

CHAPTER 9

In this chapter we have,

- I.** The answer which God, in a vision, gave to Solomon's prayer, and the terms he settled with him (v. 1-9).
- II.** The interchanging of grateful kindnesses between Solomon and Hiram (v. 10-14).
- III.** His workmen and buildings (v. 15-24).
- IV.** His devotion (v. 25).
- V.** His trading navy (v. 26-28).

<100>1 KINGS 9:1-9

GOD'S ANSWER TO SOLOMON

God had given a real answer to Solomon's prayer, and tokens of his acceptance of it, immediately, by the *fire from heaven* which consumed the sacrifices (as we find <400>2 Chronicles 7:1); but here we have a more express and distinct answer to it. Observe,

I. In what way God gave him this answer. He appeared to him, as he had done at Gibeon, in the beginning of his reign, in a dream or vision, v. 2. The comparing of it with that intimates that it was the very night after he had finished the solemnities of his festival, for so that was, <400>2 Chronicles 1:6, 7. And then v. 1, speaking of Solomon's finishing all his buildings, which was not till many years after the dedication of the temple, must be read thus, *Solomon finished* (as it is <471>2 Chronicles 7:11), and 5:2 must be read, *and the Lord had appeared*.

II. The purport of this answer.

1. He assures him of his special presence in the temple he had built, in answer to the prayer he had made (v. 3): *I have hallowed this house*. Solomon had dedicated it, but it was God's prerogative to hallow it — to sanctify or consecrate it. Men cannot make a place holy, yet what we, in

sincerity, devote to God, we may hope he will graciously accept as his; and *his eyes and his heart shall be upon it*. Apply it to persons, the living temples. Those whom God hallows or sanctifies, whom he sets apart for himself, have his eye, his heart, his love and care, and this perpetually.

2. He shows him that he and his people were for the future *upon their good behaviour*. Let them not be secure now, as if they might live as they please now that they have the *temple of the Lord* among them, ^{<2100>}Jeremiah 7:4. No, this house was designed to protect them in their allegiance to God, but not in their rebellion or disobedience. God deals plainly with us, sets before us good and evil, the blessing and the curse, and lets us know what we must trust to. God here tells Solomon,

(1.) That the establishment of his kingdom depended upon the constancy of his obedience (v. 4, 5): “*If thou wilt walk before me as David did*, who left thee a good example and encouragement enough to follow it (and advantage thou wilt be accountable for if thou do not improve it), *if thou wilt walk as he did, in integrity of heart and uprightness*” (for that is the main matter — no religion without sincerity), “*then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom*, and not otherwise,” for on that condition the promise was made, ^{<1000>}Psalms 132:12. If we perform our part of the covenant, God will not fail to perform his; if we improve the grace God has given us, he will confirm us to the end. Let not the children of godly parents expect the entail of the blessing, unless they tread in the steps of those that have gone before them to heaven, and keep up the virtue and piety of their ancestors.

(2.) That the ruin of his kingdom would be the certain consequence of his or his children's apostasy from God (v. 6): “*But know thou, and let thy family and kingdom know it, and be admonished by it, that if you shall altogether turn from following me*” (so it is thought it should be read), “*if you forsake my service, desert my altar, and go and serve other gods*” (for that was the covenant-breaking sin), “*if you or your children break off from me, this house will not save you*. But,

[1.] Israel, though a holy nation, will be cut off (v. 7), by one judgment after another, till they become a proverb and a by-word, and the most despicable people under the sun, though now the most honourable.” This supposes the destruction of the royal family, though it is not particularly threatened; the king is, of course, undone, if the kingdom be.

[2.] “The temple, though a holy house, which God himself has *hallowed for his name*, shall be abandoned and laid desolate (v. 8, 9): *This house which is high.*” They prided themselves in the stateliness and magnificence of the structure, but let them know that it is not so high as to be out of the reach of God's judgments, if they vilify it so as to exchange it for groves and idol-temples, and yet, at the same time, magnify it so as to think it will secure the favour of God to them though they ever so much corrupt themselves. *This house which is high.* Those that *now pass by it are astonished* at the bulk and beauty of it; the richness, contrivance, and workmanship, are admired by all spectators, and it is called a stupendous fabric; but, if you forsake God, its height will make its fall the more amazing, and those that pass by will be as much astonished at its ruins, while the guilty, self-convicted, self-condemned, Israelites, will be forced to acknowledge, with shame, that they themselves were the ruin of it; for when it shall be asked, *Why hath the Lord done thus to his house?* they cannot but answer, It was *because they forsook the Lord their God.* See ~~1 Kings~~ Deuteronomy 29:24, 25. Their sin will be read in their punishment. They deserted the temple, and therefore God deserted it; they profaned it with their sins and laid it common, and therefore God profaned it with his judgments and laid it waste. God gave Solomon fair warning of this, now that he had newly built and dedicated it, that he and his people might not be high-minded, but fear.

~~1 Kings~~ 1 KINGS 9:10-14

SOLOMON AND HIRAM

What agreement was made between Solomon and Hiram, when the building-work was to be begun, we read before, 1 Kings 5. Here we have an account of their fair and friendly parting when the work was done.

1. Hiram made good his bargain to the utmost. He had furnished Solomon with materials for his buildings, according to all his desire (v. 11), and with gold, v. 15. So far was he from envying Solomon's growing greatness and reputation, and being jealous of him, that he helped to magnify him. Solomon's power, with Solomon's wisdom, needs not be dreaded by any of his neighbours. God honours him; therefore Hiram will.

2. Solomon, no doubt, made good his bargain, and gave Hiram *food for his household*, as was agreed, ^{<HRB>}1 Kings 5:9. But here we are told that, over and above that, he gave him twenty cities (small ones we may suppose, like those mentioned here, v. 19) *in the land of Galilee*, v. 11. It should seem, these were not allotted to any of the tribes of Israel (for the border of Asher came up to them, ^{<GRZ>}Joshua 19:27, which intimates that it did not include them), but continued in the hands of the natives till Solomon made himself master of them, and then made a present of them to Hiram. It becomes those that are great and good to be generous. Hiram came to see these cities, and did not like them (v. 12): *They pleased him not*. He called the country the land of *Cabul*, a Phoenician word (says Josephus) which signifies *displeasing*, v. 13. He therefore returned them to Solomon (as we find, ^{<HRD>}2 Chronicles 8:2), who repaired them, and then *caused the children of Israel to inhabit them*, which intimates that before they did not; but, when Solomon received back what he had given, no doubt he honourably gave Hiram an equivalent in something else. But what shall we think of this? Did Solomon act meanly in giving Hiram what was not worth his acceptance? Or was Hiram humoursome and hard to please? I am willing to believe it was neither the one nor the other. The country was truly valuable, and so were the cities in it, but not agreeable to Hiram's genius. The Tyrians were merchants, trading men, that lived in fine houses, and became rich by navigation, but knew not how to value a country that was fit for corn and pasture (that was business that lay out of their way); and therefore Hiram desired Solomon to take them again, he knew not what to do with them, and, if he would please to gratify him, let it be in his own element, by becoming his partner in trade, as we find he did, v. 27. Hiram, who was used to the clean streets of Tyre, could by no means agree with the miry lanes in the land of Cabul, whereas the best lands have commonly the worst roads through them. See how the providence of God suits both the accommodation of this earth to the various dispositions of men and the dispositions of men to the various accommodations of the earth, and all for the good of mankind in general. Some take delight in husbandry, and wonder what pleasure sailors can take on a rough sea; others take as much delight in navigation, and wonder what pleasure husbandmen can take in a dirty country, like the land of Cabul. It is so in many other instances, in which we may observe the wisdom of him whose all souls are and all lands.

~~1095~~ 1 KINGS 9:15-28

SOLOMON'S GREATNESS

We have here a further account of Solomon's greatness.

I. His buildings. He raised a great levy both of men and money, because he projected a great deal of building, which would both employ many hands and put him to a vast expense, v. 15. And he was a wise builder, who sat down first, and counted the cost, and would not begin to build till he found himself able to finish. Perhaps there was some complaint of the heaviness of the taxes, which the historian excuses from the greatness of his undertakings. He raised it, not for war (as other princes), which would spend the blood of his subjects, but for building, which would require only their labour and purses. Perhaps David observed Solomon's genius to lie towards building, and foresaw he would have his head and hands full of it, when he penned that song of degrees for Solomon, which begins, *Except the Lord build the house, those labour in vain that build it* (~~3870~~ Psalm 127:1), directing him to acknowledge God in all his ways, and, by prayer and faith in his providence, to take him along with him in all his designs of this kind. And Solomon verily began his work at the right end, for he built God's house first, and finished that before he began his own; and then God blessed him, and he prospered in all his other buildings. If we begin with God, he will go on with us. Let the first-fruits be his, and the after-fruits will the more comfortably be ours, ~~4063~~ Matthew 6:33. Solomon built a church first and then he was enabled to build houses, and cities, and walls. Those consult not their own interest that defer to the last what they design for pious uses. The further order in Solomon's buildings is observable. God's house first for religion, then his own for his own convenience, then a house for his wife, to which she removed as soon as it was ready for her (v. 24), then Millo, the town-house or guild-hall, then the wall of Jerusalem, the royal city, then some cities of note and strength in the country, which were decayed and unfortified, Hazor, Megiddo, etc. As he rebuilt these at his own charge, the inhabitants would be not only his subjects, but his tenants, which would increase the revenues of the crown for the benefit of his successors. Among the rest, he built Gezer, which Pharaoh took out of the hands of the Canaanites, and made a present of to his daughter, Solomon's wife, v. 16. See how God *maketh the earth to help the woman*. Solomon was not himself a warlike prince, but the king of Egypt, who was,

took cities for him to build. Then he built cities for convenience, for store, for his chariots, and for his horsemen, v. 19. And, *lastly*, he built for pleasure in Lebanon, for his hunting perhaps, or other diversions there. Let piety begin, and profit proceed, and leave pleasure to the last.

II. His workmen and servants. In doing such great works, he must needs employ abundance of workmen. The honour of great men is borrowed from their inferiors, who do that which they have the credit of.

1. Solomon employed those who remained of the conquered and devoted nations in all the slavish work, v. 20, 21. We may suppose that they renounced their idolatry and submitted to Solomon's government, so that he could not, in honour, utterly destroy them, and they were so poor that he could not levy money on them; therefore he served himself of their labour. Herein he observed God's law (~~<R254>~~ Leviticus 25:44, *Thy bondmen shall be of the heathen*), and fulfilled Noah's curse upon Canaan, *A servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren*, ~~<R0925>~~ Genesis 9:25.

2. He employed Israelites in the more creditable services (v. 22, 23): *Of them he made no bondmen*, for they were God's freemen, but he made them soldiers and courtiers, and gave them offices, as he saw them qualified, among his chariots and horsemen, appointing some to support the service of the inferior labourers. Thus he preserved the dignity and liberty of Israel and honoured their relation to God as a kingdom of priests.

III. His piety and devotion (v. 25): *Three times in a year* he offered burnt-offerings extraordinary (namely, at the three yearly feasts, the passover, pentecost, and feast of tabernacles) in honour of the divine institution, besides what he offered at other times, both statedly and upon special occasions. With his sacrifices he burnt incense, not himself (that was king Uzziah's crime), but the priest for him, at his charge, and for his particular use. It is said, He offered *on the altar which he himself built*. He took care to build it, and then,

1. He himself made use of it. Many will assist the devotions of others that neglect their own. Solomon did not think his building an altar would excuse him from sacrificing, but rather engage him the more to it.

2. He himself had the benefit and comfort of it. Whatever pains we take, for the support of religion, to the glory of God and the edification of others, we ourselves are likely to have the advantage of it.

IV. His merchandise. He built a fleet of trading ships at Ezion-geber (v. 26), a port on the coast of the Red Sea, the furthest stage of the Israelites when they wandered in the wilderness, ~~<0835>~~ Numbers 33:35. Probably that wilderness now began to be peopled by the Edomites, which it was not then. To them this port had belonged, but, David having subdued the Edomites, it now pertained to the crown of Judah. The fleet traded to Ophir in the East Indies, supposed to be that which is now called *Ceylon*. Gold was the commodity traded for, substantial wealth. It should seem, Solomon had before been Hiram's partner, or put a venture into his ships, which made him a rich return of 120 talents (v. 14), which encouraged him to build a fleet of his own. The success of others in any employment should quicken our industry; for *in all labour there is profit*. Solomon sent his own servants as factors, and merchants, and super-cargoes, but hired Tyrians for sailors, for they had *knowledge of the sea*, v. 27. Thus one nation needs another, Providence so ordering it that there may be mutual commerce and assistance; for not only as Christians, but as men, we are members one of another. The fleet brought home to Solomon 420 *talents of gold*, v. 28. Canaan, the holy land, the glory of all lands, had no gold in it, which teaches us that that part of the wealth of this world which is for hoarding and trading is not the best part of it, but that which is more immediately for the present support and comfort of life, our own and others'; such were the productions of Canaan. Solomon got much by his merchandise, but, it should seem, David got much more by his conquests. What were Solomon's 420 *talents* to David's 100,000 *talents of gold*? ~~<1324>~~ 1 Chronicles 22:14; 29:4. Solomon got much by his merchandise, and yet has directed us to a better trade, within reach of the poorest, having assured us from his own experience of both that the *merchandise of wisdom is better than the merchandise of silver and the gain thereof than fine gold*, ~~<1184>~~ Proverbs 3:14.