

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF SOLOMON: SOLOMON'S PRAYER OF DEDICATION

SESSION #13: 1 Kings 8:22-61

TEXT:

1 Kings 8:22-61

v. 22 Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in front of the whole assembly of Israel, spread out his hands toward heaven

v. 23 and said: "O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below—you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way.

v. 24 You have kept your promise to your servant David my father; with your mouth you have promised and with your hand you have fulfilled it—as it is today.

v. 25 "Now Lord, God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father the promises you made to him when you said, 'You shall never fail to have a man to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your sons are careful in all they do to walk before me as you have done.'

v. 26 And now, O God of Israel, let your word that you promised your servant David my father come true.

v. 27 "But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!

v. 28 Yet give attention to your servant's prayer and his plea for mercy, O Lord my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence this day.

v. 29 May your eyes be open toward this temple night and day, this place of which you said, 'My Name shall be there,' so that you will hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place.

v. 30 Hear the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.

v. 31 "When a man wrongs his neighbor and is required to take an oath and he comes and swears the oath before your altar in this temple,

v. 32 then hear from heaven and act. Judge between your servants, condemning the guilty and bringing down on his own head what he has done. Declare the innocent not guilty, and so establish his innocence.

v. 33 "When your people Israel have been defeated by an enemy because they have sinned against you, and when they turn back to you and confess your name, praying and making supplication to you in this temple,

v. 34 then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your people Israel and bring them back to the land you gave to their fathers.

v. 35 "When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because your people have sinned against you, and when they pray toward this place and confess your name and turn from their sin because you have afflicted them,

v. 36 then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel. Teach them the right way to live, and send rain on the land you gave your people for an inheritance.

v. 37 "When famine or plague comes to the land, or blight or mildew, locusts or grasshoppers, or when an enemy besieges them in any of their cities, whatever disaster or disease may come,

v. 38 and when a prayer or plea is made by any of your people Israel—each one aware of the afflictions of his own heart, and spreading out his hands toward this temple—

v. 39 then hear from heaven, your dwelling place. Forgive and act; deal with each man according to all he does, since you know his heart (for you alone know the hearts of all men),

v. 40 so that they will fear you all the time they live in the land you gave our fathers.

v. 41 "As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your name—

v. 42 for men will hear of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm—when he comes and prays toward this temple,

v. 43 then hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your Name.

v. 44 "When your people go to war against their enemies, wherever you send them, and when they pray to the Lord toward the city you have chosen and the temple I have built for your Name,

v. 45 then hear from heaven their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause.

v. 46 "When they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you become angry with them and give them over to the enemy, who takes them captive to his own land, far away or near;

v. 47 and if they have a change of heart in the land where they are held captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their conquerors and say, 'We have sinned, we have done wrong, we have acted wickedly';

v. 48 and if they turn back to you with all their heart and soul in the land of their enemies who took them captive, and pray to you toward the land you gave their fathers, toward the city you have chosen and the temple I have built for your Name;

v. 49 then from heaven, your dwelling place, hear their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause.

v. 50 And forgive your people, who have sinned against you; forgive all the offenses they have committed against you, and cause their conquerors to show them mercy;

v. 51 for they are your people and your inheritance, whom you brought out of Egypt, out of that iron-smelting furnace.

v. 52 "May your eyes be open to your servant's plea and to the plea of your people Israel, and may you listen to them whenever they cry out to you.

v. 53 For you singled them out from all the nations of the world to be your own inheritance, just as you declared through your servant Moses when you, O Sovereign Lord, brought our fathers out of Egypt."

v. 54 When Solomon had finished all these prayers and supplications to the Lord, he rose from before the altar of the Lord, where he had been kneeling with his hands spread out toward heaven.

v. 55 He stood and blessed the whole assembly of Israel in a loud voice, saying:

v. 56 "Praise be to the Lord, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses.

v. 57 May the Lord our God be with us as he was with our fathers; may he never leave us nor forsake us.

v. 58 May he turn our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways and to keep the commands, decrees and regulations he gave our fathers.

v. 59 And may these words of mine, which I have prayed before the Lord, be near to the Lord our God day and night, that he may uphold the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel according to each day's need,

v. 60 so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God and that there is no other.

v. 61 But your hearts must be fully committed to the Lord our God, to live by his decrees and obey his commands, as at this time."

INTRODUCTION:

As many of you know, I have a love affair with country music and cowboy poetry.

One ole cowboy was trying to describe the age of another old cowboy he met. He said,

"I bet you if you peeled his bark back, you'd count near eighty rings!"

Another cowboy was talking about how fast word spread in his little town. He said,

"Words spread like cheap wine on a white tuxedo!"

Another fellow was trying to describe what it is like to deal with somebody who is angry. He said,

"Messin' with an angry man is like kickin' fresh turd on a hot day."

Judge Roscoe Buckner has just passed away and this is the Cowboy Preacher's Eulogy:

Judge Roscoe Buckner Eulogy

This is the Reverend Spikes and I just want to say, I say, I just want to say a few words.

A few words about a friend of mine, . . . Roscoe Buckner.

Spent his whole life in service to his community, his country, and his Lord.

And we're sure that when that roll is called up yonder, he'll be there.

He was a judge who made hay while the sun shined but always, and I say always, lettin' a smile be his umbrella.

For he always kept his sunny side up and he always saw the silver linin' behind every cloud.

He was a judge who took no wooden nickels, nor threw caution to the wind.

But he looked before he leapt and he never got in over his head. No.

He kept his head when all about him were losing theirs and blaming it on him.

He kept a stiff upper lip and his nose to the wheel.

About this man we can truly say, he was one of a kind, a jolly good fellow which nobody can deny.

Well he was all for one and one for all and to his own self true.

And I can tell you this, he did it his way.

He was a serious-minded judge who let bygones be bygones but remembered the Alamo.

About this man we can truly say, he was the cream in [everybody's] coffee.

He fought fire with fire, he kept the home fires burnin' and when he couldn't stand the heat he got out of the kitchen.

And he would walk that extra mile, he would walk it toughly.

And he carried a big stick. He was a pepper-upper. A man's man.

Early to bed, early to rise. He laid his cards on the table.

He gathered at the river and he . . . [spent his life bringing in the shieves]

[When one motor was gone, he still carried on. Comin' in on a wing and a prayer.] . . .

He was a judge who never fired until he saw the whites of their eyes.

No, but he whistled a happy little tune and he praised God and he passed that ammunition.

For he had not yet begun to fight for never ever, ever, did I ever hear the man say die. He just did.

He was a fine upstanding civil servant who practiced what he preached.

Who put his best foot forward and his money where his mouth was.

And when the going got tough, he was gone.

It's not easy. I say it's not easy to find the words to describe such a man. But I've done my best.

We commend his soul to You Lord. I, the Reverend Spikes, recommend him. Amen Lord. Amen.

It would not be right if I started this series of studies and did not bring you a new piece of cowboy poetry.

Since this study is going to be centered upon the PRAYER OF DEDICATION by King Solomon for the temple, I thought it would be fitting for us to consider this wonderful Cowboy's Christmas Prayer written by Gail Burton from Arkansas.

A Cowboy's Christmas Prayer

By Gail Burton

The worn and wrinkled cowboy
slowly shaved and combed his hair.
He picked the finest clothes he had, and
then he dressed with care.
He stomped into his new bought boots,
and shrugged into his coat;
The others would have questioned him
but his thoughts seemed quite remote.

He stepped out of the bunkhouse,
and pulled his hat down tight,
Then climbed aboard his private horse
and rode into the night.
The single footin' gelding
ate the miles without a pause,
And seemed to know the rider
had a most important cause.

Twenty miles on through the night
with the rider deep in thought,
The stars came out to guide his way
to the goal the ride had bought.
His horse stopped on the gentle rise,
tho' the rider pulled no rein,
And the cowboy raised his head to stare
'cross the quiet and lonely plain.

He crawled down off the weary horse,
 loosed the cinch so it could blow,
 Then walked a yard or two away
 and knelt down in the snow.
 He crushed his hat against his chest,
 raised his face up to the sky,
 And then he started talking
 like a friend was standing by.

“Lord, you see I rode a piece tonight
 ‘cause I knowed that you’d be here.
 Course you wuz at the bunkhouse too,
 but on this hill ya’ seem so near
 As I look acrosst’ this prairie
 and see the things you’ve made;
 Why! comparin’ things us men has done
 really put ‘em in the shade.”

“I thank you for the love you show
 in everything you do
 And I’m proud to be a top hand
 with a loyal happy crew.
 I’ve still got all my fingers,
 my legs are bowed, but tough,
 Rheumatiz’ ain’t touched my bones
 and my mind is sharp enough.”

“Your spirit gives me comfort,
 and I know that when I die,
 You’ll let me rest forever
 at that bunkhouse in the sky.
 Forgive me when I wander off,
 like a wild jug-headed hoss,
 And I pray you’ll not give up on me
 ‘fore I learn that you’re the boss.”

“I’ve rode out here to tell you
 I’m thankful for a Saviour’s birth,
 And to send you MERRY CHRISTMAS
 from your folks down here on earth.”
 Then he mounted up and rode away
 with a casual goodbye nod.
 A cowboy with his heart at peace,
 in the palm of the hand of God.

When it comes to the subject of prayer we are talking about something that is similar to exercise. We know it is good for us but so many of us neglect doing what we know we need to do.

We probably all have one thing in common and that is, none of us are really satisfied with our prayer lives.

(1001 Humorous Illustrations for Public Speaking by Michael Hodgin)

Yuppies' Prayer

Now I lay me down to sleep,
 I pray my Cuisinart to keep,
 I pray my stocks are on the rise,
 And that my analyst is wise,
 That all the wine I sip is white,
 And that my hot tub's watertight.
 That racquetball won't get too tough,
 That all my sushi's fresh enough.
 I pray my cordless phone still works,
 That my career won't lose its perks.
 My microwave won't radiate,
 My condo won't depreciate.
 I pray my health club doesn't close,
 And that my money market grows.
 If I go broke before I wake,
 I pray my Volvo they won't take.

p. 221

(The Complete Book of Practical Proverbs & Wacky Wit by Vern McLellan)

A teenager's view of prayer: "There are four answers to prayer—yes, no, wait awhile, and you've got to be kidding!"

p. 190

(God's Little Devotional Book on Prayer by Honor Books, Inc.)

Sandra Goodwin's poem, "Traveling On My Knees" reminds us that prayer is the generator for God's power at work in our world. When we fail to pray, because He desires to release His will in the world through our prayers, less is accomplished in God's kingdom!

*Last night I took a journey to a land across the seas;
I did not go by boat or plane, I traveled on my knees.
I saw so many people there in deepest depths of sin.
But Jesus told me I should go, that there were souls to win.
But I said, "Jesus, I cannot go and work with such as these." He
answered quickly, "Yes, you can by traveling on your knees."
He said, "You pray; I'll meet the need, you call and I will hear; be
concerned about lost souls, of those both far and near."
And so I tried it, knelt in prayer, gave up some hours of ease; I
felt the Lord right by my side while traveling on my knees.
As I prayed on I saw souls saved and twisted bodies healed, and
saw God's workers' strength renewed while laboring on the fields.
I said, "Yes, Lord, I have a job, my desire Thy will to please; I
can go and heed Thy call by traveling on my knees."⁶*

⁶*Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, Paul Lee Tan, ed. (Rockville, MD: Assurance Publishers, 1979), #4532.

p. 17

Our business in prayer is not to prescribe but to subscribe to the wisdom and will of God; to refer our case to Him, and then leave it with Him.

p. 28

(Prayer—The Great Adventure by David Jeremiah)

POWER OF PRAYER

I got up early one morning and rushed into the day;
I had so much to accomplish that I didn't have time to
pray.

Problems just tumbled about me, and heavier came
each task.
"Why doesn't God help me?" I wondered. He answered,
"You didn't ask."

I wanted to see joy and beauty, but the day toiled on,
gray and bleak;
I wondered why God didn't show me. He said, "But you
didn't seek."

I tried to come into God's presence; I used all my keys
at the lock.
God gently and lovingly chided, "My child, you didn't
knock."

I woke up early this morning, and paused before entering the day;
I had so much to accomplish that I had to take time to pray.
p. 34

(Spiritual Intimacy for Couples by Charles & Virginia Sell)

Famous missionary William Carey wrote: "Prayer—secret, fervent, believing
prayer—lies at the root of all personal godliness."
p. 98

(The Great House of God by Max Lucado)

We're often content to ask for less. We entered the Great House of God with a satchel full of requests—promotions desired, pay raises wanted, transmission repairs needed, and tuitions due. We'd typically say our prayers as casually as we'd order a burger at the drive-through: "I'll have one solved problem and two blessings, cut the hassles, please."

p. 61

(The Roots of Inner Peace: Finding Fresh Courage and Strength in the Face of Fear and Worry by Don Hawkins)

In the words of Archbishop Trench, prayer isn't overcoming God's reluctance but is laying hold of His highest willingness. General Dwight Eisenhower said prayer gives you courage to make the decisions you must make in a crisis and the confidence to leave the result to a higher authority.

In 1787, the Constitutional Convention of the United States was on the verge of failure, deeply divided over whether small states should have the same representation as larger ones. Addressing this hopeless situation, eighty-one-year-old Benjamin Franklin reminded his colleagues that Scripture said, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it."

"Gentlemen," he told them, "I have lived a long time [and I] am convinced that God governs in the affairs of men. If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? I move that prayer, imploring the assistance of heaven, be held every morning before we proceed to business."

pp. 85-86

(Inspiring Quotations compiled by Albert M. Wells, Jr.)

Prayer is a kind of calling home every day. And there can come to you a serenity, a feeling of at-homeness in God's universe, a peace that the world can neither give nor disturb, a fresh courage, a new insight, a holy boldness through calling home that you'll never, never get any other way.

—Earl G. Hunt, Jr.

The main lesson about prayer is just this: *Do it! Do it! Do it!* You want to be *taught* to pray? My answer is: pray.

—John Laidlaw

p. 159

I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom, and that of all about me, seemed insufficient for the day.

—Abraham Lincoln

The less I pray, the harder it gets; the more I pray, the better it goes.

—Martin Luther

p. 159

The great tragedy of life is not unanswered prayer, but unoffered prayer.

—F.B. Meyer

Behind every work of God you will always find some kneeling form.

—Dwight L. Moody

p. 160

We come now in our study of the on-going saga in the life of King Solomon to EPISODE #13.

Just to refresh your memories, we have followed Solomon through his youth to the securing of the kingdom upon the death of his father, David. It has been a joyous journey for the most part, as we have seen the deep desire on the part of young Solomon to be "All that God wants him to be!" and to pray for the things that delights the heart of God to grant.

TWO MAJOR PROJECTS have consumed the first half of Solomon's reign. It has taken him 20 years to build the temple and his own palace.

1. The TEMPLE project took 7 years and
2. His own PALACE took 13 years.

On this occasion in EPISODE #13 we have the joy of listening to Solomon pray. It is a PRAYER OF DEDICATION for the temple and what a beautiful prayer it is!

As we study this magnificent passage we will witness:

- Solomon PRAISING the Lord,
- a SEVEN-FOLD PETITION [the heart of the prayer] that he makes with regard to the children of Israel and their relationship to this temple, and finally
- His BLESSING of the people once the prayer is concluded.

There is a very similar record of this prayer is 2 Chronicles 6:12ff.
For our studies, however, we have chosen this King's passage,
1 Kings 8:22-61.

Lange reminds us in his commentary that:

(He [Solomon] announces the mercy of God, in that he allows him to undertake the work whose completion was denied to his father. He who understands a great, holy work must be assured of this—that he is not actuated by ambition, by passion for glory, or by vanity, but that he is called thereto by God, and that it is his sacred duty.)
p. 106

Parker in his commentary on the Chronicles passage says:

He remembers the people; he knows their wants; he understands their wandering, weary, restless life, their ambitions that come and go like nightmares; and he prays for them with a right royal apprehension of all their need. But there is also a great world-wide, all-time-including reference in it, which redeems the prayer from being a merely Jewish monologue breathed into the heavens.
p. 213

Parker in his King's commentary says:

Now we approach the great prayer by which the temple was dedicated. The house itself was nothing. It was but a gilded sepulchre, an elaborate and costly vacancy. First of all, therefore, we stand convinced that however much we may do technically, it can only be regarded as in a preparatory or introductory capacity. We can build the house, but we cannot supply the tenant. Solomon and those united with him in this holy labour did not walk round about the temple saying, Behold how beautiful a thing we have created, how lavish has been the generosity of Hiram, and how skilful have been the men whose hands fashioned all this beauty! Not a word of praise do we hear concerning their own work; they seem rather to hasten into the house that they may behold some manifestation of the divine presence and rejoice that God was still king and ruler in Israel.
p. 307

Parker says further:

Throughout his prayer we discover on the part of Solomon how thoroughly he identifies the house of God with all human interests. We have seen before that the house of God is really the house of man, and that being in the largest sense the house of man, it becomes through that very circumstance the house of God. The sanctuary should always be regarded as the home of the people. It is in the sanctuary that human life should be interpreted in all the meaning of its pain and tragedy.
p. 309

Everything is now in readiness and the king is ready to make his public appearance and to lead the nation in this marvelous prayer.

v. 22 Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in front of the whole assembly of Israel, spread out his hands toward heaven

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Solomon stood and then kneeled (v. 54) on a special bronze platform that had been built in the temple courtyard for the dedication service (2 Chron. 6:13).
p. 504

We have a record of this in 2 Chronicles 6:13 and this little platform was probably 7 ½ feet square and about 4 ½ feet high.

Haldeman in his Bible exposition says:

In taking his place by the altar he recognized sacrifice as the only ground of approach to God. Only by the blood of Christ can any one have liberty to draw nigh unto Him. (Hebrews 10:20, 21.)
p. 376

McNeely observes:

Solomon seems to have moved to a place erected for praying the prayer of dedication. He first stood beside the altar, and then fell to his knees (cf. 8:54). The prayer is a model one. It began as prayer should, not with requests but with worship.

p. 49

Gaebelein says:

Then Solomon spoke. A great and marvellous dedicatory and intercessory prayer follows.

p. 265

(God's Little Devotional Book on Prayer by Honor Books, Inc.)

Dr. Wilbur Chapman wrote the following letter to a friend telling him about a great lesson he had learned concerning prayer:

"At one of our missions in England the audiences were exceedingly small; but I received a note saying that an American missionary was going to pray God's blessing down on our work. He was known as Praying Hyde. Almost instantly the tide turned. The hall became packed, and at my first invitation fifty men accepted Christ as their Savior. As we were leaving I said, 'Mr. Hyde, I want you to pray for me.' He came to my room, turned the key in the door, dropped on his knees, and waited five minutes without a single syllable coming from his lips. I could hear my own heart thumping, and his beating. I felt hot tears running down my face. I knew I was with God. Then, with upturned face, down which the tears were streaming, he said, 'O God.' Then for five minutes at least he was still again; and then, when he knew that he was talking with God there came from the depths of his heart such petitions for me as I had never heard before. I rose from my knees to know what real prayer was."¹³

True prayer is voiced first in the heart.

¹³*Knights Master Book of 4,000 Illustrations*, Walter B. Knight (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956), p. 493.

p. 33

Isaiah 41:13

For I am the Lord, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.

(The Complete Book of Practical Proverbs & Wacky Wit by Vern McLellan)

Life's road is rough, but you can make it; hold out your hand, and God will take it.

When we work, we work; when we pray, God works.
p. 192

As we begin the actual study of this PUBLIC PRAYER, it might be good for us to have a little bit of an OVERVIEW.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The king then proceeded to petition God and to intercede for His people. Nine requests may be noted in this prayer:

- (1) God's presence and protection. **8:25-30**. . . .
- (2) Forgiveness of trespasses. **8:31-32**. . . .
- (3) Forgiveness of sins that had caused defeat in battle. **8:33-34**. . . .
- (4) Forgiveness of sins that had brought on drought. **8:35-36**. . . .
- (5) Forgiveness of sins that had resulted in other calamities. **8:37-40**. . . .
- (6) Mercy for God-fearing foreigners. **8:41-43**. . . .
- (7) Victory in battle. **8:44-45**. . . .
- (8) Restoration after captivity. **8:46-51**. . . .
- (9) Attention to every prayer. **8:52-53**.

p. 504

When you get into the actual HEART OF THE PRAYER you find TWO KEY WORDS appearing in each of the SEVEN PETITIONS. The little word:

"WHEN" followed by the word

"THEN."

My personal preference at this point is to see Solomon:

opening with words of PRAISE to God in verses 23 & 24 and

REMINDING the Lord of His promises and counting on His presence and His protection in verses 25-30.

He then launches into the SEVEN PETITIONS beginning at verse 31 and carrying us down to verse 51.

As he CONCLUDES HIS PRAYER in verses 52 & 53, he is asking the Lord to look with His eyes and listen with His ears to what Solomon has been praying.

We will then CONCLUDE our study with Solomon's blessing of the people in verses 54-61.

v. 23 and said: "O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below—you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way.

You will notice that in these FIRST TWO VERSES Solomon comes in:

PRAISE and WORSHIP before he

PETITIONS the Lord.

Selman in his Chronicles commentary says:

This does not mean, however, that God is far away or that prayer is an exercise in remote control. Solomon reaffirms that God also dwells *on earth with men* (v. 18; cf. vv. 1-2).
p. 327

McNeely observes:

Regarding prayer, our Lord said, "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name'" (Matt 6:9). Solomon began in much the same spirit. He extolled the greatness of God, and that was real worship. He described God's uniqueness (v. 23), His faithfulness (vv. 24-26), His infinity (v. 27), and His compassion and concern (vv. 28-29).
p. 49

"O LORD, GOD OF ISRAEL, THERE IS NO GOD LIKE YOU:"

1. "IN HEAVEN ABOVE"
2. "OR ON EARTH BELOW."

He then concludes this verse with a very IMPORTANT PHRASE referring to God:

"YOU WHO KEEP YOUR COVENANT OF LOVE WITH YOUR SERVANTS".

That is, those:

"WHO CONTINUE WHOLEHEARTEDLY IN YOUR WAY."

O Solomon, Solomon, you know what you need to do to experience God's faithfulness in keeping His covenant of love with you and yet how quick love grows cold, we become lukewarm. We compromise and then we depart in disobedience.

Let us meditate for a minute on the phrase:

"WHO CONTINUE WHOLEHEARTEDLY IN YOUR WAY."

I am reminded of Caleb back in Joshua 14:8:

. . . I, however, followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly.

In Joshua 14:9 Moses bears witness of Caleb's testimony:

. . . you have followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly.'

Then as Joshua blesses Caleb in Joshua 14:14, Joshua says:

. . . because he followed the Lord, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly.

Bill McCartney has written a new book called Sold Out. May that be true of each of us. That our commitment to the cause of Christ might be total and complete.

May the words of the apostle Paul in Philippians 3:7, 8 be the testimony of our hearts as well:

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ,

v. 24 You have kept your promise to your servant David my father; with your mouth you have promised and with your hand you have fulfilled it—as it is today.

Here Solomon reminds the Lord that he is aware that what is happening on this occasion is the faithfulness of God in keeping the promise that He had made to David, Solomon's father.

A PROMISE MADE IS A PROMISE KEPT.

First of all he says,

"WITH YOUR MOUTH YOU HAVE PROMISED,"

You have spoken the words. But it did not stop there.

"WITH YOUR HAND YOU HAVE FULFILLED IT—AS IT IS TODAY."

It reminds me of Joshua 4:24:

He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful and so that you might always fear the Lord your God."

"WITH [HIS] MOUTH" God had promised the children of Israel a land.

"WITH [HIS] HAND" He had opened up a corridor in the Jordan river so that His people might pass on into the land that He had promised.

v. 25 "Now Lord, God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father the promises you made to him when you said, 'You shall never fail to have a man to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your sons are careful in all they do to walk before me as you have done.'

Solomon, as he participates in praise and worship before God here in verses 25 & 26, focuses on the promises that were made to his father David.

I want for us to consider once again a CRUCIAL PHRASE here in verse 25. It is the last phrase in the verse:

"IF ONLY YOUR SONS ARE CAREFUL IN ALL THEY DO TO WALK BEFORE ME AS YOU HAVE DONE."

Back in verse 23 we looked at the phrase:

"who continue wholeheartedly in your way."

Dillard in his commentary on the Chronicles passage says:

The "walk before me" of 1 Kgs 8:25 is "concretized" (Willi, *Die Chronik*, 125) by the Chronicler as "walk in my law."
p. 48

Obedience without compromise frees God to be faithful to fulfill the blessings of His covenant with His people.

v. 26 And now, O God of Israel, let your word that you promised your servant David my father come true.

The Lord's response would be, "I will do that for those who continue wholeheartedly in My way. And I will do that for those who are careful in all they do to walk before Me in obedience to My Word."

In verses 27 and 28 Solomon turns from the:

PROMISES to

GOD'S PRESENCE.

v. 27 "But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!

Solomon raises a legitimate QUESTION here:

"WILL GOD REALLY DWELL ON EARTH?"

"THE HEAVENS, EVEN THE HIGHEST HEAVEN, CANNOT CONTAIN YOU. HOW MUCH LESS THIS TEMPLE I HAVE BUILT!"

I am reminded of the words of John in John 1:14:

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Lange in his commentary says:

Although the heaven of heavens cannot contain the Unmeasurable and Infinite One, and no building, how great and noble soever, can suffice for Him, yet, in His mercy, He will make his dwelling-place (John xiv. 23) in the heart of that man who loves him and keeps his word, and it will truly become a temple of God (1 Cor. iii. 16); . . .
p. 107

J. Vernon McGee says:

It was merely a place for man to come and bow before Him and offer his sacrifices before Him. It served as an approach to God. It is a pagan notion to think that God can dwell in a house down here. Solomon said, "The heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee." God is omnipresent—He is everywhere. He is also transcendent, above His creation.
p. 264

(Our God Is Awesome by Tony Evans)

When you reduce God to something you're comfortable with, it frees you up to do what you want. That's why God does not want likenesses that limit or localize or leverage Him.

p. 42

v. 28 Yet give attention to your servant's prayer and his plea for mercy, O Lord my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence this day.

The little word "HEAR" occurs THIRTEEN TIMES in this prayer of Solomon.

Solomon asks the Father to "GIVE ATTENTION":

1. "TO YOUR SERVANT'S PRAYER" and
2. "TO HIS PLEA FOR MERCY."

I am reminded of 1 John 5:14, 15:

And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

McNeely points out:

Three different expressions for prayer in verse 28 also are instructive. The word translated "prayer" denotes prayer in general. The second word, "supplication," is a specific form of prayer, a call for help. The third, "cry," literally means "a ringing cry."

p. 50

In the NIV the words are translated here in our passage as:

"PRAYER,"

"PLEA" and

"CRY."

v. 29 May your eyes be open toward this temple night and day, this place of which you said, 'My Name shall be there,' so that you will hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place.

The FOCUS is on the:

PROMISES (verses 25 & 26),

PRESENCE (verses 27 & 28), and now

PROTECTION (verses 29 & 30).

"MAY YOUR EYES BE OPEN TOWARD THIS TEMPLE NIGHT AND DAY."

2 Chronicles 16:9

For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war."

Psalm 121

I lift up my eyes to the hills—
 where does my help come from?
 My help comes from the Lord,
 the Maker of heaven and earth.
 He will not let your foot slip —
 he who watches over you will not slumber;
 indeed, he who watches over Israel
 will neither slumber nor sleep.
 The Lord watches over you—
 the Lord is your shade at your right hand;
 the sun will not harm you by day,
 nor the moon by night.
 The Lord will keep you from all harm—
 he will watch over your life;
 the Lord will watch over your coming and going
 both now and forevermore.

v. 30 Hear the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel when they
 pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and
 when you hear, forgive.

Here Solomon addresses the KEY ISSUE:

FORGIVENESS.

Patrick & Lowth in their commentary says:

For sins unpardoned would hinder his blessing from descending on them; and therefore, in the first place, he implores forgiveness of them.

p. 321

2 Chronicles 7:14

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 will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Daniel had a similar sense of urgency in his prayer in:

Daniel 9:19

O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name."

We now come to the HEART of Solomon's prayer.

In verses 31-51 we have SEVEN DEFINITE PETITIONS that are outlined.

The KEY WORDS in each petition are:

"WHEN" and

"THEN."

PETITION #1 involves:

FORGIVENESS OF TRESPASSES (verses 31 & 32)

v. 31 "When a man wrongs his neighbor and is required to take an oath and he comes and swears the oath before your altar in this temple,

Patrick & Lowth says on the phrase:

The oath come before thine altar] It was the custom of all nations to touch the altar when they made a solemn oath: calling God, that is, to witness the truth of what they said, and to punish them if they did not speak the truth.
p. 321

Delitzsch in the introduction to these verses that are now coming under consideration says:

This general prayer is then particularized from ver. 31 onwards by the introduction of *seven* special petitions for an answer in the different cases in which, in future, prayers may be offered to God in the temple.
p. 128

Joseph Parker commenting on these petitions says:

They show a wonderful conception of human life on the part of the royal suppliant. He does not say, Now that this temple is erected there will be no more plague, no sin, nor war, nor difficulty in human life: God will now from this point of time so order things that there will be no more sin, nor crying, nor pain, nor death; this temple shall be as heaven upon the earth. No; on the contrary: though the temple stands as a monument of human piety and as a fulfilment of a divine promise, human life will go on in all the variety of its experience much as it had gone on from the beginning.
p. 311

v. 32 then hear from heaven and act. Judge between your servants, condemning the guilty and bringing down on his own head what he has done. Declare the innocent not guilty, and so establish his innocence.

Here is now our first PETITION and it has to do with RELATIONSHIPS. You have the word:

"when" in verse 31 and

"THEN" in verse 32.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Solomon asked God to **judge** righteously in interpersonal disputes among the Israelites.
p. 504

Wiersbe says:

Solomon prayed that God would condemn the wicked and justify the righteous (1 Kings 8:32). But through Jesus Christ, God justifies (declares righteous) the wicked (Rom. 4:5), and He does it on the basis of grace, not works. God cannot justify the righteous because there are none (Rom. 3:10).
p. 200

Isaiah 54:17

no weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is their vindication from me," declares the Lord.

PETITION #2 now comes before us in verses 33 & 34.

According to The Bible Knowledge Commentary this petition involves:

Forgiveness of sins that had caused defeat in battle.
p. 504

v. 33 "When your people Israel have been defeated by an enemy because they have sinned against you, and when they turn back to you and confess your name, praying and making supplication to you in this temple,

We have a very similar situation in Joshua 7 when Akin chooses, in disobedience, to steal some of the articles and clothing from Jericho. The children of Israel are defeated in their next battle at Ai. In fact, there were thirty-six fatalities in this defeat. This causes Joshua to tear his clothes and to fall face down to the ground before the Ark of the Lord. The Lord responds to Joshua's prayer by saying:

Joshua 7:10-13

... "Stand up! What are you doing down on your face? Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have lied, they have put them with their own possessions. That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies; they turn their backs and run because they have been made liable to destruction. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction. Go, consecrate the people. Tell them, 'Consecrate yourselves in preparation for tomorrow; for this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: That which is devoted is among you, O Israel. You cannot stand against your enemies until you remove it.

Solomon prays:

"WHEN YOUR PEOPLE ISRAEL HAVE BEEN DEFEATED BY AN ENEMY."

The REASON:

"BECAUSE THEY HAVE SINNED AGAINST YOU."

Solomon says:

"WHEN THEY TURN BACK TO YOU AND CONFESS YOUR NAME,
PRAYING AND MAKING SUPPLICATION TO YOU IN THIS
TEMPLE."

v. 34 then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your people Israel and bring them back to the land you gave to their fathers.

This again almost sounds like:

2 Chronicles 7:14

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 will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

We come now to PETITION #3.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary titles this:

Forgiveness of sins that had brought on drought. **8:35-36**.
p. 504

v. 35 "When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because your people have sinned against you, and when they pray toward this place and confess your name and turn from their sin because you have afflicted them,

Leviticus 26:18-21

"If after all this you will not listen to me, I will punish you for your sins seven times over. I will break down your stubborn pride and make the sky above you like iron and the ground beneath you like bronze. Your strength will be spent in vain, because your soil will not yield its crops, nor will the trees of the land yield their fruit. If you remain hostile toward me and refuse to listen to me, I will multiply your afflictions seven times over, as your sins deserve.

Deuteronomy 11:16, 17

Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them. Then the Lord's anger will burn against you, and he will shut the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce, and you will soon perish from the good land the Lord is giving you.

Deuteronomy 28:23, 24

The sky over your head will be bronze, the ground beneath you iron. The Lord will turn the rain of your country into dust and powder; it will come down from the skies until you are destroyed.

In the time of Ahab, the king, Elijah the prophet told Ahab that it was not going to rain for three and a half years. When Ahab and Elijah meet, Elijah responds to Ahab question:

"Is that you, you troubler of Israel?" (1 Kings 18:17).

"I have not made trouble for Israel," Elijah replied." But you and your father's family have. You have abandoned the Lord's commands and have followed the Baals" (1 Kings 18:18).

v. 36 then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel. Teach them the right way to live, and send rain on the land you gave your people for an inheritance.

When Elijah confronts Ahab and the children of Israel on Mount Carmel he says in:

1 Kings 18:21

Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him." But the people said nothing.

Patrick & Lowth say:

These words are better translated in 2 Chron. vi. 27 (where the Hebrew words are the very same with these here). *When thou hast taught them the good way wherein they should walk.* He doth not desire their pardon, till their affliction had taught them better obedience.

p. 321

(God's Little Devotional Book on Prayer by Honor Books, Inc.)

This prayer from *The Gardener's Year*, reminds us that when we tell God what to do in prayer, we are speaking from our limited, finite point of view. We are much better off when we simply state our requests, and then trust Him to respond from His eternal storehouse with His great generosity and unquestionable wisdom.

O Lord, grant that in some way it may rain every day, say from about midnight until three o'clock in the morning, but You see, it must be gentle and warm so that it can soak in; grant that at the same time it would not rain on campion, alyssum, helianthemum, lavender, and the others which You . . . know are drought-loving plants—I will write their names on a bit paper if you like—and grant that the sun may shine the whole day long, but not everywhere (not, for instance, on spiraea or on gentian, plattain lily and rhododendron) and not too much; that there may be plenty of dew and little wind, enough worms, no plant-lice and snails, no mildew, and that once a week thin liquid manure and guano may fall from heaven. Amen.¹¹

¹¹ *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, Paul Lee Tan, ed. (Rockville, MD: Assurance Publishers, 1979), #4564.

p. 29

(Prayer—The Great Adventure by David Jeremiah)

Here is an idea to think about:

Back of the loaf is the snowy flour
And back of the flour, the mill
And back of the mill is the field of wheat,
The rain, and the Father's will.¹

1. Ray C. Stedman, *Jesus Teaches on Prayer* (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1975), 72.
p. 123

This brings us now to PETITION #4 (verses 37-40).

The Bible Knowledge Commentary titles this petition as:

Forgiveness of sins that had resulted in other calamities.
p. 504

v. 37 "When famine or plague comes to the land, or blight or mildew, locusts or grasshoppers, or when an enemy besieges them in any of their cities, whatever disaster or disease may come,

Reading this verse reminds me of David's experience in:

2 Samuel 21:1

During the reign of David, there was a famine for three successive years; so David sought the face of the Lord. The Lord said, "It is on account of Saul and his blood-stained house; it is because he put the Gibeonites to death."

v. 38 and when a prayer or plea is made by any of your people Israel—each one aware of the afflictions of his own heart, and spreading out his hands toward this temple—

What a powerful phrase occurs here in verse 38:

"EACH ONE AWARE OF THE AFFLICTIONS OF HIS OWN HEART."

This is the KEY to God's working significantly in any one's life. To stop excusing, defending, and denying one's own responsibility in these matters, and to with humility and brokenness, with a spirit that is manifested here in this phrase:

"EACH ONE AWARE OF THE AFFLICTIONS OF HIS OWN HEART."

Psalm 139:23, 24

Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

Psalm 26:2, 3

Test me, O Lord, and try me,
examine my heart and my mind;
for your love is ever before me,
and I walk continually in your truth.

We would do well to ask ourselves the question:

What are the "AFFLICTIONS" of the human "HEART?"

The ANSWER is THREE-FOLD:

1. SIN,
2. SELFISHNESS, and
3. SATISFACTION with the things of this present world.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon quotes:

. . . John Newton when he wrote,—

“Physician of my sin-sick soul,
To Thee I bring my case;
My raging malady control,
And heal me by Thy grace.

“Pity the anguish I endure,
See how I mourn and pine;
For never can I hope a cure
From any hand but Thine.

“Lord, I am sick, regard my cry,
And set my spirit free:
Say, canst Thou let a sinner die,
Who longs to live to Thee?”

p. 758

(The Joyful Journey by Patsy Clairmont, Barbara Johnson, Marilyn Meberg,
and Luci Swindoll)

I saw a cartoon once that said, “Life generally looks better in the morning; it’s just that morning takes so long to get here!”

p. 84

v. 39 then hear from heaven, your dwelling place. Forgive and act; deal with each man according to all he does, since you know his heart (for you alone know the hearts of all men),

Back in verse 38 it was:

"each one aware of the afflictions of his own heart."

Now in verse 39:

"DEAL WITH EACH MAN ACCORDING TO ALL HE DOES."

The REASON for this request is:

"SINCE YOU KNOW HIS HEART (FOR YOU ALONE KNOW THE HEARTS OF ALL MEN)."

Luke 16:15

And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God."

1 Samuel 16:7

But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

Jeremiah 17:10

"I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve."

v. 40 so that they will fear you all the time they live in the land you gave our fathers.

The RESULT of the Lord's action with regard to this petition is given in verse 40:

"SO THAT THEY WILL FEAR YOU."

What does it mean to FEAR THE LORD?

1. I must recognize that I have a responsibility to my relationship with God.
2. I must respect that which He desires for my life.
3. It is my responsibility to respond in obedience to His Word.
4. I must repent when I have failed to be obedient.
5. I must realize the justice of retribution when I fail to follow His plans and precepts.

This brings us in our prayer to PETITION #5 (verses 41-43).

The Bible Knowledge Commentary titles this petition:

Mercy for God-fearing foreigners.
p. 504

v. 41 "As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your name—

Solomon now catches a world-vision in his prayer. He recognizes that this magnificent place is not just a place for the children of Israel only.

I am reminded of Rahab's testimony to the spies in:

Joshua 2:8-11

Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof and said to them, "I know that the Lord has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.

v. 42 for men will hear of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm—when he comes and prays toward this temple,

Here is the REASON why Solomon expands his prayer to include the foreigner.

He says that "MEN WILL HEAR" THREE THINGS about You when they come and pray toward this temple:

1. "YOUR GREAT NAME,"
2. "YOUR MIGHTY HAND," and
3. "YOUR OUTSTRETCHED ARM."

v. 43 then hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your Name.

Solomon asks the Lord to hear the prayer of the foreigner.

"AND DO WHATEVER [he] . . . ASKS . . . SO THAT" [RESULT] "ALL THE PEOPLES OF THE EARTH":

1. "MAY KNOW YOUR NAME,"
2. "FEAR YOU," and
3. "MAY KNOW THAT THIS HOUSE I HAVE BUILT BEARS YOUR NAME."

This brings us now to PETITION #6 (verses 44 & 45).

The Bible Knowledge Commentary titles this request:

Victory in battle.

p. 504

v. 44 "When your people go to war against their enemies, wherever you send them, and when they pray to the Lord toward the city you have chosen and the temple I have built for your Name,

v. 45 then hear from heaven their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause.

(God's Little Devotional Book by Honor Books, Inc.)

God intervenes in the
affairs of men by
invitation only.

p. 292

The scriptures abound in illustrations of the Lord intervening in the battles that took place as the children of Israel were obedient to the Lord and walking in dependence upon Him.

Exodus 17:10-12

So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset.

Joshua 10:7-14

So Joshua marched up from Gilgal with his entire army, including all the best fighting men. The Lord said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them; I have given them into your hand. Not one of them will be able to withstand you." After an all-night march from Gilgal, Joshua took them by surprise. The Lord threw them into confusion before Israel, who defeated them in a great victory at Gibeon. Israel pursued them along the road going up to Beth Horon and cut them down all the way to Azekah and Makkedah. As they fled before Israel on the road down from Beth Horon to Azekah, the Lord hurled large hailstones down on them from the sky, and more of them died from the hailstones than were killed by the swords of the Israelites. On the day the Lord gave the Amorites over to Israel, Joshua said to the Lord in the presence of Israel: "O sun, stand still over Gibeon, O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon." So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies, as it is written in the Book of Jashar. The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the Lord listened to a man. Surely the Lord was fighting for Israel!

David in the Valley of Elah facing Goliath says in:

1 Samuel 17:47

All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands."

Jehoshaphat is surrounded by the enemy and the Lord tells him and the people in:

2 Chronicles 20:17

... Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you."

Yes, the Lord is available to provide all that is necessary to accomplish His purpose and plan. He truly will "uphold our cause" when our cause is His cause.

Patrick & Lowth, commenting on the phrase "UPHOLD THEIR CAUSE," says:

Show the justice of it, by making them victorious.
p. 322

We come in his prayer to the PETITION #7 (verses 46-51).

The Bible Knowledge Commentary titles these verses:

Restoration after captivity.
p. 504

The Bible Knowledge Commentary also says:

The king seemed to have prophetic insight into the fate of God's people. They did indeed go into captivity because of their sins against God; they called on Him for forgiveness, and they experienced restoration to their land.
p. 504

v. 46 "When they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you become angry with them and give them over to the enemy, who takes them captive to his own land, far away or near;

You notice it is not a question of IF they sin against you, but just a matter of "WHEN THEY SIN AGAINST YOU."

The REASON given is in the next phrase:

"FOR THERE IS NO ONE WHO DOES NOT SIN."

Ecclesiastes 7:20

There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.

Romans 3:10

as it is written, "There is none righteous, not even one;

Romans 3:23

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

J. Vernon McGee says:

This, by the way, is God's estimate of you and me—"there is no man that sinneth not." Don't tell me that *you* don't sin. God says you do.
p. 264

Parker says:

"There is no man which sinneth not"—no king, no potentate, no ruler, no father, no child, no heart that has not its wandering, its aberration, its hunger after evil, its thirst for hell. A wondrous tragedy is this human life; for a long time so plain and simple and fluent, and then suddenly more terrible than a volcano, more cruel than any wild beast of the jungle, more difficult than any perplexity that ever afflicted the human mind. A man who prays so begets our confidence, because we feel he knows human nature. It is thus where the preacher must lay his hold upon public attention—by showing that he has read the human heart, that he knows it in all its trickery, and concealment, and genius of hypocrisy; and that he knows it in all its unconfessed infirmity and bitterness and load of grief.

p. 215

"WHEN THEY SIN AGAINST YOU—FOR THERE IS NO ONE WHO DOES NOT SIN—AND YOU BECOME ANGRY WITH THEM AND GIVE THEM OVER TO THE ENEMY, WHO TAKES THEM CAPTIVE TO HIS OWN LAND, FAR AWAY OR NEAR."

Hebrews 12:5, 6

and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by Him; For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives."

(No More Excuses: Be the Man God Made You to Be by Tony Evans)

Jonah chapter 2 begins with an interesting statement: "From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the LORD his God." Jonah wasn't praying when he ran to Joppa. He wasn't praying when he got on the boat and paid the fare. He wasn't even praying when the storm came and the sinners chastised him for his disobedience. He didn't pray until he got swallowed.

Some of us are not going to get right with God until we are swallowed, until God puts us in a place so tight that going to Him in prayer is the only thing left to do. Jonah could have repented anywhere along the line, but it took this cataclysmic circumstance to turn him back to God. Then he was ready to pray:

p. 92

(Inspiring Quotations compiled by Albert M. Wells, Jr.)

When a man is getting better, he understands more and more clearly the evil that is still in him. When a man is getting worse, he understands his own badness less and less.

—C. S. Lewis

p. 122

The heart of the problem is a problem of the heart.
p. 188

(Will God Heal Me? by Ron Dunn)

Not long ago I visited with a delightful Christian who, when we said our good-byes, fired this parting shot: "Love God! Hate sin! *And watch out for trucks!*"
p. 157

(Collected Verse of Edgar A. Guest by Edgar A. Guest)

The Furnace Door

My father is a peaceful man;
He tries in every way he can
To live a life of gentleness
And patience all the while.
He says that needless fretting's vain,
That it's absurd to be profane,
That nearly every wrong can be
Adjusted with a smile.
Yet try no matter how he will,
There's one thing that annoys him still,
One thing that robs him of his calm
And leaves him very sore;
He cannot keep his self-control
When with a shovel full of coal
He misses where it's headed for,
And hits the furnace door.

He measures with a careful eye
 The space for which he's soon to try,
 Then grabs his trusty shovel up
 And loads it in the bin,
 Then turns and with a healthy lunge,
 That's two parts swing and two parts plunge,
 He lets go at the furnace fire,
 Convinced it will go in !
 And then we hear a sudden smack,
 The cellar air turns blue and black;
 Above the rattle of the coal
 We hear his awful roar.
 From dreadful language upward hissed
 We know that father's aim has missed,
 And that his shovel full of coal
 Went up against the door.

The minister was here one day
 For supper, and Pa went away
 To fix the furnace fire, and soon
 We heard that awful roar.
 And through the furnace pipes there came
 Hot words that made Ma blush for shame.
 "It strikes me," said the minister,
 "He hit the furnace door."
 Ma turned away and hung her head;
 "I'm so ashamed," was all she said.
 And then the minister replied:
 "Don't worry. I admit
 That when I hit the furnace door,
 And spill the coal upon the floor,
 I quite forget the cloth I wear
 And — er — swear a little bit."
 pp. 293-4

(Holiness by J. C. Ryle)

Well says Owen, 'I do not understand how a man can be a true believer unto
 whom sin is not the greatest burden, sorrow and trouble.'
 p. 38

v. 47 and if they have a change of heart in the land where they are held captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their conquerors and say, 'We have sinned, we have done wrong, we have acted wickedly';

This sounds very similar to the period of the Judges, although most of the time they were held captive in their own land.

Judges 10:15, 16

But the Israelites said to the Lord, "We have sinned. Do with us whatever you think best, but please rescue us now." Then they got rid of the foreign gods among them and served the Lord. And he could bear Israel's misery no longer.

Notice the KEY progression and restoration here in Solomon's prayer:

"IF THEY HAVE A CHANGE OF HEART."

That is, they are willing to recognize they are wrong and that the Lord is right. Not only that, but they:

"REPENT AND PLEAD WITH [the Lord] IN THE LAND OF THEIR CONQUERORS."

They verbalize it by saying:

"WE HAVE SINNED, WE HAVE DONE WRONG, WE HAVE ACTED WICKEDLY."

v. 48 and if they turn back to you with all their heart and soul in the land of their enemies who took them captive, and pray to you toward the land you gave their fathers, toward the city you have chosen and the temple I have built for your Name;

Let us go back for a moment and look at those KEY PHRASES that are involved in dealing biblically with sin in our lives:

1. "have a change of heart,"
2. "repent,"
3. "plead" with the Lord in our repentance,
4. acknowledge "we have sinned,"
5. "we have done wrong,"
6. "we have acted wickedly,"
7. "THEY TURN BACK TO YOU WITH ALL THEIR HEART," and
8. they "PRAY TO YOU."

v. 49 then from heaven, your dwelling place, hear their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause.

We have already run into this phrase back in verse 45:

"then hear from heaven their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause."

The REASON the Lord can "UPHOLD THEIR CAUSE" is because their cause is His cause.

v. 50 And forgive your people, who have sinned against you; forgive all the offenses they have committed against you, and cause their conquerors to show them mercy;

1. "Hear their prayer,"
2. "[hear] their plea,"
3. "uphold their cause,"
4. "FORGIVE YOUR PEOPLE, WHO HAVE SINNED AGAINST YOU, FORGIVE ALL THE OFFENSES THEY COMMITTED AGAINST YOU,"
5. "CAUSE THEIR CONQUERORS TO SHOW THEM MERCY."

v. 51 for they are your people and your inheritance, whom you brought out of Egypt, out of that iron-smelting furnace.

Here is the REASON, in conclusion, that Solomon prays that the Lord would "forgive their sin" and ultimately "uphold their cause."

There are TWO REASONS:

1. "THEY ARE YOUR PEOPLE" and
2. "YOUR INHERITANCE."

This sounds a lot like MOSES talking to the Lord after the golden calf experience in:

Exodus 32:11

But Moses sought the favor of the Lord, his God. "O Lord," he said, "why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?"

Lord, these "ARE YOUR PEOPLE AND YOUR INHERITANCE." They are the ones "YOU BROUGHT OUT OF EGYPT, OUT OF THAT IRON-SMELTING FURNACE."

McNeely says:

And Solomon acknowledged that the care of Israel was God's responsibility: "They are Thy people and Thine inheritance which Thou has brought forth from Egypt" (1:51).

p. 50

I want to take just a moment to focus on the FINAL PHRASE in verse 51:

“OUT OF THAT IRON-SMELTING FURNACE”

Isaiah 48:10, 11

See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another.

1 Peter 4:12, 13

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of his glory, you may rejoice with exultation.

(Prayer, Praise & Promises: A Daily Walk Through the Psalms by Warren W. Wiersbe)

God knows how much we can bear, and His grace is sufficient for each day. But there is another dimension to our burdens. God can turn them into benefits. Has He given you a heavy burden? Perhaps He wants to turn it into a benefit and do something special for you.

(Day 175)

(The Christian in Complete Armour by William Gurnall)

Faith can praise God because it sees mercy even in the greatest affliction. Thus Job quenched this dart which Satan shot at him from his wife's tongue. "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10). Will we let a few present troubles become a grave to bury the memory of all His past mercies? What God takes from us is less than we owe Him, but what He leaves us is more than He owes.
(November 3)

(Prayer, Praise & Promises: A Daily Walk Through the Psalms by Warren W. Wiersbe)

What do you do on difficult days? Hold on to all that God is and all that He does. God is still working for you. All things are still working together for good (Rom. 8:28). Don't turn away from Him. Wait. He will bring you out of your affliction.



Whenever you experience a difficult day, encourage yourself by focusing on God's character and His attributes--power, loving-kindness and faithfulness. Remember what He has done for you in the past. In spite of what you see around you, trust the Lord. He will see you through your affliction.
(Day 217)

(Detours, Tow Trucks, and Angels in Disguise: Finding Humor and Hope in Unexpected Places by Carol Kent)

"The refiner is never very far from the mouth of the furnace
when his gold is in the fire."

—CHARLES SPURGEON,
A Rainbow of Hope

p. 129

(A Man to Match the Mountain: Overcoming the Obstacles of Life by David Roper)

“Where grows the golden grain?” Maltbie Babcock asks. “In a furrow cut by pain.”
p. 163

(Rainbows: The Book of Hope edited by George W. Humphreys)

We need to learn the kindness of unanswered prayer.

St. Augustine in his confessions tells of his mother praying all through one night that God would not let her son sail for Italy.

She wanted her son to be a Christian--here at home she could surround him by holy influences and share her deep faith with him. But in Italy how could he stand against temptation and overcome world and flesh and devil.

Yet even as she prayed that her boy might not go to Italy he set sail for those shores. There he came under the powerful spiritual influence of Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, and Augustine became a Christian in the very place from which his mother's prayers would have kept him.

p. 158

(Prayer—The Great Adventure by David Jeremiah)

Several years ago, during a time of discouragement in my life, someone gave me this little poem:

My Father's way may twist and turn,
 My heart may throb and ache,
 But in my soul I'm glad I know,
 He maketh no mistake.

My cherished plans may go astray,
 My hopes may fade away,
 But still I'll trust my Lord to lead
 For He doth know the way.

Though night be dark and it may seem
 The day will never break;
 I'll pin my faith, my all in Him,
 He maketh no mistake.

There's so much now I cannot see,
 My eyesight's far too dim;
 But come what may, I'll simply trust
 And leave it all to Him.

For by and by the mist will lift
 And plain it all He'll make,
 Through all the way, though dark to me,
 He maketh no mistake.⁴

4. A.M. Overton, "He Maketh No Mistake," Croft M. Pentz, compiler, *Speaker's Treasury of 400 Quotable Poems* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1963), 73.
 pp. 176-177

(The Seeking Heart: Volume 4: The Library of Spiritual Classics by Fenelon)

Do not resist what God brings into your life. Be willing to suffer if that is what is needed. Overactivity and stubbornness will only increase your anguish.
 p. 3

(The Seeking Heart: Volume 4: The Library of Spiritual Classics by Fenelon)

No matter how difficult or uncomfortable your circumstances become, you are free because you have come to accept them all from the hand of God. The greatest thing is to suffer without being discouraged.

p. 74

(Something to Smile About by Zig Ziglar)

A prizefighter, floored in the second round by a powerful punch, tried to look up from the mat. "Let the referee count," yelled his trainer. "Don't get up until eight." The fighter nodded and replied weakly, "What times is it now?"
(Executive Speechwriter Newsletter)

p. 124

The saying is still true: It's not what happens to you; it's how you handle what happens to you that counts. I love what Present Reagan said about his first term in office: "Since I came to the White House I got two hearing aids, a colon operation, skin cancer, a prostate operation and I was shot." He paused. "I've never felt better in my life."

p. 190

James 1:2, 3

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials; knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

Now we come upon the CONCLUSION of this MAJESTIC PRAYER in verses 52 & 53.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary titles these two verses:

Attention to every prayer.

p. 504

v. 52 "May your eyes be open to your servant's plea and to the plea of your people Israel, and may you listen to them whenever they cry out to you.

In verse 52 Solomon is FOCUSING upon the Lord's:

"EYES" and

His EARS.

He asks Him to:

LOOK and

"LISTEN."

1. "MAY YOUR EYES BE OPEN TO YOUR SERVANT'S PLEA AND TO THE PLEA OF YOUR PEOPLE ISRAEL," and
2. "MAY YOU LISTEN TO THEM WHENEVER THEY CRY OUT TO YOU."

Verse 53 gives us the REASON.

v. 53 For you singled them out from all the nations of the world to be your own inheritance, just as you declared through your servant Moses when you, O Sovereign Lord, brought our fathers out of Egypt."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary titles the remaining verses:

Solomon's blessing of the people (8:54-61)
p. 504

v. 54 When Solomon had finished all these prayers and supplications to the Lord, he rose from before the altar of the Lord, where he had been kneeling with his hands spread out toward heaven.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Solomon . . . had been kneeling . . . he arose to pronounce [the] benediction
...
p. 504

(God's Little Devotional Book on Prayer by Honor Books, Inc.)

God not only gives us answers to our prayers, but with every answer gives us something of Himself.



*Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.
You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*
Jeremiah 29:12, 13 NIV

Fanny Crosby, the noted hymn writer, said she never attempted to write a hymn without first kneeling in prayer. Given the fact that she wrote no less than 8,000 songs, she was obviously a woman of considerable prayer!

Like many creative people, Miss Crosby was often under pressure to meet deadlines. One such time came in 1869 as she tried to write lyrics for a tune composed by W. H. Doane. She couldn't seem to find the words, and then she remembered she had forgotten to pray. As she rose from her knees, she dictated — as fast as her assistant could write — the words for the famous hymn, "Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross."

Another time, she had run short of money and needed exactly five dollars for a particular purpose. There was no time to call upon her publishers, so she simply prayed for the money. As she ended her prayer, she began to pace back and forth in her room, trying to get into the mood to write. Just at that time, an admirer called upon her. The two chatted briefly, and in parting, the woman pressed something into her hand. It was a five-dollar bill! Fanny fell to her knees in a prayer of thanksgiving, and upon rising wrote, "All the way my Saviour leads me."⁷⁸

Jesus does not just give answers. He is The Answer.

⁷⁸*Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, Paul Lee Tan, ed. (Rockville, MD: Assurance Publishers, 1979), #4537.
p. 172-3

(Borden of Yale '09 "The Life that Counts" by Mrs. Howard Taylor)

The weary ones had rest, the sad had joy
 That day, and wondered "how?"
 A ploughman singing at his work had prayed,
 "Lord, bless them now."

Away in foreign lands they wondered "how"
 Their simple word had power.
 At home the "Gleaners", two or three, had met
 To pray an hour.

Yes, we are always wondering "how?"
 Because we do not see
 Someone, unknown perhaps, and far away,
 On bended knee.

p.90

v. 55 He stood and blessed the whole assembly of Israel in a loud voice, saying:

v. 56 "Praise be to the Lord, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses.

This takes us back to the BEGINNING of the prayer when Solomon FOCUSES on the:

PROMISES MADE TO DAVID.

Now in CONCLUSION it is the:

PROMISES MADE TO "MOSES."

1 Kings 8:24

You have kept your promise to your servant David my father; with your mouth you have promised and with your hand you have fulfilled it—as it is today.

"PRAISE BE TO THE LORD, WHO HAS GIVEN REST TO HIS PEOPLE ISRAEL JUST AS HE PROMISED. NOT ONE WORD HAS FAILED OF ALL THE GOOD PROMISES HE GAVE THROUGH HIS SERVANT MOSES."

v. 57 May the Lord our God be with us as he was with our fathers; may he never leave us nor forsake us.

Deuteronomy 31:8

The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."

Hebrews 13:5

Let your way of life be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you."

Exodus 33:14

The Lord replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

(In the Hands of God: Inspiration From Daily Life by William Barclay)

An atheist has been described as a man with no invisible means of support, but the Christian has the help and the presence of God in every task and at every time.
p. 109

v. 58 May he turn our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways and to keep the commands, decrees and regulations he gave our fathers.

Whereas,

He prays in verse 57 for the Lord's PRESENCE,

He prays in verse 58 for the Lord's PERSISTENCE & PERSEVERANCE.

There are THREE CRUCIAL PHRASES in verse 58:

1. "MAY HE TURN OUR HEARTS TO HIM,"
2. "TO WALK IN ALL HIS WAYS," and
3. "TO KEEP THE COMMANDS, DECREES AND REGULATIONS HE GAVE OUR FATHERS."

It reminds me of:

Proverbs 3:5, 6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

What a difference the biography of Solomon would have looked like if these things that he mentions in verses 57 & 58 could have been true for him.

(Meeting God at a Dead End by Ron Mehl)

Down on her knees beside her bed in the dark, when she ought to have been sleeping before another long day of work, Carol poured out her heart. “Lord, I know where my daughter is. I know what she’s doing, and I know how she’s living. But I know You love her, Lord, and because I know You love her, I’m going to rest in Your faithfulness — to save her, minister to her, touch her, redeem her, restore her.”

So she prayed.

But nothing happened.

Carol wept until she had no more tears and cried out to the Lord morning and night. But there was no change. No softening. No remorse. Nothing.

Eventually Heather moved to a different city, and Carol lost contact altogether. Friends who had the courage to speak of the matter urged Carol to let her go. To concentrate on the other kids. To think about herself a little. Heather was too far gone, they told her. There was no hope.

And as the weeks became months, and the months became years, it began to look as though they were right.

But still, her mother prayed. Still, her mother hoped.

Finally there was no need to pray any longer. Word came that Heather was dead.

It fell to Carol to go to Heather’s little apartment in a run-down part of a nearby town and collect her daughter’s meager possessions. Her heart felt like a stone as she drove the rainy streets, searching for the address, knowing there would be no one home. The rain continued to fall as she stood at the door, fumbling with the key they had sent her. She had never set foot in this place before. What would she find? Would she be able to bear it? *What more could she have done?* She had prayed so fervently for her daughter’s restoration . . . for her salvation.

And now it was too late for prayer. It was out of her hands. Maybe it always had been.

The apartment was cold and dark, but its condition wasn’t as bad as she had feared it might be. It hurt to see how Heather had lived in her last days, how impoverished she had been. But even though the apartment was drab and the furnishings sparse, there was a neatness that surprised Carol. The place had been recently cleaned.

Scanning the room, Carol’s eye was caught by a white envelope on a little desk in a corner. It was an unstamped, unsent letter in Heather’s familiar hand.

And it was addressed to Carol.

Feeling suddenly weak, she slumped down into a chair. Her fingers trembled as she opened the envelope and unfolded the letter. It was penned on plain binder paper and dated shortly before her girl’s death.

Dear Mom:

I just wanted you to know that I'm coming home next weekend. Mom, I have news for you. I just received Jesus Christ as my Savior. He's changed my life, and I'm so thankful. And Mom — to think that you would love me during those days and years when I was such a mess — when I was everything but what a mother would want her daughter to be — to think that you would love me and stand with me and care for me has meant more to me than you'll ever know.

I can't wait until next weekend when we can sit together and I can hug you and tell you just how much I love you and how much you mean to me.¹

There was a little more, but Carol's eyes were streaming with tears. She bent over the desk as the rain pattered on the windows and wept as she had not wept before.

The old nightmare had been a lie. She *would* catch up with her girl one day. They would walk together and laugh together again, in a better place.

¹ To the best of my memory, this was the wording of the letter.

pp. 46-48

v. 59 And may these words of mine, which I have prayed before the Lord, be near to the Lord our God day and night, that he may uphold the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel according to each day's need,

Whereas, it is the:

LORD'S PRESENCE in verse 57,

HIS PATIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE in verse 58,

here, in verse 59, he is asking for the LORD'S PROVISION.

"MAY THESE WORDS OF MINE, WHICH I HAVE PRAYED BEFORE THE LORD, BE NEAR TO THE LORD OUR GOD DAY AND NIGHT, [and] THAT HE MAY UPHOLD THE CAUSE OF HIS SERVANT."

Again I am reminded of:

Isaiah 54:17

no weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is their vindication from me," declares the Lord.

This is the THIRD TIME that we have had this little phrase:

“UPHOLD THE CAUSE.”

1. Verse 45 — when the children of Israel go to war against their enemies, Solomon’s prayer is that the Lord would “uphold their cause.”
2. Verse 49 — when they have a change of heart and come back to the Lord, he asks that the Lord would “hear their prayer and their plea and uphold their cause.”
3. Now here in verse 59 — Solomon asks the Lord to “UPHOLD THE CAUSE” of himself and then also “THE CAUSE OF. . . HIS PEOPLE ISRAEL ACCORDING TO EACH DAY’S NEED.”

This reminds me of the PROVISION OF MANNAH in the wilderness:

Exodus 16:4

Then the Lord said to Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them to see whether they will follow my instructions.

Matthew 6:11

‘Give us this day our daily bread.

v. 60 so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God and that there is no other.

This is the RESULT that Solomon wants from his prayer:

“SO THAT ALL THE PEOPLES OF THE EARTH MAY KNOW THAT THE LORD IS GOD AND THAT THERE IS NO OTHER.”

This reminds me of Elijah on Mount Carmel:

1 Kings 18:37-39

Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.” Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench. When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, “The Lord—he is God! The Lord—he is God!”

McNeely says:

The statement, "the LORD is God," is almost a creedal statement. Gray calls it "the confession of faith," and Montgomery, "a battlecry."¹⁷ This statement would appear later when Elijah faced the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:39).

17. Gray, p. 231; Montgomery, p. 199.
pp. 50-51

v. 61 But your hearts must be fully committed to the Lord our God, to live by his decrees and obey his commands, as at this time."

Isaiah 56:7

these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations."

How wonderful it would have been if Solomon would have prayed here with the people:

"BUT [OUR] HEARTS MUST BE FULLY COMMITTED TO THE LORD OUR GOD, TO LIVE BY HIS DECREES AND OBEY HIS COMMANDS, AS AT THIS TIME."

Wiersbe observes:

It is unfortunate that Solomon failed in the very thing he exhorted his people to remember—loyalty of heart (v. 61).
p. 201

Delitzsch in commenting on the meaning of these phrases in verse 61, says:

Let your heart be wholly, undividedly devoted to the Lord . . .
p. 135

Devries observes:

Solomon's final word is a plea to the assembly that their future behavior may be the same as "right now" . . .
p. 126

Lange observes:

The best and greatest wish which a king can form for his people, a father for his children, a pastor for his flock, is: May your heart be righteous, *i.e.*, whole and undivided before the Lord our God. He who elects to side with Him must do so wholly and entirely; all "halting between two opinions" is an abomination to Him: the lukewarm He will "spue out of His mouth." Be thou on the Lord's side, and He will be with thee.

p. 108

(Prayer—The Great Adventure by David Jeremiah)

Another ruler many centuries later would learn the same lesson. After Napoleon Bonaparte was for the last time toppled from his European empire and forced to spend his last days in exile on the island of St. Helena, he wrote these moving words:

I die before my time and my body shall be given back to the earth and devoured by worms. What an abysmal gulf between my deep miseries and the eternal kingdom of Christ! I marvel that whereas the ambitious dreams of myself and Alexander and of Caesar should have vanished into thin air, a Judean peasant, Jesus, should be able to stretch his hands across the centuries, and control the destinies of men and nations.³

3. Quoted in David Robinson, "Is Anyone In Charge?" *Command*, Fall 1992, Vol. 41, No. 3, 7.

pp. 174-175

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

. . . Solomon reminded the people that they **must be fully committed to the LORD** and obedient to **His** Word. Solomon . . . failed to do this.

p. 505

(The Blessings of Brokenness by Charles Stanley)

We each have these areas of our lives in which we want to maintain total control. And they are *precisely* the ones into which God moves. In fact, these areas that we hold to be off limits to God are the very ones he focuses upon in order that every aspect of our independence be stripped away from us. His desire and purpose for us is *total dependence upon him*. Nothing short of *complete* dependence will suffice.

p. 46

(Game Plan: Winning Strategies for the Second Half of Your Life by Bob Buford)

I have a feeling that a lot more people would make the leap to “committed Christian,” except for one great fear: “If I let God have complete authority over my life, he’ll make me start wearing polyester, get a bad haircut, and ring a bell during holidays.” In other words, he won’t let me be who I really am.

p. 67

(The Seeking Heart: Volume 4: The Library of Spiritual Classics by Fenelon)

Let God act in your life in whatever way He chooses. All you must do is to be faithful to what He asks of you. God wants you to depend on him from moment to moment. The darkness and uncertainty of your life's path must bring you to rest peacefully in Him. To trust Him even when you do not see where He is taking you is a true death. It is a silent death that happens without fanfare.

p. 161

(The Complete Book of Practical Proverbs & Wacky Wit by Vern McLellan)

Don’t bother to give God instructions; just report for duty.

Corrie ten Boom

p. 18

(Detours, Tow Trucks, and Angels in Disguise: Finding Humor and Hope in
Unexpected Places by Carol Kent)

“Lord
 As you show me
 That You are my Father
 By instructing me
 May I show You
 That I am Your child
 By obeying You.”¹

—RUTH HARMS CALKIN,
Lord, It Keeps Happening . . . and Happening

1. *From: Lord, It Keeps Happening . . . and Happening*, by: Ruth Harms Calkin © 1984. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

p. 115

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular passage?

LESSON #1: When we begin to pray, our focus should be upon the Father in praise.

LESSON #2: Lord, help us to be like Caleb and to continue "wholeheartedly in Your way."

LESSON #3: Lord, with "Your mouth You have promised" much in our Savior and You will fulfill what You have promised with Your hand.

LESSON #4: Lord, as we come to You in prayer, make each of us aware of the afflictions of our own hearts.

LESSON #5: Lord, it is amazing that You know our hearts and that You still love us.

LESSON #6: With the Psalmist we would say, "Test me, O Lord, and try me, examine my heart and my mind, for your love is ever before me, and I walk continually in your truth" (Psalm 26:2, 3).

LESSON #7: Lord, may You be able to uphold our cause because our cause is Your cause.

LESSON #8: Lord, thank You for the furnace experiences in our lives when You are in the process of purifying our minds and hearts.

LESSON #9: Lord, thank You that we can always count upon Your presence.

LESSON #10: Lord, help us to desire more than anything to put You first in our lives, to walk in Your ways, and to be obedient to Your Word.

LESSON #11: Lord, thank You for the confidence we have that You are there to meet each day's need.

LESSON #12: Lord, may our hearts be fully committed to the Lord our God and that we are living by Your Word.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon reminds us:

“The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands.” No one place is more sacred than another.

“Where’er we seek Him He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground.”

There remains one temple, however, and that is the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is temple, altar, and sacrifice; and if you would look the right way in prayer, and if you desire your prayers to speed, you must look to Him by the eye of faith. See, there He sits at the right hand of God. Having finished the one sacrifice, and made atonement for sin for ever, there He sits—priest, altar, offering, temple; and every true supplicant must enter into the holiest by His blood, “by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh.” Whoever beneath the wide heavens is conscious of the plague of his own heart, or has anything that plagues him or aught that troubles him, may turn his eyes toward Christ, the true temple, with a certainty that God will hear his prayer and answer his request, and send to him deliverance. “We have an altar,” and that altar is our Lord’s own blessed person; we have but one, and we tremble for those who set up another, but to that one we look with confident hope, being assured that the sacrifice once offered there has made our peace with God, and procured acceptance for our supplications.

“We rear no altar—Thou hast died;
We deck no priestly shrine;
What need have we of creature-aid?
The power to save is Thine.”

p. 757

The Bible Knowledge Commentary records what the Chronicles record gives us following this account:

As the king finished speaking, “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) as it had earlier filled the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34-35; Lev. 9:23-24).

p. 505

(Walking With Saints: Through the Best and Worst Times of Our Lives by Calvin Miller)

J. Edwin Hartill remarked, "Prayer is the slender sinew that moves the muscle of omnipotence."⁶ But the hymnist Samuel Cowper sang it better than anyone ever said it:

**Restraining prayer we cease to fight;
Prayer makes the Christian's armor bright,
And Satan trembles when he sees,
The weakest Saint upon his knees.**

6. Epigraph, Madam Guyon, *Autobiography of Madame Guyon* (Chicago: Moody Press, undated) p. 230.
p. 28

(Prayer—The Great Adventure by David Jeremiah)

Prayer does not come naturally to any of us. In our more honest moments, we all admit it's a struggle to pray as we'd like. And yet there is no avoiding the fact that Scripture insists God has hard-wired the universe in such a way that He works primarily through prayer. No doubt He could have chosen some other method, but He has chosen to do most of His work through prayer. In some ways, He has made Himself subservient to the prayers of His people. And certainly He has conditioned a good portion of His blessing upon our willingness to pray.
p. 35

(Prayer—The Great Adventure by David Jeremiah)

We do not see into the world in which God lives, but He definitely sees into ours, as the following personal testimony by Spencer January attests:

It was 1945, and the U.S. Army's 35th Infantry Division, of which I was a twenty-four year-old member, was pushing through the woods and towns in the Rhineland region of West Germany. As I and my comrades were cautiously making our way through a thickly wooded area, word came that the company ahead of us had been badly shot up by the enemy and that Company I was to replace them.

When my company arrived on the scene, I was appalled by the grimness of the situation. Only a handful of wounded bleeding soldiers hiding behind a large stone house at the edge of the woods had survived. The route to Ossenburg had been completely blockaded. "God," I prayed desperately, thinking of my wife and little son back home, "You've got to do something...please do something, God!"

Moments later, the order was given to advance. Just as the soldier ahead of me took a step, something to the left caught my eye. I stopped and stared in amazement. A cloud—a long, fluffy, white cloud—had appeared instantly out of nowhere, obscuring the Germans' line of fire. Taking advantage of this miraculous turn of events, I and my fellow soldiers bolted into the clearing and ran for our lives. Safe in the sheltering woods on the other side of the clearing, my pulse pounded in my ears, I hid behind a tree and exclaimed, "This has to be God! I'm going to see what happens now."

I watched closely as the last American soldier frantically raced toward my comrades in the woods. I will never forget what happened next. The instant the soldier scrambled to safety, the cloud vanished! Just like that. Poof! It was gone.

The Germans, thinking they still had us pinned down behind the stone house on the other side of the field, radioed its position to their artillery. Minutes later, the house was blown to bits.

Two weeks later, a letter arrived from my mother back in Dallas, Texas. "Son, what in the world was the matter on the morning of March 9?" she asked. "You remember Mrs. Tankersly from our church? Well, she called me that morning and said the Lord had awakened her at one o'clock in the night and said, 'Spencer is in serious trouble. Get up now and pray for him!' Mrs. Tankersly said she interceded for you until six o'clock the next morning. She told me the last thing she prayed before getting off her knees was, 'Lord, whatever danger Spencer is in, just cover him with a cloud!'"⁸

⁸ From a photocopy of an unnamed source.
pp. 59-61

(Prayer—The Great Adventure by David Jeremiah)

DON'T LOSE HEART!

I learned many things from my professors in seminary. My all-time favorite was Howard Hendricks, the head of the department under which I studied. He is a tremendous communicator and a great man of God. He taught us much by his descriptive language and his unique way of communicating. But one of the greatest lessons I learned from Dr. Hendricks had nothing to do with the lesson of the day. I can't remember the year; I don't even know what class I was in. But he came in one day and through tears, said, "Gentlemen, I want to tell you something. My seventy-five year old father received Jesus Christ as his Savior. That might not be meaningful to you unless I tell you that for forty years, I have prayed for his salvation. And after forty years, God finally said yes."

No wonder "Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up."

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