

If you have time you might also look at 1 Peter 3.8-12. The last three verses are quoting Psalm 34 and what we saw as promise from God that He will hear when we cry to Him. But what is Peter saying in the two verses immediately before this?

Thinking around

(Questions and discussion starters for those who get through the study quickly or want to explore some wider issues.)

Gospel and Social Action

This has been a thorny issue. Theologically “liberal” Christians have appeared to many to abandon the Biblical gospel - that is calling people to repentance and faith in Christ as the only means of our salvation. At the same time liberals have accused “evangelicals” of ignoring Jesus’ compassion for others.

Some temperature raising discussion starters:

Does social action (care for non-Christians) have any value in itself, or is it only to provide an opening to share the gospel?

In John 14-16 is there anything to suggest that our compassion should be shown to the world, or should we only “love one another”.

What are the big issues today? (Last year we heard much about the 18th century evangelical activist William Wilberforce and the abolition of the slave trade. Wilberforce campaigned on many other issues including a successful campaign to close down the national lottery. He described it as “a national sin”.)

David Phillips, October 2011

The Prayer of the Wise

Bible Study Groups

7 : 1 Kings 8.51-53



This passage was preached on Sunday 23 October 2011. The audio is available at www.stjameschorley.org.

Endings

How do we wind up a prayer, whether written or extempore? Think of some well known examples of written prayer, or look in a book of prayers if you have one.

Do you find yourself ending your prayer in certain ways, or do you notice that others in your group tend to use particular endings?

In the second study in this series we thought about what we say at the beginning of a prayer. We saw that often what we say about God reflects or informs what we are about to ask.

What is the significance of some of the phrases you have noted that we use to end a prayer.

Digging in the Passage

Read 1 Kings 8.51-53.

Note: This prayer also appears in 2 Chronicles chapter 6. The end of the prayer is recorded differently. Chronicles does not record most of what Solomon says in 1 Kings 8.50-53, except for about half of verse 52. But Chronicles does have at the end some words of Solomon not recorded in Kings which shows him fervently pleading with God to arise and act. We will confine ourselves to the words recorded in Kings.

Verse 51 opens with the word ‘for’ thus linking it with what has gone before. What was Solomon praying for in the previous verse(s).

What reason does he therefore give in verse 51 for what he had asked in verse 50 or earlier?

Praying in the light of God's redeeming work

This verse echoes Deuteronomy 4.20. What does the phrase "iron furnace" suggest about the experience of Israel in Egypt?

Many books in the Old Testament refer back to the exodus from Egypt. Direct references are found in all the historical books from Judges to 2 Chronicles, in the Psalms and in the prophecies of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Amos and Micah. Why is the Exodus so important in the Old Testament?

Why do you think Solomon makes mention of it here at the end of his prayer?

The New Testament parallel is that we are rescued from bondage to sin by Christ. Do you think this overshadows our faith in the way that the Exodus did the faith of Old Testament believers?

How does the fact of what God has done for us in Christ shape our approach to him in prayer?

How does remembering what God has done in the past also help us to have confidence in prayer?

Lord hear our prayer

In study 3 we looked at how often in verses 28 to 30 Solomon asked God to hear. He closes the prayer in a similar vein in **verse 52**.

We also saw in verse 29 this phrase "that your eyes may be open". What do you think this means in terms of our prayers.

We find a similar prayer in Neh 1.6, Isa 37.17 & Dan 9.18. If you have time look at these verses and the circumstances of the prayer.

Look up the promise in Psalm 34.15-22. How does this help us when we cry out to God in 'trouble' and 'affliction'. This is one of those Psalms that is worth remembering.

In **verse 53** how does Solomon describe the relationship of Israel to the Lord.

Look at Exodus 19.5-6. How does the Lord describe the relationship?

Was it because Israel were special or better than anyone else that the Lord chose them?

(The verses you will be racking your memories for are Deut 7.7-8.)

Praying in His name

Often we close prayers by saying something like "in the name of Jesus". What do you understand this to mean?

One way to understand praying "in his name" is that we pray in the light of who God is - His character and purposes. If this is correct then how does it fit with how Solomon prayer.

Read John 15.9-17 - this was the passage Phil mostly preached on.

This forms part of Jesus words to the disciples at the last supper. Jesus mentions asking "in my name" six times - Jn 14.13, 14.14, 15.16, 16.23, 16.24 and 16.26.

Phil drew attention to the link between asking in Jesus name and love. Take a look at the verses surrounding each of the six references above and see how often the two come together.

Love Is

I understand that Kim Casali's 1970s "Love Is" cartoons still appear in some newspapers. If you were writing such a cartoon from John 14-16, what phrases would you come up with?

Phil mentioned some things we could do as a Church to show love for one another and the community around us. Either discuss these or share your own ideas. Don't just dream dreams but think about how they might be achieved (and who by). Please pray about this either now in at the end of the meeting.