

# Blessings

Adapted from a sermon by Rev. Norbert H. Rogers

*Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name.  
Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits (Psalm 103:1-2).*

All things—all blessings—are from the Lord’s Divine love, and are brought into effect and communicated by His Divine wisdom.

Blessings, which produce or contribute to a state of blessedness, are goods or relate to goods. Certainly evils cannot bless anyone; for they are the very essence of all misery, insanity and destruction, and only by Divine intervention can they be made to contribute in any way to the pleasantness and happiness of life. Neither can falsities endow a person with blessings; for of themselves they are related to evils and serve them. Nor, indeed, can truths of themselves bless; for truths separated from goods are harsh and condemnatory. Only when truths are conjoined with goods do they introduce a person into a better and happier state of life. The truths are then the means by which a better state is attained, but what makes the state a better and happier one are the goods to which the truths have led the person and with which they are conjoined.

“To bless,” then, means nothing else than to communicate good to another person, by which his state is improved and made the more blessed. By doing so people can bless each other. Indeed, the blessedness and happiness of heaven are continually being increased and perfected because the angels mutually communicate and share their goods with one another. The goods they have and share are not from themselves, but are all blessings they receive from the Lord—as are all the genuine goods people have on earth. For not the least good can come from a person himself. Thus, people can bless others only from the Lord, and not at all from themselves. And so the angels are in a continual effort to communicate their blessings to one another because they are in mutual love and charity. And the more of their blessings they give to others, the greater blessings they receive from the Lord.

Even less can any person actually bless the Lord. For, no matter how ardently we desire to, we have nothing of our own with which to endow the Lord, or to improve His state. So, in the command to bless the Lord, Psalm 103 is speaking according to the *appearance* that what a person has or does can please the Lord and delight Him. A genuine desire to bless the Lord is thus a manifestation and sign of love to the Lord. And the exhortation and effort to bless Him are a declaration and expression of that love. This is a person’s reciprocation of the Lord’s love by which he is conjoined with the Lord and caused to be in a heavenly state.

So, then, this declaration of love—“bless the Lord”—expresses a grateful acknowledgment that all blessings are from the Lord alone, and involves a desire to praise the Lord and to make known His wonderful works. For there can be no genuine love without knowledge and acknowledgment, nor without gratefulness, nor without a seeking to communicate and to share. So, in ancient times “Blessed be the Lord” was a formula of thanksgiving (*Arcana Coelestia* 1096). And to “bless the Lord” meant to sing to Him, to evangelize His salvation, to preach His wisdom and power, thus to confess and acknowledge the Lord from the heart (*ibid.* 1422:2).

Psalm 103 also tells us not to forget all the Lord's benefits. This is a reminder of our continual need to humble ourselves, without which even the angels could not acknowledge the Lord and bless Him. For we are taught that only the Lord's uplifting power can withdraw people from infernal states and raise them into a heavenly state and maintain them in that state. Indeed, if the Lord's unceasing effort to uplift people were interrupted, just for a moment, even the celestial angels would immediately relapse into infernal states.

Remembering (not forgetting) the Lord's benefits is important because memory is associated with love and affection. We tend to remember only what affects our loves and affections in some way. So, to forget the Lord's benefits is to cut one's self off from the Lord. It means that we have no love to Him, and no ties with Him. It can only mean that we are being led by our selfish affections away from the Lord, away from His protection and love, and away from His blessings. For in consciously remembering the Lord's benefits, remains of love to the Lord may be rekindled and developed, until our souls and all that is within us may come to bless the Lord and His holy name.

To be genuine, and to affect our spiritual life, our remembrance of the Lord's benefits—our acknowledgment and love of Him—must turn away from self to the Lord Himself. We must have regard for the Divine and the spiritual blessings which the Lord bountifully and freely provides out of pure mercy and love. Then there will be a genuine reciprocation of the Lord's love and mercy, bringing us into conjunction with the Lord and causing us to be truly blessed. And then we will be able, with a humble and full heart, to join the Psalmist in joyfully saying: "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."