

Benediction Addiction

Numbers 6:22-27

In the book of Numbers, God assembles Israel, has a census conducted, organizes the tribes in camp-formation, calls out the Levites as the priestly tribe, gives them various duties and regulations, establishes policy for what to do with lepers and jealous husbands, and also establishes the “Nazarite vow.” After all this, in Numbers chapter 6, God instructs the priests how to bless the people of Israel. For all the work of fulfilling the ordinances of the worship and service of God, the end result is that they are supposed to bless the people. God gives them words to say that will invoke God’s goodness and mercy to flow upon them. These words are also a reminder of the reality of the presence of God: His sufficient grace and good will toward men. We are to acknowledge and desire His presence and His will for our lives, trusting Him with all of our hearts (Deuteronomy 6:4-6; Psalm 105:4; Proverbs 3:5-10).

We can apply this principle to ourselves today. The Gospel ministry should be characterized with the encouragement that comes with knowing and receiving the grace that God gives through our Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:3 tells us that God has “blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” Through Christ, we all have been made kings and priests (Revelation 1:5-6) and should be occupied with blessing others (Matthew 5:43-48; Romans 12:9-21; Ephesians 4:28-32; Philippians 2:1-5; I Timothy 2:1-8; James 3:8-18; 5:16).

Blessings are also called “benedictions” (i.e. something said or done to invoke God’s blessing to others). Our Scripture reading is a benediction that was used by the Levitical priests after worship and sacrifices were performed. We may use these words also. The Apostle Paul has many benedictions at the end of his letters (I Corinthians 16:23-24, Galatians 6:18, Ephesians 6:23-24, I Thessalonians 5:23-28; II Thessalonians 3:16-18, II Corinthians 13:11-14).

The benediction in Numbers 6:24-26 is a three-fold blessing. It has a hint of the **Trinity** of God in it.

- Provision and Protection – Numbers 6:24
The Father oversees and preserves us (Ephesians 1:3; I Peter 1:3-5).
- Presence and Personal Intimacy – Numbers 6:25
The Son unites us to the Father, revealing Him to us and through us (II Corinthians 4:6, John 14:6,9; I Peter 3:18; Matthew 28:18-20). The Father's gracious gifts are provided through Christ (John 1:14,16-17; Ephesians 4:7-8; I Timothy 1:14, Philippians 4:19; John 14:13-18).
- Pleasure and Peace – Numbers 6:26
The Spirit of God causes us to experience the "countenance" of God (his heart toward us). Our hearts and minds are assured of God's love, joy and peace (Romans 5:1-5, 8:14-18,31-39; Galatians 5:22-23; I John 3:24; 4:8-19 cp. Ephesians 2:1-7; Titus 3:4-7; Jeremiah 29:11; 31:3; Psalm 42:5,11).

Perhaps Paul gave us a very close parallel to the priestly blessing found in Numbers 6, when he shared his thoughts and prayers in Ephesians 3:14-19.

- Are we comprehending the love of Christ and God's gracious blessings to us?
- Are we filled with His fullness today?
- Are we blessing others?