

Friday, July 1, 2016

If

1 Kings 6-7

The word of the LORD came to Solomon: "As for this temple you are building, if you follow my decrees, carry out my regulations and keep all my commands and obey them, I will fulfill through you the promise I gave to David your father. And I will live among the Israelites and will not abandon my people Israel." 1 Kings 6:11-13

1 Kings 6 and 7 give the description of the marvelous temple and palace that Solomon built. The temple was a breathtaking structure. I close my eyes as I try to imagine this temple. There is gold everywhere, with ornate carvings and a wash basin that is said to have held 11,500 gallons of water! It was built in such a way that all those who came to hear the wisdom of Solomon would see the temple where Israel and its king worshiped the one true God, who gave Solomon that wisdom they were seeking. Solomon followed the design left for him by his father and then moved the items that David has dedicated to the LORD into the temple. I imagine living in the city, watching the construction, and being awestruck. The LORD was ready to make His dwelling among the Israelites. He reminds Solomon that while the temple is built by human hands, the Occupant stays based upon the response of human hearts—especially the heart of their king. It was up to Solomon to live in such a way that God would remain living among the Israelites. God will remain visible in my life as I walk closely with Him, careful to do all that He has decreed for me, rejoicing in the peace that comes from obedience.

Dear Lord, please remain visible in my life as I give my heart to You. You take the deed to my heart and make it Your home. Decorate it with Your love and goodness. Amen.

Saturday, July 2, 2016

Never

1 Kings 8-9

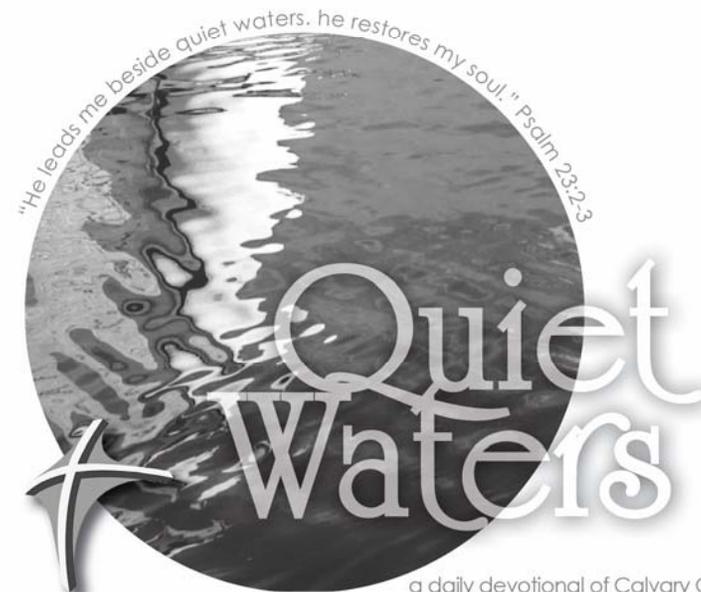
May the LORD our God be with us as he was with our fathers; may he never leave us nor forsake us. May he turn our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways and to keep the commands, decrees and regulations he gave our fathers. 1 Kings 8:57-58

The prayer and blessing of Solomon, as recorded in Kings is a special prayer indeed. The temple is not a magic building. It is the presence of the LORD that is the power. It is the LORD choosing to live in the midst of His people that will remind them to continue to live their lives for Him. As they are tempted to wander, they will remember that He is there. When they sin against Him, they will remember to repent. When the temple is seen by foreigners, they will turn to the God of Israel. On this day, amidst great celebration and sacrifice, there can be no doubt, as the dark cloud of God's presence falls on the temple, that God is with them—in their very midst. Solomon prays that God may never leave them. He prays that God will turn their hearts toward Him and keep their hearts toward God and God alone. He prays that God will cause them to walk in the truth and in obedience. This is my prayer as well. May God never leave His people. May God cause us to turn our hearts fully toward Him. May we not be distracted by other gods and the desires of this world. May we walk with Him.

Lord, turn our hearts to You. May all of us who have called on Your name and received Your salvation walk in Your ways and keep Your commands. We are Yours. Amen.


Pastor Chuck Cervenka

June 27-July 2, 2016



a daily devotional of Calvary Community Church

Monday, June 27, 2016

Heard

2 Samuel 22-23

In my distress I called to the LORD; I called out to my God. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came to his ears.
2 Samuel 22:7

God rules from His temple. David understood what it meant to rule. He was the king. As he reflects on the victories of his life, Israel's singer of songs writes a praise song to the LORD, acknowledging that it is God who gave the victories. It is preserved here and also in the Psalms (18). It is indeed a marvelous praise to the magnificent God of the Bible. David was certain that God heard the prayers that he offered. While in distress, he called out to the LORD in His temple. David did not view this as God being far away and unapproachable, rather he knows that God heard his voice. He knew that God was listening to the cry of his heart from deep despair. What follows in the praise song is a poetic picture of how David saw God responding to his prayer. He parted the heavens and came down amidst smoke to a trembling earth, riding on dark clouds, soaring on the wings of the wind, roaring like thunder as He went to battle against David's enemies. How would my prayers change if I realized the intensity of the battle that I am in? What if I could truly understand that my prayers are heard by God, while He is in His temple, and that Almighty God will move with great power? I must learn to offer big prayers to a big God who is ready to answer in a big way.

Dear God, I am overwhelmed to think that you hear my prayers and that you respond to each and every one. Sometimes it seems as though you are not listening. Help me remember that You are and that my prayers bring me ever closer to You. Amen.

Tuesday, June 28, 2016

Cost me

2 Samuel 24-1 Kings 1

But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen and paid fifty shekels of silver for them.
2 Samuel 24:24

David feels the conviction of the LORD once again. But this time the king is convicted before a prophet comes to speak to him. David is the example of a man who understands his place and role before God. He serves as a viceroy. He realizes that he is king only as he exercises his authority on behalf of sovereign God. God is the true King of Israel. No other king in Israel will comprehend this to the degree that David does. He sees his sin—and sees the consequences, as the plague comes into Zion—and repents. He has given himself and his people to the mercy of God (24:14) instead of his own decision, showing the true trust he has in God. God calls him to build an altar in a certain place so that the plague will stop. David obeys, finding the threshing floor owned by another who is willing to give it to the king. But David knows that a sacrifice is not a sacrifice if it costs nothing, and he has been called to make a sacrifice. So he pays for the threshing floor, which will become the place where Solomon will build the temple (2 Chron. 3:1). How many of my sacrifices cost me something? How many times is my repentance flippant and forgiveness from God is expected selfishly? I must learn from David that I serve a King who is greater than I. It is a joy to obey this King.

Dear God, allow me to see the depth of my sin and to grieve when the consequences bring pain to others. Teach me to repent with a sacrifice that has a cost to me. Amen.

Wednesday, June 29, 2016

Except

1 Kings 2-3

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.
1 Kings 3:3

The books of the kings open with the throne being passed, at God's command, from David to Solomon. David charges Solomon to hold tightly to God and to obey and love the LORD and to walk faithfully with Him. David dies and God establishes Solomon's throne. But sadly, Solomon quickly shows that he is not David, nor does he have the heart for God that David did. Solomon loves the LORD. No other king in the books of the kings will be said to love the LORD. But then comes the word *except*. This is an enormous word that will give us an insight into what will be the downfall of a king. He walked like David, *except*... This is the problem. The promise of God was not that he would bless the kings who walked in the way of the LORD, *except*. There was no exception clause offered. Solomon took a foreign wife and kept her in Jerusalem as he built a palace for her and a temple for the LORD. He offered sacrifices and incense on the high places. These two things would be the undoing of Solomon and his potential and would eventually lead to the division of the nation. How does this happen in my life? I love the Lord—truly, I do. Do I have an exception clause? How do I fall short of complete and total devotion to God? Is there that repentance is needed.

Dear God, search me and know me—know my heart. Show me quickly where I allow other things to distract me from total devotion to You. Let my love for You be without exception. Amen.

Thursday, June 30, 2016

Wisdom

1 Kings 4-5

God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. He was wiser than any other man...
1 Kings 4:29-31a

Solomon was a man who had been blessed by God. He was wiser than any other man. 1 Kings 4 describes a man who lacks for nothing. He has all he needs and wants. He is a king who is over a nation that is at great peace. There is prosperity. The people he is ruling are happy (4:20). Men from all over are coming to hear the wisdom of Solomon. He writes proverbs, many of which are preserved in the book of Proverbs. He wrote songs and psalms. He learned and grew in his wisdom. He used his wisdom to accumulate things, some of which were not to be accumulated (Deut. 17:16). Solomon's name has come to be synonymous with wisdom and wealth. I try to imagine the scene in ancient Israel as peace reigns and people from all over the known world are coming in and out of Jerusalem to listen to Solomon speak. They bring riches and treasures from other lands. Surely, this was a wonderful time to be an Israelite. By all appearances, God is highly exalted, and it is in this setting that the temple can now be built. I am told that if I lack wisdom, I may ask and it will be given to me. Am I asking God for His wisdom so that I may best have an impact for Him in this world?

Dear God, thank You for the wisdom that You have given to me. I am blessed to know You and Your goodness and greatness. Help me use my wisdom for You. Amen.