

## Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2015 AM Getting blessed - Numbers 6v22-27

### **Title: Getting blessed - Numbers 6v22-27**

**Purpose:** This section rounds off our studies in Exodus thru to Numbers and is a fitting finale to end on a note of blessing and not cursing. The purpose here is for people to appreciate that God's blessing is something we can sense on our hearts (subjective) but it is also something very concrete and certain - God has committed Himself to carrying out our blessing.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### Ending conversations

It is probably something to do with the famed British reserve - but we do find ending things a bit awkward.

**For example, ending conversations** - (especially telephone conversations) - we find this particularly difficult.

Perhaps you've been on the telephone when both parties know that the call is at an end but how exactly do you terminate it without it seeming a bit blunt or rude.

### Ending meetings

When it comes to more formal settings - the conventions can be quite wide ranging for example:

- there are places where someone will say: "**Be upstanding**" and then the most senior person(s) will leave - perhaps a court judge for example
- or take our **UK Parliament**, when they want to end things they say: "**I move we adjourn. Second. All in favour say aye.**"

### Ending Church meetings

So what about in **church settings**:

Q. How did the OT priests end their services?

Well Leviticus 9 verse 22 gives us one example:

"Then Aaron lifted his hands toward the people and blessed them. And having sacrificed the sin offering, the burnt offering and the fellowship offering, he stepped down."

And this was a specific role of the priests - they were to offer sacrifices, they were to teach the law, they were to adjudicate cases and finally they were to pronounce blessings on the people (and traditionally that would be at the close of proceedings).

### This morning

This morning, as we are closing proceedings on our travels with the Israelites through Exodus and Numbers, we are turning to the words of the blessing that God gave to the priests that they should use - Numbers 6 verses 22 thru 27.

And in order to keep it simple I have three headings - each a question that builds on the previous one:

- **FIRSTLY** - Blessing: Q. What it means?

- NEXT - Blessing: Q. How it comes?
- and then LASTLY - Blessing: Q. What it does to us?

So then, #1:

## 1] Blessing: Q. What it means?

**Here in this church** - when it comes to ending the service - we tend to use one of roughly **four different ways**:

- We might use a **brief prayer** that picks up on some aspect of what has gone on in the service, or most likely from the preached word that we have just been hearing
- We might opt for something that **involves everybody participating** - so perhaps we say the words of **the GRACE** together: "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all ever more. AMEN"
- If not these we might say **the words of a DOXOLOGY** - which is some piece of Scripture which ascribes greatness to God in some way, for example:  
(1 Timothy 1 verse 17) "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory forever. AMEN"
- And then one other option - and that is **what we call a BENEDICTION or BLESSING**.  
Q. So what is that when it's about?

Well - a **BENEDICTION** literally means "**good word**" (It is the Latin form of the Greek "**EULOGY**") and our passage here in [Numbers 6](#) is **the most famous BENEDICTION in the Bible**.

It's not the only one, for example, [Romans 15 verse 13](#) would be another NT example:

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

But still we are left with the question: Q. What does blessing mean?

It is here in [Verse 24 "The LORD bless you..."](#)

It's not unusual for Christians to say to someone well ["God bless!"](#): Q. BUT WHAT DOES IT REALLY MEAN?

### 1. His DELIGHT - His ENJOYMENT

Well for this we need to return to the Garden of Eden and to the creation of the world - in Genesis chapter 1 we have God making things and 6 times, having made something He says that "it is good!". And in two of the cases he goes on to pronounce a blessing in addition.

So here we have God creating and then following it up with "a good word" - now when we make something and then stand back and say "That's good" - it is a comment on the quality of the craftsmanship - BUT when God says something He's made is good - it cannot be that since God never makes anything that is even a tiny bit flawed.

So when God says: "It is good!" - it means that He is standing back and taking DELIGHT in what He has made, He is ENJOYING what He has created.

But this is not the only side:

## 2. His WISHES - His COMMITMENT

Another place where we see blessing in the Bible is where a father is about to die and he gathers his children together to give them his blessing.

And in this he is expressing his wishes for them for the future and importantly he doesn't stop there with just a wish - he goes onto commit the wealth of his estate so the child can achieve that good.

The father says - my child this is what I want for you AND MORE THAN THAT I am going to do what it takes - here is my inheritance - everything I have is now invested in your future.

### Bless you AND Keep you

So when we read at the start of the blessing here in Numbers 6 verse 24 "The LORD bless you and keep you." - these are these 2 aspects of what blessing (at least from the Bible) is all about:

- ONE - that God is DELIGHTING in something
- TWO - that God is INVESTING, COMMITTING Himself into something so that it may come to pass

So let's see how this process works #2:

## **2] Blessing: Q. How it comes?**

### Very emphatic blessing

Now one of the things that we should notice about this blessing - beyond the fact that it consists in just these 3 lines - is that it is very emphatic.

You see it is not just the first line that is prefixed by "The LORD..." and so we know that it is really trying to make sure that all of this blessing is coming to us from the LORD.

### Very focussed blessing

I think another thing that is worth noticing is the fact that although this blessing would be given in a GROUP SETTING it is, nonetheless, something which is very focussed.

Q. Now why do I say that?

Well simply that the "YOU" that comes up 6 times against all of the 6 action verbs in this 3 line blessing - this "YOU" is in the SINGULAR.

It is as though God - through the agency of His priest would be saying these words and pointing individually to "YOU" and to "YOU" and "YOU". That really is a very lovely aspect. It is BOTH "widely public" AND YET "wonderfully personal".

### Verse 25

Now the 2<sup>nd</sup> line of the blessing - Verse 25 reads:

"the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you;..."

### Soothing AND shocking

Now when we first look at this it is something that feels very **SOOTHING** - we perhaps imagine that it is a bit like that lovely feeling we get when the sun shines down upon and takes away the morning chill with its pleasant, life-giving warmth.

So we feel **SOOTHED**, and so we should, **BUT** there is a sense in which we should be rather **SHOCKED** as well.

Moses would have found this especially hard to grasp. Perhaps you can recall the time when he is up Mount Sinai with God and he asks to see His glory:

Let me read the verses to jog your memory:

Exodus 33 verse 18-20 "Then Moses said, 'Now show me your glory.' And the Lord said, 'I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But,' he said, '**you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.**'"

### We have lost His face

It is one of the most basic things about the Bible story - and that is the fact that early on, in the garden of Eden, mankind through his sin lost the face of God. He lost that initial intimacy with his Creator that he had originally enjoyed.

And here in this blessing we have an advertisement of its full recovery - and we ask:

Q. Just how exactly can this be?

The answer comes in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of this second line: (Verse 25):

"the Lord make his face shine upon you **and be gracious to you;**..."

There is no other way that the all-holy God can turn His face to us once again save by some **RADICAL ACT OF GRACE**.

### OIL and WATER

Let me illustrate this a little:

Take OIL and WATER we all know that they are **totally incompatible** as a fact of their nature - **despite your best efforts to make them come together they \*FUNDAMENTALLY CANNOT\***.

So to change this fundamental incompatibility - you have to find **an AGENT** that can effectively intervene - & so at this point we introduce **HOUSEHOLD DETERGENT** & this make the oil soluble and it becomes connected and at one with the water.

### When this BENEDICTION comes

Now think for a moment when this benediction, this blessing comes in the sequence of things - if you go back to your Bibles you will see that it is pronounced following the conclusion of the sacrificial offerings.

Leviticus 9 verse 22 would be a good example involving Aaron as the officiating priest:

"Then Aaron lifted his hands toward the people and blessed them. And having sacrificed the sin offering, the burnt offering and the fellowship offering, he stepped down."

The blessing only comes when the sacrifice has been made and it is only on the basis of that sacrifice that the blessing can be administered as a final act.

The NT book of Hebrews sheds more light on what is really going on:

Hebrews 10 Verse 11 "Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, **which can never take away sins. BUT** when **this priest** had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God."

Q. Who was "THIS PRIEST"? Well all through Hebrews it is talking about the Lord Jesus Christ.

And Q. What was this "ONCE FOR ALL TIMES SACRIFICE FOR SINS"? Well this was the sacrifice of Himself there on that lonely cross at Calvary.

And it is this RADICAL ACT OF GRACE that means that we have once again have the FACE OF GOD shining upon us and turned towards us giving us peace as the third line of the blessing indicates:

Verse 27 "the LORD turn His face towards you and give you peace."

Now the last question that we are going to look at - given that we:

- know what blessing means - God's delighting in us and His doing what it takes to make things happen for us
- know how blessing comes - through the once for all sacrifice of Jesus - through this we have the face of God once again

Now #3:

### 3] Blessing: Q. What it does to us?

And for this I want to turn us to the last verse of our short section:

Verse 27 where we read "So they will **PUT MY NAME** on the Israelites, and **I will bless them.**"

Now we need to understand what this means "PUT MY NAME" on the Israelites - in Isaiah we hear God saying to his people:

(Isaiah 43 verse 1) "But now, this is what the LORD says— he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have **summoned you by name**; you are mine."

Now God does not merely SUMMON US BY NAME - He goes further and that extra step is that he GIVES US A NAME, HE GIVES US HIS NAME.

Imagine if you were adopted and you were adopted not just into any old family but you were adopted into a very famous and very wealthy family.

You would now have their name and all that went with it.

Q. So how does this play out for us?

Well there are a number of obvious areas, I think:

- FOR ONE - we get a priceless **IDENTITY** - we get the name.

It is a remarkably lovely thing when a somebody takes a nobody and makes them special.

Many years ago I recall going to play basketball, I think it was, at some place and I believe we were staying at the place overnight and an elderly gentleman (perhaps because he noticed that I was isolated, perhaps because he noted that there was maybe a loneliness) he took me aside and basically showed kindness to me on a one-to-one basis.

And this is what we get when God gives us His name

- SECONDLY - have gained identity we **LOSE OUR ISOLATION**.

Loneliness is a terrible thing and we all know that even amongst a crowd, even if we have all of life's pleasures - we can still be craving connection with others and having God's name we become part of His family.

Q. Where do we see this family? Well - we're looking at it now - it has it's local expression here in this church.

- THIRD - we have ACCOUNTABILITY.

We all know that with privileges comes responsibility - you carry around everywhere you go the family name and you either honour that name or possibly you end up dragging it through the mud.

It changes therefore how we live day-to-day.

- LASTLY - it gives us a real sense of SECURITY and CLOSENESS.

When you are a son, a daughter, you know that if you mess things up that you won't be ejected from the family. Your Father will show even more love - he will come after you, he will pursue you and draw you back into the right place again.

It is very freeing to know that there is nothing stronger than true love - the love of the Heavenly Father. (If you need a story example of this quality of familial love - just turn to Luke 15 and the parable of the prodigal son).

I want to conclude and in doing so to ask ourselves - what we are to do with our blessing - what we are to do with the wonderful benediction - these good words of God.

## CONCLUSION

There are, I would suggest, a couple of things that very naturally flow out from receiving such a blessing:

### 1] Be a giver of blessing

The first is ourselves to be one who GIVES OUT BLESSING.

As we read in Proverbs 11 (ESV) "Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered."

Or take Romans 12:

"Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. **Bless** those who persecute you; **bless** and **do not curse**."

Now maybe you find blessing others doesn't come very naturally - well here are three ways in to blessing when you look at another person:

- **FIRSTLY** - consider their **FRUIT** - look at the things that are good about their character and then affirm them in that.

Maybe they exhibit great patience in the way they do something, the way that they don't give up with something or someone. Affirm this aspect.

It could be that they are a person who pays real attention to detail - they really put their all into something - well this is good - affirm them for it.

- **SECONDLY** - consider their **GIFTS** - yes gifts come from God, however it is down to us to put in the effort to hone those gifts and to put in effort to deploy them to their maximum effect.

We can notice how when and how they exercise a gift and encourage them in it - what a breath of fresh air that can be - so often we take each other and what we do for granted.

- **THIRDLY** - consider their **SACRIFICE** - often sacrifices are made behind the scenes, things are being done perhaps and they take a lot of time and effort.

Once again we have another fruitful area where we can reach out to someone to bless them for their labours.

Now I said there were 2 things - the second is \*not\* just be a giver of blessing but:

## 2] Be a getter of blessing

Be a getter of blessing. We need to take more in.

Q. So what does that really look like?

Well there are a couple of sides of this blessing that comes from the LORD ultimately through the agency of the Lord Jesus Christ -- and these are the objective side and also the subjective side:

- Now **the objective side** is that God delights in us and is totally committed to us so that we will surely BE BLESSED. It doesn't matter how we are feeling, it is a done deed and we simply need to reckon upon it.
- Regarding **the subjective side** - this is where we have to do some work to make sure that we gain a proper sense of God's blessing - it's real fullness & richness - upon our hearts.

We need what might be called a "sense experience" of this simply unmatched benediction of God.

I wonder if we are living as effective paupers, whether we are living off breadcrumbs and missing the wonderful feast that this **PRIESTLY BENEDICTION** maps out for us.

LET US PRAY SHALL WE ..... AMEN