

Thoughts on Numbers Vi, Vii - Part Ii. the Blessing of God: Numbers Vi, 22-27

by Hudson Taylor

The sermon explores the blessing of God, highlighting the spontaneous and unsought nature of God's love and blessing, and the significance of the three-fold benediction in Numbers 6:24-26.

Scripture: Numbers 6:22

Topics: "Divine Blessings", "Consecration to God"

Description

Hudson Taylor reflects on the profound blessings of God as articulated in Numbers 6:22-27, emphasizing that true consecration to God opens the door to His abundant blessings. He explains that while the privilege of priestly service was lost, anyone could draw near to God through Nazarite separation, highlighting the importance of surrendering one's will to receive divine favor. Taylor illustrates this with the parable of the prodigal son, showing that true joy and restoration come from returning to the Father. He elaborates on the three-fold benediction, representing the blessings from the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and concludes with the significance of being sealed with God's name, which signifies belonging and divine favor.

Transcript

NUMBERS 6:22-27

We have already seen the grace of God making provision that His people, who had lost the privilege of priestly service, might draw near to Him by Nazarite separation and consecration. And not as the offence was the free gift: those who had forfeited the privilege of priestly service were the males only, but women and even children might be Nazarites; whosoever desired was free to come, and thus draw near to God.

We now come to the concluding verse of Numbers 6, and see in them one of the fullest forms of benediction to be found in the whole Word of God. The thought naturally arises,

WHY IS IT FOUND HERE?

And the reply is twofold. There is the Divine side. Flowing from God's heart of love first came the privilege of Nazarite consecration; and then, by the act of consecration, His loving heart is so gladdened that it further overflows in these rich benedictions.

Looking, on the other hand, at the human side, we may learn that the soul which is fully consecrated always receives the blessing of God. Where that blessing is not enjoyed, there is always something unreal or defective in the consecration. It may be that we have separated ourselves to carry out our own will, or thought, or plan of service, instead of surrendering ourselves and our will, to learn and to do His will. But it is real consecration to God that puts us into the position in which He can pour out His richest blessings upon us.

The prodigal was a son of the father all the time; but when he preferred his will to the will of his father, his way to the way of his father, his management of his share in the property to his father's management, it issued but in ruin and misery, in hunger and nakedness and shame. The fact that he was a son was of no avail to him in the "far country," in the place of self-will and self-management. But as soon as he arose, and with true repentance and submission came back to the father's house, willing to serve, and to do his father's will, he found himself restored to his father's heart, and to all the privileges of sonship: the fatted calf was killed, the best robe was put upon him, once more he had shoes on his feet and a ring on his hand, and joy and gladness filled the home.

How many Christians there are who, in their self-will and attempted self-management, find themselves day by day full of sorrow, or full of care. Trying to keep themselves they are not kept; trying to be happy they are often unhappy; trying to succeed they fail; and they can but confess that their life is very different from that ideal life describe in Psalm 89:15-18:

"Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound:

They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance.

In Thy Name shall they rejoice all the day:

And in Thy righteousness shall they be exalted.

For Thou art the glory of their strength;

And in Thy favor our horn shall be exalted.

For the Lord is our defense;

And the Holy One of Israel is our King."

Instead of this many practically know very little of peace "which passeth all understanding;" of joy that is literally "unspeakable"; adjectives far more moderate would be found strong enough to express all they know of oft-troubled peace and intermittent satisfaction and happiness. Many there are who fail to see that there can be but one lord, and that those who do not make God Lord of all do not make Him Lord at all. The slightest reservation in our consecration shows that we hold ourselves as our own, and consequently at liberty to give Him as much or as little as we think fit. If we recognize Him as Lord and Master, we have nothing to withhold, and nothing of our own, for we, and all we have, are already His. But then, in return, all He has, and all He is, become ours. Oh! Blessed portion! Who would not wish henceforth to have no private property in himself, in his members, in his possessions, in his family, in his affection; but, in fullest consecration, to acknowledge and recognize God's right and to be no longer a robber of God?

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel....And they shall put My Name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them."

Here we have the blessing that God delights to give to those who have dedicated themselves and their all to Him. Before considering it in detail, let us notice, first, how spontaneous and unsought is this blessing from God. The Lord commanded Aaron and his sons to bless Israel, to put His Name upon them; and declared His own unalterable purpose, "I will bless them." And then, let us ask ourselves the question, what is

THE REAL MEANING OF BLESSING?

We frequently use the word so vaguely as to lose much of its preciousness, and to overlook the primary meaning in some of its secondary significations. For instance, we use it frequently as a synonym of praise, and in speaking of blessing God, we think of praising Him. But blessing does not merely mean praise, for God blesses us. Again, sometimes we use it for some gracious gift, as when we speak of the blessing of peace or of plenty. But blessing does not only signify gift, for when we bless God we do not give to Him peace or plenty. Blessing is the moving of the heart towards an object of affection and complacency. The out-going of the heart is naturally accompanied by gift or ascription, as the case may be. When our hearts bless the Lord, we sing a song of praise to Him for the great love wherewith He hath loved us; but the blessing is not the song. It is the feeling that prompts it. When the Lord blesses His people with peace and plenty, it is His open Heart that moves His loving Hand.

Again, blessing is always accompanied with joy; it is a joy, and it gives joy, both to the giver and the receiver. A little child playing with his toys may be both happy and satisfied. But it hears the mother's footsteps, it sees the mother open the door, and instantly the toys are dropped and forgotten; the little arms are stretched out, and the little feet are running to meet the welcome mother. Nor is this all; the great, motherly arms are as quickly stretched forth towards the child, and with longer steps the mother hastens to meet the little one, and clasps it to her bosom, the loving little arms entwining themselves around her neck.

But whose heart is the more glad? The little one's heart is full; and the mother's heart is also full; but her capacity is greater, and so her joy is deeper. And is not this true of our Heavenly Father? When His heart blesses ours, and ours blesses Him, we are full of joy; but His heart is infinitely greater than ours, and His joy in His people as far exceeds all their joy in Him, as the infinite exceeds the finite.

Let us always remember in connection with blessing that the deep heart-feeling is the primary thought. "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy Name." The praise of the lip may be insincere; the blessing of the heart cannot be.

THE THREE-FOLD BENEDICTION: Verses 24-26.

"The Lord bless thee, and keep thee:

"The Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:

"The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

We have dwelt upon the meaning of blessing, the moving of the heart towards an object of affection and complacency, and noticed that this is naturally accompanied by gift or ascription, as the case may be. When love overflows, loving words, loving embraces, or loving gifts instinctively follow.

In the light of the fuller revelation of the New Testament we can scarcely fail to see in this three-fold benediction the overflow in blessing of the Father, of the Son, and of the Spirit; and we may read it as follows:-

"Jehovah, the Father, bless thee, and keep thee:

"Jehovah, the Son, the Bridegroom, make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:

"Jehovah, the Spirit, lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

So read, we see in these words fuller beauty and appropriateness. Let us now notice the first clause in particular.

THE BLESSING OF THE FATHER.

Considered as a father's blessing could anything be more appropriate than "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee"? Is not this just what every loving father seeks to do, to bless and keep his children? He does not find it an unwelcome task, but his greatest delight. Offer to relieve him of the responsibility and to adopt his child, and see what his reply will be! Nor may we confine ourselves to paternal love in thinking of this subject; but rather take it as parental love, embracing also the love of the mother, for "Thus saith the Lord,... As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." We all know how the mother-love delights to lavish itself on the objects of its care. With a patience that never tires, and an endurance almost inexhaustible, and a care all but unlimited, how often has the mother sacrificed her very life for the welfare of her babe. But strong as is a mother's love, it may fail; God's love never. "Can a woman forget her suckling child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee."

It was one of the objects of our Saviour's mission to reveal to us that, in Christ Jesus, God is also our Father. How He delighted in bringing out this precious truth the Sermon on the Mount bears witness: "Glorify your Father." "Love..bless..do good, that ye may be the children of your Father." Be "perfect, even as your Father." "Thy Father..seeth." "Your Father knoweth," etc., etc. And well may our hearts rest in the thought which so satisfied His heart, that God is indeed our Father.

And what a glorious Father He is! The source of all true fatherhood and motherhood. We have often walked in the field in the early morning, and have noticed how the rising sun has turned each dewdrop into a glittering gem; one ray of its own bright light makes a little sun of each of the million drops that hang from the pendent leaflets and sparkle everywhere. But it is helpful to remember that the glorious orb itself contains infinitely more light than all the dewdrops ever did or ever will reflect. And so of our heavenly Father: Himself the great Source of all that is noble and true, of all that ever has been loving and trustworthy, each beautiful trait of each beautiful character is but the dim reflection of some ray of His own great perfection. And the sum total of all human goodness, and tenderness, and love is but as the dewdrops to the sun. How blessed then to confide in the infinite and changeless love of such a Father, our Father in heaven!

How safe too! "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in His excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Oft times where the love of earthly parents has not failed, yet have they been powerless to bless and to keep. The cruel tyrant has tortured the parent in torturing the child; while there has been no power to deliver. And in the presence of human want or suffering how impotent has the strongest human love oft proved to be! Not so the love of our heavenly Father: His resources and His power are as inexhaustible as His love; and they are blest and kept indeed whom he deigns to bless and keep.

May we not add "they only"? The foolish prodigal imagines that he can secure greater happiness for himself when no longer curbed by his father's presence and will; such always come to want, and, alas! Do not always return quickly to the home where reconciliation and blessing alone are to be found. He is poorly kept who tries to keep himself; and though the pleasures of sin may for a season gratify, they can never satisfy!* (When we speak of God as a Father we must not forget that He is only such in its full meaning to those who have become His children by faith in Christ Jesus; and that the sad and solemn words of the loving Saviour to the unconverted were, "Ye are of your father, the devil." The prodigal was a backslider: when furthest from home he could yet think and speak of the privileges of his father's house.)

"Jehovah, the Father, bless thee, and keep thee." It is an individual blessing: and it includes every form of blessing, temporal as well as spiritual--"My God shall supply all your need"; and this "according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus," not according to our consciousness of need. He is able to bless, able to make all grace abound, to so wonderfully abound towards us, that we always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: He is able to keep, to keep us from falling, to keep us from all evil. And not only is He able, but He has already "blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ," and He wants us, His children, to know and to enjoy the love that is the source of all blessing: the love that can never by finite words express its fullness: the love that eternal ages will never exhaust!

"Best of blessings He'll provide us,

Naught but good shall ere betide us;

Safe to glory He will guide us,

Oh, how He loves!"

THE SECOND PERSON OF THE TRINITY.

The second clause of the blessing is the blessing of the Son, which is not less full and appropriate. Through eternal ages the Son of God, He became, in the fullness of time, the Son of Man. The Brightness of His Father's glory, the Sun of Righteousness, He came to manifest, as well as to speak of, the Father's love. He became the Light of the world, as well as the Lamb of God; but in each aspect doing the will, as well as the work of God, He thus revealed the wondrous love and grace of the Father, and His own perfect Sonship. The Father's will included Christ's glad reception of all who come to Him, His meeting all their need, saving, sanctifying, satisfying, keeping, raising up at the last day, His giving Himself for, and giving Himself to, all those given to Him of the Father.

He is indeed a wonderful Saviour! What light the incarnate Word of God (Who is Light) has thrown on the written Word of God! The law in its legal requirements He has fulfilled, bringing in everlasting righteousness, which is imputed to all those who are indeed in Him. He has also fulfilled the Law in its

manifold typical aspects, Himself the Temple, the Priest, and the Sacrifice; Himself the Altar, the Offerer, and the Victim; Himself the Lamp, and the Priestly Trimmer of the lamps (as He is also the whole Vine, and yet the Life of each individual branch of the Vine). Time would fail us to enumerate the various objects and acts of typical service which were all fulfilled in Him. He too is the Bridegroom, from whose wounded side the Bride is being formed; and He is waiting for His Bride, who will soon be caught up to meet Him in the air. The true Solomon is He whose glory we shall share, and not only so, but whose presence will be the ever-satisfying portion of His chosen Bride.

The Bride eyes not her garment, but her loved Bridegroom's face;

I shall not gaze on glory, but on my King of grace;

Not on the crown He giveth, but on His pierced hand:

The Lamb is all the glory of Imanuel's land.

May the Holy Spirit give us more and more to realize the practical bearing of all that is thus revealed of the glory of the Person, and the fullness of the work of our Saviour and King!

THE BLESSING OF THE SON AND BRIDEGROOM

Jehovah, the Son, make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee.

The first clause of the three-fold blessing told of the going out of the heart of the invisible Father; now, when we come to the blessing of the Son, we read, "The Lord make his face shine upon thee," or, in other words, make visibly manifest his favor towards thee. The Son of God is the Kinsman who has the right to redeem, the Friend who sticketh closer than a brother, the One who has come, not only to be the Light of the world, but in an especial sense to be the Light of His own redeemed ones.

There was no need in Israel of a kinsman-redeemer in times of prosperity; but when bereavement and poverty afforded opportunity to the creditors to seize the possession, then a kind and wealthy kinsman-redeemer was a blessing indeed. We are reminded of the beautiful history of Ruth; how sweetly the gracious words of Boaz fell on the ear of the young stranger and what blessing that kinsman brought into her heart and life! The Friend that sticketh closer than a brother is precious at all times, but never so valued as in times of adversity; and the very expression, "the Light of the world," tells us of the darkness, alas! Not only around, but also within. The shining of the face of Jehovah, the Son, dispels the darkness and the gloom, manifests the presence of the Friend in need, and shows us the Redeemer, who not only delivers, but becomes the Bridegroom of the soul.

"Make His face shine upon thee." The face is perhaps the most wonderful part of the wonderful human body. Of all the faces that God has made no two are exactly alike, even when quiescent; and though we do occasionally meet with those that bear a very close resemblance, intimate friends, who know the play of the countenance, never mistake. And why is this? Because God has so ordered it, that the face shall reveal the character and feelings of the individual. And it is the purpose of God that the heart of Christ shall be revealed to His people. That heart might have been full of love, and we might never have known it; but it is the will of God that "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God" should be revealed to us "in the face of Jesus Christ."

How well we know in actual life what the light of the countenance means! How the mother's smile brings light and gladness into the heart of the child! How the welcoming look of a friend is at once understood! In Daniel 9: 16, 17, the prophet prays, "O Lord...I beseech Thee, let Thine anger and Thy fury be turned away from Thy city, Jerusalem;...and cause Thy face to shine upon Thy sanctuary that is desolate." Where there is the shining of the face we know there is more than forgiveness; there is favor and complacency. In the thrice-offered prayer of Psalm 80, "Cause Thy face to shine, and we shall be saved," the salvation of Israel is counted upon as the result; and in Psalm 67, we find that the shining of God's face upon His people is further to issue in His way being "known upon earth, His saving health among all nations."

It is, however, when we consider Him in the relationship of Bridegroom and King that the tenderness and preciousness of this blessing are most fully seen. A truly royal Bridegroom: "in His favor is life," and to Him we can approach at all times, without any fear that He will hide His countenance, or that He will not hold out to us the golden scepter. Queen Esther might tremble for the result of her boldness, but our King ever welcomes the approach of His Bride.

When her heart cries out, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth," He is ever ready to bring her into His chambers; indeed it is often the Bridegroom who has to allure the Bride, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." Canticles 2:10; "Come with Me from Lebanon, My spouse." Canticles 4:8. Rather than the Bride who has to seek the favor of the Bridegroom. It is only when she has treated him with neglect or disobedience that she finds herself in darkness. And what is not His favor to a loyal and true-hearted Bride! To a subject, the favor of the King is "as dew upon the grass," but to a bride is it not everything? "Jehovah, the Bridegroom, make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee!"

What a wonderful view of the light of His countenance the favored disciples must have had, who were witnesses of His transfiguration: we are told that His face did shine as the sun. To the proto-martyr Stephen the heavens were opened, and the face of the Lord shone upon him: and when he saw Him he became so like Him, that his dying utterances corresponded with those of his Lord on the Cross. When Saul, likewise, saw the glory of his risen Saviour, on the way to Damascus, the vision at midday was of a light above the brightness of the sun shining round about him; and the effect of that heavenly vision changed the whole current of his life, making him a follower of the Christ, who pleased not Himself, and making the spirit manifested in his first cry, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" the spirit of his life ever after. And so when the Lord makes the light of His countenance to shine upon any of His people, in the measure in which with unveiled face they discern the beauty of the Lord, there is a moral and progressive change into His likeness, the work of the Lord, the Spirit.

THE LORD, THE SPIRIT.

We have considered the bountiful overflow of the Father's love; and our hearts have burned within us as we dwelt upon and felt the glow of the love of the Son. Now, as we think of the blessing of the Lord, the Spirit, May He reveal Himself to us through these holy words, which were written by His inspiration and which can never be fully understood and enjoyed save by His own illumination. The Bible is a supernatural book, a divine revelation: the Holy Spirit is the supernatural, the divine Guide to its meaning. From the "wise and prudent" its teachings are hidden; hence the questionings of some of the learned only confirm its truth; but to "babes", to all those, whether learned or unlearned, in whom the Holy Ghost has wrought the child-like spirit, it is an opened book: they love it, and feast upon it, and grow thereby.

It is very important to have clear thoughts about the third person of the Trinity. Many Christians fail in this respect, and lose much in consequence. He has as distinct personality as has the Son of God; and we must not think or speak of Him vaguely, as though He were an influence merely and not a person. Our Saviour teaches us that we should know Him, "for He abideth with you, and shall be in you." But are there not many of the Lord's people to whom He is not yet "a living, bright Reality"?

So important are the presence and the work of the Holy Ghost, that our Lord assured His disciples that it was expedient for them that He should go away, in order that the Comforter should come. And we see the mighty change that was wrought in the disciples when the outpouring of the Spirit actually took place at Pentecost. The timid became courageous; the scattered and persecuted disciples went everywhere preaching the Word; the Holy Spirit wrought conviction of sin, and revealed the risen Saviour as the object of faith; and many were added to the Lord. The same Spirit is still present with us; may we too be filled, and largely used as channels of blessing.

THE BLESSING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

"Jehovah, the Spirit, lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

The blessing of the Spirit is essential to the completeness of the benediction. We are struck, however, with the similarity of this blessing to that which precedes it; nor is the similarity surprising. For, as the Son came to reveal the Father, so the Spirit has come to reveal the Son. Christ was a true comforter; but His personal work on earth being finished, He ascended on high to minister for His people as their High Priest in the presence of God. The Holy Spirit is the other Comforter, sent by the Father in Christ's name, that He might abide with the Church for ever. Christ is the indwelling Saviour: the Holy Spirit the indwelling Comforter. On whomsoever Christ makes His face to shine, the Holy Spirit will surely lift up.

HIS COUNTENANCE.

"Lift up His countenance upon thee." We have already dwelt on the significance of the face or countenance (the same original word) as revealing the emotions of the heart. We see from these words that it is the purpose of God that the presence and the love of the Spirit should be made known to those in whom He dwells. When He lifts up His countenance upon us, we walk in conscious security and freedom; but if the Spirit be grieved, the light of His countenance is hidden from us, and we walk in darkness. And, oh, how dangerous is this walking in darkness, how surely we shall wander from the way, and fall into some of the snares of the devil! There is only one safe course, to confess the sin that has grieved Him, and take no rest till communion is restored: this may always be done most easily by immediate confession and turning Him, who is our Advocate with the Father, and whose shed blood cleanses from all sin. When sin is put away the Spirit again lifts up His countenance upon us, and peace fills the heart.

THE PEACE OF THE SPIRIT.

The Lord Jesus, when on earth, said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." But here it is the Spirit who is spoken of as bestowing peace: why is this? Because the Spirit of God makes real things real to us, and enables us practically to enjoy the blessings procured for us by the death and resurrection and priestly ministry of the Lord Jesus. Many a believer to whom Christ has left peace, knows little of it; but those who are filled with the Spirit are filled with peace. They have peace with God; they have also heart-peace in the midst of conflict and turmoil; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, guards their hearts

and thoughts. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace.

Are we practically enjoying this blessing, and experiencing this peace which passes all understanding? Are we finding that when He makes quietness, none can make trouble? And if not, what is the hindrance? Is there any known sin unconfessed, or not put away? Has wrong been done, and restitution to the extent of our ability not been made? Is there any matter in which God has a controversy with us? Or are we indulging ourselves in anything about which we have doubt? Are we withholding anything from God which is His due? Ourselves, our property, our children; or, it may be, our testimony? Or, if none of these things are hindering us, are we failing to accept, by faith, the filling of the Spirit; perhaps only asking, but not receiving also? Is it that we are neglecting the prayerful study of God's Word, and thus grieving the Spirit by whom it was inspired? Paul asked God to give the Ephesian Christians the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, that they might know the hope of His calling and the exceeding greatness of His power toward them that believe. We do well to note the words "that believe," for unbelief lies at the root of every form of hindrance.

As the spirit reveals Christ, so does Christ bestow the Spirit; and by faith in Christ and in His Word we appropriate the gift. We shall never forget the blessing we received through the words, in John 4:14, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him

SHALL NEVER THIRST,"

Nearly thirty years ago. As we realized that Christ literally meant what He said, that "shall" meant shall, and "never" meant never, and "thirst" meant thirst, our heart overflowed with joy as we accepted the gift. Oh, the thirst with which we had sat down, but oh, the joy with which we sprang from our seat, praising the Lord that the thirsting days were all past, and past for ever! For, as our Lord continues, "the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up, overflowing, unto everlasting life." Perhaps, however, we should draw attention to the words of Christ, "whosoever drinketh"; not drank, once for all, but "drinketh," that is habitually: as in chapter 8:38, 39, where, after promising that out of him "shall flow rivers of living water," it is significantly added, "this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe", i.e., keep believing, should receive.

Is it not sad that so free a gift should be so little esteemed, so often neither enjoyed nor sought after? It is intended for each one of us. "lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." Would that each reader would accept the gift now, and evermore enjoy it, to the glory of God.

SEALING WITH THE NAME OF GOD: Verse 27.

"And they shall put My Name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them."

With these words this wonderful chapter closes, and the great object of God in bestowing His blessing upon His people is revealed: "They shall put My Name upon the children of Israel," or, in other words, shall cause them not only to become the people of God, but also to become manifestly such.

In olden time names were not meaningless, but were descriptive of character or relationship. The various names of God are all full of significance, and each is always used designedly in the Bible: failing to recognize this, learned, but spiritually ignorant men have imagined the Old Testament writings to have been mere compilations from the works of different authors, and have failed to see the beautiful appropriateness of the various names of God as they are used in different connections.

In the preceding benediction the thrice repeated Name of Jehovah has revealed to us the triune God in His gracious relations with His redeemed people, and has also reminded us that in these relationships He is the unchanging One, the same yesterday, today, and for ever; for all this is contained in the Name Jehovah. And thus the expression, "They shall put My Name upon the children of Israel," implies the purpose of God that in His people should be manifested, not only the beauties of His Divine character, but also the unchanging relationship in which they stand to Him. Israel of old was, and still is, God's witness in the world. In all their unfaithfulness, their very existence as a separate people is a standing miracle, witnessing to the truth of prophecy. But had they been faithful they would have been much more than this; for the beauty of the Lord their God would have been upon them; and receiving His blessing themselves, they would have become a blessing to the world. We who are now the children of God, Christians upon whom the Name of Christ has been called, are intended to be witnesses for our Master, and to show forth the beauties of Him who has "called us by His own glory and virtue." (2 Peter 1:3, R.V.)

There is an interesting parallelism between the passage we are considering and the commission given by our Lord to His people to disciple all nations, baptizing them into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. True Christians are kept by the power of God ("the Lord bless thee and keep thee"), in the grace which is in Christ Jesus ("the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee"), and receive the illumination of the Holy Ghost ("the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee"), in order that they may shine as lights in the world, and become living epistles, known and read of all men.

It is deeply interesting also to connect the sealing of this passage with that of Revelation 7 and 8. In the former passage (Revelation 7:1-3) we see the powers to whom the plagues are committed restrained until the sealing of the servants of God is completed. The hundred and forty and four thousand are all sealed, a mystical and symbolical number of the mystical and symbolical Israel, not of Israel according to the flesh. For in this book of Revelation the Lamb does not mean an animal, but the Lamb of God. The beast does not mean a literal wild beast, but the spiritual wild beast who destroys the children of God. So the twelve thousand of the tribe of Judah refers to the praising ones of Christ's fold; the sealed of Asher to the happy ones, who bless the Lord at all times; those of Naphtali, to those satisfied with favor, full with the blessing of the Lord; those of Reuben, to the one censurable as water, but now fully saved ones; & c., & c.

In Revelation 13 we find the great tribulation in progress, and those still left on the earth persecuted sorely, many of them to the death, by the beast. But the hundred forty and four thousand of Revelation 14 are not among them; they were caught up before the tribulation commenced, having been accounted worthy (Luke 21:34-36), to escape the things coming on the earth, and to stand before the Son of Man. Such are not only virgins, undefiled by spiritual adultery with the world, but also wise ones, filled with the Spirit: they are not only waiting for the coming of the Bridegroom, but ready for that coming; whereas the unwise have to go and buy oil, and so miss their opportunity. In Revelation 14 we see that God's Name is written on the foreheads of these wise virgins, and that in their mouths is a song which no one else can sing. They are firstfruits Bride united to the firstfruit's Bridegroom, and were redeemed (not from among the Jews only, but from among men), unto God and the Lamb. Other believers, then in the tribulation, shall join them later and form the harvest unto God (Revelation 7:14-17), and will come with the Bridegroom and Bride when our Lord is revealed from heaven in flaming fire to take vengeance on the ungodly (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10). The harvest is not only separated from the first-fruits in Revelation 7 and 9, but also in Rev. 20. We may read verses 4-6 more clearly if we render the second clause of verse 4, "I saw also the souls of them, & c.," instead of "and I saw, &c." and the last clause, "They also lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." We thus see the enthroned Bridegroom and bride and the harvest, the Body of Christ,

forming the first resurrection, and together reigning in glory.

"And I will bless them." A word of encouragement to Aaron and his sons in pronouncing the blessing, as well as to the people who received it. The blessing was preceded by God's command ("Speak unto Aaron....On this wise ye shall bless"), and followed by the promise quoted above; even as our Saviour in giving His last commission to disciple all nations, preceded it by, "All power is given unto Me...." Go ye therefore;" and followed it by the assurance and promise, "Lo, I am with you always." In the word of a King there is power; and when His servants carry out His commands, our King is present to authenticate them, and to ensure the result.

Source:

<https://sermonindex.net/speakers/hudson-taylor/thoughts-on-numbers-vi-vii-part-ii-the-blessing-of-god-numbers-vi-22-27/>

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