

PSALM 134

This is the last of the fifteen songs of degrees; and, if they were at any time sung all together in the temple-service, it is fitly made the conclusion of them, for the design of it is to stir up the ministers to go on with their work in the night, when the solemnities of the day were over. Some make this psalm to be a dialogue.

I. In the first two verses, the priests or Levites who sat up all night to keep the watch of the house of the Lord are called upon to spend their time while they were upon the guard, not in idle talk, but in the acts of devotion.

II. In the last verse those who were thus called upon to praise God pray for him that gave them the exhortation, either the high priest or the captain of the guard. Or thus: those who did that service did mutually exhort one another and pray for one another. In singing this psalm we must both stir up ourselves to give glory to God and encourage ourselves to hope for mercy and grace from him.

PSALM 134:1-3

A CALL TO BLESS GOD

A song of degrees.

This psalm instructs us concerning a two-fold blessing: —

I. Our blessing God, that is, speaking well of him, which here we are taught to do, v. 1, 2.

1. It is a call to the *Levites* to do it. They were *the servants of the Lord* by office, appointed to minister in holy things; they attended the sanctuary, and kept the charge of the house of the Lord, ^{GEN}Numbers 3:6, etc. Some of them did *by night stand in the house of the Lord*, to guard the holy things of the temple, that they might not be profaned, and the rich things of the temple, that they might not be plundered. While the ark was in curtains there was the more need of guards upon it. They attended likewise

to see that neither the fire on the altar nor the lamps in the candlestick went out. Probably it was usual for some devout and pious Israelites to sit up with them; we read of one that *departed not from the temple night or day*, ⁴¹⁷Luke 2:37. Now these are here called upon to *bless the Lord*. Thus they must keep themselves awake by keeping themselves employed. Thus they must redeem time for holy exercises; and how can we spend our time better than in praising God? It would be an excellent piece of husbandry to fill up the vacancies of time with pious meditations and ejaculations; and surely it is a very modest and reasonable to converse with God when we have nothing else to do. Those who stood *in the house of the Lord* must remember where they were, and that holiness and holy work became that house. Let them therefore *bless the Lord*; let them all do it in concert, or each by himself; let them *lift up their hands* in the doing of it, in token of the lifting up of their hearts. *Let them lift up their hands in holiness* (so Dr. Hammond reads it) or in sanctification, as it is fit when they lift them up *in the sanctuary*; and let them remember that when they were appointed to wash before they went in to minister they were thereby taught to *lift up holy hands* in prayer and praise.

2. It is a call to us to do it, who, as Christians, are made priests to our God, and Levites, ⁴¹⁸Isaiah 66:21. We are the *servants of the Lord*; we have a place and a name in his house, in his sanctuary; we stand before him to minister to him. Even by night we are under his eye and have access to him. Let us therefore *bless the Lord*, and again bless him; think and speak of his glory and goodness. Let us *lift up our hands* in prayer, in praise, in vows; let us do our work with diligence and cheerfulness, and an elevation of mind. This exhortation is ushered in with *Behold!* a note commanding attention. Look about you, Sirs, when you are in God's presence, and conduct yourselves accordingly.

II. God's blessing us, and that is doing well for us, which we are here taught to desire, v. 3. Whether it is the watchmen's blessing their captain, or the Levites' blessing the high priest, or whoever was their chief (as many take it, because it is in the singular number, *The Lord bless thee*), or whether the blessing is pronounced by one upon many ("*The Lord bless thee*, each of you in particular, thee and thee; you that are blessing God, the Lord bless you"), is not material. We may learn,

1. That we need desire no more to make us happy than to be blessed of the Lord, for those whom he blesses are blessed indeed.

2. That blessings out of Zion, spiritual blessings, the blessings of the covenant, and of communion with God, are the best blessings, which we should be most earnest for.
3. It is a great encouragement to us, when we come to God for a blessing, that it is he who *made heaven and earth*, and therefore has all the blessings of both at his disposal, the upper and nether springs.
4. We ought to beg these blessings, not only for ourselves, but for others also; not only, The Lord bless *me*, but, The Lord bless *thee*, thus testifying our belief of the fulness of divine blessings, that there is enough for others as well as for us, and our good-will also to others. We must pray for those that exhort us. Though *the less is blessed of the greater* (~~300~~ Hebrews 7:7), yet the greater must be prayed for by the less.