

PREPARING FOR GOD'S BLESSING

Numbers 6: 22-27 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Is God waiting on you, on me, on us, on us as a church, or on us as a nation? So often God is waiting on us as we are waiting for Him to reveal His direction to us or to lead us to His will or His purpose. Some of us may have been waiting a long time for God and we may have been waiting for His blessing. Did you know that often God is waiting on us first to act in obedience to His Word, to His promptings or to His revealed will? Nevertheless, God will not pour out His blessings until each of us act on what He has revealed to us. Maybe months or years ago, God led us to follow Him to do something we rejected or balked at doing. Do you remember saying, “Not me. No, not over my dead body!” Like Moses, did we say, “Not me, Lord!” You have the wrong person. That’s not my place.” What God leads us to do, He qualifies us to accomplish when we move out in obedience.

Do you remember Abraham doing what God asked him to do, and preparing to sacrifice Isaac? Do you know when God proved Himself to be Jehovah-jireh, the God who supplies, providing a ram caught in a thicket? It was after Isaac was tied on the altar for sacrifice and Abraham had lifted his knife. Then God called to Abraham and said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy, or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.” (Genesis 22: 11) Remember the woman with the issue of blood, who hemorrhaged for twelve years? (Luke 8: 44) When did the healing blessing come? It was when she got down low in the multitude and touched the hem, the fringes of Jesus’ garment. Then virtue passed out of Jesus and she was healed. The blessings come to us when we move out for God and do His bidding. Do you remember the invalid who lay among the lame, blind and paralyzed folks at the pool of Bethesda? This invalid had been unable to walk for 38 years. He was waiting for the blessing, but the blessing never came until Jesus came and said to him, “Get up, take up your bed and walk.” The man never said, “How cruel of you. I am an invalid. I can’t walk.” No, at the prompting of Jesus, at once, he moved, stood up, healed, took up his bed, and walked.

Many of us may have thought God’s blessings are automatic for believers. Yet, over, and over, God’s blessings come only after we move in obedience. When David ventured to go against Goliath, picked up 5 smooth stones and threw one at the giant—then the blessing of victory came. For 40 days, all Israel was frozen in fear with no blessing from God. (I Sam. 17: 48, 49) When did God part the Red Sea? It was when Moses raised his staff over the sea that God parted the waters. (Exodus 14: 16, 21) The Lord said to Moses, “Why do you cry to Me? Tell the people to go forward. Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and

divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground.” Often God waits for us to obey in the smallest way—whether we like His commands or not. Some of you may be waiting for God’s financial blessings, so you will be able to tithe and give offerings. You will wait your entire life. God says in Malachi 3:10, “Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house. And thereby put Me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.” James 2: 20 tells us that “faith, apart from works is useless.” The next time you go to Walmart or K-Mart, stand back and wait for the doors to open for you as you stand still 20 feet from the outer door. It won’t happen. We must move toward the door, one step at a time. Then, the outer door opens. The inner door is still shut. We must enter the outer door for the inner door to open. Take obedient steps with God. Maintaining a tender heart to His leading. Doors of blessing will open. As Dr. Jimmy Draper says, “You never drift anywhere worth going.”

A careful study of the first six chapters of Numbers tell God’s blessing wasn’t an automatic blessing for all Israelites. The people of God had obeyed God and His commands through Moses. They had **arranged the camp as God commanded**—chapters 1 and 2. **Every workman was set to his proper place**, chapters 3 and 4, and two men didn’t make it, 3: 4, Nadab and Abihu, two sons of Aaron. They disobeyed God and offered up strange, unauthorized fire before the Lord. They died before the Lord. **Everyone confessed sin, was pardoned and freed from defilement**, chapter 5. **Everyone was to have purity in their marriage and be separated unto God, honestly keeping their vows to God**, chapter 6. God looked at the Israelites and He saw how strikingly beautiful they were before Him in their cleansed, ordered camp, consecrated to Him. There was no more to do. Now, prepared for whatever God desired, God commanded Aaron to bless the people individually and collectively, at the end of chapter 6.

To be blessed, we must be prepared. This blessing of Aaron first went out to God’s people, Israel, who would live to reject Jesus when He came incarnate to earth. The blessing first was a national blessing for Israel. Some say this blessing is no longer for Israel, and that God has moved the Aaronic blessing over to the church. Never tamper with the desired purposes of God. If God didn’t mean what He said to Israel through Aaron about Israel and her future in Canaan, how do we know that He means what He says when He speaks to us as His church? If Israel is to be robbed of her blessing and her glorious future, what security do we have that God’s blessing cannot be robbed from us? II Corinthians 1: 20 is true that “All the promises of God are yea, or yes and Amen in Christ Jesus.” This Aaronic blessing is also for us for we (Gentiles—we who are like wild olive shoots) have been

grafted into God's olive tree too. We may claim these blessings of God to Israel. What are these 5 blessings God waits to grant us, if we are obediently prepared?

HIS DIVINE PRESENCE. AS WE MOVE IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD, HE PROMISES TO BLESS HIS PEOPLE WITH THE BLESSINGS OF HIS TRIUNE, THREE-FOLD PRESENCE. (I.)

Notice three times in verses 24-26, we find “The Lord, the Lord, the Lord.” Then in verse 27, God says “So shall they put My name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.” Nothing is in the Word of God by accident. The name of the Lord, Jehovah—the self-existent One, This Name, Yahweh or Jehovah—and the Hebrew text does not insert the vowels for pronouncing this name. In English, this Name is “I AM THAT I AM.” That’s why today when we look at five aspects of the Lord’s blessings, it only scratches the surface of all God is, all He does, and all He promises yet to do. Knowing what we know from the New Testament about baptizing disciples of Jesus in the singular Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, it gives me pause as I read in Isaiah 6: 3, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.” Then in Revelation 4: 8, John on the isle of Patmos tells us, “And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within and day and night they never cease to say, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is, and is to come!”

Why isn't it holy twice or four or five times? Why are these triune expressions most frequent in the Word of God unless it is true that the Lord, who is one God forever and ever is also triune in His existence—as Father, Son and Holy Spirit? Here Moses tells us that Aaron and his sons, the priests are, v. 27 to put My singular Name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.” Let this early benediction and the sacredness of this Name—Yahweh, Jehovah or I am that I am, let this name “The Lord, the Lord, the Lord, three times confirm in us afresh the glory of the unsearchable mystery of the Trinity, the Three in One. What is this benediction of Aaron, but an early form of the apostle Paul’s benediction in II Corinthians 13: 14, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship or communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.” This blessing to God’s people, we use today, for it belongs to us as well as to Israel. Paul tells us that the church has been blessed in Christ with “every spiritual blessing” in the heavenly places. (Eph. 1: 3) We can claim this benediction. We share this blessing by sharing the Gospel, to one person at a time. Secondly,

HIS DIVINE POINTING OF THE WAY. AS WE MOVE IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD, HE PROMISES TO ILLUMINATE OUR WAY, SHOWING US HIS WILL. (II.)

Notice in verse 25, “The Lord make His face to

shine upon you.” What an illuminating method! The Lord is He who promises us in Psalm 119: 105, “Your Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.” Psalm 80: 3, 7, and 18 all tell us that this pointing of the way is most often the God pointing the way back to where we departed from obeying God’s voice. The Hebrew word for turn again or restore is **shuwb**. Three times in Psalm 80 we read, “Restore us, O God; let Your face shine, that we may be saved...Restore us, O God of hosts; let Your face shine, that we may be saved!... Restore us, O Lord God of hosts! Let Your face shine, that we may be saved.” Job in Job 10: 3 asked a rhetorical question, “Is it good unto Thee that Thou should shine upon the counsel of the wicked?” We know the answer is No, because Psalm 1: 1 tells us, “Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly! The psalmist in Psalm 31: 16, says, “Make Your face shine on Your servant; save me in Your steadfast love.” The psalmist in Psalm 67: 1-2 declares, “May God be gracious to us and bless us and make His face to shine upon us that Your way may be known on earth.” Psalm 119: 135 declares, “Make Your face shine upon Your servant, and teach me Your statutes.” Paul declared in II Corinthians 4: 3, 4 and 6, saying, “And even if our Gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case, the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ. For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” John wrote to us in I John 2: 8, “The darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.” God not only gives us His divine presence, but He promises to illuminate and point out His way. 3rdly,

HIS DIVINE PROTECTION. AS WE MOVE IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD, HE PROMISES TO KEEP AND PROTECT HIS PEOPLE. (III.)

Note in verse 24, “The Lord bless you and keep you.” The Hebrew word for keep is that wonderful word, **shamar**. Shamar means to tend, to watch over, to hedge about us to protect us and to keep us safe. God provides all good things to us His chosen ones, but as He does, He keeps, guards and protects us from the enemy who is ever after depriving us of God’s good gifts. It is God who keeps us from stumbling and falling and who presents us blameless before the presence of His glory with great joy—Jude 24. We are kept by the power of God. I Peter 1: 5 reads so comfortingly, that we are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” My mother, back in Kentucky in the early 1950’s when I was nine years old, knew the keeping power of God in her life, when Dad became deathly sick. She used I Peter 1: 5 to write a chorus I’ve never forgotten. “Kept by the power of God, kept by believing His Word. The trials of faith, more precious than gold, I’m kept by the power of God.” God keeps us in the face of mighty temptations, helping us not to yield and providing a way of escape.

(I Cor. 10:13) God keeps us from following our own evil hearts, for the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17: 9) God keeps us strong and pure in the-midst of a crooked and perverse generation, to help us shine to others as lights to the world. (Phil. 2: 15) God keeps us in the face of seduction from quitting, from stopping believing the truth. Beloved, don't quit before you finish the race. The Lord bless you and keep you. We are well kept whom God keeps, and no others are so kept on earth. There is no keeping like divine keeping. He keeps us as the apple or pupil of His eye. (Psalm 17: 8) God says in Zechariah 2: 5, "I will be to you a wall of fire about you or around you, declares the Lord, and I will be the glory in your midst." Speaking of the redemption of Israel and we can claim the promise in Isaiah 27: 3, God calls us His vineyard, saying, "I, the Lord, am its keeper; every moment I water it, lest anyone punish it. I keep it night and day. I have no wrath." The apex of God's keeping I find in Psalm 121 that I claim for you and me. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: He shall preserve thy soul. The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore." 4thly,

HIS DIVINE PARDON. AS WE MOVE IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD, CONFESSING SIN, HE PROMISES TO PARDON US. (IV.) Notice in Numbers 6: 25 and 26, "The Lord...be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you." The countenance of the Lord's face, His expression, represents how He looks at each of us, whether in sunshine and grace or in a cloud of grief or disapproval. The lifting up of God's countenance is the assurance that He has pardoned our sin. The face or the countenance of the Lord is a remarkable reflection of His pardon or His promise to punish the wicked. In Leviticus 17: 10 states, "If any one of the house of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people. Leviticus 20: 1-3 states, "The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Say to the people of Israel, "Any one of the people of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech (that is, to put their children to burn on a hot furnace as a sacrifice to Molech) shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones. I Myself will set My face against that man and will cut him off from among his people, because he has given one of his children to Molech, to make My sanctuary unclean and to profane My holy Name." But for those of us who have heard the joyful sound, "Jesus saves, Jesus saves," we can claim the blessing of God being gracious

to us, being faithful and just to forgive us our sins, to pardon our transgressions. Then with Ethan the Ezrahite in Psalm 89: 15, we can shout, “Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Your countenance. The joyful sound of the redeemed is that sound first shouted in heaven’s courts when one sinner is saved. Jesus said, in Luke 15: 7, “Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous persons who need no repentance.” This gracious blessing of God (Amazing Grace) is being saved by grace through faith. This lifting up of God’s countenance is then reflected in our faces. David who sinned in adultery, murder, and deceiving his nation as their king, experienced the countenance of God turning against him. He said in Psalm 32: 4, “For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me.” But Psalm 51 tells us his prayer of confession and Psalm 32: 1 states, “Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is pardoned.” Oh, beloved, what a blessing is God’s pardon. Fifthly,

HIS DIVINE PEACE. AS WE MOVE IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD, HE PROMISES TO BLESS US WITH HIS PERFECT PEACE. (V.) Notice

Numbers 6: 26 which declares, “The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.” I need to caution us all beloved. We cannot demand any of these blessings and promises of God. Even though we are called to move in obedience to God, we do not and we cannot initiate God’s blessings. All the initiation of blessing rests with God. We may seek and claim His blessing, move in obedience, but all we do is remove any delays in God’s blessing us. God is ever and always in charge of blessing in His time and in His way. Isaiah 26: 3 tells us, “You, (Lord) keep us in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You because He trusts in You.” I ask you, “Are you struggling to enjoy the blessing of God’s peace?” Where are you fixing your mind these days? Are you covetous, are you lustful, are you bitter, are you scheming against others, are you trying to get your own way, are you desiring control, are you into pornography, are you abusive to your children or to your parents, are you focusing on the future in fear, are you mad at God, are you mad at others, are you neglecting devotional time with the Lord, are you demanding your rights, are you cursing on the job, are you complaining a good bit of the time, are you accusing others, are you gossiping and slandering others, are you living to get rich, are you lukewarm in your love for God, are you losing your first love? Then remove the distance between you and God. Move into confession, receive His pardon, and you’ll receive His peace—that’s His promise. “Now the Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.” So today, as your pastor, I bless you with the name of the Lord. Be blessed today as you prepare your life and heart for the blessings God is waiting to pour out on you. Amen.