



Lesson 16: Blessing

Psalm 134 (The Message)

¹⁻³ **134** Come, bless God,
all you servants of God!
You priests of God, posted to the nightwatch
in God's shrine,
Lift your praising hands to the Holy Place,
and bless God.
In turn, may God of Zion bless you –
God who made heaven and earth!

I. Stand, Stoop, Stay

In Psalm 120, the first of the Songs of Ascents, we saw the theme of repentance developed. The word in Hebrew for repentance means, a turning away from the world and a turning toward God – the initial move in a life goal set on God. The way of faith can have many challenges. It requires all that is in us and these songs help us see the road we must travel. But what happens once we arrive? Will we be disappointed or joyful?

Psalm 134, the final song of Ascents gives us the evidence. The way of discipleship begins in an act of repentance and concludes in a life of praise. It is clear the controlling thought of this song and the key word is bless God, bless God, God bless you. And because God blesses us, we bless God. We respond with that which we have received. We are people who are blessed to bless others.

II. An Invitation & A Command

There is not a better summarizing and concluding word in all of Scripture than blessing. Psalm 134 features the word in a form we might call an invitational command. "Come, bless God...Lift your praising hands...and bless God."

Read one way, the sentence is an invitation: "Come, bless God." The great promise of being in Jerusalem is that all may join in the rich temple worship. The sentence is an invitation; it is also a command. Having arrived at the place of worship, will we now sit around and tell stories about the trip? Will we sightsee? Will we look for another holy place to visit? But that is not why you made the trip, bless God. You are here because God blessed you. Now you bless God.

III. *Feelings Don't Run The Show*

We are invited to bless the Lord, we are commanded to bless the Lord. And then someone says, "But I don't feel like it. And I don't want to be a hypocrite. The biblical response to that is "Lift up your praising hands to the Holy Place, and bless God!" You can lift up your hands regardless of how you feel; it is a simple motor movement. You may not be able to command your heart, but you can command your arms. Lift your arms and bless; just maybe your heart will get the message and be lifted up also in praise.

Most probably the people who were first addressed by this command were the professional leaders of worship in the Jerusalem temple, the Levite's ("you priests of God, posted at the nightwatch in God's shrine"). They worked in shifts around the clock during the festival time, and through the night some of them were always on duty. The great danger in those hours was that worship might be listless and tiresome. What can you expect at 3:00 o'clock in the morning? "No excuses," says this Psalm, "your feelings might be flat, but you can control your muscles: lift up your hands."

IV. *Glorify God, Bless God*

There is at least one thing the Westminster Shorter Catechism has right in how it answers the question, "What is the chief end of man?" What is our final purpose? What is the main thing about us as disciples of Christ? Where are we going, and what will we do when we get there? The answer, "To glorify God and enjoy Him forever."

Glorify. Enjoy. There are other things involved in Christian discipleship. The Songs of Ascents have shown us some of them. But it is extremely important to know the one thing that overrides everything else. Blessing God!

Grace and gratitude belong together. Grace evokes gratitude like the voice of an echo. Gratitude follows grace as thunder follows lightning. We are so created and so redeemed that we are capable of enjoying God. All the movements of discipleship arrive at a place where joy is experienced. Every step of ascent toward God develops the capacity to enjoy him. Not only is there, increasingly, more to be enjoyed, there is the acquired ability to enjoy it.

Best of all, we don't have to wait until we get to the end of the road before we enjoy what awaits us there. So, "Come, bless God...God bless you!"