

New Year Requests
1 Kings 8:54-61
December 31, 2012

When Solomon had finished all these prayers and supplications to the Lord, he rose from before the altar of the Lord, where he had been kneeling with his hands spread out toward heaven. He stood and blessed the whole assembly of Israel in a loud voice, saying: "Praise be to the Lord, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses. May the Lord our God be with us as he was with our fathers; may he never leave us nor forsake us. May he turn our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways and to keep the commands, decrees and regulations he gave our fathers. And may these words of mine, which I have prayed before the Lord, be near to the Lord our God day and night, that he may uphold the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel according to each day's need, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God and that there is no other. But your hearts must be fully committed to the Lord our God, to live by his decrees and obey his commands, as at this time."

Lots of people make New Year's resolutions. They resolve to change their lives in the New Year – to start doing this or that, to stop doing this or that. New Year's resolutions are fine, but a better way for Christians might be not to make New Year's resolutions, but to make New Year's requests.

Requests put the emphasis where it belongs – not on us and on our power, but on God and on His power. Asking is an act of humility. It's an indicator of our need for a power greater than ourselves. So join me tonight as we listen to our God, who invites us to make some new year's requests.

According to Solomon, there are three requests we ought to make:

1. Ask God to never leave us
2. Ask God to help us keep His commands
3. Ask God to bless our daily efforts

Solomon says, *"May the Lord our God be with us as He was with our fathers; May He never leave us nor forsake us."* God will never leave us in 2013, but we are able to leave Him. We all have a sinful heart that attacks God's rule inside us and wants to do its own thing. Every sin we committed in 2012 was proof of that.

This past year was nothing to be proud of for me. I look back and see broken promises, unfinished work, undisciplined days, and feeble attempts to serve Jesus. If you're honest with yourself, I'm sure you see the same thing in your lives. We left our Lord and tried to run away from Him many times during the last year.

That's why we need to pray tonight, "Jesus, never leave us or forsake us in 2013." As Solomon says in verse 58, *"May He turn our hearts to Him."* When we ask God to never leave us, we're asking God to turn our hearts to Him. We're the ones who need to

change. We're the ones who need to be different. We're asking God to lead us to repentance: to turn us, or to change us.

When we ask God to never leave us, we're asking Him to make us sorry for our sin the instant we do it, say it, or think it. We're asking God to assure us of forgiveness for that sin. We're asking God to cause us to joyfully believe we're redeemed by the blood of Jesus. I pray God will do that for us every day of 2013.

And He will! Solomon says: *Not one word has failed of all the good promises God gave through His servant Moses.* Our God won't leave us in 2013. He'll be there every day for us. He'll speak to us daily through the words of the Bible we read, through the words of the Bible we think about and meditate on, through the words of the Bible we have memorized.

He'll be there every week as we gather around Word and Sacrament in public worship services. He'll be there constantly through other Christians, who bring us words of encouragement, comfort, strength and correction throughout this New Year. When we ask God to never leave us, that's a prayer we can pray with confidence because He never will.

And that leads to a second New Year's request: Ask God to help us keep His commands.

Solomon says: *May He turn our hearts to walk in all His ways and to keep the commands, decrees and regulations He gave our fathers.* Solomon also says, *Your hearts must be fully committed to the Lord our God, to live by His decrees and obey His commands.*

It's part of our Christian faith to hate sin and desire to do God's will. The Bible says: *To fear the Lord is to hate evil* (Prov 8:13). Jesus said: *If you love me, you will obey what I command* (Jn 14:15). Part of belonging to Jesus is that we are now devoted to doing what God wants us to do.

Sadly, it doesn't always work that way. There's still a part of us that hates God and doesn't want to do what He wants us to do. To the degree we see that in our daily lives, we see the proof we still have an old Adam of sin who's alive and well. But this sin part of us is not in charge of our lives.

The new man of faith is in charge. The real us is our believing nature, and he's the one in control of our lives. The instant we see sin in our lives, we fight it tooth and nail because of the new man of faith the Holy Spirit has put inside us. Because we believe in Jesus, we are determined not to sin, but to fight it and do God's commands instead.

We need God's help to do that, that's why we ask God to help us keep His commands. We ask God to remind us daily of what Jesus did for us to cleanse us from our sins. We ask God daily to show us His love and to assure us that we are forgiven. We ask God daily to guard our lives, to guard our tongues, to guard our thoughts. Paul says: *Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he*

died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again (2 Co 5:14-15 NIV).

So we ask God to help us keep His commands in the year 2013. This is especially needed in our interpersonal relationships. In the home – husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters. We ask God to help us treat each other with kindness, respect, gentleness, and love. We ask God to help us do our jobs well. We ask God to help us avoid gossip. We ask God to help us live lives that glorify him. Make your New Year's request that God would help you keep His commands.

Finally, let us ask God to bless our daily efforts. Solomon says: *May the Lord our God uphold the cause of His servant and the cause of His people Israel according to each day's need, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God and that there is no other.* Solomon is asking the Lord to bless his daily efforts as king and to bless the daily efforts of Israel as the Lord's people.

We do the same. Every day we do what we do because of God's love for us. God has laid out for us what to do in 2013. He's planned it all out and has set up all the opportunities for us to serve Him. We just need to ask God to bless us as we do them. Are you a husband and a father? Ask God to bless you in that role. Are you a wife and a mother? Ask God to bless you in that role.

Are you a student or a worker? Ask God to bless you in that role. We all have individual tasks that are given to us daily. They may look rather mundane, rather common, rather monotonous – preparing meals, punching time cards, cleaning homes, doing schoolwork. They may seem not very glorious to the world, but they are glorious to our God, because they're assignments from Him and He's promised to bless them.

The Bible says: *Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody* (1 Th 4:11-12 NIV). Don't ever under estimate what you're called on to do in 2013.

Because it's done in the name of Jesus, God views what we do as a wonderful act of thanksgiving, love, and sacrifice to Him. Solomon tells us everything we do has missionary value. He says: *so that all the peoples on earth may know that the Lord is God and that there is no other.* People will be watching us in 2013. They'll see our little acts of kindness. They'll hear our tactful and encouraging words.

They'll be observing our faithfulness to duty and our commitment to other people. They'll notice our submissiveness to God's will and to one another. They'll be aware of our quiet and confident joy in living as children of God. They'll be amazed at our forgiving attitude and our daily contentment.

You can't hide these fruits of the Spirit. So we ask God to bless our daily efforts at letting our lights shine in 2013, so many other people will be led to God's grace, mercy,

and love.

Go ahead. Make your New Year's resolutions. But make them in the form of a prayer. If we make resolutions to do anything by our own power, we will fail. But if we make resolutions to do everything in life by the power of God, then God will bless them. Turn to God this New Year's Eve and make some New Year's requests.