A misty forest at sunrise with a beam of light shining through the trees.

*Benedictions
for the Church*

Week 1

**A Godly
Benediction**

Numbers 6:24–26

**“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.”**

Week 1 A Godly Benediction

Numbers 6:22-24 is perhaps the best-known benediction in all of Scripture, being recited by Christian and Jew alike for thousands of years. The words were given by God to Moses who then instructed Aaron and his sons. This three-fold blessing was from God and its promises are anchored in his holy name.

The priest prayed that God would show Israel favor by doing good for them, providing abundantly for his people as they relied on their great Provider. Ephesians 1:3 expands any temporal blessing of God's people to "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" in Christ. Aaron and his sons would then pronounce Yahweh's protection over his people. He

would keep, guard and preserve them from their earthly enemies just as he keeps and preserves those who are in Christ from eternal and supernatural enemies (1 Timothy 1:12).

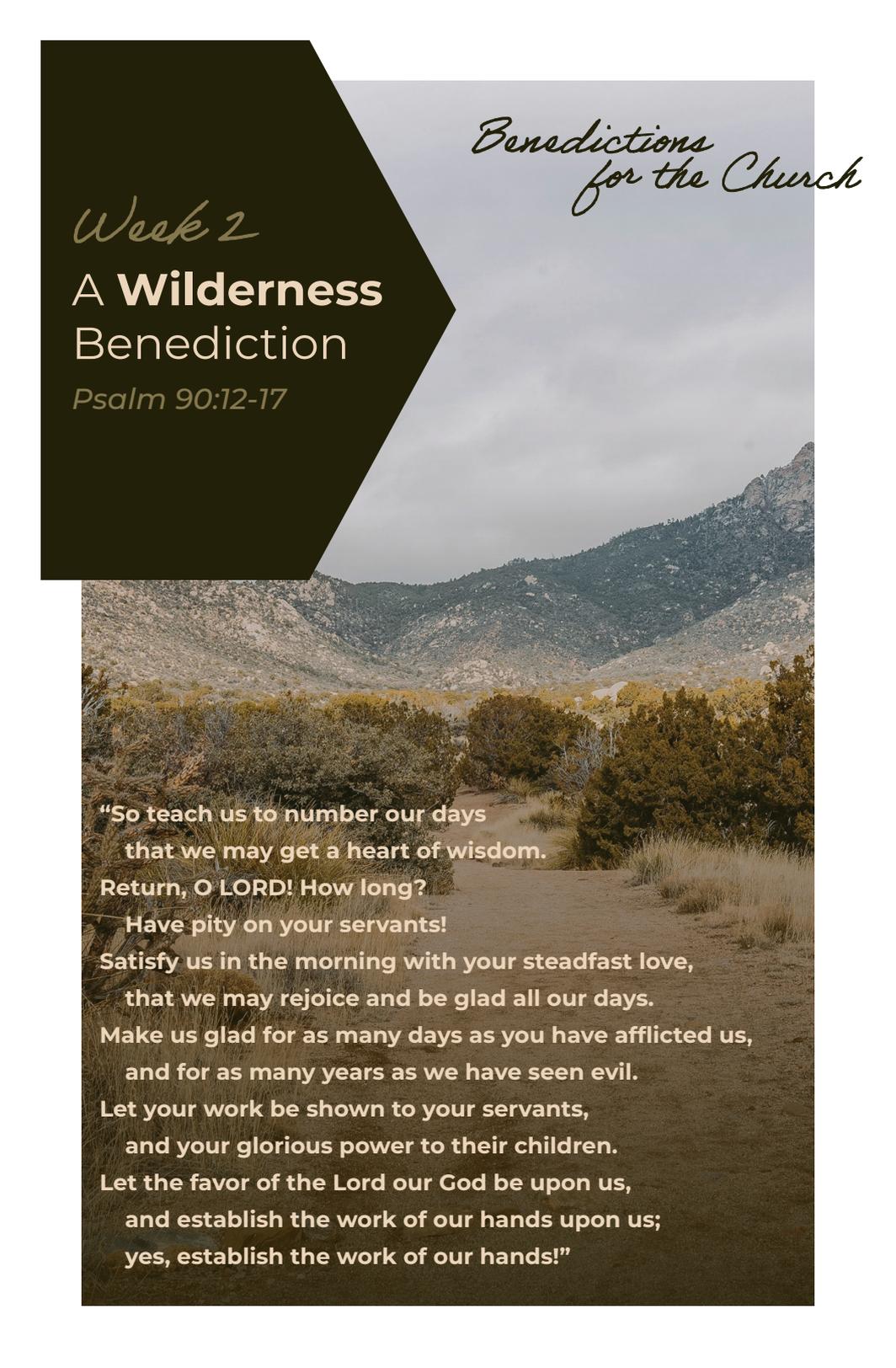
Glimpsing the glory and goodness of Yahweh is the next blessing for his people. As the sun shines upon the earth warming it, so the souls of God's people are warmed as we see his face and know his love more richly. It is in Christ that we see God's character and know his love most clearly (John 14:9). The blessing here speaks not just of knowing the glorious truth about God's grace, but of experiencing it. Jesus Christ who was full of "grace upon grace" (John 1:16) is the fullest expression of this. Through

him we experience this grace as we are united to him in faith and are transformed into his image as we behold his glory (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Our heavenly Father's smiling on us in favor and pleasure is envisioned in the intimate language of the final couplet. His tender countenance will fill us with his love and comfort us with his peace. The Hebrew concept of peace is not merely the absence of conflict; it is the presence of everything rightly ordered. It is the world as God intended it to be. We can know this peace partially now; eternally it will fully be ours in Christ (Ephesians 2:14). As this blessing was for Israel then, it is even more fully ours today in Jesus.

As you bless your church family this week, pray the Lord will:

- ▶ *Provide for their needs and keep them safe from the attacks of the enemy*
- ▶ *Allow them to see him clearly and experience his grace in Christ more fully*
- ▶ *Abide intimately with them filling them with his love and peace*



*Benedictions
for the Church*

Week 2

**A Wilderness
Benediction**

Psalms 90:12-17

**“So teach us to number our days
that we may get a heart of wisdom.
Return, O LORD! How long?
Have pity on your servants!
Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,
that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.
Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us,
and for as many years as we have seen evil.
Let your work be shown to your servants,
and your glorious power to their children.
Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us,
and establish the work of our hands upon us;
yes, establish the work of our hands!”**

Week 2 A Wilderness Benediction

Psalm 90 is the only psalm attributed to Moses. He writes in the context of the generation doomed to spend the rest of their existence wandering in the wilderness because of their rebellion against the Lord. As this generation drifted in the desert with no hope of entering the Promised Land, Moses reflects on God's goodness to them, even in his righteous judgment, recognizing that "from everlasting to everlasting, you are God." In the closing verses, he prays for God's blessing to sustain them.

Moses begins with a plea for wisdom to understand the brevity of life. Grasping our own finite frailties, we can learn to rightly order our lives. The final verse pleads for the Lord's work in and through his people which is further rec-

ognition of our limitation and need. We can reject self-reliance and self-governance by remembering we are temporary creatures made by a sovereign and eternal God.

Finding our ultimate satisfaction in the Lord's steadfast love brings joy and gladness into our lives. Moses wants the people to recognize the blessing that can never be taken away. God's love is unfailing and unending. This is ours in Christ and it is the rock that anchors Christian joy and gladness. As Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, "The Christian is a man who can be certain about the ultimate even when he is most uncertain about the immediate."

Seeing Yahweh's glorious power at work on behalf of his children

brings hope and peace. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). Notice Moses does not pray that God will love and work on behalf of his children. These things are already true. The blessing Moses seeks is that the people will understand and believe God loves them and works for them.

Like the Israelites wandering in the wilderness, we are pilgrims in this life waiting for our entry into the promised land of the heavens and earth made new (Hebrews 11:13). Daily we wade through the trials and triumphs of a world groaning under the weight of sin. May the Lord sustain us and teach us to recognize our weakness and need, and to rely on his strength and provision.

As you bless your church family this week, pray the Lord will:

- ▶ *Teach them to grow in our wisdom and understanding in light of the brevity of life*
- ▶ *Satisfy them with his great love for them*
- ▶ *Allow them to see his glorious work on their behalf*

*Benedictions
for the Church*

Week 3

A Three-Fold Benediction

2 Corinthians 13:14

**“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ
and the love of God and the fellowship
of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”**

Week 3 A Three-Fold Benediction

The apostle Paul ends his second letter to the church at Corinth with words that have served as a benediction in Christian worship for nearly two millennia. Here, divine unity amid diversity is highlighted in the work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each graciously bestowing a particular blessing upon God's people.

Jesus' grace, his unmerited favor, is invoked first. Earlier in the letter, Paul describes the shape of this grace: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). Through his incarnation, life and atoning death, Jesus took our poverty

and gave us the riches of salvation in return.

It is in this sacrifice of the Son that we experience the greatness of the Father's love for us: "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). God loved us while we were still estranged from him, sending his Son to die in our place. His unrequited love, demonstrated in the sacrifice of Jesus, brings salvation, offers comfort, pardons sin, sanctifies us and fills our hearts with joy and peace.

Embracing this grace and love through faith brings us into fellowship with the indwelling Spirit, who binds us as adopted children to

God the Father and as brothers and sisters of Jesus the Son. As we are drawn into communion with the Father, the Son and the Spirit in perfect fellowship, we are also united in fellowship with all who belong to the triune God (Ephesians 2:18–22).

This benediction would have been especially poignant for the church at Corinth, which was beset by factions and divisions. Christ's grace, the Father's love and the Spirit's unity were the solution to the church's strife. We would all do well to return often to what is ours in Christ. As we grow deeper in this grace, love and unity, they begin to shape our hearts, minds and actions.

As you bless your church family this week, pray the Lord will:

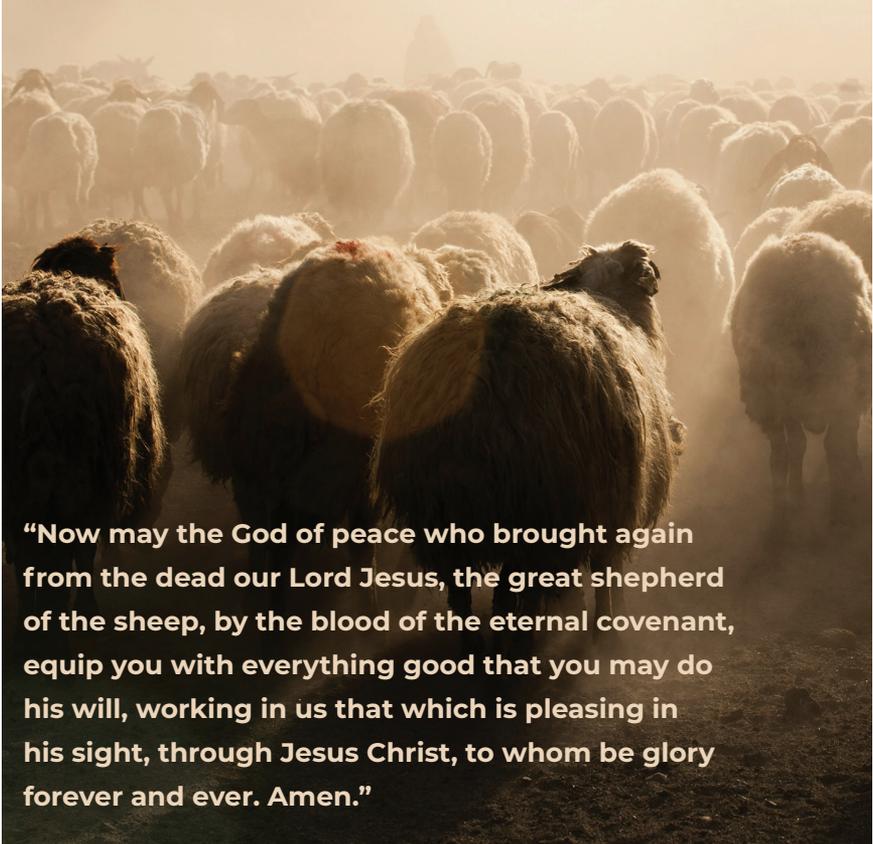
- ▶ *Fill them with a deep understanding of the grace that is theirs in Jesus Christ*
- ▶ *Grant them a palpable sense of his steadfast love*
- ▶ *Fill them with the Holy Spirit*

*Benedictions
for the Church*

Week 4

**A Gospel
Benediction**

Hebrews 13:20-21



“Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

Week 4 A Gospel Benediction

Written to Jewish Christians who found themselves persecuted for their newfound Christian faith, the central theme of the book of Hebrews can be summed up in the phrase “Jesus is better.” Many of these believers were struggling to stay faithful, and some were abandoning Christ to return to the Law. The superiority of Jesus over the Old Covenant and all that it entailed served to brace up the wavering faith of these believers.

This benediction gathers the letter’s prominent themes as the author invokes God’s blessing on all his readers. The source of all blessings is God himself (James 1:17), and his blessings come to us through his Son. Here the death and resurrection of Jesus are

presented as the means of our peace with God, which opens to us the deep wells of our Heavenly Father’s grace. All that is good about us, all that is right in us, all that is our hope is found solely in Jesus, the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep (John 10:11) and was raised again for our justification (Romans 4:25).

In many ways, this benediction summarizes the gospel, demonstrating how Jesus’ death and resurrection satisfied the requirements of the temporary Old Covenant of the Law and instituted the eternal New Covenant of grace. Reminding us that grace relies not on what we do for God, but on what God has done for us in Christ. Through Jesus, God has

equipped us with everything good that we may do his will.

In Christ, we have been made righteous and holy before God. Through the Holy Spirit, God empowers us so that we might become in practice what we are in position, working in us that we might do “that which is pleasing in his sight.”

All of this is through Jesus, because of Jesus and for Jesus, who is glorified for all eternity. Christ is our greatest blessing, and all other blessings flow from him forever and ever. Amen.

As you bless your church family this week, pray the Lord will:

- ▶ *Give them a deeper understanding and appreciation for all that Christ did for them*
- ▶ *Equip them that they may do his will, working in them that which is pleasing in his sight*
- ▶ *Be glorified in their lives as he transforms them into his image*