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## **Prayer Study 5 - Solomon's Prayer**

### ***Background***

In our last study in this series on prayer, we learned how Abraham 'fellowshipped' with the Lord and also something of the heart of intercession. Abraham interceded for the righteous of Sodom. With these events in mind, we shall continue our series of studies on prayer and take a look at the prayers of Solomon, since there are two main prayers of Solomon in Scripture. The first may be found in 1 Kings 3: 1 - 28, and the second in 1 Kings 8: 22 - 53.

### ***The Message***

1 Kings 3: 1 - 28

This account tells us how after Solomon had offered a thousand burnt offerings to God on the altar, God appeared to Solomon in a dream later that night. Incredibly perhaps, God said to Solomon "*Ask. What shall I give you?*" God was moved by Solomon's attitude - what was on his heart and his actions - and in response reached out to Solomon to give him an opportunity to receive a great blessing. God could simply have blessed Solomon in a way of His choosing, but instead He provided Solomon with an opportunity to ask for absolutely anything. This further reveals the nature of the relationship God wants to have with each and every one of us. Picture the moment, and spend some time thinking what your response would have been. If you are in a group, go around the group and share what perhaps you would have asked for.

It has been said that what we pray for is like a window on our heart, and a sign of our closeness with God. Solomon could have asked for so many things...in today's terms he could perhaps have asked for health, wealth or happiness. Now health is certainly important, something perhaps we only value when we haven't got it or as we get older. But Solomon was clearly in his prime, and full of health - so there would have been little point in praying for health.

Solomon could also have asked for wealth, but does money really make us happy? It doesn't make me happy when I see great injustice in a supposedly civilised world where people in the third world are dying from hunger, and HIV Aids and when I see global injustice. It doesn't make me happy when it can so easily destroy lives. Countless studies have shown how once people have reached a certain basic level of wealth, increased affluence does not mean increased happiness. In Matthew's gospel, a young man came before Jesus, and asked what he had to do to get eternal life. Jesus presented him with a list of some of the ten commandments. The young man replied that he had kept all of the commandments Jesus listed ("*All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?*"). The thing was, the young man put money and possessions before God. Jesus told him "*If you desire to be perfect, go sell your property and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in Heaven; and come, follow Me.*" (Matthew 19: 20 - 21) In Solomon's case, wealth had no attraction for him; it was not the reason for his existence and he had no love for it.



Finally, Solomon could have asked for happiness, but ultimately what is the source of joy? Jesus tells us *“As the Father loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will remain in My love, just as I have obeyed My Father’s command and remain in His love. I have told you these things so that My joy may remain in you and that your joy may be complete.”* (John 15: 9-11). By keeping Jesus’ commandments and remaining in His love, His joy will remain in us and our joy will be complete. Solomon knew that it was more important to keep the statutes of God.

So what was Solomon’s reply?

*“You have done great kindness to Your servant, my father David, as he walked before You in truth and in righteousness and in uprightness of heart with You. And You have kept for him this great kindness, and have given to him a son sitting on his throne, as today. And now, O Jehovah my God, You have caused Your servant to reign instead of my father David. And I am a little man-child; I do not know to go out and to come in. And Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a numerous people that cannot be numbered or counted for multitude. Also give to Your servant an understanding heart, to judge Your people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this, Your great people?”* (1 Kings 3: 6 - 9)

Solomon did not rush in and declare his need immediately. Instead he spoke testimony, of how God had been at work in the life of his father David and how God had been at work in his father’s life. He then declared his inadequacy, acknowledging that he could not succeed in human strength. Only then did he make clear his need - for an understanding heart, not for himself, but that he might be enabled to better rule and judge God’s great people. How often do we rush in when praying and approach God with a shopping list of need? Do we ever recount how God has been at work in our lives and declare our gratitude. And note that in this prayer Solomon was alone with God. These were truly heart-spoken words, in the intimacy of his quiet time with God.

Scripture tells us *“And whatever we ask, we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments, and we do the things pleasing before Him.”* (1 John 3: 22) God’s response, as you may read in verses 10 to 14, is truly amazing. Does God delight in our prayers? Do we appreciate the extent to which God wants to bless us, if only we would put Him first in our lives by keeping his commandments, and doing things that please Him? Read also 1 Kings 4: 29 - 34.

1 Kings 8: 22 - 61, 1 Kings 9: 1 - 9

The second prayer of Solomon that we will take a look at relates to the dedication of the temple, which follows the ark of the covenant being brought to the temple constructed under Solomon’s direction. We know that David was not the one to build a house for God to dwell in (See also 1 Chronicles 17). As the ark of the Lord was brought to the temple, we are told that *“so many*



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*sheep and cattle*” were sacrificed “*that they could not be recorded or counted.*” (1 Kings 8: 5) After the ark has been put in the Holy Place by the priests, they were unable to perform their service because the glory of the Lord filled His temple (for additional context, read Exodus 40: 33 - 35). Just imagine for moment an encounter with the glory of the Lord in this way. When people come to our churches do you think that they, even in some small part, have such an encounter? Are we the Bride of Christ that God longs for?

In verses 15 - 21 of 1 Kings 8, again gives some form of testimony to the whole assembly of Israel and blesses them. And then in verses 23 - 53 we read how Solomon spread out his hands towards heaven and prayed to God.

Much like the first prayer of Solomon we looked at, Solomon begins this second prayer with testimony, speaking of God’s character and again does not rush in declaring his need. Solomon stated that if the highest heavens cannot even contain God, the temple built for God clearly cannot contain Him either. So even if God chose to dwell amongst His people in this way, in reality He cannot be contained in this or any way. The temple is therefore more of a focal point for the people.

Testimony can in a sense be twofold; relating either to how God has been at work in the life of the individual, or to how God has been at work throughout all of salvation history. We may therefore praise God for:

- what we learn of Him through scripture (the relationship He has had with His people);
- the work He has begun in our lives (the relationship He has with His people today);
- what we know God will ultimately accomplish (the relationship He will have with people in the future - a new Heaven and a new earth).

I think that when our prayers are balanced in this way, not simply a declaration of need, they are truly powerful and effective akin to speaking God’s truth into the heart of a situation. The New Testament gives us the sense of us “asking in God’s name” in prayer (John 16: 24), and I have often given thought to what does it mean to ask for something in God’s name? In ancient times, an individual’s name spoke of the whole of the person - and therefore when we ask God for something in the name of Jesus, we are praying in accordance with all that the person who bears that name is - our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

So Solomon begins his prayer with an appeal to the Davidic Covenant (v23 - 30), and closes with an appeal to the Sinaitic Covenant (see Exodus 19: 5; Leviticus 20: 24, 36; Deuteronomy 7: 6, 32: 9). Covenant is at the heart of relationship and fellowship, and this is reinforced in prayer through declaration of God’s truth and testimony.



We may note the following:

- God is unique in heaven and earth. There is no God like Him, and He has established a covenant of love with those that serve Him that continues with us today (v23);
- God keeps His promises (v24);
- There is no-one who does not sin (v46);
- Solomon gives examples of instances that people may bring to God covering most aspects of life -
  - Wrong relationships with each other (v32 - 32)
  - Defeat by an enemy because of sin (v33 - v34, v46 - v51)
  - Lack of or no rain (v35 - 36)
  - Famine or plague (v37 - v40)
  - Foreigners from a distant land (v41 - v43)
  - Defeating enemies (v44 - v45)

Solomon then again blesses the whole assembly of Israel (v56 - 61).

Let us now take a look at God's response, after Solomon's prayers and once the temple of the Lord was complete. God appeared to Solomon a second time (1 King 9: 3 - 9). God heard the prayer and plea that Solomon laid before Him, and reminds Solomon of the price of Covenant - not simply a one way thing, or something for nothing, but reliant upon Solomon walking before God in integrity of heart and uprightness.

In summary, some key aspects of Solomon's prayer included:

- Praise to our great and glorious God;
- Testimony and declaration of God's truth;
- Supplication and confession (when a man wrongs his neighbour...);
- A statement of need in keeping with God's heart.

### **Questions**

1. What three things would you change when praying to God having studied Solomon's prayers?
2. Why do you think that some aspect of testimony is so crucial to prayer with God?
3. Are there things in your life that compromise your integrity of heart and upright?
4. Do you think there are any differences in the way Solomon prayed when in private and in public?
5. Spend some time in prayer, and give thanks for the God that was, and is and is to come.