

THE NEXT VOICE YOU HEAR

2 Chron. 7:14

Suppose this ~~program~~ ^{Service} today should be interrupted - and the announcer's voice were to say - "Your attention, please, for this special world wide broadcast. The next voice - the voice you hear, will be the voice of God."

Could you (imagine) being seated before the television or listening to some favorite radio program and the announcer butt in and say, your attention, please - the next voice you hear will be the voice of God.

Friday Night FOOT BALL Stadium - interruption - ball man Goodtime - Voice of God

I have an idea that every one of us would listen very carefully to what that next voice said. We might feel for a moment that it was some put up job or that we were being fooled. But suppose it were true beyond a doubt. And it was proved beyond doubt that the voice actually was the voice of God. The whole world would hang breathless on every word.

*Last Night Burrows Memorial Bap. Ch. - This is your life for Pastor H. March
Voices from past would speak & the pastor would try to remember - slides on wall - 15 yrs. service -*

Such an unusual situation is the plot of a best seller book, called - "The Next Voice You Hear" - which was made into a motion picture. It tells the story of an average American family. A man, his wife, his son. The man is a worker in an aircraft plant - just an ordinary sort of fellow like you or me. Then one night as he sits listening to his favorite radio program - there is an interruption. The next voice he hears is the voice of God speaking to the whole world. God announces that for the next few days at the (same time each day) - he will speak over the radio. At first people are skeptical. But the news comes from around the earth at the same time - every man in the world listening to his radio heard God speak. Each in his own language. Science can give no explanation. And each night the world hears the voice.

God warns the listening people of the consequences of their sins.
Of the coming judgement - but he holds out a way of life to them in which that
judgement can be averted. The story is told beautifully in the change in
life of one family and their friends. All because each night for six nights
they heard the voice of God speaking to them.

Such a story is not too fascinating or fantastic. If God were to speak
that way - the world would listen. And the lives of countless thousands would
be changed. The tragedy is that so many of us do not realize that God does speak
to us. He does not speak in exactly that spectacular way. But make no mistake
about it, God does speak to every one of us. To men and to nations in this hour.

We have a book - and that book is the Bible. And that is God's holy word.
It is the revelation of God. It is divinely inspired and written - and in it
God speaks. When the Bible speaks - God speaks to the hearts and minds, and
souls of men. He speaks words of warning. Of impending danger and judgement.
He offers a way of escape. A way of life that will lead us to peace. And peace
is something that every person seeks. He speaks to the confused world. His is
the voice of hope.

We read this text. If any people, my people, which are called by my name
shall humble themselves and pray - and seek my face, and turn from their wicked
ways - then will I hear from Heaven and forgive their sin, and will heal their
land.

God has spoken. What does it mean to you and me. Will we listen? Will
we understand what God is saying. No Bible verse is more important to our lives,
to this nation, and to our world in these sinful days than the one which we have
just read. These words go right to the heart of each of us.

What does this world need now? Is there anything we need more than that God will hear us, that he will forgive our sins, he will heal our diseased and sickened land.

God in these words have promised that he will do it. No uncertainty about it. God speaks with authority. When God says he will do a thing - he will do it.

Someone once asked General Robert E. Lee's aide about a certain matter - to which General Lee had promised to attend. What guarantee do I have that this thing will be done, he said. The aide replied, Sir, you have General Lee's word - there is no better guarantee.

How much more certain is the word of God - for God speaks with authority. Thus saith the Lord. We have his word. There is no better guarantee.

This is no vacant promise or idle word spoken. There is a condition. The sentence begins with "and if". That little "if" is an important word. If my people - which are called by my name.

There is the condition - there are definite unmistakeable things that we are to do if God is to hear our prayer, forgive our sins, and heal our land. What are we to do.

I. We are to humble ourselves.

That is a terrible hard thing. I think God put it first here - because he knew that it was the hardest thing of all. To forget pride and selfishness, to admit that we are wrong. To confess our wickedness. This is hard. It is so

much easier to confess someone else's sin. It is so much easier to blame everything on "they". Whoever "they" may be.

It is so simple to convince one's self that the thing which is wrong with our world and our lives has its roots in what somebody else does. But the voice of God says - you must humble yourself. The fault is you - not somebody else. The sin is in your life - not somebody else. The confession must be personal - individual. It must come from the humble heart. We must put our lives upon the mercy of God. As the Publican - Lord be merciful to me a sinner.

It will be a tremendous day when our country humbles itself before the living God. We are so proud - so sure of ourselves. We have a reputation around the world of being braggers. We have paid lip service to the idea that all men are equal but we have privately believed that no one in the world is half as equal as one good American. With our wealth - we pile up our guns and atomic bombs - and we dare the world to give us trouble. And now we are sick because trouble is coming from here and there. And they are getting far worse than we ever imagined. If we as Americans could realize that we are what we are by the grace of God. If we look at the poor, the down-trodden - the oppressed people of the world - and say in our heart - there but by the grace of God, go I. Then we would be closer to the kingdom of Heaven. We are a people of unclean lips. And the sooner we are able to humble ourselves before God - realizing that in him is our hope - the sooner God will fulfill his promise.

II. We Are To Pray.

That is so easy to say - but so hard to do. A recent poll reports that 75% of all Americans say that they pray. I wonder about that figure. So many of us have never learned the real meaning of the word prayer. Prayer life consists of

an anguished cry for help. When a crisis comes or troubles start. We do not know what it means to pray earnestly, meaningfully - we have never fully considered that Scripture. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

I do not know much about prayer - I wish I knew a great deal more. I wish I knew something about the kind of prayer life of that man of God - whose name was Hyde, who went to his knees - locked in his room - stopping only now and then again to eat and to get a little sleep. Praying for 3 months at a time for a Revival in India. No wonder God answered his prayers.

I wish I knew something about the prayer life of George Mueller. Depending entirely year after year on prayer for the support of his orphanage. And the care of dozens of homeless children. We need to prayer-- but it must not be idle prayer. It must be concentrated - spirit led prayer - that makes vital contact with God. Our hearts must be right to pray like that. We must be forgiven of our sins in our lives - we must be humble before God.

I wish we knew something about the Mother's prayer who was a fine Christian. She was stricken with cancer - she layed upon her death bed and the preacher visited her and prayed with her. And he prayed for her and for her children and her work. And prayed that the pain might not be too much. Then he prayed that she might still be healed. When he was through, she prayed. Her voice was weak - but the spirit was strong. Never a word did she say about herself. She prayed for others. Pointing out the needs of poor lost men to God. She prayed for the pastor and his work. She prayed for missionaries on the foreign field. She praised God for his mercy and love. And that preacher went away saying in his heart, I know God heard that prayer. I wish I could pray like that. And that is what God wants in this hour. Humble ourselves and pray.

III. We Are To Turn From Our Wicked Ways.

It is significant that God does not say simply that we are to confess our sin. It is one thing to confess a sin, and it is another thing to be willing to let the Holy Spirit work in you to overcome that sin. And to take it out of your life. It is not enough to confess sin - we are to renounce it. Not in our own strength - but in the strength of God. We are to put our back to it. We are to turn from our wicked ways.

The danger of this day is that we have come to regard sin too lightly. Even those of you who are Christians, you have fallen victim too many times to the temptation to believe that because forgiveness of sin is freely available in Christ Jesus - that sin is not a serious thing.

Sin is a serious thing. It is a terrible fact of life. It was sin that sent Jesus to the cross at Calvary. And that to me makes it serious. It is sin that brought this world and the nation to the brink of disaster. It is serious. It is sin that prevents our prayers from being answered - and that is serious. It is sin that kills the American soldier on the battle fields of the world and that is serious. It is sin that drags the unredeemed men down to the depths of Hell. Sin is the most serious thing in the world. It is serious in its power. In its consequences, in its punishment. In its penalty - and it must be dealt with and truthfully the only way to deal with it is at the cross.

There is only one answer to sin - and that condition was spoken of by God. Return from our wicked ways - humbly as we turn to the Lord of Lords. As we turn to the risen Saviour. As we invite this Spirit to come into our lives. To displace sin and push it out and live the victorious life.

Make no mistake or misunderstand that God has conditions for the salvation and for the righteous people of this nation. God does not deal in the drama of world history with a nation - regardless of the moral and spiritual condition of it's people. A nation cannot go on unforgiven - forsaking sin - and still be blessed of God.

The question is not - is God on our side. It is - are we on God's side. No nation has a monopoly on the power of God. God blesses the nation that blesses him. We are either for God or we are against God.

May I say to you - in relation to this text, I believe with all my heart that the message here is one for this hour. It is what we would call a contemporary message to the United States. I believe that the voice of God is speaking to us in this hour. And he is calling us this day to repentance and humility. And to confession and to prayer - and forsaking of sin. I believe in the depth of my being that the future of America as we know it - will depend on what we do in these days. We stand at the judgement bar of God. We are weighed in the balance and found wanting. We have sinned, pride, self-sufficiently and lust, envy, jealousy. We have made light of religious matters. They are just on the outter surface.

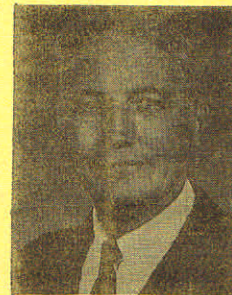
In fact, I think we're a more sinful people than most people realize. A great need is for a national time of repentance. I suppose there are about 50% of the American people who have their names on church rolls. But you would wonder how many of these names are written in the book of life. Quite a few people sit each Sunday in church services. But how many people really sit in the Kingdom of God. We have our religious phrases which we use. The messages are delivered from the pulpit. We must go to our knees. We must get back to the cross. Something must happen in our hearts.

A man one day was watching a group of school children in the back yard of his home. They must have been studying the United Nations in school. You know this is quite a subject today as Red China is trying to get in. They set up their boxes as desks - and the delegates each representing one of the great powers of the world, took their places. One young fellow was the presiding officer. He pounded with a stick upon his desk to open the meeting - with complete dignity he announced -- "the first thing on the program this morning is a fight between the United States and Russia." Now this amused the it made him also sick. You and I know that this is

But suddenly there was an interruption - one and shaking her head so vigorously - that her pig "That's not right, we're not ready for the fight yet

Oh, she was right - so right. And again - of we are not ready for the fight - we're not ready for the prayer. Until we have let God in on it. Until with him.

Listen, the next voice you hear - is the voice are called by my name can humble themselves and pray turn from their wicked ways - then will I hear from sins and will heal their land.



PASTOR'S Paragraphs

A layman, an officer of the church, related an experience to his pastor that took place at the plant where he

worked. A worker accidentally overturned a vat of hot lead. The lead singed away the flesh from the man's side as he fell to the floor. The call went out, "Get a doctor; get a doctor!" The man on the floor cried, "It is too late for a doctor. Is there anyone who could tell me about my soul?"

"Pastor," the layman commented, "there were three hundred of us ready to help the man with his body, but there was no one to help him with his soul."

"What are you saying?" replied the pastor. "You could have helped him! You didn't have to preach. You could have knelt beside him and told him what the LORD means to you - or you could have simply asked him to let you pray."

The layman replied, "No, I'm afraid not. Because you see, I'm not the same man at the iron works that I am at church. Those men down there have never heard me teach a Sunday School class, or take the collection or heard me pray. BUT they have heard me swear, seen me lose my temper and caught me in moments of dishonesty." And I'll confess to you: a dozen times I started to kneel beside the man and do just as you said. Then I saw those men who know me as I really am. And my LIFE CLOSED MY LIPS." HERE WAS A MAN WHO COULD NOT TAKE THE NAME OF GOD TO A DYING FRIEND BECAUSE HE HAD ALREADY TAKEN GOD'S NAME TO HIS FRIEND IN VAIN.

A man one day was watching a group of school children in the back yard of his home. They must have been studying the United Nations in school. You know this is quite a subject today as Red China is trying to get in. They set up their boxes as desks - and the delegates each representing one of the great powers of the world, took their places. One young fellow was the presiding officer. He pounded with a stick upon his desk to open the meeting - with complete dignity he announced -- the first thing on the program this morning is a fight between the United States and Russia. Now this amused the man who was watching - but it made him also sick. You and I know that this is pretty close to the truth.

But suddenly there was an interruption - one of the little girls stood up and shaking her head so vigorously - that her pig tails waved in the breeze.

That's not right, we're not ready for the fight yet. We haven't had a prayer.

Oh, she was right - so right. And again - of course, that hurts. Because we are not ready for the fight - we're not ready for anything until we have had the prayer. Until we have let God in on it. Until we are in right relationship with him.

Listen, the next voice you hear - is the voice of God. If my people which are called by my name can humble themselves and pray - and seek his face, turn from their wicked ways - then will I hear from Heaven, and will heal their land.

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OFFERING
NORTH CAROLINA BAPTIST
No. 51

Some people come to church (carrying resentments) of years past. And they ask God for his blessing.

The big "if" here is - if you turn from your wicked ways. This part is out of style today. Sometimes preachers don't even speak about the sins of the saints.

If I go to church, and I hear the Gospel preached, and I go out loving my sins - that sermon didn't do me much good.

There must be a definite, deliberate, breaking of our sins.

Now it is not just the possibility of admitting we have done wrong, but here is the matter of turning, repenting from our wicked ways.

When Moses came down and there was a golden calf - unfortunately, they were practicing idolatry.

We measure things in other terms - other than what God does. But God does not compromise with the matter.

But here must be a sincere renouncement of sin. Alibi from now until Jesus comes will do no good. It will not do you a bit of good. If you are not fruitful - you are not faithful. If you are not faithful, it is because there is unconfessed, unrepented, unforgiven sin.

X into his life and took charge of that young man. And he would like to have prayer requested for this young man. Indeed, they had a fervant season of prayer. Dr. Hatcher said it was a prayer that you could not write down nor could you forget it. Because of the groaning of it.

That night a lady came and said there is no hope for this young man. I invited him to come to the service, but he took his skates and has gone to spend the evening skating.

Hatcher told her that God is good and God is faithful. That young man cannot get around Levering's prayer.

So the service went on, and he said at the end of the service he did something unusual. He asked if there was anyone who was present and had anything to say - especially if he did not know God. Instantly a young man stood - he said, if there be a God, I do not know him. Christ is the son of God, the Saviour of man, I do not know him. If there be a God, he says, I wish that he would save me. And if anybody knows God, I wish that you would speak to God for me. Instantly he fell back in his seat.

The benediction was pronounced, the church emptied, and Mr. Levering who had been praying - came up and told Hatcher that the young man was Fuller Kindie, the one they had prayed for that morning.

Ten years later, Hatcher was back in that city, in a church. And in the afternoon, they had a Chinese Sunday School in the church. He visited it. And a young man came up to him, came up to him, spoke to him, and said - do you know me. He said that he didn't. He told him that he was the young man that arose during the end of the service one night many years before. And that he was in the dark. And Hatcher said, yes, I remember that. Are you still in the dark of

that night. Oh, he said, no, I have found the light. And he said with great joy, I am trying to turn this Chinese man - that the light may shine in his dark heart.

Twenty years later, Hatcher was back in that place to preach again. And he remarked about the experience that he had, of that young man standing up in the dark and asking for prayer.

Someone came up to him and said - let me tell you a bit of history. That young man became a lawyer. He was very eloquent - but evidently he did not know, but two months before that man had come to his end and he had stood by his grave. And there was common agreement that he was one of the best of all the brethren. And they decided that he had been taken because he was the most ready to go.

That is the possibility of prayer. When they prayed, and there is no substitute. God promises to hear and to forgive. I wonder today if you would not respond to the challenge of prayer - as it hinges on it. How many of these are you willing to undertake today. People, my people. Piety, humble yourself. Petition, prayer, labor at it. Passion, seek God's face. Prescription, turn from your sins. The possibility, blessings will flow.