

Making God-Pleasing Decisions.

Text: 1 Kings 3:5–14

Suggested Hymns:

325, 163, 41, 420, 345

- 1) The Privilege
- 2) The Temptation
- 3) The Decision
- 4) The Answer

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 1 Kings 3:5–14, ⁵ *At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, “Ask! What shall I give you?”*

⁶ *And Solomon said: “You have shown great mercy to Your servant David my father, because he walked before You in truth, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with You; You have continued this great kindness for him, and You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.*

⁷ *Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in.*

⁸ *And Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted. ⁹ Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?”*

¹⁰ *The speech pleased the LORD, that Solomon had asked this thing. ¹¹ Then God said to him: “Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, ¹² behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. ¹³ And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days.*

¹⁴ *So if you walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days.” (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Few of us realise how many decisions we have to make during the time of an ordinary life, or of what far-reaching consequences our decisions will be.

This is true of our lives, first, economically. Many a farmer has had to decide whether he should sell his grain and livestock now or wait for a while. Some, having decided to sell immediately, have seen the markets rise in price within a few short weeks or months, and the loss to them ran into thousands of dollars.

Others have decided to hold on, and, instead of seeing the market rise, they have seen it go down until they were compelled to sell at a loss of thousands of dollars.

Decisions affect our lives also physically. Many a person must decide which doctor to consult, or as to whether or not he will try a certain remedy that has been suggested for his illness. Under God the length of life may depend upon such decisions. Some have made the right decisions and have regained health and lived for years; others have decided wrong and, as a result, continued in ill health and, humanly speaking, had a much shorter life than they might have had.

But most important of all, decisions affect our lives also spiritually. We may go back to the Garden of Eden and see how much depended upon the decision which Adam and Eve made when they were tempted to eat of the forbidden fruit.

It might be interesting for us to let our imagination rove for a while and try to picture to ourselves what life would have been had Adam and Eve decided to obey God.

As it is now, we know the terrible consequences which their ill-fated decision has had upon the history of the world. It is literally true that the history of the world — yes, the life of every individual human being has been radically affected by the decision which Adam and Eve made.

And so there comes a time in the life of every person when he must make important decisions in spiritual matters. It is true, by natural powers we cannot

decide in favour of Christ, but we can by our own strength decide against Christ and thus reject Him.

Consider what dire consequences such a decision will have upon man's life in eternity! It makes the difference between an eternity of unparalleled joy in heaven or an eternity of unspeakable misery in hell.

Now when we think of how much depends upon our decisions, we may tremble at the thought that possibly we are deciding wrong. As a result, some people are constantly hesitating to make decisions. This is wrong, too.

Often such people miss the good things in life because they have failed to decide in favour of the right thing and at the right time. We see, then, how necessary it is for us to implore God's guidance in order that we may make right decisions in the true fear and love of God. This thought is vividly illustrated in the history of our text. Let us therefore consider *Making God-Pleasing Decisions*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Making God-Pleasing Decisions

The Privilege

Solomon had just brought God a thousand burnt offerings at Gibeon, the place of worship. That night God appeared to him in a dream and said, "***Ask! What shall I give you?***" Think of what a privilege it was for Solomon to have God place the choice before him in such a generous fashion, "***Ask! What shall I give you?***"

Many a person has silently longed for a similar privilege. But friends, I wonder whether all too many of us have not been like the hen of the fable which sat next to a bushel of grain and starved to death.

God has given us similar wonderful promises. His Son has told us in Matthew 7:7, ⁷ "***Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.***

He has also promised in John 16:23, ***Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.*** Before we envy Solomon for his privilege, let us recognise the great privilege that God has placed before us.

But someone may say: "*Oh, that was different. Solomon had a special vision. God appeared to him in a dream and gave him this specific promise and*

privilege. If God would grant such a visible sign to us, we, too, could have more confidence in the effectiveness of prayer and rejoice more greatly in its privilege.”

It may be true that God gave a very special privilege to Solomon by granting him this dream, but, friends, here is an instance where we should see why we ought to learn to appreciate the Word of God itself and all of its glorious promises.

Is it not true that too often we feel about God’s Word as did the rich man in hell, who asked Abraham to send someone from the dead to his brothers and warn them against the future misery of hell?

When Abraham told the rich man that they had Moses and the Prophets (namely the Word of God), the rich man was sure that was not enough. He felt that some miracle should be performed before their eyes.

Then Abraham reminded him that if a man will not believe God’s Word, neither will he believe though one rose from the dead.

Let us apply this to our privilege of prayer. The Lord has spoken the word, “*Ask, and it will be given to you.*” He has added the promise: “*whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.*” If we will not believe these clear words of God and thus recognise our great privilege, neither would we believe even if a vision was granted to us like to that of Solomon.

2. Making God-Pleasing Decisions

The Temptation

It was now up to Solomon to make his decision. Being human, no doubt he was tempted to ask for certain things which would have been unworthy and even foolish. He might have thought of asking for a long life upon this earth. He might have thought about asking for great wealth and honour. He might have thought of the opportunity this gave him to take vengeance upon all of his enemies and to remove them from becoming any possible danger to himself and to his throne.

Because you and I have also been born of sinful flesh, the temptation for us to ask for (or at least to desire) unworthy and even foolish things is great enough.

We too are tempted to crave a long life on this earth. Now, on the one hand, it is certainly true that length of days is a blessing from God. We see this in the promise of the Fourth Commandment.

On the other hand, my friends, if we recognise through faith the joys and the blessings of heaven as they are promised to us in God's holy Word, we certainly will not grieve about it, if God in His wisdom, sees fit to take us out of this life even at an early age.

We, too, are tempted to crave riches and honour. Already from early youth most of us have wished that we would become rich; and in the case of the majority of people this desire is never lost.

Then, too, when we have had difficulties and troubles with other people and we come away hurt with a sense of injustice received at their hands, we, too, are tempted to wish in our hearts that such a person would have to pay for his unkindness and injustice.

We must therefore recognise the temptation to abuse the privilege of prayer which God has granted and therefore also be constantly on our guard so that we do not ask for unworthy and even foolish, hurtful, and sinful things.

3. Making God-Pleasing Decisions

The Decision

Even though Solomon probably was greatly tempted to ask for unworthy gifts, still he began to consider the great needs of that moment. He thought first of the mercy which God had granted to his father David, who walked in righteousness and in uprightness of heart before God.

If Solomon was to be a worthy successor of such a father, certainly he could not abuse the privilege which God was now granting him. Again Solomon considered the people over whom he was to rule. He recognised in them God's chosen people. They were therefore a great people, and it would certainly have been most foolhardy on his part to forget the needs of his office when God was granting such a privilege.

And once again, Solomon considered his own personal shortcomings and needs. He recognised his own youth and inexperience and therefore said: "*I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in.*" Solomon recognised the

tremendous responsibility of the position to which God had raised him and therefore by the Spirit of God, who was active in his heart, he was prompted to ask for an understanding heart and for wisdom so that he might judge God's people in a God-pleasing manner.

Solomon's choice amounted to this: *"God, make me every bit that man which You want me to be, and equip me for the work which You have given me to do."* In other words, he is asking first and above all for the gifts to fulfil that place which God had cut out for him in this life.

My friends, if God has blessed us with Christian parents, do we see that we likewise have an esteemed position to fill, if we are not to bring discredit and dishonour upon their name?

If that father and mother have not only taught us the way of Christ, but also have taken the lead by the example of their own lives, God forbid that we should bring disgrace or dishonour upon their name!

Again, when we consider that God has a work for us to do which will influence and affect ever-widening circles of people and then remember that our lives and influence may mean, under God, the difference between salvation and damnation for this or that person, I think we will recognise the tremendous — yes, even overwhelming importance of working as God would want us to work.

Or again, if we consider our own shortcomings and inadequacy for life's calling, I think we, too, will see what a foolhardy choice it would be to squander the opportunity of prayer by asking for purely personal, temporary, and earthly advantages when God grants us the privilege: *"Ask, and it will be given to you."*

Let us, then, also decide, as did Solomon, to place ourselves at God's disposal and to ask of Him an understanding heart and wisdom. This will mean, first, that we ask for that spiritual understanding by which we shall see in Christ Jesus our Saviour and Lord, with all the beauty and majesty which that implies.

Yes, it means to pray with the disciples, as written in Luke 17:5, ⁵ *"Lord, Increase our faith,"* so that we glory in the Cross of Christ, on which He earned our full and complete salvation at such a tremendous price.

But this prayer includes also the petition that God would equip us for that work which He has for us to do, so that we may serve absolutely to the best of those abilities with which God has endowed us.

It makes little difference what position we may hold in life (as long as it is honourable and God-pleasing), but it does make a big difference as to how we fill that position. Let us therefore offer ourselves to God without any reservations and ask Him to endow us with a full measure of His grace for the performance of our life's calling.

4. Making God-Pleasing Decisions **The Answer**

When God had heard Solomon's prayer, we read, ¹⁰ *The speech pleased the LORD, that Solomon had asked this thing.* Because this was a God-pleasing prayer, God granted him the request which he had made.

Solomon, was given an understanding heart and such great wisdom that no king before or after could compare with him; and because he had acted so wisely, God also granted him some of the things for which he had not asked, but which could be used and enjoyed.

God granted him great honour, so that kings and queens travelled great distances to see and to hear him. God granted him also great wealth, so that Solomon was probably the richest king Israel ever had.

Finally, God told Solomon that if he would continue to walk upon righteous paths, he would also enjoy long life.

Unfortunately, Solomon did not fulfil this part of the covenant and therefore died comparatively young. But it does not change the fact that when a man seeks first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, God will add any other blessings to him which will be for his good and enjoyment.

Let us not think, my friends, that it is different today. God still hears the prayer of the righteous heart. God also answers that prayer; if not exactly in the way that we have asked it, then it will generally be even much better.

Consider the covenant which God makes with all people when He says in Matthew 6:33, ³³ *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

Our reaction to this offer will reveal our real heart and attitude. There are some people who pretend to be seeking God's kingdom, but what they are really seeking is only "*all these things.*" Then, when God does not grant "these things," they complain that His promise does not hold.

Let us therefore realise that if we are really seeking God and His kingdom first and above everything else, we will not be too much concerned about these other things.

When we are really seeking God and His righteousness, we do not do it with an ulterior motive. We do not seek God and His righteousness while casting a side glance upon the earthly and material profit there may be in it, but we actually have our heart and mind set upon God and His kingdom.

May God, therefore, grant us an abundant measure of His Holy Spirit, so that for the many choices and decisions we are called upon to make we may always make God-pleasing decisions. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.