



Conversation with God – Part 13
2 Chronicles 7:12-16
GCSP – 02/28/2009

Take a moment and read the following statement:

FINISHED FILES ARE THE RESULT OF YEARS
OF SCIENTIFIC STUDY COMBINED WITH
THE EXPERIENCE OF MANY YEARS.

Now read it again and count the number of F's you see in this statement (For those who are reading this sermon keep your eyes focused above to get the full effect of this illustration – no peeking below).

How many of you see three F's? Anyone see four? How about five? There are actually six F's in that statement. Look at it again if you need to.

FINISHED FILES ARE THE RESULT OF YEARS
OF SCIENTIFIC STUDY COMBINED WITH
THE EXPERIENCE OF MANY YEARS.

Why is it that most of you failed to see the F's in the word "OF" even though it was right there in front of you? It is because your brains are wired to create images in your mind for everything. As you read the statement in your mind you were preconditioned to "hear" the sound of an F even more so than actually seeing the F. The F in the word "OF" sounds like a V; so the image created in your mind was that of a V and your sight blocked it out.

I am afraid that at times this same deficiency to see what is right in front of you occurs as you study the Bible. Because you have been conditioned to only "see" certain things because of your own personal theology, or because of the traditions you have been raised in, or because of some bad experiences you have had with other denominations, or any number of other reasons, you miss some of the F's in God's Word. And be careful; our pride causes us to hear a statement like I just made and immediately apply

it to someone else you know and not yourself; after all, you are the only one who accurately understands everything God has said, right? I know that describes me; at least in my own mind sometimes.

Many times this deficiency of not "seeing" what is right in front of you happens when you are familiar with a particular verse or passage of Scripture. For many of you tonight's passage, or at least one verse in the passage, is indeed very familiar. So focus in. Be wary of your mind, or Satan, tricking you into zoning out, or believing you have nothing else to learn.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **2 Chronicles**.

2 Chronicles 7:12-16

Let's pray.

Several weeks ago I used a passage from **1 Kings 8-9** for a sermon in this series on prayer. At that time we looked at Solomon's prayer of dedication at the completion and opening of the Temple. Tonight's passage takes place after the two weeks of feasting and celebration that surrounding this same event.

Back up to the beginning of **2 Chronicles 7**, and let's read to refresh our memory of the scene in which our passage comes from and to gain some perspective.

2 Chronicles 7:1-11; Psalm 136

It is after all of this that the Lord appears to Solomon again.

v. 12

God calls the Temple His house of sacrifice (the only time in Scripture that He calls it by this name). Before we go any further I want to make a connection. Hold your place in **2 Chronicles** and turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Isaiah**.

Isaiah 56:1-7

What a glorious passage of Scripture! Notice in **verse 7** that the connection is made between sacrifice and prayer; God speaks of the acceptable sacrifices and immediately calls His house a house of prayer. The sacrifices we make to the Lord, whether they are the sacrifices of praise and worship, the sacrifices of our gifts and offerings, the sacrifices of our time and service to the ministry of the Lord, the sacrifices of the reading and studying and meditating on and memorizing God's Word, the sacrifices of immediate obedience to His Word, or any other biblical sacrifices, all are to be covered with and infused with prayer.

As we looked at several weeks ago, **Isaiah 1:10-15** makes it clear that our sacrifices and prayers can be useless and an abomination to the Lord if not offered with the right heart and the proper motivation and attitude. But when genuine prayers are made prior to your sacrifices, during your sacrifices, and after your sacrifices, you can rest assured that both will be acceptable to the Lord. And the blessings that follow such joyful and willing obedience will come in abundance.

Let's look at one other instance of the Temple being called a house of prayer. Turn with me in your Bibles to the Gospel of **Matthew**.

Matthew 21:12-14

The Temple was a house of sacrifice and a house of prayer; and when genuine heartfelt sacrifice and prayer occurred, so too did miraculous blessing and provision occur.

So where is the Temple of the Lord today? Scripture is clear that our bodies are now the Temple of the Lord (**1 Corinthians 3:16**). The Holy Spirit of God is now housed within each of us who have confessed with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believed in our heart the God raised Him from the dead (**Romans 10:9-10**). The Holy Spirit lives within us. We are now the "house" of sacrifice and the "house" of prayer; or at least we should be.

Is your "house", your life, one that the Lord would be pleased with or one in which He would have to grab a whip to chase away everything that was not holy? Would Jesus have to overturn the tables in your life to cleanse His Temple again? Can your life be called a life of prayer or is it a den of thieves? And in the context, anything unholy in our lives could be characterized as thievery for the Bible tells us we have been **bought with a price** and our lives **are not our own** (**1 Corinthians 6:20**). Anything we do that is against the principles of God's Word must be cleansed and driven out so that the Lord's Temple can rightly be called a house of prayer.

We do not have the right any longer to do as we please. We are stealing from the Lord when we live a sinful lifestyle. We are turning the Temple of the Lord into a den of thieves when we live according to the world and not according to his Word. God stepped into your life and snatched you out of the darkness and lovingly placed you into His glorious light. Do you think He is okay with you scratching and clawing your way back into the darkness? May it never be!

Jesus Christ was mercilessly beaten to a bloody pulp and then nailed on a cross to pay for your life of sin. He suffered and died so that you would be His bride, His brother or sister, and His joint-heir of the riches of heaven. Because of His sacrifice you are now a son or a daughter of God. You are now the Temple of the Holy Spirit. You are now the beloved of God. The price was paid for your entrance into heaven and your ticket to hell has been cancelled and obliterated.

Have we forgotten all of this? Have we allowed petty offences in our lives to break our fellowship with other believers and more importantly with the Lord? Have we set up tables of offence and un-forgiveness in the Lord's Temple? Are we selling the world's justice and the world's philosophies and the world's materialism and the world's lifestyle in the Lord's Temple?

Romans 12:1, tells us that our reasonable act of service and worship to the Lord is offer up our bodies, everything that we are, as a living and holy sacrifice to God. If we are to be the Temple of God, the house of prayer, then we must be careful and determined to do our own housecleaning on a regular and consistent basis (**1 John 1:9**).

Don't allow yourself to become so polluted by the world that the Lord has to step in and cleanse His Temple in your life. When the Lord cleanses His Temple it is violent and painful. **John 2:15** tells us how the Lord made a whip to drive out the money-changers and the sellers of merchandise. So know that when you choose to use the Temple of God for anything other than the holy purposes He has given us in His Word, expect pain.

Well, let's get back to **2 Chronicles 7** and continue to make some connections.

v. 13

Why would the Lord withhold the rain, or send locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among His people? He would do this when they choose to be disobedient to His Word.

Rain is required for the land to flourish. Protection from locusts was required to be able to have a good harvest. Both of these directly dealt with the prosperity of the people. In Bible times your land and your crops and the livestock that lived off the land represented your wealth and prosperity. Even today you don't ask a rancher how many head of cattle he owns or how many horses are on his land, because that question would be the same as him asking you how much money you have in the bank. Land and crops and livestock equaled wealth and prosperity.

Pestilence is primarily mass disease and sickness. On rare occasions it refers more to famine, but in times of famine the people are much more susceptible to disease and sickness as their immune systems are compromised due to a lack of nutrition. Starvation is a form of disease when you boil it all down. So it is safe to say that pestilence is any condition that leads to mass sickness and disease.

So do you see the picture that is being painted here when you choose disobedience to God's Word? Yes, there are unbelievers who are very wealthy and healthy who do not live according to God's principles, and God will at times allow some of His children who are backslidden to prosper and remain healthy for a season, but beloved, **"God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap"** (**Galatians 6:7**). And for those who disobey, those who defile His Temple, their prosperity and physical health are at risk.

v. 14

Most Christians are very familiar with this verse. In the series of sermons I preached on "A Biblical Response to Troubling Times" I referred to this verse many times.

In the proper context, **verse 14** is the antidote for the consequences of unholy and unrighteous living. God in His unfathomable mercy has given us a prescription to regain the prosperity and health that you may lose due to your sin – and please do not miss the F's in what I am saying here. I am not saying that all financial problems and all sickness is due to disobedience, but in this passage we are dealing with the times when they are the result of disobedience (Jot down **Deuteronomy 28** and check out how God has promised the curse of financial disaster to those of His children who do not obey His Word).

If My people who are called by My name

Notice again that God is specifically talking to His people who are called by His name – meaning He is talking to anyone who is a genuine born again Christian. He is not talking to unbelievers, or to the heathen, or even religious people; there are a multitude of religious people in this world who have never confessed Jesus as Lord of their life, and Jesus is the only way to salvation (**Acts 4:12**). God was talking to His chosen people in the original context and He is talking to us today when He refers to His people. So if you are here tonight, or you are reading or listening to this sermon in some other format, and you know beyond any doubt that you are a genuine saved believer, then God is talking to you in this verse when you are disobedient to His Word.

Humble themselves

Pride will always be at the core of your continued disobedience to God's Word. Pride convinces you that you know better than God. Pride tells you that you are the exception to God's rules; you are spiritual enough that you don't have to obey everything in Scripture. Pride says you can hang onto that grudge or withhold that forgiveness because you have good reason to. Pride says you can ignore the one who has something against you. Pride says you can skip church. Pride says it's okay to cheat your employer because they are no good for nothing scoundrels anyway. Pride says you're too busy to set aside a consistent time to study Scripture and pray. Have I hit everyone yet or do I need to go on?

We must humble ourselves if we expect to ever regain what we have lost due to our sin.

And pray

I have spent three months preaching on prayer, and although this will be the last in this current series, I could easily go on for another three months. I trust you have learned a thing or two about prayer during this time.

Prayer is essential in having a right relationship with God. Apart from prayer there is no true relationship with God. If you never spoke with your spouse, or your children, or your parents, how would you describe that relationship? If you never speak with God it's going to be that same kind of relationship. We must humble ourselves and pray.

And seek My face

The majority of Christians do not seek God's face but instead they seek His hand. They do not come to God for the simple aspect of wanting to know Him and to be with Him, but they come to Him from the aspect of what He can give them. It would be like having a cousin that you never gave a second thought about until you heard they won Lotto; and after twenty years of no contact you decide to then pick up the phone. That's seeking God's hand as opposed to seeking His face.

Make no mistake about it, God desires for us to ask for the things from His hand (**you have not because you ask not – James 4:2b**, KJV), but He first desires that you want Him. Humbly pray seeking His face.

And turn from your wicked ways

This is more than saying I'm sorry. Turning from your wicked ways is more than confession of your sins. Confessing your sins is telling the Lord about what you did and how much you are sorry about it. Confessing your sins is telling God how much you are

ashamed of the fact that you lied, or cheated, or lusted, or failed to forgive someone, or gossiped, or failed to help someone the Lord placed in your path, etc. That's confession. And while confession is important, confession alone is not turning from your wicked ways. Turning from your wicked ways is taking the necessary steps to make radical and permanent change in your life.

For example, confession would be telling the Lord how sorry you are for watching that filthy movie on HBO or Cinemax or Showtime last night, turning from your wicked ways would be cancelling those channels so the temptation is not in your home, or putting safeguards in place so you are blocked from viewing porn sites on your computer, or staying away from places that are conducive to that kind of sin. Studying and applying **Proverbs 5-7** will be an act of turning from your wicked ways in this regard.

That's just one example. Whatever sin you struggle with, turning from your wicked ways means you attack the problem not just put a Band-aid on the symptom.

Then I will hear from heaven, will forgive your sin, and heal your land

The context of this entire passage is for national healing in the days of Solomon but the same principle applies to you personally. We can also apply this to our country as I spoke about several months ago but tonight's application is more so a personal level. If you want God to hear you, to forgive you, and to restore that which you lost as a result of your sin, then you must humbly pray, seek God's face, and turn from your wicked ways. It's that simple.

v. 15

How important is it for you to know that when you pray that God's eyes are open and His ears are attentive to you, especially when you are coming to Him because of the calamities in your life brought on by sin? The prayers offered in His holy Temple, a cleansed Temple, are guaranteed to capture His attention.

It says "**Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive**", meaning after you have humbly prayed and sought His face and turned from your wicked ways. When the Temple that is your life is cleansed God will see and hear your request to restore your prosperity and health that had been destroyed or taken away due to sin.

v. 16

Some might say that I have taken things out of context by trying to apply this promise to the nation of Israel to our lives today. Let me ask you a question: Does the physical Temple exist today? Then how are God's name and eyes and heart there perpetually? Beloved God is continuing this promise in the lives of His children today. We are His Temple and forevermore shall be. When the physical Temple is rebuilt in the days of the Tribulation it will not be to replace His new Temple of the believer's hearts; the next Temple will be built for the Antichrist.

God has chosen and consecrated us so that His name will be there forever and so that His eyes and His heart will be within us perpetually. We can see life through God's eyes and we can display and manifest His heart in every situation we face because they reside within us; that's what this verse says.

But if we have set up our tables of merchandise and have let the world take up residence in the Temple, if we have defiled God's Temple and trampled on God's glory to the point of making God's house look like any other house in the world, then the rains will be withheld and the locusts will come to devour our wealth, and the pestilence will come to destroy our health – this is God's curse to those who do not take care to keep His Temple consecrated and holy.

But, **"If My people..."**

Let's pray.