

September 10th

BLESSED BY THE LORD

"The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them, The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. 'So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.'" **NUMBERS 6:22-27**

Ever heard of the movie "Chariots of Fire"? It received the Academy Award for Best Picture in 1982. One of its famous scenes is of the British track team training on the sand next to the sea. I think there's an even better moment in the film. Eric Liddell, one of the heroes of the story is an evangelical Christian that has been called as a missionary to China. However, he first desires to run for the Lord's glory at the Olympic Games. His sister Jenny is upset about the decision to run before setting off for China. Here's Eric's response: "Jenny, I believe that God made me for China, and God also made me fast. And when I run, I feel His pleasure." What a statement! Iain Duguid calls on this example from Liddell as he considered Aaron's blessing in Numbers 6. What does God teach us here?

As Duguid wisely points out, there at least two truths to learn from this blessing. First, we must look at the source of the blessing. While your Bibles probably have a section heading entitled, "Aaron's Blessing," if you look more closely, you'll see that Aaron does give the blessing, but only after God has commanded Him to give it. This isn't about the nature of Aaron wanting to encourage the people; this is about our God that comes to encourage the people. What would this have meant to the Ancient Near East culture, where multiple gods were worshiped everywhere? Remember, they had just come out of Egypt, where each plague was a judgment against foreign gods. Why so many gods in these cultures? The reason is that their "gods" needed to be appeased and sought after. In this blessing from God that He commands Aaron to give to the people, you can see that God sets Himself apart from these fake gods. God is always the initiator. He pursues His people with His mercy and grace.

What else can we learn from this? Remember Liddell's statement that he felt God's pleasure when he ran? That statement points toward God's blessing here. The blessing says, "The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you...". Duguid wisely points out in his commentary that this is the pleasure of God that He has when He looks down at His sons. That's what the blessing is pointing to. Think about it this way: have you ever heard someone talk about someone's face shining because they have so much joy in a specific moment? That's again what God is saying here. He delights when you delight in Him. As Liddell says, "when I _____, I feel His pleasure." What would you place in the blank? How do you feel God's pleasure because you're walking in His will? How will God's blessing give you hope? God freely gives His grace without your arm-twisting and begging. He gives to you because He loves you. What a God that we serve!

Spend some time thinking how your life gives God pleasure. Ask the Lord to help you live more faithfully for His glory and to enjoy Him.

For Further Reading: I John 4:7-21

