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R. C. SPROUL

How Can I Be Blessed?

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LIGONIER MINISTRIES

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Chapter One

The Beauty of Being Blessed

I once walked into my office to find a letter from a former student who was getting married in California and had invited Vesta and me to participate in his wedding. Our schedule prohibited our accepting, so he had written to ask, “If you can’t come to our wedding, could you please record a benediction for our wedding?” I was moved by this request, and immediately a producer and I went into a recording booth and recorded a special prayer of blessing for this couple’s wedding. I am sure I was far more moved

by it than they were, because, as a pastor, I see pronouncing the benediction as one of the highest privileges that we have.

The word *benediction* simply means “good saying.” It comes from two Latin roots: *bene*, meaning “good,” and *dictio*, meaning “statement” or “saying.” A benediction is a good statement, an announcement of blessing. The standard Old Testament benediction is the Aaronic blessing, found in Numbers 6. It is given in a poetic, parallel form:

The LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. (Num. 6:24–26)

This standard Jewish benediction has three lines, and each line says the same thing in two different ways. In this kind of literary parallelism, if we fail to grasp the meaning of it in one line, the subsequent lines make it more clear so that we’ll fully understand what’s being expressed.

Notice also the emphasis on the face of God. This benediction is alluding to a special kind of blessing, a face-to-face intimacy with the Lord. For an Israelite, the highest state of happiness, the supreme experience of blessedness,

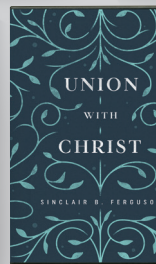
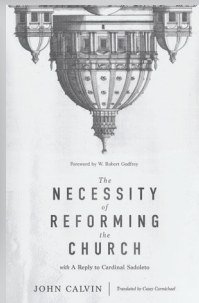
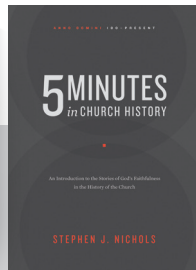
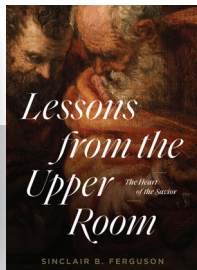
The Beauty of Being Blessed

was associated with coming as close as possible to the Creator, standing in His immediate presence, and basking in His unveiled glory.

The Israelites, as a semi-nomadic people, were acutely conscious of the fragility of human life. They saw that life seems to be like grass that sprouts and quickly withers and dies. They yearned for a permanent home. They wanted to be preserved. This benediction must have been tremendously encouraging. When it talks of the peace that the Lord brings, it's referring to something much more profound than cessation from military conflict. It's talking about an enduring peace, the peace with God that every soul hungers for. This benediction is the promise of the blessedness of peace, grace, and perseverance.

Throughout biblical history, this concept of blessedness was closely linked to the vision of God. What was referred to as a benediction in the Old Testament was sometimes called a "beatitude" in the New Testament. In this booklet, we're going to look at a famous and beloved portion of the New Testament that speaks about what it means to be blessed. This passage is known as the Beatitudes. It is part of the great sermon preached by Jesus Christ known as the Sermon on the Mount, and it is found in Matthew 5.

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around the world connect the deep truths
of the Christian faith to everyday life.



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