

God Hears and Forgives the Repentant

2 Chronicles 7:14

Intro

Lenin at the beginning of the Russian Revolution said, “*Electricity will replace God. The peasants should pray to it; in any case they will feel its effect long before they feel the effect from on high.*” Apparently Lenin didn’t believe in God and he felt that prayer was useless.

There are some believers who feel that prayer maybe useless because they question whether God really listens or bothers to answer. Feeding a spirit of doubt will erode one’s faith and as a result some have drifted away from God.

But today I want to focus on the fact that God hears and responds. He is not silent as some think nor has He left us to our own fate. He is very much involved in our world and He is much involved in human lives. As a matter of fact He is much closer than our breath.

Last Sunday we looked at what true confession and repentance means. We need not only confess our sin but also experience sorrow for our sin that has hurt God and that we need to turn away from our sin. That’s true repentance.

2 Chronicles 7:14

In 2 Chronicles 7 we read about a personal encounter that King Solomon had with the Lord. Solomon just finished building this elaborate temple in Jerusalem for God and that very night the Lord appeared to him as he was praying.

This is what the Lord said to him: “*I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a temple for sacrifices. 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...*” (2 Chron. 7:12-13).

But notice what God says in the following verse, “*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*” (2 Chron. 7:14).

In this verse God lays four prerequisites in order for Him to hear and answer our prayer.

- 1/ If my people humble themselves
- 2/ If my people pray
- 3/ If my people seek my face
- 4/ If my people turn from their wicked ways.

There’s the condition “*if.*” If His people fulfill these 4 prerequisites He promises to hear from heaven, forgive their sin and heal their land – that means bless them.

“Then I will hear from heaven”

God’s first promise when we follow his four conditions is to hear from heaven. From the four conditions listed it is obvious that God will hear our prayer. Does God hear all our prayers? Are there some prayers He doesn’t hear?

Because God is who He is He knows all things and nothing happens without His knowledge. Therefore He hears every word that comes out of our mouths whether it is a prayer or not. God hears everything, our words and even our thoughts.

In Psalm 139 David said, *“You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar...Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord”* (Psalm 139:2,4).

But there are times when God does not listen to us. The Psalmist tells us - Psalm 66:18 ***“If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened”***. If we cherish or entertain our sin in our heart then God will not hear nor respond to our petition.

It’s like the story that Norman Vincent Peale told when he was a young lad. He found a big fat cigar and went to a secret place to smoke it and his father found him. Norman tried to hide the lit cigar and tried to distract his father by pointing to a poster for the circus. *“Dad, the circus is coming! Can we go?”* His father gave him a piece of advice he never forgot: *“Son, never make a petition while at the same time trying to hide a smoldering disobedience.”*

God Responds to Prayer

In 2 Chronicles 7:14 when God says that He will hear from heaven it means that He will answer their prayer. But IF we humble ourselves, pray, seek His face and turn from our sinful ways – repent.

To “hear” in Hebrew can mean to agree with its intention or petition. God takes our prayers seriously.

1 John 5:14-15 says, *“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.”*

God Hears our Sincere Prayer

Psalm 106:44, *“But he took note of their distress when he heard their cry.”*

Psalm 18:6, *“And my cry for help before Him came into His ears.”*

Psalm 34:15, *“And His ears are open to their cry, the righteous.”*

God Hears the Prayers of the Righteous

John 9:31, *“We know that God does not hear sinners but if anyone is God-fearing, and does His will, He hears him.”*

1 John 3:21-22 we read, *“Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.”*

It is not any prayer that is heard and answered by God but the prayer of a faithful believer who is in fellowship and communion with the Lord.

God’s Perfect Will

God answers prayer in 3 ways: yes, no and wait.

Often we get impatient when we feel God hasn’t responded according to our way and timeline. I like what it says in Galatians 6:9 *“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”*

We must remember that God has a perfect will and plan for us. Sometimes we may pray a miss. You see, prayer becomes not only a time for petitioning but of yielding our life to the will and work of God. In 1 John 5:14 we read, *“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.”*

God hears our cries for help and responds even though it may seem like a long time to us. He works out His best for us according to His sovereign plan and timetable. And His work is accomplished even when we perceive that nothing is happening. Many times God works behind the scenes.

“And will forgive their sin”

After God hears our sincere prayer He forgives our sin. Forgiveness is one of the greatest blessings we could ever imagine and experience. The God who knows all our sin will forgive all our sin. Wow!

Not long before she died in 1988, in a moment of surprising candor on television, Marghanita Laski, one of our best-known secular humanists and novelists, said, *“What I envy most about you Christians is your forgiveness; I have nobody to forgive me.”* She desperately wanted to be forgiven. There are many who live under the load of guilt and desperately desire to be forgiven.

Karl Menninger, the famed psychiatrist, once said that if he could convince the patients in psychiatric hospitals that their sins were forgiven, about 75% of them could walk out the next day!

The Word Forgive

The word "forgive" means to wipe the slate clean, to pardon, to cancel a debt. When we wrong someone, we seek their forgiveness in order for the relationship to be restored – the same with God. Forgiveness is not granted because a person deserves to be forgiven. No one deserves to be forgiven. Forgiveness is an act of love, mercy, and grace. Forgiveness is a decision to not hold something against another person, despite what they have done.

Forgiveness can be such a tricky thing. When we forgive someone, does that mean we'll never recount their offense? And what if we do? What if their offense comes to mind at an unsuspecting moment? Did we ever really forgive?

Our problem as human beings is that we sometimes don't forgive completely and we churn the hurt deep inside of us and then it can breed a spirit of bitterness and resentment. But God is not like that. God does not hold sin against us if we truly have confessed and repented.

“Love keeps no record of wrongs” (1 Cor. 13:5). God forgives and keeps no record of our sin because He loves us!

Sin Destroys

God wants us to be free from our sin sick condition. We read in Galatians 6:8, *“The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction.”* God desires to forgive. In Ezekiel 8:32 God says, *“For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!”*

God is ready to forgive. *“For You, Lord, are good, and **ready to forgive**, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You.”* (Psalm 86:5). Our God is a God who desires to forgive our sins.

God also forgets our sins. God says, *“For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”* (Jeremiah 31:34).

Also we read in Micah 7:19, *“You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.”*

Jesus Bore Our Sin

All it takes is confession and repentance on our part. It took a great deal more than that on God's part. It took the life of His Son, His death on the cross to forgive us. It's through Christ that sinners are forgiven.

*“For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:12).
“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed” (1 Peter 2:24).*

Conclusion

In one of the churches I pastored a young lady told me of one of the most powerful exchanges that happen between her and her father. She said it was one of those most awkward exchanges between a 16-year-old girl and her father, but it spoke volumes. While her father was out of town, she had broken her curfew and stayed out too late with her boyfriend. Now she had to talk to her dad about it. Embarrassed and afraid, she sat quietly looking down at her hands in her lap while the discussion went on. She apologized and they decided on a suitable discipline. *“Look at me,”* her dad said. She didn't want to, but she did. Instead of a hard look of displeasure, she saw tears and a look of deep love in her dad. She went to him and threw her arms around him, and they both knew that everything would be all right between them. That experience deeply impacted her life and she never wanted to disappoint her father.

To keep everything right between us and our heavenly Father, we have to seek His face. We may feel guilt, or awkward toward God. But that is when we must respond to His invitation to look at Him, especially if fellowship has been broken. Our sin grieves God's heart (Gen. 6:6) because He loves us so much.

Our greatest concern should be the fear of losing a close relationship with our precious Lord. Our greatest delight should be seeing His face in the Word and through the wonderful privilege of prayer. That way we will have the assurance that everything is all right between us.

That's what God wants. He wants to restore or revive us in rightful relationship with Him. He desires so much our love and our devotion. He hears and he forgives because he wants our intimate fellowship. Folks! He loves us very much!!

When God hears and forgives He then **“HEALS!”**