

An Easter Blessing Hebrews 13:20-21

Intro

Each week at the conclusion of the service I end with a reminder that we gather to be strengthened by the grace of Christ and that we are sent from this place into the world as his ambassadors and then I pray a benediction - a biblical prayer of blessing over you.

This practice of praying and proclaiming biblical benedictions is present throughout church history but it isn't just a nice idea that pastors came up with to encourage the church - proclaiming blessing over God's people was instituted by God himself;

[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, [24] The LORD bless you and keep you; [25] the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; [26] the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. [27] "So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them."(Numbers 6:22-27)

Beginning with this first benediction and continuing on throughout the many benedictions in Scripture we pray and proclaim receive these as gifts from our good and gracious God.

The idea of invoking God's blessing, presence, and smile on his people is not a creation of the people or a development of the priests but a gracious provision by God himself. (Ronald B. Allen in *Expositor's Bible Commentary: Numbers*, p. 755)

Benediction is not superstitious declarations that we dream up, it is praying for the people of God in assurance that it is according to his will and so with the faith filled expectation that he will act according to his Word. that's why we use biblical blessings.

Example of errant benediction that I experienced - "unlimited money, complete health, etc."

Nice - I'll take it

God's blessings can include financial provision, healing, health - his blessings though are present in the lean years, sickness and suffering and there are blessings that I can say with certainty are in the possession of every Christian here this morning whatever your financial or physical condition - blessings that transcend any ordinary category, blessings that transcend the temporal needs that have in this life. The blessings that come to us in the Gospel are exactly what we all need, and for those that have trusted in Jesus Christ, they are exactly what we possess.

This easter morning, we will look at a biblical benediction and examine the blessings described and is pronounced over us in this blessed benediction. It is a blessing rooted in the cross and

resurrection of Jesus Christ. Two verses that hold a world of glory and blessing within - a prayer that invokes God's blessing, presence, and smile upon us - a gracious provision from God himself

[20] Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, [21] equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Hebrews 13:20-21)

Let's stare straight into the eyes of this benediction and revel in the blessings we have in Jesus Christ on this Easter morning:

I. Receive the Blessing

A. Verse 20 our attention is directed to the God of Peace - the one who brings peace into disorder and chaos

1. Oh, how we need blessing from the God of peace because apart from divine grace we all labor under the opposite of blessing we live under a curse - apart from divine grace - as sinners in a fallen world - we live our lives under the curse of sin and death
 - a) In The Fall of our first parents Adam and Eve as they disobeyed God - all of creation under the curse of God.

(1) We experience this every day - sickness, toil, death

2. But - because God is full of mercy and grace - even in the moment of his declaration and administration of the curse in Gen. 3 - we find him also declaring that grace is coming and that the offspring of the woman would crush the head of the serpent in Gen. 3:15 and even provided and blessing the objects of his curse

And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. (Genesis 3:21) IN THEIR SHAME

3. We have not done anything to deserve a reversal of the curse - NO our continual breaking of God's law - and resistance to his reign - simply adds to our being deserving of being cursed.
 - a) In ourselves - in a million different ways - small and large - our lives reflect enmity against God - we insist on going our own way and rejecting his right to govern our lives.
 - b) In ourselves we are hedonistic, selfish, jealous, covetous, self-indulgent, self-important
4. Because we have broken God's commands and resisted his rule, we cement our place as those cursed and facing God's righteous judgment - indeed his righteous wrath
 - a) How amazing it is that in Hebrews 13:20 we find "the God of *peace*"! How can it be that the offended King with whom our souls are at war can now come to us not as the God of wrath but as the God of peace?

B. In light of our many sins, the right question to ask is not why am I not more blessed by God - the right question to ask is how can we expect any blessing at all from God this morning?

1. The storyline of Scripture is that of God moving throughout history to show mercy and grace to those who deserve his wrath - God promised Abraham in Genesis 12 (only 9 chapters after the curse) that in him all the families of the earth would be blessed - over thousands of years he has kept his promise - culminating in the chosen one that we celebrate this Lord's Day - the Son of God coming in blessing and humility and kindness and grace

[13] Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—[14] so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith. (Galatians 3:13-14)

2. Upon that cursed tree we find God undoing our curse - In Christ's cross we find that God has acted to remove enmity, he has shown unspeakably great love to his enemies - God has made a way for undeserving sinners like you and me to come out of the curse of sin and death and to have peace with him.
3. Deserving only blessing as the sinless Son of God - he became a curse - he took our death and judgment upon himself
4. He exhausted the curse - all that's left is blessing for his people
 - a) Christ was cursed willingly - in our place - as our substitute - the Father and the Son working together in love - so that we could have the unshakable blessing of peace with God - transferred out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ

C. Maybe you made your way here and you aren't experiencing peace.

1. Know this my friend - peace is yours because your Father is the God of peace - by faith receive into your soul afresh this blessing of peace from God - the peace and wholeness of knowing that your sins are forgiven and your future is blessing.
 - a) In this world full of conflict, division, suffering - we remember that our peace as Christians transcends anything we see with our eyes - God - the ultimate reality in the universe - is our God of peace. Rest in him.

D. There is more - our attention is directed to the promise of God

1. Our God of peace brought Jesus up from the dead - Easter!
 - a) His resurrection is the rock-solid confirmation that Christ has conquered sin, Satan, and the grave.
2. “By the blood of the eternal covenant.”
 - a) In Christ's death he was ratifying - he was confirming a covenant with everyone who will trust in him.

[10] For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed," says the LORD, who has compassion on you. (Isaiah 54:10)

Illustration: Christ has stamped his promise to forgive us and care for us by his death - document signed in his own blood.

3. We are reminded of his personal care and protection“ the great shepherd of the sheep.”

a) He doesn't simply save us and then stand by watching us - PERSONAL - he has taken us into his care - Our Shepherd is committed - provides grace for us now and he will lead us to our eternal home.

[1] The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

[2] He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

[3] He restores my soul.

**He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.**

**[4] Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
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 goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
forever. (Psalm 23)**

b) He has promised to never leave us or forsake us

A shepherd is one who is ready to give his life for the sheep; he puts up with their foolishness and never stops loving them. That is what Jesus does for us. (William Barclay in *The Letter to the Hebrews*, p. 237)

E. Appeal to unbelievers

1. Unless you repent and trust in the curse-bearing Savior you will bear the full weight of the curse

a) This morning you can come out from under the curse and into everlasting blessing. On this resurrection Sunday- Come awake, come awake and into Christ

- b) Receive the blessing of the crucified and risen Christ! Repent and believe!
- 2. Gospel blessing must be proclaimed over us and to ourselves because we so easily forget - prone to wander - in that moment the problem is not that we know the depths of blessing in the gospel too well - it is that we don't really know them at all.
 - a) There is an everlasting spring of blessing for us in Christ Jesus. Receive.

F. To all the Beloved - receive and revel in the reality of God's promises - this blessing of his shepherding care - into your mind and soul - he has not abandoned you and never will - he has promised by his own blood and ratified his promise in his resurrection.

- 1. AREN'T YOU GLAD He puts up with our foolishness and never stops loving us?

G. There is more blessing - there is Power

- 1. The author of Hebrews prays that this gracious God of peace - who has committed himself to the good of his people in the cross of his Son - would equip - would give ability - power to do his will.
- 2. He does this by "working in us that which is pleasing in his sight." (v. 21)
- 3. The blessing is at work in us - the Holy Spirit (Galatians 3:14)
 - a) We aren't left to fend for ourselves - we have a shepherd over us and the Spirit within us to work in us that which is pleasing in his sight
 - b) We aren't hopeless in besetting sin - he will equip and work in us
- 4. O THE BLESSINGS OF THE GOSPEL WE REMEMBER THIS EASTER DAY Receive the reality of God's PEACE, PROMISE, POWER. It is ALL yours in Christ.

II. Reveal the blessing

A. As we are filled anew with thanksgiving and hope because of the Gospel this Easter Sunday - TO BLESSED TO BE STRESSED

B. We must remember that our right response to all this blessing is to share this blessing with those around us.

[1] May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, Selah [2] that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations. (Psalm 67:1-2)

C. The blessings we have received in Christ - the God has been gracious to us and has made his face to shine upon us in love through the Gospel in Christ

- 1. EQUIPS US - WORKING IN US THAT WHICH IS PLEASING IN HIS SIGHT

D. IT IS NOT TO SIMPLY LAND AND END UPON US - we have been blessed in order to bless - IT IS ALWAYS INTENDED BY GOD TO ENGAGE US IN THE GLORIOUS CAUSE OF MAKING GOD KNOW ON EARTH - MAKING HIS SAVING POWER KNOWN AMONG THE NATIONS

[8] To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, [9] and to bring to light for everyone what is the

plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, [10] so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. [11] This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, (Ephesians 3:9-11)

E. The world needs us to proclaim the blessing of the gospel - men and women young and old saturated with the Gospel and smitten by the glory and beauty of the risen Christ to declare GOOD NEWS - there is no plan B REVEALING GOOD NEWS! CAN'T HAVE BETTER NEWS THAN THAT!

Illustration : EXAMPLES OF THE FALL ALL AROUND US - below 50% church attendance - suicide, addiction - and this is all besides the most terrifying reality of a world running towards hell - eternally experiencing the righteous wrath of God.

F. Oh, how this world needs the blessing of the Gospel - how this world needs the revelation of the glory and grace of Jesus Christ.

1. CHURCH PLANTING, The Bridge

2. May God set a fire in our hearts this Easter Sunday - Even to the nations - Christ has died and has risen from the dead - burning hearts - all must know - HIS NAME MUST BE KNOWN IN ALL THE EARTH

3. PAUL MICHAELS

a) PROCLAIM CHRIST TO EVERYONE - YES EVERYONE - STRAINING - WAY KNOWN ON EARTH AND SAVING POWER AMONG THE NATIONS

G. This cross-bearing Savior, this Shepherd King reigning in resurrection glory - we receive the blessing of the gospel and we reveal the blessing of the gospel to others to others in order that HE would receive glory (v. 21) - JESUS CHRIST TO WHOM BE glory forever and ever and ever Amen.

Close

This is the healthy natural rhythm of the Christian life - receiving blessing and revealing blessing
Like breathing in and breathing out

This Easter morning - breathe in the oxygen of the gospel - as you go into this afternoon with friends and family - breathe out the blessing of the gospel.

For the glory of the one who died and rose again so that we would be most blessed among all people and throughout all eternity. Amen

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