

- ***Read II Chronicles 6:1-12*** The scene we have before us here in this text is Solomon's dedication ceremony for the temple. We read that Solomon's father, David, originally wanted to build a temple for His God, but God had a different plan. Instead, David's son, Solomon, would be the builder of God's great temple, and that temple has been completed. Solomon calls all of Israel together so that they might participate in this great day of dedication. In **v.13**, we find that Solomon has build a big bronze platform. We find him on this platform, and then he kneels, spreads his hands toward heaven, and then he begins to pray unto God before all the people of Israel.
- Solomon begins his prayer (**vv.14-17**) before God with acknowledgments of God's great power, truthfulness, and lovingkindness. He recognizes the fact that God has kept all of His promises concerning David and Himself, and he requests that God continue to confirm His word through this prayer that Solomon is offering. The real purpose and focus of this prayer is actually on the idea of prayer. Solomon's temple was to represent the relationship between God and his people, and prayer is the backbone of that relationship.
- Beginning in **v.22**, Solomon lists about 7 different scenarios where a person might approach God in prayer, and Solomon's purpose in his prayer is to ensure that God would be there to listen to this prayer when it is offered from the presence of the temple. Solomon mentions specifically the man who sins against his neighbor, when Israel is defeated in battle, when there is no rain in the land, when there is famine in the land, when a foreigner offers prayer, when Israel goes into battle, and when someone sins against the Lord.
- We know the Lord heard Solomon's prayer because of the fire that comes does from heaven and consumes the offerings at the beginning of **chapter 7**. Israel recognizes God's acknowledgement and they begin to prepare more sacrifices for the Lord. By the end, Solomon and Israel have offered 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. The temple is now dedicated and the people begin to feast and offer continual praises before God.
- Solomon finishes all of his work, and the Lord responds to his efforts during the night. (**7:11-15**) God hears Solomon's prayers and confirms that He will hear the prayers of the people and forgive their sins, as long as they meet some conditions that He sets forth. This morning, I would like for us to consider what must take place before God forgives sin...He has laid these conditions out before Solomon, and I believe they are just as necessary today if we want God to forgive us when we fall short of His standards.

I. We must humble ourselves before Him.

- A. God said that the first necessary step in gaining His ear and forgiveness is to humble ourselves.
 1. Recognizing that we have sinned and are in need of God's forgiveness is humility.
 2. Those who lack humility 1) Do not believe that they have done anything wrong that needs forgiveness and 2) Think that they are all sufficient by themselves. If this is the case within the mind of the individual...then surely we understand why God's forgiveness will not be given to them.
 3. Israel had a nasty habit of becoming puffed up in their minds and not seeing the need for God. What always followed was their destruction at the hands of a wicked people. The Israelites would come to their senses and recognize that they were not powerful by themselves, but that they were strong when they recognized that God was the source of their strength. They were required to humble themselves to gain God's favor.
 4. Humility was needed for strength to conquer, and it was just as need in order for their sins to be forgiven.
- B. Just the same, if we want forgiveness of our sins then we must humble ourselves before God.
 1. James speaks to this idea of humility before God when we have sinned in **James 4:1-10**.
 - a) In their battle against the flesh, James says that their must be a recognition that God is the give of grace, but that His grace is not given to just anyone. (**v.6**)
 - b) He makes the point that God's grace is only received by those who are humble and recognize their need for it. (**vv.6,7**)
 - c) Therefore, James' admonition is for the person submit, humble themselves before God. He admonishes them to be miserable, mourn, and weep which are all signs of the person who has been humbled. It is at that point that James says the Lord will exalt you or lift you up. (**vv.9,10**)
 2. Our God is a loving and merciful God who is willing to cleanse us of all unrighteousness, but we must first humble ourselves and recognize that we are in need of that forgiveness and that God is the only one through whom we can find forgiveness for our sins.

II. We must talk to Him.

- A. God next says that the penitent person must pray or talk to Him concerning his sin and circumstances.
 - 1. It is not just enough that we humble ourselves and recognize our sin and need for God, but that humility should push us to be willing to come before God and His awesome throne of grace to confess our mistakes and seek that amazing grace.
 - 2. Solomon in his prayer and through his prayer acknowledges the fact that God desires for us to come before God in prayer to speak to Him in our time of need for forgiveness.
 - 3. Not only is Solomon doing this very thing before the assembly of Israel in that fact that he is leading by example in talking to God and requesting His favor, but he also is praying that when others do this necessary thing that God will give them His ear and grant their request for favor.
 - 4. Solomon was well convinced and God confirmed his belief that He desires for those seeking forgiveness to come humbly before Him and speak to Him through prayer.
- B. We, like Solomon, must approach God in prayer and make request for our needs.
 - 1. We know the verse well, but we must make sure that we are putting into practice **James 5:13-16**.
 - a) It is important to note from the text the emphasis that James puts on prayer. In so many different situations, James' emphasis is quite similar...just pray...talk to God and let Him know about your situation and your needs at this particular time.
 - b) When you suffer...pray. When you're sick...pray. When you are caught up in sin...pray. When you know that your brother is in sin...pray. In all things, James believes that God's people should be a praying people.
 - c) James recognizes that the prayer of God's people can accomplish much good and that is because a person that prays is a person who trusts in God and recognizes his need for Him.
 - 2. We must recognize our need for God when we are guilty of sin, and we must go to Him confessing our sins, and in doing so He is faithful and righteous to forgive us of our sins. (**I John 1:9**)

III. We must seek His Will.

- A. Thirdly, God says to Solomon that His people who seek His forgiveness must seek His Face or seek His Favor.
 - 1. Solomon was seeking to do this very thing as He brought Israel together for this day of celebration and dedication. This was a day where Solomon wanted his people to recognize the importance of God and doing all things according to His will.
 - 2. Contrary to our first point, it was during those times of commitment and faithfulness to God that Israel truly flourished and thrived as a nation. When they were faithful to God and following His Will, good things happened.
 - 3. Solomon was seeking to do God's will and make atonement as best he could for the sins of the people. This is the reasoning for the ridiculous amount of sacrifices that were offered in this chapter. He wanted to seek the favor of God by showing God that he and the people were committed to His will.
 - 4. Solomon's hope and prayer was that this temple, this house for God would be a place of good where the people of Israel and even the foreigner would be able to come and seek the favor of God through obedience to His Holy Will.
- B. When we are in need of forgiveness, we must turn to God and seek His favor by resolving to do His will from that point on.
 - 1. When I think of a resolution to move past mistakes and to do better in the future according to the will of God, I can't help but think of David's prayer of repentance in **Psalms 51**.
 - a) After confessing his sin and speaking of just how distraught he had become because of it, David transitions and makes requests of God concerning how he wanted to move forward from this in **vv.6-17**.
 - b) His desire is for God to give him wisdom, to purify him, to help him move past the heartache, to create in him a new and clean heart, and to restore within him the joy of knowing God's salvation.
 - c) But David said that there were some things that he himself was going to do. He was going to teach transgressors the ways of God. He was going to sing joyfully of God's righteousness. He was going to declare praise towards God. These things were according to God's will and they would cause David to see God's face and to feel His favor showered upon him.
 - 2. To think that we can simply request blessings from God without following His will is foolish. The true blessings of God are for those who delight in His Will and seek it all their days.

IV. We must turn away from our wicked ways.

- A. Finally, God tells Solomon that the people must turn away from the sin that they had been committing.
 1. It wasn't that they should just seek God's favor by doing what is good, but God demanded that they stop doing those things that were contrary to God and His Will.
 2. For Israel, these sins were their failures to honor God's Law. They were a people who went after the gods of the heathen nations around them. They were a people who would neglect God's commands for them. They were a people who would do wrong by their neighbor and sin against them.
 3. Yet, when they sought forgiveness for their mistakes in humility, when they confessed their sins to God, and when they sought His face and favor...they still have to take care of the issue of the sins they had been engaged in. They had to stop sinning against God. When they did these things, then God said that He would hear them from heaven, forgive their sins, and heal their land.
- B. We must be sure to show true repentance before our God when we are in need of forgiveness.
 1. To repent is not just to feel sorry, but it is to make a change...to go in a different direction. This is what we pledge to do when we make our commitment to Christ at the point of obedience to the Gospel. We repent of our sins and we decide to now live our lives for Jesus instead of for self.
 2. I am reminded John's admonition to the Jewish Leadership when they came to him requesting to be baptized. **(Matt. 3:1-8)** John admonishes them that they ought not be coming just for a show, but that they should truly repent and bear fruit that shows that they had truly repented.
 3. I think that we sometimes oversimplify God forgiving our sins. We make a mistake and sin against Him, and then we think that we can just bow our heads quickly and say we're sorry then we're good to go. That just doesn't seem to fit what we see throughout the Bible, and it doesn't fit when we consider the seriousness of sin and how it pains God for His creation to go against His will. It isn't simply about asking for forgiveness, but it is a change of life and the giving of a true effort to recognize that we have sinned and how we can avoid ever doing that again.
 4. A man I know from high school back in East Tennessee recently said this in a Facebook post and I think it is entirely accurate and appropriate for our discussion. "Prayers for God's forgiveness with no effort to prevent the sin moving forward are an abomination promptly abandoned on His doorstep. They ultimately serve no purpose other than to soothe our guilty conscience."
 5. How true are these words. May we strive to stop doing those things that hurt our God. x

All of this takes great effort, but God has said plainly that this is what He expects of us when we keep His grace and forgiveness. May God help us to first off not sin, but when we do...May He help us to do those things that He desires of us so that our sins may be forgiven and that we might go on from that point doing His will and not engaging in those things contrary to Him. May we know and put into practice those actions that are worthy of the penitent person.