



Approaching God

Begin your time with an opening prayer

Take a moment to quiet your heart and ask God to help you experience his presence today. Ask Him to free you from any distractions as you begin to read and meditate on today's passage.

Psalm 134 - Blessing

Passage Introduction:

For some the goal is an academic degree; for some a career position; for some a certain standard of living; for some acquiring a possession, getting married, having a child, landing a job, visiting a country, meeting a celebrity. But having gotten what we had always wanted, we find we have not gotten what we wanted at all. We are less fulfilled than ever, and are conscious only of a kind of deadness inside. In Psalm 120, the first of the Songs of Ascents, we saw the theme of *repentance* developed. The word in Hebrew is *těshubah*, a turning away from the world and a turning toward God—the initial move in a life-goal set on God. It was addressed to the person at the crossroads, inviting each of us to make the decision to set out on the way of faith. Each of the psalms following has described a part of what takes place along this pilgrim way among people who have turned to God and follow him in Christ. But when we get to where we are going, what then? What happens at the end of faith? What takes place when we finally arrive? Will we be disappointed? Psalm 134, the final Song of Ascents, provides the evidence. The way of discipleship that begins in an act of repentance (*těshubah*) concludes in a life of praise (*běrahkah*). It doesn't take long to find the key word and controlling thought in the psalm: *bless* God, *bless* God, God *bless* you.

Eugene Peterson - *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*

Bible Reading, Study & Meditation - Read the passage slowly 2 or 3x's.

Start with Engaging the Text: Take a few minutes to highlight, circle, or underline key words.

Psalm 134 - A Song of Ascents (NLT) - 1 Oh, praise the LORD, all you servants of the LORD, you who serve at night in the house of the LORD. **2** Lift your hands toward the sanctuary, and praise the LORD. **3** May the LORD, who made heaven and earth, bless you from Jerusalem.

Questions for Reflection & Meditation

- As you meditate on this short passage, what are some blessings you've experienced in reading through the Psalms of Ascent?

- “There are two words which are translated “blessed” in our bibles. One is *’ashre*, which describes the having-it-all-together sense of well-being that comes when we are living in tune with creation and redemption. The other word is *běrahkah*. It describes what God does to us and among us: he enters into covenant with us, he pours out his own life for us, he shares the goodness of his Spirit, the vitality of his creation, the joys of his redemption. He empties himself among us, and we get what he is. That is *blessing*.” - *Eugene Peterson*
Where do you long to experience God’s blessing and to be a blessing for others right now?

Psalm 134

Passage Summary - (From The ESV Transformation Bible)

This final psalm of the psalms of ascent calls the people of God generally, and those ministering at the temple on behalf of the people specifically, to join together in offering praise to their God. The lifting up of holy hands (v. 2) is an outward expression of adoration and worship. It acknowledges the true greatness, not of the people themselves, but of the God whom they love, serve, and worship.

Yet in their very worship of God they recognize how very much they need his continued blessing on their lives. Their worship therefore leads naturally to expectation of God’s continued blessing on them (v. 3). Rightly seen, both the offering to God of worship, and the receiving from God of what we need, are the twin sides of all true worship. God is honored both as we give expression to his greatness and glory, and as we open our hearts and hands to receive from him what only he can give. After all, he alone “made heaven and earth” (v. 3), and hence he alone stands above all need. What a marvelous conclusion to the songs of ascent—a reminder of the obligation and joy of God’s people both to offer praise worthy of God’s greatness and to receive his blessing which we need day by day. We, the needy ones, give glory to God as we receive what he graciously shares out of the bounty of his infinite fullness—a grace ultimately made manifest in his own Son.

Key Takeaway:

As you read today’s passage, what are 1 or 2 main takeaways that you wrote down that you want to take with you? How would you briefly summarize your observations and meditations for today?

Close in Prayer:

Close by turning today’s Psalm into your own prayer. Write some of your own prayers here using sections of Psalm 134 as a guide using the theme of blessing.

- vs. **1** - *Oh, praise the LORD, all you servants of the LORD, you who serve at night in the house of the LORD.*
- vs. **2** - *Lift your hands toward the sanctuary, and praise the LORD.*
- vs. **3** - *May the LORD, who made heaven and earth, bless you from Jerusalem.*