

GREAT BIBLE PRAYERS

SOLOMON'S PRAYER OF DEDICATION
I Kings 8:22-61

The setting of this prayer is the dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem constructed in the reign of King Solomon. It was the first Temple of the Israelites and was a magnificent and splendiferous edifice, unlike any in their subsequent history. Solomon, in all of his glory, never had a more glorious moment than his prayer of dedication of this Temple.

It was not solely a Temple for a city but the Temple for the country – a national cathedral. The Israelites had worshipped at the portable Tabernacle throughout their 40 years of desert dwelling and the years of Canaan conquering. Now they were to have a permanent place of worship and witness, a place of fixity, solidity and beauty. It was here that the divine Presence was manifested. (I Kings 8:10-11)

This day of dedication was a long awaited day. The Temple had been seven years in building (I Kings 6:38) and now a vast crowd assembled for the history making occasion. The King himself prayed the dedicatory prayer recorded here in I Kings 8 beginning in verse 22. The prayer will both instruct and inspire us as we study it.

I. THE BEGINNING OF SOLOMON'S PRAYER. I Kings 8:22-23

“Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven; and he said: “LORD God of Israel, there is no God in heaven above or on earth below like You, who keep Your covenant and mercy with Your servants who walk before You with all their hearts.”

A. Solomon's prayer place. V.22a

““Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel....” This was a public prayer. He prays best in public who prays most in private.

B. Solomon's prayer posture. V. 22b

Verse 54 tells us that he knelt on his knees: “when Solomon had finished praying all this prayer and supplication to the LORD, that he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven.”

“He stood..... and spread out his hands toward heaven.....” Here he is said to have stood before the altar. Frequent kneeling keeps us in good standing with God! He both knelt and stood. There is no one posture for which we should argue. It is the posture of the heart that matters most with God.

“He spread out his hands toward heaven.” This is a posture of reverence, resignation, dependence and reliance. When we come before God in this attitude we are saying by our posture, “Here I am, totally surrendered and subservient to Your sovereignty and dependent upon Your mercy, O God! We are to come boldly to the Throne but humbly as well.

C. Solomon's prayer of praise. V.23

"...and he said: "LORD God of Israel, *there is* no God in heaven above or on earth below like You, who keep Your covenant and mercy with Your servants who walk before You with all their hearts." Prayer is not all requesting from God certain benefits, although Solomon does ask for specific blessings later in his prayer. He begins, however, by praising God.

Joseph Parker writes defining prayer as follows: "It is fellowship, communion, identification with God; it is the soul pouring itself out just as it will in all the tender compulsion of love, asking God for blessings, praising God for mercies, committing itself to God in view of all the mystery and peril of the future." (People's Bible)

Solomon's prayer reveals that he was no stranger to the God to Whom he prayed or to the practice of prayer. He pours out his soul in this prayer, beginning with praise. His praise is twofold:

He praises God for what He is.

He is "the Lord God of Israel." On this occasion He was addressed as the national God of Israel. He is also the personal God of all who come to Him through the Door which is His Son, Jesus Christ. Then He can be addressed personally as Thomas did saying, "My Lord and my God." (John 20:28)

He praises God for Who He is.

"LORD God of Israel, *there is* no God in heaven above or on earth below like You, who keep *Your* covenant and mercy with Your servants who walk before You with all their hearts." (v.23a)

- He is sovereign – "there is no God in heaven above or on earth below like You." Also he says in v.27, "Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!"
- He is faithful – "who keep Your covenant and mercy." Solomon extols the covenant keeping God. His total petition for the future of Israel rests upon the faithfulness of God to keep His word. The grounds of our approach and appeals are similarly based upon the faithfulness of the God Who "cannot lie." (Titus 1:2)

May Solomon's approach to God and his adoration of God inspire us to follow his example and instruct us in our praise. He is our God personally and perpetually; He is sovereign and faithful. Truly "there is no God in heaven above or on earth below" like Him.

II. THE BASIS OF SOLOMON'S PRAYER. I Kings 8:24-27

"You have kept what You promised Your servant David my father; You have both spoken with Your mouth and fulfilled it with Your hand, as it is this day. Therefore, LORD God of Israel, now keep what You promised Your servant David my father, saying, 'You shall not fail to have a man sit before Me on the throne of Israel, only if your sons take heed to their

way, that they walk before Me as you have walked before Me.’ And now I pray, O God of Israel, let Your word come true, which You have spoken to Your servant David my father. “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!”

The basis of Solomon’s prayer are the promises of God. In these verses He is recalling and relying upon the promises as the basis for the appeals that he is going to make. In II Samuel 7:13 God promised David that Solomon would build this house of worship and Solomon is praising and praying because of those promises. He predicates his prayer upon the promises of God.

A. He refers to the promises that God made about the Temple. v.24

The promises that God made to David were being fulfilled at the very moment Solomon was speaking. The Temple had been built and was now being dedicated.

B. He reminds God about the promise made about the Throne.

“Therefore, LORD God of Israel, now keep what You promised Your servant David my father, saying, ‘You shall not fail to have a man sit before Me on the throne of Israel, only if your sons take heed to their way, that they walk before Me as you have walked before Me.’ And now I pray, O God of Israel, let Your word come true, which You have spoken to Your servant David my father.” v.25,26

He is looking to the future of the nation; he has perpetuity in mind. Unless God’s man is on the throne and by him the nation is preserved and perpetuated, with God’s blessings, the Temple will be destroyed.

Praying the promises of God is the Bible way to pray. Solomon, in praying, cites the promises of God, claims the promises and clings to them. The lesson for us? Get a promise in God’s Word and run to the throne of God with it if you want to gain God’s ear!

III. THE BURDEN OF SOLOMON’S PRAYER. I Kings 8:28-53

In the body of Solomon’s prayer he prays for his people, who will come to this newly built house of worship in the future, and themselves pray. He begins, however, praying for himself.

A. His introduction. V.28-30

“Yet regard the prayer of Your servant and his supplication, O LORD my God, and listen to the cry and the prayer which Your servant is praying before You today: that Your eyes may be open toward this temple night and day, toward the place of which You said, ‘My name shall be there,’ that You may hear the prayer which Your servant makes toward this place. And may You hear the supplication of Your servant and of Your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. Hear in heaven Your dwelling place; and when You hear, forgive.”

He asks that God’s ears will be open. v.28 & 30.

He asks that God's eyes will be open. v.29

He knows that God is omniscient and omnipresent; that He knows all and sees all, but in asking God to hear and see he is expressing in human terms his desire for God to be actively shepherding His sheep at all times and in every circumstance.

B. His intercession. v.31-53

Nine times the phrase “hear in heaven” is used in his prayer – one time in relation to himself and 8 times in relation to his people. His 8 requests for the people are as follows:

1. Hear in heaven and forgive. v.30
2. Hear in heaven and judge. v.31-32
3. Hear in heaven and restore. v.33-34
4. Hear in heaven and send rain. v.35-36
5. Hear in heaven and minister justice. v.37-40
6. Hear in heaven, the foreigner. v.41-43
7. Hear in heaven and give victory. v.44-45
8. Hear in heaven, deliver and preserve. v.46-53

What a prayer! What a pray-er! Solomon the wise, Solomon the King, on this great day in the nation's history, prays for those who, in the future, would pray either at the Temple or turn their faces toward the Temple and pray. He is a caring King and, having prayed for his people, now draws his prayer to a close.

IV. THE BENEDICTION TO SOLOMON'S PRAYER. v.54-61

His benediction is a combination of praying and preaching! Notice:

A. He concludes his prayer with blessings. v.54

“And so it was, when Solomon had finished praying all this prayer and supplication to the LORD, that he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven....”

He blesses the people. v.55

“Then he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice...”

He blesses God. v.56

“...saying: “Blessed *be* the LORD, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised. There has not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised through His servant Moses.”

B. He continues with some final requests. v.57-58

“May the LORD our God be with us, as He was with our fathers. May He not leave us nor forsake us, that He may incline our hearts to Himself, to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, which He commanded our fathers.”

He requests that God's presence would continue with them. v.57

"May the LORD our God be with us...." The Lord had been with them all the way from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea. But they must not take His Presence for granted, and neither should we.

He requests that God's people would continue with God. v.58

"that He may incline our hearts to Himself, to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commandments..." He knew that the human heart is fickle and that Israel's history, to this point in time, had proven it. He, therefore, prays that God would govern their hearts and guide their feet in the way of His commandments.

C. He communicates a desire that God will be known. V.60

"that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD *is* God; there is no other."

"Solomon had a 'missionary vision' for the Gentile nations. What an opportunity Israel had to win the lost people around them." (Warren Wiersbe)

D. He closes with a challenge. v.61

"Let your heart therefore be loyal to the LORD our God, to walk in His statutes and keep His commandments, as at this day."

He basically repeats the same thing that he said in verse 58. While all the people were congregated for this great event, and this probably was the last time they would gather like this, Solomon challenged them to be loyal to God.

Great celebratory events in a church's history are excellent opportunities to challenge the people of God, while they are sensitive to what God has done among them, to remain faithful in the future.

This prayer of dedication was followed by great offerings made to God and then the people celebrated with a fourteen day feast. This was an occasion, the likes of which would never again be equaled on earth by Israel.

Wouldn't it be a little touch of heaven on earth to have the head of government in our country, or in any country for that matter, pray publicly for his citizens as Solomon prayed openly and unashamedly for the citizenry in his kingdom? However, individually we can pray:

"Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done
On earth as it is in heaven."

(Matt.6:9-10)

JdonJ