

**Sonoraville Baptist Church**  
**Sunday, March 6, 2011 – 11:00 AM**  
**Rev. Steve Skates, Pastor**

**Getting Right with God – 2 Chronicles 7:1-3. 11-16**

**Introduction:** Have you ever had an experience so incredible that it literally changed your life? For a soldier it might be a “foxhole” experience when he made it out alive in spite of bullets and bombs all around him. For someone living on a fault line or in tornado alley, or in hurricane-prone areas, it might be escaping certain death by surviving a natural disaster. Some would probably call their graduation day or your wedding day that kind of experience, but I’m not talking about that kind of experience. I’m talking about an experience that can’t be explained in any other terms but unbelievable, miraculous or supernatural.

Such was the case, I can imagine, that King Solomon experienced one day as he and the people of Israel came together to dedicate the temple. They had worked long and hard to build a permanent and magnificent structure to house the Ark of the Covenant. Finally, the day had arrived for the temple dedication. The people gathered and Solomon prayed, and the Bible says, “*When Solomon finished praying fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple*” (2 Chron. 7:1 NIV).

If I had been in Solomon’s shoes that day, this would have been an unforgettable, life-changing experience. I can’t imagine fire falling from the sky and filling a place and people surviving. But if that happened to me, I’d be shaking in my boots and doing everything in my power to get right with God.

Today, we’re going to take a closer look at this encounter that Solomon and the Israelites had with God, and see what happens when a person gets right with God. First:

**1. When We Are Right with God**

**A. Our Ways Will be Purified.**

God has always used fire to identify His presence and purify His people. God spoke to Moses through a burning bush and told him that the very ground he was standing was holy. God came to Elijah on Mt Carmel and consumed the altar with a heavenly fire and told the prophets of Baal that Elijah was a holy man. To those first few believers who were huddled together and praying in that upper room in Jerusalem, God visited them in the form of a mighty wind and tongues of fire, announcing that these were a holy people. And in our Scripture passage today, we see that as Solomon and the Israelites worshipped at the Temple, God came as a fire from heaven consuming the temple sacrifices and declared that this was a holy place.

In those instances, the people who were right with God were separated from the rest who were not right with God by the purifying presence of God. That’s what holiness is – being separated from impurities. God shows up and burns away the dross. His very presence in a room makes it holy place. And His very presence in our lives makes us holy people.

This is why Peter wrote, “*But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”*” **1 Peter 1:15-16 (NIV).**

Holiness is what Jesus prayed for in John 17 as He prayed, “*My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.*” **John 17:15-19 (NIV).** Jesus used the word “sanctify” three times. It means to set apart for sacred use or make holy.

People who are right with God are holy people – they’ve separated themselves from the world and distanced themselves from sin, and it shows up in how they live, talk, and think.

So today, ask yourself; Am I right with God? Am I holy? Am I separated from the world? Have I distanced myself from sin? Second, When We Are Right with God:

**B. Our Worship Will be Profound.**

Notice what the people of Israel did. **2 Chronicles 7:3 (NIV)** “*When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the LORD above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, “He is good; his love endures forever.”*”

Worship is a response to God's presence, His holiness, and His glory. Worship is expressing our love to God for who He is, what He's said, and what He's doing. In genuine worship the power of God's presence is felt, the cleansing of God's pardon is offered, the burning of God's purposes are revealed, and the flame of God's power is displayed.

People who are right with God have fallen in love with Him and they long to meet God in worship. Do you have that burning desire to encounter God in worship? You will, if you are right with God.

Thirdly, When We Are Right with God:

### **C. Our Witness Will be a Priority.**

The nature of fire is to purify and to consume, but it is also to spread. God not only wants to meet us in worship, He also wants His fire to spread into the hearts of others. There is a close connection between worship and witnessing. The goal of witnessing produces worshipers of God. And at the same time, worship is the motivation for witnessing. Worship produces a desire in us to tell others about Christ.

God said to Solomon, "*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 will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*" **2 Chronicles 7:14 (NIV)**. That verse is one of the most familiar revival verses in all of Scripture, and it begins with one of the biggest words in the English language – "*If*." That word is so big, that the destiny of every person and every nation hinges on it.

This statement was a word from God to Solomon following the temple dedication ceremony. The temple symbolized commitment to worship and a relationship with God. It suggests responsibility on the hearer's part. God was saying to Solomon, "*You are to carry my flame into the world.*" And, to the nation of Israel, "*You are my people, and the responsibility of proclaiming my forgiveness and healing is yours.*"

The responsibility for spreading the flame of God's forgiveness and healing rests squarely on the hearer's shoulders. Just as God was saying to Solomon "*You are the man,*" He is saying to us, "*You are the man and you are the woman!*" Just as God was saying to the people of Israel you are the people, he is saying to every Church, "*You are the people.*" When the fire falls on us, our priority is to witness to others - to tell others about the greatness and goodness of God.

Are you on fire for God? Are you telling others about Him. Are you separated from the world? Are you responding to God in worship? I hope you are, but more than likely we all have a lot of room for improvement. We all could use a spark to get us going, which leads me to the next point:

## **2. When We Are On Fire for God**

What will it take for us to be set on fire? Well, to be on fire there must be some combustible material and there has to be something to ignite it. We are the material and God is the spark. And thankfully, God gives us the formula for starting a fire in our hearts. It's found in 2 Chronicles 7:14. If . . . humble themselves . . . pray . . . seek my face. . . turn from their evil ways.

**A. We'll Accept Personal Responsibility.** The word, "*If*" shows our responsibility. Getting right with God is your responsibility. It is not the pastor's responsibility, your deacon's responsibility, your parent's responsibility, your Sunday school teacher's responsibility. It is your responsibility.

**B. We'll Display Humility.** Humility is a statement of position. It's the kind of position Jacob took as he humbled himself to be reconciled with his brother Esau. That same position is needed in reconciling our relationship with God. When we humble ourselves we bow; we fall to the ground. Jacob fell on the ground seven times before he met his brother. We meet God in humility and submission to Him. That way, we see ourselves as we really are—lowly and desperate; but we also acknowledge God as he really is—majestic, omnipotent, and gracious. Humility must be present if we are to catch the fire of God.

**C. We'll Pray.** Prayer indicates a relationship between the Creator and the created. It is hard to get right with God if you aren't spending time with God. Statistics reveal that most Christians spend less than ten minutes a day in prayer and Bible reading. How can we be right with God if we aren't in conversation with God?

**D. We'll Desire God's Presence.** Seek my face shows the intent of our desire to be with God. Notice, God does not say "*seek my hand.*" Too often we seek God's hand—what He can do for us; rather than seek God's face—who He is. If you want to get right with God, don't just seek what God can do for you, seek God and you

won't be ashamed or afraid to look Him in the eye. Peter Lord said, "*If we only seek God for what He can do for us, rather than seeking Him for Him, we are spiritual idolaters.*"

**E. We'll Repent.** Turn from their wicked ways shows the direction of our walk—a walk away from sin and a walk toward God. The theological word for turning from our wicked, sinful, unholy lifestyle and walking toward God is repentance. Repentance means to turn around. It is to say I'm going in the wrong direction; I need to turn from my wicked way. In practical terms, it's the spiritual act of getting right with God.

Repentance doesn't mean to feel sorry, or to cry over, or to blame someone else for the wrongs in one's life. Repentance is an act of the will – a choice one makes to change the mind that leads to a change of direction – it's a spiritual "*about-face.*"

Those are the steps that it will take to get right with God. Are you ready and willing to take those steps?

**Conclusion:** When I was a volunteer fireman for a few years. There was this one guy who we noticed would show up at every house fire and brush fire we'd go to. It turns out that he was setting them just so he could watch them burn. That's how it is with some folks - they just like to watch fires burn.

I wonder what would happen if our church caught on fire? I'm not talking about it burning to the ground – that would be a tragedy I don't even want to think about. I'm talking about Sonoraville Church catching on fire from the ground up. I'm talking about the fire of God's presence falling on this church so that we'd have a purity of holiness, an intensity in our worship, and a passion for witnessing to this community. I'll tell you what would happen - it would be like Pentecost all over again. People would be attracted here by the droves because people would come and watch us burn for Jesus.

Church buildings and new programs and carrying big King James Bibles won't attract many people, but when people get their hearts right with God, and He sends His holy fire in our hearts, that will do the job.

Do you need to get your heart right with God today? Do you sense that gnawing inside your heart that lets you know that things aren't right? You can acquire the fire today. It's your responsibility. Don't make it "*if*" I turn to God, make it "*I am turning to God.*" Take personal responsibility today and humble yourself and pray. Seek God's face today and turn from your evil ways. Do that, and you'll be well on the way to getting right with God.