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## WHAT THE LORD REQUIRES

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The words of the prophets of Israel thundered across the land that God had given His people. God's people had departed from the right way and were headed toward destruction. These prophets were "moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21) as they preached obedience to the law of God and the need for sinners to repent. Their words are not to be ignored today even though they lived under a former covenant. Their inspired preaching still echoes divine truths and principles that we should heed today. By them we are made wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:15).

Micah 6:6-8 is one of the most significant and well-known passages of the Old Testament:

*With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams or ten thousands rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?*

The prophet contemplates what the Lord requires of man when he comes before the most High God. One idea would be to offer to God multitudes of sacrifices and offerings. He suggests thousands of rams, ten thousand rivers of oil, and even one's firstborn. Yet will countless and endless sacrifices and offerings *alone* please God? If I keep piling on the rituals of worship, will God be forced to count me as faithful?

The prophet then says that God has shown man what is good, and what He requires. It is not a mystery too complicated to understand. The principles of goodness and righteousness are the basis of all true service and worship of God. This passage sums it up in three principles:

1) **To Do Justly** – Man is required of the Lord to "do justly," or to act properly. To do what is just, or proper, is to act according to the divine standard of the law of God. Man must live by a standard of right and wrong, and God provides us with the only absolute and complete standard. We can know exactly what is just and right. This is important in a world that blurs the distinctions between right and wrong. God has shown us the truth and how to live by it so that we may "do justly."

2) **Love Mercy** – Man is also required of the Lord to "love mercy," or to follow after compassion and kindness. There are those around us who are in need of mercy and compassion, and we are to love our neighbors as ourselves (Romans 13:9). Jesus showed

compassion (Mk. 1:41), and we are to show mercy (Jas. 2:13; 3:17). This is a fundamental trait of one who would follow a merciful God.

**3) Walk Humbly With Your God** – Man is required to “walk humbly” with his God. To “walk” with God is to align one’s life with the statutes and will of the Father. “Can two walk together unless they are agreed?” (Amos 3:3). If we walk with God, we are following His steps and direction, not our own. To walk “humbly” indicates a complete submission of our will to God’s. We must follow God in complete and submissive obedience in all things, like Jesus who said to the Father, “Not My will, but Yours, be done” (Lk. 22:42).

One commentator said, “This verse is considered by many to be one of the most comprehensive and all-embracing statements in the Old Testament” (Homer Hailey, *The Minor Prophets*, 214). This passage teaches the true nature of all service and devotion to God. It is not mere ritual that pleases God, but a total and complete submission to God and His will in our minds and lives.

Samuel told King Saul something like this when he rebuked the king for disobeying God and using “offering sacrifices” as an excuse:

*Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams (1 Sam. 15:22).*

Hear the words of David as he recognizes the true idea of repentance:

*For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart – These, O God, You will not despise (Psalm 51:16-17).*

Finally, hear a scribe as he comments on the scripture that Jesus identified as the “foremost commandment” (Deut. 6:4-5):

*And to love [God] with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices (Mk. 12:33).*

Jesus saw that he “answered wisely” and told him that he was “not far from the kingdom of God” (v. 34). This scribe understood that all worship and service unto God must first be based on a total devotion and love for God. This is what the Lord requires. Are you walking humbly with your God today?