

AND NOW

THE LESSON: JUDE'S BENEDICTION

A “benediction” is a short prayer invoking God’s blessing, guidance and help – an appropriate way for a worship service to close as we consider what comes next!

Sue Careless wrote about it this way: “We are heading out into the week and into the world. There we will be greeted by curses and blasphemies as we live and work in a world that does not rightfully and fully acknowledge a holy God. We will be tempted to curse as well. So we desperately need God’s blessing upon us, his benediction, which is the exact opposite of a curse.”

So it is that at the end of our 622 service, as we are about to head back into normal life, we pause to call upon God’s blessing, using the closing words of the Apostle Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians. This particular passage is often used because it refers to all three persons of the Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: *“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with us all evermore. Amen.”*

Many of the epistles (or apostolic letters) in the New Testament close with similar words of blessing, which also make for great benedictions. The writers of the epistles are leaving the readers with a job to do, but firmly rooted in the care of God. When we leave the church building, our relationship with God doesn’t end! There is so much more after we say, “Amen”.

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In a moment we’ll take a look at the closing verses of Jude’s epistle. Jude is the second last book of the Bible, and only 25 verses long. Jude’s letter is concerned with encouraging believers to defend the faith and to stand firm against false teachings. His closing remarks offer a good summary for us of what we face in the world, the job we have to do, and our God who is able to uphold us through it all.

AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Choose one of the benedictions in the New Testament epistles to pray with. You may want to rewrite it in your own words, using it as a springboard to offer your own life and worries to God. Here are a few suggestions:

- 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24
Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.
- 2 Thessalonians 3:16
Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all.
- 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.
- 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.

- AND/OR -

AND NOW

Take some time to pray through this prayer, pausing to reflect after each phrase.

Almighty God, who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplications unto thee; and dost promise that when two or three are gathered together in thy Name thou wilt grant their requests: Fulfill now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants, as may be most expedient for them; granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. Amen.

(THE PRAYER OF SAINT CHRYSOSTOM, BCP PAGE 15)

JUDE 1: **A JOB TO DO, A GOD WHO IS ABLE**

¹⁷But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁸They said to you, “In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.” ¹⁹It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. ²⁰But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. ²²And have mercy on those who doubt; ²³save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

²⁴Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ²⁵to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.