

“What’s in a Request?”—1 Kings 3:9-14

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “What’s in a Request?”, is 1 Kings 3:9-14 → Solomon said to Yahweh: *Give Your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern Your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this Your great people?*” It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. And God said to him, *“Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you. I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days. And if you will walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days.”* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

How would you respond to God if He gave you a “blank check” offer? You could ask Him for anything you wanted! Such an offer may make one take inventory of his life to determine exactly what he wants or

needs. In one sense, it's not a foreign concept to us this side of the celebration of Christmas, where the frequently asked question, "What do you want for Christmas?", opened up the unlimited possibilities of our wish list—at least in our dreams. Realistically, we know that people can't give us everything we want in life, although we act like it sometimes.

Speaking of dreams, as Solomon was worshiping God he found himself in a very unique situation. Not only had he recently become the new King of Israel but he was also "offered" anything he wanted from the LORD in a dream. Following the evening sacrifice *the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and . . . said, "Ask what I shall give you."* (cf. 1 Kings 3:5) Quite a command to receive from the LORD, don't you think?

How would you respond to such a command? Would your sinful nature kick in and request something for yourself that you've wanted very much? One might think of all those possessions of which he dreamed about having in life. However, are you sure your wish list is complete enough so that you will not miss something in the end? Some might see this as their chance to obtain those mega-bucks which they feel would solve so many of their problems in life. However, can you be sure you'd ask for the right amount of money? Or maybe you'd immediately think of this as your opportunity to be completely restored to health. However, at what age would you limit your restoration and be

willing to die, since death would seem inevitable?

For some, sinful skepticism might immediately show its face and question the “offer” analytically: “Is God trying to test me? Why would He command **me** to do such a thing?” Their minds might be flooded with all kinds of doubt, wondering, “What’s the catch?” This is actually many people’s perspective of God’s grace in their lives. God may give freely but there’s got to be an “angle” to it somehow. Somehow He’s going to demand something from them so they refuse to get involved, which constitutes unbelief. Such an attitude lacks trust in the LORD **as Savior from sin** and leads to eternal separation from Him in hell.

Yet, how many times in our prayer life do we find ourselves making requests to God on our own terms, motivated by what we think we need or desire rather than by what God wants for us? It turns prayer into an act of manipulation rather than an act of submission in faith. James 4:3 speaks about combining selfish desires with prayer: *You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.* Humble faith submission in prayer is expressed in the desire for God’s will to be done in your life, as expressed in the 3rd Petition of the Lord’s Prayer, where we pray, “Thy will be done in heaven as it is on earth.”

Solomon considered his situation as king of Israel while recognizing his inexperience for such a task (cf. 1 Kings 3:7). However, His response to God’s command was made first and foremost **on the basis of God’s**

great and steadfast love (cf. 1 Kings 3:6) **toward His people!** He recognize in faith that Yahweh is the great Promises Keeper, the evidence of which he was experiencing by succeeding his father David as king.

As a servant of Yahweh, Solomon knew the focus of God's command was **His people** whom **He had chosen** (cf. 1 Kings 3:8). He viewed his life by faith on God's terms and from His perspective. Thus his request in verse 9 of our text: *Give Your servant . . . an understanding mind to govern Your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this Your great people?* His response reflected an attitude of humility in connection to His responsibilities for leadership of God's people.

Humility is central to discipleship because it reveals total submission to God's plan for your life in the ultimate expression of His *great and steadfast love* for you **in Jesus**. Humility was central to the Person & Work of Jesus Christ for us "entitled" sinners. We even refer to His life from conception to burial as His "state of humiliation" as He *made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant and humbling Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross* (cf. Philippians 2:5-9). If Jesus would have functioned with the same kind of entitled attitude which sinners display today we would still be lost in our sins.

Humility is also the key to repentance. When you are humiliated by your sinful actions in the sight of God and others it should lead you to your knees in repentance. Such humiliation connects you to the humiliation of Christ's cross on your behalf so that you receive forgiveness of sins and are born anew by the Holy Spirit. Jesus put it this way in Luke 14:9 → *Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.* Forgiveness (i.e. being exalted or "lifted up" by grace) is for everyone because Christ *humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death . . . on a cross for all the sins of all people for all time!*

Solomon reflected the important aspect of Jesus' teaching on humility in connection to leadership. At various points during Jesus' earthly ministry with His disciples they would engage in discussions about the positions they would eventually hold as leaders in the church. This prompted Jesus' teaching in Mark 10:42-45 → *You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.* And what does Jesus give as the motivation for acting so contrary to world's ways of functioning in leadership? *For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.* He places before us

His own humiliation.

Entitlement is dangerous to the life of humility. One may feel entitled to treat others in abrasive ways because of the money he's invested in a product. One may feel entitled to treat others disrespectfully when she thinks she has "earned" the right to do so by longevity or seniority in an organization. One may reflect entitlement whenever you view others self-righteously, thinking, saying or doing things which intentionally humiliate them. The mixture of sin and entitlement is so serious that we even think everyone driving on the roads should be looking out for us and getting out of our way.

What would your response be to God if He gave you a "blank check" offer in your life? In one sense we have been given the same command by Jesus in John 14:13-14 → *Whatever you ask in My name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.* Kind of sounds like the same command which the LORD gave Solomon.

To ask for anything in the name of Jesus means that you come to Him in humble faith, trusting in His Person & Work for the forgiveness of your sins. As you bring your requests, petitions and intercessions to the LORD in the name of Jesus, as commanded to do, you do so in humility desiring God to *be glorified in the Son*. Thus it's not simply about your own needs or wants being met but it's about praising God, worshiping

Him and giving Him thanks in submission to His Will for your life as you trust Him to take care of **all your needs!**

He who humbles himself will be exalted. So . . . what's in a request? From the LORD's perspective His "request"—or more correctly His command—is the expression of His desire to give you all the blessings of His work in your life. He desires to "exalt" you by giving you forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus. His desire is to provide for you physically on a daily basis. In fact, He always gives much more than you are entitled to or deserve! In our text Solomon received the wisdom for which he asked and much more because he considered God's desires and His people more important than himself.

He who humbles himself will be exalted. So . . . what's in a request? From a Christ perspective it is the desire to be used as God desires to work through us. It is a recognition in every level of your life you are not entitled to everything by everybody. It is a humble attitude which looks for the LORD to do His will in and through you each day as you offer yourself in service to your neighbor. It is the desire for a humble faith which is first and foremost seeking God's understanding and wisdom in Christ for your life. Amen.

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.*

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