SWM 5-2-21

**WALK BEFORE ME FAITHFULLY**

1 Kings 9:1-28

Key verse 4

“As for you, if you walk before me faithfully with integrity of heart and uprightness, as David your father did, and do all I command and observe my decrees and laws,”

The Bible has two parts: the Old Testament and New Testament. Do you know the meaning of the Testament? Testament is an old English word that means ‘Covenant’. And the ‘covenant’ means ‘contract’ or ‘agreement between two parties’. Biblical meaning of covenant is the contract between God and his people based on the promise God gave them. So basically the bible is the contract between God and us and the content of the contract is God’s promise. In the contract, both sides have to do their own part. So believing the bible means to accept all promises that God gave us in the bible and decide to do my own part. And when we do that God’s job is to fulfill all the promises that he gave us. The bible is filled with God’s so graceful and glorious promises. We should take advantage of it. In today’s passage God appeared to Solomon and reminded him of the covenant that he gave to his father David and he said that he would bless him based on the covenant. But at the same time God gave him a very serious warning about what would happen if he and his descendants would violate the covenant. May God help us to know how we can be blessed through the covenant God gave us through Jesus and hear his warning as well meditating today’s passage together.

There are two parts in my message; I. If you walk before me faithfully (1-5) II. If you turn away from me (6-9) III. He built up whatever he desired to build (10-28)

 **I. If you walk before me faithfully (1-5)**

Look at verse 1 and 2. **When Solomon had finished building the temple of the Lord and the royal palace, and had achieved all he had desired to do, 2 the Lord appeared to him a second time, as he had appeared to him at Gibeon**. God appeared to Solomon again when he had finished building the temple and the place and successfully carried out all he had in mind for the buildings. Why do you think God appeared at that specific moment? For Solomon, building up the temple and the place was the most important project to do for his kingdom. Now by completing the two buildings, Solomon established a good foundation for his kingdom and it was his great achievement. At the moment of great success, God appeared to Solomon because it was the moment that Solomon really needed God’s word and new direction.

After his great success, there was a good possibility that Solomon would get proud and corrupted and live following his sinful desire. At his very critical moment, God appeared to give him his word so that Solomon may live in his blessing continually. It really shows us that God is a good shepherd who knows his sheep well and leads them by giving his words. Let’s take a moment and think about our last 5 years, or 10 years or 20 years of life. How your life has changed? Have you achieved things? Have you had words of God in your heart that have led your life or you have lived just according to the situations? We could be in a very important moment when we need a word of God and God’s direction.

Couple of years ago, I had a talk with one of our senior church members and he said when our church was in Long Beach more than 20 years ago all church members were very poor and the church building was small, but members were full of faith and spirit and served campus students diligently and the loving relationship among brothers and sisters was very strong. And he said he couldn’t see the same faith and passion now even if we had things a lot more. It made me sad and I realized that I had to repent and pray earnestly for restoration and even better faith and passion for God. Also during last Saturday men’s morning bible study, one missionary said that in his middle age now, he feels like he needs to seriously think about where he is now and what he should do now and in the future. It is very important for us to be led by God and his word. Otherwise we would get lost and end up living an undesirable life before God. May God help each of us and our church to come to God seeking his word and guidance seriously through prayer, repentance and his word. May God appear to us and give us his word so that we may live a life that can please him.

Now God gave his word to Solomon about the temple and his throne. Look at verse 3. 3 **The Lord said to him: “I have heard the prayer and plea you have made before me; I have consecrated this temple, which you have built, by putting my Name there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there**. God said that he had heard his prayer and consecrated the temple by putting his Name there forever. God also promised that his eyes and his heart would always be in the temple. It meant that he would pay his full attention to the temple and hear their prayer always with his sincere heart. God’s temple was one of the greatest blessings for Israelites. The Holy God was present among them through the temple and they were able to come to God and meet him there and pray to him. It was a great privilege that any other nation couldn’t have.

How about us? We are more blessed than Israelites because we have the perfect temple Jesus Christ. We can come to God and pray to him anytime through Jesus without sacrificing animals continually Israelites did. And God meets us and hears our prayer in Jesus all the time and answers our prayer whatever we ask in the name of Jesus. When we look at the world, people follow so many regions and gods and pray to them for blessing. But all the religion and god are empty and fake. But we can come to the true and living God and pray to him who is almighty, so merciful and generos. This is a great privilege for us. But we need to think about how much we take advantage of it? How often do you pray? Muslims pray five times a day to their god Ala. I believe if all Chrstians pray five times a day, we can see so many miracles and change the world because our God is the true and almighty God. Let’s pray together ealy in the morning. Let’s pray for 300 1:1 and 30 disciples of Jesus by faith in the name of Jesus and experience God’s mighty work together. May God help us to bring many prayer topics to him by faith.

Now God gave Solomon his word about his throne. Look at verse 4, 5. **4 “As for you, if you walk before me faithfully with integrity of heart and uprightness, as David your father did, and do all I command and observe my decrees and laws, 5 I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father when I said, ‘You shall never fail to have a successor on the throne of Israel.**’ God promised that he would establish Solomon’s throne over Israel forever as he promised to David with the condition that he would walk before God and obey his command.

Why did God give this word to him? After finishing building the temple and the palace successfully, Solomon might have confidence that he could build up a powerful kingdom with his wisdom and make many plans. But God told him that he would establish his throne over Israel forever as he promised his father David. By giving this word, God reminded Solomon that it was God himself who could establish his throne forever based on his covenant and what Solomon really needed to do for his kingdom was to comply with the covenant by walking before God and obeying his command.

In 2Sam 7, when king David expressed his desire to build a temple for God, God told him that his son would build the temple and gave him a promise about his throne and kingdom saying,  ***“Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.’”*** (2Sa 7:16). Now God confirmed that he would bless Solomon and his kingdom based on the covenant. This God’s affirmation of his covenant was the best assurance of the future of Solomon’s kingdom. Why is it? It is because God never fails at keeping his promise but fulfills it absolutely with his mighty power and faithfulness. God wanted Solomon to hold the covenant and obey his command by faith.

What was the condition that Solomon had to comply with to enjoy the blessing of the covenant? Look at verse 4 again**. “As for you, if you walk before me faithfully with integrity of heart and uprightness, as David your father did, and do all I command and observe my decrees and laws**, ‘Walking before me’ means to live and do everything before God out of reverent fear. ‘Integrity of heart and uprightness' ' means to keep a truthful and fully committed heart and seek what is right and just before God. God wanted Solomon to live before God with a fully committed heart seeking what is right before him and obey all his commands. And God mentioned David as an example who walked before God faithfully. If we take a look at David’s life, we can see that he really lived before God fearing him and serving him wholeheartedly. One time king David had a great chance to kill King Saul who was chasing after him to kill him. Everyone told him to kill Saul but David refused, saying it was not right to kill the one whom God anointed. Instead of seeking his interest, he feared God and did what is right before God. David was not a perfect man and he even committed terrible adultery but repented with a broken heart when he was rebuked. He never turned to idols but served God only wholeheartedly. So David became the standard for good and bad kings, and all later kings were evaluated in comparison with him. ***Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. Unlike David his father, he did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord his God. (2Ki 16:2) He (King Hezekiah) did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, just as his father David had done. (2Ki 18:3)*** Solomon could have made many plans and done many works to build up a powerful kingdom. But God helped Solomon to keep the covenant and walked before him faithfully and obey all his commands. This was the best way for Solomon to let his kingdom last forever.

Just as God blessed Solomon based on the covenant, God always blesses his people based on his covenant. If you take a look at the entire bible you can find that God always made a covenant with his people by giving wonderful promises and blessed them based on the covenant when they obeyed his commands. When God called Abraham, he was a poor old man with no child. He had no hope for his life. But God called him with a covenant, “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great,and you will be a blessing” (Genesis 12:2) Abraham accepted this covenant by faith and lived by serving God and obeying him. Then God blessed just as he promised and made him a great nation and source of blessing for all people on earth. God called each of us to his great covenant so that we may live truly blessed life. This God’s covenant in the bible can be the true foundation of our life that we should live by.

Someone could ask ‘Why does God give promises with condition instead of just giving blessings with no condition?’ It is because God has a purpose that he wants to achieve through the covenant. The purpose is to raise up holy people who fear God, love him with all their hearts and live a holy life obeying his command. In his covenant, the condition that God wants us to comply with is always the same; Serve God only with a faithful heart and obey all his commands. As God commanded Solomon, if we walk before God faithfully serving him only we can build up a deep loving relationship with God and when we obey all his commands we can become his holy people who have God’s beautiful image. This is a true blessing. Even though God’s commands look burdensome but actually it is a great blessing for us and his great gift from his deep love for us. So king David said God’s law is sweeter than honey. May God help us to accept all God’s promises by faith and build up our life on God’s covenant obeying his command so that we may enjoy all the blessings of the covenant.

**II. If you turn away from me (6-9)**

God blessed Solomon with the covenant. But at the same time, God gave him a serious warning as well. Look at verse 6-9. **6 “But if you or your descendants turn away from me and do not observe the commands and decrees I have given you[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Kings+9&version=NIV#fen-NIV-9058b)**] and go off to serve other gods and worship them,7 then I will cut off Israel from the land I have given them and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my Name. Israel will then become a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples. 8 This temple will become a heap of rubble. All[**[**c**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Kings+9&version=NIV#fen-NIV-9060c)**]who pass by will be appalled and will scoff and say, ‘Why has the Lord done such a thing to this land and to this temple?’9 People will answer, ‘Because they have forsaken the Lord their God, who brought their ancestors out of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, worshiping and serving them—that is why the Lord brought all this disaster on them.’”** God warned him about what would happen if Solomon and his descendants turn away from God and disobey his commands and worship idols. First, God would take away all the blessings that he had given them through his covenant. God had given the beautiful Canaan land to Isrealites according to his covenant with them. But God would cut them off from the land. And God would reject the temple, meaning he would not meet them and hear their prayer anymore at the temple. Second, they will become a byward and object of ridicule among all peoples with great shame. God lifted up Israelites over all people and gave the honor and glory as his chosen people. But they would lose all glory and become an object of scorn and ridicule with great shame. Third, the magnificent temple will become a heap of rubble. It means the temple will be totally destroyed and become nothing under God’s great wrath. And all who pass by the temple will be shocked and would scoff and say, ‘Why has the Lord done such a thing to this land and to this temple?**’** And people would answer saying, “Because they have forsaken the Lord their God, who brought their ancestors out of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, worshipping and serving them” The ultimate reason why God would judge them is they betrayed God who saved and blessed them and embarrassed other gods and worshipped them.

 Despite God’s server warning, Israelties turn away from God and worship idols disobeying God’s commands. And 9n B.C 586, Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar invaded Israel and destroyed the temple completely and the temple became a heap of rubbles as God said and Israelites were taken to Babylonia as captives.

God blesses us by giving us his covenant but when we break the covenant by turning away from him and disobeying his commands, he can’t bless us any more but takes away the blessings and let us suffer. Again the purpose of God’s covenant is to make us his people who serve God only whole heartedly and live a holy life by obeying his command. Then if God still blesses them even if they turn away God and do evil things, there is no point of the covenant. Even if we received a blessed covenant, if we disobey we can’t enjoy any of the blessings. Rather God’s server judgment follows so that we may repent and come back to God.

God gave us a wonderful covenant in Jesus Christ. Jesus had to shed his blood to give us the precious covenant. Mark 14:23,24 say **23** Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it.**24** “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,” he said to them. (Mark 14:23,24) There are so many blessings in the covenant. In the covenant, we became children of God and have the hope to enter the eternal kingdom of God. We can live an abundantly fruitful life by remaining in Jesus. Then what is our part in the new covenant? **When people asked Jesus a question, “What must we do to do the works God requires?” Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent”(Jn 6:28.29)** In the new covenant in Jesus, God wants us to live by faith in Jesus by obeying his commands. When we have faith in Jesus, God works in our life so powerfully and fulfills all the promises he gave in Jesus Christ and makes our life fruitful and powerful. ***5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. (John 15:5-8)*** Jesus also gave us warning as well. He warned that if we lose our saltiness, we would be thrown out and trampled underfoot and cut off from the tree and thrown into the fire. Thank God for giving us a blessed covenant in Jesus which is the true foundation of our life. May God help us to meditate all promises that God gave us in Jesus and have deep faith in Jesus and obey his commands so that we may be blessed with all the blessings in the covenant.

**III. He built up whatever he desired to build (10-28)**

In verse 10-28, we can see other things that Solomon did besides building the temple and palace. **Look at verses 10-14**. After building the temple and palace, King Solomon gave twenty towns in Galilee to Hiram king of Tyre as payment for the king’s supply of building materials. Now Hiram checked out the towns and he was very disappointed with them and said, “ What kind of towns are these you have given me, my brother?” And he called the town Land of Kabul. Kabul means ‘good for nothing’. The towns were useless and good for nothing. King Hiram had provided things for Solomon well with whatever he needed. It was not good and graceful to pay for Hiram’s generous supply with poor quality towns. When we ask others to provide us with what we need, we want to receive the best but when we have to pay back, we want to pay the minimum. It is not right before God. We should be fair and generous and pay back sufficiently and generously. Despite Solomon’s poor payment, Hiram sent King Solomon 120 talents of gold, about 4 ½ tons.

**Look at verses 15-19**. Solomon did a lot of construction work for his kingdom. He built the terraces, which were military purpose towers, the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor and Megiddo, the military fortress. He also built Gezer, the city that Pharaoh gave it to his daughter as a wedding gift. He built up many other fortress cities and stored cities and towns for his christots and his horses. In verse 19, it says, Solomon built whatever he desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon and throughout all the territories he ruled. Solomon built the building to protect the kingdom but even if he built the buildings for needed purpose, the construction became a big burden for his people later. (1Ki 12:4) It shows that Solomon might do the work out of his ambitious desire, not focusing on his people’s wellbeing.

**Look at verses 20-23**. Solomon conscripted the descendants of the Canaanites to serve as slave labor. But he did not make any of the Israelites following God’s command as slaves. In Lev 25:39-43, God commanded Israelite not to make fellow Israelites to work as slaves because Israelites are God’s servants and his people. ***42 Because the Israelites are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt, they must not be sold as slaves. 43 Do not rule over them ruthlessly, but fear your God. (Lev 25:42-43)***All of God’s people belong to God and they are God’s servants. God can be their only true Lord and king. We should treat other fellow Christians preciously by recognizing them as God’s precious children and his servants and should not take advantage of them in any ways. And Solomon let his people work as fighting men, government officials, and captains and commanders. Solomon let his people do the work in the ruling position. It reminds us of the vision that all of God’s people will reign in the kingdom of God together with Jesus Christ forever.

**Look at verses 24-25**. Three times a year Solomon sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings on the altar he had built for the Lord, burning incense before the Lord along with them, and fulfilled the temple obligations.The three times a year refers to three major festivals: the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of harvest and the Festival of Tabernacles (2Ch 8:13)It shows that Solomon served God faithfully obeying his commands and observing decrees.

**Look at verses 26-28**. Solomon built many ships at a place called Ezion Geber on the shore of the Red Sea. He built the ships for trade through the sea route. Hiram sent sailors to serve in the fleet with Solomon’s men. They sailed even to Ophir in India and brought back 420 talents, 16tons of gold to King Solomon. Through the trade, Solomon accumulated huge wealth to make him and his kingdom so rich.

Through what Solomon did, we can see that Solomon was successful to make his kingdom strong and rich outwardly. He even served God fulfilling all commands and regulations. But it is hard to see Solomon’s deep personal fellowship with God and eager desire of seeking God. We need to work hard to build up our career and manage our life. But we should always remember that the thing that makes our life truly strong and rich is our relationship with God and our faith in him. We should always make it a priority of our life. Otherwise our life can collapse easily as we will see in the following chapters of this book through Solomon’s case.

 **In conclusion**, God gave us a wonderful covenant in Jesus Christ. God keeps his relationship with us and blesses us based on the covenant. Our life depends on how we believe in Jesus and follow him obeying his command. May God help us to enjoy all the blessings that God gives us through the covenant so that all the people in the world may know God and praise him through us. One word, “ Walk before me faithfully”