**GIVING THE BLESSING**

My childhood friend at church in Memphis, Tennessee was Steve Walker. He moved away when I was in grade school and I lost track of him until one day my daughter Meredith called and said she was dating his son Joel. Suddenly Steve was to become my daughter’s father-in-law. At their wedding he made the suggestion that the two dads might possibly say “*The Blessing*” over our children as they began their life together. What he meant by that was the ancient Aaronic blessing pronounced upon Israel in Numbers 6:24-26. I loved the idea. After the wedding was finished we gathered around our son and daughter and offered them this beautiful blessing upon their marriage. I believe it is fitting and proper, as God’s priests today, to give this wonderful blessing to each other still. Not in a casual way, but in a ceremonial structure that gives it meaning. With that said, may I take this solemn moment to pronounce a blessing upon you? Let’s read both he context and the actual blessing:

*22 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
23 “Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, ‘This is the way you shall bless the children of
 Israel. Say to them:
24 “The LORD bless you and keep you;
25 The LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you;
26 The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.” ’
27 “So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them.”*

“*The Lord*… *The Lord*… *The Lord*.” Jehovah in trinity. Today we could use 2 Cor. 13:14 in a similar way*: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.”* The Father, Son, and Spirit are all intimately involved in our life and salvation. They stand ready and willing to truly bless us and save us from our sins. I’m comforted beyond description to know that God is “*the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation”* (2 Cor. 1:3-4); that Jesus is “*indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world*” (Acts 4:42); and that I “*have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise*” (Eph. 1:3). What a blessing!

Six special gifts are promised to us from this holy Triune God. Believe them.

**THE LORD BLESS YOU***. “Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said to the reapers, “The LORD be with you!” And they answered him, “The LORD bless you!”* (Ruth 2:4).
*“When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, “Bless me—me also, O my father!” But he said, “Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing.”* (Gen. 27:34-35).

In these two stories we see the impact of “blessing” upon the people of Israel. To receive a “favor” or “gift” from God is the ultimate joy of man. So think of it this way, Eph. 1:3 says God has “*blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ*.” That’s all I want. That’s all I need. May you receive every single one of those divine gifts.

**THE LORD KEEP YOU**. Jesus prayed these words upon His apostles. *Holy Father,* ***keep*** *through Your name those whom You have given Me… While I was with them in the world, I* ***kept*** *them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have* ***kept****; … I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should* ***keep*** *them from the evil one.”* (John 17:11-15). That same God now holds our inheritance as a reservation in heaven, “***kept*** *by the power of God*” (I Pet. 1:3-5). Also think on this blessing: *24 Now to Him who is able to* ***keep*** *you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24).*

**THE LORD MAKE HIS FACE TO SHINE UPON YOU**. God’s face shone upon Moses (Exo. 34:29) and upon Stephen (Acts 6:15). It shone also upon Jesus on that mountain (Matt. 17:2). God told them in that special way, “*in whom I am well pleased*” (Matt. 17:5). Just as they saw the smile of God, so we do as well. I love this prospect from Paul as to how God sees us: *“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory”* (2 Cor 3:18). May God’s sunshine ever be upon your face to give your life warmth and deep meaning.

**THE LORD BE GRACIOUS**. Grace. Unmerited favor. We deserve nothing, but God gives us everything! How good is the God we adore. I pray, as did Peter, that “*you have tasted that the Lord is* ***gracious***” (I Pet. 1:3). I pray, as did Paul, that *“God is able to make all* ***grace*** *abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work” (2 Cor. 9:8).*

**THE LORD LIFT UP HIS COUNTENANCE**. When Cain’s “countenance” fell toward his brother Abel, it led to disaster. But when God’s “countenance” is lifted up toward His children, you can sense His broad smile and happy disposition toward us. Nothing pleased me more in childhood than the smile of my dad and mom, to know they were proud of me. That feeling is magnified a thousand-fold when I think of God’s smile. In my favorite movie, *Chariots of Fire*, Eric Liddell tells his sister: “In the dust of defeat as well as the laurels of victory there is a glory to be found if one has done his best. God made me fast. And when I run, I feel His pleasure.” Oh to feel the pleasure of God as we live our life.

**THE LORD GIVE YOU PEACE**. Shalom. Peace. God’s peace. “*The peace of God that surpasses understanding*” (Phil. 4:7). Picture Jesus saying these words to you: *Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*” (John 14:27). I could live for a month on that promise. Correction. I could live for a lifetime, yea, for an eternity, upon that promise.

Aaron’s six-fold blessing has blessed my daughter and son-in-law since May 20, 2011. God just blessed them with their second daughter. Thank you Steve for thinking to pass this magnificent oath upon our loved ones. Now may each of you receive it as well.

Until tomorrow… The Lord bless you, keep you, make His face shine upon you, be gracious, lift up His countenance, and give you peace.

I love you. Rick