

Stir Up A Benediction

Scripture Reading

1 Thessalonians 3:11-13 (NKJV)
11 Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you. 12 And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, 13 so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

Introduction

During this series Stir it Up, we have centered our focus on what God desires to stir on the inside of us, what He's stirs around us in working His plans, what we stir up in one another and today we come back to what He desires to be stirred in His Body. Today I feel led to stir up a different gift that we see given throughout the Scriptures. It's not a miraculous sign; it's not a prophetic utterance; it's not a battle cry or a material substance. 'A benediction is a declaration of blessings from God upon His loved ones.' It is the pronouncement and assurance of God's Presence, Peace, comfort, help and protection upon one another as His Body of Christ—the brethren. And it takes great effect on those who are the brethren.

The Brethren

When we hear the word "brethren" we refer it to it in the religious sense—as a part of a faith, a community of traditional church goers. Some religious groups only apply the term to the males within their groups. Other groups apply the term more broadly.
The use of the word brethren in the Bible is key because it takes us beyond the structured dynamic of the "congregation." It places the culture and context of what we know to be "church" in the background and it focuses on the fundamental connection we share across immediate family, communities, racial and cultural constructs, denominations, and flags. It brings us to the first and genuine connection between true believers.

There is a difference between a church goer and the "brethren."
There's a difference between a musician that plays in church and the brethren

There's a difference between a choir member and the brethren
There's a difference between a career speaker or preacher and the brethren
There's a difference between someone who announces themselves as a church mother, or senior deacon—and the brethren.
There's a difference between family members of the pastor or the Bishop and the brethren.

Luke 8:19-21 (NKJV)
(Matt. 12:46–50, Mark 3:31–35)
19 Then His mother and brothers came to Him, and could not approach Him because of the crowd. 20 And it was told Him by some, who said, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see You."
21 But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."

Hearers and doers are the brethren
Jesus' own siblings and local neighbors from His hometown didn't believe in Him

John 7:2-5 (NKJV) 2 Now the Jews' Feast of Tabernacles was at hand. 3 His brothers therefore said to Him, "Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing. 4 For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." 5 For even His brothers did not believe in Him.

(Tony Evans Bible Commentary) 8:19–21 Jesus's mother and brothers tried to meet with him but could not because the crowd was so large (8:19). We learn in the other Gospels that his family thought he was "out of his mind" during his ministry and didn't believe in him (Mark 3:20-21; John 7:1-5). When he was notified that his family was trying to reach him (8:20), Jesus used the opportunity to teach his listeners a kingdom lesson. Intimacy with Christ is tied to obedience to the word of God. Such intimacy transcends earthly family relationships. Those who not only hear but also do the Word will know true spiritual intimacy with Jesus (8:21).

Where we see relationships, connections, affiliations, and associations, Jesus identifies "Hearers and doers."

So are the brethren an exclusive group? Do you need special access to become a part of the elite bunch? The access is the same for everyone but the journey is not for the faint of heart. The Blood of Jesus is what gives us access. It is the atonement for our sins. But our response is the distinguishing factor. Because of His love, we believe on Him and take up our cross and follow Him. We've heard the Gospel, and we live the Gospel.

Matthew 7:21-23 (NKJV)
I Never Knew You
(Luke 6:46; 13:26, 27)
21 "Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

The Boundary

Ephesians 6:23 (NKJV)
23 Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The benediction is given to the brethren as a covering from God the Father and embrace of those called by His

Name. It isn't a delicacy that can be indulged and 'teaspoon-tasted' by all who are not true followers of Jesus. Non-followers cannot receive something they have not surrendered to, although the invitation to their hearts is never rescinded, it is simply an invitation not opened yet.

Benedictions like this one in Ephesians and many others were written at the end of a letter and read openly to the intended recipients of the letter. In it is the content of the Heart of the author towards the recipient(s) and the sentiments shared are specifically for them.

2 Corinthians 13:11-14 (NKJV)
11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.
12 Greet one another with a holy kiss.
13 All the saints greet you.
14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

Not all of Jesus' heart and words were readily received by those who said they were His followers. At the time nearing His crucifixion, Jesus made a startling statement regarding His divinity and Him being the "bread which came down from heaven." In that movement, his local neighbors questioned what He was saying. "Isn't' this Mary and Joseph's boy?" Yet Jesus continued speaking.

John 6:54-56 (NKJV)
54 Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. 56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.

John 6:63-66 (NKJV)
63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.
64 But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. 65 And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."
66 From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.

What is a sacred blessing to us, was an offense to them!
They wanted the power and presence of God but didn't want His Heart

We are living in a time, where it will become more and more clear to you those who just want the things that God can give them but they don't truly want His heart. And when you see it and hear it from people who you really love, it will hurt to your core because you realize that they are not His… not yet. And that you have to re-prioritize your relationship with them, what you share, what you assume to be true, and whether you can be in lock-step with them. Because blessings are given within borders to beneficiaries; and the boundary of the benediction is experienced in the heart of the true believer.

The Blessing

Enclosed in the benediction are promises for you to experience. Encounters for you to inherit. A connection with God for you to enter into as you have been granted access through your faith and His Love. God is bound by His

word and He is moved when we declare His Word to Him in confidence. This faith and confidence in the Lord is taught to our generations—not as an assumption of faith through DNA but a testimony of it.

And as we close our meditation on the Benediction today, I'd like us to Stir this Benediction amongst one another:

Numbers 6:22-27 (NKJV)
22 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 23 "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them:
24 "The LORD bless you and keep you;
25 The LORD make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
26 The LORD lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace." '
27 "So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them."