

THE GREAT PRIESTLY BENECTION

NUMBERS 06:21–27

Introduction

Desperate circumstances often stir people to pray and make vows to God. Severe illness, accidents, marital problems, parental problems, school problems, business difficulties, threats, war, and a host of other circumstances can cause people to make vows and promises to God. Every promise and vow is important to God, and God takes the vow seriously. He expects the person to fulfil his or her vows. But there is one vow that is very, very special to God: the Nazarite vow. What is the Nazarite vow? It is a vow that seeks a deeper life with God. The person wants a closer walk with God; therefore, he sets aside a period of time to seek the LORD as never before. He seeks a closer walk with the LORD, a deeper communion and fellowship with Him. He takes more time to study the Word of God, to pray and seek the face of God. He seeks to be more conformed to the image of God. He wants to grow in holiness, to be more totally separated from the world and set apart to God. He wants to be a stronger witness and testimony for God. The passion that burns in his heart is a passion to know God more and more, to be conformed to the very image of God.

This is the great subject of this important passage of Scripture: *The Special Provision Instituted for Drawing Closer to God — the Nazarite Vow and the Special Benediction of God: The Importance and Seriousness of Vows*, Numbers 6:1-27.

- I. The reason for the vow: a strong desire to draw closer to the LORD — to be separated, totally set apart to the LORD (vv. 1-2).
- II. The obligations of the special vow to the LORD (VV. 3-12).
- III. The fulfilment of and the discharge from the vow (vv. 13-20).
- IV. The seriousness and heavy weight of the vow (v. 21).
- V. The great priestly benediction (vv. 22-27).

I. *Numbers 06:21 Seriousness of the Nazarite Vow*

Note the seriousness and heavy weight of the Nazarite vow. The Nazarite vow is a law, a law established by God Himself.

The commitment of the vow is significant to God, so significant that He established a law to control the vow. The vow declared a person's desire to draw closer to the LORD, a deep desire to be separated, totally set apart to God. God accepts all vows as serious commitments, but the Nazarite vow was very special to Him. The Nazarite vow was a personal commitment to seek a closer walk with the LORD: to seek a deeper commitment, a closer fellowship and communion with the LORD. It was a commitment...

- to live increasingly in God's law or Word
 - to obey God as never before
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- to be totally devoted to God
- to love and worship God more and more
- to live in prayer, in an unbroken consciousness of God's presence
- to bear strong witness and testimony for God

The Nazarite vow had to be kept and fulfilled before God. The person making the vow was responsible for completing the vow, A heavy responsibility and accountability lay upon his shoulders. It was not a vow to be taken lightly. If a person made the commitment and took the time to draw closer to the LORD, the LORD accepted the commitment, the vow and expected the person to complete it to the fullest.

Thought 1. All vows are serious to God. He accepts the commitment of any vow. But the commitment to draw closer to God — to seek a greater fellowship and communion with Him, to live more than ever before in His Word, to pray more and to bear a stronger witness and testimony for Him — has a very special meaning to God. Therefore, the person must live a holy life before God, be totally separated and set apart to God. The person must follow after God with his whole heart and life. He must be totally devoted and given over to the Lord.

Rom 12:1-2 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

Num 30:2 *When a man makes a vow to the LORD or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.*

Deu 23:21 *If you make a vow to the LORD your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the LORD your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin.*

Psa 34:13 *Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from telling lies.*

Eccl 5:4 *When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfil your vow.*

II. Numbers 06:22—27 The Great Priestly Benediction

Note the great priestly benediction of God.

This prayer is sometimes called the Aaronic benediction because it was to be pronounced by Aaron the High Priest, pronounced over God's people as they marched toward the promised land. It is interesting that the benediction follows immediately after the Nazarite vow. The point of the benediction or prayer is striking: God wants to bless all His people as they march to the promised land. He wants to fulfil His covenant promise to the fullest if His people will only fulfil their part of the promise, to follow Him with all their hearts.

This is one of the most beautiful prayers in the Bible and is one of if not the most quoted benedictions of Scripture. The Expositor's Bible Commentary makes this statement:

[This benediction] may be thought of as the Lord's prayer of the Old Testament (see Mat 6:9). The priests were told how to pray for God's blessing on the people in the same way that the disciples were instructed by the Saviour how to pray for God's blessing in their lives. (The Expositor's Bible Commentary. Frank E. Gaebelin, Editor, p. 754)

1. The benediction was promised by God Himself (vv. 23-26). God instructed Moses to instruct the priest to use this benediction on behalf of His people as they marched to the promised land. Note the points of the benediction or prayer.
 - a. The LORD promised His blessing: "The LORD bless you" (v. 24). The idea is that God pours out His blessing upon His people. He blesses them abundantly, exceedingly. God provides all the necessities of life for His people: food, shelter and clothing.

Mat 6:33 "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

Phil 4:19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

Exo 23:25 Worship the LORD your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you.

Deu 30:9 Then the LORD your God will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your land. The LORD will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your ancestors.

Psa 23:5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Psa 31:19 How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you, which you bestow in the sight of men on those who take refuge in you.

Psa 65:9 You care for the land and water it; you enrich it abundantly. The streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with grain, for so you have ordained it.

Psa 68:19 Praise be to the LORD, to God our Saviour, who daily bears our burdens.

Psa 132:15 I will bless her with abundant provisions; her poor I will satisfy with food.

Psa 115:12 The LORD remembers us and will bless us: He will bless the house of Israel, he will bless the house of Aaron.

Isa 30:23 He will also send you rain for the seed you sow in the ground, and the food that comes from the land will be rich and plentiful. In that day your cattle will graze in broad meadows.

Mal 3:10 *“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.”*

- b. The LORD promised His protection and security: “The LORD...keep you” (v. 24). God has the power to keep His people as they march to the promised land.. He has the power to deliver His people from all the pitfalls and enemies of this life.

Lk 21:18 *“But not a hair of your head will perish.”*

John 17:11 *“I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name — the name you gave me — so that they may be one as we are one.”*

1 Cor 10:13 *No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*

Phil 1:6 *Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

2 Tim 1:12 *That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.*

Heb 13:6 *So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”*

1 Pet 1:5 *Who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.*

1 Pet 3:13 *Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?*

Jude 1:24 *To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy.*

Gen 28:15 *I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.*

Exo 14:14 *“The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.”*

2 Chr 16:9 *For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war.*

Job 11:18 *You will be secure, because there is hope; you will look about you and take your rest in safety.*

Psa 91:4 *He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.*

Psa 91:5 You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day.

Psa 112:7 They will have no fear of bad news; their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the LORD.

Psa 121:4 Indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

Prov 3:24 When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.

- c. The LORD promised that His face would shine upon His people, that His very special presence would be with them: “The LORD make His face shine upon you” (v. 25). The LORD is always facing His people; His face is always shining upon them. This simply means that God’s presence is always with His people. This is a beautiful, descriptive picture of God’s presence with His people. The Hebrew literally means that God smiles upon His people: He is pleased with their faith and obedience in following Him.

Mat 18:20 “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”

Mat 28:20 “And teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Mt.28:20).

Gen 28:15 I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.

Exo 33:14 The LORD replied, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”

Deu 20:1 When you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them, because the LORD your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, will be with you.

Deu 33:27 The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He will drive out your enemy before you, saying, ‘Destroy him!’

Psa 16:8 I keep my eyes always on the LORD. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

Psa 18:35 You give me your shield of victory, and your right hand sustains me; you stoop down to make me great.

Psa 40:17 Yet I am poor and needy; may the Lord think of me. You are my help and my deliverer: O my God, do not delay.

Isa 41:10 So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Isa 43:2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

Isa 46:4 Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.

- d. The LORD promised that His grace would be showered upon His people: “The LORD... be gracious to you” (v. 25). Grace means that God favours His people and strengthens them to conquer all the pitfalls and enemies of this life. Both favour and strength are included in the meaning of the word grace.

Rom 3:24 *And are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*

1 Cor 1:4-5 *I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way — with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge.*

2 Cor 1:12 *Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God’s grace.*

Eph 1:7 *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.*

Eph 2:7 *In order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*

Eph 2:8-9 *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.*

Titus 2:11 *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.*

Titus 3:7 *So that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.*

- e. God gives His attention, His approval, His pleasure to His people: “The LORD lift up His countenance upon you” (v. 26). God never turns His face away from His people. They always have His attention. He sees everything that goes on in their lives: every threat, every temptation, every trial. The believer has the attention of God and the approval and pleasure of God. Therefore, He lifts up His countenance — turns His face — to them. He is their helper in all things.

Luke 12:7 *“Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”*

Acts 2:28 *You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.*

Heb 13:6 *So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”*

1 Pet 5:7 *Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*

Psa 21:6 *Surely you have granted him unending blessings and made him glad with the joy of your presence.*

Psa 40:17 *Yet I am poor and needy; may the LORD think of me. You are my help and my deliverer: O my God, do not delay.*

Psa 57:1 *Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, for in you my soul takes refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed.*

Isa 25:4 *You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat. For the breath of the ruthless is like a storm driving against a wall.*

Isa 41:10 *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

- f. The LORD gave His peace to His people: “The LORD...give you peace” (v. 26). God’s peace includes *peace with God* and the *peace of God*. People who reject God, who rebel against and curse Him, need to make peace with God. If they fail to make peace with God, they are doomed eternally. However, when a person makes *peace with God*, he comes to know the *peace of God*. God’s peace floods his heart and life. He has the perfect assurance that he belongs to God, that God looks after and cares for him. He knows that he has the hope of eternal life and that he is marching to the promised land of heaven. God floods him with a great sense of triumph, conquest and victory — triumph over all the pitfalls and enemies of this life, even the enemy of death. The believer knows that when his moment comes to die, God will transport him right into His presence. He knows that he will live eternally in the promised land of heaven, in the presence of God Himself. God gives this kind of peace to His people, to those who truly trust Him. The *peace of God* floods the believer’s heart and life.

John 14:27 *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*

John 16:33 *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

Phil 4:7 *And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Psa 29:11 *The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace.*

Psa 119:165 *Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble.*

Psa 26:3 *For your love is ever before me, and I walk continually in your truth.*

Isa 26:3 *You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.*

Isa 48:18 *If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea.*

2. Note the result of God's blessings: the blessings of God actually identify a person as belonging to God. When the blessings of God are seen upon a person's life, that person is identified as a believer. It is clearly seen that he is a follower of God. What a glorious testimony: to walk around with the blessings of God upon one's life, to be blessed so much that the blessings actually identify one as belonging to God.

John 15:27 *"And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning."*

Acts 2:4 *All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.*

Acts 4:20 *For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.*

Rom 8:14 *Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*

Deu 14:2 *For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession.*

Isa 43:10 *"You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me." ■*