

1Kings 3:1–15

"God's Greater Grace to a Great Sinner Like Solomon"

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Just how generous was God's offer to Solomon? Pastor leads his family in today's "Hopewell @Home" passage. 1Kings 3:1–15 prepares us for the first serial reading in Morning Public Worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these fifteen verses, the Holy Spirit teaches us that God chose to meet Solomon in the midst of the one thing in which He said that Solomon was NOT(!) loving Him. Not only did God heap up gifts in addition to wisdom, but the first part of the wisdom that He gave Solomon was in granting him repentance from the manmade worship at Gibeon.

Wednesday, January 5, 2022 • Read 1Kings 3:1–15

Questions from the Scripture text: With whom did Solomon make a treaty in v1? Whom did he marry? Where did he bring her until when? What were the people doing (v2a)? Why (v2b)? What did Solomon do (v3a)? Except for what (v3b)? Where did Solomon go to do what (v4)? How many? What happens that night (v5)? What is Solomon supposed to do? But what does he do first in v6? And second in v7–8? What does he finally do in v9? For what does he ask? Why? How does Yahweh respond (v10)? What will God give him (v12)? And what else (v13)? Why (v11)? And what else, upon what conditions (v14)? What change in v15 (cf. v4) is the first indication of an understanding heart?

In my particular translation, the publisher has chosen to head this section "Solomon requests wisdom." Indeed he does, by God's grace. But the red flags are flying all over this chapter. After the establishing of the kingdom in chapter 2, the opening of chapter 3 has the makings of its unraveling. A treaty with Pharaoh (v1a). A political marriage (v1b) that is going to be spiritually compromising and set a precedent for a thousand such "marriages." Permitting the people to worship at the high places (v2a), using an excuse (v2b) that Solomon himself knows doesn't hold water (cf. v15b). And then Solomon himself worshipping at those high places (v3b–4).

Against this backdrop, we can't come away from this chapter thinking that it's a story of how good Solomon is to make this choice. Rather, we must come away amazed at the grace of God that would permit and enable him to make a good choice. So, let's observe several aspects of this great grace of God to Solomon (and to us).

God's patience with the exceedingly great evil of manmade worship. Lest we think it is a small thing to worship God in a non-commanded way, note the relationship of the first half of v3 to the second half of v3. "Solomon loved Yahweh... *except...*" Here is a man whose life could be accurately summarized (God Himself does it!) as "loving Yahweh," but he goes to worship God with great sincerity and zeal (a thousand burnt offerings in v4!), and that's the one place in his life that he is NOT loving the Lord. This says the same thing as Exodus 20:5. Worshiping God using our own innovations *is to hate Him*.

However much we love the Lord in the rest of our lives, however sincerely and intensely we mean our worship, if we are doing it according to the inventions of man instead of the prescription of God, we are hating Him.

But while Solomon's idolatry is a feature of the text, it is the background to that glorious grace of God that He displays in the foreground. Why was Solomon in Gibeon (v4)? Because "that was the great high place" (cue wincing and cringing and gasps of horror). But it is "at Gibeon" (v5) that Yahweh appears to Solomon to invite him to ask for whatever he wants.

As I write this, we have just come through what many sincere believers call "advent season." It's an invention of man, and many are devoted to it with the intensity of Solomon's thousand sacrifices. And as the Lord's appearance to Solomon at Gibeon, the Lord has graciously communicated Himself to many, even in the midst of something that Scripture teaches us to understand is a hating of Him. His doing so is no indication that somehow this manmade religion is acceptable. Rather, it's a display of just how marvelous His grace is (see especially the last section below!)

God's grace to enable us to respond to God's grace. And God adds to that grace the grace by which Solomon answers well. I suspect that most of us who are familiar with this story think of Solomon "answering well" as Solomon asking for wisdom. But the excellence of his answer has much more to it than the request that he ends up making.

First, he starts with praise and thanksgiving. "You have shown great *hesed* (covenant love)... You continued this great *hesed* for him and You have given him a son to sit on his throne" (v6). Then, he continues with humility and neediness. "I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in" (v7). He pleads the Lord's own interests: "Your people whom You have chosen" (v8). He lays his predicament before the Lord: this people is so great by comparison to Solomon's abilities that he cannot even number or count them (v8).

Finally, Solomon asks for a "hearing heart" (v9a) to judge the people well as their king. How does someone whose act of worship is one that offends God come to pray in a way that pleases (v10) the Lord? There's only one explanation for that. Grace.

God's generosity to reward good works. The Lord gives Solomon a wise and understanding heart beyond that of any mere man (v12). But He responds to Solomon's grace-given humility and grace-given request with a generous reward: riches and honor above all the other kings of his day (v13). We can do nothing good apart from grace, and yet the God who gives the grace for that good, both forgives our guilt for the sake of Christ's sacrifice and rewards the good for the sake of Christ's righteousness. The chapter begins with red flags, features Solomon's idolatry, surprises us with a grace-produced request at Gibeon, and then features God's reward for that request. It presents to us our God who rewards, by generous grace, the good works of believers which are done only by His grace.

God's grace to grant repentance. God promised Solomon wisdom to judge the people, and also great riches and honor. But before the passage closes, He gives him something better than all of those: repentance. The king wakes up in Gibeon, realizes his error, and does not respond to this appearance of God by offering more sacrifices as "the great high place" in Gibeon. Instead, he packs up and comes to Jerusalem and "stood before the ark of the covenant of Yahweh." It is there that he now offers up burnt offerings and peace offerings. Whenever the Lord's people realize a spiritual blind spot and turn away from their great sin, it is a great gift of God.

That's the risk of adding subtitles to translations. You might end up calling a passage "Solomon request wisdom," when upon a closer look a better title might have been, "God displays the greatness of His grace."

With what former ignorant sin of yours has the Lord been patient? How does this free you to (possibly) let go of other practices that are offensive to Him? How does His generosity to reward good works help you seek both the reward and the praise of His generosity?

Sample prayer: Lord, how great is Your love and Christ's sacrifice, that for His sake You would bear patiently with us! For truly, we have done many things, sincerely thinking that we were honoring You, only to discover later that those very things were hateful to You. So we ask not only that You would forgive us, but that You would grant unto us the further grace of identifying such sin and turning from it. How we thank You for giving us Christ, and together with Him all good things. Make us to walk in those works that please You, and which You are pleased to reward, for Christ's sake—in whose Name we also ask it all, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP73C "Yet Constantly, I Am with You" or TPH176 "O Thou That Hear'st When Sinners Cry"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)

First Kings chapter 3, our portion this versus one through 15. So, be careful how we hear because these are the words of God. Now, Solomon made a treaty with Pharaoh King of Egypt and married Pharaoh's daughter. And then he brought her to the city of David, until he had finished building his own house, the house of Yahweh and the wall all around.

Jerusalem. Meanwhile, the people sacrificed at the high places because there was no house built for the name of Yahweh until those days and Solomon. Loved Yahweh walking in the statutes of his father, David, except that he sacrificed and burned incense at the high places. Now, the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there for that was the great.

I place Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. And Gabian Yahweh appeared to Solomon and a dream by night. And God said, ask what shall I give you? And Solomon said, you have shown great mercy to your servant David. My father, because he walked before you in truth and righteousness and an upright of heart with you.

You have uprightness of heart with you, you have continued. That's great. Kindness for him. And you have given him a son to sit on his throne as it is. This day verse 7, chapter 3. Now now oh you all am I 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 and your servant is in the midst of your people who you have. Chosen a great people. Two numerous to be numbered or counted. Therefore give to your servant and 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. The speech pleased, the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing Then, God, said to him, because you have asked this thing and have not asked long life for yourself, or have asked riches for yourself. Nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern.

Justice 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, nor shall any like you arise after you. 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.

So if you walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments as your father, David walked, Then I will link in your days then Solomon. Awoke and indeed, it had been a dream and he came to Jerusalem and stood before the arc of the Covenant of Yahweh.

Offered up. Burnt offerings, offered piece offerings, and made a feast for all his servants.

Amen. So far the reading of God's inspired and inherent word. It's interesting. The New King James editors decided to title this section, Solomon requests, wisdom. When a better title for the section, might be God's patience with Solomon's sin in order to give him repentance by wisdom. The end of chapter two, indeed.

Most of the whole of chapter two was about the establishing of the kingdom and Solomon's hand and wisdom. Had already played a big factor in it as David gave him instruction those who needed either for the establishing of justice in the land or the removal of guilt from their house or the strengthening of the kingdom under Solomon and the new administration.

Several times in that chapter, we saw either David saying or the text commenting that Solomon was wise to do these things. And the conclusion of the chapter was thus the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon. But coming from that very positive note, the red flags start flying, and the first red flag is immediately.

Now Solomon made a treaty with Pharaoh and knowing how the Israelite history began and the warning against making treaties especially with those who are post-god and so forth. We know that that's a problem. You made a treaty with Pharaoh and married Pharaoh's daughter which of course it weren't to marry foreign women at all.

But we know. Now this time looking forward at, what would come in Solomon's life that this politically convenient marriage for Solomon would end up being one of, literally a thousand, a thousand wives and concubines that he would end up with the vast majority of him would be foreign women who would turn his heart away from the Lord.

And so the red flags are flying and then we see Meanwhile verse 2, the people sacrificed to the high

places because there was no house built for the name of Yahweh until those days. But in chapter two, when somebody thought he might be about to be executed, He didn't run to a high place and grabbed one of the, you know, a corner of one of the fancy altars that would be built in the style that you might build one of the high places or especially at Gibeon, which ends up being called the great eye place here.

No, they would run to the tabernacle we read and grabbed the horns of the altar of Yahweh, which had been designed in the way that the Lord Himself had commanded. So verse 2 is not a good excuse and then verse 3 and Solomon loved. Yahweh walking in the statutes of his father, David, except that he sacrificed and burned incense at the high places.

So he loved you all way. And all of these ways over here, but in this one way, he hated the Lord, and that's what the Lord says about. Worshiping him in the wrong way. We remember from the second commandment, don't we? That he calls those who worship by way of idols, then that hate me.

So So the red flags are flying especially with respect to this last one is when we read. Now, the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there. For that was the great eye place Solomon. Offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. He thought he was loving the Lord. Perhaps is very intensely devotional and he's not offering to another God.

He is offering to Yahweh but he's doing it at Gibeon the high place and we might expect and God would have been exactly right to do. What he did tonight, Abena by. You wouldn't he to to strike Solomon down and kill him. Even though the act was sincere because it was hateful and offensive to him, but look at God's mercy.

Look at his patience with this exceedingly. Great evil. At Gibeon Yahweh. Appeared to Solomon in a dream by night. Do you see the greatness of the grace of God that he not only makes us offer to Solomon? Which is a very gracious and generous offer no matter where he does it, but he does it even here through this.

And we see, and remember the rest from the teaching of the rest of Scripture from the whole of Scripture that it is. Christ's sacrifice that is putting away. The sin that Solomon is committing and Christ's righteousness to which God is responding as he responds to that, which is Solomon does sincerely, And we're comforted in our own worship and in our own walk with the Lord.

Because there have been many times that we have been doing something in the worship of God, or in the way that we walk within. That was part of our religion. We ourselves at one point in our family used to observe something that that many call Advent. And there's a name for it that even uses the name of Christ in it.

And we try not even to use that name anymore, but we thought it was all about Jesus and offered ourselves up to him and sincerity. And there were many times as we did. So, and we sang things that were scripturally inaccurate singing lies about Jesus and honor of a man-made religious thing and God could have done to us according to what he did according to Nate to Naidabanabaihu.

But we too, we look back and we say, behold, how gracious God was to us. Not only put away our sin in Christ. But for the sake of the righteousness of Christ rewarded that which was sincere and good. Even in the midst of such a great sin and met us in a special way so many times.

And it becomes easier for us to let go of the idolatry, doesn't it? Because now we're not saying it can't have been so wrong. If God met us in such a special way. Instead we're saying even though it was so wrong, behold the grace of God who has met us who had medicines such a special way.

And may he be glorified by our repentance now. So you see the great patience of God, even with such an exceedingly great evil, as this man-made worship. And then you see the great enabling of God. He is not, he does not leave us to ourselves to produce wisdom. He offers to Solomon.

Ask for anything. And It's significant that when Solomon responds, he responds first by offering. God praise. And then second by humbling himself, we can learn much from how to pray to God, when we come requesting something to offer him, praise. And then to confess about ourselves, but it's significant that in his confession about himself.

He says, I am a little child, I do not know how to go out and to come in. Yes. This is a Hebrew idiom meaning that he's very foolish and needs a lot of wisdom, but he picks one that has to do with going out and coming in because here he is at Gibeon and he's realizing how foolish he has been even in the worship of God.

Now, how is ghee going to be king over? Such a great people. As the Lord's people, If he doesn't, even if he hasn't even gone to the right place to worship God. And so he asks, God for wisdom and God is pleased with the way that Solomon has spoken and God is pleased with the request makes these marvelous promises, but you notice that the grace of God gives Solomon wisdom and whoops.

Gotta flip the page here. And so when he says at the end, So if you walk in my ways to keep my statutes and my commandments as your father, David walked and were reminded immediately of verse 3 Solomon. Loved Yahweh walking in the statutes of his father. David except that he sacrificed and burned incidents of high places and Solomon.

Awoke verse 15. And indeed it had been a dream and he came to Jerusalem. The Lord has said, I have given you wisdom a wise and understanding heart verse 12. And the first exercise of that wisdom is to leave the high place and go to the tabernacle and go to the right place to the place that God has commanded, that God has established as a statute to use those terms from verse 14.

So we see God's patience with our sin. We see God's grace to give us the wisdom and ability to repent of that sin. His generosity to reward that which is good. He's pleased with Solomon's prayer even at Gibeon as he is generous to reward. Us even for whatever is sincerely and rightly good that comes from Christ.

And then the repentance that he grant Solomon, how the sin from earlier in the chapter is reversed in verse 15. He comes to Jerusalem and stands before the arc and offers up burnt offerings and peace offerings. He doesn't say well it must have been accepted. It Gibeon because look at how God met me and look at how God responded to me.

He instead leaves Gibeon and goes to the right place and offers up there. And so we see God's great grace and the right way of depending upon him to make us lies and to give us repentance and the right way of repenting to set aside our sin and to make a new beginning of doing that, which he has commanded.

Let's ask God to increase our knowledge of him and our responding to him in those ways.

Father, thank you for this portion of your word. Thank you for the way. You displayed yourself with Solomon and two, literally two Solomon, and the way you have displayed yourself to us and your word. And by the help of your spirit, we pray that he would continue to lead us and help us and meditating upon your word and in responding rightly that we would be amazed at your great mercy to us that you would give us grace and wisdom to recognize where we still need to repent.

That you would give us grace to act upon that recognition and make ongoing reformation in whatever needs to be reformed back. According to your word. We thank you and bless you. That you are generous having put away our sin being merciful, you are merciful and having put him away, put away our sin by the cross of Christ.

And that you are generous to reward that which is good. And from Christ. And what we do for his sick, make us to know you as generous make us to know you as merciful, make us to love you, with a desire to do everything according to your Word and the way that pleases you, we ask all these things in Christ's name.

Amen.