

Ephesians 6:23-24 – A Brotherly Benediction

TSK, GreekLexicon, Gill, Handfuls, Robertson, Rienecker, Trapp, Poole, PNT, NASX, Henry, JFB, Hodge, Geneva, Barnes, Calvin, Clarke, Expositor, Moule, Henriksen, Ellicott, Gaebelein
Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: What is a benediction? A benediction is a blessing. It is not really a prayer (one of the reasons we don't close our eyes for it). It is a declaration **that the favors referred to in it may come on God's people.**

There are many examples of benedictions in the Bible, starting in the Old Testament. For example, Melchizedek, the priest, blessed Abram when they worshipped together.

Genesis 14:18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. 19 And he blessed him and said: "**Blessed be Abram of God Most High,** Possessor of heaven and earth;

The most famous benediction in the Old Testament was called the Aaronic benediction, for the obvious reason.

Numbers 6:23 "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.'"

These benedictions continued on God's people throughout the New Testament. You often see them in the letters the Apostles wrote to the different churches. The most popular New Testament benediction is from 2Corinthians 13:14. But let's read some of them together.

Romans 15:33 Now the **God of peace be with you all.** Amen.

Galatians 6:16 And as many as walk according to this rule, **peace and mercy be upon them,** and upon the Israel of God.

2 Thessalonians 3:16 Now may the **Lord of peace Himself give you peace always** in every way. The Lord **be with you all.**

1 Peter 5:14... **Peace to you all** who are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

3 John 1:14... **Peace to you.** Our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.

2Corinthians 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the **communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.** Amen.

Today you will see the Apostle Paul's benediction to believers in Ephesus as he concluded his letter to them. He knew their work was going to be hard and the Devil was constantly attacking them personally and always trying to hinder them from doing work for the kingdom, so he wanted God to bless them as they worked and fought.

Our headings are:

Peace to the brethren

Love to the brethren

Grace to the brethren

Our goals are: **That you will receive God's rich assurances of blessings as you defend against the personal attacks of the Devil and as you fight to advance his kingdom around the world.**

Peace to the brethren

23 Peace to the brethren, *and love with faith,* from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Apostle Paul blessed the Ephesian Christians with peace.

2. But could the Apostle Paul really "bless" people-could Melchizedek, Aaron, or I really "bless" the people of God?

The Apostle Paul (and others) surely could bless the people of God. The minister does this today at the end of the worship service when he raises his hand. Jesus did it too. But ministers are only the agents of the blessing. (The disciples healed many sick, but it was really Jesus healing through the disciples.) **So Jesus ultimately blesses his people through the ministers.** Consider how Jesus blessed his disciples with peace when fear was present among the disciples after Jesus was killed.

Luke 24:36 ...Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "**Peace to you.**"

3. What kind of peace was this with which Apostle Paul blessed the Ephesian Christians?

The Ephesians already had peace with God and they had their conscience sprinkled with the blood of Jesus. So they were no longer at war with God. Christ was the ground for their peace with the Father. He had satisfied his Father's anger. That case was settled.

Hebrews 12:24 to **Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant,** and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

Luke 19:38 saying: "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!" **Peace in heaven** and glory in the highest!"

Didn't the angels sing "Peace on earth and good will to men?" Jesus is the Prince of Peace.

So now Apostle Paul wanted the Ephesians to have peace in their hearts and to live peaceably with those around them.

But didn't the Christians have peace with each other? Yes, but the Apostle **wanted an increase of peace!**

4. On the other hand, the Apostle Paul knew the wicked didn't have peace with God, they didn't have peace in their hearts, and they didn't have peace with each other.

Isaiah 57:20...the wicked *are* like the troubled sea, When it cannot rest, Whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

But the Lord's people had peace with God, they had peace in their hearts, and they had peace with each other.

5. Lessons:

a. Say hallelujah! You have peace with God. He is no longer angry with you. You are not his enemy. But more...

c. When there is peace in the church no one pulls in his own direction. There isn't selfish competition. There is no strife and backbiting. There is no gossip. You work together in unison for a common cause – the glory and praise of your Savior.

d. When there is peace in the church there is a tolerance of each other's weaknesses and differences in opinions and tastes, and there is mutual submission to each other – giving each other priority. If one chooses to drink wine, and one does not, he doesn't look down on each other. If one eats white sugar and another eats raw sugar, it isn't an issue. Don't be suspicious if someone dresses-up for church and another dresses-down. Learn to tolerate minor differences in doctrine. We have a huge enemy to fight and we don't need to be pulling in different directions.

Love to the brethren

23 Peace to the brethren, and **love with faith**, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. After peace, Apostle Paul blessed the Ephesian Christians with love, and as before, love to the brethren.

But this love must be connected with faith! There is no love without faith in Jesus Christ...not true love! You don't know love until you have faith in Jesus.!

And **you need this love to have peace!**

2. Because this love was rooted in faith (which is a gift of God), this love is gift from God.

3. But why would Apostle Paul bless the Ephesians with love if they were already Christians and had exhibited love already?

Answer: He was blessing them **with an increase in love**. He knew man's love was never sufficient.

4. This love, that had to be based on faith, had to therefore be in the heart.

Sincerity among soldiers was essential for success. The soldier had to genuinely love the commander!

5. Lessons:

a. Love the Lord. Delight in his will. Love your brother and sister in Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 13:2 And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, **but have not love, I am nothing.**

b. Love the Lord's people in action. Listen to them. Encourage them. Pray for them. Share with them. Visit them. Run the risk of offending if it is your desire to help. Especially watch out for the young people. If you see them straying, speak up. Challenge and encourage them to live godly lives. Now is especially a time to how that love...even by a phone call or an e-mail.

c. You can summarize this love the Ephesians were expected to have in this way: Jesus loves you and you love Jesus, and Jesus wants you to love his children. Yes, the children may be a little different from you – different color, maybe some different doctrine...from a different denomination...but you are of the same family, from the same Father!

Grace to the brethren

24 Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

1. After blessing the Ephesian Christians with peace, and after blessing them with love than flowed from faith, the Apostle Paul then blessed them with grace.

This is the best blessing of all! All things flow from the grace the Christians receives from Jesus. (To have peace, they needed love, and **to love they needed grace from God.**)

2. As with love and peace, this grace (growing grace, not saving grace) is a blessing for believers; it is not for non-believers.

3. When grace flows in a man's heart, it frees him from all hypocrisy, (it is sincere) from all corrupt actions.

It was what Mary experienced when she washed Jesus' feet with her tears. She received grace and responded! She sacrificed for the Savior. This was why Moses gave up his royal title and chose to suffer with the people of God!

4. "Amen" at the end signified the Apostle Paul was confirming everything he said in his letter to the Ephesian Christians, as well as confirming everything in his benediction.

5. Lessons:

a. Everything rests on Christ and his grace to you. No wonder you see the Apostle Paul coming back to the work of Jesus on each of these 3 points. No preacher worth his salt forgets this. No good father forgets this. Don't appeal to your children to do well based on "how it will hurt Mommy." Appeal to them to do well based on what Jesus did for them on the cross. **They must love Jesus to do well in life.**

b. We don't go around pronouncing God's blessings on those who don't know or don't love Jesus.

We don't pronounce **non-believers who die are in heaven!** Ministers have no such authority. (Woe to those who do this at funerals.) Even if a person says he believes in God but does not look to Christ for salvation, we can't pronounce God's blessing on him. He is not God's child. The pearls of God must not be thrown to swine.

1 Corinthians 16:22 If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come!

On the other hand, the one who loves Christ will **delight in his person, will desire his presence, and be devoted to his work.** God is pleased to bless them. This is why all should be present for the benediction.

c. You have received perfect grace if you come to the end of your life loving the Lord will all sincerity. This would be infinitely **better** than to come to the end of your life with **great wealth and fame.** This would be infinitely better than to come to the end of your life even with **old age!**

Conclusion:

The Apostle Paul blessed the Ephesian Christians with peace, love, and grace. He knew in order to have peace, they had to love, and in order to love, they needed grace. So this was a truly great benediction.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Don't miss the benediction in the services...get it twice! Have your children present for it.

2. Pray peace, love, and grace might fill New Horizon members – every single one, and then use these blessings to advance Christ's cause.

3. You badly need these gifts to be able to advance the kingdom of Jesus Christ in the world.

Finally, hear these other words again from the Apostle Paul: *1 Corinthians 16:22* *If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come!* If you don't know Jesus, go to his Word and get to meet him.