SOLOMON'S REQUEST FOR WISDOM: A LESSON ON THE ASSURANCE OF ANSWERED PRAYER
1 Kings 03:04–15

Introduction

Does wisdom dwell on the earth today? Are there many wise men and women within society serving in governmental, business, educational and other leadership positions? Are there many husbands and wives who possess genuine wisdom, who develop wise relationships between themselves and with their children?

Wisdom is the ability to understand and to discern what to do, how to do it, and when to do it. Wisdom knows what to do and does it. Wisdom knows right from wrong, and always does what is right. Wisdom recognizes wickedness and has nothing to do with sin and evil. Wisdom knows what responsible behaviour is and lives responsibly, turning away from all acts of irresponsibility.

Wisdom was the great concern of Solomon. Remember that Solomon had just consolidated the power of his throne. He had shattered a rebellion, a coup against the throne by his half-brother Adonijah. And he had executed all the powerful, influential conspirators who had supported the uprising of Adonijah. The nation was now unified under his leadership, and peace swept through the land. Solomon's father, King David, had recently died, and Solomon sat all alone upon the throne of the nation. Sensing deep inadequacy and helplessness to handle the task laid out before him, he felt the need to seek the face of the Lord. He desperately needed wisdom, a very special ability to understand and to discern what to do as he governed the great nation Israel. This is the subject of this great passage of Scripture: *The Request for Wisdom by Solomon and His Wise Justice: A Lesson on Wisdom and Discernment*, 1 Kings 3:1-28.

I. A glimpse into the attitude of Solomon: planting the seeds that leads to a worldly, carnal life (vv. 1-3).

II. A request for wisdom: a lesson on the assurance of answered prayer (vv. 4-15).

III. A demonstration of wise judgment or discernment: the importance of wisdom (vv. 16-28).

1 Kings 03: 04-15 Solomon's Request for Wisdom: A Lesson on the Assurance of Answered Prayer

Solomon began his reign in worship and prayer, sensing a deep need for wisdom to lead and govern the nation. With his power now consolidated and all the nation unified in supporting him, Solomon could now celebrate his inaugural ceremony or coronation service (2 Chr 1:1-13). What happened at the ceremony changed Solomon's life forever:

1. Solomon travelled to Gibeon to worship God and to conduct the inaugural ceremony (v. 4). Attending the ceremony were the officials of the royal court, the military commanders, the judges and governors of the nation, the clan leaders, and no doubt a vast multitude of citizens (v. 4; 2 Chr 1:1-13). A thousand burnt offerings were sacrificed to the LORD, indicating a huge and joyful occasion in celebrating the crowning of Solomon as king. It should be noted that the Tabernacle itself was located at Gibeon during these days of Solomon's reign (2 Chr 1:3). Once the worship service had been conducted, Solomon and the multitude of people retired to their tents and campsites for the night.

2. After having fallen asleep, Solomon was suddenly confronted by the LORD who appeared to him in a dream (v. 5). Being very pleased with the worship and sacrifices Solomon had offered, the LORD told Solomon to ask for or make any request he wanted.

3. But note what Solomon did: instead of making an immediate request, he acknowledged two great facts (v. 6). His heart was overflowing with gratitude to the LORD for His wonderful goodness to him as king. For that reason he expressed his gratitude and thankfulness for what the LORD had done:

=> that God had been very kind to his father David because David had been faithful to the LORD and lived a righteous and upright life

=> that God had given a son to continue David's dynasty

Solomon knew that he had been given the privilege of ruling only by the grace of God and only because his father David had lived a righteous life. With a heart full of praise and thanksgiving, Solomon expressed his gratitude to the LORD for the wonderful privilege of ruling and sitting upon the throne of David.

4. Solomon also expressed a very essential attitude or spirit — that of humility (v. 7). He was gripped by a deep, intense sense of helplessness and inadequacy for the awesome task given him. Knowing how inexperienced he was in government Solomon referred to himself as being "only a little child." Within the halls of government, he simply did not know how to go out or come in, how to find his way around, how to carry out his duties and perform his task as king. Solomon was gripped by a sense of desperate need, for God's chosen people were too numerous and too great a people for him to serve. He was helpless, too unqualified for the task.

5. Having shared his gratitude and his sense of inadequacy, Solomon then made a striking request of the LORD (vv. 8-9). He requested an understanding, discerning heart so that he might govern God's people and discern between good and evil, right and wrong. Without this wisdom — the wisdom of an understanding and discerning heart — Solomon stated that he would not be able to govern the great nation Israel, the people of the LORD. Keep in mind that Solomon had become the ruler of the nation once led by great leaders such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Samuel and his father King David.

By an understanding and discerning heart, Solomon meant a heart that could understand issues and discern the truth, a heart that could judge between...

- good and bad
- right and wrong
- truth and falsehood
- righteousness and evil

He was asking for a heart that would listen and be patient with all sides of an issue and that could discern and judge the truth. He needed a tender, patient heart and a sharp mind that had the ability to reason and think issues through.

6. Solomon's striking request pleased the LORD immensely (vv. 10-14). Responding to Solomon, the LORD reviewed and confirmed Solomon's request. He had not requested what most people would have: health and a long life, wealth and prosperity. Instead, Solomon had requested an understanding, discerning heart so that he might minister justice among the people. Because of Solomon's wise and humble request, the LORD made an astounding promise to Solomon:

=> he would be given a wise and discerning heart, a heart that never had been nor ever would be surpassed (v. 12).

=> he would be given wealth and honour above all his contemporaries (v. 13).

=> he would also be given a long life, but this promise was conditional: it was based upon obedience. Solomon must walk in the ways of the LORD and obey the LORD's commandments.

7. When the encounter with the LORD was over, Solomon immediately awoke from his dream and returned to Jerusalem (v. 15). He was stirred to worship before the Ark of God because of God's wonderful promises to him. After standing there before the Ark, he offered two types of sacrifices to the LORD:

=> He offered burnt sacrifices, which symbolized the atonement, that he had been reconciled to God through the substitute sacrifice.

=> He offered fellowship or peace offerings, which symbolized that he wished to grow in the peace and fellowship of God, ever seeking a deeper life with the LORD (see notes, Lev 1:1-7:38).

After his personal worship before the Ark of God, Solomon held a great feast for his court officials (v. 15). What a memorable experience his inaugural ceremony had been, an experience that led to a dramatic, life-changing encounter with the LORD!

Thought 1. There is an encouraging lesson for us in this worship experience of Solomon. When we are facing desperate and critical situations or are feeling incapable and sensing deep, intense inadequacy, we can cry out to the LORD and He will answer us. The LORD will meet our desperate need, and He will help equip us to handle the difficult situation. The LORD will empower us, making us sufficient and adequate so that we can handle the task. Never will the LORD abandon us and leave us to plough through life by ourselves.

Prayer is the answer. When we pray, the LORD hears and answers us, meeting our need. Whatever the need is, the LORD will hear our cry and answer our prayer, strengthening and empowering us to conquer whatever problems confront us. This is the clear teaching of God's Holy Word:

Mark 11:24 *"Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."*

Luke 11:9 *So I say to you: "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."*

John 15:7 *"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."*

John 16:24 *"Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete."*

Heb 13:6 *So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"*

James 5:16 *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*

1 John 3:22 *And receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.*

Psa 28:7 *The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song.*

Psa 40:17 *Yet I am poor and needy; may the LORD think of me. You are my help and my deliverer: O my God, do not delay.*

Psa 91:15 *He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him.*

Isa 41:10 *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

Isa 43:1-2 *But now, this is what the LORD says he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze."*

Isa 65:24 *Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.*

Jer 29:13 *You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.* ■