

Introduction

1. My initial intent was to cover these final few verses with last week's passage
2. Quite often we simply gloss over the final words of the Epistles because they often include what we think are rather insignificant things
 - a. For instance, the names and greetings Paul includes at the end of many of his letters (including the nearly chapter long list at the end of Romans)
 - b. Or, the requests he makes for Timothy to bring him his cloak and parchments
3. The end of this letter can also seem a bit insignificant at first glance because it's a small benediction along with a few simple requests that don't have much theological significance.
4. However, when we actually spend some time looking at these verses, their value and importance become quite clear
5. So, I ultimately decided that simply taking them on to last week's passage wouldn't do them justice

A. Paul's Benediction

1. Define benediction: an invocation or request of blessings upon an individual or individuals
2. Common in the NT epistles and takes primarily two forms:
 - a. A request for God's blessing upon His people:
 - 1) Romans 15:5-6, 13
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 13:14
 - 3) Ephesians 3:20-21; 6:23-24
 - 4) Phil 4:7
 - 5) 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17
 - 6) Hebrews 13:20-21
 - b. A blessing of God by His people--often as part of a doxology (praise to God):
 - 1) 2 Peter 3:18
 - 2) Jude 24-25
 - 3) Revelation 1:5b-6; 5:12-13; 7:12
3. In vs. 23-24 we have Paul's Benediction upon his readers and it comes with a DECLARATION, a BLESSING, and a PROMISE (READ 23-24):
 - a. The DECLARATION (23a): **"God of peace"**
 - 1) You might have noticed that many of the benedictions we read above included a declaration regarding an attribute of God or His character:
 - a) **"God of endurance and encouragement..."** (Romans 15:5)
 - b) **"God of hope"** (Romans 15:13)
 - c) **"To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God..."** (1 Timothy 1:17)
 - d) **"[the] only Sovereign, the King of Kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see..."** (1 Timothy 6:15-16)

- 2) Here Paul declares that God is a **“God of peace”**—the question is what does it mean?
 - a) This title is used five times in the NT (Rom 15:33; 16:20; Phil 4:9; Hebrews 13:20 and here)
 - b) When we hear this, we might be tempted to think it means that God is only a God of peace, and not wrath, but we know that’s not true (e.g. Romans 1)
 - c) We might also be tempted to confuse it with another similar phrase, **“the peace of God”**, which according to Philippians 4:6-7, **“guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus”**—in other words, that sense of peace given by the Holy Spirit
 - d) However, the title **“God of peace”** is more likely a reference to God being the author of the peace that now exists between Himself and His people, which He made possible through the sacrifice of His Son:
 - Romans 5:1: **“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,”**
 - Ephesians 2:14-18: **“For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. 17 AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; 18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.”**
 - Colossians 1:19-20: **“For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, 20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.”**
- b. The BLESSING (two parts):
- 1) The first part of the blessing was for their complete sanctification (23b): **“May the God of Peace Himself sanctify you entirely”**:
 - a) Theological words, like sanctify, are important but sometimes with these big words we fail to grasp their real meaning
 - b) To sanctify something means to make it holy (NET: **“make you completely holy”**), but also to set it apart for service to God—both of these are true in our case as Christians (we’ve been made holy and have been set apart)
 - c) Sanctification is an interesting thing for the Christian because in one aspect it is a completed event, but in another aspect we still have to learn the practice of walking in it:
 - Completed event and something we should recognize/accept (generally represented by the aorist or perfect tense):
 - Acts 20:32; 26:18
 - 1 Corinthians 1:2; 6:11
 - Hebrews 2:11; 10:10, 14
 - The Practice of Holiness:
 - 2 Timothy 2:21
 - Romans 6:19
 - 1 Thessalonians 4:1-7

- 1 Peter 1:15
- Revelation 22:11

- d) Paul's use of the word "**entirely**" here suggests that he is referring to God making us completely, totally holy
- When we are born again, God takes the righteousness and holiness of Christ and imputes it to us
 - According to Paul, Christ's righteousness and holiness is now our righteousness and holiness (1 Corinthians 1:30)
 - This makes us as holy as we can possibly be—and this is true from the moment of our new birth in Jesus
 - Our problem is that we don't always walk like we're holy
- 2) The second part of the blessing was for their sanctification to be protected (23c): "**and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.**"
- a) Not only does Paul desire their complete sanctification, but he entrusts God to keep (protect) their sanctification
- b) This is essentially a continuation of the first blessing and ultimately defines what it means for God to sanctify us completely—that He will keep us sanctified until the very end when we face Jesus without blame
- c) Now, we need to clarify something here:
- Paul is speaking here of our position in Christ, in which we are ultimately blameless because of what Christ did on our behalf
 - However, the Bible also says that we will have to give account of ourselves to God based upon how we choose to live (Romans 14:12)
 - In other words, if we have a cavalier attitude about righteousness and holiness, and live a life pursuing the flesh, we may have some splainin' to do when we see Jesus (in the words of Ricky Ricardo from I Love Lucy)
 - So, we are still called upon to pursue holiness and righteousness
 - Peter challenged his readers to "**be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless**" (2 Peter 3:14)
- d) NOTE: Paul's use of spirit, soul and body is merely a way of stressing completeness (e.g. in every part of their life); it's not support for the trichotomy view of personhood (nor is Hebrews 4:12)
- c. The PROMISE (2): "**Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.**"
- 1) Paul ends his benediction with some encouragement—a promise
 - 2) God would sanctify them completely
 - 3) God would protect their sanctification
 - 4) Why? Because He is faithful, able to do it, and will bring it to pass
 - a) 1 Corinthians 1:8: "**who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.**"
 - b) Philippians 1:6: "**For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.**"

- c) Colossians 1:22: **“He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—”**
- d) Jude 1:24: **“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy,”**

B. Paul’s Final Requests (25-27)

- 1. He asks for their prayers (25): **“Brethren, pray for us.”**
- 2. He asks them to share a sign of affection (26): **“Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.”**
 - a) There’s no real consensus on the function or significance of the holy kiss
 - b) A kiss in Paul’s day and culture was used as a sign of love, respect, reconciliation and even performed when striking a contract (Wanamaker, p. 208)
 - c) It’s mentioned by Paul four times in the NT (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12 and here)
 - d) It’s likely it was simply a way of expressing love and affection for one another much like we might share a handshake or a hug
- 3. He asks for them to share his letter (27): **“I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren.”** (this is something Paul asked of the Colossians as well: Colossians 4:16)

C. Paul’s Final Blessing (28): “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”
