

Our Gracious God by Brain Brodersen

by Brian Brodersen

This sermon explores the character of God as a blessing, keeping, smiling, gracious, and attentive God, and encourages believers to cultivate a deeper understanding of his nature.

Duration: 33:53

Scripture: Numbers 6:22-27, Psalm 29:11, Psalm 103:13, Psalm 139:1-6, Proverbs 16:7, Isaiah 26:3, Matthew 6:26, Philippians 4:7, James 1:17

Topics: "Gods Character", "Spiritual Wellbeing"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of having the right concept of God for our spiritual well-being, highlighting God's desire to bless, keep, smile upon, be gracious, be attentive, and give peace to His people. It discusses the misrepresentation of God throughout history and the need to properly understand and represent God's character. The sermon encourages focusing on studying and understanding the nature and attributes of God to experience His peace and blessings in the tumultuous world we live in.

Transcript

This morning we're going to draw our text from the sixth chapter of the book of Numbers. Numbers chapter 6 verses 22 through 27. And I think it's appropriate on this first Sunday of the new year to just make sure that our concept of God is the right one.

Because our spiritual well-being is dependent on it. If I have a wrong concept of God, it's going to result in spiritual sickness really. But if I have the right concept of God, it's going to lead to prosperity of soul.

And that's what we're looking for in this year to come. And so verse 22, the Lord speaking. And the Lord spoke to Moses saying, speak to Aaron and to his son saying, in this way you shall bless the children of Israel saying to them, the Lord bless thee and keep thee.

The Lord make his face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel and I will bless them.

Now the thing that really strikes me here, first of all, is that this is God's instruction to Moses and Aaron. He says, this is how you are to bless the people. This is what I want you to say to them.

This is what I want them to understand when they think of me. One of the big problems that has occurred over the long history of the church is a failure to properly represent God from leadership. And oftentimes to

give the wrong impression or to put forth a concept of God that isn't true to who God is.

Many people have been really sort of repelled from drawing near to God because of a wrong concept of God, because they got the wrong picture. Maybe it was something that just, you know, developed in their mind, but maybe it was something that was communicated to them through a preacher or maybe it was something that they saw in a parent or an authority figure who claimed to be a Christian. But it just so radically messed up their concept of God that it caused them to not want to have anything to do with God.

And that's a sad and a tragic thing. God wants to be properly represented. As a matter of fact, later in the life of Moses, you might remember, Moses in his frustration with the people of Israel, he himself failed to properly represent God.

And he presented to the people an attitude of hostility and anger and impatience as though that was the Lord's attitude toward them. Maybe you remember that incident where Moses, they're crying out for water and Moses says, must I strike this rock and get you water, you rebels? But that wasn't God's heart for the people at that time. He was compassionate concerning their plight.

And that misrepresentation on the part of Moses cost him the promised land. Because he misrepresented God, because he failed, as the Lord said, to sanctify the Lord before the people, he was not allowed to go into the promised land. So God takes serious the representation of him and he wants to be properly represented.

And so he tells Moses and Aaron, this is how you're to represent me to the people. You're to put my name upon them and I'm going to bless them. Now as we look at this pronouncement here, we see a few things.

We see first of all, that our God is a blessing God. We see that our God is a keeping God. We see that our God is a smiling God.

We see that he is a gracious God, that he is an attentive God and then ultimately that he is the God of peace. And so we want to break that down and look at each one of these different things that are stated here in this pronouncement. And so we see from the first one that the Lord is a blessing God.

What do you think of when you think of the word blessing? The word in my mind just conjures up favor and goodness and abundance. And that's the idea. When we talk about the blessing of God upon a person's life, we're talking about the hand of God upon a person's life in a favorable way.

We're talking about a sense that the Lord is with that person. But you see this isn't something that's limited to just a certain few people. It's available to all of God's people because he is a blessing God.

But again I think sometimes we we think of God in almost the opposite way. We think of God as not really wanting to bless us but just sort of you know looking for an opportunity to judge us. We think of God as impatient and irritable and intolerant and upset and easily angered and you know we have a feeling that at any moment he could just in his wrath just you know just sort of blow us off the face of the earth.

But this is not the picture of God. This is a distortion. The true picture of God as is being revealed right here and other places in scripture is that the Lord our God he's a blessing God and his first desire is to bless us.

All the many many places throughout scripture where God tells us how to be blessed. He tells us so many different ways to experience his blessing. Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord.

In his law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree planted by the rivers of water and so forth. There it is.

God says this is how you can be blessed or as Jesus would say in what we commonly refer to as the Sermon on the Mount. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who mourn.

Blessed are the meek. Again God giving us instruction on how to experience his blessing because he's a blessing God and he wants to bless us. And as we start off this new year it's so important to start off the new year on the right spiritual foot knowing God is for me.

God's not against me. God is not upset with me. He doesn't have sort of an underlying seething that's developing where one day soon he's just going to break out in judgment against me.

That's not the Lord. The Lord's heart his desire is to bless because he is a blessing God. He wants his favor to be upon our lives.

Now sometimes people think of blessing strictly in a material sense. They say well if you know if God's going to bless me I guess what I'm in for is an you know an abundance of material prosperity coming my way. People think of it in those terms and although there might be some of that that is really a shallow view of it.

What we're talking about is a prosperity of the soul that no material thing on earth could even come close to providing for us. It's that our soul is prospering that we're prospering spiritually that in our heart and in our mind we're overflowing with joy and with peace and with just that sense of God's hand upon our lives. I love what we read in was it Nehemiah who who continued to refer to the good hand of the Lord that was on him.

He just sensed that God's hand was upon him and may we sense that in this year to come because our God is a blessing God but he's also a keeping God. Our God is a keeping God. Our God protects us.

He watches out for us. He's concerned with us. This is why Jesus said that we're not to be worried like the unbelievers worry.

We're not to be all stressed out and concerned over the things that are going on around us in the world because we have a heavenly father who knows what we need. Who knows our plight. Who knows our situation and who is committed to watching over us and keeping us.

And in so many different ways throughout the scripture we see that God is a keeping God. We see how he kept Israel through their journey in the wilderness. We see how he kept them against their adversaries.

We see how Jesus when he came how he kept those followers of his and then we think of how we're told by the Lord about God's concern for us over and over again. Jesus tells us things like that and so God is watching over the affairs of our life and he's keeping us. And I think this point of being kept by God has been so beautifully illustrated in the situation with our pastor.

As I shared a little bit on Sunday night about the things that had developed prior to this incident that have actually proven to have kept him from something more severe in regard to this stroke. When Cheryl and I

were living in London and ministering there we had a woman who had joined us in the ministry and her name is Ina and Ina was from Finland and she was a nurse. We became close friends with her and since we came back 10 years ago we've stayed in touch and she's been all over the world.

Israel, Australia and different places but a few years ago she settled back down at home here. And about six months ago Cheryl started saying to me you know I need to get Ina into my mom and dad's home. We need to have her there.

She's wonderful. She's godly. She's a nurse.

They need that kind of you know just security and Cheryl felt really really strongly about this. So she would talk to me about it and she would mention it to Ina and you know pray a little bit and mention it to Chuck occasionally. But you know about a month and a half ago it all sort of came together.

Ina was looking for a place to stay temporarily and Chuck and Kay had an open room anyway. She ended up there in the house and we realized now that it was her presence there and her medical background that enabled her to immediately diagnose what was going on with Pastor Chuck and get him the treatment and get him to the hospital. Those things that he would not have done for himself because you know how he is.

I mean you know he said to her I don't want to go to the hospital. She said you're going to the hospital. But in doing so the Lord used that to keep him from a more extensive damage through this and so you know we can look at this and we can see how God has kept and then you know even watching now as he's been you know through the hospital situation and now into the rehab and it's amazing.

The Lord has just surrounded him with believers and many of the the doctors and the therapists and the different people that are working with him. Oh Pastor Chuck we're so glad you're here. We're so glad that we can minister to you and here's a here's a classic one he told me a couple days after he'd been in.

He was going into I think it was either the CAT scan machine or the MRI and and the guys the guy says to him uh yeah so I heard you're a pastor and and Pastor Chuck said yes yes I am. He says well this is what the guy says the guy says yeah I know Chuck Smith down at Calvary Chapel. Chuck looks up and says I am Chuck Smith.

So I don't know the guy probably hasn't been here for a while. So you know again just you know seeing God's keeping and as he's gone into the the rehabilitation center there um you know again just a number of believers there and Cheryl walked in uh to visit the other day and as she walked in she was talking I don't know if she's talking to her mom or to my daughter or something and there was a group of uh ladies sitting there and all of a sudden one of the ladies said is that the voice of Cheryl Broderson?

And she was like yes that's me and she says oh I listen to you on the radio all the time and come and pray with us we're just praying and and then uh Pastor Chuck was saying he joined them for the prayer meeting the other day so you know in all of that I am sharing that to say we see the keeping hand of God. We see how the Lord watches out for us and that's not just the case with Pastor Chuck but it's the case with all of us God's children and many of you have similar stories and testimonies as to how God has kept you your loved ones your family members and things and we see over and over again the the evidence of this keeping God that we serve but then we also see here that the Lord he's a smiling God and when it says the Lord make his face to shine upon thee that's really the idea that's being expressed that God would

smile upon us and and remember again this is what the Lord is saying to Moses and Aaron to say to the people and this is God's disposition it's a disposition of friendliness it's a disposition of kindness and he's smiling upon us he's not frowning at us from heaven but he's smiling upon us he's looking upon us with delight as we as a as it says in Psalm 103 so beautifully as a father pities his children so the Lord pities those who fear him but just looking with that love and that that affection upon us as his children he's a smiling God and then he is a gracious God may he be gracious unto thee and I want to sort of couple these two things together God's again his heart toward us is a heart full of grace I love the word gracious it's a it's a I just like it it's one of those words that I it makes me feel good just to hear it a gracious person a person who's kind a person who's benevolent a person who's patient and and loving and considerate this is how God is A.

W.

Tozer in his classic book on the attributes of God the knowledge of the holy this is what he said in regard to this point he said the goodness of God is that which disposes him to be kind cordial benevolent and full of good toward men his is tender-hearted he is tender-hearted and of quick sympathy and his unfailing attitude toward all moral beings is open frank and friendly by his nature he is inclined to bestow blessedness and he takes holy pleasure in the happiness of his people the whole outlook of mankind might be changed if we could all believe that we dwell under a friendly sky and that the God of heaven through or the God of heaven though exalted in power and majesty is eager to be friends with us what a beautiful picture God's disposition toward us kindness he's cordial he's

benevolent he's full of good but yet so often people have the wrong perspective the wrong concept the wrong view some years ago I was counseling a young lady here and she came to see me and she's filled with anxiety and all and she you know told me that she just felt that God was angry with her and that she the judgment of God was was soon to fall upon her life and I asked her well have you done something that you know you think might bring that about and she said well I I can't really think of anything but probably and this is what I said to her I said you know I have a daughter I'm speaking of my youngest daughter and I said you know she can be very naughty at times and I said but you know I have never ever ceased to love her with all my heart even when she's naughty I love her totally

and completely and I said this and if I who am sinful by nature if I have that much love for my child how much more love do you think that God has for you who's not sinful and that's really what Jesus told us didn't he he said if you being evil or sinful by nature if you know how to give good things to your children if if you know how to love them and patiently endure with them and all of that how much more God you see our God is a smiling God he's a gracious God and what a difference this will make practically for you and for me if we get up in the morning and get out of the bed thinking that we serve a blessing keeping smiling gracious God you know if nothing else goes right throughout the day it doesn't matter because this is the God that we know this is the God that's committed to us

this is the God that we're serving but he goes on and he says the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and this speaks of the fact that God is an attentive God God is attentive he pays close attention to the details of our life now again many people have different ideas of God and some have formulated them in a way that you know states rather concisely their belief and there there is uh the idea that is known as deism deism is the belief in a God but he's a God who's a far off he's a God who stands at a distance he's a God who created everything but since then he's been uh disengaged from it all and just sort of letting it all go on and follow its natural course the God of the Bible is not like that and I don't know how it was that men

came up with this picture of God they certainly

didn't find it in the pages of scripture because the scriptures teach us the opposite of that that God is he's attentive he's very interested in our lives he's interested in the details of our lives and again of course Jesus taught us these things you remember Jesus said this he said a sparrow cannot drop to the ground without your father's consent and then he said if God is so concerned about the birds you remember he said look at the sparrows they neither sow nor reap they don't gather things into a barn but yet your heavenly father feeds them and if God takes care of the birds how much more will he take care of you and then he adds oh you of little faith because so often our faith is small and our thoughts of God are the wrong thoughts and we're thinking God isn't attentive God doesn't

really know he's not aware of my situation or he doesn't care about what I'm going through nothing could be further from the truth he's an attentive God and of course we know that he is a God of tremendous detail a great thing to do is meditate on creation because the one thing or the two things creation shows you one of course is the power of God but secondly what creation shows you is how God is so interested in the details of things he's got the the the deepest interest in the smallest kinds of things details if you if you look into the microscopic world if you look into the the world of the cells and all of that and you see this unbelievable complexity and all of this detail and then we understand why Jesus said things like God has numbered the very hairs on your head so as we enter

into this new year I want you to think about God in this way that he is attentive he is watching over me he is aware of the circumstances of my life and not only is he aware of them but he is committed to helping me work through these situations and taking care of me in the process and blessing me as I go this is the idea of God that we need to have this is the concept of God that we need as his people now the last point here is that he says the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace you know really if you just take each one of these things to heart the the end result will be that you will have peace if you take to heart that you serve a blessing God a keeping God a smiling God a gracious God an attentive God that will in and of itself result in peace what what are you

going to be worried about what are you going to be troubled over because God's in control and he's not just in control of the the bigger picture of the universe or in control of the you know affairs of the world but he's in control of your very life and again the scriptures remind us of these things many times over and I think a good exercise for all of us this year would be to just through the scriptures and through good Christian literature just study the person of God.

Cheryl and I as we were driving in this morning she she was telling me a couple days ago that you know something was really speaking to her about the name of the Lord and so this morning she just sort of said incidentally she said you know I I feel like the Lord showed me kind of my study for the year to come and it's to it's to focus on his name and just to really come to understand his name in a greater way in all of the implications of that and you know she said it it was it was interesting to me because for about the past year that's been a subject that I've just sort of been engaged in studying going through some of the passages in scripture and just meditating on those places like exodus 34 where the Lord reveals his name to Moses a great text there this passage here or some of the the great passages in Isaiah the 40s or the psalm psalm 103 psalm 139 and I found myself over the past year and a half or so being drawn toward books that are talking about the nature of God and reading Knowing God by J.I.

Packer or One Holy Passion by R.C. Sproul, Knowledge of the Holy by A.W.

Tozer and as I'm meditating on these and as I quoted to you from Tozer this morning you know these kinds of things just they enrich us but this is the way we want to start the year this is the way we want to conduct ourselves in this year to come the automatic result is going to be peace now I don't have to tell you we live in a tumultuous world we live in a world that's peace is you know slipping away rapidly but does that mean that we have to lose it ourselves no and not only as we just you know take each one of these points and embrace them does that result in peace but then the additional element here is that God actually gives peace as well as we ask him as we seek him he imparts that to us and so in closing today this is this is the Lord's heart for you and for me in this year

to come this is his heart for us and again I go back to what I began with this is what fascinates me this isn't something that Moses and Aaron came up with this is God's instruction you know if you were to sit down and write out what you would like God to be for you you could not possibly come up with a better picture than this one I would imagine that we would all even in our expressed desire we would all fall short of what God has laid out himself here but this is the heart of God this is his desire he says in this way you shall bless them and he says you shall put my name upon them and I will bless them you know there's power believe it or not we sometimes use certain terms more or less as cliches we just get in the habit of saying them hey God bless you know we need to stop and

think a little bit when we say that because there's power in that to to bless one another to pronounce blessing and as we sincerely from our heart say hey the Lord bless you you know there's something to that that's what the priest were to pronounce over the people and the Lord says when they do that they're putting my name upon them and I will bless them we're a royal priesthood we're all of us priests and we can engage in pronouncing the blessing upon one another as we realize the the power of this blessing and as we just sincerely express it to one another and so I want to do that this morning just pronouncing upon you this blessing the Lord bless you and keep you the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you

peace and may this year this new year before us 2010 a new decade and I don't know why I'm so excited about this year because you know I don't get excited about too many things but I just you know I just have a sense that this this is a it's a year of blessing the Lord has blessing in store for us not just us here but for his people generally and I'm excited I'm thrilled but to go into the year just knowing that God's hand is upon our lives that his desire is to bless us because our God is a gracious blessing God may you receive the blessing of the Lord today and in the days to come let's pray father we thank you that you are this God the true God the living God the blessing God the keeping God the smiling God the gracious God the attentive God the God who gives us peace Lord that you are

slow to anger and you're plenteous in mercy that your thoughts toward us which are more than can be numbered are thoughts of good their thoughts of peace and Lord as we enter this new year may we leave behind all of the worries all of the anxiety all of the fears that may be followed us through the past year may we leave them behind and Lord step forward today with a new confidence in you because you are our gracious God and may we experience that outpouring of grace upon our lives that will lead to the blessing that you desire for us in this year to come we thank you Lord we praise you in Jesus name amen amen let's stand together well the pastors are up front as usual this morning and they're available to pray with you and you know maybe you would like them to lay hands on you and just

maybe even pray specifically for you or maybe in some cases there's some issues in your life maybe some some sin issues and things that need to be sorted out so you can have confidence that the blessing

of God will come upon you in this year to come whatever the case the pastors are up front they're available to pray with you they love to pray with you and again may the Lord bless you and keep you and fill you and may he just do all that's in his heart to do his heart is one a blessing and may he just be free to pour out those blessings on our lives in the weeks and in the months and in the year to come and again let's just lift our voices in worship as we close this morning singing how great is our God

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