

Zeal

Psalm 134

Dr. Paul Cannings

A. The Center of it All (v. 1):

1. Behold – Everyone needs to give specific attention to worshiping the Lord with a sincere heart. It needs to always be the center of our lives, the focus for which we live.
 - a) Thank God for having brought our journey to a prosperous end. All ye servants of the Lord, which by night stand in the house of the Lord; i.e. ye special servants of the Lord, priests and Levites, now standing within his courts, and engaged in His worship. The temple was never left without a body of priests and Levites, to keep it and sing praises in it.^[1]
2. Behold – Because of all the distractions that can take place, we must make a decision to intentionally purpose in our hearts to worship the Lord just like David did.
3. Blessed – When we enter His house of worship we are commanded to have a humble attitude (blessed means to bow and give God praise) and to reverence and adore who God is.
4. Blessed – To be blessed by God is to be joyous in His presence (Deuteronomy 28:47-48). This act of worship is an intentional purposeful statement of our trust in Him that regardless of whether the week was good or bad, we choose to believe that God is going to work things out for our good because He is faithful.
5. Lord – The person who we make an intentional decision to purposefully, joyously, and with reverence, adore is always in control, because He has all authority and power. This is why genuine worship, despite the difficulties we may experience, is a demonstration of trust and respect.

6. All servants – God does not expect anyone who does not know Him to worship Him in a blessed manner.

a) The verb that the niv translates “minister” has to do with taking up one’s post or station. This need not refer to as a ritual service of some sort, but simply to those priestly personnel who were assigned guard duty at night. ^[2]

7. All servants of Lord – Anyone who has a sincere experience with God is a servant because daily, they respect His authority and power, they seek His presence faithfully and serve Him like a slave serves their master. This person also experiences who the Lord is; they willingly worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:24).

a) Priests and Levites served in the temple at all hours of the day and night. Evening duties included keeping the lampstand lit and the sacrifices burning as well as guarding the gates (Ex. 27:21; Lev. 6:9; 1 Chron. 9:22–27). The verb “to minister” can be more literally translated as “to stand” (esv; nrsv; nasb mg.). This metaphorical use of this word is common in the Old Testament for a posture of ready service before a king or God (David “stood before” Saul [1 Sam. 16:21–22]; angels stand before Yahweh while awaiting orders [1 Kings 22:19–21]). ^[3]

8. All servants of Lord – David experienced the power of God through so many struggles; as a result no one could stop him from worshiping God even when there was a plague (1 Chronicles 21-22).

a) The departing worshipers call on the Levites to continue the praise for the Lord through the night (1 Ch. 9:33).

9. Who serves/stood by night – We must be purposeful in making sure God’s house of worship is faithfully and sacrificially served. This attitude blesses God because it is a demonstration of our respect and honor for Him.

a) The psalm is very suitable for pilgrim-bands arriving, as they commonly would, late in the day at the temple gates, and announcing their arrival to those

within, who would be expecting them, and would call on God to bless their pilgrimage to them (ver. 3).^[4]

b) This posture is illustrated by the many statues of standing worshipers that were placed in Mesopotamian temples. These representations typically show hands folded in front representing a “self-binding” or surrender before the deity, but another gesture of the hands, lifted up, is emphasized in verse 2 (see comments on 28:2).^[5]

c) Pagan temples were silent at night, because their gods had to rest (1 Kings 18:27), but “He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep” (121:3–4, nkjv). The Lord gives sleep to His beloved people, but He stays awake and guards the city and watches over the family (127:1–2). He also hears the praises of His people.^[6]

10. House of the Lord – Absolutely nothing should distract us from our commitment to make His house of worship a place, where by our faithful service, it is vividly clear that the Lord is honored.

11. Lift up your hands – We are commanded to raise up our hands as a sign that we give up all authority in directing how we choose to live when we come into His presence.

12. Lift up your hands – By lifting up our hands we signify that we have no control over our lives and all that we have accomplished, we offer it to Him because we view it as His favor towards us.

13. Sanctuary, holy – The reason why the Psalmist would say “lift up hands in the sanctuary” is because in our worship to the Lord, we are also demonstrating that “whatever we do in word or deed is done to His glory.” (Colossians 3:17; 1 Timothy 2:8)

14. Blessed the Lord – Our desire and passion must with all humility joyously and reverently, vividly demonstrate all of God’s favor towards us so that all who hear us view the Lord favorably. Our conviction that God is always doing good towards us should be manifested by the manner in which we praise Him.

B. Leads to Blessings (v. 3):

1. May the Lord – The Lord always has the ability to do everything He promises to do. He is all powerful and will faithfully execute His love towards us.

2. Blessed you – When our attitude is as described above, the Lord is committed to endlessly execute His favor towards us. His blessings also mean that His continuous favor can make us prosperous.

a) The Lord blesses thee in return for thy blessing the Lord (vv. 1, 2). The reference is to the Mosaic blessing pronounced by the priests alone (Num. 6:24). So the whole collection of pilgrim-songs closes with the blessing of the Lord on the people: a fit conclusion.^[7]

b) Worship provides the context for celebrating the joys of family life and affirming the unity which binds together the wider family of God (Psalms 127; 128; 133). Here, there is space for eager expectancy (Psalm 130), quiet trust (Psalm 131), joyful thanksgiving, and praise (Psalms 124; 134). If you are ever tempted to dismiss worship in the Jerusalem temple as fear-stricken legalism or sacrificial mumbo jumbo, read again the pilgrim Songs of Ascents.^[8]

3. Zion – God’s blessings are directed from our worship of Him in His place of worship (Psalm 128:5). Thanks to the work of David, Zion is a place of worship that will be in place forever.

a) It is highly likely that David captured Jebusite Jerusalem with cunning ability and did not create any substantial damage; “Fortress Zion” remained intact and became the “city of David” (cf. H. J. Stoebe, ZDPV 73 [1957]: 73–99).^t However, the inhabitants of the city also continued to dwell there; one of their members even became a priest under David (Zadok; cf. H. H. Rowley, JBL 58 [1939]: 113–41; id., FS Bertholet 461–72; additional bibliog. in K. Koch, BHH 3:2200). According to Psa 110, which applies Jebusite royal ideology explicitly to the Israelite king of Jerusalem, Yahweh guarantees the dominion of the king from Zion over the antagonistic foreign nations that threatened the kingdom (v 2).^[9]

4. Zion – After returning from exile in Babylon, God instructed the people to make the rebuilding of His temple a greater priority than their own homes (Haggai 1) because when His place of worship is honored in the manner described above, His response is to bestow on His worshipers His good will.
5. He who made heaven and earth - God created out of nothing, the heavens and the earth which is vivid before us and He sustains it all. There is no way He does not have the power and the authority to prosper us, no matter how difficult things may seem.
6. He who made heaven and earth - A true worshiper reveres and honors the nature of God, especially in the house of God which in turn leads to a blessed life constantly nourished by God's favor.
7. He who made heaven and earth - It is David's commitment to worshipping God that led to His blessings and His eternal throne (2 Samuel 7). David would say; "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God, My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" (Psalm 42:1-2)
8. He who made heaven and earth – Keeping all that God is and means at the center of our lives shapes the nature of our view of Him, which in turn determines our worship.

^[1] Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. (1909). [Psalms](#) (Vol. 3, p. 275). Funk & Wagnalls Company.

^[2] Matthews, V. H., Chavalas, M. W., & Walton, J. H. (2000). [The IVP Bible background commentary: Old Testament](#) (electronic ed., Ps 134:1). InterVarsity Press.

^[3] Walton, J. H. (2009). [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary \(Old Testament\): The Minor Prophets, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs](#) (Vol. 5, p. 430). Zondervan.

^[4] Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. (1909). [Psalms](#) (Vol. 3, p. 275). Funk & Wagnalls Company.

^[5] Walton, J. H. (2009). [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary \(Old Testament\): The Minor Prophets, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs](#) (Vol. 5, p. 430). Zondervan.

^[6] Wiersbe, W. W. (2004). [Be exultant](#) (1st ed., pp. 182–183). Cook Communications Ministries.

^[7] Fausset, A. R. (n.d.). [A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Job–Isaiah](#): Vol. III (p. 388). William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited.

^[8] Davidson, R. (1998). [The vitality of worship: a commentary on the book of Psalms](#) (p. 434). W.B. Eerdmans; Handsel Press.

^[9] Jenni, E., & Westermann, C. (1997). In [Theological lexicon of the Old Testament](#) (p. 1073). Hendrickson