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1 KINGS 8:1-9:9

The most impressive building the Jews ever had in their history was the temple Solomon built. The blueprints were drawn by God Himself. It has been completed and furnished and **chapter 8** tells us that Solomon assembled all the men of Israel for a feast and a dedication in Jerusalem.

Verses 1-9 tell us of this great gathering and also tell us that the ark of the covenant was brought into the new temple.

Remember what the ark of the covenant was...it was a piece of furniture that had originally been placed in the tabernacle that Moses built.

But, it was more than just a piece of furniture. It was the most sacred piece of furniture Moses put in the tabernacle and Solomon brought into the temple.

The ark was symbolic of God's presence. It was a rectangular chest about three feet nine inches long and two feet three inches wide. It was made of acacia wood and covered with gold inside and out. It had a gold rim encircling its top, gold rings on each corner and staves of acacia wood covered with gold to carry it.

The top or lid was called the **mercy seat** and it was made of pure gold. On top of the ark at each end were two cherubim of gold facing each other but looking down toward the mercy seat with their wings touching each other as they were stretched out over its top.

Verses 10-11...

The glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.

I don't believe we can even begin to imagine what an awesome thing this was!

"The priests could not stand," **verse 11** says. I believe when God's presence filled the house the priests fell on their faces before the holy God!

In the wilderness God manifested His presence in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. All the while the tabernacle was transported through the wilderness the presence of God led the children of Israel. When God wanted them to move the cloud or fire would move and when God wanted them to stay the cloud or fire would stay still.

We talked last week about the presence of God being manifested in all His fullness in a believer's life. God's presence means **protection** and it means **provision** and it means **peace**!

And we talked at length last week about what it takes for His presence to be manifested in our lives in all its fullness.

He longs to lead you and me today. He longs to fill His temple today with His glory and He longs for His temple to glorify Him.

He reminded them how it came about that the temple was built by him...how his father had wanted to build it, but how God had allowed him to build it instead.

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Verses 20-21...

The next thing we see Solomon do is pray. And we could spend several weeks on this prayer. I believe when the pastor preached through **1 Kings**, he preached at least ten sermons on **chapter 8**.

We can't do that...in fact, we can only skim the surface, but what I want us to see first is the way Solomon begins his prayer.

Verses 22-27...

Prayer is a very private part of a person's life. I don't believe we should be in the habit of dissecting a person's prayer... but this particular prayer was not a private prayer...it was a very public prayer.

Later on we're going to find that this prayer is primarily a prayer of intercession, but Solomon begins this prayer with worship.

I think it's interesting that Solomon began his prayer the same way the Lord Jesus taught His disciples to pray... Remember when the disciples came to the Lord Jesus and asked Him to teach them to pray... He said,

"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name..."

Jesus was teaching that prayer should begin with worship...with ascribing to God worth and honor!

And this is exactly what we see Solomon doing here...

He acknowledges God's **unique character**... *"There is no God like Thee"*
He acknowledges God's **faithfulness** and His **lovingkindness** and His **trustworthiness**.

Solomon spent time at the beginning of his wonderful prayer just praising Almighty God!

We could never exhaust the reasons that God deserves our praise and worship. There are attributes of God's character that we can almost feel...we can almost reach out and touch them – attributes like His love and His mercy and His grace and His compassion.

Then, there are attributes of God's character that seem so far above us and so far beyond our comprehension – attributes like His omniscience and His omnipresence and His omnipotence and His transcendence.

And I believe this is what Solomon had in mind when he said in **verse 23**... ***"O LORD, the God of Israel, there is not a God like Thee in heaven above or on earth beneath..."***

And in **verse 27**... ***"the highest heaven cannot contain Thee..."***

I hope we never get over the fact that the King of kings and Lord of lords is our God! There is not a God like Him in heaven above or on earth beneath...and He loves us!! And He was willing to send His Son to die for us! What an incredible truth!!

The next thing about Solomon's prayer that I want us to notice is that he interceded for his people...

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In **verses 31-32**, Solomon prays for his people when they sin against their neighbor. Solomon asked God to condemn the wicked and to justify the righteous.

In **verses 33-34**, Solomon prays for his people when they sin against God and as a result are defeated before their enemy. He asked God to forgive them when they repent and turn again to Him and make supplication to Him.

In **verses 35-36**, Solomon prays for his people when they sin against God and God shuts up the heavens and there is no rain. He asked God to forgive them when they confess God's name and turn from their sin. Solomon asked God to teach his people "**the good way in which they should walk**" and send rain upon the land He has given them for an inheritance.

In **verses 37-40**, Solomon prays for his people if there is famine, pestilence, blight, mildew, locust or grasshopper...when an enemy comes against them...or plague or sickness. Solomon asked God to hear their supplication and forgive and render to each person according to his ways because Solomon said, "**Thou alone dost know the hearts of all the sons of men.**"

Do you see what's happening? Do you see the kind of intercession Solomon was doing? Solomon is begging God to hear the prayers of repentance of the people when they sin.

In **verse 31**, he talks about a child of God sinning against another child of God. He talks about that person taking an oath.

Here's what seems to be happening here. **This** brother accuses **another** brother of doing something. Because there are no witnesses, the brother who is accused can either say, "Yes, I confess. I did it." Or, he can say, "You're out of your mind. I don't know what you're talking about."

And Solomon is saying, "Lord, when these kinds of situations come about, will you bring the solution? When the word of one is going against the other, will you solve the problem? The one who is telling the truth, Lord, find innocent. The one who is lying, Lord, find guilty."

Then, the next several situations that Solomon brings before the Lord involve more than people who have sinned against each other. They involve folks who have sinned against God. At least at this point in Solomon's life he knew that God would punish sin.

But, he put a strong emphasis on asking God to forgive if His people if they repented...

Verse 33... "if they **turn** to Thee again and confess Thy name and pray and make supplication to Thee in this house..."

Verse 35... "and they pray toward this place and confess Thy name and **turn** from their sin..."

Repentance doesn't just mean that a person is "sorry" that he has sinned. Repentance involves that little word "turn". It means we change directions. And this is the requirement for forgiveness. God looks at us and He sees that we have sinned. And He waits for us to come to Him in prayer and confession and repentance.

John told us that if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Confession means that we look at what we've done with the exact view that God looks at what we've done. We call wrong *wrong*. We call sin *sin*. And then we turn from it!!

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In the next few verses, Solomon does something very interesting...he prays for the foreigner...let's look at it...

Verses 41-43...

Solomon knew what God had called the Jews to do. God loved the Jewish people. They were His own peculiar people. He had called them out of the Gentile world to be His own possession.

But, He had called them to be a light to the nations around them. He wanted them to point the heathens to Jehovah.

And Solomon is praying that God will bring "foreigners" into His house. The only way a "foreigner" is going to be allowed in His house is if He comes to the realization that Solomon had already stated...that there is no other God in heaven above and on earth beneath like the God of Israel.

Folks who want to preach that if folks are just sincere in their beliefs they are going to heaven are WRONG! And it's amazing how many of our so-called theologians teach this.

One of our local Episcopalian churches had made what they called "peace pins" with the name and age of an Iraqi child printed on each of them. The pins come with a card with the words of a prayer.

Now, this sounds so good and noble...but the words of the prayer were also printed in the paper and the prayer is addressed to God **and** Allah. Now, you can't address a prayer that way. Well, I guess you can, but it's not a prayer...it's just a bunch of words strung together...it's not a prayer.

God said in His word that He will not share His glory with another. And I don't believe He's going to begin sharing it with Allah today!

Solomon prayed for the "foreigners" who would come to know Jehovah and they would come to His house and pray and also bring others to know Jehovah!

Verses 44-45...

Solomon asks the Lord to be with His children when they go out to battle. Now, that's very relevant for our nation today...

But, I believe it's more relevant for us when we think of the warfare we are called on to engage in each and every day as believers.

Believers are in an ongoing everyday spiritual warfare. It's more intense at some times than others...but, if Satan isn't coming against you, that only means you're not seeking to live your life yielded to the dear Holy Spirit.

I love the last phrase of **verse 45**. I believe God longs to "maintain the cause" of Christ in the lives of His children when we pray and make supplication to Him!

Verses 46-53...

Solomon comes back to the subject of sin. But, he's not being redundant. It's not that he has run out of things to pray for so he just repeats what he's already said.

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No, Solomon knows his own heart and he knows the hearts of the people of God for whom he's praying... "Lord, if any of us sin, and Lord, we know...we confess that there's not any of us exempt from sinning..." So, Solomon keeps going back to this subject...

Let's just think a few minutes about what sin does in the life of a believer.

Sin in a believer's life angers God...verse 46...

We don't like to think about God being angry, do we? But, I believe if God could be angry with His chosen people...He can also be angry with you and me when we willfully disobey Him. Sin in a believer's life provokes God to anger.

Sin in a believer's life will return that believer to spiritual bondage...verse 47...

The child of God is free. Sin doesn't reign in our body. That's what the Bible tells us. But, the Bible also tells us that when we get caught up in sin we run the risk of becoming slaves to sin again.

Galatians 5:1: "It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery."

Paul wrote the book of ***Galatians*** to the believers in the church at Galatia and he wouldn't have warned them about something that couldn't possibly have happened.

Why would Paul have said,

"...do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery" if it were an impossible thing for them to be subject again to a yoke of slavery?

This doesn't mean the believer loses his salvation, but it does mean he loses his joy, and he loses his witness, and he loses his influence for good and that for all intents and purposes what issues forth from his life is contaminated because he is enslaved, he is in bondage to sin!

Sin in a believer's life provokes God to anger.
Sin in a believer's life can return him to spiritual bondage.

Sin in a believer's life puts him outside the place of the blessing of God...verse 46...

See, it's not just that these folks might be defeated by the enemy...but it says they also that they might be taken captive and carried back into the land of the enemy.

I know some of us have found this out the hard way...
THERE IS NO PEACE IN THE LAND OF THE ENEMY!

And the reason there is no peace there is because we don't belong there! We have been bought out of that land by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ!

There's a little verse over in the book of ***Jude*** that says, ***"Keep yourselves in the love of God."***

Again, Jude wrote **his** letter to believers if it were not possible for believers to be outside the love of God, Jude wouldn't have written these words.

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This doesn't mean that we can ever be any place where God's love doesn't exist...but it **does** mean that it is possible for you and me to be living so far away from His will that the umbrella and protection of His love and blessing are not there.

Well, the question comes to us... "What can I do about my sin? If I've gotten my life in a real mess where I have provoked the anger of God and I'm in bondage again and I'm outside the scope of God's blessing, what in the world can I do about it?"

Verse 47...The first thing is to receive the conviction of God.

Again we see Solomon mentions repentance and prayer. I believe the NIV says, "have a change of heart."

Well, why in the world would a believer have a change of heart? I'll tell you why! Because the love of God just will not let him go! The Holy Spirit comes and continues to bring conviction.

If you're out there away from God...
provoking the anger of God...
captive again in the bondage of sin...
outside the blessings of God...

God will come and bring conviction and you can reject it or you can receive it!

And the other thing you can do is repent.

You know...we've talked about repentance a lot today, but that's one subject most folks really don't want to hear about, isn't it?

I mean, folks would much prefer to hear about grace...but you can't have any grace until you repent.

Folks would much prefer to hear about forgiveness...but you can't have forgiveness without repentance.

Folks love to hear about heaven...but you can't go there without repentance!

Well, there's a lot we could say about repentance, but let me just say
Real repentance begins with prayer...**verse 47...**
Real repentance is honest about sin...**verse 47...**
Real repentance must be sincere...**verse 48...**
Real repentance gains the ear of God...**verse 49...**
Real repentance brings forth the forgiveness of God...**verse 50...**

Solomon's beautiful prayer of dedication is finished. Now, Solomon turns and blesses the people and reminds the people that their God is a rest giving and covenant keeping God. But, Solomon not only reminds the people of these things, but he also exhorts the people...

Verses 54-61...

Solomon is saying, "Now in the light of the character of God, you need to serve Him." And we see three ways to serve Him in these verses...

Verse 60...by your witness... "...that all the people of the earth may know..."

What is the scope of our witness? All the people of the earth. He was not just Israel's God...even though some people thought so. The Bible says that all the earth may know...

John 3:16 makes that clear... "For God so loved the **world**..." Not a select few...not just the "frozen chosen..."

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That's the scope. But what about the substance of our witness? **Verse 60:** "...that all the people of the earth may know that the LORD is God and there no one else."

And this is where people take offense. They don't want to hear that God is not the God of Islam or Buddhism or Shintoism or Mormonism or any other "ism." There is only one God! And there is only one way to Him! No one comes to God except by the Lord Jesus Christ!

We also serve God

Verse 61...By our walk... "...walk in His statutes and keep His commandments..."

Let me ask you...how do you walk? I mean, to physically walk, what do you have to do? You have to take one step at a time, don't you? What I want to say is that just because you walked in His statutes yesterday, doesn't necessarily you're going to walk in them tomorrow...and we're going to see that in the weeks ahead in Solomon's own life.

Day by day...really moment by moment I must serve God by being obedient to His teachings and His will and His way for my life!

Lastly,we also serve God

Verses 62-66...By our worship...

We'll not read these verses, but after Solomon prayed and addressed the people,

- **sacrifices were offered,**
- **the middle court of the temple was consecrated and**
- **they ate together and**
- **finally they went home joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the LORD had shown to David His servant and to Israel His people.**

We don't often think of worship as a way of serving God, but it is! Paul tells us in **Romans** that we are to present our bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual **service of worship.**

Each time we praise God through our words and our music...every time we open His Word and learn His truths...every time we pray and seek His will...whether alone or gathered here together...we are worshipping God! And through that worship, we are serving Him!

I believe the challenges this lesson sets before us today are many. One is to pray...for ourselves and other people.

We should be challenged to acknowledge that our God is indeed an awesome God and there is no one like Him.

We should be challenged when we sin to receive conviction of the Holy Spirit.

We should also be challenged to serve God by our witness, our walk and our worship.