

## 2 Chronicles 6:12-40 – “A House of Prayer”

(Pew Bible Page: 362-363)

**Intro:** In Mark 11:17 Jesus referred to the Temple, his Father’s house, as A House of Prayer for all the Nations. It is a striking phrase – A House of Prayer – and in our day it often is used to refer to the Church, and properly so as we’ll see tonight. When Jesus used that phrase, He was quoting Isaiah 56:7 and a quick look back at that passage will set our minds on the passage we have before us tonight, from which the thought, if not the phrase itself is taken. The verses we will examine tonight contain King Solomon’s prayer of dedication of the first Temple in Jerusalem and by the Biblical principle of the Law of First Mention<sup>1</sup>, we can go to these verses to understand the meaning of the phrase, A House of Prayer, and why it is appropriate for our application of it to our own church and any other church established on the foundation of the gospel. So let’s dig in...

**Proposition:** From the very beginning, God’s house has been called A House of Prayer, so evidently prayer is to be “job one” in our churches.

Our study tonight has two movements: (vv.12-17) Solomon’s Prayer, and (vv.18-40) Solomon’s Request.

(vv.12-17) Solomon’s Prayer – How did Solomon pray? Perhaps that is the first question to ask ourselves as we approach this whole matter of prayer. Let’s start in verses **2 Chronicles 6:12–13** - *12 Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands. 13 Solomon had made a bronze platform five cubits long, five cubits wide, and three cubits high, and had set it in the court, and he stood on it. Then he knelt on his knees in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven.* From the description of Solomon’s prayer in these verses we see that Solomon took prayer seriously. He stood before the Lord’s altar; he gathered with the Lord’s people; he expressed reverence before the Lord through his body posture; he had prepared a special platform on which to pray. All of these details draw our attention to Solomon’s attitude of heart toward approaching God in prayer. This reminds us of Jesus’ attitude toward prayer modeled in the gospels, and that is appropriate when we realize that Solomon is a type of Christ. In Old Testament typology, certain figures prefigure our Lord Jesus, pointing to His work, ministry and methods in preparation for His first or second coming. Notice how Solomon’s life and that of Christ parallel each other: Solomon was the son of his father, the king, and was charged with the responsibility of building A House of Prayer for all people. Likewise, Jesus was the only begotten Son of His heavenly Father, who is King over everything. Like Solomon, Jesus was charged by His Father with the responsibility of building A House of Prayer, the Church. Certainly, Jesus fulfills the typology predicted of Him in Solomon. Since Solomon so obviously typifies Jesus, one use of this passage is to see Jesus praying for His Church through the words of Solomon’s prayer. So, how did Solomon pray?

- He worshipped God: **2 Chronicles 6:14–15** - *14 and said, “O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven or on earth, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to*

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<sup>1</sup> The key to understanding the meaning of any Bible term or theme is usually found in its first mention in Scripture.

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*your servants who walk before you with all their heart, 15 who have kept with your servant David my father what you declared to him. You spoke with your mouth, and with your hand have fulfilled it this day.* He acknowledged God for Who He is and celebrated with thanksgiving God's promises kept. Notice how he put this last point: *You spoke with your mouth, and with your hand have fulfilled it this day.* This is God's way of doing things through prayer: He makes a promise with His words and fulfills that promise through the means of His people. God promised, and Solomon built. God, through human hands, kept His promise.

- He claimed God's unfulfilled future promises – Listen to what he prayed in **2 Chronicles 6:16–17** - **16** *Now therefore, O LORD, God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father what you have promised him, saying, 'You shall not lack a man to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk in my law as you have walked before me.'* **17** *Now therefore, O LORD, God of Israel, let your word be confirmed, which you have spoken to your servant David.* Solomon claimed God's promise of things yet to come. Some people wonder at this. It is a commonly asked question, “If God already has determined to do something, why do we have to pray?” It's a good question and there is a good answer! God ordains the answer and He also ordains the prayer that fetches the answer. A good example of this is in the story of Peter's incarceration in Jerusalem. An angel released him from prison, much to the surprise of the praying church! A puritan, Thomas Watson, quipped, “The angel fetched Peter out of prison, but it was prayer that fetched the angel!” God had already told Peter that he was going to live to be an old man (cf. John 21:18). That was God's promise. And how did God ordain that promise to be fulfilled in that instance? Through the prayers of His church. God ordains prayer as the instrument through which He fulfills the things He promises to His church. What if we fail to pray? Apparently, the promised blessing will not be given (cf. Genesis 18:22-33).

So, this is how Solomon prayed: He took prayer seriously. He worshipped God for Who He is. He thanked God for promises kept. He asked God to fulfill the promises not yet fulfilled.

(vv.18-40) Solomon's Request – All of these things were preliminary to Solomon's request of God. What did he ask? We are told in verses **2 Chronicles 6:18–21** - **18** *“But will God indeed dwell with man on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, how much less this house that I have built! 19 Yet have regard to the prayer of your servant and to his plea, O LORD my God, listening to the cry and to the prayer that your servant prays before you, 20 that your eyes may be open day and night toward this house, the place where you have promised to set your name, that you may listen to the prayer that your servant offers toward this place. 21 And listen to the pleas of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. And listen from heaven your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.* In a word, Solomon simply had one request:

- That God would make His house A House of Prayer – Solomon put this request first among all the things he would ask, so this is obviously his first concern. Following

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Solomon’s pattern, perhaps we can also say that Jesus’ first concern for His Church is that His Church would become a House of Prayer. This is challenging to our thinking about the matter of prayer, for most Christians seem to see prayer as a side light rather than a priority issue in the Christian life. If it is given priority at all, it is private prayer rather than common or corporate prayer. But this is not the Biblical outlook. Immediately after the fall of Man in the Garden and Cain’s subsequent murder of righteous Abel, we are told in Genesis 4:26 that, “*People began to call upon the name of the Lord,*” an obvious reference to prayer. Along with worship by sacrifice, prayer is the oldest and most basic form of worshipping God. Prayer is not a sideline; it is a main event in Christian worship.

- Secondary requests made by Solomon – Following Solomon’s call for God to make His house A House of Prayer, the remainder of the chapter contains a series of specific request ordained by God for prayer by the godly. Time does not permit us to look at each one in depth, but it is worthwhile to review these briefly and compare those to our priorities in prayer as 21<sup>st</sup> Century Christians:
  - (vv.22-23) Solomon asked God to Give Justice to His people when they pray.
  - (vv.24-25) Solomon asked God to Forgive the Sins of His people when they pray.
  - (vv.26-27) Solomon asked God to Restore Sin’s Damage when His people pray.
  - (vv.28-31) Solomon asked God to Relieve the Affliction of His people when they pray.
  - (vv.32-33) Solomon asked God to Receive Outsiders into His Family when they pray.
  - (vv.34-35) Solomon asked God to Defend His People from their Enemies when they pray.
  - (vv.36-40) Solomon asked God to Release His People from Captivity when they pray.

The curious thing about this list is that by and large these items take a secondary place, if they occupy a place at all, in most of the corporate, public prayers of our generation. The number one item we pray for is not even included on Solomon’s list: health concerns. There is certainly nothing wrong with bringing that need to God in prayer, but doesn’t it give us pause when we reflect on the fact that our priority in prayer is primarily for our comfort rather than His Justice, Forgiveness, Restoration, Relief, Evangelism and Christian Liberty?

What shall we say about all we’ve seen tonight? I can think of two mistakes we can make and one encouragement we can enjoy when we think about prayer and the Church:

1.) Some who hear the things we’ve talked about tonight might become proud. They may say, “Well, I’m doing pretty good! I never miss a prayer meeting; I’m pretty eloquent in public prayer. I mention a lot of spiritual stuff. I’m not like the rest of these schlemiels who never show up, stand up or speak up when prayer is being offered! Look at that one over there! I’ve never seen him in a prayer meeting! I wonder if he even is saved.” Careful! You’re in danger of creating a “pride divide” in your heart and possibly in the church itself toward your brother in

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Christ! A “pride divide” occurs when certain ones in the church get a reputation as “those who pray” as opposed to “those who don’t pray.” The proud see themselves as superior to those who seem to have less desire for prayer. When this grows in a congregation it is deadly to the prayer ministry of the church. Resentment grows up. Fellowship grows cold. The exact opposite of what we should be praying for happens: effective prayer ministry in a church can easily be throttled at the hands of its friends. Pride is one problem with regard to prayer.

2.) The second problem is guilt. Someone has said that nothing produces such sorrowful confessions of failure among Christians as much as a serious examination of our prayer lives! Some fall into the trap of pride, but many more are laid low in discouragement by guilt.

If you leave church tonight feeling either proud of your prayer life or guilty about your prayer life, you have missed the point. What is the point? The point is, we need to do what Solomon did: we need to pray about our prayer life and the prayer ministry of our church! For ourselves and our church, ask God to make us a true House of Prayer to His glory. That’s the call of tonight’s message.

3.) Finally, hear the voice of Jesus praying for His people in Solomon’s prayer. How encouraging it is to realize that even today, right now in fact, Jesus is praying to His Father on behalf of each one in His Church. What is He asking? He is saying something like, “Lord, hear their prayers, weak as they are. Father, forgive them their sins for my sake. YHWY restore them. Jehovah, defend them. El Shaddai, comfort their afflictions; encourage their hearts; rebuke their enemies; save those they intercede for; release them from their captivity to sin and bring them fully into the glorious freedom of the sons of God.” Isn’t it encouraging to know that Jesus is praying right now for our prayer life?

**Conclusion:** As God’s people we are called to be A House of Prayer. Prayer is to be a main event in our lives, not a sidelight. Jesus prays for our prayer life to be honoring to God and helpful to man. Why not join Him in making prayer, “job one” in our church?