

1 Kings 7-8 - The Prayer of Solomon (Dedication of the Temple)

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I don't know if studying through the Old Testament is fun for you and an encouragement for you, but I've been asked before what I felt were one of some of the biggest challenges to studying the Old Testament. And I have to tell you that I think probably one of the biggest things that I can think of that is a challenge is that we're dealing with the nation of Israel who is under the covenant of Moses, what we call the Mosaic Covenant.

And the covenant that God made with Israel was one that was unique to their country and to that people, and the terms of the covenant were very unique to the people of Israel. And I think one of the biggest challenges that people have when they're reading through the Old Testament is reading it and not assuming that that covenant applies. And Christians have struggled with this for many, many, many, many years, so, as long as the Christian church has been around, we've struggled.

You read through the Book of Acts, and you find that some of the biggest challenges that the apostles had to deal with, and then Paul later on in his letters was the Christian church disengaging from the Mosaic Law. And sometimes the churches would be drawn back into it, like such as in the case of the Galatian churches. And Paul had to write to them and say, what are you guys doing? You're keeping special days and seasons and years, and you believe that now circumcision is vital to your salvation, and he says, I feel like I've wasted my efforts on you.

I mean, those are the kinds of things Paul had to say to Christians who couldn't detach from the Mosaic Law. And is that something that only happened in the first century? Heavens! When's the last time - I'm willing to bet some of you maybe have come out of a church that was a Sabbath keeping church. Some of you have probably come out of that sort of a thing. Some of you might still be confused about those particular issues, and I'll bet you some of you have been asked by someone along the line at some point, do you keep the Sabbath?

And you know where they're coming from related to that. And what are you dealing with there? You're dealing with somebody who is a Christian and

believes the basic elements of the Gospel of Jesus but is not detached from the Mosaic Law. Paul says, and we actually read the verse last Sunday in our Roman study where Paul said in Romans chapter 6, we are not under Law, but under grace. And of course, we're going to talk about that this this coming Sunday, Lord willing. About what that means and all the implications and dynamics of what it means to be under grace and not under Law. But believe me, that statement right there is hugely problematic for a lot of Christians because they read the Old Testament, and they apply it.

And there's something good about the fact that we're applying the Word, but we're not applying it in wisdom. And the reason is because we're stumbling over the issues of the Mosaic Law. And that is a challenge, and we have to keep that in mind as we're going through the Scriptures. The promises that God made with Israel are mostly, at least, most of them as it relates to the Mosaic Law, are unique to Israel. And you and I can't apply them from the strict standpoint that they're going to come to the United States of America. God never said to you and I, in the United States of America, keep my Law and I'll bless you in the land. He never said that to us.

He said that to Israel. He did not say it to us. Okay? We're not under the Mosaic Law. We're not under that Covenant. When God spoke to Israel through the prophet Jeremiah, He said, the time is coming when I'm going to make a New Covenant with the house of Israel. And He said, it's not going to be like the Old Covenant. It's not going to be like the Old Covenant. Why? Because they disobeyed my Covenant. And then He began to describe how that Covenant would be unique and different from the Mosaic Covenant.

He said, I'm going to take my Law and I'm going to write it on their hearts. It's no longer going to be external to them on tablets of stone. It's going to be internal to them and the aspect of keeping the Law is no longer going to be rules and regulations. It's going to be a matter of the heart. Very, very difficult for a lot of Christians to grasp. Another big stumbling area for Christians is tithing. I mean, some people have come out of a very legalistic approach to the whole thing, and they see tithing as this requirement, this legal requirement for believers today and they say, pastor Paul, do you believe in tithing?

Well, I believe in the principle, but it's not commanded of us in the New Testament. It's interesting. In the Old Testament God commanded 10 percent from His people. Do you know what it is in the New Testament? It's a hundred. Yeah, essentially the Bible says that you've been purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ, and you are not your own, you've been bought with a price. And

by the way, he didn't just buy 10 percent of you. He bought a hundred percent of you. Now, as far as giving goes, this is the part people mess up all the time.

They're like, well, then what are we supposed to give? The Bible, in the New Testament Paul said, each man is to give according to what is in his heart to give. He's not to give under compulsion. He's not to give because it's a legalistic rule. He's not to give because somebody is putting pressure on him. He should give what God has spoken to his heart to give. That's the New Testament principle. It's being led by the Spirit not by rules and laws. That's hard for people to deal with.

Many of us would much rather just retreat to the safety of rules. It's like, just tell me what to do, and I'll do it. Give me the rules Give me the law. Give me the guidelines and I'll follow them. You know what? That's not New Testament Christianity. New Testament Christianity is to follow the leading of the Spirit. And that's why people sometimes will come to me as a pastor, and they'll want me to impose the law. And, pastor, what do you think I ought to do in this situation?

Well, my response is, well, what's the Holy Spirit telling you to do? I don't know. Tell me what to do. It's like, you know what? I suppose I could do that, but you're never going to grow as a Christian if I do. I'm not going to be your Mosaic Law, and I can't be your Holy Spirit. Each and every one of us needs to hear from God for ourselves. We need to learn to listen. And by the way, that's not easy. Have you noticed? I mean, listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to speak to your heart, it's a very, very challenging sort of a situation.

And many of us have never really kind of nurtured a listening ear for the Lord. And then we come to situations in our life where we need answers, and we haven't developed any sort of a listening heart, and suddenly, we're like, ah! I need answers. Well, many times we just go to the Law and the Law can come in different forms. Just going to somebody and saying, tell me what to do. Tell me what to do. You don't grow as a believer that way. That's why in legalistic churches, people don't grow. They never grow. They're stunted. They're like children.

Our children, how do we treat them when they're little? Do we give them rules and laws? You bet we do. Yeah. Don't go outside, it's raining. Or don't touch that. It's hot. Don't go past the end of the block, on your bicycle. But you don't treat your 21-year-old like that. Why? It's time to grow up, right? It's time to grow up. It's time to understand with the head and with the heart what the will

of the parent is, and at some point, a child needs to come to a place of understanding, and it's the same thing with the New Covenant.

The New Covenant is God taking His heart, His Law, His righteousness and writing it on your heart through His Holy Spirit. It's called growing up. And the Law, we're told, was a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ. Now we've come into a place where we need to grow up in our faith. And hopefully we've done that enough to go back now and look at the Old Testament and read the Old Testament and accept and receive from it what is important for us to receive because the Old Testament is full of wonderful, glorious examples to you and I of how to live.

And there's great lessons here, as long as we don't stumble over the issues of the Law. Because you and I are under the covenant of grace, amen? Chapter 7. Chapter 7 is in the first 12 verses a highlight of the details of Solomon building his own palace. He has already built the temple, it's interesting, but the temple actually sat for like 11 months before they occupied it and brought the Ark of the Covenant into it. But Solomon began to build his own palace, and it says that, *"Solomon (he) was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished his entire house."* (ESV)

Now, by comparison, the temple took seven years to build. So almost twice as much time Solomon spent building his own palace. You can deduce from that whatever you want, but that is the situation. Now when we say Solomon's palace, I'm not saying that Solomon took 13 years just to build his house. The living part of that palace was fairly small compared to - the palace was used for many kingly duties, like there was, we're going to see here, there was the room of judgment. There were other places where Solomon would carry out his kingly duties.

He didn't do those in the temple. He did them in his palace. And so parts of his palace's palace were beyond just living arrangements. But anyway, it tells us in verse 2 that, *"He built the House of the Forest of Lebanon..."*

Now that's not saying he built his house from the forest. He literally named this one section of it, the House of the Forest of Lebanon, and then we're told why as he goes on. It tells us, ²*"Its length was a hundred cubits and its breadth fifty cubits and its height thirty cubits, and it was built on four rows of cedar pillars, (And that's why it was called the house of the forest of Lebanon) with cedar beams on the pillars."*

Now, remember a cubit is about 18 inches, about a foot and a half. So, you can do the math on the fly if you're good at that sort of thing. We don't know exactly what the function of this first structure was, but our best guess is that it served as an armory. So again, this was not living quarters. This would be used for something else related to just the kingdom.

Verse 3, *“And it was covered with cedar above the chambers that were on the forty-five pillars, fifteen in each row. ⁴ There were window frames in three rows, and window opposite window in three tiers. ⁵ All the doorways and windows had square frames, and window was opposite window in three tiers.*

⁶ And he made (then, verse 6) the Hall of Pillars; (And this was most likely an entrance to the hall of the throne, which we'll talk about here in a moment) its length was fifty cubits, and its breadth thirty cubits. There was a porch in front with pillars, and a canopy in front of them. ⁷ And he made the Hall of the Throne where he was to pronounce judgment, even the Hall of Judgment. It was finished with cedar from floor to rafters.”

The hall of judgment is where he would hold court. Because as the king, he would hear arguments, cases people against people, and he would render judgment.

Then it says in verse 8 that, *“His own house where he was to dwell, in the other court back of the hall, was of like workmanship. Solomon also made a house like this hall for Pharaoh's daughter whom he had taken in marriage. (and) ⁹ All these were made of costly stones, cut according to measure, sawed with saws, back and front, even from the foundation to the coping, and from the outside to the great court. ¹⁰ The foundation was of costly stones, huge stones, stones of eight and ten cubits. ¹¹ And above were costly stones, cut according to measurement, and cedar.*

¹² The great court had three courses of cut stone all around, and a course of cedar beams; so had the inner court of the house of the Lord and the vestibule of the house. ¹³ And King Solomon sent and brought Hiram from Tyre. (And by the way, this is not King Hiram. This is just in fact, this man is part Jew, but he's a craftsman) ¹⁴ He was the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, (or, if you will, Phoenician) a worker in bronze. And he was full of wisdom, understanding, and skill for making any work in bronze. He came to King Solomon and did all his work.

¹⁵ He cast two pillars of bronze. (each excuse me) Eighteen cubits was the height of one pillar, and a line of twelve cubits measured its circumference. It

was hollow, and its thickness was four fingers. The second pillar was the same. ¹⁶ He also made two capitals (which would be the top of the pillar) of cast bronze to set on the tops of the pillars. The height of the one capital was five cubits, and the height of the other capital was five cubits. ¹⁷ There were lattices of checker work with wreaths of chain work for the capitals on the tops of the pillars, a lattice for the one capital and a lattice for the other capital. ¹⁸ Likewise he made pomegranates in two rows around the one latticework to cover the capital that was on the top of the pillar, and he did the same with the other capital.”

Now stop there for a minute. Some of you in your Bibles, when we got to verse 14, you might have had a heading in your Bible that said, these are the furnishings for the temple. You'll notice that the writer didn't tell you that. They've, your Bible interpreters, your Bible publishers put that in there so that you'd recognize that beginning in verse 14 we started dealing with issues for the temple, not for Solomon's palace. But you're not told that unless you read those headings in your Bible. I'm assuming you probably had one. Anyway, so this is all this decorative work that they put into the temple.

Verse 19, “Now the capitals that were on the tops of the pillars in the vestibule were of lily-work, four cubits. ²⁰ The capitals were on the two pillars and also above the rounded projection which was beside the latticework. There were two hundred pomegranates in two rows all around, and so with the other capital. ²¹ He set up the pillars at the vestibule of the temple. He set up the pillar on the south and called its name Jachin, and he set up the pillar on the north and called its name Boaz.”

Isn't that interesting? He named the pillars. But there was a specific purpose for that because of the names and what they meant. Jachin means, he shall establish, and Boaz means, in strength. So these two pillars stand for this, make this declaration. He shall establish in strength. Okay, and so it's this constant reminder. And I don't know if they wrote the names on those pillars or not, but you can tell that this is just incredible stuff. And you'll notice that we had a word in there and it's, the word was lily work. It's an interesting word.

It basically just refers to decorative stuff on the tops of those pillars and thought to be done in a lotus motif. But a lot of what, a lot of the details of what you're reading here in 1 Kings is lost without photographs. I mean, they describe it, the glory of it, and the intricacy of it is pretty much lost on us because I don't know how good you are at following these kinds of instructions. I'm horrible. You know that. I'm a picture person. It's like, you want to explain something to me? Show me a picture.

I am so glad they came up with YouTube. Everything I've ever done, like any kind of repair work. If I can find a video on YouTube, I'm okay. Somebody's showing me how to do something, but don't just tell me. So, I read through this and I'm like, it's like, doesn't mean a whole lot, but here you go. Now, this next thing that they made was really amazing. I would have loved to have seen a picture of this.

²³ *"Then he made (and this is this Hiram guy. Made) the sea of cast metal. (It's a huge bowl, if you will) It was round, ten cubits from brim to brim, and five cubits high, and a line of thirty cubits measured its circumference. ²⁴ Under its brim were gourds, for ten cubits, compassing the sea all around. The gourds were in two rows, cast with it when it was cast. ²⁵ It stood on twelve oxen, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east. The sea was set on them, and all their rear parts were inward. (So, in other words, these oxen were facing outward with this huge bowl resting on their hindquarters. Can you get this in your mind? And it says) ²⁶ Its thickness was a handbreadth, and its brim was made like the brim of a cup, like the flower of a lily. It held two thousand baths."*

And that translates to about 11,500 gallons of water. So, this is an amazing piece of architecture, which again, and I've seen drawings, but I've never actually seen, well, no one has, well, no one living has seen the real thing. Maybe somebody has come up with some re-creations, but what an amazing thing that would be to see. I mean, all cast in bronze and oh, just, and this was, by the way, used by the priest to get water to put in other wash basins so that they could wash their hands and go through the ceremonial washings that were required when they did their work as priests and so forth.

And for the, to hold that water for the individual washing areas it also says, *"²⁷ He also made the ten stands of bronze. Each stand was four cubits long, four cubits wide, and three cubits high. ²⁸ This was the construction of the stands: they had panels, and the panels were set in the frames, ²⁹ and on the panels that were set in the frames were lions, oxen, and cherubim. (or in other words, angels) On the frames, both above and below the lions and oxen, there were wreaths of beveled work. ³⁰ Moreover, each stand had four bronze wheels and axles of bronze, and at the four corners were supports for a basin. The supports were cast with wreaths at the side of each."*

³¹ Its opening was within a crown that projected upward one cubit. Its opening was round, as a pedestal is made, a cubit and a half deep. At its opening there were carvings, and its panels were square, not round. ³² And the four wheels were underneath the panels. The axles of the wheels were of one piece with the

stands, and the height of a wheel was a cubit and a half. ³³ The wheels were made like a chariot wheel; their axles, their rims, their spokes, and their hubs were all cast. ³⁴ (They were, excuse me) There were four supports at the four corners of each stand. The supports were of one piece with the stands.

³⁵ And on the top of the stand there was a round band half a cubit high; and on the top of the stand its stays and its panels were of one piece with it. ³⁶ And on the surfaces of its stays and on its panels, he carved cherubim, lions, and palm trees, according to the space of each, with wreaths all around. ³⁷ After this manner he made the ten stands. All of them were cast alike, of the same measure and the same form. ³⁸ And he made ten basins of bronze. Each basin held forty baths, each basin measured four cubits, and there was a basin for each of the ten stands. ³⁹ And he set the stands, five on the south side of the house, and five on the north side of the house. And he set the sea at the southeast corner of the house. (Now, the house is the temple)

⁴⁰ Hiram also made the pots, the shovels, and the basins. So Hiram finished all the work that he did for King Solomon on the house of the LORD: ⁴¹ the two pillars, the two bowls of the capitals that were on the tops of the pillars, and the two latticeworks to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the tops of the pillars; ⁴² and the four hundred pomegranates (and the two, excuse me) for the two latticeworks, two rows of pomegranates for each latticework, to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the pillars; ⁴³ the ten stands, and the ten basins on the stands; ⁴⁴ and the one sea, and the twelve oxen underneath the sea.

⁴⁵ Now the pots, the shovels, and the basins, all these vessels in the house of the LORD, which Hiram made for King Solomon, were of burnished bronze. ⁴⁶ In the plain of the Jordan the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zarethan. ⁴⁷ And Solomon left all the vessels unweighed, because there were so many of them; the weight of the bronze was not ascertained. (They never did figure out how much they used because there was just too much) ⁴⁸ So Solomon made all the vessels that were in the house of the LORD: the golden altar, the golden table for the bread of the Presence,

⁴⁹ the lampstands of pure gold, five on the south side and five on the north, before the inner sanctuary; the flowers, the lamps, and the tongs, of gold; ⁵⁰ the cups, snuffers, basins, dishes for incense, and fire pans, of pure gold; and the sockets of gold, for the doors of the innermost part of the house, the Most Holy Place, and for the doors of the nave of the temple. ⁵¹ Thus all the work that King Solomon did on the house of the LORD was finished. And Solomon brought

in the things that David his father had dedicated, the silver, the gold, and the vessels, and stored them in the treasuries of the house of the LORD.”

I mean, we read through the chapter and what do you get out of it? I don't know, again, how well your mental picture is able to develop an understanding, but what it tells you and I is it was incredibly ornate. And that the craftsmanship was just awe inspiring, and that's what it was meant to do, to inspire awe. Because God told Israel, My Presence will be supernaturally among you. And so, this temple was meant to just be very impressive. It wasn't huge as buildings go.

There were buildings bigger, but it was incredible. It was ornate. It was, I mean, there was so much gold and burnished bronze and silver in this thing. I mean, Oh, I can't imagine. I mean, I'm impressed looking going to Mitchell, South Dakota and going to the corn palace. I don't know if you've ever been to the corn palace. It's made, well, it's made of corn, but all the outside has corn. It's this huge thing. It's corn, kernels of corn. And the birds are slowly eating it away. Serious. Be great to be a bird, I suppose, in Mitchell, South Dakota.

You have a constant diet of corn right there. But I remember going there as a kid just going, whoa! Can you imagine seeing the temple of the Lord that Solomon had built? It was destroyed, as you know, when king Nebuchadnezzar took his army and came into the land. It's all told about in the Book of Jeremiah, which I happen to be reading right now, and they destroyed everything.

Later on, 70 years later, they began to rebuild it. And there were people who were still alive when Solomon's temple stood, who are now witnessing the next temple, or what they call Zerubbabel's temple, that was being built in its place.

And it said that when they laid the foundation, that a great cry arose among the people. Some of them were crying for joy because the temple was being rebuilt, but it also says that some of them were crying out of the pain in their heart for the new temple didn't hold a shadow to the old one, and they knew it. And they cried because of what they lost because of their disobedience. Solomon's temple was amazing.

Chapter 8 begins this way, *“Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the fathers' houses of the people of Israel, before King Solomon in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion.”*² *And all the men of Israel assembled to King Solomon at the feast in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month.”*

Now this festival would be the Feast of Booths or the Feast of Tabernacles. This was a feast in Israel's program of feasts that was meant to commemorate their journeys through the wilderness for 40 years as God kept them alive and kept them protected. And so, they would, during this festival, actually leave their homes and go out outside of the city and they would erect a booth or a tent or something temporary and live in it, stay in it, camp.

It was a camping trip. For those of you that like or dislike camping, you can appreciate that for this period of this feast, but it was all meant to commemorate their time in the wilderness, which of course, these people hadn't experienced. It had been their forefathers, but it was meant to be a reminder. And again, this dedication ceremony now is almost a full year after the temple was completed.

Verse 3, *“And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark. (Solomon did it right, having the priests carry the ark) ⁴ And they brought up the ark of the LORD, the tent of meeting...”*

And the tent of meeting is the tabernacle. Do you guys remember? Don't get confused. Tent of meeting is a term that originally described, during the wilderness wanderings, a tent where Moses would go and meet with the Lord. It was, and he called it the tent of meeting because he would go there and meet with God. This is before the tabernacle was built.

Then God told them to build the tabernacle, right? And the tent of meeting became the tabernacle. So, you read that in the Old Testament, it's easy to get confused because you'll hear that Moses met with the Lord at the tent of meeting.

And then it says suddenly they have the tabernacle built and it'll say, and they joined with the Lord in the Tent of meeting, and you think, oh, they're using that tent that Moses used. No, it's switched. But they don't tell you that. But it's switched to the tabernacle. Now, and the tabernacle was a tent. It really was a big tent. And so now they're referring to this. They're bringing all of this to the tabernacle or to the temple now. You can see they're even using some of the old language. The tent of meeting that they're taking up and bringing all of this, and all the holy vessels that were in the tent, the priests, the Levites brought them up.

Verse 5. *“And King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel, who had assembled before him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and oxen that they could not be counted or numbered. ⁶ Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place in the inner sanctuary*

of the house, (or temple) in the Most Holy Place, (your Bible may say the Holy of Holies) underneath the wings of the cherubim. ⁷ For the cherubim spread out their wings over the place of the ark, so that the cherubim overshadowed the ark and its poles.

⁸ And the poles were so long that the ends of the poles were seen from the Holy Place before the inner sanctuary; but they could not be seen from outside. (meaning outside the holy place) And they are there to this day. (So, at the time of this writing, everything was still standing) ⁹ There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone that Moses put there at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the people of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.”

Guess what? Things were missing. You remember? There were two other things that were supposed to be in the Ark. There was the jar of manna that Moses was told to gather up, and it would stay. And then there was Aaron's staff that had budded to prove that he was the one called to be the high priest. Those were missing now. They're gone. Even by this time.

Now, where did they go? Well, presumably they were taken. I mean, by this time, the Ark of the Covenant had already been stolen by the Philistines. You remember reading about that in Samuel. And so it had already gone into the hands of the Philistines. They paid dearly for their stealing it. But some of these things are missing and now there's just the tablets of the Lord that are there.

And it says in verse 10, *“And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, a cloud filled the house of the Lord, ¹¹ so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.”*

Now you'll remember that clouds are often associated with the presence of the Lord, not only in the Old Testament, but also in the New. You remember in the New, where Jesus is on the Mount of Transfiguration, remember? He's there with His, 3 of His disciples, and it says suddenly a cloud just a fog closed in and just enveloped them, and they heard a voice speaking from the cloud and so forth.

This is something that is fairly common, but this is the presence of God, the very presence of the Lord, the Shekinah Glory of the Lord that becomes so thick here in the temple that the priests can't even enter to go in and perform their functions.

¹² “Then Solomon said, “The LORD has said that he would dwell in thick darkness. ¹³ I have indeed built you an exalted house, a place for you to dwell in forever.” ¹⁴ Then the king turned around and blessed all the assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel stood. ¹⁵ And he said, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who with his hand has fulfilled what he promised with his mouth to David my father, saying, ¹⁶ ‘Since the day that I brought my people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel in which to build a house, that my name might be there. But I chose David to be over my people Israel.’

¹⁷ Now it was in the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of the Lord, the God of Israel. ¹⁸ But the LORD said to David my father, ‘Whereas it was in your heart to build a house for my name, you did well that it was in your heart. ¹⁹ Nevertheless, you shall not build the house, but your son who shall be born to you shall build the house for my name.’ ²⁰ Now the LORD has fulfilled his promise that he made. For I have risen in the place of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and I have built the house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. ²¹ And there I have provided a place for the ark, in which is the covenant of the LORD that he made with our fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt.”

²² Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven, ²³ and said, “O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to your servants who walk before you with all their heart; ²⁴ you have kept with your servant David my father what you declared to him. You spoke with your mouth, and with your hand have fulfilled it this day. ²⁵ Now therefore, O LORD, God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father what you have promised him, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your sons pay close attention to their way, (excuse me, to their walk. No, I had that right the first time. To their way) to walk before me as you have walked before me.’”

One thing I want to bring out from this, it's interesting if I can stop just for a moment, is how Solomon is praying and he's saying to God in verse 25 there. “Now, therefore, God, keep your promise.” That's an interesting statement, isn't it? It's an interesting thing to say. Is he saying it because he's concerned that God might not fulfill His promise? No. Is he saying it because God has any kind of a track record of not fulfilling His promise? No, of course not. He's saying it out of a heart and attitude of faith.

But it is, it's an important, I think God likes it when you and I declare His promises in such a way as to communicate that we are standing on them, and that is why he's saying it when he's saying to the Lord, now fulfill Your promise. He, in essence, is saying, I believe your promise. I believe that it's sure, and I believe it's going to come to pass. It's a way of declaring faith in the promises of God. I think that's something that you and I should do. I think you and I should be aware of promises in God's Word and we should stand on them and we should even speak them out in God's hearing and say, Lord, you're the one who promised this.

Now uphold your promise. I might get a little nervous when you come to me and say that, hey pastor Paul, you made a promise now uphold it. I might go and get a little, testy with you. Why? Because I don't fulfill all my promises. I can't because I don't have all power, I don't have all knowledge, and things can happen in my life that actually change my circumstances. But it never happens to God. There's nothing hindering Him ever from keeping His promise.

And so, when you and I speak His promises and declare them in such a way as to say, I'm standing on this. I just got to say, I think it pleases the Lord. I really do. I think it pleases Him. So, know His promises. Everything from promises related to forgiveness, to promises related to strength against temptation, to promises related to the last days and how God is going to bring His people through difficult times and seasons. Know those promises. Declare them in the hearing of the Lord, and so forth.

I like what Solomon goes on to say, verse 26. *“Now therefore, O God of Israel, let your word be confirmed, which you have spoken to your servant David my father.”*²⁷ *“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!*

And I'm glad Solomon said this, aren't you? Because he just built this magnificent temple. And God said, I'm going to dwell, my Name is going to dwell in this temple in a very, very special way among the Jews. But lest we think that God was restricted to this temple Solomon says here, I've built this magnificent temple - as if you could dwell in a building made by men.

How, what a ridiculous thought. David, in fact, had said this very same thing. In Psalm 139. Let me just read this for you. Okay, you guys know this. ⁷ *“Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?”* ⁸ *If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!* ⁹ *If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, (yeah)* ¹⁰ *even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.”*

What is David saying? God, you're everywhere. You can't be contained in a single place. He goes on verse 28 and he says, *"Yet have regard to the prayer of your servant and to his plea, O Lord my God, listening to the cry and to the prayer that your servant prays before you this day, ²⁹ that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you have said, 'My name shall be there,' that you may listen to the prayer that your servant offers toward this place. ³⁰ And listen to the plea of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. And listen in heaven your dwelling place, and when you hear, (look at this, when you hear what? Did he say just act? No, he's very specific. When you hear) forgive."*

Isn't that interesting? Solomon says when we pray to you, forgive us. When we talk to you. What Solomon is expressing here, and this is very important that you and I see this. The greatest need that you and I have from God above everything else is forgiveness. And that has been accomplished people through Jesus Christ on the cross. But our greatest need forever is forgiveness. Now, once we've been saved and we're forgiven for all eternity, there's still an ongoing need of cleansing, isn't there so that we will be close relationally with the Lord. People stumble over this all the time too.

It's like, well, I prayed to receive Christ as my Savior. Now, do I need to receive Him again tomorrow when I sin? No, you've been forgiven past, present, and future. So then why does the Lord tell us to pray, forgive us our debts as we forgive those who are indebted to us? Why is that necessary? Well, it's because of relationship. We all know that. When you and I have a relationship, a close relationship with someone and we violate that relationship, it puts distance between you and I, and that person. So how do we resolve and bring that relationship back together? Forgiveness. Every marriage, married couple knows this.

This is marriage 101. Right? You've got a problem with your spouse? Apologize. Get it right. You got a problem with God? Is there distance between you and God? You're saved, you're born again, you're going to heaven. But is there a distance? Pastor Paul, I just feel this distance between God and myself. Well, maybe there's some unconfessed sin that you need to take away. Have you gone to the Lord and just said, Lord, just forgive me. You're not getting saved all over again. You're restoring relationship. Okay? Very important. But forgiveness is the key.

Look what he goes on to say in verse 31. And what he's going to do here is give us the first of seven specific cases that he's going to actually petition the Lord about, but he says in verse 31, *"If a man sins against his neighbor and is made*

to take an oath and comes and swears his oath before your altar in this house, ³² then hear in heaven and act and judge your servants, condemning the guilty by bringing his conduct on his own head, and vindicating the righteous by rewarding him according to his righteousness.”

This is interesting that Solomon would pray about this one first. Again, this is the first of seven petitions, but this first one is interesting because it applies to him as the king. You guys know that as the king, he had to hear arguments where people had cases against one another, and he had to decide. He was like, he was everything from the small claims court all the way up to the Supreme court. Solomon was that in the land.

And so, the first thing he prays is, Lord, when two people have an issue against one another, and there isn't enough evidence to really, for me to determine who's at fault, who's guilty, and who's the innocent party.

And when one of those individuals, or both for that matter, comes to this temple and swears an oath and says, I am telling the truth, I swear to God. He said, Lord hear from heaven, and you judge. Because there are situations, and Solomon knew this full well, where we can't judge. We don't have enough information to judge. Even our own court system does that. We throw out cases in our court system because there's not enough evidence, or sometimes things don't even come to trial.

They'll go through this pretrial, preliminary sort of a thing, process to look at the evidence, and they come to the conclusion. I think that's, isn't that a grand jury that does that? And then they say, no, there's not enough, there's not enough evidence to even try this case. So, they throw it out. Well, what do you do? Well, here in the United States of America, we just go, whatever. But Solomon is saying, God, you judge. You judge that person. You judge the righteous and you judge the guilty and so forth. He's saying intervene.

Verse 33. Here's another one. *“When your people Israel are defeated before the enemy because they have sinned against you, and if they turn again to you and acknowledge your name and pray and plead with you in this house, ³⁴ then hear in heaven and (look at this) forgive the sin of your people Israel and bring them again to the land that you gave to their fathers.”*

This second, the third and the fourth petitions all concern experiencing defeat in battle, and this one even talks about exile or being forcibly removed from their homeland. Verse 35, and he says, *“When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against you, if they pray toward this place and*

acknowledge your name and turn from their sin, when you afflict them, ³⁶ then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel, when you teach them the good way in which they should walk, and grant rain upon your land, which you have given to your people as an inheritance.

³⁷ “If there is famine in the land, if there is pestilence or blight or mildew or locust or caterpillar, if their enemy besieges them in the land at their gates, whatever plague, whatever sickness there is, whatever prayer, whatever plea is made by any man or by all your people Israel, each knowing the affliction of his own heart and stretching out his hands toward this house, ³⁹ then hear in heaven your dwelling place and forgive and act and render to each whose heart you know, according to all his ways (for you, you only, know the hearts of all the children of mankind), ⁴⁰ that they may fear you all the days that they live in the land that you gave to our fathers.”

Now the things that Solomon lists here are several of the things that God said would come upon them if they forsook the Lord, if they stopped obeying the Covenant that He had made with them through Moses. But in each case, you'll notice that Solomon pleads for mercy. But I want you to notice when he tells God to act. Does he say, hey, listen, if your people sin, then just forgive them? He doesn't say that, does he?

Look at verse 38 again. Verse 38 says, *“whatever prayer, whatever please made by any man, by all your people, Israel, each knowing the affliction of his own heart. (Look at this, look at this) and stretching out his hands toward this house.”*

This is a, what he's describing is reaching out for God and reaching to His mercy through repentance. Solomon is very clearly saying here that when your people repent, bless them, hear from heaven, forgive their sin. Once repentance happens, that's the time when God is free to respond favorably and with great blessing and restoration. I'm not saying that God's mercy isn't operational even before we repent, because it is. But He's not free to turn around and bless and restore. Repentance is so huge, you guys. I mean, I've learned something as a pastor, as a teacher and just ministering to people.

I don't have any ability to help people with their issues until they repent. Somebody comes to me and people are always doing it bless their hearts. They bring family members, they drag family members in by their hair and they, you need to go talk to pastor Paul. Bring them in and they are totally unrepentant, and they think I've got some kind of magic. I have nothing. I have nothing to

offer except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And if they're not repentant, they're not going to be open to it. Pastor Paul, would you call my brother?

He's just really going through a time of rebellion. What do you want me to say to him? You're going to hell? Gee, that would probably make a lot of inroads. What do you want me to say to your rebellious family member? I've got nothing to say to him, until they repent. Until somebody repents of their rebellion, their hard heartedness, their stiff-necked attitude, what are you going to do? You pray for them, don't you? You pray, like we said, you pray God would make them miserable to the point where they become broken because a broken heart, a broken spirit, God will never despise that we're told in the Scriptures.

But you just try ministering to an unbroken person. It's like trying to ride an unbroken horse. You're going to get thrown off and the horse is just going to look at you laying there and just saying, try that again, buddy and I'll do worse. And it's that same attitude in people's hearts that is just like, I don't need what you are selling, Pastor. Forgiveness? What do I need forgiveness for? God? What do I need God in my life for? Forget it. I'm having a good time. Get out of my face. What are you going to say to an unrepentant person? You know what the Bible, some Bible characters would say to people who came and talked to them who are completely hard hearted and stiff necked?

They would say to them, what do we have in common? And that was an Old Testament way of saying, why are you even talking to me? I had a gal email me from England. Just saw some of our stuff on the web and she emailed me and had just started telling me all about her life. And it was horrible. So, I wrote her back and I said, well, you need Jesus. What do you know about Jesus? And her response is, well, nothing. And then went on to just talk about her problems. The more I said, well, I mean, how do you minister to somebody first of all, in England from Ontario, Oregon? So, I said, well, here's some links.

Why don't you check these out? And they're Gospel oriented. Why don't you read this stuff? Why don't you listen to this message that I taught on the Gospel and why don't you just see what the Lord. Nothing. What are you going to say? What are you going to say to somebody until they're open to hear the Gospel, to hear the message of forgiveness in Christ and restoration that comes through that forgiveness? That's why Solomon doesn't just say God, when your people mess up, just be kind, would you. Don't - just forgive them. They're idiots.

He doesn't say that. He says, God, when your people mess up and all these things happen, they get taken away by their enemies. The land begins to dry up

because there's no rain, pestilence, disease. Bugs are eating our crops in the fields before we can even harvest them. When those things happen, and when your people cry out to you with all their hearts and say, Oh God, we've sinned, then hear from heaven and restore them. That's the order it goes in. And we can't circumvent that order.

Verse 41. Let's see if we can finish the chapter here quickly. *“Likewise, when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a far country for your name's sake ⁴² (for they shall hear of your great name and your mighty hand, and of your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this house, ⁴³ hear in heaven your dwelling place and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name.*

⁴⁴ *“If your people go out to battle against their enemy, by whatever way you shall send them, and they pray to the Lord toward the city that you have chosen and the house that I have built for your name, ⁴⁵ then hear in heaven their prayer and their plea, and maintain their cause. ⁴⁶ “If they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you are angry with them and give them to an enemy, so that they are carried away captive to the land of the enemy, far off or near, (Look at this) ⁴⁷ yet if they turn their heart in the land to which they have been carried captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their captors, saying, ‘We have sinned and have acted perversely and wickedly,*

(And look at this, look at verse 48 if they repent with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies, who carried them captive, and pray to you toward their land, which you gave to their fathers, the city that you have chosen, and the house that I have built for your name, ⁴⁹ then hear in heaven your dwelling place their prayer and their plea, and maintain their cause ⁵⁰ and forgive your people who have sinned against you, and all their transgressions that they have committed against you, and grant them compassion in the sight of those who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them

⁵¹ *(for they are your people, and your heritage, which you brought out of Egypt, from the midst of the iron furnace). ⁵² Let your eyes be open to the plea of your servant and to the plea of your people Israel, giving ear to them whenever they call to you. (Why?) ⁵³ For you separated them from among all the peoples of the earth to be your heritage, as you declared through Moses your servant, when you brought our fathers out of Egypt, O LORD God.”*

⁵⁴ Now as Solomon finished offering all this prayer and plea to the Lord, he arose from before the altar of the LORD, where he had knelt with hands outstretched toward heaven. ⁵⁵ And he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice, saying, ⁵⁶ “Blessed be the LORD who has given rest to his people Israel, according to all that he promised. Not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke by Moses his servant. ⁵⁷ The LORD our God be with us, as he was with our fathers. May he not leave us or forsake us, ⁵⁸ that he may incline our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments, his statutes, and his rules, which he commanded our fathers.

⁵⁹ Let these words of mine, with which I have pleaded before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God day and night, and may he maintain the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel, as each day requires, ⁶⁰ that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no other. ⁶¹ Let your heart therefore be wholly true to the LORD our God, walking in his statutes and keeping his commandments, as at this day.” ⁶² Then the king, and all Israel with him, offered sacrifice before the LORD.”

We’re told in the following verses they offered so many that they couldn't even get them all offered on the bronze altars, and they had to bring in some other offering altars.

Skip down to verse 65. “So Solomon held the feast at that time, and all Israel with him, a great assembly, from Lebo-hamath to the Brook of Egypt, before the LORD our God, seven days. ⁶⁶ On the eighth day he sent the people away, and they blessed the king and went to their homes joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the LORD had shown to David his servant and to Israel his people.”