

**Sermon Notes of  
Pastor Craig Kuhlman's Sermon on August 15, 2021:**

**"Choice – What would you ask for?  
(1 Kings 3:3-14; Ephesians 5:15-20)"**

**[In today's sermon, Pastor Craig Kuhlman, at church in the Y, shows us that the New Testament church should follow the example of Solomon and seek Godly wisdom and discernment in our lives.]**

Introduction:

- Have any of you seen a movie or read a novel where the person has been granted a wish they had?
- Wouldn't it really be cool, if we had an opportunity to ask for whatever we wanted, and it would be granted?
- How many would love that to happen? Probably most of us.
- And what would we have asked for?
  
- Now, how many of us remember that this actually happened in scripture?
- And the person that this actually happened to was Solomon.

**1 Kings 3:3 (NASB), Now Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of his father David, except that he was sacrificing and burning incense on the high places. 4) And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, because that was the great high place; Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. 5) In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream at night; and God said, "Ask what you wish Me to give you."**

- Now, this only happened once in scripture that Pastor Craig is aware of.
- Interestingly, Solomon could have asked for anything, but because he didn't ask for any of the things that he could have, in terms of material possessions or physical blessings, God being such a loving, merciful God gave him all those things on top of what he asked for.

**6) Then Solomon said, "You have shown great faithfulness to Your servant David my father, according as he walked before You in truth, righteousness, and uprightness of heart toward You; and You have reserved for him this great faithfulness, that You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.**

- So, here Solomon is acknowledging everything God had did relationally with David, his father.

**7) And now, Lord my God, You have made Your servant king in place of my father David, yet I am like a little boy;**

- Perhaps Solomon was a little boy, or a teenager or, in his mid-20's, but he felt like a little boy, in that. He didn't feel like he was able to take on that task of kingship.

- You know, sometimes an opportunity is given to us either at work, school or church and we immediately go to doubts.
- But, in this case, Solomon is acknowledging what God has done.
- We need to realize that it our Father in heaven is the One who gives us all that we have.

**7b) 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 who are too many to be numbered or counted.**

- No matter what age Solomon was, this is a daunting task that he faced.

**9) So give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, to discern between good and evil. For who is capable of judging this great people of Yours?"**

- Now, generally speaking, we could sum this up by the use of the word "wisdom".
- Solomon asked for "an understanding heart", which means a level of discernment that goes beyond what would be our natural inclination.
- With this comes discernment "between good and evil", which takes wisdom.
- Now, this wisdom gives us the ability to make judgments rightly.

**10) Now it was pleasing in the sight of the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing.**

- God, the Father, thought highly for what Solomon was asking for – a discerning heart or Godly wisdom.
- Do you think, that if we sought wisdom from God today, He would think favorably on that?
- Now, if we could spend 3 and ½ hours seeking wisdom instead of watching the news or political shows for 3 and a ½ hours, where do you think we might be at the end of the day?
- What if we made seeking wisdom, as part of our day, wouldn't that be a good thing?

**11) And God said to him, "Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked for yourself a long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the lives of your enemies, but have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice,**

- So, wisdom also gives us an ability to understand justice.
- Solomon wanted to make the right decisions in his leadership and rule.

**12) behold, I have done according to your words. Behold, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you.**

- Because of Solomon's desire for wisdom, he was elevated to a level that no one had been at before or afterwards.
- That's how much God respected what Solomon has asked for.
- Now, we know at end of Solomon's life, he kind of got a little derailed, but that didn't prevent him from being blessed with this blessing at this time.

**13) I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that there will not be any among the kings like you all your days. 14) And if you walk in My ways,**

**keeping My statutes and commandments, as your father David walked, then I will prolong your days.”**

- So, everything Solomon didn't ask for, he was granted by God.
- Now, let's jump ahead to Ephesians and see what Paul has to say about seeking our time after wisdom and an understanding heart.

**Ephesians 5:15 (NASB), So then, be careful how you walk, not as unwise people but as wise,**

- So, Paul, in essence is saying that wisdom wasn't just a valued commodity back in Solomon's day, because he is encouraging the New Testament church to be wise.
- Seeking wisdom is not just a passive thing, but requires activity.
- Now, with the word "walking", there is an indication of forward movement and forward progress.
- Paul is going to show us that there are certain things we can do to attain that wisdom, to live that wise life.

**16) making the most of your time,**

- How can we make the best use of our time – watching sports or entertainment shows or prioritize our walking in wisdom?
- Now, how we engage our time is either by investments in time (seeking wisdom) or consumption of time (seeing entertainment).

**because the days are evil. 17) Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.**

- It's implied in Paul's statement here that seeking wisdom and redeeming the time is how God wants us to live our lives.

**18) And do not get drunk with wine, in which there is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,**

- So, when we are seeking wisdom and spiritual disciplines can be tied into that, this uplifts and fills our spirit.

**19) speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your hearts to the Lord; 20) always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to our God and Father;**

- Giving thanks, being grateful, and having a spirit of gratitude is extremely wise.
- In fact, scientists and doctors have noted that a spirit of thanksgiving can considerably reduce your stress level.
- So, Paul is showing us how to make the most of our time.
- Now, what are some practical ways that we can seek wisdom?

- We know that beginning the day with prayer and thanksgiving and with the study and reading of scripture and meditation is a good way to lift our spirit and to redeem the time.
- But, what about a steady diet of wisdom literature?
- Have you ever thought of this as part of your spiritual discipline?
- So, Pastor Craig is going to suggest our reading of 3 books that he has begun studying.

Book #1: “Plato to Christ” – “How Platonic Thought Shaped the Christian Faith” by Louis Markos:

- Pastor Craig has thought, in the past, that all the Greek philosophers were just out it.
- Now the New Testament was written in Greek. And what language did the noted philosophers speak – Greek.
- What group of people was going to receive the Gospel according to Acts – the Hellenists, which were the Greeks.
- Don’t you think that in God’s design, He may have had some interest in preparing those people to have at least an inkling of what was going to be presented to them in the Gospel?
- So, was God involved with the Greek philosophers to have them write about concepts that would connect with the Gospel? Apparently so.
- Here’s an excerpt of the book, “Plato to Christ”.

*I do, however, mean to suggest that the works of Plato can be most profitably read on two simultaneous levels: as works of genius in their own right and as inspired writings used by the God of the Bible to prepare the ancient world for the coming of Christ and the New Testament.*

*Plato, to my mind at least, is the greatest of all philosophers – the culmination of the best of pagan (pre-Christian) wisdom, a wisdom that challenges the mind as much as it fires the imagination and that leaves the soul yearning for more.*

*Though he lacked the direct (or special) revelation afforded to Moses, David, Isaiah, John, and Paul, Plato was nevertheless inspired by something beyond the confines of our natural world. [Excerpt (p. IX)].*

*Though Plato the pre-Christian did not know that Truth is ultimately a Person [Jesus] (see John 14:6), he sought it as tenaciously and passionately as Solomon or John or Paul. Let us do the same. [Excerpt (p. XI)].*

Book #2: “Her Gates Will Never be Shut” – “Hope, Hell and the New Jerusalem” by Brad Jersak:

*The Bible repeatedly affirms that God has given humanity the real capacity for authentic choice. To choose between life and death, heaven and hell, and mercy and wrath implies the real possibility that some could choose the way that leads to destruction.*

*The Bible testifies that some may opt for choices that result in permanent posthumous exclusion (the lake of fire, outer darkness, etc.). On the other hand, the Bible just as plainly teaches that God is also free: free to relent, free to forgive, free to restore even when judgment is promised (Hos 11; Jonah 1: 1; 3: 4, 10; 4: 2, 11), free to pursue lost sheep “until he finds them,” free to play out a cosmic history where, in the end, “every knee will bow,” “all things will be restored,” “everything will be reconciled,”*

*and “all will be made alive,” a time when absolutely everything will be “summed up in Christ,” and when Christ will, in turn, hand a saved cosmos over to his Father so “that God may be all in all.” The Alpha purposes of God for the universe will come to their Omega point in Jesus Christ. Thus, before we plant our flag on any one version of hell, we must take all of the biblical texts on hell and judgment, mercy and restoration into account. These three types of passages, which I will call infernalist, annihilationist, and universalist texts, cannot be integrated easily into a cogent dogmatic system. [Excerpt (p.7)].*

- Infernalist is the concept that we can read from scripture that sinners and those who don't trust in Jesus or repudiate the love of God will burn forever and ever in a burning hell fire.
- That's the infernalist way of reading scripture.
- Now, you have to have a certain view of God to think that people are going to burn in hell forever.
  
- So, how many of us have said that the Bible does not contradict itself?
- That's a fairly straight forward hermeneutic concept in terms of interpreting scripture.
- If we find that scriptures seem to be contradictive or seem to be at odds with each other, we either have a mistranslation or we haven't taken into account the full context of the verse or verses.
  
- Now, an annihilationist believes that one ceases to exist or that God wipes you out if you don't believe in Jesus.
- So, the question is, how could God, who has so much love for humanity, cause people to cease to exist?
- And finally a universalist believes all that all humans will eventually be saved.
- Brad is also a hopeful universalist.
  
- So, we need to take all scripture and look at it and evaluate it to come to a conclusion on where we land, which is what Brad does in this book.

Book #3: “When Christ Comes and Comes Again” by Thomas F. Torrance:

*“God with us” means that in the birth of Jesus Christ God has given Himself wholly to us, in a love that is absolutely unstinting and infinitely lavish. It is God's utmost self-giving that stopped at nothing. God could do no more than come Himself into our humanity, and give Himself entirely to us – and that is exactly what He has done in Jesus. The sheer extent, the boundless range, of His act of love takes our breath away. “God with us” means God Almighty insists on sharing His life with us.*

*Far from abandoning us to the fate which men deserve, God has identified Himself with us. Once and for all He has become one of us, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. God has committed Himself to us in such unrestrained love in the birth of Jesus, and in such a way that now He cannot abandon us any more than He can abandon Himself in Jesus Christ. [Excerpt (p.40)].*

- Torrance is correct -- God cannot abandon us any more than He can abandon Jesus.

Concluding thoughts:

- So, we need to find some time to carve out a piece of our day to support our spiritual disciplines and habits of worship, of prayer, of study, of meditation to get some answers about difficult scriptures.

Closing prayer: