**Hear the supplication of your servant**

**1 Kings 8:22-53**

**Key verse 8:30**

**“Hear the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.”**

A long time ago, we had one woman in our ministry. If I am correct, she was a Chinese from Taiwan. She came to America as an immigrant. She was about thirties or early forties. She did not have her husband, but she had one son. Life in America as an immigrant must have been tough for her. She came to our church and shared her stories. I was not good at listening to her because she talks about one or two hears easily and all her talk is small talks about her life. There is no meaningful in her talk. So usually I did not make any effort to listen to her. In fact, I tried to avoid her a little. But msn Isaac was different. He listened to her one or two hours many times although he was busy working at the bank on full time. One day she came to our church and talked to Msn Isaac. M. Isaac told me she talked to him 5 hours straight.

I was surprised to hear that because she had still so much to say even after all these talking to M. Isaac. During the 5 hours of straight talk to M. Isaac, she shed many tears, and then finally she left. And that was her last time we saw her. We found that she had to move to a other state. On that day, I believe, it is a Saturday, by the mercy of God, she had someone who can hear all of her stories again 5 hour straight. And she was able to leave with great peace and joy because she was heard.

Come to think of it, M. Isaac represented to the Lord, the God of Israel in today’s passage who hears. He reveals our God, Jesus Christ, the most because he heard all her stories in great mercy and love. She could tell M. Isaac all she wanted. And then she was ready to leave and go to other state. Now what M. Isaac did truly represents the mercy and love of the Lord, the God of Israel, in today’s passage who hears all their prayers, pleas, and supplications to the full. I truly believe that M. Isaac, on that Saturday, when he needed to write his Sunday message, revealed the mercy of the Lord, spending 5 straight hours by hearing all she had to say. Surely he repented the Lord, our God, who hears all our prayers, pleas, and supplications all the time without any time limit. He is God who hears. Today we would like to know him through today’s message.

My message has two parts.

**Part I. You who keep your covenant of love (v.22-26)**

**Part II. Hear from heaven and act (v.27-53)**

**Part I. You who keep your covenant of love (v.22-26)**

Look at **verses 22-26**

“**22Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in front of the whole assembly of Israel, spread out his hands toward heaven 23and said:**

**“Lord, the God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below—you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way. 24You have kept your promise to your servant David my father; with your mouth you have promised and with your hand you have fulfilled it—as it is today.**

**25“Now Lord, the God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father the promises you made to him when you said, ‘You shall never fail to have a successor to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your descendants are careful in all they do to walk before me faithfully as you have done.’ 26And now, God of Israel, let your word that you promised your servant David my father come true.**

Solomon began to pray before the altar of the Lord. He was not standing in front of the Holy Place, main body of the temple. But he was standing before the altar of the Lord. The altar is the place where people bring their sacrifices and blood will be shed.

Solomon mentioned about the faithful character of the Lord first. There is no God like the God of Israel who is faithful to his covenant of love. “The covenant of love” is for those who continue in God’s way wholeheartedly. Then as the example of the Lord’s faithfulness, Solomon mentioned about the Lord’s fulfillment of his promise given to his father David and himself in 25 and 26. The completion of the temple is the evidence of the Lord’s faithfulness to his father David.

Look at **verses 25-26.** “**25“Now Lord, the God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father the promises you made to him when you said, ‘You shall never fail to have a successor to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your descendants are careful in all they do to walk before me faithfully as you have done.’ 26And now, God of Israel, let your word that you promised your servant David my father come true.**

Solomon asked the Lord to keep his promises given to his father David regarding the dynasty. It is a great concern for Solomon because he will be the second king of the dynasty. If the dynasty does not continue, the promise of the Lord to David would not be fulfilled. So Solomon prays based on God’s faithfulness that the Lord would keep his promise. But there was one condition on the promise of the dynasty. It is to walk in obedience to the Lord. **You shall never fail to have a successor to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your descendants are careful in all they do to walk before me faithfully as you have done.’** This is what the Lord has said to David in chapter 2 of 1 kings, and David gave the message to Solomon as the time drew near for him to die. **“and that the Lord may keep his promise to me, “If you descendants watch how they live and walk before me faithfully with all their hearts and soul, you will never fail to have a successor on the throne of Israel.” (1 Kings 2:4)**

Acknowledging the Lord’s faithfulness first in our prayers is a good practice. It is because we believe the Lord’s answer for our prayers based on his faithfulness in his promises. We have a promise from Jesus Christ. He said in **John 14:13-14. “13And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”** It is based on the covenant of love, the blood covenant which he shed for all believers.

**Part II. Hear from heaven and act (v.27-53)**

**Verses 27-30 27“But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built! 28Yet give attention to your servant’s prayer and his plea for mercy, Lord my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence this day. 29May your eyes be open toward this temple night and day, this place of which you said, ‘My Name shall be there,’ so that you will hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place. 30Hear the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.**

These verses are like the introduction before Solomon offers specific prayer topics. God cannot dwell on earth. He is not limited by any visible or invisible things because he transcends everything. So the only thing Solomon’s temple has is the promise “My Name shall be there.” The temple is not the actual place of the Lord’s dwelling, but it is the place where “the Name of the Lord” is there. Since the temple has the name of the Lord, praying toward the place of the temple is accepted as the prayer to the Lord, the God of Israel.

In today’s passage, before the Lord, Solomon called himself as ‘your servant.” He called the Israelites, “your servants.” It is fitting because he and his people Israel were the servants of the Lord. Then Solomon asked God to pay attention to his prayer toward the temple at that day. (v.28)

In verse 30, he asks the Lord, the God of Israel to hear the supplication of himself and the Israelites when they pray toward the temple from heaven, his dwelling place. Then Solomon asks the Lord to forgive them after hearing their prayers. **“And when you hear forgive.”**

Forgiveness comes from hearing. When the Lord hears their supplication and repentance, he forgives.

From verse 31, Solomon offered seven specific prayer topics one by one. They are:

(1) When anyone wrongs their neighbor
(2) When Israel have been defeated by an enemy\*
(3) When there is no rain
(4) When disaster or disease may come\*
(5) When the foreigner has come
(6) When the Israel go to war without sin\*
(7) When they sin and become captives in a foreign land\*

We can notice one thing from his seven prayer topics. It is four prayer topics are related to war. So I made a mark \*. It shows the main prayer topic and the main concern for Solomon is the war. Why is this so? Probably it is because war is the time for people to suffer the most. As we learned from the last Sunday message, the glory of the Lord is the suffering glory. It is because he is with his people who suffer. Indeed the bible reveals the Lord, the God of Israel, also went to exile where his people were suffering. To be with his suffering people is the demonstration of the Lord’s mercy and love.

Now let us look at the seven prayer topic one by one.

Now the first one. **(1) When anyone wrongs their neighbor**

First one is about doing wrong to one’s neighbor. Look at **verses 31-32. “31“When anyone wrongs their neighbor and is required to take an oath and they come and swear the oath before your altar in this temple, 32then hear from heaven and act. Judge between your servants, condemning the guilty by bringing down on their heads what they have done, and vindicating the innocent by treating them in accordance with their innocence.”**

This is a difficult case. The event involves without any witness or visible evidence. It is like the case of “he says” “she says.” In those cases, they would be brought in front of the altar and swear an oath. Solomon prays that the Lord, the God of Israel, would establish justice, by condemning the guilty and vindicating the innocent. If Solomon did not make a wise decision about two prostitutes, the case belongs to this category.

Justice is so important, but we know it is so challenging to establish justice. It is hard to know which is justice. But the Lord knows. So Solomon prays that the Lord would establish justice between neighbors.

The second prayer is about being defeated by an enemy.

(1) When anyone wrongs their neighbor
**(2) When Israel have been defeated by an enemy\***
(3) When there is no rain
(4) When disaster or disease may come\*
(5) When the foreigner has come
(6) When the Israel go to war without sin\*
(7) When they sin and become captives in a foreign land\*

**Verses 33-34.** **33“When your people Israel have been defeated by an enemy because they have sinned against you, and when they turn back to you and give praise to your name, praying and making supplication to you in this temple, 34then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your people Israel and bring them back to the land you gave to their ancestors.**

The Israelites were defeated by their enemies because of their sin against the Lord, the God of Israel. But not all people became exiles. Some who were left prayed at the temple, and the Lord would forgive them and bring them back to their home land again. It seems to me this is a case where not all people went for exiles because there were people who prayed at the temple. But both group of people would repent in this case. When we look at Israel’s history, there are many years of gap between people were taken to foreign lands due to their sin. The captivity of people in the foreign land happened several times. So if the Israelites who had remained in their home land had repented together with the exiles, the Lord would bring the exiles back.

(1) When anyone wrongs their neighbor
(2) When Israel have been defeated by an enemy\*
**(3) When there is no rain**(4) When disaster or disease may come\*
(5) When the foreigner has come
(6) When the Israel go to war without sin\*
(7) When they sin and become captives in a foreign land\*

Third, it is about drought. **Verses 35-36**. **35“When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because your people have sinned against you, and when they pray toward this place and give praise to your name and turn from their sin because you have afflicted them, 36then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel. Teach them the right way to live, and send rain on the land you gave your people for an inheritance.**

The drought, no rain, was caused by their sin against the Lord. After suffering they repent and pray toward the temple and give praise to God’s name. Giving praise to God’s name means they repent and restore their faith in the Lord. When they turn from their sin, Solomon asks the Lord to forgiven them and send the rain on the promised land.

(1) When anyone wrongs their neighbor
(2) When Israel have been defeated by an enemy\*
(3) When there is no rain
**(4) When disaster or disease may come\***(5) When the foreigner has come
(6) When the Israel go to war without sin\*
(7) When they sin and become captives in a foreign land\*

Fourth, it is about personal deliverance during the time of disaster or disease. **Verses 37-40.**

**37“When famine or plague comes to the land, or blight or mildew, locusts or grasshoppers, or when an enemy besieges them in any of their cities, whatever disaster or disease may come, 38and when a prayer or plea is made by anyone among your people Israel—being aware of the afflictions of their own hearts, and spreading out their hands toward this temple— 39then hear from heaven, your dwelling place. Forgive and act; deal with everyone according to all they do, since you know their hearts (for you alone know every human heart), 40so that they will fear you all the time they live in the land you gave our ancestors.**

It is about individual’s prayer during the time of disaster or diseases. Here “an enemy besieges them in any of other cities” probably refers to the temporary and partial siege of any cities, and it probably does not refer to full blown up war.

If anyone of them prays or offers supplication to the Lord, he will answer accordingly. The Lord knows the heart of everyone. So he can bring justice to everyone according to what they do. Only the Lord knows everyone’s heart. Therefore only the Lord can bring true justice for each one of them. These verses teaches us that there is no way for us to deceive God, and indeed God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

So even when we face natural disasters or diseases which are out of our control we do not need to fear for any disaster or diseases as long as we live before the Lord. The Lord will bring about justice according to what we do and our heart. The Lord knows our hearts and he will respond according to our hearts.

The response of the Lord for each one of us individually in the time of disaster and diseases reminds us of Psalm.

**Psalm 18:25-27**

**25To the faithful you show yourself faithful,
    to the blameless you show yourself blameless,
26to the pure you show yourself pure,
    but to the devious you show yourself shrewd.
27You save the humble
    but bring low those whose eyes are haughty.**

The faithful people will experience that the Lord is faithful to them. The blameless people will know the Lord is blameless. The pure will experience the pure Lord. But the devious will know the Lord is shrewd. The Lord will not be deceived by them. The Lord saves the humble and brings down the proud. As the Lord said, “with the measure you use it will be measured to you.”

When the people saw how much the Lord can bring his justice without fail they will begin to fear the Lord. It will help them to live in the promised land with fear of the Lord as long as they live.

(1) When anyone wrongs their neighbor
(2) When Israel have been defeated by an enemy\*
(3) When there is no rain
(4) When disaster or disease may come\*
**(5) When the foreigner has come**(6) When the Israel go to war without sin\*
(7) When they sin and become captives in a foreign land\*

Fifth. It is about the foreigner. **Verses 41-43. “41“As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your name— 42for they will hear of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm—when they come and pray toward this temple, 43then hear from heaven, your dwelling place. Do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your Name.**

Foreigners, especially those who lived near Israel, would hear the name of the Lord, the God of Israel because of the mighty hand of the Lord. Some of them would come to the temple. When the foreigners come and pray toward the temple, Solomon asks the Lord to do whatever the foreigner asks of the Lord. The purpose of doing this is for other foreigners and eventually all the peoples of the earth. Solomon prays that all the peoples of the earth may know the name of the Lord and fear him together with the Lord’s people Israel.

(1) When anyone wrongs their neighbor
(2) When Israel have been defeated by an enemy\*
(3) When there is no rain
(4) When disaster or disease may come\*
(5) When the foreigner has come
**(6) When the Israel go to war without sin\***(7) When they sin and become captives in a foreign land\*

Sixth, it is about war without their sin. **Verses 44-45. 44“When your people go to war against their enemies, wherever you send them, and when they pray to the Lord toward the city you have chosen and the temple I have built for your Name, 45then hear from heaven their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause.**

Verse 44b, “Wherever you send them” shows this war is different from the wars caused by their sin against the Lord. So probably the war is started by other nations, and it is the war where the Lord can use his people as his instrument. The Israelites do not sin, and still there can be war, and the Lord can send them wherever he wants. Then they can pray toward the temple, and the Lord can uphold their cause.

(1) When anyone wrongs their neighbor
(2) When Israel have been defeated by an enemy\*
(3) When there is no rain
(4) When disaster or disease may come\*
(5) When the foreigner has come
(6) When the Israel go to war without sin\*
**(7) When they sin and become captives in a foreign land\***

Seventh, it is about exile due to their sin. **Verses 46-51. 46“When they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you become angry with them and give them over to their enemies, who take them captive to their own lands, far away or near; 47and if they have a change of heart in the land where they are held captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their captors and say, ‘We have sinned, we have done wrong, we have acted wickedly’; 48and if they turn back to you with all their heart and soul in the land of their enemies who took them captive, and pray to you toward the land you gave their ancestors, toward the city you have chosen and the temple I have built for your Name; 49then from heaven, your dwelling place, hear their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause. 50And forgive your people, who have sinned against you; forgive all the offenses they have committed against you, and cause their captors to show them mercy; 51for they are your people and your inheritance, whom you brought out of Egypt, out of that iron-smelting furnace.**

The Israelites become captives of the war and exiles in a foreign land because they sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel. In the land of their captors, they can repent and ask God’s forgiveness, praying toward the temple. Then the Lord would hear them and forgive them and uphold their cause. It is by the way of causing their captors to show them mercy.

Mentioning about war or battle is mentioned 4 times in today’s prayer. Partial invasion of a city, partial exiles, just war, and exiles due to their sin. So prayer for war is a major concern of Solomon’s prayer. From the very beginning, the Lord, the God of Israel, made it very clear that if they sin they would become prisoners of wars and will be led to other foreign land.

But if they repent, they will have a chance to be restored to their home land again. The Lord, the God of Israel suffers together with his people who are in exiles. His mercy and love is expressed in his forgiveness and bring them back to their home land.

What the Lord does shows the Lord, the God of Israel, is the God of Hope. There is always hope in the Lord as long as we repent. When we repent, the Lord hears us and forgives and uphold our cause. So indeed there is always a second chance and hope in the Lord.

**Verses 52-53** is like a recap like the verses 27-30.

**52“May your eyes be open to your servant’s plea and to the plea of your people Israel, and may you listen to them whenever they cry out to you. 53For you singled them out from all the nations of the world to be your own inheritance, just as you declared through your servant Moses when you, Sovereign Lord, brought our ancestors out of Egypt.”**

Here, Solomon again asks the Lord to open his eyes toward the temple and hear their prayers, pleas and supplications of his people as he did in the beginning of his prayer. Israel became God’s people by the choice of the Sovereign Lord. They did not choose to become God’s people or his inheritance. The Sovereign Lord chose them as Moses brought them out of Egypt.

Jesus also said that for his disciples. You did not choose me but I chose you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last. In Jesus Christ we become God’s people, and we have such privilege to pray to the Lord God in Jesus’ name. And Jesus said, “Ask whatever in my name and I will do it.”

Jesus became our temple, and our body became the temple of the Holy Spirit. We do not need to pray toward the temple. Through Jesus we can pray and offer our supplication whenever and wherever we need, and we can experience of the mercy and love of Lord our God who hears, forgives and acts.

Now we learned about Solomon’s prayer. I want to ask you one question. What is the most important thing about prayer? It is to pray itself. So let us come to the Lord and offer our prayer every morning and evening and whenever we have time.

One word: hear the supplication of your servant.