

PRAYER OF SOLOMON
1 Kings 3:3-14

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Identify the key challenge to the listeners:

Prayer needs to be an integral part of a growing Christian's life.

OUTLINE**SOLOMON'S INVITATION (vv.3-4)**

- Walked (v.3)
- Worshipped (v.4)

RESPONSES (vv5-9)

- God's (v.5)
- Solomon's (vv. 6-9)
 - Heritage (v.6)
 - Humility (v.7)
 - Help! (v.8)
 - Higher Values (v.9)

INTRODUCTION

My daughter often says our meal prayers in our house and she always used to say the same thing: "Thank you for food, Amen". Her prayer is very much like all children's prayers-simple and to the point.

I have compiled a few others children's prayers here:

- Dear God: Please send a new baby for Mommy. The new baby you sent last week cries too much. Debbie, 7
- Dear God: Who did you make smarter? Boys or girls? My sister and I want to know. Jimmy, 6
- Dear Lord: Thank you for the nice day today. You even fooled the TV weather man. Hank, 7
- Dear God: Please help me in school. I need help in spelling, adding, history, geography and writing. I don't need help in anything else. Lois, 9
- Dear God: Do you have any helpers in Heaven? I would like to be one of Your helpers in Heaven when I have summer vacation. Natalie, 7
- Dear God: I need a raise in my allowance. Could you have one of your angels tell my father. Thank you. David, 7
- Dear God; I am saying my prayers for me and my brother, Billy, because Billy is six months old and he can't do anything but sleep and wet his diapers. Diane, 8

While these are interesting and funny it is not the way that God has intended for us to use the tool of prayer. God wants for us to use prayer to mature as Christians. I am convinced that too many Christians do not do this. The only times they pray are for meals or when they are facing a crisis. So what I want to share with you this morning has to do with one believer's prayer and how he grew from it. The text this morning is from 1 Kings, chapter 3 verses 3-14. It is here that we see King Solomon arriving in the high place of Gibeon to offer sacrifices to the Lord.

SERMON TEXT

1 Kings 3:3-14 (NKJV)

3 And Solomon loved the LORD, **walking** in the statutes of his father David, except that he sacrificed and burned incense at the high places.

4 Now the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place: Solomon **offered** a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. 5 At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "**Ask! What shall I give you?**" 6 And Solomon said: "You have shown great mercy to **Your servant David my father**, because he walked before You in truth, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with You; You have continued this great kindness for him, and You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as *it is* this

day. 7 Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, **but I am a little child**; I do not know how to go out or come in. 8 And Your servant is in the midst of **Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted.** 9 Therefore give to Your servant an **understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil.** For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" 10 The speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. 11 Then God said to him: "Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, 12 behold, I have done according to your words; see, **I have given you a wise and understanding heart**, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. 13 And **I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor**, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days. 14 So if you walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days."

WHAT**SOLOMON'S INVITATION**

Our text begins by giving us a small description of what kind of person Solomon is and what he is doing. This is significant because it sets the stage for Solomon to be able to receive the fullest blessing from the Lord.

Walked

v3. Walking according to the statutes of his father David

The first thing we see in this passage is that Solomon loved God. This is evidenced by two ways. The first way that the writer says that Solomon loved God was because he “*walked according to the statutes of his father David*”. We already know that David was a man described as after God's own heart. David lived his life with an unchangeable belief in the faithful and forgiving nature of God; he lived with great enthusiasm in the Lord; although he sinned many times, he was always quick to confess those sins. His confessions were from the heart and were followed by genuine repentance. He never took God's forgiveness lightly, nor did he take His blessings for granted. Finally, David expressed joy in the Lord even when facing the consequences for his actions. These were some of the major qualities that David exhibited and Solomon emulated. Have you ever

heard the saying that the apple doesn't fall too far from the tree; meaning that kids end up being a lot like their parents. That is certainly the case here. Many of the things that Solomon did were things that his father David did also; both good and bad. So we see that Solomon kept in line with the will of the Lord, so much so that what was Solomon's will was also God's-but we will get to that later.

Worshipped

v4. Offered a thousand burnt offerings

The next thing that we read about Solomon doing is offering sacrifices to the Lord. In doing this Solomon is essentially stating two things. First, he is conscious of the fact that he needs the Lord with him in order to carry out the duties that are before him. The second thing he is doing is clearly setting the example for his people that the Lord is a priority. There was a problem in what Solomon was doing though. God had stated earlier in Deuteronomy 12 that the people were not to offer sacrifices anywhere they pleased; God would select the places that His people were to worship. This was because God wanted to ensure that purity was kept in worship. Now in his mind Solomon probably thought it was OK to worship at these 'high places' because they did not yet have a temple to worship in. He probably figured the worship was what was important and not the place,

unfortunately he was only partially right. God recognized the genuineness of his heart and wanted to meet Solomon in the worship, but could not because he was in direct disobedience. God instead chose to honor Solomon's prayer but not condone the sacrifice by coming to him during the night in what is described as a dream. In all actuality it would have been more like a vision because there is conversation between the Lord and Solomon-much like the one Isaiah experienced. It is because of Solomon's life and worship that God makes him such a grand proposal.

The following few verses give the responses of both God and Solomon to this event.

RESPONSES

God's

v5b. Ask for whatever you want me to give you

At the end of verse 5 we see God essentially offer Solomon a blank check. He says to him, ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you. I am blown away by this statement. How could God say such a thing? How could he make such an offer? Doesn't He realize that we are human, and that most often our first thoughts are of ourselves? The answer is YES. God created us, so He is fully aware

of our wants, desires and needs-even more so than we are ourselves. What makes this situation different is that Solomon is extremely close to God. As I stated earlier Solomon's and God's wills were perfectly aligned. That is why God can give such an invitation to Solomon here, because he already knows what it is that he will ask for.

Solomon's

In the next 4 verses we see Solomon give much thought to the offer from God. The writer reveals to us the mind of Solomon and how he comes to the decision of what to ask for.

Heritage

v6. My father David

Solomon begins by grounding himself in the work that God has already done in his life. He spends this time by praising both God and his earthly father. On two occasions in this verse he refers to God's great kindness. This is in recognition to the way in which the Lord has blessed his life up to this point. The rest of the verse he spends more-or-less recognizing and praising his father, probably in the hopes of being able to imitate him in all he does. What I mean is that Solomon sees the benefits of living a Godly life like his father did, and that is obviously very high in his mind. His father, King David, is someone he

very much admired and wanted to be like. Although trying to fill the enormous shoes of his father was probably a daunting task, Solomon met it with excitement that it could be done. After spending so much time praising the Lord and remembering his father, Solomon no doubt felt miniscule and insignificant; this is what leads him to make his next statement.

Humility

v7. I am only a little child

Solomon next exhibits humility in both the fact that he is king and that he is only a child. Solomon didn't mean here that he was too young, he was about 20, but that he was inexperienced. Firstly he is amazed that God would bestow on him such a high and lofty position as King. Secondly he did not know how to carry out the day-to-day affairs of being a king. He is admitting to God his inability to lead these people, and that he must and will be dependent on God to see him through it.

Help!

v8. A great people too numerous to count

Now Solomon begins to seem a little overwhelmed. He realizes that he is not only a king, but that he is The King to The Nation, he is

The King to God's People. As if this would not have been enough pressure, he also realizes that the people under his reign are too many to be able to count. It is here that Solomon begins to completely take in the entirety of the task that God has laid upon him. His reaction though does not seem like he is overwhelmed. Instead he quietly and calmly takes it all in and then answers Gods' question.

Higher Values

v9. Give your servant a discerning heart

After all that he has been through Solomon could ask for safety for himself, he could ask for assurance that he would remain king, or he could ask for money or wealth. He could request the death or destruction of his enemies. Solomon could also ask for military strength or protection from other nations. He could ask for any number of these things or something you or I never thought of; but he didn't. Instead he makes one simple request, one that would have far greater impact on the people, the Lord's people. He asked for a "*discerning heart*". What he was asking for was wisdom. Far above his own ambitions, Solomon wanted to be able to lead well and make the right decisions for the people. What he wanted was not intellectual genius, but rather skill: to live according to God in life, in relationships and in moral integrity. He truly recognized the grandeur

of God's mission for him and he truly saw the people with love and compassion-through the eyes of God.

At the end of it all we see that God was pleased with Solomon's unselfish request. So much so in fact that he not only answered his prayer and gave him wisdom (more than anyone would ever have) but he also unconditionally added to that riches and honor, so that he would have no equal.

SO WHAT

PRAYER IS...

Solomon gives us a great example of what prayer means, what it is and how to effectively do it. If we follow the guidelines that he has displayed here we can see an increase in the effectiveness of our own prayer lives.

Conversational

First of all our prayers need to be conversational. God is not a genie in a bottle which we just rub and then make our requests. The God we seek for answers is the same God that has provided for our salvation. I don't need to remind you that He allowed His only Son to die for you. That is an incredible amount of love. I know people who

love me a whole lot less than that and I enjoy talking to them. It should be no different with the Lord. He wants to have a conversation with you. Just like He would walk and talk with Adam in the Garden, He desires to do the same with you. The moment we lessen our relationship with God to a simple request and subsequent 'thanks' is the same moment that we have lost sight of the power that we have available to us through a relationship. The other side of that is that a lot of the time we need to do less running of our mouths and more listening. If you knew someone who was an expert in a field in which you were seeking advice, wouldn't you sit and listen to them instead of telling them? I would think so. God is the same, except that He is an expert in every field. If you have a question about dating, ask him; about work, ask him; about friends, ask him. I could go on with the list endlessly but the point I want you to get is that God wants you to speak to Him and then He wants you to listen to Him.

Dependant on our Walk

Next we need to be sure that we are walking with the Lord consistently. This has everything to do with the ways in which we conduct ourselves on a day-to-day basis. We need to devote ourselves to the disciplines of prayer, bible reading, devotionals, fasting, and we need to support each other, care for the needy. It

doesn't matter what it is you are doing just so long as your walk is with the Lord. I have often said that the worst thing for a Christian to hear is "Oh, I didn't know you were a Christian". If people cannot tell that we are Christians then we are not doing a good job telling them what we believe. But this goes even deeper; to say that it isn't just what we say, but more importantly what we do. How does the saying go "At all times preach the gospel, and if necessary use words". This means let your actions speak for themselves. But if you do have to speak, your walk better support your talk.

Dependant on our Worship

Closely tied to our daily walk is our worship. Now I don't just mean sitting here on Sunday morning, or singing a few songs; there is more to worship than that. The word most commonly used for worship in the Hebrew and Greek both mean to 'prostrate oneself'; literally to lay down in worship before the Lord. Essentially this means laying down your life for His. If you have a problem with that you better get over it pretty quick because that is what He did for you; and Jesus has set the example that we should follow. It means living a lifestyle of worship through obedience to God. This can not be applied on a general level over a life-time; no it must be applied on a daily, moment-by-moment level. This is why I like the passage in Luke so

much “take up your cross daily and follow me”. Luke is the only one that adds that word ‘daily’. He is the only one that conveys that worship [obedience] is a lifestyle not an activity.

NOW WHAT

HOW TO PRAY

So now we know all of that and it is fine and dandy, but now what do we do. Well it just so happens that Solomon not only gives us an example of how to live but he also gives us a guideline of how to pray.

Walk with the Lord

First of all we must be certain that we are in step with God and that like Solomon our wills are the same. If we are spending time with Him as we should be then we will learn to know His mind and our requests for ourselves will be the same ones he would have for us. If for some reason our wills are not the same then we need to recognize that it is not our will but His that should be ultimately done, For Isaiah tells us that His ways are higher than ours.

Worship the Lord

We should begin our prayers with praise or adoration of God.

The biggest thing that this does is that it puts things into perspective. If we spend time praising the Lord for who He is and what He has done, then by the time we get to our needs they will seem quite small in comparison to the mighty God we have just spent time with.

Act in Humility

After we have concluded our praise session we then need to move on to a time of personal reflection, where we admit our weaknesses. This is the point where we really can claim our dependency upon God. It is the part where we call out 'I need you'. It is at this moment of weakness that we gain true strength. The tendency is to not want to admit our inabilities, but the thing is that God already knows them, we are really only admitting them to ourselves.

Ask for Help

Finally after all else has been done we can present our request(s) to God. I don't know if she remembers it or not but years ago my mom said to me it never hurts to ask, the worst that can be said is no. For some reason that has always stuck with me, and it is something I have often thought before asking any question. There are times that I received a no, but I believe there are more times that I

received a yes. This simple comment needs to be applied to our spiritual lives as well. Jesus tells us to 'ask and it will be given to you'. God's desire is for us to have things like knowledge, patience, love and wisdom; but unless we ask for them how will we ever receive them.

CONCLUSION

Solomon experienced a great encounter with the Lord. But that encounter was no accident; it was intentional on Solomon's part. He went to the high place expecting that God would meet him there. He did not go into this expecting something for nothing though. He knew that if the Lord was going to meet with him he had to first of all be living according to His commandments. Once Solomon was sure that he was living under God's law he knew that he could continue with his sacrificial offering. It was at this point that all of Solomon's hard work paid off, the Lord came to him with an incredible offer. When faced with a decision to make, Solomon prayerfully considered all of the facts and through his conversation with the Lord he saw his shortcomings and then asked God to make up the difference. If we are going to encounter the Lord we must also come expecting it. And this just doesn't mean getting ready for it Sunday morning, this means preparing to meet with Him all throughout our week. We do this by obeying his commands on Monday while at work or school, on

Wednesday while driving to church, on Friday when planning to go out, and on every other day in between. If we have done this then the time when the Lord comes to meet with us will be a time when we will be forever changed. Through our prayerful conversation with God our weaknesses will be revealed and He will already be prepared to fill in the gaps of our Christian life.

This is my challenge to you this week. Spend it preparing to meet with the Lord. Spend it laying your life down daily. Spend your prayer time in conversation with God. Follow the example laid out by Solomon. Just as he received wisdom, you can receive what you need to overcome your weakness and mature as a Christian.