

**JULY 22**

**2 Chronicles 6:12-8:10**

These are great chapters. We have read all of this before, so I only want to mention a few things.

Keep in mind the purpose of Ezra in writing this. He could have told everyone to refer back to 1 Kings where this is recorded, but it is repeated here for this generation. What is Ezra's purpose? Here again we have a great king, Solomon, taking spiritual leadership for his people. But more than that, Ezra seems to be pointing them to God's eternal promises and how that has undergirded their history, from Abraham, to the establishing of the Davidic covenant, through being preserved in the exile, to the return by command of Cyrus...all according to the promise (and *steadfast love*) of God. What we are witnessing here today, and what Ezra is showing the people, is that based on the work of David and Solomon in leading the people in making the temple, God makes an eternal promise to them, right here. God heard and honored Solomon's prayer of dedication. Because of the promise God makes here (among other promises) Israel is allowed back into its land.

**2 Chronicles 6:12-42**

There are many repeated words and ideas here and there is a very clear structure. Take time and do a lot of underlining and observing. Notice how often the word *servant* is used and notice the references to God's love.

Vs. 12-17 Notice the references to the promise God made to David. Solomon builds this plea on the fact that God had already shown His faithfulness to David by saving him. This is very powerfully expressed, and it is something that should make us think about what it means when God visibly helps us in different situations. Verse 17 calls on God to confirm His Word to David. The question is how that promise would be confirmed in the dedication of the temple.

Vs. 18-21 Solomon knew that God couldn't dwell in a house. Verse 20 says that God had already promised to set His name in that house. God's promise toward the temple was what Solomon was crying out for God to confirm. In this way it would be an additional confirmation of His promise to David. The plea for future forgiveness is still in force. Two days before Jesus was killed, he told the nation, *For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'* When the Jews finally pray this, there will be a deep sense of repentance and desperation, and God will forgive.

V. 19 Notice the intensity of this prayer. Notice that the faith of those who pray will be directional, toward the temple and the city.

Vs. 22-39 What are the *if's* and *when's* that Solomon mentions? Solomon will get God to promise to forgive every conceivable situation. Much of this is prophetic, and it will be used and very important in Daniel 6 and 9.

Vs. 22-23 This is regarding a person sinning against a neighbor and the need for justice in the land. Here they come into the temple.

Vs. 24-25 If there was a defeat in battle, it showed, as with Joshua in the case of Achan, that Israel had sinned before the Lord. This is also done in the temple, not in any other place.

Vs. 26-27 Drought was an indication of sin and guilt in the land. We've seen this with Elijah and with David and the case of the Gibeonites. In this situation the people all over the land were to pray toward the temple and humble themselves to be taught the way of the Lord.

Vs. 28-31 This deals with individual or national affliction caused by natural events or by the oppression of the enemy. Interestingly, this doesn't seem to be because of sin. It is simply the people crying out for help, like we have seen David do in The Psalms.

Vs. 32-33 This is the most redemptive part of the prayer, referring to an individual or to all nations. Again, this prayer and pleading is not because of sin.

Vs. 36-39 For me this is the most interesting part of the prayer. The Spirit must have put it into the heart of Solomon to extend the prayer to the circumstance of being sent into exile. This part of the prayer was used extensively while they were in exile in Babylon.

Vs. 40-42 This is a great ending to the prayer. It begins with a request and ends with the appeal to the promise to David.

## 2 Chronicles 7

Vs. 1-3 What a way for God to publicly confirm His answer to this prayer. Notice what the people said in response in v. 3. This was Israel's praise of God because of David. This might have been Israel's holiest moment as a nation.

Vs. 4-6 Notice Solomon's leadership in offering sacrifices.

V. 7 This is Solomon taking the leadership in directing the dedication of the inner court.

Vs. 8-10 Here, Solomon is leading this feast of celebration. I'm sure Ezra wanted to show the returnees the grandeur of the dedication, and also the passion of the leaders in worshiping God. This would normally have been the Feast of Booths, directly following the Day of Atonement. Nothing is said here of the Day of Atonement. Also, from what Nehemiah says, from Joshua to Nehemiah, this feast was never celebrated by the making of booths and people living out of doors, remembering Israel's days in the wilderness following Moses.

V. 11 Remember the timing here. It took Solomon 7.5 years to build the temple and another 13 to finish his palace and residence. The dedication of the temple would have been after the temple's completion. God is now speaking to Solomon, not that night, but a night 13 years later. I think the point is that Solomon had been on a mission for God. Now he was done. From this point on, Solomon could do what he wanted to do. And what would that look like? Would he serve God or would he drift from God? That is why this is such a crucial point in his life. God honored Solomon's prayer and devotion, but not just for Solomon's sake.

Vs. 12-18 God made three promises here. One was the promise to hear the prayers directed toward the temple. The second was that God would set His name in the temple forever. The third was to Solomon regarding his royal lineage.

V. 14 is kind of a famous verse.

V. 16 Notice the eternal nature of this promise. Daniel, in particular, held on to this promise, which means he had to have read 1 Kings, since this wasn't written until after the exile.

Vs. 19-22 Notice again the warning to Solomon. As already mentioned, Solomon would fail here. His bloodline of royalty would not extend to Jesus, the ultimate Davidic king. Although Joseph's genealogy extends to Solomon, Joseph was only "legally" Jesus' father. Jesus' birth mother's genealogy reached back to David, but through Solomon's older brother Nathan. Solomon's disobedience made this promise void.

It is amazing that the Lord said this to Solomon, because by Solomon's idolatry (not mentioned in Chronicles) Solomon would begin the process that led the people into exile and led to the destruction of the temple.

## 2 Chronicles 8:1-10

Vs. 1-8 It's one thing to build buildings and a name for yourself. It is another thing to build character and build into the hearts of a nation. Solomon kept building stuff.

V. 2 Note that Solomon received a gift of cities from Hiram. In 1 Kings 9:11-13, Solomon gave Hiram cities too, but he didn't repay Hiram in kind and fancy them up. Solomon gave him raggedy, tired little towns that Hiram called "Kabul," worthless.

Since everybody knew how Solomon fell, it might be here that Ezra is beginning to use him as an example of self-absorption in leadership. As disciples our true devotion to following Christ in the harvest is seen not when it is our job or we're on a summer mission trip, but it's seen when the "mission" is over and we can do anything we want. This was Solomon's downfall, and why he never measured up to be the "man after God's own heart," that David was. Thankfully, the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. We can desert God, but He remains faithful because He cannot deny Himself.

### **Romans 7:14-8:8**

Romans 7:14-25

Enjoy reading this. This is the clearest statement in the Bible about the power of sin. This short section is like a theological "power bar."

Vs. 14-20 The flesh is our old nature which somehow is bound in and with this body. This is why the resurrection is such a great hope for us. It is not just that we will live forever in a body. It is, as said in Romans 6 and again in Romans 8, that we will be free of this body of death. For us as believers, the resurrection is our daily hope in Christ, only if we are sick of sin. If we have the attitude that sin isn't so bad, then the resurrection is just a carnival ride: thrilling but unnecessary. We need to grasp the deadliness of sin, every day.

Vs. 21-25 The main idea here is that the fight goes on. The new spiritual life of the Spirit allows us to desire what is right in our heads, but it is no match for our old nature. The situation in this body is wretched. The solution is the help of the Spirit in the next chapter.

Vs. 23 and 25 express the futility of this battle apart from Christ and the Holy Spirit. Jesus gives us forgiveness. The Holy Spirit creates the new spiritual life within us, yet, we can't do better without the Holy Spirit's help to live following Him. This help is explained in chapter 8, but chapter 7 ends without hope.

V. 24 is not a dramatic cry from an unbeliever. It is Paul expressing the depth of his present fight. If you don't understand how deep the need is, you don't correctly seek the help offered. That is true everywhere in life, and it is especially true here. As disciples working in the harvest following Christ, this understanding needs to be vital and important to us. We are not just weak; we are sick and hopeless without the resources God makes available to us. The world is filled with the wreckage of Christian men and women and marriages and families and churches. We have more media than any other generation that has walked this earth. We have more resources, yet sin doesn't seem to respond to podcasts and Kindles, to traditional or contemporary worship, to amazing missional vision and positive attitude. Sin is still winning. The fight is the same as it was in Paul's day, and the answer is the same. The tragedy is that the answer is right here in the Word, in these chapters and in the next.

Romans 8:1-8

Vs. 1-3 This is salvation in Christ. This is repentance, turning your back on your sin and turning to Christ to receive His forgiveness and His deliverance. It created a new nature, a new spiritual life in us. We are no longer responsible to the law. We are no longer under God's condemnation. God is satisfied and we are free. But that is not enough for now. If God took us to heaven we'd be fine, but we are left here for the harvest and we are still weak and need tons of help

Vs. 4-8 Now we follow the Spirit. Before we knew Christ, we tried to follow a lot of things - religion, good ideas, etc. Now, we say things like "following Christ," which is accurate in terms of following Christ as our Lord into the harvest (John 12:26). Yet in terms of daily guidance in

working in the harvest, the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ and we look to His impulses and guidance. To give credence to John 14-16 and what Paul and the Spirit are writing here, it is really the Spirit that we follow. And, this following is very intentional. It isn't an accident like something we instinctively do without thinking. We have to mindfully and intentionally surrender our will and willingly be aware of following. We have to do it actively, seeking the Lord, reading His Word, but all the time understanding that it is the Spirit who is given to help us through this life and lead us against this nature that is still alive within us.

As disciples it is all very simple. We surrender our will and our feelings and follow the Spirit. We realize that we have a desperate need and we live with it. If we were bi-polar, we'd live with it and take our meds. If we were terminally ill and treatments kept the illness at bay, we'd report for our transfusions and not pretend something different. The difference for us is our hope in our salvation and the resurrection of Christ. This body is terminal; but we will not only live forever with Christ, it will be in a new body without sin. Without sin! And all that makes our mission following Christ in the harvest more important than ever. We've found the cure for this sickness and madness.

We haven't quite gotten to *all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God*. That's tomorrow. What is interesting to me is that the model for following the Spirit is actually Jesus. Read John 5:17-24 as Jesus talked to Jews. Jesus' entire argument is that He had to do what the Spirit was showing Him that the Father was doing. I don't believe Jesus woke every morning knowing what would happen; but He lived aware of God's working, and He was expectantly ready every moment to follow the lead of the Spirit.

## **Psalm 18:1-15**

Today's reading is only about one-third of Psalm 18. We'll be in Psalm 18 for three days. The occasion of this psalm is probably sometime after David had become the king of the entire nation and after victories had been won against the Philistines. Only then was Israel secure and David at peace. This psalm is also 2 Samuel 22, placed there at the end of David's life as his personal testimony to God's deliverance from all that came against him. Placing this psalm at the end of 2 Samuel gives it the added significance of also seeing how God rescued David from his family, friends, himself and Satan.

For me the key verse of this portion is v. 6. It is not until we have exhausted all of our resources and ideas and "connections," and have realized that only God can help us, that we cry out. This is what Paul learned in his suffering as he says in 2 Corinthians 12:10, *For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

Vs. 1-3 This is the summation of years of distress and needing God's help. What a privilege it must have been to have looked back and to have been able to say these words.

Vs. 4-6 We know of David's crying out and distress, but it's interesting that God heard him in His temple. Since there wasn't yet a temple, David either meant the tabernacle or God's actual throne in heaven. Somehow, this all worked into developing a passion in David to build a house for the Lord.

Vs. 7-15 This is God's response to come rescue David as seen in David's mind and expressed poetically. I wonder if David had this imagery from being in the mountains and seeing storms sweep across the land.

## **Proverbs 19:24-25**

V. 24 It is easy to put this one off as not applying to us, but I know that there are some areas in my life where I'm a workaholic, and some areas where I'm a sluggard. I think that's true of everyone.

V. 25 This looks like a challenge to interpret. Is the scoffer the simple one? Or is this saying that if you strike a scoffer, he doesn't learn because he's a fool at heart; but it's not wasted because the simple will take notice and learn prudence. On the other hand, if you reprove a man of understanding, he himself will learn and gain knowledge. I don't know, but I think this might be the best way to interpret it.