

CHAPTER 8

The building and furniture of the temple were very glorious, but the dedication of it exceeds in glory as much as prayer and praise, the work of saints, exceed the casting of metal and the graving of stones, the work of the craftsman. The temple was designed for the keeping up of the correspondence between God and his people; and here we have an account of the solemnity of their first meeting there.

I. The representatives of all Israel were called together (v. 1, 2), to keep a feast to the honour of God, for fourteen days (v. 65).

II. The priests brought the ark into the most holy place, and fixed it there (v. 3-9).

III. God took possession of it by a cloud (v. 10, 11).

IV. Solomon, with thankful acknowledgments to God, informed the people touching the occasion of their meeting (v. 12-21).

V. In a long prayer he recommended to God's gracious acceptance all the prayers that should be made in or towards this place (v. 22-53).

VI. He dismissed the assembly with a blessing and an exhortation (v. 54-61).

VII. He offered abundance of sacrifices, on which he and his people feasted, and so parted, with great satisfaction (v. 62-66). These were Israel's golden days, days of the Son of man in type.

<1181> 1 KINGS 8:1-11

THE DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE

The temple, though richly beautified, yet while it was without the ark was like a body without a soul, or a candlestick without a candle, or (to speak more properly) a house without an inhabitant. All the cost and pains bestowed on this stately structure are lost if God do not accept them; and, unless he please to own it as the place where he will record his name, it is after all but a ruinous heap. When therefore *all the work* is ended (<1175> 1

Kings 7:51), the *one thing needful* is yet behind, and that is the bringing in of the ark. This therefore is the end which must crown the work, and which here we have an account of the doing of with great solemnity.

I. Solomon presides in this service, as David did in the bringing up of the ark to Jerusalem; and neither of them thought it below him to follow the ark nor to lead the people in their attendance on it. Solomon glories in the title of the *preacher* (^{<2000>}Ecclesiastes 1:1), and the *master of assemblies*, ^{<2121>}Ecclesiastes 12:11. This great assembly he summons (v. 1), and he is the centre of it, for to him they all assembled (v. 2) *at the feast in the seventh month*, namely, the feast of tabernacles, which was appointed on the fifteenth day of that month, ^{<2234>}Leviticus 23:34. David, like a very *good* man, brings the ark to a *convenient* place, near him; Solomon, like a very *great* man, brings it to a *magnificent* place. As every man has received the gift, so let him minister; and let children proceed in God's service where their parents left off.

II. All Israel attend the service, their judges and the chief of their tribes and families, all their officers, civil and military, and (as they speak in the north) the heads of their clans. A convention of these might well be called *an assembly of all Israel*. These came together, on this occasion,

1. To do honour to Solomon, and to return him the thanks of the nation for all the good offices he had done in kindness to them.

2. To do honour to the ark, to pay respect to it, and testify their universal joy and satisfaction in its settlement. The advancement of the ark in external splendour, though it has often proved too strong a temptation to its hypocritical followers, yet, because it may prove an advantage to its true interests, is to be rejoiced in (with trembling) by all that wish well to it. Public mercies call for public acknowledgments. Those that appeared before the Lord did not appear empty, for they all sacrificed sheep and oxen innumerable, v. 5. The people in Solomon's time were very rich, very easy, and very cheerful, and therefore it was fit that, on this occasion, they should consecrate not only their cheerfulness, but a part of their wealth, to God and his honour.

III. The priests do their part of the service. In the wilderness, the Levites were to carry the ark, because then there were not priests enough to do it; but here (it being the last time that the ark was to be carried) the priests

themselves did it, as they were ordered to do when it surrounded Jericho. We are here told,

1. What was in the ark, nothing but the two tables of stone (v. 9), a treasure far exceeding all the dedicated things both of David and Solomon. The pot of manna and Aaron's rod were *by* the ark, but not *in* it.
2. What was brought up with the ark (v. 4): *The tabernacle of the congregation*. It is probable that both that which Moses set up in the wilderness, which was in Gibeon, and that which David pitched in Zion, were brought to the temple, to which they did, as it were, surrender all their holiness, merging it in that of the temple, which must henceforward be the place where God must be sought unto. Thus will all the church's holy things on earth, that are so much its joy and glory, be swallowed up in the perfection of holiness above.
3. Where it was fixed in its place, the place appointed for its rest after all its wanderings (v. 6): *In the oracle of the house*, whence they expected God to speak to them, even in the most holy place, which was made so by the presence of the ark, *under the wings of the great cherubim* which Solomon set up (~~1067~~1 Kings 6:27), signifying the special protection of angels, under which God's ordinances and the assemblies of his people are taken. The staves of the ark were drawn out, so as to be seen from under the wings of the cherubim, to direct the high priest to the mercy-seat, over the ark, when he went in, once a year, to sprinkle the blood there; so that still they continued of some use, though there was no longer occasion for them to carry it by.

IV. God graciously owns what is done and testifies his acceptance of it, v. 10, 11. The priests might come into the most holy place till God manifested his glory there; but, thenceforward, none might, at their peril, approach the ark, except the high priest, on the day of atonement. Therefore it was not till the priests had come out of the oracle that the *Shechinah* took possession of it, in a cloud, which filled not only the most holy place, but the temple, so that the priests who burnt incense at the golden altar could not bear it. By this visible emanation of the divine glory,

1. God put an honour upon the ark, and owned it as a token of his presence. The glory of it had been long diminished and eclipsed by its frequent removes, the meanness of its lodging, and its being exposed too much to common view; but God will now show that it is as dear to him as

ever, and he will have it looked upon with as much veneration as it was when Moses first brought it into his tabernacle.

2. He testified his acceptance of the building and furnishing of the temple as good service done to his name and his kingdom among men.

3. He struck an awe upon this great assembly; and, by what they saw, confirmed their belief of what they read in the books of Moses concerning the glory of God's appearance to their fathers, that hereby they might be kept close to the service of the God of Israel and fortified against temptations to idolatry.

4. He showed himself ready to hear the prayer Solomon was now about to make; and not only so, but took up his residence in this house, that all his praying people might there be encouraged to make their applications to him. But the glory of God appeared in a cloud, a dark cloud, to signify,

(1.) The darkness of that dispensation in comparison with the light of the gospel, by which, *with open face, we behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord.*

(2.) The darkness of our present state in comparison with the vision of God, which will be the happiness of heaven, where the divine glory is unveiled. Now we can only say what he is not, but then we shall see him as he is.

<1082>1 KINGS 8:12-21

THE DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE

Here,

I. Solomon encourages the priests, who came out of the temple from their ministration, much astonished at the dark cloud that overshadowed them. The disciples of Christ *feared when they entered into the cloud*, though it was a *bright cloud* (<1084> Luke 9:34), so did the priests when they found themselves wrapped in a thick cloud. To silence their fears,

1. He reminds them of that which they could not but know, that this was a token of God's presence (v. 12): *The Lord said he would dwell in the thick darkness.* It is so far from being a token of his displeasure that it is an

indication of his favour; for he had said, *I will appear in a cloud*,
^{<B162>}Leviticus 16:2. Note, Nothing is more effectual to reconcile us to dark dispensations than to consider what God hath said, and to compare his word and works together; as ^{<B103>}Leviticus 10:3, *This is that which the Lord hath said*. God is light (^{<G105>}1 John 1:5), and he dwells in light (^{<S416>}1 Timothy 6:16), but he dwells with men *in the thick darkness*, makes that his pavilion, because they could not bear the dazzling brightness of his glory. *Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself*. Thus our holy faith is exercised and our holy fear is increased. Where God dwells in light faith is swallowed up in vision and fear in love.

2. He himself bids it welcome, as worthy of all acceptance; and since God, by this cloud, came down to take possession, he does, in a few words, solemnly give him possession (v. 13): “*Surely I come*,” says God. “*Amen*,” says Solomon, “*Even so, come, Lord*,”. The house is thy own, entirely thy own, *I have surely built it for thee*, and furnished it for thee; it is for ever thy own, *a settled place for thee to abide in for ever*; it shall never be alienated nor converted to any other use; the ark shall never be removed from it, never unsettled again.” It is Solomon's joy that God has taken possession; and it is his desire that he would keep possession. Let not the priests therefore dread that in which Solomon so much triumphs.

II. He instructs the people, and gives them a plain account concerning this house, which they now saw God take possession of. He spoke briefly to the priests, to satisfy them (a word to the wise), but *turned his face about* (v. 14) from them *to the congregation* that stood in the outer court, and addressed himself to them largely.

1. He blessed them. When they saw the dark cloud enter the temple they blessed themselves, being astonished at it and afraid lest the thick darkness should be utter darkness to them. The amazing sight, such as they had never seen in their days, we may suppose, drove every man to his prayers, and the vainest minds were made serious by it. Solomon therefore set in with their prayers, and blessed them all, as one having authority (for *the less is blessed of the better*); in God's name, he spoke peace to them, and a blessing, like that with which the angel blessed Gideon when he was in a fright, upon a similar occasion. ^{<1062>}Judges 6:22, 23, *Peace be unto thee. Fear not; thou shalt not die*. Solomon *blessed them*, that is, he pacified them, and freed them from the consternation they were in. To receive this

blessing, they all stood up, in token of reverence and readiness to hear and accept it. It is a proper posture to be in when the blessing is pronounced.

2. He informed them concerning this house which he had built and was now dedicating.

(1.) He began his account with a thankful acknowledgment of the good hand of his God upon him hitherto: *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, v. 15.* What we have the pleasure of God must have the praise of. He thus engaged the congregation to lift up their hearts in thanksgivings to God, which would help to still the tumult of spirit which, probably, they were in. “Come,” says he, “let God's awful appearances not drive us from him, but draw us to him; *let us bless the Lord God of Israel.*” Thus Job, under a dark scene, *blessed the name of the Lord.* Solomon here blessed God,

[1.] For his promise which he *spoke with his mouth to David.*

[2.] For the performance, that he had now *fulfilled it with his hand.* We have then the best sense of God's mercies, and most grateful both to ourselves and to our God, when we run up those streams to the fountain of the covenant, and compare what God does with what he has said.

(2.) Solomon is now making a solemn surrender or dedication of this house unto God, delivering it to God by his own act and deed. Grants and conveyances commonly begin with recitals of what has been before done, leading to what is now done: accordingly, here is a recital of the special causes and considerations moving Solomon to build this house.

[1.] He recites the want of such a place. It was necessary that this should be premised; for, according to the dispensation they were under, there must be but one place in which they must expect God to record his name. If, therefore, there were any other chosen, this would be a usurpation. But he shows, from what God himself had said, that there was no other (v. 16): *I chose no city to build a house in for my name;* therefore there is occasion for the building of this.

[2.] He recites David's purpose to build such a place. God chose the person first that should rule his people (*I chose David, v. 16*) and then put it into *his heart to build a house* for God's name, v. 17. It was not a project of his own, for the magnifying of himself; but his good father, of blessed memory, laid the first design of it, though he lived not to lay the first stone.

[3.] He recites God's promise concerning himself. God approved his father's purpose (v. 18): *Thou didst well, that it was in thy heart*. Note, Sincere intentions to do good shall be graciously approved and accepted of God, though Providence prevent our putting them in execution. *The desire of a man is his kindness*. See ^{<4082>}2 Corinthians 8:12. God accepted David's good will, yet would not permit him to do the good work, but reserved the honour of it for his son (v. 19): *He shall build the house to my name*; so that what he had done was not of his own head, nor for his own glory, but the work itself was according to his father's design and his doing it was according to God's designation.

[4.] He recites what he himself had done, and with what intention: *I have built a house, not for my own name, but for the name of the Lord God of Israel* (v. 20), and *set there a place for the ark*, v. 21. Thus all the right, title, interest, claim, and demand, whatsoever, which he or his had or might have in or to this house, or any of its appurtenances, he resigns, surrenders, and gives up, to God for ever. It is for his name, and his ark. In this, says he, *the Lord hath performed his word that he spoke*. Note, Whatever good we do, we must look upon it as the performance of God's promise to us, rather than the performance of our promises to him. The more we do for God the more we are indebted to him; for our sufficiency is of him, and not of ourselves.

^{<1082>}1 KINGS 8:22-53

SOLOMON'S PRAYER

Solomon having made a general surrender of this house to God, which God had signified his acceptance of by taking possession, next follows Solomon's prayer, in which he makes a more particular declaration of the uses of that surrender, with all humility and reverence, desiring that God would agree thereto. In short, it is his request that this temple may be deemed and taken, not only for a house of sacrifice (no mention is made of that in all this prayer, that was taken for granted), but a *house of prayer for all people*; and herein it was a type of the gospel church; see ^{<2507>}Isaiah 56:7, compared with ^{<4213>}Matthew 21:13. Therefore Solomon opened this house, not only with an extraordinary sacrifice, but with an extraordinary prayer.

I. The person that prayed this prayer was great. Solomon did not appoint one of the priests to do it, nor one of the prophets, but did it himself, *in the presence of all the congregation of Israel*, v. 22.

1. It was well that he was able to do it, a sign that he had made a good improvement of the pious education which his parents gave him. With all his learning, it seems, he learnt to pray well, and knew how to express himself to God in a suitable manner, *pro re nata* — *on the spur of the occasion*, without a prescribed form. In the crowd of his philosophical transactions, his proverbs, and songs, he did not forget his devotions. He was a gainer by prayer (^{<40B1>}1 Kings 3:11, etc.), and, we may suppose, gave himself much to it, so that he excelled, as we find here, in praying gifts.

2. It was well that he was willing to do it, and not shy of performing divine service before so great a congregation. He was far from thinking it any disparagement to him to be his own chaplain and the mouth of the assembly to God; and shall any think themselves too great to do this office for their own families? Solomon, in all his other glory, even on his ivory throne, looked not so great as he did now. Great men should thus support the reputation of religious exercises and so honour God with their greatness. Solomon was herein a type of Christ, the great intercessor for all over whom he rules.

II. The posture in which he prayed was very reverent, and expressive of humility, seriousness, and fervency in prayer. He *stood before the altar of the Lord*, intimating that he expected the success of his prayer in virtue of that sacrifice which should be offered up in the fulness of time, typified by the sacrifices offered at that altar. But when he addressed himself to prayer,

1. He *kneeled down*, as appears, v. 54, where he is said to *rise from his knees*; compare ^{<40B3>}2 Chronicles 6:13. Kneeling is the most proper posture for prayer, ^{<40B4>}Ephesians 3:14. The greatest of men must not think it below them to *kneel before the Lord their Maker*. Mr. Herbert says, “Kneeling never spoiled silk stocking.”

2. He *spread forth his hands towards heaven*, and (as it should seem by v. 54) continued so to the end of the prayer, hereby expressing his desire towards, and expectations from, God, as a *Father in heaven*. He spread forth his hands, as it were to offer up the prayer from an open enlarged heart and to present it to heaven, and also to receive thence, with both

arms, the mercy which he prayed for. Such outward expressions of the fixedness and fervour of devotion ought not to be despised or ridiculed.

III. The prayer itself was very long, and perhaps much longer than is here recorded. At the throne of grace we have liberty of speech, and should use our liberty. It is not making long prayers, but making them for a pretence, that Christ condemns. In this excellent prayer Solomon does, as we should in every prayer,

1. Give glory to God. This he begins with, as the most proper act of adoration. He addresses himself to God as the *Lord God of Israel*, a God in covenant with them And,

(1.) He gives him the praise of what he is, in general, the best of beings in himself (“*There is no God like thee*, none of the powers in heaven or earth to be compared with thee”), and the best of masters to his people: “*Who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants*; not only as good as thy word in keeping covenant, but better than thy word in keeping mercy, doing that for them of which thou hast not given them an express promise, provided they *walk before thee with all their heart*, are zealous for thee, with an eye to thee.”

(2.) He gives him thanks for what he had done, in particular, for his family (v. 24): “*Thou hast kept with thy servant David*, as with thy other servants, *that which thou promisedst him*.” The promise was a great favour to him, his support and joy, and now performance is the crown of it: *Thou hast fulfilled it, as it is this day*. Fresh experiences of the truth of God's promises call for enlarged praises.

2. He sues for grace and favour from God.

(1.) That God would perform to him and his the mercy which he had promised, v. 25, 26. Observe how this comes in. He thankfully acknowledges the performance of the promise in part; hitherto God had been faithful to his word: “*Thou hast kept with thy servant David that which thou promisedst him*, so far that his son fills his throne and has built the intended temple; *therefore now keep with thy servant David that which thou hast further promised him*, and which yet remains to be fulfilled in its season.” Note, The experiences we have had of God's performing his promises should encourage us to depend upon them and plead them with God: and those who expect further mercies must be thankful for former

mercies. Hitherto God has helped, ^{<4010>}2 Corinthians 1:10. Solomon repeats the promise (v. 25): *There shall not fail thee a man to sit on the throne, not omitting the condition, so that thy children take heed to their way;* for we cannot expect God's performance of the promise but upon our performance of the condition. And then he humbly begs this entail (v. 26): *Now, O God of Israel! let thy word be verified.* God's promises (as we have often observed) must be both the guide of our desires and the ground of our hopes and expectations in prayer. David had prayed (^{<3075>}2 Samuel 7:25): *Lord, do as thou hast said.* Note, Children should learn of their godly parents how to pray, and plead in prayer.

(2.) That God would have respect to this temple which he had now taken possession of, and that his eyes might be *continually open towards it* (v. 29), that he would graciously own it, and so put an honour upon it. To this purpose,

[1.] He premises, *First*, A humble admiration of God's gracious condescension (v. 27): *“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Can we imagine that a Being infinitely high, and holy, and happy, will stoop so low as to let it be said of him that he dwells upon the earth and blesses the worms of the earth with his presence — the earth, that is corrupt, and overspread with sin — cursed, and reserved to fire? Lord, how is it?”* *Secondly*, A humble acknowledgment of the incapacity of the house he had built, though very capacious, to contain God: *“The heaven of heavens cannot contain thee,* for no place can include him who is present in all places; even this house is too little, too mean to be the residence of him that is infinite in being and glory.” Note, When we have done the most we can for God we must acknowledge the infinite distance and disproportion between us and him, between our services and his perfections.

[2.] This premised, he prays in general, *First*, That God would graciously hear and answer the prayer he was now praying, v. 28. It was a humble prayer (*the prayer of thy servant*), an earnest prayer (such a prayer as is a cry), a prayer made in faith (*before thee, as the Lord, and my God*): *“Lord, hearken to it, have respect to it,* not as the prayer of Israel's king (no man's dignity in the world, or titles of honour, will recommend him to God), but as the prayer of thy servant.” *Secondly*, That God would in like manner hear and answer all the prayers that should, at any time hereafter, be made in or towards this house which he had now built, and of which God had said, *My name shall be there* (v. 29), his own prayers (*Hearken to the*

prayers which thy servant shall make), and the prayers of all Israel, and of every particular Israelite (v. 30): “*Hear it in heaven, that is indeed thy dwelling-place, of which this is but a figure; and, when thou hearest, forgive the sin that separates between them and God, even the iniquity of their holy things.*” *a.* He supposes that God’s people will ever be a prayer people; he resolves to adhere to that duty himself. *b.* He directs them to have an eye, in their prayers, to that place where God was pleased to manifest his glory as he did not any where else on earth. None but priests might come into that place; but, when they worshipped in the courts of the temple, it must be with an eye towards it, not as the object of their worship (that were idolatry), but as an instituted medium of their worship, helping the weakness of their faith, and typifying the mediation of Jesus Christ, who is the true temple, to whom we must have an eye in every thing wherein we have to do with God. Those that were at a distance looked towards Jerusalem, for the sake of the temple, even when it was in ruins, ^{<2160}Daniel 6:10. *c.* He begs that God will *hear the prayers, and forgive the sins*, of all that look this way in their prayers. Not as if he thought all the devout prayers offered up to God by those who had no knowledge of this house, or regard to it, were therefore rejected; but he desired that the sensible tokens of the divine presence with which this house was blessed might always give sensible encouragement and comfort to believing petitioners.

[3.] More particularly, he here puts divers cases in which he supposed application would be made to God by prayer in or towards this house of prayer.

First, If God were appealed to by an oath for the determining of any controverted right between man and man, and the oath were taken before this altar, he prayed that God would, in some way or other, discover the truth, and judge between the contending parties, v. 31, 32. He prayed that, in difficult matters, this throne of grace might be a throne of judgment, from which God would right the injured that believingly appealed to it, and punish the injurious that presumptuously appealed to it. It was usual to swear by the temple and altar (^{<4216}Matthew 23:16, 18), which corruption perhaps took its rise from this supposition of an oath taken, not *by* the temple or altar, but *at* or *near* them, for the greater solemnity.

Secondly, If the people of Israel were groaning under any national calamity, or any particular Israelite under any personal calamity, he desired

that the prayers they should make in or towards this house might be heard and answered.

a. In case of public judgments, war (v. 33), want of rain (v. 35), famine, or pestilence (v. 37), and he ends with an *et cetera* — any plague or sickness; for no calamity befalls other people which may not befall God's Israel. Now he supposes,

(a.) That the cause of the judgment would be sin, and nothing else. “If they be *smitten before the enemy*, if there be no rain, it is *because they have sinned against thee*.” It is sin that makes all the mischief.

(b.) That the consequence of the judgment would be that they would cry to God, and make supplication to him in or towards that house. Those that slighted him before would solicit him then. *Lord, in trouble have they visited thee. In their afflictions they will seek me early and earnestly.*

(c.) That the condition of the removal of the judgment was something more than barely praying for it. He could not, he would not, ask that their prayer might be answered unless they did also *turn from their sin* (v. 35) and *turn again to God* (v. 33), that is, unless they did truly repent and reform. On no other terms may we look for salvation in this world or the other. But, if they did thus qualify themselves for mercy, he prays,

[a.] That God would hear from heaven, his holy temple above, to which they must look, through *this* temple.

[b.] That he would forgive their sin; for then only are judgments removed in mercy when sin is pardoned.

[c.] That he would *teach them the good way wherein they should walk*, by his Spirit, with his word and prophets; and thus they might be both profited by their trouble (for *blessed is the man whom God chastens and teaches*), and prepared for deliverance, which then comes in love when it finds us brought back to the good way of God and duty.

[d.] That he would then remove the judgment, and redress the grievance, whatever it might be — not only accept the prayer, but give in the mercy prayed for.

b. In case of personal afflictions, v. 38-40. "If any man of Israel has an errand to thee, here let him find thee, here let him find favour with thee." He does not mention particulars, so numerous, so various, are the grievances of the children of men.

(a.) He supposes that the complainants themselves would very sensibly feel their own burden, and would open that case to God which otherwise they kept to themselves and did not make any man acquainted with: *They shall know every man the plague of his own heart*, what it is that pains him, and (as we say) where the shoe pinches, and shall spread their hands, that is, spread their case, as Hezekiah spread the letter, in prayer, towards this house; whether the trouble be of body or mind, they shall represent it before God. Inward burdens seem especially meant. Sin is the plague of our own heart; our indwelling corruptions are our spiritual diseases. Every Israelite indeed endeavours to know these, that he may mortify them and watch against the risings of them. These he complains of. This is the burden he groans under: *O wretched man that I am!* These drive him to his knees, drive him to the sanctuary. Lamenting these, *he spreads forth his hands* in prayer.

(b.) He refers all cases of this kind, that should be brought hither, to God.

[a.] To his omniscience: "*Thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men*, not only the plagues of their hearts, their several wants and burdens" (these he knows, but he will know them from us), "but the desire and intent of the heart, the sincerity or hypocrisy of it. Thou knowest which prayer comes from the heart, and which from the lips only." The hearts of kings are not unsearchable to God.

[b.] To his justice: *Give to every man according to his ways*; and he will not fail to do so, by the rules of grace, not the law, for then we should all be undone.

[c.] To his mercy: *Hear, and forgive, and do* (v. 39), *that they may fear thee all their days*, v. 40. This use we should make of the mercy of God to us in hearing our prayers and forgiving our sins, we should thereby be engaged to fear him while we live. *Fear the Lord and his goodness. There is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared.*

c. The case of the stranger that is not an Israelite is next mentioned, a proselyte that comes to the temple to pray to the God of Israel, being convinced of the folly and wickedness of worshipping the gods of his country.

(a.) He supposed that there would be many such (v. 41, 42), that the fame of God's great works which he had wrought for Israel, by which he proved himself to be above all gods, nay, to be God alone, would reach to distant countries: "Those that live remote *shall hear of thy strong hand, and thy stretched-out arm*; and this will bring all thinking considerate people to pray towards this house, that they may obtain the favour of a God that is able to do them a real kindness."

(b.) He begged that God would accept and answer the proselyte's prayer (v. 43): *Do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for*. Thus early, thus ancient, were the indications of favour towards the *sinner of the Gentiles*: as there was then *one law for the native and for the stranger* (⁽¹²¹²⁾Exodus 12:49), so there was one gospel for both.

(c.) Herein he aimed at the glory of God and the propagating of the knowledge of him: "O let the stranger, in a special manner, speed well in his addresses, that he may carry away with him to his own country a good report of the God of Israel, *that all people may know thee and fear thee* (and, if they know thee aright, they will fear thee) *as do thy people Israel*." So far was Solomon from monopolizing the knowledge and service of God, and wishing to have them confined to Israel only (which was the envious desire of the Jews in the days of Christ and his apostles), that he prayed that *all people might fear God as Israel did*. Would to God that all the children of men might receive the adoption, and be made God's children! *Father, thus glorify thy name*.

d. The case of an army going forth to battle is next recommended by Solomon to the divine favour. It is supposed that the army is encamped at a distance, somewhere a great way off, sent by divine order *against the enemy*, v. 44. "When they are ready to engage, and consider the perils and doubtful issues of battle, and put up a prayer to God for protection and success, with their eye *towards this city and temple*, then *hear their prayer*, encourage their hearts, strengthen their hands, cover their heads, and so maintain their cause and give them victory." Soldiers in the field must not think it enough that those who tarry at home pray for them, but

must pray for themselves, and they are here encouraged to hope for a gracious answer. Praying should always go along with fighting.

e. The case of poor captives is the last that is here mentioned as a proper object of divine compassion.

(a.) He supposes that Israel will sin. He knew them, and himself, and the nature of man, too well to think this a foreign supposition; *for there is no man that sinneth not*, that does not enough to justify God in the severest rebukes of his providence, no man but what is in danger of falling into gross sin, and will if God leave him to himself.

(b.) He supposes, what may well be expected, that, if Israel revolt from God, God will be *angry with them*, and *deliver them into the hand of their enemies*, to be carried captive into a strange country, v. 46.

(c.) He then supposes that they will bethink themselves, will consider their ways (for afflictions put men upon consideration), and, when once they are brought to consider, they will repent and pray, will confess their sins, and humble themselves, saying, *We have sinned and have done perversely* (v. 47), and *in the land of their enemies will return to God*, whom they had forsaken in their own land.

(d.) He supposes that in their prayers they will look towards their own land, the holy land, Jerusalem, the holy city, and the temple, the holy house, and directs them so to do (v. 48), for his sake who gave them that land, chose that city, and to whose honour that house was built.

(e.) He prays that then God would *hear their prayers, forgive their sins, plead their cause*, and incline their enemies to *have compassion on them*, v. 49. 50. God has all hearts in his hand, and can, when he pleases, turn the strongest stream the contrary way, and make those to pity his people who have been their most cruel persecutors. See this prayer answered, ^{<PAGE>}Psalm 106:46. He *made them to be pitied of those that carried them captive*, which, if it did not release them, yet eased their captivity.

(f.) He pleads their relation to God, and his interest in them: “They are thy people, whom thou hast taken into thy covenant and under thy care and conduct, thy inheritance, from which, more than from any other nation, thy rent and tribute of glory issue and arise (v. 51), *separated*

from among all people to be so and by distinguishing favours appropriated to thee,” 5:53.

Lastly, After all these particulars, he concludes with this general request, that God would hearken to all his praying people *in all that they call unto him for*, v. 52. No place now, under the gospel, can be imagined to add any acceptableness to the prayers made in or towards it, as the temple then did. That was a shadow: the substance is Christ; whatever we ask in his name, it shall be given us.

1 KINGS 8:54-61

SOLOMON BLESSES AND EXHORTS THE PEOPLE

Solomon, after his sermon in Ecclesiastes, gives us the conclusion of the whole matter; so he does here, after this long prayer; it is called his *blessing the people*, v. 55. He pronounced it standing, that he might be the better heard, and because he blessed as one having authority. Never were words more fitly spoken, nor more pertinently. Never was congregation dismissed with that which was more likely to affect them and abide with them.

I. He gives God the glory of the great and kind things he had done for Israel, v. 56. He stood up to *bless the congregation* (v. 55), but began with blessing God; for we must in *every thing give thanks*. Do we expect God should do well for us and ours? let us take all occasion to speak well of him and his. He blesses God who has given, he does not say wealth, and honour, and power, and victory, to Israel, but *rest*, as if that were a blessing more valuable than any of those. Let not those who have rest under-value that blessing, though they want some others. He compares the blessings God had bestowed upon them with the promises he had given them, that God might have the honour of his faithfulness and the truth of that word of his which he has *magnified above all his name*.

1. He refers to the *promises given by the hand of Moses*, as he did (v. 15, 24) to those which were made to David. There were promises given by Moses, as well as precepts. It was long ere God gave Israel the promised rest, but they had it at last, after many trials. The day will come when God's spiritual Israel will *rest from all their labours*.

2. He does, as it were, write a receipt in full on the back of these bonds: *There has not failed one word of all his good promises.* This discharge he gives in the name of all Israel, to the everlasting honour of the divine faithfulness, and the everlasting encouragement of all those that build upon the divine promises.

II. He blesses himself and the congregation, expressing his earnest desire and hope of these four things: —

1. The presence of God with them, which is all in all to the happiness of a church and nation and of every particular person. This great congregation was now shortly to be scattered, and it was not likely that they would ever be all together again in this world. Solomon therefore dismisses them with this blessing: “*The Lord be present with us, and that will be comfort enough when we are absent from each other. The Lord our God be with us, as he was with our fathers* (v. 57); *let him not leave us, let him be to us to day, and to ours for ever, what he was to those that went before us.*”

2. The power of his grace upon them: “*Let him be with us, and continue with us, not that he may enlarge our coasts and increase our wealth, but that he may incline our hearts to himself, to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments,*” v. 58. 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.

3. An answer to the prayer he had now made: “*Let these my words be nigh unto the Lord our God day and night,* v. 59. Let a gracious return be made to every prayer that shall be made here, and that will be a continual answer to this prayer.” What Solomon asks here for his prayer is still granted in the intercession of Christ, of which his supplication was a type; that powerful prevailing intercession *is before the Lord our God day and night*, for our great Advocate 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*, ⁶⁶²¹⁰ Revelation 12:10) *and the common cause of his people Israel, at all times*, upon all occasions, as the matter shall require, so as to speak for us *the word of the day in its day*, as the original here reads it, from which we shall receive grace sufficient, suitable, and seasonable, *in every time of need.*

4. The glorifying of God in the enlargement of his kingdom among men. Let Israel be thus blessed, thus favoured; not that all people may become tributaries to us (Solomon sees his kingdom as great as he desires), but *that all people may know that the Lord is God, and he only, and may come and worship him*, v. 60. With this Solomon's prayers, like *the prayers of his father David, the son of Jesse, are ended* (^{<19729>}Psalm 72:19, 20): *Let the whole earth be filled with his glory*. We cannot close our prayers with a better summary than this, *Father, glorify thy name*.

III. 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, and 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*, v. 61. Let your obedience be universal, without dividing — upright, without dissembling — constant, without declining;" this is evangelical perfection.

^{<1082>}1 KINGS 8:62-66

SOLOMON HOLDS A GREAT FEAST

We read before that Judah and Israel were eating and drinking, and very cheerful under their own vines and fig-trees; here we have them so in God's courts. Now they found Solomon's words true concerning Wisdom's ways, that they are ways of pleasantness.

I. They had abundant joy and satisfaction while they attended at God's house, for there,

1. Solomon offered a great sacrifice, 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep, enough to have drained the country of cattle if it had not been a very fruitful land. The heathen thought themselves very generous when they offered sacrifices by *hundreds* (*hecatombs* they called them), but Solomon out-did them: he offered them by *thousands*. When Moses dedicated his altar, the peace-offerings were twenty-four *bullocks, and of rams, goats, and lambs*, 180 (^{<00788>}Numbers 7:88); then the people were poor, but now that they had increased in wealth more was expected from them. Where God sows plentifully he must reap accordingly. All these sacrifices could not be offered in one day, but in the several days of the feast. Thirty oxen a

day served Solomon's table, but thousands shall go to God's altar. Few are thus minded, to spend more on their souls than on their bodies. The flesh of the peace-offerings, which belonged to the offerer, it is likely, Solomon treated the people with. Christ fed those who attended him. The brazen altar was not large enough to receive all these sacrifices, so that, to serve the present occasion, they were forced to offer many of them *in the middle of the court*, (v. 64), some think on altars, altars of earth or stone, erected for the purpose and taken down when the solemnity was over, others think on the bare ground. Those that will be generous in serving God need not stint themselves for want of room and occasion to be so.

2. He kept a feast, the feast of tabernacles, as it should seem, after the feast of dedication, and both together lasted fourteen days (v. 65), yet they said not, *Behold, what a weariness is this!*

II. They carried this joy and satisfaction with them to their own houses. When they were dismissed they blessed the king (v. 66), applauded him, admired him, and returned him the thanks of the congregation, and then *went to their tents joyful and glad of heart*, all easy and pleased. God's goodness was the matter of their joy, so it should be of ours at all times. They rejoiced in God's blessing both on the royal family and on the kingdom; thus should we go home rejoicing from holy ordinances, and go on our way rejoicing for God's goodness to our Lord Jesus (of whom David his servant was a type, in the advancement and establishment of his throne, pursuant to the covenant of redemption), and to all believers, his spiritual Israel, in their sanctification and consolation, pursuant to the covenant of grace. If we rejoice not herein always it is our own fault.