

**A CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP
SONGS OF ASCENT
LIFT UP YOUR HANDS - BLESSING**

Text: Psalm 134

Key Word; Blessing

Key Thought: God Blesses Us in Response to Our Blessing of Him

What is our response to the LORD once we've made it into His kingdom? This Psalm tells what the children of Israel did after they had reached the temple and had fulfilled their desires of worshipping God. They we're now prepared to leave. Are we as satisfied as they were after reaching their spiritual goals?

******* On election night of 1972, 3 men stood in an elite office after months of struggle, strategy, and sacrifice. They had just witnessed a landslide victory. They had finally reached the pinnacle of their dreams.

Here stood Haldeman with an arrogant and sullen look, Colson expressing a feeling of being let down, deflated; and Nixon walking about restless as he gulped down another scotch.

What a sight to see. The new President grumbling over the words he must now say to his fallen foe; his chief of staff expressing his anger with snarling words; and the architect of the political strategy sitting with a numbed look. *******

We may think that this is uncommon, but really it is the feelings of so many people after they reach the goals they set in their lives.

"Being part of electing a President was the fondest ambition of my life. For three long years I committed everything I had, every ounce of energy to Richard Nixon's cause. Nothing else mattered. We had no time together as a family, no social life, no vacations."

Charles Colson
"Born Again"
p. 10

Once he reached his goal he found he couldn't enjoy it. People have many goals which quickly leave them empty. Some strive for an academic degree; others for a career position; some labour to achieve a certain standard of living; others look at acquiring possessions; many get married and have children; certain ones travel to many countries; a few desire to meet some celebrity.

There is nothing wrong with these things in themselves, but when we search for fulfilment of life in them, we are quickly disappointed. There must be a better way. **The Psalms of Ascent have taken us on a journey where life can find rich fulfilment.** Psalm 120 begins with *Repentance ("teshubah")* and ends with a life of *Praise ("berakah")*.

There are 2 words that are translated "*blessed*" in our Bibles. One is "*ashre*" which describes "*having it all together in the sense that we feel good because we are in accord with God and His creation.*"

The other word is "*berakah*" which describes "*what God does to us and for us:*"

"He enters into a covenant with us,
He pours out His life for us,
He shares the goodness of His Spirit,
the vitality of His creation,
the joys of His creation"

Eugene Peterson
"*A Long Obedience*"
p. 185

God is one who **stands**, who **stoops** and who **stays** with us to make our lives meaningful and fulfilled. **Lets Consider the Two Main Focuses of this Psalm and Compare Our Lives with Them.**

I. OUR BLESSING OF GOD (Psalm 134: 1,2)

II. GOD'S BLESSING OF US (Psalm 134:3)

I. OUR BLESSING OF GOD (Psalm 134: 1,2)

The Bible tells us that the Levites who were assigned as musician/singers were to fulfil their duty both day and night.

"Those who were musicians, heads of Levite families, stayed in the rooms of the temple and were exempt from other duties because they were responsible for the work day and night."

I Chronicles 9:33

Moses summed up the duties of the tribe of Levi by telling them that they were to carry the Ark of the Covenant and stand before the LORD to bless His name (Deuteronomy 10:8ff). King David also made worship unto God a paramount duty for the Levites.

I. OUR BLESSING OF GOD (Psalm 134: 1,2) (Contd.)

"They were also to stand every morning to thank and praise the LORD. They were to do the same in the evening."

I Chronicles 23:30

As this Psalm was being sung, the 24 Levites, the 3 priests, and the captain of the guard, were to be on duty from sunset to sunrise at their posts, while the multitude of worshippers were making their way out of the gates, which would soon close for the evening.

The pilgrims were now heading back home after a wonderful time of expressing their love toward God. But before they left through the outer courts they turned back toward the keepers of the temple and sang,

*"Praise the LORD, all you servants of the LORD who minister (stand) by night in the house of the LORD.
2. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the LORD."*

Psalm 134:1,2

The people wanted to encourage the Levites to do their privileged ministry with zeal, never allowing familiarity to breed contempt. **The pilgrims wanted their priests to keep watch over the Temple of the LORD with an alertness.** There was no time to slumber and sleep.

*"Awake, awake, O Zion, clothe yourself with strength. Put on your garments of splendor, O Jerusalem, the holy city. The uncircumcised and defiled will not enter you again.
2. Shake off your dust; rise up, sit enthroned, O Jerusalem."*

Isaiah 52:1,2

One hymn writer put it so wonderfully when he wrote,

*"Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him all creatures here below
Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts,
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost."*

I. OUR BLESSING OF GOD (Psalm 134: 1,2) (Contd.)

*** The Jewish Targum explained what was done during the Temple watch. After midnight, the chief of the door-keepers took the key of the inner Temple and went with some of the priests through the small postern (side entrance) of the Fire Gate.

After entering the inner court they would divide into 2 companies, each carrying a torch. One company would make sure that all was ready for the morning Temple service. In the Bake House (where the Mincha - meat offering was made) they were met with a cry "*All well.*"

The other company of priests went to bathe themselves and put on their garments for morning praise.

The 2 companies would then meet in the stone chamber and under the guidance of the officer who gave the watchword, along with a member of the Sanhedrin, and surrounded by other priests clad in their robes of office they were assigned their daily duty by casting lots.

J.J. Steward Perowne
"Spurgeon's Treasury of David"
Vol VII, P. 133

We must also be alert, diligent, always mindful of the work of God. When the night settles upon the Church may its holy ones guard its truth and not become discouraged, but rather bless the LORD even in the darkest hours. The priests had to wash their hands before they could raise their hands to God.

II. GOD'S BLESSING OF US (Psalm 134:3)

"God is our fountain of blessing, the heavens and the earth are evidence of His blessing, the church is His channel of blessing."

"Come near to God and he will come near to you."

James 4:8

God wants to bless us. It is easy for us to bless God because He is so worthy, but for God to bless us He must make us what we are not. We will never become worthy (outside of the grace and mercy of God) to receive His blessing.

II. GOD'S BLESSING OF US (Psalm 134:3) (Contd.)

"Reflect upon your present blessings, of which every man has many; not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some."

Charles Dickens

"Never undertake anything for which you wouldn't have the courage to ask the blessing of heaven."

Georg Christoph Lichtenberg

"We can never be blessed until we learn that we can bring nothing to Christ but our need."

Vance Havner

When you think of the blessings of God, remember one child's description of an elevator: *"I got into this little room and the upstairs came down."*

Michael Green
"Illustrations for Biblical Sermons"
p. 36

After receiving a blessing from the people, the priests in turn blessed the people. God wants us to receive His blessing. **Those who spend time in God's blessing naturally want to bless others.**

We don't have to get TO the end of the road to enjoy what is AT the end of the road.

"All the way to heaven is heaven."

Catherine of Siena

A blessed end is paved with a blessed means to that end. God placed us on this earth to glorify Him. Don't settle for second best when God has something better for you. **God blesses us in so many ways that we often don't even recognize Him with us and working on our behalf.**

We cannot see into His eyes even though He is staring right at us. We often don't sense His loving arms even though they are extended towards us.

II. GOD'S BLESSING OF US (Psalm 134:3) (Contd.)

*** One day the great theologian, Karl Barth was on a bus in Basel, the Swiss city that he lived in. A man came and sat beside him, a tourist. Barth struck up a conversation, *"You are a visitor, yes? And what do you want to see in our city?"*

The man replied, *"I would like to see the great theologian, Karl Barth. Do you know him?"*

"Oh, yes," said Barth, *"I shave him every morning."*

The man went away satisfied, telling his friends that he met Barth's barber. ***

Enjoy God's presence. Your journey of faith takes you right before Him. Converse with Him and enjoy His willingness to commune with you. Become like the Levitical priesthood and bless others in response to His blessing of you.

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Date: July 24/16

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30 Am

Song: Come and Let us Go - D

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I. OUR BLESSING OF GOD (Psalm 134: 1,2) - *I Chronicles 9:33; I Chronicles 23:30; Psalm 134:1,2; Isaiah 52:1,2*

II. GOD'S BLESSING OF US (Psalm 134:3) - *James 4:8*