

## September 2015 National Devotional

### WHAT BLESSES GOD?

Several people responded to my last devotional, WE ARE BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING, expressing a desire to bless God and bless others. There are many ways we can bless God. First and foremost, we must be in a right relationship with Him (*1 Timothy 2:3*). Because He is holy, and we are sinful, our sin must be atoned for (*Romans 8:8*). It is not possible for us to atone for our own sin. Only Jesus, the perfect Son of God, was able to do so (*Romans 8:1-2*). He atoned for our sin on Calvary when He shed His innocent blood on our behalf and justice was served (*Colossians 1:22-23*). Our responsibility is to invite Jesus into our hearts by faith as our Savior and Lord (*Hebrews 11:6*). However, the god of this world has persuaded many of our neighbors, if they believe there is a God, into hoping their good deeds will find favor with God and atone for their sin. God's word says that we are saved by faith not by works lest anyone should boast (*Ephesians 2:8-9*).

Looking back some 2,500 years, the people responded to God's blessings in much the same way as they do today. Daniel describes their response this way: ***"We have sinned and done wrong. We have rebelled against you and scorned your commands and regulations. Lord, you are in the right; but as you see, our faces are covered with shame. This is true of all of us."*** (Daniel 9:5, 7) It must grieve God's heart today as He sees the people of our nation do the same. We turn their backs on Him and His moral absolutes. Even though God is merciful and forgiving, people ignore His will and His way and focus on themselves. Treating neighbors unfairly and lacking concern and compassion for the needy, they selfishly pursue their own desires and interests. Instead of living humble and obedient lives which bless God, they become prideful and disobedient. Even leaders become wise in their own eyes and are deceived into believing that they know better than God on how best to conduct their own affairs and those of their nation (*Isaiah 5:21*). They begin to call evil good and good evil (*Isaiah 5:20*). They take bribes to pervert justice, letting the wicked go free and putting innocent men in jail (*Isaiah 5:23; Proverbs 17:15*).

The Prophet Micah primarily proclaimed a message of judgment to his nation. Today, many evangelicals are proclaiming a similar message of judgment and the imminent return of Christ. However, Micah also proclaimed a message of hope to the faithful. Today, I believe our primary focus should be modeling Christ's life and sharing the hope we have in Him with our neighbors. God is sure to be blessed when He sees our faith continue to grow as we trust Him more and more by obeying God's Word and responding to the promptings of His Spirit.

Micah asked the people a rhetorical question in Micah 6:6 regarding how they might bless the Lord:

***"With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God?"***

In Micah 6:8, we are given the answer:

***"He has told you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God."***

The Lord gave Micah three ways for His people to bless Him. Each one calls for a spiritual commitment of the heart. They are not good just because God desires them, but He desires them because they are good. They bring Him glory! Let's take a closer look at each one:

**(1) DO JUSTLY** - Be fair and just, not taking advantage of others in all our transactions and interactions. Merchants are not to misrepresent the products they offer their customers in quality

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or quantity. And customers are not to cheat merchants by fraud, theft or any other immoral means. It's God's desire that we be people of integrity. (Psalm 51:6) Yet, "to do" is not enough. We must reach the heart and love mercy.

**(2) LOVE MERCY** - Be kind, merciful and compassionate toward all by fulfilling the law of love. Be dispensers of His grace, forgiving those who wrong us and exhibiting joy in doing so. *"Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience (Colossians 3:12) "Don't forget to do good things for others and to share what you have with them. These are the kinds of sacrifices that please God" (Hebrews 13:16).*

**(3) WALK HUMBLY WITH GOD** - Keep our hearts humble, tender, teachable, self-sacrificing and conformed to the will of God. *"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves" (Philippians 3:3). "In the same way, when you have done all the things which are given you to do, say, There is no profit in us, for we have only done what we were ordered to do" (Luke 17:10).*

We cannot accomplish these three in and of ourselves. But Jesus can and will if we allow Him to live His life through us. That, my friend, will bless God.

*"Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in His ways." (Psalm 128:1)*

*"You who fear the Lord, bless the Lord." (Psalm 135:20b)*

**How will you bless God this week?**

Will you choose **truth** over lies and **honesty** over falsehood? Will you choose **mercy** over unforgiveness, **kindness** over anger and **love** over indifference? Will you choose **humility** over arrogance and **service** over self?

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