



## *Solomon's Blessing*

**Study Scripture: 1 Kings 8: 54 – 61**

**Background Scripture: 1 Kings 8**

**Lesson 8     January 25, 2020**

### **Key Verse**

*The LORD our God be with us, as he was with our fathers: let him not leave us, nor forsake us: That he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk **in all** his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments, which he commanded our fathers.*

(1 Kings 8: 57 & 58)

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Lesson Study looks again at what Solomon was doing at this very important point in the celebrations surrounding the establishment of the Temple. This is the spiritual finale. It is therefore important for us to examine in some detail what he was doing and why, as well as what his words in this Blessing meant for Israel and for us. His posture as he addressed God is significant and so we will look at the words that are used to describe what was happening and what he really meant.

It is to be noted that both prayer and supplication are mentioned and it is important to pay attention to the fact that both actions in prayer and supplication are closely related actions and are very interconnected for both involve a call for help from God and there is accordingly a spirit of reverence and a recognition that God is sovereign.

We therefore define prayer as a sincere thanksgiving and a request made to God. But supplication which is mentioned about 60 times in the Bible is a rather distinct kind of prayer which means “to plead humbly” stressing our firm belief in God and trusting Him for an answer to our genuine and heartfelt prayers.

We have extremely important needs and so we are therefore instructed to perform a prayer of supplication for health and for the sick. We therefore are told to practice supplication as one writer says:

**“rather than surrender to our anxiety and fear. Christians can use the supplication as a means of praising God and casting worries upon Him releasing them from our hearts and minds”.**

When we therefore perform our acts of supplication we wisely ask God for specific things like wisdom, strength, health, and love to enrich our lives. In this we must be really authentic, for we are dealing with issues that affect the wellsprings of our life.

So we see Solomon engaging in a particular kind of prayer as mentioned in James 5:13-16. Verses in the New Testament therefore include the concept of supplication in Hebrews 4:16 which refer to our attitudes as we confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and grace in time of need. 1 Peter 5:7, Philippians 4:6-7, Thessalonians 5:17-18 as well as James 5:16 also guide us.

It is therefore extremely important for us to follow Solomon's example as this wisest of men teaches us how to improve our spiritual life. It is therefore important that we not be casual in how we approach God

In this approach by Solomon in his blessing he uses words that have a precise meaning. For example, he calls on God to bring “*rest*” to His people. The dictionary notes that **Rest** is freedom from work toil, strain, mental exertion. But it also means freedom from whatever bothers you or disturbs you so that you remain refreshed. God's rest is not only physical but also means that one is settled, and secured and remains confident as a person leans on God. There is therefore a significant reduction in nervousness, being tense, and experiencing many physical and mental problems as one is active in the affairs of life. What Solomon is saying is reflected in one well regarded and famous hymn by Frances Havergal who translates this idea of “Rest” into the life of the believer as follows:

**“Like a river glorious, is God's perfect peace,  
Over all victorious, is its bright increase;  
Perfect yet it floweth, fuller every day,  
Perfect, yet it groweth, deeper all the way.**

**Refrain**

**Stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blest  
Finding, as He promised, perfect peace and Rest.**

**Hidden in the hollow of His blessed hand,  
Never foe can follow, never traitor stand,  
Not a surge of worry, not a shade of care,  
Not a blast of hurry touch the spirit there.**

**Refrain**

**Every joy or trial falleth from above,  
Traced upon our dial by the Sun of Love;  
We may trust Him fully all for us to do.  
They would trust Him wholly find Him wholly true.**

Connected to this idea is that of “inclining the heart to God”. The Greek means “**to cause to bend , rest, recline, make to yield**”.

Another refers to the meaning

**“to tip one way”.**

Another **“to desire”.**

Many verses refer to requests to God to **“incline”** His ears to save us. See Psalm 71:2; 86:1; 88:2; 119:36; 141:4; Proverbs 22:17 and many other verses.

Texts teach us that we however should incline our ears. Texts like Jeremiah 7:24, 26; 11:8; 17:23; 35: 15 and many other texts show that Israel often were not inclining their ears to God and that prophet laid the blame for the destruction of the Temple and the exile of Israel to the people **“not inclining”** of the ears to God.

Closely connected to this of course is the fact that when the heart and the ears are **“inclined”** there will be obedience to the commandments, statutes, ordinances, and judgments of God. There is a difference in these words.

The commandments are from the Hebrew word Mitsvah and its root

**“Tsavah means “to lay a charge upon” “to command”, “to charge”, “to give orders”, or “to appoint”.**

They are prescriptions or directions from God which He wanted observed. They were Yahweh's charges. They were obligations something to be watched over, preserved, and observed. They are numerous and though independent of each other they are closely connected. In the case of the 10 Commandments or more properly called 10 Words they are really the reduced commands to comprehensive precepts of permanent validity. Every duty required of God from man is based on these. Everyone in Israel appreciated that these commandments were a privilege rather than a simple requirements to control man to bring about external obedience based on duty. So Israel knew that the 10 Words could be reduced to two, these two to one principle, the principle being love.

With respect to the word **“Judgment”** this comes from the Hebrew word **“Mishpat”**. Strong's concordance states:

**Mishpat is the Hebrew word meaning the process of deciding, a decision in law, justice, ordinance, the legal right or privilege due. In modern terms, over understanding would be that the judgments being referred to tell us how to handle situations according to Yahweh. For example, when adultery was committed, we were given a process to follow in order to handle things God's way. When an animal is injured while under the care of another, we were given instructions as to what type of retribution was owed, etc. when we take mishpat back to its roots, shaphat (H8199), we are able to confirm this understanding. Shaphat means to judge, to govern, and vindicate, punish, to rule, or decide controversy. Yahweh provided us the method by which just and right rulings could be made to best govern His People. The same understanding is applied when Yahweh brought judgments upon His people and other nations. He has set up a process to follow and appropriate consequences for each situation, just as we do today. By following His judgments, the innocent or**

vindicated and the guilty are responsible for the appropriate restitution afforded to the wronged party. There is a clear difference between a commandment (or charge to be followed and observed) and a judgment (the way to handle situations between His people.

### **Statutes**

**Hebrew word: Choq**

**Strong's H2708**

**The word often translated as “statute” is choq in Hebrew. Choq is a statute (a condition or civil enactment from God, an ordinance (enactment or decree), a limit, or something prescribed (a task, portion, limit/boundary). Another word that could be used to define choq is a requirement.....**

**A Statute is a civil degree or enactment from our Creator, something prescribed for us to do, or a boundary set. As an example of what this means, we are instructed not to kindle a fire on the Sabbath. This is a boundary, or limit set on what we cannot do. Other examples would include what we cannot do while unclean or what a woman can or cannot do during her menstrual cycle. These are specific decrees. They sound like commands, orders being given right? We would agree, they are! It understanding that all statutes are a type of command, but not all commands are statutes. For example, the 10 Commandments are like chapters in a book, a high-level view of what we cannot do pertaining to different areas. Within each chapter (command) we find further instruction on what obeying that commandment looks like.**

We should therefore note carefully the complete nature of what God has told us to do and to observe. He has given us detailed instructions. In our life today we can therefore consider carefully what God wants from us.

Most importantly, we are warned by Solomon that the sovereign God has laid out all kind of instruction and how we should go about observing them. No one has the right therefore to create their own Commandments or their own processes or Statutes when they are in charge of the people of God.

Reading the words of Solomon therefore provide immensely useful teachings for all levels.

This Lesson with the blessing of Solomon therefore is much more important and not as simple as it might appear to some. We should therefore look carefully and examine the meaning of the words he uses when Solomon talks about God wanting His people to be “perfect”.

We should here put forward a note of caution. When someone speaks about being “perfect” this is not the same as what psychologists call the traits of Perfectionism. That trait makes life an endless report card on accomplishment or looks and that puts a person on a track of unhappiness, depression, and eating disorders. In that case a person live by lists, always wanting to look great, finding it hard to relax.

In the case of Scripture that kind of behaviour is not recommended. Bible translates the Word Perfect in the Old Testament mainly from **Shalem**, a word which means “finished”, “whole”, “complete”. Other words are used but in every case it indicates God is looking for a perfect heart, that is, wholly or completely devoted to Yahweh. Human beings therefore can be wholly devoted to God and His Law but they will never be wholly complete in this life when this sin nature is so dominant’. Perfection for human beings in the fullest sense awaits sanctification by the Holy Spirit and being taken into the presence of God at the end. It is made clear therefore that only God is perfect.

Solomon therefore knew that it was God that had to maintain the cause of His people. It is He that would have to incline the heart and the ears of the people to Him. Solomon obviously knew that men are somewhat weaker than they like to think. They therefore must lean on God always. So let us observe carefully and in detail what Solomon is really saying as he blesses God, giving honour and praise to Him as the source of help and keeping, and blesses the people of Israel.

### **THE TEXT**

#### **Verses 54, 55.**

Solomon concluded his prayer and the act of dedication of the temple at the end of this verse. We are told that in offering up his prayer and supplication unto the Lord that he arose to bless the entire assembled congregation. His posture in kneeling was that of someone said to be lying upon their knees with their hands spread out towards heaven. The posture leaves one completely vulnerable, but in that we see that he is totally relying on God for every mercy and goodness.

A parallel summary of these events occurs in 2 Chronicles 7: 1 – 4, providing readers with a statement to the effect that fire fell from heaven and consumed the burnt offering upon the altar. However, the essential part of all this was the occurrence contained implicit in the filling of the Temple with the glory of the Lord. Just as at the consecration of the tent, God also kindled the first sacrifice with fire from heaven (Lev. 9:24), to sanctify the altar as the legitimate place of sacrifice, so also at the Temple the miraculous kindling of the first sacrifice with fire from heaven was the immediate and even necessary consequence of the filling of the Temple with the cloud, in which the presence of Jehovah was embodied.

Some elements should be carefully watched as Solomon could be considered a type of Christ in that he is praying and interceding for his people before the golden altar (Rev. 8:3).

He, Solomon pronounced a blessing standing, that perhaps he might be heard all that much better. He blessed as one having authority, closing with a word of exhortation to them.

#### **Verse 56.**

He gives God the glory for the great and kind things He had done for Israel. It should be noted that he stood up to bless the congregation, but began with blessing God, for if we are true to our God and understand who guides our prayers, those that we should utter to God and those which we do not know to ask for, it would behoove us to give thanks unto God first and foremost.

Christians should have an expectation of God to do well for us and ours. However, we should understand that that is a promise already given to His children. We attain it by doing a few things. First would be taking all occasion to speak well of Him and His. Solomon blesses God who has given all that is needed. He does not say the priority for Israel is wealth, and honour, and power, and victory, but the summary of blessings to them is *rest*, as if that were a blessing more valuable than any of those.

This aspect of rest involved more than is normally imagined and it flows throughout Israel's dealings with God (Deut. 12:9-10). It is a promise that extends into eternity that is centred around the coming of Jesus Christ in order for all the children of God to achieve that *rest*.

Deuteronomy 12:9-10, and its fulfilment in Joshua 21:44-45, and Joshua 23:14, with Leviticus 26:3-13 and Deuteronomy 28:1-14 where the "good word, which the Lord spake by Moses", is more precisely described as the blessing which the Lord had promised to His people. This blessing had been given and provided in full. By the leadership of Joshua, in subduing most of the land of Canaan, one part was achieved, but since many parts of the land still remained in the hands of the Canaanites, this rest was only fully secured to them by David's victories over all their enemies. The fulfillment warranted the hope that the Lord would also fulfill in the future what He had promised His servant David (2 Samuel 7:10) which is what Solomon points to in his closing.

**Verse 57.**

Note first, the evil consequences predicted by Moses in Leviticus 26:14 and Deuteronomy 28:15 were not in view and did not have to come to pass. These plagues did not need come upon Israel or even the rest of us, as long as we do as instructed by God, and as Solomon exhorted us to do.

"May Jehovah our God be with us, as He was with our fathers; may He not leave us nor forsake us, to incline our heart to Himself, that we may walk in all His ways,"

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and those that came out of Egypt, and especially those that entered into the land of Canaan under Joshua, and subdued it had enjoyed the presence of the Lord. The Lord had been with them to guide and direct them, protect and defend them, make them succeed and prosper. So Solomon desires God might be with them so that the blessing would continue flowing.

Nothing is more desirable than the presence of God; Solomon could not have prayed for a greater blessing for himself and his people. This was no doubt a prayer of faith, founded upon a divine promise.

**Verse 58.**

In this prayer of supplication, Solomon continues to bless the people of Israel and himself, and expresses his earnest desire and hope of a few things. Note everything is based on the divine promises.

These promises have never failed.

First, he prayed for the presence of God with them, which is all in all to the happiness of a church and nation and of every particular person. Supplication is made that the Blessing will continue through all generations once the presence of God remains with His people.

Children of God seek only the joy of being with the Father, Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit. This is how in our lives we gain true happiness and peace, seeking the Kingdom of God first.

Solomon's second wish is that the power of His grace be upon them. He wishes that God would give His people the strength of will to walk in all the ways of God. This of course means that by God's grace He will ensure that the people will be given the will to walk in all the ways of the Covenant. It is clear that Solomon knew and wished that the people understand that all the covenant stipulations were met.

This meant that there must be obedience. The Covenant with Abraham recorded in Genesis 12 and 13 was an unconditional covenant with a promise

- to make Abraham a great nation,
- that he would receive the blessing of God,
- that his descendents would be multiplied exceedingly, and
- that his descendents would be given the land of Canaan as a possession.

Abraham was required to leave his home and his extended family to go to a new Land. Abraham and his descendents would be a blessing to others. They were to walk before Him and be blameless. Genesis 17:1. Abraham believed God and his belief and faith in God and His promises stood as a model for all after him.

But clearly the will to walk in obedience to the words of God would have to be given by God. In his supplication therefore Solomon asked for God to incline their hearts to Himself. The inclining of the heart therefore is most necessary and we should pay attention to this. Without this just doing some works that we consider to be good is not enough. God wants our hearts.

When therefore God in times the heart of the believer the will the Commandments, but statutes, and God's judgments. These have been defined above. All of these have been given beforehand to the fathers. Scriptures has defined these and discussed them over and over again.

Note therefore that the wishes of God have not been hidden from man. The prophets have declared them. They have been written in the Bible. Jesus the Messiah came to explain and to reveal them in their fullness. We therefore today have no excuse. Sin and disobedience to what God has instructed will lead to unpleasant consequences.

Solomon understood what God was saying but unfortunately his will became dominant and the will of God was ignored. So we must keep making supplication to God for His help in keeping us on the narrow way. As we keep close to Him we will strengthen and we will be able to resist Satan so that he will flee from us.

Should this be the case, all the people of God will see good things come into their lives. It will just be a prelude of the gifts that God will bestow upon His people in eternity.

Spiritual blessings are the best blessings, with which we should covet earnestly to be blessed. Our hearts are naturally averse to our duty, and apt to decline from God; it is his grace that inclines them, grace that must be obtained by prayer.

Then Solomon prayed that the supplications that he had made be kept close to the heart of God and always be dear to Him. This therefore was the motive for Solomon's supplication and it was a good motive.

**Verse 59.**

Third was the request for an answer to the supplication and prayer he had now made. As we make prayers to God, just as Solomon here demonstrates, we must be sure to listen to God, our Father as He responds to His children.

What Solomon asks here for his prayer was granted in the offering and intercession of Christ. The intercession of Solomon and His supplication was a type, a type, seen in our great Advocate as He attends continually to this very thing, and we may depend upon Him to maintain our cause (against the adversary that accuses us day and night). His intention and motive is that we shall receive grace sufficient, suitable and seasonable in every time of need.

It is really critical that we make supplication to God for Him to keep us near to Him and maintain the cause of His servants and the cause of His people Israel.

**Verse 60.**

Fourthly, Solomon sought for the glorifying of God in the enlargement of His kingdom among men. Israel is to be that instrument that the Lord God Almighty used in bringing about this. Solomon therefore wanted Israel to fulfill the command to Abram to be a blessing to all the peoples of the earth. As that instrument, Israel shall be blessed, and favoured. They have been allowed to be part of God's will in achieving His goals for all mankind.

**Verse 61.**

Solomon therefore reminded the people of the covenant that God made to Abraham and he solemnly charges his people to continue and persevere in their duty to God. Having spoken to God for them, he here speaks from God to them. It is hoped that those only would fare the better for his prayers that were made better by his preaching.

His admonition, at parting, is, "Let your heart be perfect with the Lord our God, 1 Kings 8:61. Let your obedience be universal, without dividing - upright, without dissembling - constant, without declining;" this is evangelical perfection.

**CONCLUSION**

Our commitment to keep the Commandments, statutes, and judgments of the Lord still stand. Solomon certainly praised God and gave thanksgiving as he recounted the covenant blessing.

## Dedicating the Temple to God

All are welcomed in the kingdom of God. But they must be cleaned of their sins, redeemed by blood.

Solomon was certainly filled by the Holy Spirit and he most certainly was praying in the Spirit. We are told in the description of the event in 2 Chronicles that fire came down from heaven and consumed his sacrifices in recognition of the value of what Solomon had said.

Let your heart and your mind therefore recognize that you must be loyal to the Lord our God. There is a great blessing in store for you when you do that.

We pray that God will continue to incline your heart to Him and that He will maintain your cause before Him.