

Prayer Emphasis Pt. 1 (Aaronic Blessing)

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, January 5, 2020

Main Theme – Beginning 2020 with a Series on Prayer – Part 1 Highlights the “Aaronic Blessing”

WORSHIP & PRAYER COMMUNION

I want to call forth the USHERS to distribute the emblems of Communion.

- The WAFER symbolizes/commemorates the Body of Christ – Broken for you
- The JUICE symbolizes/commemorates the Blood of Christ – Shed for your sin

NOTE – The Lord’s Supper provides an ongoing opportunity for necessary REFLECTION:

1) It Affords Us the Opportunity to Look UPWARDLY...

- To consider the love of God the Father in sending forth His Son (cf. John 3:16)
- To consider the willing obedience of Jesus in coming to serve and to give His life

Romans 5:8 (NIV)

8 ... God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

John 10:17–18a

17 The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.

2) It Affords Us the Opportunity to Look INWARDLY...

- To consider the degree to which we have cast ourselves upon the grace of God
- To consider the degree to which we have placed our trust in the work of Christ
- To consider what manner of people we ought to be in light of His grt. sacrifice

Philippians 1:27b

27 ... Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

3) It Affords Us the Opportunity to Look OUTWARDLY

- To consider how many reject the love of God and spurn His gracious offer of et. life
- To consider how many are trusting in something other than Christ to bring salvation
- To consider how many are running headlong into a Christ-less eternity (tragic reality)
- To consider the role that we must play to win people to Christ while there is yet time

Matthew 9:35–37

35 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

1 Corinthians 11:23–26

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Special Events**

- Men's Ministry – Saturday, January 11, from 9–10:30am
- Women's Ministry – Tuesday, January 14, from 6:30–8pm
- Week of Prayer-Fasting – January 13–17 (Signups to Come)

- **Annual Business Meeting**

The 2019 Annual Business Meeting will take place on Sunday, January 19, 2020 following the Sunday Service. A slate of candidates qualified to stand for election (for the office of Deacon) has been posted in the Fellowship Hall. If your name appears on this list, prayerfully notify the Pastor of your intentions ASAP. Also, TODAY is the deadline for the submission of Ministry Leader Reports.

MORNING OFFERING

At this time, I want to call forth our ushers.

-Thank you for your faithfulness in giving to the Lord/His work

-Your giving fuels the work of Christ in and through this church

May the Lord bless you as you give! May you experience His faithfulness in kind!

- **CHILDREN DISMISSED FOR CHILDREN'S CHURCH**

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INTRODUCTIONS

As always it is wonderful to see you. I look forward to these moments of corporate worship and instruction. I pray that you are ready to receive what the Lord has for you as we enter into a New Year! Please have your Bible at the ready and be prepared to take some notes.

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 1

As we enter into 2020, I want to spend some time on the topic of PRAYER...

NOTE – Prayer is a topic we can never HEAR enough of or EXHAUST through study. Prayer is also a discipline we cannot PRACTICE enough or PERFECT entirely. I have yet to meet the Christian who confesses, “Pastor—I pray too much and too effectively!” These truths—coupled with the fact that the Week of Prayer & Fasting 2020 is mere days away—makes this a PERFECT time to talk about prayer.

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 2

Allow me to share a few QUOTATIONS on prayer that both challenge and inspire me:

QUOTE 1 – “One of the great uses of Twitter and Facebook will be to prove at the last day that prayerlessness was not from lack of time” –John Piper

-This quotation speaks to the necessity of making TIME for prayer. Notice that Jesus introduced His teaching on HOW to pray (cf. Matt. 6:5) with “WHEN” you pray instead of/versus “IF” you pray. This is worthy of note!

QUOTE 2 – “The greatest tragedy of life is not unanswered pray, but unoffered prayer” –F. B. Meyer

-This quotation touches upon a spiritual reality addressed in the Book of JAMES. Consider...

James 4:1–3 (Emphasis Mine)

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. **You do not have because you do not ask God.** 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

QUOTE 3 – “Prayer is as mighty as God, because He has committed Himself to answer it” –L. Ravenhill

-There is a power to prayer that is INSCRUTABLE—being rooted in the capacity of God Himself.

Luke 1:37

. . . nothing will be impossible with God.

KEY – This is all rooted in the UNCHANGING nature of God (cf. Mal. 3:6)...

QUOTE 4 – “God has not changed; and His ear is just as quick to hear the voice of real prayer, and His hand is just as long and strong to save as it ever was!” R. A. Torrey.

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 3

Of course, as E. M. Bounds notes, “Prayer is NOT learned in the classroom, but in the closet.” i.e., The BEST way to learn to pray is to practice, practice, practice the discipline of prayer! However, there is still a place for biblical instruction/teaching regarding prayer (which is what I want to offer in this opening series of 2020)!

FYI – There are many prayers recorded throughout the pages of the Bible—in both the Old and New Testaments. EACH offers unique spiritual and practical insight regarding prayer and its practice in the life of the believer. This morning I want to examine a prayer that has become quite important to me the last year-plus—a prayer recorded in the Book of Numbers (ch. 6).

CONTEXT – As you turn to Numbers 6, allow me to give you a bit of historical CONTEXT for this passage. As the children of Israel are journeying from Egypt to the Promised Land in the days of Moses, the Lord issues the following command to and through Moses...

Numbers 6:22–27 (NIV)

22 The LORD said to Moses, 23 “Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them:

24 “““The LORD bless you
and keep you;

25 the LORD make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;

26 the LORD turn his face toward you
and give you peace.””

27 “So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 4

NOTE – Let me note that this prayerful appeal to God—phrased in the form of a blessing—was given to a specific people at a specific point in history (i.e., to Moses and the children of Israel as they journeyed to the land of Canaan). However, this does NOT mean that this blessing is irrelevant in 2020, etc.! Consider the remarks of one theologian...

QUOTE – “Because of the simple elegance and profound sentiments expressed in this blessing, it has been used throughout the centuries long after the sacrifices of the Aaronic priesthood ended.” i.e., It has been used throughout time and space through the millennia as a means to call upon the Lord on the behalf of others!

KEY – This prayerful appeal found in Numbers 6 is both TIMELESS and TIMELY! Thus, I want to spend some time dissecting it—that it might be both understood and utilized by those in the sound of my voice today. LET’S DELVE IN...

EMPHASIS ON “LORD” PT. 1

FYI – Any analysis of this prayer demonstrates the EMPHASIS it places upon the Lord.

1) Firstly, this Prayer Finds its Origin/Source in the Lord

i.e., It was the Lord who instructed Aaron/priests to speak forth this blessing in the first place...

Numbers 6:22–23

22 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 23 “Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them,

2) Secondly, Note How Often the Term “LORD’ appears In the Text or is Referenced

Numbers 6:22–27 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

22 The **LORD** said to Moses, 23 “Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them:

24 “““The **LORD** bless you
and keep you;

25 the **LORD** make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;

26 the **LORD** turn his face toward you
and give you peace.””

27 “So they will put my **name** on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”

EMPHASIS ON “LORD” PT. 2

KEY – We have to spend some time on this term LORD...

Q. Do you see how it is presented in the text? i.e., All capital letters (LORD).

FYI 1 – Whenever you see this term presented in this fashion in the pages of the Old Testament, it is always a translation of a very sacred, special Hebrew NAME for God: i.e., Yahweh (or less accurately—Jehovah).

FYI 2 – This is the Name by which God revealed Himself to the Patriarchs and ultimately to Moses (cf. Exod. 3:14–15). The word herein “sounds like and may be related to the Hebrew” word for “I Am” (i.e., I Am the One Who Is and Who Will Be). This is a Name RICH in both history and mystery (beyond our time this AM), but its MEANING is connected with the following two elements:

1) “I Am” Is a Statement of God’s Existence & Self-Sufficiency

Whatever can be said of God—He IS. i.e., He exists and has LIFE in Himself. He depends upon nothing and no one to exist (v. the whole of creation which ultimately derives life from Him). He is therefore transcendent over all things—ruling and reigning (unaffected and unhindered) far above all authorities, powers and forces.

2) “I Am” is a Statement of God’s Abiding Presence

i.e., “I Am With You” – God is NOT a distant, removed or aloof Deity. Rather, He is near, intimate with and close to those who trust in Him. This Name—Yahweh—is often connected to the abiding NEARNESS of God in Scripture.

KEY – Thus, this blessing is an appeal to the God who both exists above all things & who is near.

Q. In light of these truths, what appeal does this blessing make to such a great God?

PT. 1 – V. 24a

Let's begin to answer this question by looking at verse 24a:

Numbers 6:24a

24 ""The LORD bless you . . .

S & S – This prayer calls upon the Lord to release/unleash His blessing (i.e., favor) on His people.

NOTE – I find this text rather interesting. i.e., God commanded the offering of a prayer that was designed to unlock His favor in the lives of His people (ind. & coll.). **Q.** What does this reveal about God? **A.** It reveals His GENEROUS nature and His KINDNESS...

...i.e., He WANTS/DESIRES to bless His people!

Q. Do you not realize that God is fundamentally a God of outpoured blessing?

Q. What need(s) do you really have that He has not/will not perfectly supply?

2 Peter 1:3

3 His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life...

Psalms 23

1 The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,

3 he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.

4 Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,

I will fear no evil,

for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

6 Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord
forever.

PT. 2 – V. 24b

Moving along—I would posit that this prayer emphasizes a specific blessing (v. 24b)...

Numbers 6:24 (Emphasis Mine)

24 ""The LORD bless you
and **keep you**...

NOTE 1 – The blessing sought is the specifically the PROTECTION and PRESERVATION of those who belong to Him. These words carry the idea of protection (i.e., a sense of guarding and watching over). For Israel this would have immediate application, as they were literally surrounded by enemies in their wilderness trek.

NOTE 2 – Yet this appeal for preservation and protection has application in ALL generations. Scripture is clear that we will always have enemies and forces that oppose us in this life (i.e., earthly and spiritual forces alike cf. John 15:20; Eph. 6:1–18). Thus, this prayer for the Lord to either **a)** deliver us FROM such enemies or **b)** deliver us THROUGH their opposition will always be applicable to the believer.

NOTE 3 – i.e., We will ALWAYS need His keeping power!

KEY 1 – We find HOPE in the protection afforded us by the Lord! Consider the remarks of Paul...

2 Timothy 4:18

18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

KEY 2 – This hope is anchored in something BEYOND the influence of any force or power! Note:

Romans 8:35, 37–39

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? . . . 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

PT. 3 – V. 25

Q. What else does this prayerful appeal ask of the Lord?

Numbers 6:25

25 the LORD make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;

NOTE 1 – In many regards v. 25 mirrors v. elements of 24 in that they both call upon the Lord to show His divine favor and grace. The themes of God’s favor and graciousness PERMEATE much of this priestly blessing (indicating our need for them)!

NOTE 2 – I love the phrasing of verse 25a: “the LORD make his face shine on you . . .” God’s face shining on His people indicates a position of **a) FAVOR** (it would not be “shining” if the people were liable to judgment” and **b) INTIMACY** (i.e., a face-to-face connection).

ILL – When a person sees someone that they favor/love, it is natural for their faces to “light” up. (My mother’s face when she saw me at the airport v. the many other “faces” and their duller expressions).

Q. Do you not recognize that God’s face “lights up” when He looks upon you (amazing truth)!

Q. Do you not recognize that we are objects of His affection (Eph. 2) – recipients of His grace!

Psalms 103:1–5, 8–12

1 Praise the Lord, my soul;
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
2 Praise the Lord, my soul,
and forget not all his benefits [i.e., blessings that flow graciously from His favor]—
3 who forgives all your sins
and heals all your diseases,
4 who redeems your life from the pit
and crowns you with love and compassion,
5 who satisfies your desires with good things
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.
8 The Lord is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.
9 He will not always accuse,
nor will he harbor his anger forever;
10 he does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.
11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;
12 as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

PT. 4 – V. 26

Let's consider verse 26 as we move along in the text:

Numbers 6:26

26 the LORD turn his face toward you
and give you peace.”

NOTE 1 – Consider once again the emphasis that this prayer places upon the FACE of the Lord. Verse 25 connects the shining of God's face with His gracious FAVOR. Verse 26 connects His face with PEACE.

NOTE 2 – The appeal for God to “turn his face toward” a person is an appeal for God to give someone His “undivided attention.” What a NOVEL concept in some ways!

FYI 1 – The NATIONS surrounding Israel believed in gods who could be distracted by other things (much like human beings) and had to be summoned, awakened or moved to action (cf. 1 Kings 18:27–28). Many pagan rituals were designed to attract the attention of the gods and put them in a proper mood to act on the behalf of the worshipper.

FYI 2 – This was all FOREIGN to the Israelite religion. When the people were faithful to God, His face was fixed upon them (resulting in peace). Tragically, He would turn His face in seasons of rebellion—resulting in terrible judgment!

FYI 3 – Peace (“SHALOM”) is more than the absence of warfare or conflict. It speaks to a sense of rest, repose and sense of harmony (lit. a wholeness and sense of completeness). The NT believer has been granted peace with God through Christ (cf. Rom. 5:1). We can now access the peace of God by trusting in Him (cf. John 14:27) and seeking Him in prayer...

Philippians 4:6–7

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Q. Could it be that all of the anxiety in our culture is connected to a lack of faith and prayer?

Q. Could it be that all of the anxiety in our lives is connected to His face being turned from us?

KEY – Knowing that God's face is “turned toward me” (He sees/knows) gives me peace!

PT. 5 – A BRIEF NOTE

Clearly the themes of GRACE and PEACE permeate this prayer.

FYI – I find something interesting: EVERY letter of Paul opens with an appeal for grace & peace!

- Romans 1:7
- 1 Cor. 1:3
- 2 Cor. 1:2
- Gal. 1:3
- Eph. 1:2
- Phil. 1:2
- Col. 1:2
- 1 Thess. 1:1
- 2 Thess. 1:2
- 1 Tim. 1:2
- 2 Tim. 1:2
- Phile. 1:3

KEY – EVERY Epistle opens with a call to God for “grace and peace”

Q. Where do you think Paul learned this? I am willing to bet Numbers 6 INFORMED him!

KEY – Maybe the grace and the peace of God is what we need most in this life! If those things are in place and in operation, maybe everything else will naturally fall into place? This precept is worthy of prayerful consideration!

PT. 6 – V. 27

There is ONE MORE item I want to address (v. 27)...

Numbers 6:27

27 “So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”

NOTE – We put our name on things that BELONG to us and that we LOVE. If you have seen Toy Story, you know that Andy puts his name on his beloved toy, Woody! It would seem that this appeal serves as a means by which God puts His Name on that which belongs to and is loved by Him! What beautiful imagery!

Q. Isn't it amazing that God wants to put His Name on you! Yes...you!

CONCLUSIONS

In the last 1–2 years I have come to LOVE this prayer and UTILIZE it often in my times with God:

- 1) I Love its SIMPLICITY**
- 2) I Love that it's easily MEMORABLE**
- 3) I Love that its PROFOUND and IMPACTING**

FYI – This is a blessing I have spoken over the CHILDREN in my care every night before they go to bed. This is a blessing I have spoken over my WIFE when she comes to my mind. This is a prayer I have prayed over my CHURCH family and friends for some time now.

KEY – This is a blessing I want to speak over you TODAY as we prepare to close:

Numbers 6:24–26

24 ““The LORD bless you
and keep you;
25 the LORD make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
26 the LORD turn his face toward you
and give you peace.””

KEY – Having come to understand the sentiments behind this prayer—UTILIZE it yourself!