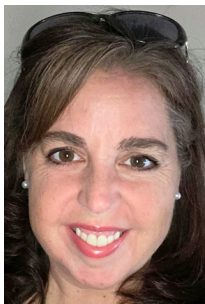


Bible Studies for Life: June 30

Praying for Our Nation • 2 Chronicles 7:1-3,12-20

By Jessica McMillan



McMillan

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But we HAVE humbled ourselves and prayed as fervently as we know how. Yet as we look at the world around us, it is anything but healed. So what went wrong? Did we not pray hard enough? Was there still a lack of humility? Is God just waiting on the right amount of boldness and intent from His people before He will act? I do not believe this is the case. Generation after generation, people have heard and read this passage, and they have humbly prayed for God’s healing on their land – both in these United States and abroad. Why hasn’t God healed us?

Maybe we are misunderstanding God’s word as we read it through our own patriotic lens. This passage was not written to the United States of America. As with any responsible interpretation of Scripture, we must look at what it meant to the first recipients, then how the same biblical principles might apply to our context today.

2 Chronicles 7:1-3

How would the original recipients have understood this passage? 2 Chronicles 7:1-10 is an account of the dedication of the temple built by Solomon. Fire coming down to consume contents of an altar is not an uncommon image in the Old Testament. This usually indicates God’s acceptance of an

offering in worship. God demonstrates His approval of this new place of worship and the offerings of the people, as well.

2 Chronicles 12-20

The next section in this lesson details the Lord's appearance to Solomon after building the temple. It is here where God says, "if my people who are called by my name," indicating a mark of ownership. God affirmed that He had chosen and consecrated the temple where His name would be forever (v. 16).

We must take note, however, of the way the pronoun "you" is used in this passage. In English, it is sometimes difficult to see the distinction, but in verses 17-18, the term is in the singular form for "you" – meaning Solomon. "As for **you**, if **you** walk before me faithfully as David **your** father did..." (v. 17 emphasis added). But in verses 19-20, the term for "you" is plural – meaning Solomon and the people. "But if **"y'all"** turn away and forsake the decrees and commands I have given **"y'all"** and go off to serve other gods and worship them, 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" (vv. 19-20 emphasis added). In other words, there would be severe consequences if the people turned away from God's laws.

Now what does all that mean for us? Because of God's glory, we should humble ourselves before God. We can trust that He hears us when we pray to Him, and He blesses those who follow Him faithfully. While God does not owe our United States of America a healing, we should never stop praying for our country and those who lead us. May we seek to continually live in a way that brings Him honor.

McMillan is a member of Prentiss Church, Prentiss.