day stopped and everyone focused on the new temple and the ceremonies of its dedication.

I want to focus on verse 14. I'll read it for the second time:

SCRIPTURE: 2 Chronicles 7:14 *¹⁴if 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.*

Let's assume the scripture is God's formula for all people of all time. I am going to break this scripture apart, phrase by phrase, and see if it applies to us.

1. If my people...
2. who are called by my name...
3. 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.

First, IF MY PEOPLE...

The question is: Are we his people? Do we serve him? Do we worship him? Are we focused on being his hands and feet in this world? Are we more reliant on God than the government? Is our faith set on him more than our Social Security and our investments?

How, exactly, do we know if we are God's people? How do we know that being God's people is more than saying mere words? The book of I John tells us we are God's people if we follow his commands and have love for each other.

As a nation, though, are we God's people? My answer is no! As we see in scripture, the nation who rebels against God's commands will not stand. God sparing his wrath against our nation is only because of his grace.

But, at the same time, there are many people in this nation who are his people. They are the people who follow God's commands and love all people.

APPLICATION: Now let's bring it home: "*If my people...*" It's so easy for us to point the finger at those who are clearly not God's people. It's so easy for us to say they need to straighten their ways. But, the phrase, "*If my people*" gives clear instruction to God's people, and here it is: Quit assuming the rest of the world needs to straighten up in order to get God's blessings. Instead, focus on being the people of God.

Second, "WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME..."

How do we know if we are called by God's name? As believers on this side of history, on this side of the cross, the answer is in knowing Jesus as Lord and Savior.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 7:21-23 ²¹ "*Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'*"

EXPLANATION: This means there will be people judged by God himself as people not called by his name.

APPLICATION: The question is not about others, though, but for each and every one of us. Are we called by God's name? As a church, are we called by God's name? As a church, are we on God's mission? Everyone who is called by God's name does God's will.

Third, “WILL HUMBLE THEMSELVES AND PRAY AND SEEK MY FACE AND TURN FROM THEIR WICKED WAYS,”

I included these together because it's written as one congruent thought.

Humbling ourselves it not easy. For some people, it's next to impossible. Pride is no doubt, the common denominator of a life without God. Pride and arrogance go hand in hand. And, with nations, I am not talking about national pride. I am talking about a nation of people who believe they became great on their own efforts, without God.

ILLUSTRATION: In the days of Soviet Communism, the nation did everything possible to erase God from everything. Banning Bibles, prohibiting teaching about God, limiting church life, and promoting atheism. As the West prospered, the Soviets had no idea how far behind they were. They could not see the outside world. Yet, their proud propaganda continued. And, it's the same today among China's leaders and North Korea's leader and other parts of the world.

APPLICATION: Now, let's look inward. While our nation continues to go secular, it's important for believers to humble ourselves, pray, seek God's face, and turn from our wicked ways.

At the dedication of Solomon's new temple, look how the people humbled themselves.

SCRIPTURE: 2 Chronicles 7:3 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.”

EXPLANATION: Have you ever heard the phrase, “Hit the pavement?” Maybe this is where it comes from.

ILLUSTRATION: In 1997, there was an assembly of men, some said about a million, who descended on the mall in Washington DC for a day of prayer called a “solemn assembly.” I was there, and it all seemed very sincere to me. It was a day of national repentance. We probably need something like that at least once a year.

APPLICATION: But now, let’s draw it back home: Humbling ourselves is not easy, is it? Two times last week when I attempted to be kind to people, I was insulted. I considered how to respond but then decided to do nothing. In those cases, I’d chosen the route which seemed most humble at the time, and I’ll have to let God deal with those people.

SCRIPTURE: James 4:10 says, ¹⁰ *Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*

APPLICATION: So, my counsel to you is to be proactive at humbling yourselves. Don’t wait until God humbles you or until he allows you to trip and fall.

Now as a church, have we humbled ourselves? Are we broken enough for God to use, or do we think we have all the answers? Are we praying? Are we seeking God’s face? Are we turning from our wicked ways?

When we hear the word wicked, we think of the worst of all evil. But, did you know the Bible says in:

SCRIPTURE: I Samuel 15:23 ²³ *For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry...(KJV).*

Let me review: *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.*

CONCLUSION: Let me ask you, don't we need our sins forgiven? Don't we need healing in our land? No doubt, sin is rampant, and no doubt, there is spiritual sickness in the land.

We were once a country where the political majority ruled and the political minority had rights. But, now we've become a country where sinful special interest groups rule the majority and lead the majority around like a bull with a ring through his nose.

No doubt, our nation needs forgiveness and healing.

Now, let me wrap this up:

What I said earlier is something I want everyone to take note of. Forgiveness and healing of the land takes place when God's people pursue it. "*If my people,*" not "if the whole world," or "if others," but "*if my people.*"

Let us commit to be the people of God, regardless of what the world is doing.

Let us commit to be the Church of God, regardless of what other churches are doing.

If you aren't sure if you are a person of God, listen to this scripture,

SCRIPTURE: I John 5:1 *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him (ESV).*

Our invitation time is open for people to receive Jesus as Lord. It is also open for prayers of repentance or healing.

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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