

## The Spirit of Christmas, Part II The Blessing!

At the close of Charles Dickens' famous Christmas story, *A Christmas Carol*, Tiny Tim says, "And God bless us, everyone"! These words still ring true after well over a century of reading. Christmas is about the blessing. We read of the Wise Men who came seeking Jesus with gifts worthy of a King, so that they might give a blessing. When the ancient prophet saw the baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph, he broke into a blessing, "*And Simeon blessed them....*" (Luke 2:34). In the New Testament, the word for blessing comes to us from the Greek word, *eulogeo*, which means: to invoke with blessing, to praise, celebrate with praises; to consecrate a thing with solemn prayers, to cause to prosper, to make happy. In Hebrew the word for blessing is: *Barakah*, which means: blessing, source of blessing, prosperity, praise of God, a gift, present, treaty of peace.

The blessing we extend to others at Christmas should be what we give them all through the year. It is not trite to say what a better place this would be throughout the year if we would have the Christmas spirit all the year. Let us not become skeptical by saying it is un-practical, not feasible, or not possible. Let us turn the Christmas spirit into a New Year's resolution. May God help us to enter into the blessing and pray for it to be on others. The Christmas blessing involves at least three characteristics:

### I. Right Relationship With God

In the last portion of the Hebrew definition of blessing we observe it is synonymous with "a treaty of peace". Without Christ we are aliens, "*That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world*" (Ephesians 2:12). Alien is not a visitor from outer space, it is one who is a stranger in the inner space of earth from relationship with God. We see in the original language of the New Testament the word for alien is *apalotrioo*, which means: to alienate, estrange, to be shut out from one's fellowship and intimacy.

Christ came to die for our sins and through His redemption bring whosoever believes Him the peace that passes all understanding (Philippians 4:7). No wonder the angels announced at His birth: "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men*" (Luke 2:14). The blessing also involves:

### II. Right Relationship With Each Other

*"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore"* (Psalm 133:1-3).

When God's people dwell together in unity, a blessing from God is commanded in that kind of atmosphere! At Christmas time it is not unusual for friends and loved ones who have had a falling-out to decide to live in harmony. Re-unions, dinners, and gifts are given which re-connect us to each other. "*That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me*" (John 17:21). Our Lord points out when we are seen by the world as we live in unity, believing becomes more believable!

### III. Right Relationship in This World

We as Christians are quick to tell one another how wonderful Heaven will be, especially when earth is so hard on us! Yet, we still continue to say to one another, "the Lord bless you". What are we saying, when we utter these delightful words? In essence we are saying, "I don't just want God to bless you later with Heaven, I want Him to bless you right now!" And there is nothing wrong with that, because the Bible says, "*The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with*

*it*" (Proverbs 10:22). I am convinced one of the strongest testimonies of the Christian is that God is good to us now, as well as later in glory. What we have should convince the world of our contentedness (Philippians 4:11).

To improvise the Irish blessing: "May the road rise up to meet you, may the wind be at your back, may the sun shine down on your face, and may the Lord's smile be upon you wherever you go". My favorite blessing in the Bible says it like this: "*The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace*" (Numbers 6:24-26). Now that is the Christmas spirit! "And may God bless us everyone"!

- Pastor Pope -

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