

## "Bless the Lord, O My Soul"

*"David blessed the Lord before all the congregation; and David said, Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel our father, for ever and ever . . . Now bless the Lord your God. And all the congregation blessed the Lord God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads and worshipped the Lord"*

—I Chron. 29:10.

We are so used to receiving blessings from God that it appears out of order for us to bless God. We who are but dust and ashes, how is it possible for us to give unto the Creator of all things?

But if we look at the basic purpose of God in the highest sense, then we will clearly understand how it is possible, and not only so; how *absolutely essential for us to bless God*.

"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for thou hast created all things, and **for thy pleasure they are and were created**" (Rev. 4:11).

It is interesting to note that Webster in defining "bless" gives as one meaning the following:

"To praise, or glorify; to extol for excellences."

And he then quotes Psalm 103:1 as an illustration—

"Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His Holy Name."

The original Hebrew word for bless, used always in the Old Testament is *barak*, which primarily means "*knee*." This would seem to be the origination of the attitude of prayer: the position of kneeling in humility before God—a recognition of Him as the Creator and we as the created. To kneel before another is to subject one's self unto the authority and position of the other. This then is the position of those who would thank and praise God for all His goodness unto the children of men.

"O come, **let us worship and bow down**: let us **kneel** before the Lord our Maker" (Psa. 95:6).

Here again the word is *barak* in the original Hebrew. In the beautiful picture of the kingdom, given by the Spirit through David, we read in Psa. 72:15—

"Prayer also shall be made for him continually; and daily shall he be praised."

In this case the same Hebrew *barak* is translated "praised."

There is an incident in the life of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, which illustrates clearly the application of blessing God. Where it is truly applied, it is a reciprocal force and brings about the bond of love and mercy between God and His children. They are blessed by putting their trust in God; and the true heart, responsive to the Divine provision, blesses God by thanksgiving and praise for His care and help. God is in control of all the circumstances in the lives of His saints, and their trials are designed to develop characters in accord with those beautifully illustrated in Jesus, the manifestation of the Father. We read in Heb. 12:6-11—

"My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him; For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

There appears to be a play upon the idea of kneeling in v. 12—

"Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and **the feeble knees.**"

This seems to revert to the idea of our not fainting when we are chastised or rebuked or developed by God under trial. Perhaps there is wrapped in this expression the thought that *we should not be feeble in our recognition of, and thanksgiving for, the Divine hand upon us for good*, regardless of the appearance of circumstances.

So it was in the case of Jehoshaphat in 2 Chron. 20. The children of Moab and Ammon gathered a great host against Judah and were preparing to invade the land and destroy the people of the Lord. The king recognized that these events were not chance, that they were the overruling hand of the Father in heaven, bringing about a set of circumstances, designed to bring glory, praise, and honor unto His Name. First we notice the godly mind of Jehoshaphat:

"He set himself to seek the Lord, and to proclaim a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the Lord" (vs. 3-4).

They recognized that God could provide the necessary aid and assistance; which in itself is an ascription of blessing or praise to God by His creatures (v. 6)—

"Art not thou God in heaven, and rulest not Thou over all kingdoms of the heathen? And in Thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand Thee?"

They were seeking a blessing from God in the required manner. They recognized their absolute dependence upon His care and sovereign aid—

"For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee" (v. 12).

One of the most interesting military engagements is then portrayed in the following verses. Judah would not have to fight against the great host of Moab and Ammon; that is, fight in a literal sense. The battle was to be the Lord's. The evidence of trust in the overshadowing arms of God had been manifested, and therefore God, through the priest Jahaziel, assured Jehoshaphat of the outcome of the conflict—

"Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's" (v. 15).

"Ye shall not need to fight in this battle; set yourselves, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you" (v. 17).

The name *Jahaziel* is interesting in its appropriate meaning. It comes from two Hebrew words, meaning "behold" and "the Almighty," signifying a relationship between God and His servants. The people of Judah under the faithful guidance of the king had beheld the Almighty and confessed His power to save, and thus placed their reliance on Him alone. In such a manner the Father was being praised and blessed, for the Hebrew "*chazah*, a portion of the name *Jahaziel*, means, "see or contemplate with pleasure."

Thus in the blessing of God, by trust and honor in Him, God would return a blessing upon their heads. It is comprehended in the scripture,

"Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you" (James 4:8).

We see then the close relationship between the two blessings. Without our blessing of God, we cannot expect to be looked upon favorably by the Father in heaven. As the army of Judah went forward the king declared unto the people,

"Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper" (v. 20).

The response of the people was whole-hearted—one of those few times in Israel's history when due to wise counsel they served the Lord with gladness. They appointed singers as a vanguard to Judah's hosts, who should lead the people in singing praise to God. What army on earth could stand before such a force? The power of the Almighty was on their lips.

"That should praise the beauty of holiness, and to say, Praise the Lord; for His mercy endureth for ever" (v. 21).

We recall how at the words of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane the Temple guard, who came to take him, fell backward to the ground. The full exercise of this protecting power is reserved for the day of God's judgments upon a wicked world, exercised by the glorified servants of God, in cooperation with the Son:

"And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And **out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword**, that with it he should smite the nations" (Rev. 19:14-15).

Certainly the events in the days of Jehoshaphat are a type of the salvation and destiny of the righteous of all generations. *Jehoshaphat* means "God has judged." The class of people for whom he stands, are those who, when the judgment is complete, shall stand on the Arbitrator's right hand, of whom it is said,

"Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

This name Jehoshaphat again appears in the prophecies of Joel (3:2, 12), again as a type, this time of God's judgments against those who afflict the natural seed of Abraham. All nations are gathered into the valley of Jehoshaphat, outside Jerusalem—

"Let the nations be awakened and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, for there will I sit to judge all the nations.

"Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision; for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision."

The effect of these judgments will be the ascription of praise and honor to the God of heaven. These judgments, though bitter in their outpourings, are sweet unto the taste of God and His elect, for they bring about the purpose of God of—

". . . filling the earth with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

For Joel continues, speaking of the glorious outcome—

"Ye shall praise the Name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you, and my people shall never be ashamed" (Joel 2:26).

Returning then to 2 Chron. 20, we find that the armies of Moab and Ammon fought against the Edomites who came with them against Judah. The result—they completely destroyed one another. The Lord was fighting for Israel. And this event is, in itself, a foreshadowing of God's hand against the Northern host upon the mountains of Israel, when He sees that it is the time of Jacob's trouble, when their strength and confidence in themselves is gone. Do we not read from Eze. 38:21?—

"I will call for a sword against him throughout all My mountains, saith the Lord God: every man's sword shall be against his brother."

And again the glorious result, the blessing of God by all the world:

"Thus I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord" (Eze. 38:23).

Jehoshaphat and the army of Judah spent 3 days in gathering of the spoil of the enemies of the Lord—riches, and precious jewels.

"On the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of **Berachah; for there they blessed the Lord: therefore the name of the same place was called, The Valley of Berachah**, unto this day" (2 Chr. 20:26).

*The blessing of God*—the desired result of God's blessing of the people—was manifested. It brought forth the peaceable fruits of the Spirit. The people returned to Jerusalem with joy and thanksgiving in their hearts for all that God had done for them.

"And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets **unto the house of the Lord**" (2 Chr. 20:28).

Certainly this is a type of the overthrow of Israel's enemies upon the mountains of Canaan in the time of the end. Do we not see the enflaming again of the old hatred of Arab against Jew, as Russia re-arms Egypt and the Arab League? We are living in the days of the antitype of Jehoshaphat's time. We should not lose confidence in what God is doing. We should realize that "*the whole disposing of the matter is of the Lord.*"

As a further indication of the relationship of the type to the coming of God's kingdom on the earth, we find that the wealth of Israel's enemies was brought to Jerusalem, and all nations feared the Lord because they realized that God was fighting for His people. This of itself would cause others to reverence and bless the Name of God. The desired end for mankind after 6000 years of trial and conflict is foreshown by v. 30—

"So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet; for his God gave him rest round about."

In the fullest sense peace shall flow to the ends of the earth as a river. War and conflict, both between individuals and nations, *shall cease* (Isa. 65:25)—

"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain."

Turning to the New Testament we find exactly the same aspect of people "blessing God." The point we have been speaking about is not limited to the Old Testament. The apostolic words teach that the blessing of God by His creation is not only desirable, but absolutely *essential for salvation*.

Again we must bear in mind that our conception of the meaning of "bless" may be rather limited. The Greek word translated "bless" in the A.V. is *eulogeo*. This comes to us as a compound word, being made up of two basic Greek words, *eu* meaning "good," and *logos* meaning "word." *Logos* comes from the Greek *legeo* which means "to write." We observe that our words "ledger" and "legible" come from this original Greek. We can also pick out our English word "eulogy," praise, or "eulogize," to speak well or highly of a person, in the Greek word "bless." *Eulogeo* also means "to speak well of." Let us look at a few New Testament passages where *eulogeo* appears in the original. James referring to the tongue (3:8-9) tells us of the great power resident in this little member—

"The tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless (**eulogio**) we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God."

The elaboration of James' argument shows that this condition of blessing and cursing cannot go together. We cannot bless God and curse men, any more than a fountain can send out sweet water and bitter. *The tongue is the outward manifestation of the condition of the heart.* We must make the waters of the heart sweet and pure. Pure and sweet words will follow. John adds in the same line of reasoning—

"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth"  
(1 John 3:18).

And he shows the relationship of our actions the one with the other to our blessing of God when he states (1 John 4:20-21)—

"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God Whom he hath not seen? This commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also."

The same Greek word *eulogeo* is used by Luke when speaking of the disciples after the ascension of Jesus (Luke 24:51-53)—

"While he (Jesus) blessed (**eulogeo**) them, he was parted from them, and carried up to heaven. And they were continually in the temple, praising and blessing (**eulogeo**) God."

Here we have in close proximity Christ blessing his disciples and the disciples blessing God. The true heart in response to the calling and mercy of God will respond with thankful praise and words of gratitude to the Creator and Provider of all.

The joy and rejoicing in the hearts of the disciples were due to the ultimate prospect of God glorified by all men; when the purpose of God in their call to preach the Gospel to all creatures should be manifest from one end of the earth to the other. It was only a prospect in their day, but it is certain of fulfilment.

The events of 2 Chron. 20:30 are a type of the kingdom age, when the mortal inhabitants of the earth give praise and thanks unto God, blessed as they will be by the Divine government in the hands of Christ and the saints.

But the highest prospect of blessing is far above the peaceful reign of Christ, while mortality is still on the earth. The prospect of immortality and Divine service for the Creator for the countless ages is the ideal and hope of all the elect. The attainment of that condition brings from their hearts that expression of blessing to the Creator which was the purpose in creation in the highest sense. Thus they are foreshown in Rev. 5:13 as singing to the Father—

"**Blessing**, and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

Again in Revelation 7:12—

"**Blessing**, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving and honor, and power, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen."

If we aspire to be among that throng, redeemed from every tongue, kindred, nation, and people, it becomes imperative that we bless God in this our day of pilgrimage. It must not be with

tongue or in word only. It must be "*in deed and in truth.*" Clearly we are called upon to bless God with a life of service to our Heavenly Father. If we continue constant in this respect we shall be accounted worthy to do so in the ages yet to come. —F.H.

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