

# “Solomon’s Knowledge of God”

## // 1 Kings 8 // *The Man Who Had It All #3*

### Intro

**1 Kings 8, if you have your Bible.** 3<sup>rd</sup> week of series—Solomon, the Man Who Had It All

I went through a streak a few months ago where I got into listening to famous commencement addresses from around the country.

There are **some really great ones** out there on YouTube. One was from...

- **Admiral William McRaven**, U.S. Admiral and former Navy Seal, who shared with graduates from the University of Texas 10 life lessons he learned as a Navy Seal. **The first, he said, was to “make your bed the first thing when you get up every morning.”** *If you do, he said, you will have accomplished the first task of the day... and that will give you a small sense of pride, and it will encourage you to do another task, and then another, and another. And by the end of the day that one task completed will have turned into many tasks completed.*
- Then there was the famous one given at **Stanford in 2005 by Steve Jobs**, who told graduates about a simple slogan that had shaped his life that he took from a 1970’s magazine called *The Whole Earth Catalogue* (which was like a travel journal of the

world in the days before Google). The magazine ran for a few years and was then discontinued, and in their final edition, the back cover featured a picture a beckoning country road, early in the morning, leading off into the mountains, and underneath it was the words, “Stay hungry. Stay foolish.” **“This was their farewell message as they signed off,” he said, and it became the theme of my life. Stay hungry, stay foolish.**

- Then there was one given by **Ellen Degeneres, Tulane Univ, 2009:** She said, “When I was asked to make the commencement speech, I immediately said yes. Then I went to look up what commencement meant.... I thought (in order to make a commencement address) that you had to be a famous alumnus, alumini, aluminum (or whatever)—that you had to graduate from this school. And I didn’t go to college here, and I don’t know if your (President) knows this, I didn’t go to any college at all. Any college. And I’m not saying you wasted your time, or money, but look at me, I’m a huge celebrity making more money than most of you will ever make.”
- **Finally, Will Ferrell, USC 2017:** *I would like to say thank you for your warm welcome. I would also like to apologize to all the parents sitting there, thinking, “Will Ferrell? Why Will Ferrell? I hate him. I hate his movies. He’s gross—although he’s much better looking in person. Has he lost weight?”*

*I graduated from this college years ago with the degree of “Sports Information” – a degree so arduous, so prestigious, that they discontinued it a few years later.*

*Today I also received my honorary doctorate. ... I have been informed that I can now perform minimally invasive surgery at any time and in any place—even if people don’t want it. In fact, I’m*

### Works Consulted:

“Solomon’s Great Prayer,” David Jeremiah

“God and Country Crucified,” Russ Moore

“Pour Out Your Heart to God,” Tony Merida

“What God Has Joined Together,” Dale Ralph Davis

*legally obligated to perform a surgery at the end of today's address or my degree will be revoked. If you have a sore tooth you want removed, please meet me at the "surgery center." And by "surgery center" I mean the windowless van in that parking lot over there.*

**Quick Question:** How many of you who graduated from college can't remember your commencement address—either the person who did it or its subject matter? (As a guy who has done a fair amount of these, that's encouraging. Seriously, I work really hard at this and stress out over what I'm going to talk about for weeks...)

A commencement address is supposed to sum up a philosophy of life, to lay out what you believe are the most essential principles for living.

In 1 Kings 8, Solomon essentially gives the people of Israel a commencement address, though his has some pretty big differences from most commencement addresses you hear most often today.

Solomon delivers it in the form of a prayer offered at the dedication of the Temple he had built.

Last week we saw that Solomon, whom God had made the wisest man on earth, explained that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is (the foundation of) understanding. **Prov 9:10**

- Well, **this prayer** is the embodiment of Solomon's knowledge of God and, as he says, this knowledge forms the foundation of his wisdom.

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<sup>1</sup> A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York: HarperCollins, 1978), 1

<sup>2</sup> 2 Chron 2:17-18. That's a labor cost, in today's terms of, 36 trillion dollars.

In a series a few years ago called **The Name** we looked at this quote by **A.W. Tozer**: "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us... We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God. The most [determining] fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like."<sup>1</sup>

- **This is the same thing Solomon was saying:** Our knowledge of God is the core, shaping influence on our lives.

(Context: Dedication of the Temple)

Before I get into what that knowledge of God was, let's talk first for a couple of minutes about the Temple that Solomon was dedicating through his prayer.

Solomon considered the building of this Temple to be his life's greatest achievement:

- **It was a magnificent structure.** It took **150,000 laborers** more than 8 years to construct it.<sup>2</sup>
- Much of it was **layered in gold**. 1 Kings tells us that Solomon used more than **4000 tons** of gold and **40,000 tons** of silver in its construction.<sup>3</sup> The price of what he used, in today's value, would be more than **160 trillion dollars**. (That is trillion, as in "T.")
  - One scholar said the amount of gold Solomon used in the temple was **about 4–5% of all the gold ever mined on earth**. As in, of all of the gold we've ever mined on earth, 1/20 of it was in *one* building.<sup>4</sup>
  - And **then there were the precious stones lining the walls**—marble and onyx and rubies and emeralds—that were layered over the walls and the pillars. This thing had some serious bling power.

<sup>3</sup> 100,000 talents of gold

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.creationconcepts.org/resources/SOLOMON.pdf>

But the most significant aspect of the Temple was **how it prefigured the Messiah that was to come.**

- **God had promised David, you see,** that one of his sons would build a place where the people could connect with God.
- This was fulfilled first by Solomon through this Temple, but it was ultimately fulfilled by David's later sons—or great<sup>14</sup> grandson—Jesus, who would be the ultimate place we met with God.

**So many things in this Temple prefigured Jesus.**

- For example, **the center of the Temple** was an altar right outside of the Holy Place where God dwelt where sacrifices were made. In order for a sacrifice for sins to be effective, you had to have **4 things**: a sinner offering a sacrifice, the sacrifice itself, a priest to do the offering, and the presence of God to receive it. In Jesus, you had all 4—At the cross he became the sinner in our place, as our priest, he offered himself as our sacrifice, and he was the very presence of God that received it.
- **Here's another one:** The innermost court was called the Holy of Holies, and it was where the Ark of the Covenant (*I think we have an actual pic*), which contained the very presence of God, dwelt. It was closed off by a “veil,” **4 inches thick**. The veil was called “**the paroket**,” which means literally “shut off,” because **that's what the veil did**. It shut off the presence of God from everyone, symbolic of how sinners couldn't get directly to God.<sup>5</sup> When Jesus died this veil was torn in two, **symbolic of his body being torn** so that the way into the presence of God was now open.

**So, this whole structure pointed to Jesus, but in Solomon's day Jesus is still about 1000 years away,** and for now they have this beautiful structure which symbolizes him.

**In 1 Kings 8 they bring the Ark of the Covenant** into this Temple (from where Indiana Jones had stored it in Area 51)

1 Kings 8:10 ...the cloud filled the temple of the Lord. 11 And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled his temple.

<sup>12</sup>Then Solomon said: The Lord said that he would dwell in total darkness. (which means he is unapproachable, un-discoverable, and un-understandable.)<sup>13</sup> I have indeed built an exalted temple for you, a place for your dwelling forever... (Notice the contrast).

This brings us to the **1<sup>st</sup> component of Solomon's knowledge** of God...

**Solomon knew that...**

**1. God is a mysterious-yet-accessible God (8:12–13)**

- **God is incomprehensible in one sense**—dwelling in total darkness—**but approachable in another**—through this Temple he has built.
- Because he is incomprehensible, we should give up any hopes of just figuring God out with our minds.
  - If we are going to know him, we have to do it through the ways he has revealed.
- **(The reason God dwells** in darkness, btw, is 1) because of the limited capacities of our minds and 2) the twistedness left in them because our sinfulness.)
- **If there is one chronic shortfall of the human race, one sin behind all the other sins,** it is that we constantly minimize God and downplay his glory and maximize our capacities.

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<sup>5</sup> Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 152–153. Maurice Henry Harris, *Hebraic Literature: Translations from the Talmud, Midrashim and Kabbala* (M. Walter Dunne, 1901), 195–196

- But he's not just a slightly bigger, slightly smarter version of us.
- **But how big must God be?**
  - He exists literally without beginning or end. Just thinking about that makes my mind want to explode.
  - **He stands outside of a universe** at least 12 trillion light years across, having spoken it into existence with a word. **Isaiah says he calls all of the 3000 billion trillion stars** by name.
    - I can't remember the names of all the kids of the people in my small group. Fellowship time: 'How's... your boy... Lil' Junior?'"
    - **God looks at 3000 billion trillion stars** and says, "Oh yes, that's Alpha Centari. That's Betelgeuse. That's Bob."
    - **And he's so in touch with every aspect of his creation** that not a single hair falls from our heads without his knowledge.
- Compare that to the capacities of your mind: I'm **clueless how the majority** of things in my life that I depend on work.
  - **My car starts making a noise** and I take it to the shop. *I swear they say it's the dingle-arm or something and it's going to be \$1200, and I have literally no idea whether they're making things up or not.*
  - **Or my phone. It stops working. I don't know why.** *Maybe it's a battery thing. Or an "operating system" thing. Truth be told, I don't know what an "operating system" is—I only know that ever 2–3 months my phone asks me if it can put a new one on and if I say "yes" in the middle of the day it will be 3 hours before I can use it again. This is one of the most basic and fundamental pieces of technology in my life, and I can't even begin to explain how it works or what goes wrong.*
- **Is it wise for someone with capacities as limited as ours to expect to comprehend everything about God—to subject him to**

**the bar of our understanding?** That we'll immediately grasp how he exists eternally, how he is a Trinity, or how all things are working for his good purposes.

- Solomon says very clearly in Ecclesiastes (and this a key principle of wisdom in life)—**No one** (this includes you) **can comprehend (God's work) under the sun.** Despite all their efforts to search it out, **no one can discover its meaning.** Even if the wise claim they know, **they cannot really comprehend it (Ecc 8:17).**
  - **John Piper:** at any given moment God is doing 10K things in your life and you are aware of about 3 of them. 9997 remain a mystery.

**On the other hand, Solomon says,** God has given us a Temple to meet with him...

*Which leads to #2...*

## 2. God is a narrowly-accessible God (8:27–29)

**"But will God indeed live on earth? Even heaven, the highest heaven, cannot contain you, much less this Temple I have built... (but) your eyes will watch over this Temple night and day, toward the place where you said, 'My name will be there, and you will hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place." 8:27–29**

- **If God really does dwell in darkness but** has revealed himself in a specific place and specific way, **it follows that the only way to really know him** is to seek him at the place he has designated.
- **Contemporary wisdom**, of course, says the opposite: the more sophisticated and worldly-wise we become, the more we'll see that **God is like a mountain...**
  - Epitomized in a parable I heard in college...
- I have 3 problems with this approach...
  - **The first is logical:** *There is one person who sees the whole elephant, and it's the narrator.* That's how he knows all religions are only revealing an aspect of God, because he

perceives the totality. IOW, he is claiming for himself what he denies everyone else.

- **Second, they are NOT saying complementary things.** Some say you go to heaven or hell, some say you get reincarnated, some say you disappear into nothing at all. **Even a child can see** you can't possibly do all these things at once. Even if you put a co-exist bumper sticker on your car. That's not bigotry, it's simple logic.<sup>6</sup>
- **The man reason I have a problem with the God as a mountain approach is who else would you approach like that way?**
  - **If you are having a heart attack, and you head down to Wal-Mart because you say,** "I just love Wal-Mart. I love their prices; I love that everyone in there leaves me alone (there's no pesky helpers in the aisle disturbing me to ask if I need help finding anything)—so I'm going to go there with my heart issues..." You might be genuinely sincere in your preferences, but you are going to die, because Wal-Mart doesn't carry heart specialists on aisle 13. At least last time I went they didn't.
    - **You can get a lot at Walmart.** A Big Mac. A eye exam. A haircut. A tire rotation. A bathing suit you'll immediately regret. But **heart surgery? Probably not your best bet.**
  - **The cardiologist says,** "I can help you, but you get it you have to come to my place, where it has my name on the door and my healing instruments on the inside."
- **God says, "I have put my name and my power at this place.** If you want my help, you have to seek it here."
  - **I was talking to girl once on a plane** about these things—she was from Harvard, and I had just

graduated from Campbell so I could tell she was a little intimidated so I was trying to make things *real* simple for her. **But she said, "God is like a mountain, whatever way you want to get to him is fine."** I said, "What if the pilot approached the runway the same way you do God? What do you mean?" 'Say he says, "I'm an open-minded pilot so I choose to land whenever and however I prefer, and right now I prefer Cameron Village in downtown Raleigh." **She said, "I don't think that analogy is the same."** I said, "It is, and your inability to perceive that is why you couldn't get into Campbell and had to settle for Harvard."

- **I'm kidding, of course, but if God is real and not just a projection of our imaginations, and he has chosen to place his power and healing in one place,** then it follows that if we want to know him we have to seek him in the place he has appointed.
  - **When the Apostles made the claim that salvation and real miraculous power could only be found through the name of Jesus,** they tied it to Jesus' power to heal and his ability to raise from the dead. They said, A lame person needs actually healing power to walk, not just sincere feelings. A dead person needs actual life, not just a sincere desire to be alive. Just as Jesus had the power for both of those things, so he alone has the power of salvation (Acts 4:12).
  - **If you want access to God, you have to seek it through Jesus.**
- Solomon said, "You put your name here, so I'll seek you here." **That made him wise.** It makes you a fool to the world.

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<sup>6</sup> Gregory Koukl, *The Story of Reality*, "True Story," p. 33.

- **If you are wise, you'll seek God in the place and way he has designated.**
  - One **application for Christians: The place** that God has put his name and the continued power of his Spirit **is his church.**
  - **That means If you are** going to experience the blessing of God, you have to be committed to the church. You can't have a casual relationship to the church and rich access to the blessing of God.

### 3. God is a **promise-keeping God (8:15, 56)**

- **Solomon first utters a phrase in vs. 15** that he is going to repeat over and over throughout his prayer, **"God has fulfilled his promise by his power."** (8:15)
  - **He repeats it again in vs. 20, 24, 25, and 26**
  - And then **ends his prayer by saying, "Blessed be the Lord! He has given rest to his people according to all he has said. Not one of all the good promises God made through his servant Moses has failed!"** (8:56)
  - A couple weeks ago I gave you a hard time about how many times some of you say the name "God" when you pray... God, we just thank you God, and pray God that you would just help us, God. Solomon did this with the promises of God.
- **Solomon ordered his life** around the assumption that the promises of God were true.
- **WRITE THIS DOWN: *Wisdom means aligning your life around the promises of God.***
  - It means **living in a way** that if the promises of God aren't true, you would be a fool. Not becoming more moral, or nicer, but living in a way that if the promises of God aren't true, you're a fool.
  - **Can you point to areas of your life** where you can say, "If the promises of God aren't true I'm a big fool?"

- **I have been thinking about a number of promises** I have been trying to build my life around.
  - **Heb 9:27, "It is appointed unto man once to die, and after that the judgment."** I don't do everything right in the Christian life, but I can tell you that almost every day I think about the fact that I am going to have to stand before God and give an account. That promise shapes my life. You may not be that smart in life, but simply thinking that way will make you wise. **Ps. 90:12**
  - **Prov 3:9–10, Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops;** then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.
  - **Here's another:** "No good thing will he withhold from those whose walk is right with him." **Ps. 84:11**
    - Let me ask: **What would your life look like if you believed that?** Wouldn't that lead you to incredible boldness in prayer? **It does me.** "God, you will not withhold from me the good I need in... parenting. Marriage. No good thing!"
    - And, if you believe that verse, then when something happens in your life that is different from what you thought should happen, you know it's because what God had for you was better than what you thought you needed, because "no good thing will he withhold."
    - **George Mueller is a great example of both sides of this:** His belief in God's goodness led him to bold requests in prayer and then patiently to trust in God when he didn't receive them in the manner he thought.
      - **Mueller ran an orphanage** and more than once he sat the kids down with nothing to eat and prayed and had someone, unknown to him, while he was praying, show up at



the door with bread or milk. He believed in God's goodness.

- On the other side, **his wife contracted rheumatic fever**. He prayed earnestly for her healing, but she died. The last verse he read to her was Psalm 84:11, "No good thing will he withhold from those whose walk is blameless."
- Have you ordered your life **around that promise?**
- One more: **Matthew 24:14**, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."
  - This tells me **what God is doing** in the world.  
**Seeing the gospel preached in all nations.**
  - **I have prioritized my life**, and the **mission of this church**, around that promise.
  - **We don't do world missions** because we like to travel, but because of what God has promised us he will do.
- **When you order your life around** God's promises, it makes you wise. If not, it makes you a fool.
- THINK: **Have you ordered your life in a way that assumes God's promises are true, or not true?**

#### 4. God is a grace-extending God (8:33–53)

- **The biggest chunk of this prayer, vs. 33–53** are all about God's willingness to forgive and restore after we sin.
- Vs. 46, "When they sin against you, for there is no one who does not sin—and you are angry with them and hand them over to the enemy, and their captors deport them...(IOW, bad sin, Varsity level sins, not little white lies, or failing to recycle, enough to get them deported) when they come to their senses and repent and petition you from their captors' land... you will hear in heaven and

uphold their cause, forgive their rebellions against you and grant them compassion." (8:46–50)

- This is the **big difference between Solomon's commencement address** and all the commencement speeches of our day, which are, honestly, largely flattery and nonsense.
  - **You are all above average:** You are special, unique, a snowflake, a skittle
  - **Nothing can stop you from achieving your dreams** (except of course for a disease, or a little bad luck, or getting hit by a bus on the way to the parking lot, or the fact that about ½ of you will have marriages that end in divorce—but let's **not think about** any of those things, let's just **offer a bunch of meaningless platitudes** that make you feel invincible.
- **Solomon's whole prayer, by contrast, is built on the understanding that we are desperate sinners** who need God's help after we mess things up.
  - 35 "When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain... 37 "When famine or plague comes to the land... or when an enemy besieges them in any of their cities, when disaster or disease come, 38 and when a prayer is made, 39 then hear from heaven, forgive and act..."
- In fact, there is a **disturbing reality** about this prayer that you might overlook. This whole ceremony was bathed in blood.
  - Vs. 5 tells us that before the prayer "King Solomon sacrificed... sheep, goats, and cattle that could not be numbered because there was so many." (8:5)
  - And then when it was done: "Then Solomon offered a sacrifice of... 22,000 cattle and 120,000 sheep and goats." (8:63) Another 142,000 animals were sacrificed?
- **Do you know how bloody and messy this would have been?** The ground Solomon was standing on was literally soaked in blood. This may be moribund to you, but it shows us that entire basis of our relationship with God, the very ground we stand on with him, is the blood of sacrifices for sin.

- **All this blood pointed to the blood of the ultimate sacrifice**, Jesus, who would one day be slain for the forgiveness of our sin.
- When we walk into the presence of God, we stand on ground soaked in the blood of Jesus.
- And that is a really good thing for us. Because, as Solomon says, “There is no one who doesn’t sin.”
  - There is **no one who doesn’t mess up relationships**, and suffer the effects of poor decisions, or go through a time where they lose their mind and play the fool.
  - And **when you come to your senses, here is God**, standing in a place filled to overflowing with the blood of Jesus, read to forgive and restore.
- And so, Solomon says, when you pray toward this place you can **rebound from defeat (vs. 33-34); regain lost blessings (vv. 35-36); request personal healing (vv. 37-39); we can regroup for spiritual victory (vv. 44-45); and we can repent and be restored (vv. 46-49)**
- *We can come boldly to the throne of grace, the writer of Hebrews says (4:12), and find help in time of need.*
  - **C.S. Lewis** on the difference between Christianity and the other religions –one word, *grace*
- God’s church, therefore, **ought to be a place** characterized by grace!
  - **And one of the things** that most fires me up is seeing God do this in the lives of people here.
  - **Two of our worship services are in prisons** (and let me take a second to say hello to the men and women who are worshipping with us there.)
  - **Anyway, I get letters regularly** from some of these men and women.
  - One told me that when he first went to prison, knowing his life was messed up, he tried Buddhist meditations for a while to rid himself of the anger that had been behind his sin. He said, that while they worked to give him a serene

feeling at the time, he knew it wasn’t really repairing his heart, correcting the things causing his anger.

- Things changed for me, he told me, when a volunteer team from TSC came to Wake Correctional and started to tell me about Jesus. I was moved by their love toward me and excitement to be around me. He said, *‘Doing things my way had led me to prison and in a deep, dark hole of sin and depression, but God met me there and redeemed me and set me free. Although I am still in prison, I was free. Even though still surrounded by chaos, guards, and barbed wire, I had peace and joy.’*
- **When you come into God’s house** with a life messed up by sin, you don’t have to feel condemned, because Jesus was condemned in your place. The ground we stand on for worship is soaked in the blood of Jesus who was condemned for your sin.
  - **Therefore, you can rebound** from defeat; regain lost blessings; request personal healing; regroup for spiritual victory and repent and be restored.

## 5. God is a justice-conscious God (8:32)

- **(I almost skipped this one**, but I walk through the message each Wednesday with the campus pastors and they encouraged me to keep it in, because, one said, this is essential for developing a wise perspective on life.)
- **Vs. 32**, Solomon says, ***“May you judge your servants, condemning the wicked man by bringing what he has done on his own head and providing justice for the righteous by rewarding him according to his righteousness.” (8:32)***
- **Solomon knows that there will be times** when you feel like you were deprived of justice. Maybe you’ve tried confrontation, or even the court, and still you can’t get justice.
- **When that happens, Solomon said**, I can lay it at God’s feet knowing that one day he will restore justice to me.
- And **when you believe that**, you can **escape the bitterness and desire for vengeance** that threatens to spoil your life.



- **Miroslav Volf**, survivor of the oppression and genocides in Croatia, said that when you watch family and friends murdered in front of you—their throats slit—the only way to keep from going insane is to know that there is a God who is angry at what is happening and will one day restore justice. If not, he says, you will seethe with an insatiable desire for vengeance. Only when you believe that God has the sword in his hand can you lay it down from your own. Only then, he says, can you be free from the hatred and bitterness that arises from an inconsolable desire to avenge your wrong.<sup>7</sup>

Finally,

### 6. God is an **outward-focused** God (8:41–43)

41 “As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land *because of your name*— 42 for *they will hear of your great name* and *your mighty hand* and *your outstretched arm*—*when they come and pray* toward this temple, 43 then hear from heaven... *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.*

- **At every point** in Israel’s history God has had in mind the outsider. He *saved Israel to make them a blessing.*
  - **This Temple was built with the salvation of the nations in mind.**
  - In fact, the maddest we saw Jesus get—the NT. Court of Gentiles.
- God was furious... Because *God saved Israel for that purpose.*
- **You were saved with the nations in mind.**

- **This church was built with the salvation of the nations in mind.** And he is furious when we treat the church as if it was all about us.
  - **I’m talking about people whose attitude toward the church is take, not give...** You sit on the sidelines, you don’t do anything, don’t contribute anything...
- The **whole focus of your life** should be blessing others as God has blessed you.
  - We always say, “**God is like a spiritual cyclone...**”
- This should affect how you think of your career, your money.
  - If you’ve been saved by God’s great generosity toward you, then you become really generous with what you have toward others.
  - Where would you be without Jesus?
  - You were an outsider when God brought you in! Shouldn’t you focus your life on helping to bring others in?
- Two applications:
  - **ServeRDU: just a taste!**
  - Go on a **mission trip**. Give a week next year—instead of using it all on vacation.

### Conclusion:

**These 6 truths shaped Solomon’s knowledge of God**, and that knowledge formed the foundation of his life.

**It was a knowledge he expressed in prayer**, a prayer that God promised to answer.

When Solomon finished his prayer, God responded by saying, (This is in 2 Chronicles) – “*Yes, Solomon, I have heard you, and “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and*

<sup>7</sup> Born in Croatia, Miroslav Volf came of age in communist Yugoslavia, where he witnessed the ethnic tensions between the Croats and Serbs. After the fall of communism in 1991, those tensions escalated into a bloody war. *Exclusion and Embrace*, by Miroslav Volf, 303–304.

seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” 2

Chronicles 7:14

- **Now, really quick: this verse often gets misapplied to the United States**, as if it is saying that if America will return to prayer God will send national prosperity.
- But the promise of this prayer is not made to America, but to the church—we are God’s people, called by God’s name.

## MUSIC

But it does mean that **if we pray, God will heal us**, and we will become a blessing to land we live in.

The wise life is a **life that blesses others, because it lays hold of the willingness of God to heal and teaches others to do the same.**

**In the NT, the Greater Solomon, Jesus repeats all these promises for us, in even stronger ways:**

- **Matthew 7:11**, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”
- **John 14:13**, “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”
- **Paul Miller says: “All of Jesus’ teaching on prayer in the Gospels can be summarized in one word: ASK!” I want to give MERCY, just ask!**

*You may not be that smart, but you can be wise by centering your life on the character and promises of God and teaching others to do the same.*

**The wise life is the praying life—the life that teaches others to call on God’s name for help.**

**(One quick application of this: Come to the times of prayer with RDU)**

