

What the Lord Requires

Key Verse: *“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”*
—Micah 6:8

Selected Scripture:
Micah 6:6-8

Aaron, and Miriam to lead and instruct them.—vs. 4

The people of Israel seemingly had not profited from these gracious acts of Jehovah on their behalf, and instead followed many of the idolatrous practices of the heathen nations around them. In verses 6 and 7 of our lesson they are represented as asking how they might please God, as though he had never given them any instructions along this line. “Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?” they asked. They knew that the Lord had called for the sacrificing of animals, and so they further asked, “Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?” Here we find an example of an exaggeration of the Lord’s

THROUGH MICAH THE prophet, God queried Israel regarding their frequent waywardness from his laws, asking them, “O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.” (Mic. 6:3) The Lord then reminded his people of some of the many ways in which he had demonstrated his care over them. He had brought them out of bondage and servitude in Egypt, and had raised up Moses,

requirements out of all proportion to his instructions. Indeed, the Israelites had not kept God's reasonable instructions properly, much less these inflated and exaggerated statements.

In our Key Verse, the Prophet Micah answers the questions propounded in the previous verses. He sums up the Lord's requirements quite simply—they were to practice justice, have a love for mercy, and walk humbly with God. These requirements not only applied to Israel, but also to all God's people of every age. "To do justly" simply means to do what is right in God's sight. In our dealings with others, this principle is particularly applied by following what we have come to understand as the Golden Rule. (Matt. 7:12; Luke 6:31) How much the lives of most of us would be changed if each day we made sure that we treated others exactly as we would want them to treat us—fairly, righteously, and without injustice.

In the phrase "to love mercy," the Hebrew word translated mercy is often rendered "kindness" or "lovingkindness" in other Old Testament scriptures. In addition to being just, the Lord wants his people to exhibit the quality of kindness, motivated by unselfish love. God is just, merciful, and kind, and he wants his people to be like him. Jeremiah wrote that the Lord loves "with an everlasting love," and with "lovingkindness." (Jer. 31:3) It is God's delight to do this, and if we would be pleasing to him we must also delight in showing mercy, love and kindness to all.

Finally, the prophet says that the Lord wants his people to walk humbly with him. To the Jews in that ancient time this meant obedience to the Law given to them at Sinai, and also a realization that their standing before God was of his doing, not theirs. Similarly, the will of God for his people of this present age—those who endeavor to follow in the footsteps of Jesus—is that they walk humbly in the narrow way of sacrifice. Indeed, we should not be seeking what we can get out of life, but how much we can put into our service to the Lord. ■