1 Kings 3:1-28

Key verse 3:9

*So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?*

Introduction

We thank God who continues to work in the uniquely difficult times we have faced over the past year. Many people, including myself were concerned that our Bible study, college and youth ministry, or even our Sunday Worship services around the world would decrease during the pandemic. However, I have heard a lot of cases where the opposite has been true. I believe that one reason is that many servants made decisions to pray even more than before. Then, as God’s servants what should ask of God in order to pray for and serve others better? In today’s passage, Solomon asked God for a discerning heart. He asked for wisdom from God. This request really pleased God, because it was prayer for governing the people of God. But how was Solomon able to ask for wisdom over all other things he could have asked for? This is the question we would like to think about through today’s passage,

**(slide 2)** In doing so, we’re going to consider the passage in two parts: Part 1. Solomon loved God, and Part 2. Solomon loved God’s people.

**(slide 3)** Part 1: Solomon Loved God (1-7a)

**(slide 4)** In chapter 2, David gave a charge to Solomon, saying, “... be strong, act like a man.” At that time, Solomon was just a teenager, or at most 20 years old. But, David believed in Soloman and entrusted him with the kingdom of Israel. He challenged Solomon to walk in obedience to God and keep God’s commands. But, he also planted God’s vision to be a man of wisdom; when he told Solomon “You are a man of wisdom.” From that point on, Solomon tried hard to be a man of wisdom.

In Chapter 2, he used wisdom to carry out God’s judgment on his enemies.

**(slide 5)** Then fast forward to today’s passage, verse 1, Solomon used his wisdom to make an alliance with Pharaoh, King of Egypt--the only other super power nation of the time. As we can see, Solomon was already a man of wisdom, but he still lacked the true wisdom from God.

**(slide 6)** In verse 2, we learn that “The people … were still sacrificing at the high places, because a temple had not yet been built …” The high places had been used to sacrifice to the Lord from the times of the Judges (Jdg 6:25, 13:16, 1Sam 7:10, 13:9, 14:35; 16:5, 1Chr 21:26). When King David brought the ark of the Lord to Jerusalem, he left Zadok the priest before the tabernacle at Gibeon, making it the most important high place (4, 1Chr 16:39, 21:29). However, this also did not fully represent God’s wisdom. God had commanded the removal of the high places, because the high places carried a history of idol worship from the former inhabitants of the land, which could possibly lead God’s people astray (Deu 12:2). God’s desire was to establish a singular place of worship for the Name of the Lord; one place for all sacrifice and offerings to be made. This was because having two places of worship could potentially divide the nation, which later it did (Deu 12:11-14). In the beginning of his reign, Solomon also joined the people in offering sacrifices and burning incense at the high places. At that time, Solomon still lacked true wisdom from God.

However, Solomon loved God.

**(slide 7)** Look at verses 3-4. *Solomon showed his love for the Lord by walking according to the instructions given him by his father David. The king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices, for that was the most important high place, and Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.*

Solomon showed his love for God by walking according to the instructions given by his father, King David. Solomon’s love for God was born out of his father’s love for God. He loved his father, and showed his love for God through obeying his father’s instructions. His father’s instructions were basically to obey the words of God. So, one can conclude that Solomon showed his love for God by obeying the words of God. Here, we can learn that David was a good Bible teacher for Solomon. David set an example of obeying God’s words and challenged Solomon to do the same. Through his father David, Solomon learned that obeying God’s words was the practical way to love God. Then, out of his love for God, Solomon brought offerings to the Lord with a clear conscience, beginning with a thousand burnt offerings on the altar at Gibeon.

We need to love God by obeying the words of God. Then we can come to God with a clear conscience and offer our lives to God. When Solomon came to God in this way, the Lord revealed himself to Solomon.

**(slide 8)** Look at verse 5. *At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, “Ask for whatever you want me to give you.”*

*“Ask for* ***whatever*** *you want me to give you!”* The Lord's offer to Solomon seems almost too generous--almost too good to be true. But, it was true! Here, we can see that the Lord is the King of kings. He gives His Kingdom to whomever he chooses. Especailly, the Lord is pleased to give the Kingdom of God to those that love him (Luk 12:32, 22:29) He trusts them to choose what glorifies God and to do what is right and just before God. When we love God, he gives us the kingdom of God, including whatever we ask!

**(slide 9)** It’s just like John 15:7, “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” , or Mark 11:24 “whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” Those who love God will even rule together with God as kings and queens, carrying out his righteousness decrees and judging the nations of the earth. So, why wouldn’t he give them whatever they ask even now? This is what God promised to Solomon. Then, how did Solomon answer God?

**(slide 10)** Look at verses 6-7a. *Solomon answered, “You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day.* ***7*** *“Now, Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David.*

Here, Solomon was referring to God’s promise to his father, King David. God promised David a son to sit on his throne (1Chr 1711-12, 2 Sam 7:11-13). And, David later made this promise known to Solomon (1 Chr 22:6). In this way God’s kindness to David continued through his son, Solomon. Standing before God, Solomon acknowledged God’s kindness to David and his faithfulness to keep his promise. Moreover, he recognized himself not only as Israel’s king, but as God’s servant. In this way, Solomon also showed his love for God by holding onto God's promise. (Of course, this promise was ultimately fulfilled through Jesus Chirst, who became God’s King forever.)

**(slide 11)** Part 2: Solomon Loved God’s People (7b-28)

God said to Solomon *“Ask for whatever you want me to give you.”* At this point, Solomon must have felt the full weight of his responsibility as king.

**(slide 12)** *Look at verses 7b-9. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties.* ***8*** *Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number.* ***9*** *So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?”*

Here, there is a huge contrast between “a little child” and “God’s great people” How could a little child govern God’s great people? They were God’s chosen people! They were too great and too numerous! Solomon quickly realized that this was not the job that anyone could do! It was the job that only God could do! Only God could govern God’s people. However, there was one thing that Solomon had. Solomon loved God’s people. So, since he loved God’s people, he asked for what he needed the most to govern God’s people. He asked God to give him a discerning heart. He asked for a heart of wisdom from God. How can we be shepherds and Bible teachers for God’s people? How can we teach even one word of God to these great people chosen by God? We need to ask God to give us a discerning heart.

Discernment means the ability to correctly choose what is right and just. But, only God is right! And, only God is just! According to Jeremiah 17:9, the human heart is deceitful above all things. This means that as servants of God, we should have reverent fear before God, especially to listen to God. We not only need to listen to the word of God, but we also need to listen to God in prayer. Today’s daily bread shows the Apostle Paul’s unceasing prayer out of his love for God’s people in Colossae. Although he hadn’t seen them in person, he prayed for them. He also mentioned Epaphras who was always wrestling for them in prayer, because he loved them dearly in the Lord.

When we pray for our children and our Bible students, we often don’t know what to pray for, so we need to ask for discernment and listen to God in prayer first. Like Solomon, we need to ask for wisdom for God’s great people, that God’s salvation work would continue from generation to generation until America becomes a kingdom of priests and a holy nation!

How did God respond when Solomon asked for wisdom from God?

**(slide 13)** Look at verses 10-14. *The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this.* ***11*** *So God said to him, “Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice,* ***12*** *I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be.* ***13*** *Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both wealth and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings.* ***14*** *And if you walk in obedience to me and keep my decrees and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life.”*

God was so pleased with Solomon--that Solomon asked for the very best thing from God. So God promised to do what he asked--to give him a wise and discerning heart. Moreover, God promised to give him all the things he didn’t ask for--wealth and honor, and long life. Solomon only needed to continue to walk in obedience to God.

After God answered Soloman, awoke from his dream.

God is looking to use us as shepherds and Bible teachers for God’s great people. This is a great duty that we cannot manage on our own. We need to pray and ask God for wisdom and for the Holy Spirit in order to be up to the task.

**(slide 14)** Luk 11:13 says, *“If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”*

And Jas 1:5 says, *“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.”*

When Solomon asked for wisdom, God gave him wisdom. Then how did Solomon use this wisdom from God to administer justice on behalf of God’s people?

**(slide 15)** First, look at verses 15b-16. *“He returned to Jerusalem, stood before the ark of the Lord’s covenant and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then he gave a feast for all his court.”*

Earlier, Solomon had offered sacrifices at Gibion. However, this time, he stood before the ark of the Lord’s convent in Jerusalem to offer sacrifices to the Lord. This was God’s wisdom to protect God’s people from the danger of falling into idol worship. It was also God's wisdom to protect the nation from the danger of division through having two seperate places of worship. Furthermore, Solomon affirmed himself as the one to build God’s house--the Jerusalem temple according to God’s promise given to David. Praise the Lord who gave Solomon such great wisdom, understanding, and insight to know the will of God for God’s people Israel.

Solomon also demonstrated his wisdom to administer justice on through his wise ruling in verses 16-27. Basically, it tells the story of two prostitutes who came and stood before the king. Now, prostitutes, because of their low status in society, might not expect to receive justice from God. But Solomon listened carefully to what these two women had to say.

The women lived in the same house and both gave birth to sons at around the same time. During the night one woman's son died because she lay on him. So she got up and took the other woman’s son and placed her dead son at the other woman’s breast. When that woman awoke and found her son dead, she realized that it wasn’t her son.

The two women argued before the king. One said, “My son is alive and your son is dead”, while the other said, “No! Your son is dead and mine is alive. Then how did king Solomon discern justice in this case?

**(slide 16)** Look at verses 24-27. *“Then the king said, “Bring me a sword.” So they brought a sword for the king.* ***25*** *He then gave an order: “Cut the living child in two and give half to one and half to the other.”* ***26*** *The woman whose son was alive was deeply moved out of love for her son and said to the king, “Please, my lord, give her the living baby! Don’t kill him!” But the other said, “Neither I nor you shall have him. Cut him in two!”* ***27*** *Then the king gave his ruling: “Give the living baby to the first woman. Do not kill him; she is his mother.”*

Solomon administered justice based on one mother’s love for her son. Even prostitutes love their own children, and pray for their own children. Through this wise verdict, King Solomon gained the trust of the nation.

**(slide 17)** Look at verse 28. *“When all Israel heard the verdict the king had given, they held the king in awe, because they saw that he had wisdom from God to administer justice.”*

The people saw that God was working through Solomon and God was glorified.

**(slide 18)** In conclusion: God has called us to love God and love God’s people. We can love God by obeying the word of God and holding onto His promises. We can love God’s people by asking God for wisdom to administer justice. So we need to pray and ask God for a discerning heart and listen to God in prayer on behalf of our children and Bible students.

One word: Solomon loved God and His great people.