



Numbers 6:24-26

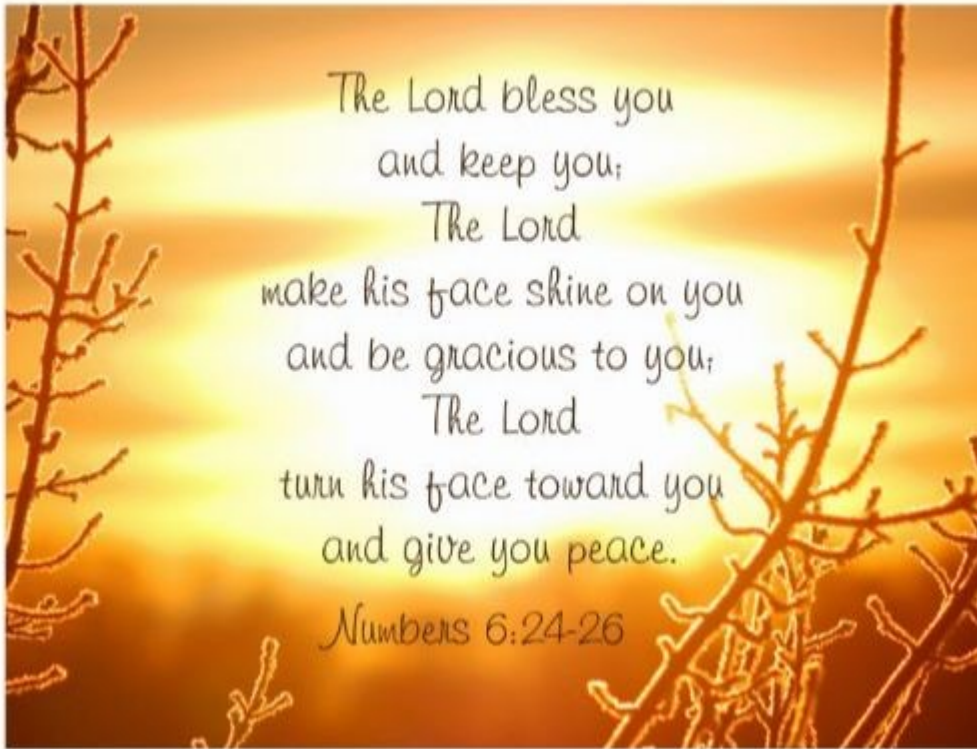


Dear Friends and Family,

For the past several months, I hope you have been blessed in your study of Scripture and have been able to use these weekly devotions as a guide.

Now that we have concluded the book of Romans, I would like to experiment with a new format. By sending shorter devotions, I hope to accomplish a few things. I pray the brevity will give you the opportunity to read through the entire message. Through targeted focus, I pray you learn key valuable insights. And most importantly, I long for you to remember God's Word and hide it in your heart.

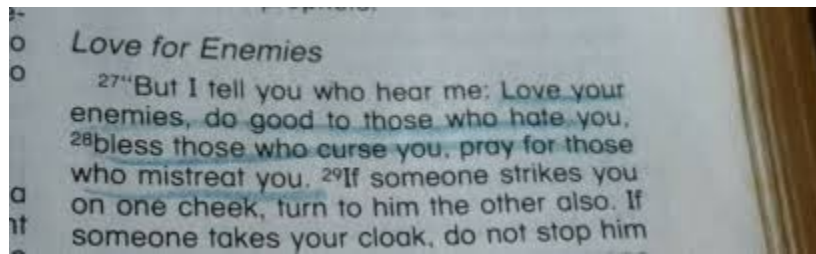
Each week, I will focus on a few verses of Scripture, highlighting context, historical significance, practical application and providing some commentary. My goal is to provide a starting point that will guide you as you study Scripture personally.



This scripture is the oldest extant verse of scripture we have. In 1979, a Villanova Professor was assisting in an archeological dig in Jerusalem's Hinnom Valley. She found a tiny silver scroll. When it was unraveled, it was shown to contain this very blessing from Numbers 6. It was worn as an amulet by the Israelites and dated to the 7th century BC, at least 500 years older than the Dead Sea scrolls.

D.L. Moody, in his book, *Notes from My Bible*, wrote of this passage in Numbers:

“Here is a benediction that can be given all the time without being impoverished. Every heart may utter it, every letter may conclude with it, every day may begin with it, every night may be sanctified by it. Here is blessing - keeping - shining - the uplifting upon our poor life of all heaven's glad morning. It is the Lord Himself who (gives us) this bar of music from heaven's infinite anthem.”

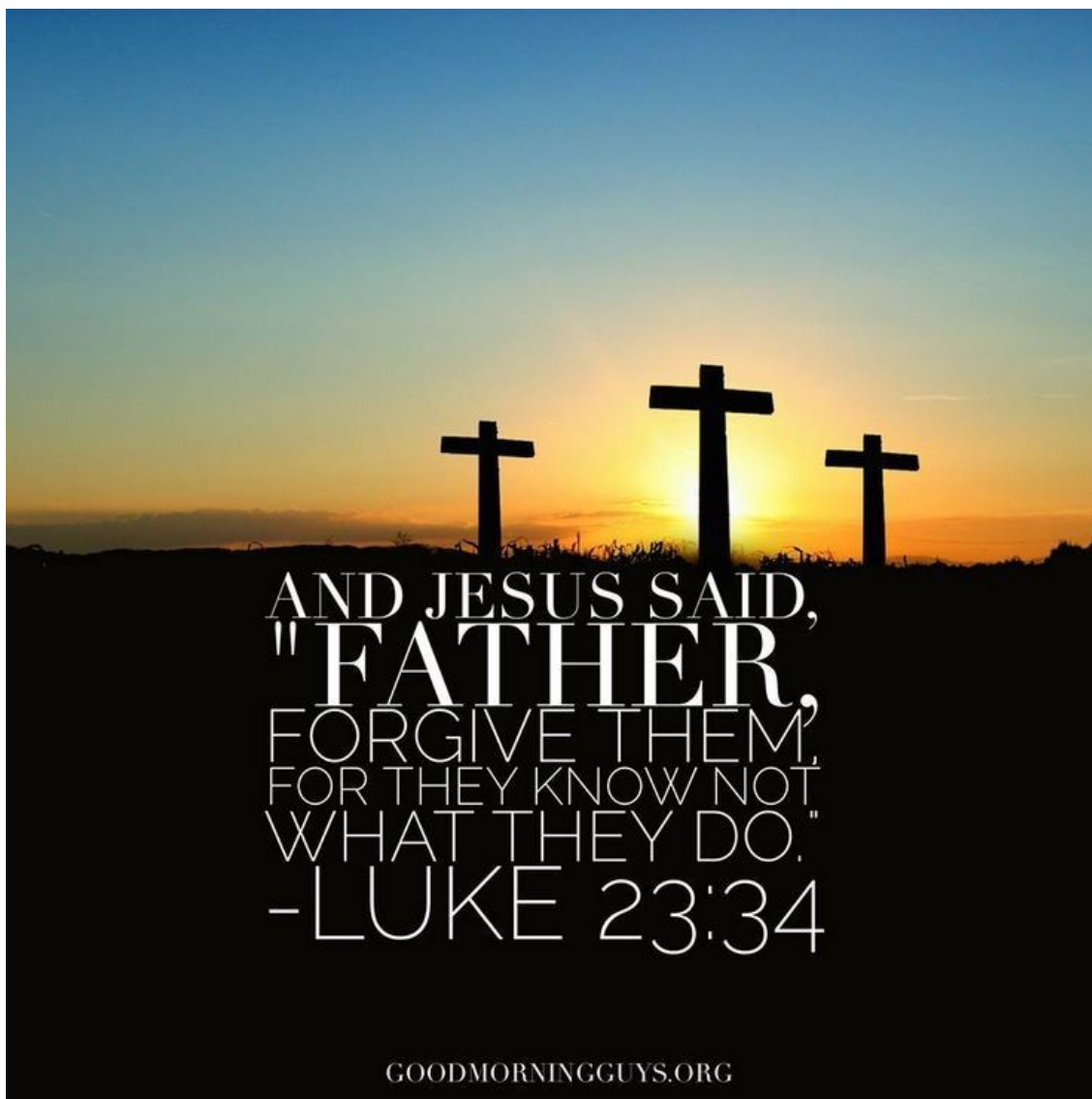


What is our common response to trials, tribulations, and those who seek to harm us? Do we bless or do we curse?

Consider this passage from Luke 6:27-29

While this passage in Luke is no doubt familiar, have you ever thought about it personally? Have you put it into practice? It seems unfathomable to ask God to bless and be gracious to someone who is mistreating you or someone you love, especially as you consider the incredible blessing written in Numbers.

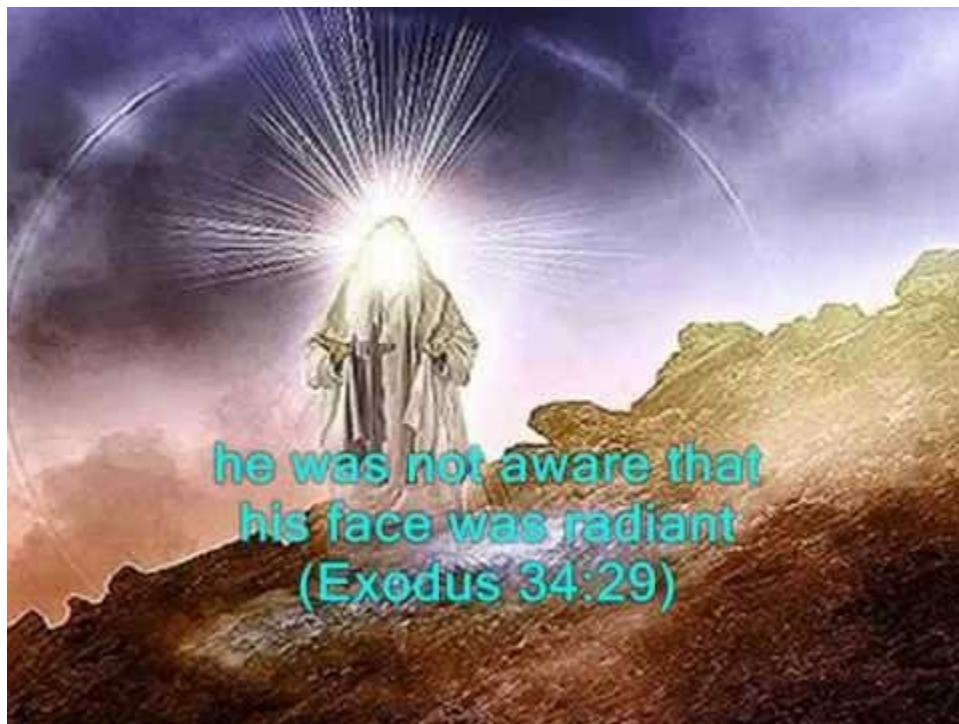
Christ, in this passage in Luke, refers to an enemy who physically harms, with a hate that leads to persecution.



Interestingly, Christ would demonstrate this verse perfectly at the cross. Not only did he turn the other cheek, he endured death, the theft of his clothes, and the complete sacrifice of himself. His final words on the cross? “Father forgive them, they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34)

How can you personally bless someone, to the extent of the blessing in Numbers, which asks for God’s countenance, His very face, to shine upon someone who is so hateful and evil? To clarify, Scripture does not advocate staying in violent or unhealthy situations. The context of Luke 6 is speaking of our enemies. Turning the other cheek is in regards to those who mistreat us and do not know better. In our Christian relationships we are called to hold one another accountable. Boundaries are healthy and God-ordained. (1 Corinthians 5:9-13)

Study the Numbers blessing and consider specifically what is being requested. What happens when God’s countenance shines upon someone? Recall what happened to the face of Moses when he spent time in God’s presence.



“He was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant...” (Exodus 34:29-35)

Moses came from God’s presence and his face was literally glowing! He reflected the glory of God so brightly that he had to wear a veil to cover the light reflecting from his face! What would happen if our enemies encountered God in this way? This is what Jesus is explaining in Luke. When we bless, we ask for God’s presence in the lives of our enemies. Reread the blessing in Numbers and consider what is being asked of God? The Numbers blessing is not a blessing of wealth, health, and prosperity. The blessing in Numbers simply asks for God’s presence in the life of the one being blessed.

It is easy to bless those we love. It is much more difficult to bless those who persecute us. But as God’s people, may we petition the throne of the Lord to bless those who do not know Him. May we beg for God’s blessing and personal presence upon our enemies, so that they too, may know His face. In doing so, may they find the grace and mercy of the King of the World, and transition from enemies in sin to brothers in Christ.



May you be blessed by the Messiah College Choir singing Peter Christian Lutkin's arrangement of *Benediction, The Lord Bless You and Keep You*:

*God be gracious to us and bless us,
And cause His face to shine upon us - Psalm 67:1*

Pastor Matt

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*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us **RUN** with endurance the race that is set before us -- Hebrews 12:1*



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