

***The Key to Turning Our Nation Around is to Turn
2 Chronicles 7:11-14***

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Text Introduction: I want us to look at an oft-used passage of Scripture on national praying. Ask God to help you to be moved to pray for our beloved nation. This passage is often mistakenly taken for a prayer or at least a pattern for prayer. Actually, this passage is God's answer to a prayer of Solomon prayed on the occasion of the dedication of the Temple. The prayer actually begins back in 2 Chronicles 6:12. Here is how God responds to the prayer.

Text: ¹¹ Thus Solomon finished the house of the LORD and the king's house; and Solomon successfully accomplished all that came into his heart to make in the house of the LORD and in his own house. ¹² Then the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him: "I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. ¹³ When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, ¹⁴ 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 will forgive their sin and heal their land.

Introduction: Eugene Peterson, author, Seminary Professor, and writer of the *The Message* paraphrase said, "Prayer is political action. Prayer is social energy. Prayer is public good. Far more of our nation's life is shaped by prayer than is formed by legislation. That we have not collapsed into anarchy is due more to prayer than to the police." *Eugene Peterson, "Earth and Altar". Christianity Today, Vol. 30, no. 1.*

Though the word "turn" is used just once in verse 14, there may be implied in this text as many as 4 "turns" that we must be willing to make if we are going to see the answer to our prayer for our nation.

Turn #1: Turn to God's Glory

"My people who are called by My name"

Our country must remember that

(1) We exist by God's grace.

- Acts 17:26 "And He made from one man every nation...having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation."
- Romans 13:1 "For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God."

(2) We exist for God's glory.

***Not to us, O Lord, not to us,
But to Your name give glory! Psalm 115:1***

We must constantly remind ourselves that God does not exist to bless America or bless us, but rather America exists to bless God.

Turn #2: Turn to God in Prayer

“and pray”

The invitation from an Almighty God to pray has two surprises.

- (1) The fact that God listens!
- (2) The fact of how seldom we pray!

We see an amazing example of prayer in Jesus' life. Perhaps, someone will raise the question, “If Jesus was God, why did He even need to pray? Why did He need to seek the will of God? Why did He need to pray for strength?” Jesus lived His life on earth as an example for us. But, I have to pause and comment, “If Jesus needed to seek the will of the Father, how much more do we? We discover that Jesus prayed...

- For refreshment (Luke 5:16)—He withdrew to the mountain to pray.
- In times of momentous decision (Luke 6:12)—Jesus spent the whole night in prayer before He would select the disciples.
- In times of distress—In garden and on the cross
- For the faith of the disciples (Luke 22:32)

We talk a lot about a prayer, but like Jesus' original 12 disciples, there is much we still are yet to learn about praying.

Turn #3: Turn to God's Word

“and seek My face”

To seek God's face is to seek His Will and we will find His will in His Word.

Perhaps no other story communicates the truth of the benefits of obeying the Word of God better than this one.

The Bible can change not only a life but an entire lifestyle. Most of us have heard the story of the Mutiny on the Bounty, but few of us have heard how the Bible played a very vital part in that historical event. The Bounty was a British ship which set sail from England in 1787, bound for the South Seas. The idea was that those on board would spend some time among the islands, transplanting fruit-bearing and food-bearing trees, and doing other things to make some of the islands more habitable. After ten months of voyage, the Bounty arrived safely at its destination, and for six months the officers and the crew gave themselves to the duties placed upon them by their government. When the special task was completed, however, and the order came to embark again, the sailors rebelled. They had formed strong attachments for the native girls, and the climate and the ease of the South Sea island life was much to their liking. The result was mutiny on the Bounty, and the sailors placed Captain Bligh and a few loyal men adrift in an open boat. Captain Bligh, in an almost miraculous fashion, survived the ordeal, was rescued, and eventually arrived home in London to tell his story. An expedition was launched to punish the mutineers, and in due time fourteen of them were captured and paid the penalty under British law. But nine of the

men had gone to another distant island. There they formed a colony. Perhaps there has never been a more degraded and debauched social life than that of that colony. They learned to distill whiskey from a native plant, and the whiskey, as usual, along with other habits, led to their ruin. Disease and murder took the lives of all the native men and all but one of the white men named Alexander Smith. He found himself the only man on an island, surrounded by a crowd of women and half-breed children. Alexander Smith found a Bible among the possessions of a dead sailor. The Book was new to him. He had never read it before. He sat down and read it through. He believed it and he began to appropriate it. He wanted others to share in the benefits of this book, so he taught classes to the women and the children, as he read to them and taught them the Scriptures. It was twenty years before a ship ever found that island, and when it did, a miniature Utopia was discovered. The people were living in decency, prosperity, harmony, and peace. There was nothing of crime, disease, immorality, insanity, or illiteracy. How was it accomplished? By the reading, the believing, and the appropriating of the truth of God! (The Tale Of The Tardy Oxcart Charles R. Swindoll, Word, pp. 50-51.)

When I think upon that story, I think of the hope for our country and our world if somehow, we would turn to the Word of God. May it be so!

Turn #4: Turn to God in Repentance

“and turn from their wicked ways”

Is this even possible? If our nation ever repents, the repentance will begin with His People! During the Great Awakening, when the Spirit of God revived much of our nation's early faith, Jonathan Edwards was presiding over a massive prayer meeting. Eight hundred men prayed with him.

Into that meeting a woman sent a message asking the men to pray for her husband. The note described a man who had become unloving, prideful, and difficult.

Edwards read the message in private and then, thinking that perhaps the man described was present, made a bold request. Edwards read the note to the 800 men. Then he asked if the man who had been described would raise his hand, so that the whole assembly could pray for him. Three hundred men raised their hands.

Bryan Chapell, Holiness By Grace, (Crossway, 2001), p. 80. Used by permission of Crossway Books, a division of Good News Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois

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 will forgive their sin and heal their land.

Don't those words sound wonderful? May it be so right here in America!