

SOLOMON'S PRAYER

by the Rev. Morley D. Rich

Lesson: I Kings 3:5-15

We say the Lord's Prayer almost every time we worship. But have you ever wished that you could talk to the Lord in your own words, as best you could? We always use the prayer which the Lord Himself has given us in His Word, and this is because He told us that this prayer is all we really need. Yet we find other prayers, even in the Word of the Lord.

You heard one of these prayers in the reading just now. This is a prayer of Solomon, who had just been made king of Israel following his father, David. In a dream the Lord had told Solomon to ask for whatever he wanted. What did Solomon ask for? Perhaps you noticed that he did not ask for gold or honors or a new palace or anything like that. He asked for something very wonderful, something to help his people, not just for himself.

First Solomon talked about the many people, his people, over whom he had the honor of being made king. And he spoke of the difficulty of judging such a great people. At the end, he said "I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in.... Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" (I Kings 3:7,9).

Wasn't that a lovely thing to ask for? Solomon was not thinking of himself, but about how he might guide and help his people, so that he might meet their needs and wishes in the best and wisest ways. It was such a fine thing to ask for this wisdom! It pleased the Lord very much. And for this reason it is one of the most beautiful prayers in the whole Word.

If you were asked such a question by the Lord—"What shall I give you?"—what would you say? Perhaps you would ask the Lord to take care of your mother and father, your brothers and sisters. You might even ask for something that you wanted very badly, such as a particular toy or a new dress or something like that. Sometimes, though, you might wish for what Solomon wanted. Perhaps you have sometimes wished you could understand other people better. At Christmas, for example, you might wish you knew what somebody else really wanted for a present, so that you could give it to them.

Can you think of anything finer to ask the Lord for than an "understanding heart"? So often it is hard to tell whether something is good or bad, true or false. An "understanding heart" lets you truly see the difference between good

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and evil. So to be wise from the heart—that is, to be wise with love—is the greatest gift the Lord can give us. And He longs to give it to every one of His children.

As we grow up, we learn that many of the things we want are not really good for us, and may actually be bad and against the Lord's commandments. If we really want to become wise, the Lord will teach us how to tell the difference between good and bad. He will make us wise through the teachings in His Word and will give us the ability to understand them.

The Lord told Solomon that he would not only give him an understanding heart, but also riches and honor, because he had not asked for them. This means that if we truly desire the love and wisdom to understand what is good and bad, true and false, then the Lord will give us true riches, which are the many truths from His Word. He will help us to become honorable people, loving Him above all things, and our neighbors as ourselves.

Before concluding, let us think for a minute about the tender and humble thing which Solomon said to the Lord before he asked for what he wanted. He said, "Now, O Lord my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in" (I Kings 3:7). Wasn't that an amazing thing for Solomon to say? Here he was, a king and governor over millions of people, living in a fine palace with many beautiful things, wearing a crown of jewels and wonderful clothing, having great power. And, still, he was so humble that he called himself a little child in his understanding of his people!

Only the Lord has the love and wisdom to see perfectly what is best for each one of us. But He also longs to give something of His own Love and Wisdom to each of us, as much as we can hold, "full measure, pressed down and overflowing." As He once said while He was on earth, "if you then...know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" (Matthew 7:11).

Amen.