

## Sermon

- The book of Numbers is one of the lesser read books of the Bible. It contains a lot of information that can be a bit cumbersome to read through.
- The great value of the book of Numbers is that it reveals the "graciousness of God" to an extent not previously revealed.
- We see God's graciousness in His dealings with Israel throughout this book.
- In the first section of Numbers (chs: 1—10), **God's provision** for His people stands out.
- We see this as God establishes *order* and *purity* for the maintenance of the Israelite camp – He gives them instructions on how to live together in safe and life-giving ways.
- As well as these instructions for order and for purity, we see how God provides and allows for *worship* in the camp – this is done by again giving instructions on how and why to worship.
- We also see God's graciousness in the *movement* God recommended for the camp as they journeyed throughout the territory – by giving instructions when, where and how to move the people and livestock.
- Through all of this, God faithfully provides for the needs of His people in these many ways as they prepared to enter the Promised Land.
- In the second section of the book (chs. 11—21), what stands out is **God's patience** with His people.
- When the Israelites failed to obey God, He did not desert them, but He disciplined them in love.
- God's patience in dealing with the Israelites did not result from God's weakness, but rather, it was evidence of God's strength.
- God disciplined the people for their disobedience, but He always directed them toward the realization of His purpose for them as He disciplined them.
- God did not manifest carelessness toward the Israelites by making them wander in the wilderness for 38 years. He manifested carefulness as He used those 38 years to prepare the next generation to obey Him.

- The years of wilderness wandering were years of education not abandonment.
- God had similarly prepared Moses for 40 years in the wilderness before the Exodus.
- Also, we know that God prepared Jesus in the wilderness for 40 days.
- In the third section (chs. 22—36) we clearly see **God's persistence** in bringing Israel to the threshold of the promised land.
- God protected Israel from her enemies and provided for her needs. Even though Israel had been unfaithful, God persisted in demonstrating faithfulness to the nation He had chosen to bless (cf. 2 Tim. 2:12).
- So, the book of Numbers reveals God's graciousness through His provision, His patience, and His persistence.
- And the blessing that Aaron is commanded to give sums this up in a few short declarations.
- This benediction indicates that one of the priest's central tasks was to be a source of blessing for God's people.
- Because, it is God's will to bless all His people, not just a few.
- Therefore, the priests were the mediators of this blessing from God to the Israelites.
- If we break down this blessing/benediction we can see a greater understanding of God's goodness expressed in each phrase.
- Because, each of the three clauses, in a different way, gives expression to God's commitment to Israel.
- They are a graduation from blessing to favour and finally a crown of peace.

"The Lord bless you and keep you;"

- God's "blessing" is *His goodness poured out*.
- The priest called on God, not only to provide for His people, but to defend them from all evil:
- The Lord bless you = 'Give us this Day our daily bread'.
- The Lord keep you = 'Deliver us from evil' (Matt. 6:13).

"The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you;"

- The second blessing is more specific – God's "face" is the revelation of His character/nature to people.

- The Lord make His face to shine on you = God will show you His character/nature – this is an invitation to intimacy.

If someone opens up and tells you something personal about themselves, they are inviting you to know them deeply and personally. This is what God is saying:

- “I will reveal myself to you and you will see me as surely as you see the fire and the sun; and as the sun promotes life, so will my presence with you promote life within and around you.
- And be gracious to you = refers to the manifestation of His favour and grace in the events of life.

“The Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.”

- The third blessing is the most specific "Lifting up the countenance" refers to *manifesting power*.
- The priests, in pronouncing this blessing, would be calling on God to manifest His "power" for His people.
- Specifically, this would produce "peace" (Heb. *shalom*). "Shalom" does not mean simply the absence of aggravation; it is *the sum of all God's blessings*.
- There are several things that are amazing about this blessing, firstly, it is a revelation of God's gracious presence, provision and patience; and secondly, we see the name of Yahweh repeated in each of the three verses which is seen by the early Christian writers as the trinity.
- The blessing of God the Father's goodness to protect and defend; the favour of God's character and nature as seen in the Son; and the manifestation of God's power as experienced through the Holy Spirit.
- So here in these three short declarations, the priests are proclaiming the goodness and protection of the Father, the favour of the character and nature as seen in Jesus, and the manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit.
- We often say or sing this blessing at baptisms, ordinations, - I say it at funerals.
- It's a powerful, powerful declaration of the power, presence, favour, goodness and protection of God.
- We can say this over our families, our friends, our church, our nation, our leaders, over anyone and everyone. And not just at baptisms!

- This blessing was not just for the OT people of God, this blessing is for ALL people, of every nation.
- And, it's not because we have done anything to deserve it or earn it, but rather, it is God's faithfulness, presence, provision and power lavishly and graciously and passionately poured out over people even in the midst of unfaithfulness, rebellion and apostasy.
- Where do you see unfaithfulness, rebellion and people abandoning the truth in exchange for superficial changes?
- My bet is you see it in your own family, in social connections, we see it in politics, we see it in all places including the church.
- As God commanded Aaron and the priests to declare this blessing over the people in the OT, so we who are all called and anointed as priests have the privilege to declare this blessing over our families, our church, our nation, our leaders – over all people.
- Who do you want to declare this blessing over today.... Type this in the chat box – everyone can declare this blessing with you.

**You tube:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOt7baaVSbE&list=RDOOt7baaVSbE&index=1>

**No Sermon Reflection this week. People are encouraged to pray  
'the blessing' over their family, church, and nation.**

**Song:**

**“Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah”**

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