SABBATH THOUGHT 2026-11-28—BLESS THE LORD!

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

This past week people in the USA observed the day of Thanksgiving. Formally established as an annual holiday by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863 during the horrors of this nation's Civil War, it has historically been a day when the nation gave thanks to God for His providence and blessings. But times change. Even the best of intentions these days fall far short in sincerity and zeal for giving thanks to God. In ancient times, although they often fell short, the Israelites had moments when they pleased God. For example, did you know there were Levites whose sole job was to give thanks to God on behalf of the entire nation[1]?

> 1 CHRONICLES 16:41 … the rest **who were chosen, who were designated by name, to give thanks to the LORD**, because His mercy *endures* forever;
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> NEHEMIAH 12:24 And the heads of the Levites *were* Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brothers across from them, to praise *and* **give thanks, group alternating with group, according to the command of David** the man of God.

In the days of Nehemiah, he appointed two large choirs of priests and Levites for the sole purpose of giving thanks to God:

> NEHEMIAH 12:31, 38 So I *[Nehemiah]* brought the leaders of Judah up on the wall, and appointed **two large thanksgiving choirs**. *One* went to the right hand on the wall toward the Refuse Gate. … 38 The other **thanksgiving choir** went the opposite *way*, and I *was* behind them with half of the people on the wall, going past the Tower of the Ovens as far as the Broad Wall,

Can you imagine worshipping God in those days? How glorious, beautiful, and uplifting it must have been to hear the choirs singing praises and thanksgiving to God! It is doubtful that anyone has heard or seen the likes of it in modern times. Prayer is the most common way to give thanks to God but, sadly, many are nothing more than dull words. What is missing is sincerity and zeal. In ancient times, prayer involved much less form and a great deal more emotion. There is not a single biblical record of King David's prayers that were not sincere and intense. He prayed and sang with a heart that was bursting with passion whether of joy and elation or grief and sorrow. His prayers of sadness were just a powerful as his prayers of joy and that is why he was a man after God's own heart—he had a zeal that was profoundly real and unrestrained:

> ACTS 13:22 "… He *[God]* raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, '**I have found David the *son* of Jesse, a man after My *own* heart, who will do all My will.**'

Desire and motivation come from the heart. It may be difficult to imagine but God is deeply passionate. His great longing is to dwell forever with His children:

[1] Also 1 Chr. 25:3; 2 Chr. 31:2.

REVELATION 21:3 And I *[John]* heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, **the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God.**

PSALMS 132:13-14 For the LORD has chosen Zion; **He has desired *it* for His dwelling place: 14 "This *is* My resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it.**

When this age is finally gone, God the Father will rejoice over His children with an outpouring of His deep love:

ZEPHANIAH 3:17 The LORD your God *[is]* in your midst, the Mighty One, will save *[you]*; **He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will [renew] *you* with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing**."

Can you imagine God singing to you? His song will be a soul-stirring perfection of harmony and words never before heard that touches the very souls of His children. When that glorious day is fulfilled, Jesus Christ will also sing praises to His Father:

HEBREWS 2:12 saying: "I *[Jesus Christ]* will declare Your name to My brethren; **in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You *[God the Father]***."

David was a man after God's own heart because he desired the Kingdom above all else. When it comes to prayers, the heart matters. The heart of David is captured in a unique biblical phrase that is found throughout Scripture but is easily missed—"blessed *be* the LORD" or "bless the LORD God"[2]:

PSALMS 103:1-2, 21-22 **Bless the LORD, O my soul**; and all that is within me, *bless* His holy name! 2 **Bless the LORD, O my soul**, and forget not all His benefits: … 21 **Bless the LORD, all *you* His hosts**, *you* ministers of His, who do His pleasure. 22 **Bless the LORD**, all His works, in all places of His dominion. **Bless the LORD, O my soul!**

1 CHRONICLES 29:10, 20 Therefore **David blessed the LORD** before all the assembly; and David said: "**Blessed are You, LORD God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever.** … 20 Then David said to all the assembly, "Now **bless the LORD your God**." So all the assembly **blessed the LORD God** of their fathers, and bowed their heads and prostrated themselves before the LORD and the king.

How can flesh and blood can bless the LORD God—*Yehovah Elohim*? He is eternity. He is all power. He is all wise. He embodies love, kindness, mercy, compassion, and faithfulness. How can flesh and blood *bless* the Creator of all? What does it mean to *bless* God? It is an act of ADORATION. To "**bless the LORD God**" is to love, respect, praise, honor, worship, venerate, and give thanks to Him!

[2] Also Exo. 18:10; Deut. 8:10; Josh 22:33; Judg. 5:9; 1 Sam. 25:32; 2 Sam. 18:28; 22:47; 1 Kings 1:48; 5:7; 8:15, 56; 10:9; 1 Chr. 16:36; 2 Chr. 2:12; 6:4; 9:8; 20:26; 31:8; Ezra 7:27; Job 1:21; Ps. 16:7; 18:46; 26:12; 28:6; 31:21; 34:1; 41:13; 66:8; 68:19, 26, 35; 72:18; 89:52; 103:102, 21-22; 104:1, 35; 106:48; 113:2; 115:18; 119:12; 124:6; 134:1, 2; 135:19-21; 144:1; 145:10, 21; Dan. 2:19-20; 3:28; Matt. 21:9; 23:39; Mark 11:9; Luke 1:68; 13:35; 19:38; John 12:13; 2 Cor. 1:3; 11:31; Eph. 1:3; 1 Tim. 6:15; 1 Pet. 1:3.

Today, prayers are usually pleas for help (supplications) or praises and thanksgiving. But neither of these really embraces the fullness of "bless the LORD your God." Adoration is much more than simply kneeling and bowing before God to utter a few words. After returning from captivity in Babylon, the ancient Israelites celebrated the Festival of Tabernacles with great rejoicing. Notice what the Levites said to the children of Israel two days after the Festival of Tabernacles when they were fasting because of their sins:

> NEHEMIAH 9:1-3, 5-6 Now on the twenty-fourth day of this *[seventh]* month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, in sackcloth, and with dust on their heads. 2 Then those of Israelite lineage separated themselves from all foreigners; and they stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. 3 And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God *for one*-fourth of the day; and *for another* fourth they confessed and worshiped the LORD their God. … 5 And the Levites … said: "**Stand up *and* bless the LORD your God forever and ever! "Blessed be Your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise! 6 You alone *are* the LORD; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them, and You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You.**"

Imagine being there. The entire assembly was gathered at the temple, humble and contrite (ashamed for their sins) after being rescued from captivity in Babylon for seventy years. The Levites came out and stood before them and loudly proclaimed, "**Stand up *and* bless the LORD your God forever and ever!**" This was the beginning of their prayer of repentance. Perhaps they looked toward the heavens with tears of shame and joy rolling down their faces as they were once again in the presence of God listening to a powerful prayer of repentance given by the Levites. That prayer was filled with great passion because of what was in their hearts!

What does God desire most? A heart full of zeal and desire for Him. While words matter, it is the unspoken words of the heart that touch God the most. How can words from our lips have meaning if our hearts are empty? On the day of Pentecost when the apostles spoke to a large gathering after receiving the Holy Spirit, their words were inspired by GOD:

> ACTS 2:4 And **they *[the disciples]* were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance**.

The words that they spoke were profound in every language. God had begun calling people in earnest to be Firstfruits of His Kingdom so this was a day to remember! God's words so moved the multitude that they were overcome with sorrow and repentance[3]: "Now when they heard *this*, **they were cut *[pierced]* to the heart**, and said … , "Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?"[4] The words of God, spoken by the apostles, *pierced* their hearts and 3,000 were baptized when they heard what God did for them through the sacrifice of His Son. Repentance and forgiveness are matters of

[3] 2 Cor. 7:9-10.
[4] Acts 2:37.

the heart. If our hearts are empty, how much will they influence God? Words of the heart are greater than those of the lips:

> ROMANS 8:26-27 Likewise **the Spirit also helps** in our weaknesses. For **we do not know what we should pray for** as we ought, but **the Spirit makes intercession for us** with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27 Now He who searches the hearts knows what **the mind of the Spirit *is*, because it makes intercession for the saints** according to *the will of* God.

If prayers are only pleas for help with poverty, healing, suffering, disease, illness, and other aspects of this physical life, then a vision of the coming Kingdom is lacking. Prayers that "bless the LORD your God" are an outpouring of passion for the purpose and works of God the Father.

It may sound odd, but consider putting aside, for a moment, supplications for your pain, poverty, grief, sorrow, affliction, and trials of this life to give sincere, heartfelt praise and thanks that you can suffer after the example of our Savior[5]. They have given us Their love, sacrifice, forgiveness, grace, mercy, and help in time of need[6]. The Son of God endured the unknowable torment for the whole world so that we can dwell together with Him and God the Father for eternity. Give thanks for the honor of having a small part in those sufferings by which God prepares us for an unending life of unspeakable wonder, peace, and joy. "**Bless** the LORD God" with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. Let it be known to the multitude of witnesses in heaven[7] how much you adore, love, respect, worship, and venerate God the Father and Jesus Christ. "Stand up" with arms raised. Revere Them in the quiet moments but sing praises for all to hear. Declare your love to Them! Dance a little and rejoice a lot! For that brief moment, revel in the wonders of the coming day! Be bold and proclaim, "Praise the LORD!" Speak your thoughts but let your heart cry out to be in the Kingdom! Our lips speak the words but our HEARTS confirm them!

> PSALMS 115:1, 11-16, 18 Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but to Your name give glory, because of Your mercy, because of Your truth. … 11 You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD; He *is* their help and their shield. 12 The LORD has been mindful of *us;* He will bless us; He will bless the house of Israel; He will bless the house of Aaron. 13 He will bless those who fear the LORD, *both* small and great. 14 May the LORD give you increase more and more, you and your children. 15 *May* you *be* blessed by the LORD, who made heaven and earth. 16 The heaven, *even* the heavens, *are* the LORD's; but the earth He has given to the children of men. … 18 [And] **we will bless the LORD from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the LORD!**

May God's grace and peace be upon you!

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[5] 1 Pet. 2:21.
[6] Heb. 4:16.
[7] Heb. 12:1.