

ESF Lord's day service message
5/15/2016

A Prayer That Pleases God
1 Kings 3:3-14

³ *Solomon showed his love for the LORD by walking according to the statutes of his father David, except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places. ⁴ The king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices, for that was the most important high place, and Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. ⁵ At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."*

⁶ *Solomon answered, "You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day.*

⁷ *"Now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. ⁸ Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. ⁹ So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?"*

¹⁰ *The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. ¹¹ So God said to him, "Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, ¹² I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. ¹³ Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both riches and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. ¹⁴ And if you walk in my ways and obey my statutes and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life."*

Jesus has given us a blessed promise: “*Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well*” (Matthew 6:33). Can this promise be achieved in our lives today? Absolutely!

Through the example of Solomon’s prayer and how God blessed Solomon through his prayer, God shows us a clearly how this promise can be achieved in our lives. Solomon’s prayer pleased God, and God fulfilled this promise for Solomon. Let’s see how Solomon prayed a prayer that pleased God.

A prayer of a humble person

God is pleased with prayer of a humble person. Here is the promise of God regarding His blessing on a prayer of a humble person: *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* (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Then how can we humble ourselves before God? In Solomon’s prayer, we can learn how to humble ourselves before God in our prayers.

1). A humble person always recognizes sinfulness and weakness before God.

Although Solomon became king, he confessed before the Lord that he was just a child. Physically he was not a child but an adult. So, what he meant by his confession, “*I am only a little child*” is that he was still an immature person, a weak person, a sinful man who constantly needed God’s forgiveness and help. By saying so, he confessed, “God! Without your merciful forgiveness and help, I wouldn’t know how to overcome my weakness and sinfulness. Without your help I would fall like a mere child. Without you, my wisdom and my power wouldn’t accomplish anything righteous.”

As the king of a powerful nation established by his father, David, he could be proud of himself. He could claim that he was a king who had

power, honor and glory. But he did not claim any of these things. He did not try to lift up his name in glory. Instead, he lifted up God's glory and God's name in his prayer. He completely depended on God's mercy. When he prayed with such a humble heart, God was pleased with his prayer.

Are you seeking God's mercy and grace all the time? If you do not seek His mercy and grace, it is evidence of pride. Living life without prayer means that you rely upon yourself more than you rely upon God. To humble yourself before God, you must always acknowledge your weakness and seek God's wisdom and strength.

2). A humble person always gives thanks to God for His grace.

When Solomon became king, he did not compare himself with other princes. He expressed neither his superiority or inferiority to others. He just gave thanks to God for making him king: *O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David.* (1 Chronicles 22: 9). And God was pleased with his prayer.

Do you compare yourself with others? Do you feel superior to others and look down upon others? On the other hand, are you depressed because you feel inferior to others? God created every person unique. God has His purpose in every person's life. Just as your life is precious so is every other person's life in God's view regardless of that person's human condition. So comparing yourself with others and feel either superior or inferior to others is rejecting God's purpose in your life and other people's lives. To humble yourself before God, you must stop comparing yourself with others. Be thankful to God for who you are and treat every person with respect and love as a human being of God's precious purpose.

A prayer which honors God as the King of all kings

A prayer that pleases God is a prayer which honors God as the King of all kings. God created the universe and human beings to receive honor

and glory from them. The main purpose of his creation is to be honored as the Lord of lords and the King of all kings.

How can we honor God as the king of all kings in our prayer?

First of all, we must know that prayer is not just verbal communication with God. Prayer is more than talking with God. True prayer includes demonstrating our faith and our love for God by our lives. Through the expression of our love for God by our lives, we acknowledge who God really is. If we love God and acknowledge that God is the King of all kings in our lives, our lives will demonstrate it.

That is what Solomon's life did. The reason his prayer was able to please God was because he lived his life according to God's word and offered himself as a living sacrifice to God. *Solomon showed his love for the LORD by walking according to the statutes of his father David, ...The king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices, for that was the most important high place, and Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.*

Solomon was praying a genuine prayer to God through his life. He honored God as the King of all kings not only by his verbal confession but also his life which demonstrated his love for God. And God was pleased with his prayer.

Sometimes you may wonder why God listens to some people's prayer while he is not listening to your prayer. Then you may have to check your heart by asking questions like these: "Lord, do I really love you? Do I love you with all my heart? Is there any evidence in my life that I love you with all my heart? Do I pray to you only by my mouth or do I demonstrate my love for you through my life?"

If you pray a prayer like that, the Spirit of the Lord will convict you, so that you will be able to see the condition of your heart. And if you are

not loving him with all your heart, the Spirit will help you to love him with all your heart and to demonstrate it through your life.

In a large metropolitan hospital there was a surgeon who insisted upon having a moment alone before entering the operating room. Because of his great skill many of the younger doctors wondered if there might be a relation between his success and this unusual habit. When some of the interns put the question to the surgeon, he answered, "Yes, there is a relationship, a very close one. Before each operation I ask the great Surgeon to be with me, to guide my hands. There have been times when I didn't know what to do next, and then came the power to go on-power which I know comes from God. I would not think of performing an operation without asking God's help."

The surgeon honored God as the great Surgeon. He honored God as the Doctor of all doctors. And God always gave him wisdom and skill he needed.

If you seek God's help in all circumstances, even in a situation you think you can handle by yourself, you honor God as the King. If you give glory to God when people praise you for what you do or have, you honor God as the King.

In whatever you do, focus on how you can glorify God. When you seek God's glory in all circumstances and pray to seek God's glory, God is pleased with your prayer. Then He will provide you with the best blessings.

A prayer which seeks wisdom and gifts to take care of people

In today's world, what many people are seeking first in their prayers is money, power, or health. Of course these are important things. Seeking these things in our prayers is not sin.

But to please God through our prayers, these things should not be the first things we seek. To please God through our prayers, we must seek God's wisdom and the gift to take care of people. This is a practical way to seek God's kingdom and righteousness first.

This is what Solomon did in his prayer: *Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong... (verses 8-9).*

As God was pleased with this prayer, God gave Solomon not only what he asked for but also all the other blessings Solomon didn't ask for but needed for his personal life: *"The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. So God said to him, ...I will do what you have asked. ...Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both riches and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings."*

The last word Jesus gave to Peter was *"If you love me, take care of my sheep, feed my lambs"* (John 21:15-17). Loving the Lord in the way the Lord wants us to love him is to take care of His flock, His people.

After receiving this word from the Lord, the word became the purpose of Peter's life and ministry. And the Lord granted him marvelous blessings—spiritual authority and power. Through his preaching, the Spirit saved several thousands of souls in one day (Acts 2:14-41). Through his ministry, the Lord healed a crippled man and a paralytic (Acts 3:1-8, 9:32-35), and raised a dead woman from the dead (Acts 9:36-42).

And so he encouraged all believers, especially leaders of the church, to follow his example of taking care of God's flock. He says in 1 Peter 5:1-4, *¹To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, ...²Be shepherds of God's flock ...not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; ³not*

lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.
⁴And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. If we pray to gain wisdom, power and the gift to take care of God's people, God is pleased with our prayer.

There was a quiet, little man, a vender of fruits and vegetables, who passed the same house everyday on a street. He always looked happy and joyful. One day the house owner found a small notebook near the spot where the vender's wagon had passed. So he picked up the notebook and took a look at the inside of it. He was much surprised to find these words: "For His body's sake, which is the church."

Throughout the notebook were Scriptural quotations and many notations like these: "The following were absent from Bible School last Sunday, be sure to visit them." "Ask about the sick baby." "Leave fruit for the blind lady." "Speak a word of cheer to the old crippled man." "Invite the new family to church services."

Then next day, the man who had found the notebook handed it to the street vender asking, "I wonder if you dropped this yesterday?" "Yes, indeed," was the vender's answer. "It is my book of reminders as I call it. I thank you." The man told the vender, "I have glanced at the contents and I was surprised at their unusual character." "Well," the vender replied, pointing to the first page text "this is my motive, my reason, for doing things, 'for His body's sake, which is the church'." Then an illuminating smile he added, "You see, it keeps my soul out of the dust."

God will give us resources, the power, the gifts and the fruits of the Spirit with which we can take good care of others. While we use them to take care of people, God makes our lives abundantly blessed too. Even if we are not seeking blessings for our own selves, God will pour abundant blessings to us. Do you want to receive marvelous blessings from God through your prayer life? Pray a prayer to lead the lost souls to Christ. Pray a prayer to take care of the Lord's flock. Seek wisdom and power and gifts of the Spirit to do so.