

Homiletics Analysis: 2 Chronicles 1

Content & Intent

This Text — Content:

Second Chronicles 1 opens the reign of Solomon with a single, decisive scene: the new king leads all Israel to Gibeon, the principal high place, where the great bronze altar stands before the Tent of Meeting. Solomon offers a staggering thousand burnt offerings on that altar. That night, God appears to Solomon and makes an extraordinary offer — ask for anything. Solomon's response is the heart of the chapter: rather than requesting long life, wealth, honor, or military victory over his enemies, he asks for wisdom and knowledge to govern God's people rightly. God is so pleased with this request that He grants not only wisdom but also the wealth, riches, and honor Solomon did not ask for, surpassing every king before and after. The chapter closes with a brief notice of Solomon's accumulated wealth — horses, chariots, silver, and gold in abundance — establishing his glory from the outset of his reign.

The chapter moves in three clear movements: the communal act of worship at Gibeon (vv. 1–6), the divine encounter and Solomon's request (vv. 7–13), and the summary of Solomon's wealth and royal provisions (vv. 14–17). Chronicles presents this as a foundational scene establishing the character and legitimacy of Solomon's reign, deliberately framing his kingship as grounded in right worship and right desire from its very first day.

This Text — Intent:

The Chronicler writes for a post-exilic community that has returned to a broken land, a rebuilt but diminished temple, and uncertain leadership. Through Solomon's opening scene, God is calling this community — and every reader — to examine what they ask of Him, to anchor their asking in the needs of others rather than self-advancement, and to trust that seeking first what is genuinely good and God-honoring produces provision that self-seeking never could. God is also demonstrating His own character: He is a God who rewards right desire, who gives generously beyond what is asked, and who takes great pleasure when a leader subordinates personal ambition to the demands of faithful stewardship. The intent is not merely historical record but an invitation to a particular posture before God: come with right worship, come with right desire, and watch what God does.

Subject Sentence: Solomon seeks wisdom to govern God's people, and God gives far more than was asked.

Primary Claim: God takes extraordinary pleasure in the leader — or the person — who asks not for self-advancement but for what faithfulness to others genuinely requires; and to that rightly-ordered desire, He gives more than could be sought.

Interpretive Evaluation

The nature of Solomon's request — virtue or strategy? A recurring temptation in handling this passage is to read Solomon's request as a kind of sophisticated spiritual strategy: Solomon is wise enough to know that asking for wisdom is the smart play, the move most likely to impress God and secure everything else. This reading, found in various popular expositions and sometimes in Wesleyan-Arminian accounts that stress the cultivation of virtue, subtly undermines the passage's force. The text gives no indication Solomon calculated the request. The Chronicler presents his answer as flowing from his genuine sense of inadequacy before the task — "Give me now wisdom and knowledge to go out and come in before this people, for who can govern this people of yours, which is so great?" (v. 10). The motivation is pastoral need, not spiritual cleverness. The Reformed reading is to be preferred: God is not rewarding a wise choice about what to request; He is responding to a genuinely subordinated desire — a heart oriented toward others rather than self. The distinction is load-bearing for application.

The "high place" problem — does the Chronicler condone it? Interpreters from various traditions note that Solomon worships at Gibeon, a high place, which elsewhere in Chronicles and Kings is a mark of spiritual compromise. Lutheran and some Baptist readings that follow the Kings parallel more closely find tension here. The Chronicler, however, carefully notes that the Tent of Meeting and the bronze altar made by Bezalel were at Gibeon (vv. 3, 5) — this is not an unauthorized altar but the legitimate pre-temple worship site. The Chronicler is not endorsing high-place worship in general; he is identifying Gibeon as the provisional but authorized center of sacrificial worship before the temple is built. This distinction must be preserved in exposition: the chapter does not create a precedent for casual worship outside God's appointed means; it describes a historically specific moment of legitimate worship at the authorized site.

The wealth summary (vv. 14–17) — embarrassment or theology? Some interpreters, particularly those shaped by prosperity-gospel frameworks, read the wealth summary as validating a principle that right spirituality produces material blessing as a normative pattern for all believers. This is an overreach the text does not warrant and that the Chronicler does not intend. Solomon's wealth is covenant-kingship wealth — it belongs to the typological shape of the Davidic king who foreshadows the greater King. The wealth is also not unambiguous: the accumulation of horses from Egypt (v. 16) echoes Deuteronomy 17:16's explicit prohibition against a king multiplying horses or returning to Egypt for them. The Chronicler notes this without comment, but a careful reader recognizes it as the first shadow in an otherwise luminous portrait. Exposition should

retain this complexity: the passage celebrates what God gives but does not endorse the model of “right prayer produces personal prosperity” as a transferable principle.

The Reformed reading throughout is to be preferred: the passage celebrates God’s generous response to rightly ordered desire in a specific typological figure — the covenant king — and invites comparison and aspiration, not mechanical replication of a formula.

Key Canonical Support

- **1 Kings 3:5–15** — The parallel account in Kings, which the Chronicler consciously adapts; reading both surfaces what Chronicles emphasizes and omits, and confirms the historicity and theological weight of the scene.
- **Matthew 6:33** — “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” — Jesus articulates the principle Solomon embodies: rightly ordered desire precedes and produces comprehensive provision.
- **James 1:5** — “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach” — the invitation of 2 Chronicles 1 is extended to every believer; wisdom is still available to those who ask rightly.
- **James 4:2–3** — “You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions” — the negative counterpart to Solomon’s request; diagnosing the disordered desire that 2 Chronicles 1 implicitly rebukes.
- **Philippians 4:11–13, 19** — Paul’s contentment and God’s supply; the New Testament counterpart to the chapter’s theology of sufficiency — God provides what is genuinely needed for faithful stewardship of the calling He gives.

Aim: To lead the reader to examine what they ask of God, diagnose the desires beneath their asking, and trust that rightly ordered petition — oriented toward faithfulness to others rather than personal advancement — is met with God’s generous and surpassing provision.

Content Table

Verse(s)	Content	Notes
1	Solomon consolidates his kingdom; the LORD his God is with him and exalts him greatly	“The LORD his God was with him” — Chronicler’s theological verdict on the reign from the outset
2–3	Solomon summons all Israel	Communal,

Verse(s)	Content	Notes
	— commanders, judges, leaders — and leads them to Gibeon	representative worship; the king does not go alone
3	Identification of Gibeon: the Tent of Meeting, made by Moses in the wilderness, is there	Establishes Gibeon's legitimacy as authorized worship site
4	Note: the ark has been brought to Jerusalem by David; only the tabernacle is at Gibeon	Explains the divided sites; ark in Jerusalem, altar at Gibeon
5	The bronze altar made by Bezalel is at Gibeon; Solomon seeks God there	Another legitimacy marker — this is the proper altar
6	Solomon offers a thousand burnt offerings on the bronze altar	Extraordinary scale of sacrifice; total consecration of the reign to God
7	That night God appears to Solomon: "Ask what I shall give you"	Divine initiative; God responds to the sacrifice with an open invitation
8	Solomon acknowledges God's steadfast love to David his father, and his own installation as king	Grounds the request in covenant faithfulness already shown
9	Asks God to fulfill His promise to David; notes his context: king over a great people	The request emerges from a sense of inadequacy before a great responsibility
10	The specific request: wisdom and knowledge to govern — "who can govern this people of yours, which is so great?"	Pastoral humility as the source of the request; the people are God's, not Solomon's
11	God's response: you have not asked for wealth, possessions, honor, or the death of enemies, or long life	God identifies what Solomon did <i>not</i> ask for — the catalogue of typical royal ambitions
12	God grants wisdom and	The surpassing gift:

Verse(s)	Content	Notes
	knowledge; and also gives wealth, possessions, and honor beyond all kings	what was not asked for is given on top of what was asked
13	Solomon returns from Gibeon to Jerusalem and reigns over Israel	Narrative closure; the encounter is complete, the reign properly founded
14	Solomon gathers chariots and horsemen — 1,400 chariots, 12,000 horsemen	Royal glory established; echoes Deuteronomy 17 warning (shadow beneath the splendor)
15	Silver and gold are made as common as stone in Jerusalem; cedar as plentiful as sycamore	Hyperbolic abundance as sign of blessing; typological royal prosperity
16–17	Horses imported from Egypt and Kue; trade details for chariots and horses	The Egypt-horse connection echoes Deuteronomy 17:16 — first hint of future compromise

Divisions Table

Division	Verses	Label
1	1–6	The King Who Leads in Worship: Solomon and All Israel at Gibeon
2	7–13	The King Who Asks Rightly: The Divine Encounter and the Request for Wisdom
3	14–17	The King Whose God Provides: The Wealth That Follows Right Desire

Subject Sentence & Primary Claim (*restated*)

Subject Sentence: Solomon seeks wisdom to govern God's people, and God gives far more than was asked.

Primary Claim: God takes extraordinary pleasure in the leader — or the person — who asks not for self-advancement but for what faithfulness to others genuinely requires; and to that rightly-ordered desire, He gives more than could be sought.

Applications (Five)

1. Examine what you actually ask God for. (*Mind/Belief*) Solomon's request reveals that what you ask God for is a diagnostic of what you genuinely want — and what you think your life is actually about. Most prayer reveals that we want comfort, relief, vindication, and provision for ourselves. Solomon asked for what he needed to serve others well. Before bringing a request to God, ask: Is this request oriented toward my flourishing or toward my faithfulness? The discipline of naming the difference is itself a form of spiritual growth that 2 Chronicles 1 invites directly.

2. Repent of the hidden assumption that self-advancement and godliness are the same pursuit. (*Affections/Worship*) The catalogue of things Solomon did not ask for — wealth, possessions, honor, long life, the death of his enemies — is a catalogue of things most people bring to God without embarrassment, framed as prayers. God singles out Solomon's request as remarkable precisely because it departed from the default. This should produce not just admiration but grief — grief over how thoroughly self-interest has colonized our praying, how naturally we assume that what is good for us is what God would most want to give us. The passage calls for a reordering of the affections, not merely a reform of the prayer list.

3. Trust that God provides what faithfulness genuinely requires. (*Mind/Belief*) Solomon did not receive wisdom by working hard to develop it — he received it as a gift from God in response to right asking. This passage grounds the conviction that God is not indifferent to the needs of those who serve faithfully; He actively provisions the work He assigns. If you are genuinely seeking to serve others well — in family, in vocation, in church leadership, in friendship — and you lack what you need to do it, 2 Chronicles 1 authorizes you to ask directly and specifically, with the confidence that God takes pleasure in that kind of asking and responds to it generously.

4. Refuse the idol of self-protection disguised as prudence. (*Affections/Worship*) Solomon explicitly refuses to ask for the death of his enemies — which in the ancient Near East was the most pressing practical concern of any new king consolidating power. He does not pray for safety through the elimination of threats. This is a form of trusting God with outcomes rather than engineering them. For many people, the functional center of their prayer life is managing risk — praying for circumstances that will make them safe,

secure, and unchallenged. Solomon models a different posture: accept the vulnerability of the assignment, ask for what faithfulness requires, and leave the outcomes with God.

5. When entrusted with responsibility for others, lead with the question “what do they need?” not “what do I need?” (*Will/Behavior*) Solomon’s request is not abstract — it is specifically oriented toward the people he has been called to govern. “Who can govern this people of yours, which is so great?” He frames the need in terms of them, not himself. This is a concrete, transferable discipline: whether as a parent, a manager, a pastor, a teacher, or a friend in a position of trust, the first question is not “what resources do I need to be successful?” but “what do these people need from me, and what will faithfulness to them require of me?” That reorientation — from self-referential leadership to other-oriented stewardship — is what 2 Chronicles 1 models and invites.

Theological Importance

Theological Importance: This passage teaches that God is personally and actively engaged with the desires of those He appoints to serve — He does not simply install leaders and leave them resourceless. The open invitation of verse 7 — “Ask what I shall give you” — reveals a God who is extraordinarily generous and who takes delight in blessing His people, particularly when their asking reflects rightly ordered affections. Equally important is what this passage teaches about God’s moral seriousness: His pleasure is not evoked by the volume of sacrifice (a thousand offerings) but by the character of what Solomon desires. God reads beneath behavior to desire, and He responds to desire at that level. The passage also establishes that God’s provision exceeds what is asked — wisdom is granted, and wealth, honor, and power are added freely — which reflects the nature of a God who gives not by strict measure but out of the abundance of His own character and covenant commitment.

Reformed Theological Significance

Reformed Theological Significance: This passage functions within Reformed theology as a powerful illustration of total depravity’s opposite in the regenerate heart — the reordering of desires that genuine grace produces. Solomon’s request is remarkable not because it is strategically brilliant but because it reflects a heart oriented away from self and toward God’s purposes. Reformed exposition sees in this a picture of what renewed desire looks like: not the elimination of need, but the reorientation of need toward faithfulness rather than self-protection. The passage also anticipates and grounds the Reformation principle of sola gratia in the realm of wisdom and governance — Solomon does not develop wisdom through self-cultivation; he receives it as an unmerited gift from a generous God. Furthermore, Solomon as the covenant king functions typologically: his wisdom, wealth, and glory are a shadow of the greater Son of David, Jesus Christ, in whom “are hidden all

the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3), and who, unlike Solomon, asked nothing for Himself but gave everything for others.

Main Takeaway

What you ask God for tells the truth about what you think your life is for. Solomon asked for what he needed to serve others well, and God gave him more than he could have sought for himself. The invitation of 2 Chronicles 1 is this: stop asking God to make your life work, and start asking God for what faithfulness to the people He has placed in your care actually requires — and watch what a generous God does with that kind of asking.

Preaching/Teaching Pitfalls

- **Reducing the passage to a technique for “unlocking” God’s provision.** The most common misreading turns Solomon’s request into a formula: if you ask for wisdom rather than wealth, God will give you both. This makes God a vending machine and turns right desire into a strategy for getting what you actually wanted. The passage is about genuinely reordered desire — not about discovering the spiritually savvy way to maximize the return on your prayers. Exposition must distinguish between a heart that actually wants wisdom and a heart that wants wealth while having learned to frame its prayers differently.
- **Ignoring the shadows in the wealth summary (vv. 14–17).** The closing verses are not unambiguous triumph. The accumulation of horses from Egypt echoes Deuteronomy 17:16’s explicit prohibition, and a reader familiar with Solomon’s full story knows that this splendor eventually becomes the occasion of his downfall. Preaching the chapter as pure success-narrative without noting these shadows fails the text and produces a falsely triumphalist reading. The Chronicler includes the detail without comment — which is itself a comment.
- **Missing the communal dimension of Solomon’s worship.** Verse 2 emphasizes that Solomon brings *all Israel* with him to Gibeon — this is not a private spiritual retreat but a representative act of national consecration. Preaching that focuses entirely on Solomon’s individual spirituality misses the Chronicler’s point: the king leads the people in worship as a constitutive act of the reign. Leaders bring others with them into the presence of God; they do not cultivate private piety while the community goes unled.
- **Applying the passage moralistically without gospel grounding.** The lesson “ask for wisdom, not wealth” preached as bare imperative produces duty without desire-change. The anti-moralism principle (Clowney) applies directly here: what makes Solomon’s request remarkable is that it flows from a genuinely reoriented heart —

and that reorientation is not self-generated. Exposition must ask: where does that kind of desire come from? It comes from the grace that appointed Solomon, the covenant love that had already been shown to David, and the Spirit who reorders what we want. The gospel must be the motor of the application, not the imperative alone.

- **Treating Solomon as a straightforward model for imitation without acknowledging his typological function.** Solomon is not simply “a great spiritual leader we should emulate.” He is the covenant king whose wisdom, wealth, and temple-building are typological shadows of Jesus Christ. Exposition that skips directly to application without acknowledging this reduces a canonical figure to a motivational example. The proper movement is: Solomon is this kind of king → he foreshadows the greater King → in Christ this wisdom and provision is fully and finally given → therefore we, in Christ, can ask and trust.
- **Preaching the passage primarily as a text about prayer rather than about desire.** Prayer is the occasion of the passage; desire is its subject. A sermon about prayer technique that uses 2 Chronicles 1 as its text has missed the Chronicler’s intent. The question the passage presses is not “how should we pray?” but “what do you actually want?” — and beneath that, “what has your life been reoriented around?” The prayer is only as significant as the desire it expresses.