

How to Be Blessed Numbers 6:22-27

Slide 1

What does it mean to be blessed? Have you ever asked yourself that question?

- finances?
- health?
- a loving family?
- lots of friends?
- good looks?

And what happens if you don't have any of these things? Does it mean you're cursed? Have you ever just stopped for a moment and counted your blessings?

We just sang a hymn that encourages us to *"Count your blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done."*

This hymn was written to remind us of the many times God blessed us, that we didn't recognize.

In our hearts we want to feel like our life has been blessed, but instead, many of us go through life feeling like we've been cursed!

In this world, where we're surrounded by heartache, relational brokenness, the pain of loved ones suffering, and the daily trials of living where do we find true blessing?

Well, Numbers 6:22-27 gives us 3 foundational truths about blessing.

1. Where it comes from,
1. What it is, and...
3. How we can receive it...

Numbers 6:22-27, *“The LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: “The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.” “So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”*”

The first thing I want you to see from this passage is from where blessings come.

Slide 2

According to this passage, blessings come from only one source, the Lord! They don't come from how much money you have, or how big your house is, or if you have a luxury car.

Blessings come from the Lord! This is such a strong message, that the Lord reiterates it three times.”

1. The LORD bless you and keep you...
2. The LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you...
3. The LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.

That word in the Hebrew for *“LORD”* is the personal name for God, *“Jehovah.”* It's a personal blessing straight from God to His people.

And, just in case you missed it, the Lord sums it all up by saying to Moses in verse 27, *“I will bless them.”*

The reason that the Lord emphasizes so strongly from where “blessings” come is because we have a natural tendency to look for “blessings” in all the wrong places.

Jeremiah 2:13, *“My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.”*

Have you ever drunk water from a cistern? Cisterns basically catch rainwater and then the water kind of sits there and stagnates.

In the process, bugs, bacteria, and moss form. I don't know about you, but I'd rather drink out of a fresh spring.

God's saying that instead of seeking our blessings from Him, the spring of living water, we scratch around in stagnant, muddy pools of our own making.

For Israel, that meant looking to other countries for protection against their enemies or going to other gods instead of the true, living God. We do the same!

Some of us try to find blessings in our possessions, maybe a new computer, a new game system, a luxury car, or a new house.

We fool ourselves into thinking that if we just had that 'thing' or that 'person' or that 'job' we would be blessed.

Maybe you've looked for a blessing from your friends, or from your work associates. If they would admire what you've done, then you'd be blessed.

But they are just "cracked cisterns." Over time the pleasure or the happiness we thought we'd gained leaks out!

So, from where are you trying to seek your blessings? Is it the Lord or is it something else? Some of us are like "*Thomas the Train.*"

Ever read those stories? The ultimate praise you could receive from the other engines were the words, "*You are really a useful engine!*" Is that what your heart cries out to hear from others.

If so, you're looking in the wrong direction and you'll be tempted to compromise your character at some point to get it. Looking for blessings in the wrong place can set you up for a world of hurt.

Because TRUE blessings only come from one source: directly from the mouth of the Lord Himself.

William Law said, *"If you depend on God for only half of your happiness, you will love Him with only half of your heart."* We need to depend on God for ALL our happiness!

But I've gotten the cart before the horse. I need to back up a little and ask the question, *"What is blessing?"*

Slide 3

Maybe the reason we're looking in all the wrong places is that we really don't know for what we're looking!

See, if a 'blessing' isn't found in having more things and wonderful relationships or being judged useful, WHAT IS IT?

I've known people who've worked hard to have all or most of those things and they're STILL not experiencing 'blessings' in their life.

In fact, they're kind of sour and bitter about life. Instead of being happy, they're complaining and miserable all the time.

So, if you can have all the stuff the world tells you that will make you happy, and you're still not 'blessed' what is this blessing about which we're talking?

Well, we it's in the priestly benediction. It's very simple: A blessing is found in a face-to-face relationship with the Lord! A relationship where you experience not only His protection but His favor!

The benediction reads, *“The Lord BLESS you and KEEP you.”* He’s saying, *“May the Lord provide us with what we need and protect us from harm.”*

See, the Lord’s not stupid; He’s not negligent. He knows that we need food. He knows we need clothing and a house in which to live.

The Lord’s blessing includes all of those things in exactly the right amount and at exactly the right time.

There’s nothing wrong with wanting these things, the problem is that we rarely trust God to provide them. But *“The Lord’s Blessing”* is more than having food in our frigs and clothes on our backs.

It’s found in verses 25 and 26:

- *“The Lord make His face shine on you...”*
- *“The LORD turn his face toward you...”*

See, a true blessing, a lasting blessing, a blessing that won’t leak out is knowing God face-to-face!

It’s having an intimate relationship with Him! If you think about it, that’s how intimacy is expressed, face-to-face.

We have a whole social network today that’s supposed to meet that need in our lives, it’s called what? FACE-book!

It’s the idea of being one-on-one with people even though we may be separated by miles.

So ‘blessings’ come when God is face-to-face with us! Think about it. The whole idea of having God’s face shine when He looks at you is a wonderful image.

Have you ever seen a face shine? How about when your kids were little, and they were opening presents at Christmas or on birthdays?

Well, what if that face of joy and excitement was God's face looking straight at you?

Some of us can't even imagine that. We imagine that God's face is scowling at us! Like He's mad at us for some reason.

Or worse, we imagine that He's turned His back on us! Like our parents would do when they were irritated at us for something. We have a tendency to transfer those feelings onto God.

But, according to this verse, God hasn't turned His back on us. He isn't 'scowling' at us. He's looking straight at us and He's smiling!

His face is shining on us, with a big grin of delight and there's no greater feeling of blessing in life than knowing that we're bringing pleasure to our heavenly Father.

Our sins have been wiped away by His grace and love, so the only thing between us and Him is His look of approval and joy.

If you don't feel the pleasure of God as He looks at you this morning, it's because you may be hiding some sin, or it could be because you don't realize fully that He's forgiven you.

But some of you may not be experiencing God's blessing because you're not looking at His face, you're looking at His hand!

In other words, you're seeking what can He give you. If you do that, then you'll be disappointed, because, like I said, He may not give you what you think you need, when you think you need it.

BUT, if you seek His FACE, Who He is, and seek to have an intimate relationship with Him, you'll never be disappointed. So, you need to pray, *"Lord, I don't want your 'presents,' I want your presence."*

God wants you to feel His blessing today. He wants you to feel His pleasure, to actually FEEL that His face shines when He looks at you!

God wants our relationship with Him to be the kind of relationship where we not only know His PROTECTION, but where we know His PRESENCE.

And so, the Lord commanded the priests to remind His people EVERYDAY that, by His grace and mercy, they could know that He delighted in them.

We've talked about from where blessings come and what a blessing is, but how do we receive a blessing?

Slide 4

The answer to that question is: There's nothing you can humanly do to receive God's blessing because it's not a prize to be earned, it's a gift to be received! It's a product of His grace and mercy!

But that's not how people thought about the 'gods' in ancient times. They thought they had to twist the arm of a particular deity in order to pry a blessing out of their clenched fist.

They went around trying to manipulate their gods. People in Moses' day looked at dealing with the gods the way we look at dealing with the government.

Have you ever had the joy of dealing with the government? It's HARD to get a blessing from the government, isn't it? Why? Because they don't really care a whole lot about your problem!

What you need is someone on the inside who knows how to work the system! Unfortunately, most of us don't have that kind of money. That's the way some people in Biblical times thought about God.

They thought He didn't care about their situation, so they needed to go to a priest, because he had an inside track. He knew how to get in through the back door for their blessing.

Not much has changed in 3 thousand years. That's the same way most people think today! We think we need to steal a blessing from the Lord!

We're convinced that He doesn't know our name, and if He did, He wouldn't really like us.

Besides, His organization is too big to care about our little issue. Therefore, we try and trick Him into giving us a blessed life.

Maybe if we're good enough; maybe if we help our neighbor or attend church, we'll get on His good side. But that's not what's going on here.

Did you notice that Aaron didn't ask the Lord, "*Lord, how do I bless Your people?*" Moses doesn't fill out a request in triplicate. The fact is, it's God Who initiates the blessing!

It comes out of nowhere at the end of Numbers 6, totally unexpected! He just comes to Aaron and Moses and says, "*I want you to place my blessing on these people, and here's how you do it.*"

No magic wand, no elaborate religious sounding rituals, just "Here it is"! Totally out of the blue! They don't have to do anything!

In two previous chapters before this blessing, God gave them a "boat load" of laws for two kinds of people.

In Numbers 5 were laws that covered the test for a wife accused of unfaithfulness. Then in the first part of Numbers 6 were laws for the person who takes a Nazarite vow.

Two completely opposite situations, a faithless wife and a super devoted follower. Which one is more like Israel?

They were supposed to be like the Nazarite, totally devoted to the Lord, but in reality, they were more like the faithless wife following after false gods.

Slide 5

Conclusion

Let me make it more personal. Which one of these persons is more like you? I don't have to think very long. Before God found me, I was dead in my sins. I was more like the faithless wife!

After God saved me, my heart STILL wanders, and I complain and grumble. But listen, God's determined to bless me in spite of myself! The Lord wants His blessing to rest on me and on you!

Jesus came to seek and to save, not the Nazirites but faithless sinners like us! That's why Jesus came to the Samaritan woman at the well.

She was totally faithless. She had five husbands and was currently living with a man!

Yet, despite all that, Jesus told her He "*was looking for worshipers among people like her.*" God is able to bless faithless people like us because He sent his Son to die in our place.

So, it's not surprising that in Luke 3:22, at His baptism, the Father said to Him, "*You are my beloved Son; with you, I am well pleased!*"

Later on, at the Mount of Transfiguration, where He revealed Himself with the glory of God Himself, the disciples heard the Father say again, *“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”*

His Father’s face was always turned towards Him in blessing. Yet, one week later, when He was hanging on the cross, everything changed.

The Bible tells us that He felt the Father’s face turn away from Him, to the point that He cried out, *“My God, my God... why have you forsaken me?”*

For the first time in eternity, His Father wasn’t pleased with Him. He didn’t respond with blessing. Even the sun turned away and became dark. The very universe couldn’t bear to look at Him.

What happened? What did Jesus do that was so bad that He lost God’s blessing? Nothing! It’s what WE did! The Bible says that *“He was bruised for OUR sin.”*

He was abandoned for OUR unfaithfulness, not His own! He was cursed so we could be blessed! Because of what He did in my place, my sin and unfaithfulness has been totally paid.

Since Jesus was raised from the dead, He’s returned to the place of honor and blessing that He deserves, but He’s also made it possible for us to experience the Father’s blessing as well!

As a Christian, God’s face is turned towards us and that’s all that matters. Having the best car or the biggest house, or the respect of others doesn’t matter because we have God’s favor and blessing!

Maybe you’ve never experienced this blessing. But you can, if you want! All you have to do is confess the sin that’s keeping you separated from Him.

His death has paid for it, so you're free to be right with God. It's the only way to true blessings in your life.

If you're already a follower of Christ this morning, then maybe you've forgotten how much God loves you and wants to bless you. When was the last time you took time to look at Him in the face?

We forget the blessings that God has given us. That's why Aaron was told to repeat this blessing to the Israelites.

As you turn your face towards the face of God this morning. What do you see? Anger? Disgust? Disappointment? Or do you see the face of your Heavenly Father smiling at you?