

God Said Ask

3 Word Sermon

By Rev. Armen Thomassian

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Bible Text: 1 Kings 3:5

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Faith Free Presbyterian Church

1207 Haywood Rd
Greenville, SC 29615

Website: www.faithfpc.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/faith

I'm going to read the opening verses of 1 Kings 3, familiar to many of the Lord's people, but let us hear the word of the Lord. 1 Kings 3, reading from verse 1.

1 And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the LORD, and the wall of Jerusalem round about. 2 Only the people sacrificed in high places, because there was no house built unto the name of the LORD, until those days. 3 And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places. 4 And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place: a thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar. 5 In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. 6 And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. 7 And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. 8 And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. 9 Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? 10 And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. 11 And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; 12 Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. 13 And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all

thy days. 14 And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days. 15 And Solomon awoke; and, behold, it was a dream. And he came to Jerusalem, and stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and offered up burnt offerings, and offered peace offerings, and made a feast to all his servants.

Amen. Ending our reading of God's infallible word at verse 15.

Let's bow together in prayer and seek the Lord.

Our God, we come before thy presence this evening, we ask that thou would graciously give to us the grace that is necessary to come before God in a way that pleases our God. The thing that Solomon asked pleased the Lord. I wonder how many times we pray for things that do not please our God, and so we need to be taught, we need to be instructed when we come to the place of prayer, when we assemble for our mid-week prayer meeting, how needful it is that all thy people would receive help and that grace would be given abundantly to seek the face of God. We pray, therefore, that thou would cleanse us of our sins, wash us from those things that so cloud our judgment and so clog communion before our God that we are in no fit state to offer prayer. May the blood of Jesus Christ, thy Son, even now cleanse us from all sin. May the wickedness that remains in our frame be dealt a blow by the grace of God for where sin abounds, grace does much more abound, so therefore such grace, such victorious grace upon all of our lives. We pray tonight for help, therefore to hear the word, to receive it, to take the instruction thereof and to bring matters of concern before thee our God, so that as we read of in this very chapter, our prayers make a difference, they alter our own experience and the experience of others upon the earth. God condescends, God responds, God acts, and things are changed because God responds to prayer. For Jesus' sake, give us such occasions each Wednesday night and when we seek thee in our homes. Come even this night, give much of thy Spirit, condescend in mercy, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

The passage before us, beloved, brings before us a scene where Solomon is confronted by God and God is pleased to come before him and appear to him. It would not be the only time that God would do so. At the dedication of the temple, God would appear again in the life of Solomon and he would be graced with such an experience of feeling God, sensing God, knowing God was there to pour out his blessings and his mercy upon him and the people of God. But on this occasion it's with a question. Verse 5, "God said, Ask what I shall give thee," and I'm taking for our text this evening the three simple words, "God said, Ask. God said, Ask."

What a confrontation. Have you ever tried to put yourself there, God visiting, God appearing and saying, "Ask"? Ask. "Ask what I shall give thee." The scene is familiar. Solomon is overwhelmed with his responsibilities. He lives in the shadow of a father who had left this looming legacy and for all his gifts and all his training through his childhood and everything else, nothing gave him a sense of confidence that he was up to the task, and so he prays, he asks for wisdom. Now much has been said about this and we could

think about that within the whole context of the passage and the importance of wisdom and so on. It was, of course, a good prayer. It pleased God. Verse 10, "the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing." The prayer was even framed in light of God's covenant promise to David in 2 Samuel 7 when God affirmed to David that there would be one that would follow, indeed, that the throne would never depart from David. Now we understand that to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. We're aware of that Davidic covenant and the significance of it fulfilled in the Son of God, but Solomon is this initial indication of God's promise to preserve this line and, in a physical sense, give significance even in terms of what could be expected if the greater son of David would arise. His reign would extend like Solomon's reign even beyond it, and have even more impact and cause the nations to bow in adoration as to his reign. Certainly great significance there.

So the question, then, is: is this an exclusive experience for Solomon? In one sense, it is. History doesn't repeat itself in exact and precise ways but certainly there are echoes and reverberations that happen and God is pleased even by the promises that sometimes he gives specifically to one person, he echoes to all his people in various passages. And so we know in reading the word of God that this invitation to ask, "God said, Ask," is not unique for Solomon. We have passages such as Jeremiah 33:3, "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." And again we can look at that promise within its context and maybe even remove from it its power to encourage our hearts, but I hope we wouldn't do that. But even if we should, then we come to the New Testament, Matthew 7:7 and following Jesus says, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." What an invitation. What a welcome to those who are without, those that are in great need and stand in tremendous need at, we might say, all occasions of their life. Ask and it shall be given you. Seek and ye shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you. "For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

God said, "Ask." Ask. Now you've heard sermons like this before as have I, and yet thinking about this, I am encouraged afresh to see the simplicity of such words and how they must draw from us a fresh appreciation for what we have already, and then to lay claim to that which God invites us to lay claim to. To ask.

Jesus speaking to his disciples, John 14:13, "whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Whatsoever. I think it's this text where the evangelist I have mentioned on occasion, W. P. Nicholson, preached on this text and the simplicity with the way he preaches it and yet the effectiveness with the way he preaches the text is very memorable and it's where I got that little phrase sometimes I will use where he talked about in this phrase, rubbing it in, because he would take the words and he would just rub them in to make sure people understood. Whatsoever.

Whatsoever. What does that mean, whatsoever? I mean, it's saying, "I'm rubbing it in, trying to help you get a grasp of what Jesus says here."

Well, sometimes we need these words to be rubbed in, indeed we need it repeatedly because we forget. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do." How often do we pray and we don't possess a frame that believes this? So we bring our prayers and in a certain sense we believe God hears us, but in another sense we don't believe he hears us with the same confidence that texts like this would encourage us to possess a real confidence that simply bringing the matter.

"Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Now certainly such a text is open to abuse and if I was taking that text and preaching on it, I would certainly be clear on that, but I think most of us here have sufficient understanding that it is not in your desire since you have a new heart and not a carnal old heart, since you have a new heart you're not going to take such a promise and use it in some fashion of abuse, abusing the sense of the text or the promise.

So there's a very famous, well, at least it sticks out in my mind. You know, some of those commercials that just, you know, 20 years pass you still remember the commercial. Well, one of those that was for Mercedes-Benz. I remember seeing it, it could be 20 years ago, and it had this song in it, the kind of just showing imagery of Mercedes and, you know, people dreaming of having a Mercedes and so on, and the song behind it was "O Lord, won't you buy me a Mercedes-Benz. My friends all have Porsche's, I must make amends," and so on and so forth. It goes that way. But that is not what the text here is encouraging, a Mercedes-Benz. Of course, then you take it to the dealer and you have to get it fixed and you learn about the other expenses that come with a Mercedes-Benz. But anyway.

And he emphasizes it further, the Lord Jesus, John 15:7, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." And this gives greater clarity, doesn't it, because the "if" gives the sense of where the heart leans, it leans into, looks towards the words of Jesus Christ. The words of God are in the heart of such and since his words abide in you, ye shall ask what you will because your will now has been transformed by the word of God, you know, asking for a Mercedes-Benz.

So, "God said, Ask. God said, Ask," and I was thinking about this. "God said, Ask." What would I ask for? What would you ask for? And I don't intend to be very long with this, I just, I want us to think about it more and I'll just throw some ideas to you this evening. If God said ask, what? If God came in the way he came toward Solomon, putting him in a, really in a position where he has to respond, or at least he ought to respond, but the Lord is saying, "Look, look, what do you want?" What would you bring before God? Now of course, my point, I trust we get this as well, is that we don't need God to come to us as he came to Solomon. The Lord Jesus has made it plain through his word that he still stands and says, "Ask. Ask. What is it that's on your heart? Ask for it."

So we have the invitation already, so let us think about this. The Lord Jesus tonight meets with his church. He loves you far more than you understand and he loves his kingdom far more than us even collectively can begin to reflect. So he loves you, he loves his kingdom, and he comes and he says, "Ask. Ask." So what's on your mind? What's on your heart? We could, for example, ask for a perfect spouse, "Oh, give me a perfect spouse." And that could be, of course, looking to the future when you have a spouse, that they would be a perfect spouse. Or it could be even about the present, or the spouse I have, make them a perfect, a more perfect spouse. Well, pros of that, you know, you can think of many but it may increase your happiness, your happiness in this life may be elevated with such a request. You might even reason out with the benefits of a more perfect spouse or a perfect spouse. Oh, how that would help in the service of the Lord and amazing children and so on and so forth. You could ask for a perfect spouse. Of course, the con of that would be that you would make their life miserable because you would not be perfect, and they would have to live with you and you would have to live with the guilt that you were a constant thorn in their side. So that might not be too good.

We could ask for complete sanctification, "Lord, remove all sin. I don't want to sin ever again." The pros of that, of course, is that you would be holy. Sin would no longer be a problem in your life. All that you battle with presently becomes a memory. You can see many good reasons to pray such a prayer. A con, of course, is that you already have that. You're just waiting for it. It hasn't happened right now but it will happen. So you're asking for something you already have, it just hasn't been cashed in, as it were. Jesus Christ will make sure that one day you are perfect. You no longer battle with sin. You're no longer in the presence of sin. So, in one sense, you have it.

There are many other suggestions I could bring, other things that you could ponder over what you would ask for, but I thought of this: we could ask for a person's salvation. We could ask for God to save someone. When I say "someone," I don't mean it general in relation to you, I am thinking you and me thinking of a particular name, a person that you know, someone who is in your circle of connections or you could ask for that one person. Pros, they would start to love the Lord Jesus. They would be a better spouse for someone else, whether if they're currently married or if they in the future will be married. They would become more holy in this life and then perfect in the next. In fact, all the things that you think about relating to yourself that you would desire to be improved upon, that you could bring before God and say, "Lord, make this, make this more real in my life." But of course, when you ask for that one thing, it's to the exclusion of other things if we're thinking about it in this way, but with one person's salvation, praying for one person all the things that you would request for yourself more deeply, more profoundly, would then occur in their lives. They would become a more perfect spouse. They would become more holy in their living and they would also, then, adopt the same mentality and frame that you possess as well, which is a desire to see others saved. There are no downsides to praying for someone's salvation. There are no downsides to taking the name of that person and pressing it to God and making it the priority of what you bring before God, "Save this person. Save this person. Lord, if you do nothing else, save this person."

"God said, Ask. God said, Ask." Not so long ago we thought of Psalm 2 and the Father invites the Son to ask for the heathen, therefore such a prayer enters into the very request that the Son brings before the Father. Isn't that interesting? "Ask of me the heathen." When was the last time that someone so burdened your heart that you could not bow your head before God but bring that name before the Lord? When was the last time that that name didn't just come before your mind or before you in terms of prayer because you have a list in front of you and you pray for with faithfulness? And I have no problem with that whatsoever, by the way. But a name that even as you were doing your work, you were constantly just, "Can't you save them? Wherever they are, save them. Stop them now, Lord."

This is how it was and how it always is when the church is in a healthy frame. She is made up of individuals who have burdens not for the world, for one person. They just can't get this person off their hearts, out of their minds. They're constantly bringing them before God. All the old missions, the big campaigns that used to be well-attended, what was the difference? You say, "Well, you know, society was different then. There was more of a sense of the fear of God in those days. People were more inclined to attend places of church." Oh, that's true. All of that is true to a degree, but the church was also made up far more than it is presently with people who had burdens for one person, and as soon as there was an opportunity, they just, "Come with me. Come with me." Bargaining with them and arguing with them and have you ever fought with someone to get them under the word? Have you ever done random weird things just to get them under the word?

I remember one occasion I was in work and we had, you know, these kind of 11 meter long tables that we had the sides of the buses on, and I had some like cleaning fluid and it was empty. It was like some kind of a, like a paint thinner or cleaner and the garbage can was like from me to the wall thereabouts, and I threw it and it landed in the garbage, and one of the men that were on the same team that I was on, he said, he said, "Do that again and I'll go to church with you." In fact, he said, "If you can do that three times," I think it was, "If you can do that three times, I'll go to church with you." I said, "Okay." So I went and got it back, stood where I was and again it went. Third time, and again it went. And I said, "Alec, you have to go to church." Now I don't think he could believe what he saw and that took some time and pressure but what was amazing was that when he was making a bet with me, that his mind went to, "I know this is what you want, me to go to church. If you do that three times, I'll go to church." Because that was the heart, that was the burden, that was the... not every day but you were going to work, that was just, you just wanted to see them under the word, talk to them about the Lord, win them for Christ.

He was very, speaking of him, he was very hard. I remember him being very hard against the gospel and his wife who was brought up in a Christian home was in a terrible car accident. She should have been killed and that greatly softened him. In fact, we were doing outreach in his neighborhood, it's a little village outside the main town where I lived, we were doing outreach and I knew he lived in this particular development, so there was this little cul-de-sac and I knew he lived in there and I tried to get the man I was with, I said, "You guys go in there, or you go up that side, or I'll go up this side," or

whatever. I was trying to avoid, I wanted someone else to go to his house. I did everything in my power to not knock his door and, of course, I was the one that knocked on his door. I stood there for the better part of an hour talking to him and his wife and he had never been so open in his life. He's not saved now as far as I'm aware but did people know that if there's one thing you wanted them to do it would be under the word?

That's what happens when you live your life and these people, they become burdens. You become pressed with a sense that you must win them for Christ; that this is what God wants you to ask for, for their salvation. "God said, Ask," and imagine we saw just one, each of you saw one person won for Christ in any 12 month period. Just one because you wouldn't give God a brick. "This one person. Just the one, Lord. Just save them."

We see the state of the land and I don't know where your mind is in terms of the future, whether you think one man getting in will make a big difference either for good or for ill, or whatever. The general trajectory, whoever gets in in November, it's four years and that's it. What's the general trajectory? Is there salvation in the next four years? Every child of God instead of being so captivated with the possibility of one person turning a massive Titanic ship, trying to turn it to stop it from hitting an iceberg, instead of being so consumed with thoughts like that, you have your little dinghy and you can try and save some people and it might not be many, but you have a dinghy and you can drag one or two into that dinghy and that's the difference you can make, and that's the focus. That's the focus and saying to God, just bring them before God, the names. Don't be feeling guilty because you don't have a list of 50 names. Just one, maybe two, but just focusing in. If you saw them coming hear the word of God, be converted, their lives transformed, what joy there is in that.

This is the Great Commission. It's each individual speaking with those that are in their path and being burdened about them, and it's not something that is up for debate. Hudson Taylor, "The Great Commission is not an option to be considered, it is a command to be obeyed." Spurgeon, "Soul-winning is the chief business of the Christian minister. It should be the main pursuit of every true believer." He also said, "To be a soul-winner is the happiest thing in this world." He's right. There's nothing, nothing like the life of the soul-winner. Nothing. Sitting with lost souls and talking to them and seeing them weep their way to the cross, hear in the news of someone being saved.

"God said, Ask. God said, Ask." Christian, start asking. One name. Just one. Just one name. Start asking. Good things are done by littles. May the Lord help us, give us grace.

"Lord Jesus Christ, we seek Thy face;
Within the veil we bow the knee;
Oh, let Thy glory fill the place,
And bless us while we wait on Thee.

We thank Thee for the precious blood
That purged our sins and brought us nigh;

All cleansed and sanctified to God,
Thy holy name to magnify.

Shut in with Thee far, far above
The restless world that wars below;
We seek to learn and prove Thy love,
Thy wisdom and Thy grace to know.

The brow that once with thorns was bound
Thy hands, Thy side, we fain would see;
Draw near, Lord Jesus, glory crowned,
And bless us while we wait on Thee."

The burden for the lost, for the souls that are perishing is really just a response to John 3:16 and following, isn't it? "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." Not getting into the nitty and gritty of exegeting those verses but the simple reality is that the answer for the world is Christ offered, his blood shed, redemption accomplished, and sinners invited to receive it, and that's it. The ministry of reconciliation, go out, go out after the one on the highways and byways of people in your neighborhood. The one, who's the first, what's the first name that comes to mind? There's a reason. There's a reason that name is so connected to you. It may be biological or some other reason but if there's one name. You see, the cross is not there to mock sinners, it's that the world through him might be saved. Not condemned, saved. So while we're Calvinistic and believe in God's sovereign electing love, his sovereign electing love indicates his embrace of all men in terms of opening his arms that whosoever believes. Whosoever believes. So your job as a Christian is not to figure out is this person elect. God help you if that's where your mind goes. Your mind just simply needs to figure out are they sinners, and is Jesus Christ the answer for sinners? And bring their names, bear them upon your breast and bring them before our God.

We're gonna pray, I'll open in prayer and one after another encourage you to seek the Lord. We have Communion that's coming on Lord's Day so may our hearts be prepared for that. Sunday school also beginning, pray for the Sunday school teachers also, that the Lord will help them to prepare and adapt to the schedule again. We're also encouraged to hear that a family of seven were in a church in Columbia on the Lord's Day which was encouraging to hear. So we want to be praying for the church there and the Lord's mercy even for the future of that work, that he may do something that far exceeds what we can ask or think.

Let's seek the Lord. Let's pray.

Our God, we're here tonight to pray. We're here to seek thy face. We have in our minds the simple words and yet the profound truth, "God said, Ask. God said, Ask." And thank the Lord it's not me standing up here telling people to pray. Thou hast invited thy people

to pray. "God said, Ask." O Lord, help us, help us to ask. We do pray for those that need our prayers. We think of Cam tonight, continue, Lord, to bless her. We thank the Lord the stitches are out. We pray that she may continue to improve and gain strength. We pray for others, Mr. Larson, God, that your hand would be upon him. We pray for recovery for our dear brother in grace when he's frustrated, that you will help him to know the joy of the Lord which is a strength, even to continue to be with John J., give grace and help to him and others, Lord, who are laid aside or shut-in. God, we lift them up before thee. They can get weary. They can get discouraged and I pray thy word and thy presence would be very real to such. We ask, Lord, that thou wilt remember our families and help us in our communities and families to not lose heart and not forget that God has said, "Ask." And I pray that we would see one by one souls coming to Christ, that lives are being transformed. Thank you, Lord, for those souls that have been saved. Thank you, Lord, for what you are doing in lives even at present. Thank you, Lord, for young men called to the ministry and other young men challenged and feeling the challenge of serving God in the future. God, build thy kingdom, do thy work, and help us now. Oh, may there be a sweet gift of the Spirit granted to us tonight as we call upon thee. Lead us then. In Jesus' name. Amen.