

**Title:** Four Principles of Prayer

**Scripture:** 1 Kings 3

**Series:** The Eternal Kingdom

1. Introduction:

- a. Our previous chapter explored the question: Can God's Kingdom be established? Through Solomon's reign as king, we saw a prophetic glimpse of how David's greatest Son, Jesus Christ, will one day establish the perfect kingdom that the saints long for.
- b. Today, we'll see how prayer plays a role in establishing the Kingdom. Solomon's prayer teaches believers about praying in a godly manner.

2. Verses 1-3: The State of God's People

- a. Scholars debate verse 1, questioning whether it portrays Solomon positively or negatively. Is his marriage to Pharaoh's daughter a sign of Israel's newfound honor among nations, or the start of unfaithfulness by marrying a foreign wife? Or both? But I believe that the Bible is clear on this point.
  - i. **1 Kings 11:1-2** Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, (2) from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the people of Israel, "You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love.

b. Furthermore, are verses 2 and 3 excuses for using high places, or do they simply refer to an incomplete state until the temple is finished? We know that **Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father, only he sacrificed and made offerings at the high places.**

i. Verses 1-3 show that if left unchecked, small sins can grow into major sins against God and cause significant harm to us and God's people. This chapter highlights Solomon's great love for the Lord and the start of his downfall. Today, we will study and learn from Solomon's love for God and His people. We will examine his downfall in later chapters.

### 3. Verses 4-15: Four Godly Principles of Prayer

a. God's invitation to Solomon sets the theme of this chapter: "**Ask what I should give you**" (v.5). Solomon asked for wisdom, and God was pleased with his request. Therefore, these verses reveal four principles that please God in prayer.

i. Prayer is motivated by God's generosity (vv. 5b, 13-14)

1. God appears to Solomon in a dream in response to his worship (vv. 4-5a) with an open-ended offer: "**Ask what I should give you**" (v. 5b). Here, we see God as the generous source of covenant blessings.
2. We learn that even though we are not kings and don't have Solomon's responsibilities,

we come to the same generous and lavish God as Solomon.

- a. It is to God's people today that His wisdom is offered. **James 1:5** If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.
  - i. Beloved, we are to ask the giving God, who gives to all His people **generously**.
- b. The same God we see in 1 Kings 3, who tells Solomon to ask, is the God who answers our prayers.
  - i. **Matthew 7:11** If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!
  - c. Beloved, God's willingness and generosity should draw the believer to prayer.
- ii. Prayer is rooted in God's faithfulness (vv. 6-7a, 8)
  1. Beloved, notice where Solomon begins. He does not start by asking.
  2. He begins with the past, with what God has done: **“You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father** (v.6a).
    - a. In verses 6-7a, Solomon recounts God's faithfulness to His more recent

promise, the Davidic covenant of 2 Samuel 7. Solomon, David's son, reigns.

b. In verse 8, Solomon references God's fidelity to his more ancient promise to Abraham (1,000 years earlier). This is clear in his reference to **a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude**. God had promised Abraham his seed would be as uncountable as the earth's dust or the sea's sand (Gen. 13:16).

i. And Solomon now declares that God has done it. Old promises or new promises - God has kept them all!

3. Solomon's prayer proclaims God's fidelity and begins by praising God's dependability.

a. It is good for God's people to praise Him. Praise helps in prayer because it reminds us of God's faithfulness and generosity, encouraging us as we pray.

i. Beloved, praise for promises fulfilled becomes the basis of our confidence in current prayer.

iii. Prayer is concerned with God's people (vv 7b-9)

1. God's word, '**Ask what I should give you**' (v. 5), is both a generous invitation and a test of the heart. The response to such an invitation reveals much about a person. Solomon's answer showed his heart.

- a. The text tells us the thinking behind Solomon's request. Solomon cites his own need (**'I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in** v. 7b. I am inexperienced in leadership), and yet he had this huge responsibility (**to rule God's chosen and vast and innumerable people**, vv. 8b, 9b) and so he prays: **Give your servant, therefore, an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil** (v. 9a).
- b. Beloved, Solomon's prayer focuses on the welfare of God's people, not on enhancing his own life. He asks, "How can I make God's people secure?" The king is a model, showing that we should prioritize benefiting God's people over personal success. Solomon's concern for God's people guides his prayer.
- c. Doesn't this text challenge us, too? Though I'm not a king, shouldn't I pray with the same holy concern and watchful love for the welfare of God's people? Should we not pray with one eye open for their well-being? This could include interceding for the strength and deliverance of Christ's suffering followers worldwide, who

endure persecution and even death for their faith.

d. Like Solomon, pastors, parents, and grandparents in the church also need to pray for an **understanding mind** to lead wisely among the part of God's people we serve.

iv. Prayer aims to please God (vv. 10-14)

1. **It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this** (v. 10).

a. The writer tells of God's **pleasure**, and then God expresses his pleasure to Solomon and gives him both what he asked (vv. 11-12) and what he did not ask (v. 13).

2. Beloved, our text teaches us the true goal of our praying. **It is to please God!** In fact, should this not be the intent of all our worship, private or public?

a. **2 Corinthians 5:9** So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

b. **Ephesians 5:10** and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.

4. Verses 16-28: The Divine Response to Godly Prayer:

a. These verses stand in close relation to verses 4-15. Solomon had asked for **an understanding mind to govern God's people** (v. 9); God had said he had granted Solomon's petition (v. 12); Here, we see the

evidence that God had indeed given the king wisdom and discernment.

- b. Two prostitutes come to Solomon with a case. The fact that he heard these women demonstrates that God's wisdom and love are always extended to sinners. One woman presents her story. According to her, both women gave birth three days apart while staying together in the same house. They were alone with no other witnesses. The accuser claims that the other woman's baby died at night, smothered accidentally. The accused then swapped her dead baby for the accuser's living child while she slept, insisting the living child was hers (vv. 19-20). Solomon must judge the situation without the help of witnesses or DNA exams.
- c. What is Solomon to do? Solomon briefly summarizes the claims and counter-claims (v. 23) and then called for a sword and ordered the living infant bisected (cut in half) and that half of the child be given to each woman (v. 25). The gasps in the palace as all heard this decree must have been tremendous. However, Solomon's command wasn't to harm the child but to uncover the truth. The order deeply affected the real mother, who insisted the other woman take the living baby. If she couldn't have justice, she would at least save her child's life (v. 26a). This outcome was Solomon's plan.
  - i. Solomon gave the child to the true mother, and the accused woman was arrested.
- d. Israel was impressed. **When all Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered, they stood in**

**awe of the king because they perceived that God's wisdom was in him to do justice.**

i. We read previously: **Give your servant, therefore, an understanding mind to govern your people, so that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this, your great people?"**

1. God had granted Solomon's request; he had assured Solomon **behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind.**

2. In the prostitutes' case, Israel saw obvious proof that the '**wisdom of God**' (v. 28) was in His anointed.

e. Beloved, there is much here for us to learn. If we ask for the things that please God, those that are according to His will, God will give them!

i. **1 John 3:22** and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.

ii. **James 4:3** You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

f. Beloved, let's approach God as His people, applying these four principles: 1) Prayer is motivated by God's generosity, 2) Prayer is rooted in God's faithfulness, 3) Prayer is concerned with God's people, and 4) Prayer aims to please God. After praying this way, clearing our hearts of doubt and sin, let's receive His blessings.

5. Conclusion: One greater than Solomon has already come and is coming again.



- a. Like David, Solomon points beyond himself. The vocabulary of 1 Kings 3 recurs again in describing the coming Davidic king.
- i. **Isaiah 11:2-4** And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. (3) And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, (4) but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
- b. To any unbeliever who might be present today, I pray that God's wisdom will not be shunned by you today. Christ said of himself:
- i. **Matthew 12:41-42** The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. (42) The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.
  - ii. God's wisdom leads us to salvation.
    1. **2 Timothy 3:15** and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred

writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

2. **Proverbs 1:7** The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

6. Benediction:

- a. **Proverbs 9:10** The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

**Public Reading of Scripture**  
**Proverbs 2:1-8**