

May the Lord Bless and Keep You

I have a friend who likes to respond to a friendly question about how he is doing with the witty truism, “I’m too blessed to be stressed!” Sometimes he follows this spiritual affirmation with, “I’m too anointed to be disappointed!”

In Numbers 6:24, Moses’ brother Aaron was given a priestly blessing to speak over his sons and the assembled priests of the Lord. In turn, they were to repeat this prayer or benediction (“good word”) over God’s people.

The mere mention of the beginning of this prayer, “The Lord bless you and keep you,” immediately evokes warm memories for many. It is a prayer that asks not for material riches nor physical things—but for spiritual blessings.

There is nothing wrong with enjoying the practical blessings of the Lord. We should receive them with joy and gratitude! But God wanted the Israelites (and us) to understand His priorities—what matters most to the heart of God.

The prescribed blessing begins as a petition, moves to a plea for protection, then underscores God’s presence and ends by seeking a pardon.

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, This is how you will bless the children of Israel, saying to them, “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift His countenance upon you, and give you peace.” They will put My name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them. (Numbers 6:22-27)

Petition: God’s Blessing and Favor

As we would petition for God's blessing and favor to be upon us, we must focus on Whom we are asking. We are not asking a human parent nor a politician; not our employer nor a human agency. God may use any or none of these to process the blessing, but it is the Lord God Almighty, our Creator and sustainer to Whom we pray. He is the giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:7).

Jesus taught that our heavenly Father "knows what you need before you ask" (Matt. 6:8). Besides the basics—food, shelter, clothing, family, love, healthy bodies and meaningful work—He knows what we truly need and what may be unnecessary things that we may want because we think they'll make us happy.

Protection: God's Keeping-Power

Linked to God's provided blessings are His protection and keeping-power. The full petition is, "The Lord bless you and keep you ..." He is being asked to keep or guard His people from the enemy, who wants to steal, kill and destroy these blessings from God.

Psalm 121 proclaims the Lord as Israel's keeper, even as He is ours: "Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper ... the Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore."

In our Lord's model prayer, He taught His disciples to seek deliverance from evil or the evil one (Matt. 6:13). Our firm foundation is found in our heavenly Father, Who knows how to protect all those who are His! But He also calls for those who petition His keeping power to "depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19) and "be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2).

Presence: Seek His Face to Shine Upon Us

Next, we see a request for not just God's protection but His presence: "The Lord make his face to shine upon you," and then the parallel phrase in verse 26, "The Lord lift up his countenance upon you."

We spend much of our lives trying to see the approval of others by gazing at their faces. We want to see if we have their approval. Do they look directly at us or do they avoid locking eyes with us? Their face or countenance tells so much.

Proverbs 16:15 (ESV) says, "In the light of a king's face there is life, and his favor is like the clouds that bring the spring rain." The "face of God" means the presence of God. When the Lord makes His face to "shine upon" His people, He takes pleasure in them.

Pardon: His Grace to Forgive Us

Having petitioned for the protection and the presence of God, and then for the pleasure of God to be shown by His face shining upon us, the priestly prayer turns to the needed pardon of God. Numbers 6:26 calls for Him to show us the gracious favor of His forgiveness of our sins, which have been exposed in the bright light of His countenance: "... the Lord lift His countenance upon you, and give you peace."

Paul affirmed to the Romans that "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). That "peace with God" brings the peace of God into all of life's experiences and relationships. We sense that Father God is smiling on us, as a father smiles upon his child!

If you have the gracious smile of God and His favor and forgiveness, you can survive the frowns or the rejection of any human figure. {eoa}

Gary Curtis served in full-time ministry for 50 years, the last 27 years of which he was part of the pastoral staff of *The Church on The Way*, the Van Nuys' California Foursquare

church. Now retired, Gary continues to write a weekly blog at and frequent articles for digital and print platforms.

Read articles like this one and other Spirit-led content in our new platform, CHARISMA PLUS.