

God and Prayer

(1 Kings 3:5-14)

INTRODUCTION:

1. In our auditorium class the other Wednesday we looked at 1 Kings 3 where God blessed king Solomon with great wisdom.
2. Within that event there were **three** significant elements.
 - A. The **first** is God's appearance to Solomon in a dream **appealing** to him to **ask of God** whatever he wished (3:5).
 - B. The **second** is **Solomon's prayerful response** to God's offer (3:6-9).
 - C. The **third** element is **God's response** to Solomon's prayer (3:10-14).
3. I want to talk about this event and these three elements because of what they can teach us about God and the interaction we have with Him in prayer.
 - A. Learning these things is important because they will help us pray.
 - B. And since prayer is a vital part of the Christian's life, improving our **prayer life** should be something we are all eager to do.
 - C. So, let's consider what we can learn from these three elements.

BODY:

- I. **The true incentive to prayer: God's generosity (1 Kgs. 3:5** – "In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night; and God said, 'Ask what you wish Me to give you.'").
 - A. God **sought Solomon's prayers**, God asking for Solomon to **communicate** his **desires** to Him, based on God's own **generosity**: "**Ask what you wish Me to give you.**"
 1. God **wants to bless** Solomon. God is offering great blessings simply for the **asking!**
 2. What an amazing and **valuable** offer this was to a young king burdened with leading God's people.
 - B. God makes the same offer to us today.
 1. God pleads with us, His people, to ask him for blessings!
 - a. Consider Jesus' exhortation (Matt. 7:7-11 – "**Ask**, and it will be **given to you**; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who **asks receives**, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ⁹ Or what man is there among you who, when his son **asks** for a loaf, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he **asks** for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? ¹¹ If you then, being evil, know how **to give good gifts** to your children, **how much more** will your Father who is in heaven **give what is good to those who ask Him!**").
 - b. Consider James' promise to those facing life's struggles (Jas. 1:5 – "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him **ask of God**, who **gives to all generously** and without reproach, and **it will be given to him.**").
 2. God is using his **generosity** to **lure** us to pray!
 - a. He tells us that if we know how to **give good gifts** to our children when they **ask**, **how much more** and **generously** will He give to His children who **ask!**
 - b. It is so important that we believe God and respond, that we **ask**, because He is **the source** of all that is good (Jas. 1:17 – "Every **good thing given** and every **perfect gift** is from above, coming down **from the Father** of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.").
 - c. We really need to think about what this says about God and how He feels about His people, about you as one of his children!
 3. So, I encourage you to think on God who pleads with you to seek His blessings in prayer that He might lavish His great gifts upon you...and then **ASK!**
- II. **The true foundation of prayer: God's faithfulness (1 Kgs. 3:6-8** – "Then Solomon said, "You have **shown great lovingkindness to Your servant David** my father, according as he walked before You in truth and righteousness and uprightness of heart toward You; and **You have reserved for him this great lovingkindness**, that You have **given him a son to sit on his throne**, as it is this day. ⁷

Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king in place of my father David, yet I am but a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. ⁸ Your servant is in the midst of Your people which You have chosen, a **great people who are too many to be numbered or counted.**")

A. Solomon began his prayer with the **past**, with what the **Lord had done** (3:6-8).

1. He does not begin with a request despite God appealing to him to ask.
2. Instead, Solomon prefaces his request by recounting God's loving and faithful acts.
 - a. He recounts God's **lovingkindness** shown to David his father as he walked before God in truth, righteousness, and uprightness of heart (3:6a).
 - b. He recounts the Lord's **faithfulness** to His promise to David (2 Sam. 7) witnessed in putting Solomon, David's son, on his throne (3:6b-7).
 - c. He alludes to God's **fulfillment of His promise** to Abraham (Gen. 13:16) seen in Israel being "too many to be numbered or counted" (3:8).

B. Praising God by recounting His faithful acts is **good**.

1. We see it in the song of Moses (Ex. 15:9-13 – "The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; My desire shall be gratified against them; I will draw out my sword, my hand will destroy them.' ¹⁰ **You blew with Your wind, the sea covered them; They sank like lead in the mighty waters.** ¹¹ **Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?** ¹² **You stretched out Your right hand, The earth swallowed them.** ¹³ "In **Your lovingkindness** You have **led the people** whom You have **redeemed**; In Your strength **You have guided them** to Your holy habitation.").
2. But some might ask, "Why tell the all-knowing God what He already knows?"
 - a. The question misses the point of praise and worship.
3. We are to do this for our benefit, not God's!
 - a. When we praise God for His enduring faithfulness, **we are encouraged.**
 - b. When we rehearse God's **faithful acts**, we are **reminded** and **reassured.**
4. I think we forget to do this because we tend to **take God's faithfulness for granted.**
 - a. We do this because faithfulness is something that is not truly appreciated until it is gone!
 - b. Ex.: Consider our cars.
 - i. We take for granted our car's faithfulness to start and take us where we want to go.
 - ii. For, how many here woke up thinking, "Boy, I am so thankful my car started yesterday, the day before, and will start today"?
 - iii. We take faithfulness for granted...**until it is gone.**
 - iv. **Then** we think we should have remembered to do this maintenance or that.
 - c. This is why recounting the faithful acts of God in our prayers and worship is so valuable.
 - i. It keeps us aware of what God has done and is doing, and what that requires of us.
 - ii. That way, when that need for God's faithfulness is thrust to the forefront of our lives, we will have been living in such a way that it is there and we can lean on it!
 - d. So, like Solomon, we need to be conscious of God's **enduring faithfulness** and make it our habit to recite examples of this in praise to Him!

III. The true anxiety of prayer: the wellbeing of God's people (3:7-9 – "Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king in place of my father David, yet I am but a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. ⁸ Your servant is in the midst of Your people which You have chosen, a great people who are too many to be numbered or counted. ⁹ So give Your servant an **understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil. For **who is able to judge this great people of Yours?**")**

A. Talking of the **true/proper anxiety** of prayer may seem strange because Jesus tells us not to be anxious, or worried, for our lives (Matt. 6:25 – "For this reason I say to you, do not be worried **about your life**, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for **your body**, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?").

1. But I do not think this means that there are no holy anxieties, no godly concerns, to be expressed to God in prayer.
 2. For, alleviation of anxiety comes by expressing them to God (1 Pet. 5:6-7 – “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, **that He may exalt you** at the proper time, ⁷ **casting all your anxiety on Him**, because He cares for you.”).
- B. Expressing his godly anxieties is exactly what Solomon did in his prayer to the Lord.
1. He expressed his anxieties concerning the magnitude of ruling **God’s people** (3:7-8).
 - a. For, he acknowledged his youth and, therefore, his lack of experience and wisdom (3:7 – “...I am but a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in”).
 - b. He acknowledged the concern for his great responsibility in being king over God’s chosen people that were too numerous to count (3:8).
 2. Because of these anxieties, Solomon sought an **understanding heart**, or wisdom, from God to lead God’s people (3:9 – “So give Your servant an **understanding heart** to **judge Your people** to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of **Yours?**”).
 - a. Solomon’s **anxiety** for the **welfare of God’s people** guided his prayer.
 - b. This shows that there is a **godly anxiety**, one that does not express lack of trust in God, but instead expresses:
 - i. Fearful and watchful concern for the **wellbeing of God’s people**.
 - ii. Our **dependance of God** to fulfill the role we must play in ensuring that wellbeing.
 3. So, like Solomon, whether it be the elders, deacons, or each of us as members of this congregation and the body of Christ, we need to be **keenly aware of the challenges** before us and **express our anxieties** these bring upon us to God that we might **gain His blessings** of strength and wisdom to succeed in helping each one of us get to heaven!

IV. The true goal of prayer: to please God (3:10-14 – “It was **pleasing** in the sight of the Lord **that Solomon had asked this thing**.¹¹ God said to him, “Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice,¹² behold, **I have done according to your words**. Behold, **I have given you a wise and discerning heart**, so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you.¹³ **I have also given you what you have not asked**, both **riches** and **honor**, so that there will not be any among the kings like you all your days.¹⁴ If you walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and commandments, as your father David walked, then I will prolong your days.”).

- A. The writer tells of **God’s pleasure first**, then of God’s expression of that pleasure to Solomon (3:10).
1. That God was **pleased** should matter to us because we gain a lot of pleasure when we please those that we truly care about.
 2. It reminds me of something as simple as my father at the dinner table declaring to my mother before all who were there, “That was a good meal!”
 - a. Now there were times that I felt the meal was not so good, and in some cases bad.
 - b. But that was not the point. For, it was my father’s intention to bring **joy** to my mother by letting her know that **he was pleased**—that he **appreciated her efforts**.
- B. I want to suggest to you that **verse 10** presents to us the **righteous and true goal** of our prayers—**to please God!**
1. So many today have completely missed this point/principle and have been led astray in their efforts to approach God.
 - a. We hear so much about how worship must cater to **felt needs** of the **worshipper**.
 - b. But that wrongly directs the focus, the goal, of worship!
 - c. The central goal of worship, including the prayers we speak, is to **please God**, the only and true audience of spiritual worship.

2. So, like Solomon, our prayers (and worship) are not to be about **pleasing self**, but about **pleasing God** and seeking **His help** to carry out **His will** in our lives for **His glory!**
- C. I encourage you to seek to please God in your prayers and in all that you do because **God's blessings will follow** (3:11-14).
 1. For, God gave him the understanding heart, or wisdom, that he sought...and which he promises us (Jas. 1:17).
 2. And, because Solomon pleased God by his prayer, God gave him more good gifts, which God also promises to us His children today (Matt. 7:7-11).
 3. God offered **life** to Solomon **if he would be faithful**, which God offers us as well (Jn. 3:36).

CONCLUSION:

1. I hope you have been encouraged today to focus more on your prayer life in 2024 so that God's blessings will flow freely in your life.
 - A. For, God pleads with you and seeks to lure you by His generosity to **ask** of Him what you wish that He might bless you!
 - B. So, I hope you will follow Solomon's example and seek out God's blessing in prayer by:
 - i. **Recounting His great acts of faithfulness** that He might be praised and you might be reminded and encouraged.
 - ii. **Communicating your desires** to him that He might bless you in your service to him, solidifying your relationship with Him and the hope it brings to you.
2. Of course, the promise of God's blessings to those that ask is open to those who are His children, to those who are living faithfully to Him through Jesus Christ.
 - A. So, if you understand the value of this blessing and want it in your life, the invitation is offered to you to come to Jesus now in F-R-C-Bp that you might be saved and raised up in hope of eternal life and as a child of God ready to receive the bountiful blessings of God!
 - B. Of course, if you are a Christian but have not lived faithfully, God invites you to return to Him, repenting of your sins, and seeking out his grace in prayer for forgiveness so that your relationship might be restored and His great blessings returned to your life!
 - C. Will you come today?