

## **BLESSED, WHOSE GOD IS THE LORD**

Psalm 144: 1-15 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Dr. J. C. (John Charles) Ryle (1816-1900) once told a compelling story he witnessed. An atheist was addressing a crowd of people in an open air gathering. He was trying to persuade a large crowd that there was no God and no devil, no heaven, and no hell, no resurrection, no judgment, and no life to come. He advised the people saying, “Throw away your Bibles. Don’t pay attention to what preachers say. Think as I think and do as I do.” In the middle of his address, a poor old woman suddenly pushed her way through the crowd, to the place where he was standing. She stood before him. She looked him full in the face. ‘Sir,’ she said, in a loud voice, ‘Are you happy?’ The atheist looked scornfully at her, and gave her no answer. ‘Sir,’ she said again, ‘I ask you to answer my question. “Are you happy? You want us to throw away our Bibles. You tell us not to believe what preachers say about Christ. You advise us to think as you do, and be like you. Now before we take your advice we have a right to know what good we will gain by it. Do your fine new ideas give you a lot of comfort? Do you yourself really feel happy?”

The atheist stopped, and attempted to answer the old woman’s question. He stammered, and shuffled, and fidgeted, and endeavored to explain his meaning. He tried hard to return to the subject. He said, “I didn’t come here to preach about happiness.” But it was of no use. The old woman stuck to her point. She insisted on her question being answered, and the crowd took her side. She pressed him hard with her inquiry, and would take no excuse. At last, the atheist stepped down from the podium and left, and went sneaking off in the confusion. His conscience would not let him stay: he dared not say that he was happy. He wasn’t. Whenever a man speaks against the Lord and His Word, ask him if his views make him feel comfortable within himself. Ask Him whether he can say, with honesty and sincerity, that he is happy. One grand test of a man’s faith is, “Does it make him happy?”

Today, let’s look at Psalm 144. This Psalm pictured for David what is also true for us all as believers. We all are engaged in a war, a battle, and a spiritual struggle that can become physical. For us who know Jesus, those born again into God’s family, we enlisted in God’s army and began our lifelong fight against the wiles and schemes of Satan—the devil, the enemy of our soul. He aims to steal, kill and destroy us, to capture and conquer us any way he can. The devil doesn’t fight fair and neither does he give up. His weapons are carnal, fleshly, and demonic. His torturous war waging is cruel. He aims in every way on every day to defeat and demolish our faith. Yet, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous. We have a Champion to help us fight our battles. There are three

blessings God uses to help us win our battles. These are three divine blessings He pours out on all believers who rely on Him.

**BLESSED ARE THE PEOPLE WHO HONOR THE LORD IN THE FACE OF PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL BATTLES.** (I.) Psalm 144: 1-4. “Blessed be the LORD, my Rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle; He is my steadfast love and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer; my shield and He in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me. O LORD, what is man that you regard him, or the son of man that you think of him? Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow.” This word blessed in verse one is different from the word blessed used twice in verse 15. The word blessed in verse 15 that says, “Blessed are the people to whom such blessings fall! Blessed are the people whose God is the Lord!—that word “blessed” is esher. It literally means to be level, to be straight, to be honest and to prosper. But esher is almost always translated happy, and most often “How happy!” even though in the ESV, it is translated blessed. Nevertheless, in verse one, the word blessed is not esher, but **barak**. Barak means to kneel to bless God. Now you know the rest of the story about how we honor the Lord in the face of our physical and spiritual battles. We honor the Lord by kneeling to bless Him, by kneeling to adore Him, and by kneeling to worship Him. We don’t know the psalmist in Psalm 95. It could be David, but there is no mention of this in the title of the psalm as being a psalm of David. Yet David in Psalm 144 seems to almost be referencing Psalm 95: 7 that reads, “Oh come, let us worship and bow down, (**kara**) —meaning to bend the knee, let us kneel, (**barak**) before the Lord, our Maker!

Beloved, be certain, blessed are the people who bend the knee, who honor the Lord by kneeling in adoration, worship, blessing and thanking the Lord. In the face of your spiritual battles, beloved, do you honor the Lord and bend the knee to Him? David was well-aware of the fact the Lord was guiding his fingers in the art of spiritual and physical warfare. The battle was real and the need for the help of the Lord was great. It’s true for all of us. Spiritual battles come and sometimes they last far longer than we could ever dream. It’s never too early or too late to bend our knees, to kneel and honor the Lord as we pour out our hearts to the one who trains our hands for war and our fingers for battle. It’s always important to bend our knees and to kneel to bless the Lord for being our **Hesed**, our steadfast love and our fortress, our stronghold, our deliverer, our shield, our refuge and the One who subdues enemies under us—v. 2. Our battles can cause the strongest soldiers of the cross to begin to doubt the will of God. The enemy sends people to discourage us, to blast us and to bewilder us, but God sends His messengers to bless us. When we are surrounded by those who question the will of God, and who question whether we are obeying the will of God, we must pray for them. Remember, and never

forget it. Our battle is not with people. People can get sideways with us and take out their blame for problems in their life on us. Our war is not against them. Our battles are against demonic principalities and powers in the heaven-lies-Eph. 6: 12. The battles the enemy brings to our lives are sent to destroy our faith! That is his purpose. All of us know the pain of losing trust in people. Often the enemy uses an idea planted in our hearts from someone who has been lied to. We have all been lied to and led astray as lambs, only to see those whom we love the most, sacrifice our trust in them on the altar of selfishness. We may all have lost faith in a person, but I pray God will help us to never lose our faith in Him. Faith must not only stand the test of time. True faith must also stand the test of trials.

David continues his honoring and blessing of God by blurting out loud what we all must feel at times in vs. 3-4. “O Lord, what is man that you regard him, or the son of man that you think of him? Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow.” Sometimes we let a temporal success go to our head. We get proud, but David is saying, “Why do you give a snap of the finger for me?” The Hebrew words David uses are awesome words—“you regard him” or “take knowledge” or “think of him. The literal translation would be “take-knowing.” The word for take or regard is **laqach**. Laqach means married to or drawn to, and knowledge or regard means to know as married people know each other intimately. On this Thanksgiving Sunday, kneel in honor to the Lord for the intimate relationship you have with the Lord, that He is married to you—drawn to you, we’re His Bride, though you and I are as mere breaths or shadows. Thank Him for thinking of you, or making account for you and me. The Hebrew word for think is **chasab**. Chasab means to plait hair or to weave a garment. God’s thoughts of us are precious for we are woven into His thoughts, plaited as if our lives were plaited into His.

Talk about something to shout about! Who are we, what are we—Casting Crowns says it well, “Who am I, that the Lord of all the earth Would care to know my name Would care to feel my hurt? Who am I, that the bright and morning star Would choose to light the way For my ever wandering heart? Not because of who I am But because of what You've done Not because of what I've done But because of who You are I am a flower quickly fading Here today and gone tomorrow A wave tossed in the ocean A vapor in the wind Still you hear me when I'm calling Lord, you catch me when I'm falling And you've told me who I am I am yours Who am I, that the eyes that see my sin Would look on me with love And watch me rise again? Who am I, that the voice that calmed the sea Would call out through the rain And calm the storm in me? Not because of who I am But because of what You've done Not because of what I've done But because of who You are.” This Thanksgiving, will you kneel before God and honor Him as David did? Secondly,

**BLESSED ARE THE PEOPLE WHO HUMBLE THEMSELVES BEFORE GOD IN THE FACE OF DESPERATE SITUATIONS** (II.) Psalm 144: 5-11.

“Bow Your heavens, O LORD, and come down! Touch the mountains so that they smoke! Flash forth the lightning and scatter them; send out Your arrows and rout them! Stretch out Your hand from on high; rescue me and deliver me from the many waters, from the hand of foreigners, whose mouths speak lies and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood. I will sing a new song to You, O God; upon a ten-stringed harp I will play to You, who gives victory to kings, who rescues David his servant from the cruel sword. Rescue me and deliver me from the hand of foreigners, whose mouths speak lies and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood.” David has already knelt before the Lord, barak. But now David is further humbling himself as God’s anointed second king of Israel, but a fugitive hiding in caves and in the wilderness. David is going to the top, to the King of Kings on his knees, humbly asking God for His divine intervention in his life. We have to be conscious of our divine calling from God—our eternally high destiny with Him. We must have faith to believe our deliverance is important enough for us to presume upon God directly to reach down from the heights of heaven to pull us from the battle, the storm, the agony, the trial, and the extremity we are in. What a mighty prayer from a humble man! We too can pray, “Lord, bow the heavens. Make a divine ramp from heaven to earth to rescue me. Send lightning as arrows and scatter my enemies. Make the mountains smoke and rout the enemy. Deliver me, Lord from the lies of the enemy that have been believed even by those I love.”

Beloved, one of the most desperate situations is when we are being thought of as evil, when the enemy has planted evil lies about us, and the dearest of friends have bought into those lies. Beloved, being delivered from mouths that speak lies and from the right hand of those whose right hand of falsehood is raised against us—is to be delivered from the father of lies—that Jesus called Satan in John 8: 44. Don’t think you cannot be fooled by Satan’s lies that even come unknowingly from your dearest friends. We can be fooled into believing lies about the David’s God has placed in our lives, those anointed by God, and we can think we have the scoop on an issue that misses it a mile. Beloved, be slow without two or three witnesses to bring an accusation against an elder or deacon or pastor. God’s Word is clear, “Receive not an accusation or a complaint or a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.” (I Timothy 5: 19) Did you know we each and every one can take up the complaint or an offense of a complainer who has lied about one of our leaders and we have been caught in cahoots with the accuser of the brethren? In church life, no lies can be so harmful as taking up a lying offense not based on witnesses, which is exactly what happened to David. That’s what he is speaking of in Psalm 144.

When David could have killed King Saul inside the cave in the wilderness of Engedi, when David cut off a corner of Saul's robe when he was relieving himself in the cave, what did David say. He followed Saul out of the cave and yelled to him at a distance, "Why do you listen to the words of men who say, "Behold David seeks your harm? Behold this day your eyes have seen how the Lord gave you into my hand in the cave. And some told me to kill you, but I spared you. I said, I will not put out my hand against my lord, for he is the Lord's anointed." (I Sam 24: 8-11.) In the face of all these lies and David's humble plea for deliverance, what does David do? Notice verses 9-11.

David continued to show his humility before the Lord by writing psalms—did he need to write more songs? Yes he did! Do we need to write or sing one more song—one more new psalm to our Deliverer—like Psalm 144? David sang in v. 9-11, "I will sing a new song to You, O God; upon a ten-stringed harp I will play to You, who gives victory to kings, who rescues David His servant from the cruel sword. Rescue me and deliver me from the hand of foreigners, whose mouths speak lies, (there are those lies again) and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood." Twice he speaks of a right hand as being the right hand of falsehood. For a new deliverance that hadn't yet arrived, David anticipated the deliverance by writing a new song. Something as wonderful as his deliverance needed a new effort of song-writing and praise. David was taking out his full toned ten string harp for this anticipated deliverance. He wanted his best song and his best accompaniment to match the greatness of God's mercy. What stands out to me is the picture in verse 7 of this rescue from many waters.

Robert Ellis, Jr. and Jon Owens wrote an awesome worship song, a new song in 2015 with the title, "Many Waters." The words and music I love. "Hallelujah, Hallelujah For the Lord Almighty reigns Hallelujah, Hallelujah For the Lord Almighty reigns I hear the sound of many waters Thundering now The song of hope From sons and daughters crying out I hear the sound of many nations Thundering now The song of hope, the celebration Crying out (Chorus) Can you hear the sound The sound of the Lion gathering His people Can you hear the sound The sound of the nations worshiping?" (Chorus) Even if you will never have anyone listen to your song, how many of you might God move to write to Him humbly your words of blessing Him for delivering you from desperation? Thirdly,

**BLESSED ARE THE PEOPLE WHOSE HAPPINESS IN GOD SHOWS IN THEIR FAMILIES AND ON THEIR JOBS.** (III.) Psalm 144: 12-15. "May our sons in their youth be like plants (or trees) full grown; our daughters like corner pillars cut for the structure of a palace; may our granaries be full, providing all kinds of produce; may our sheep bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our

fields; may our cattle be heavy with young, suffering no mishap or failure in bearing; may there be no cry of distress in our streets! Blessed are the people to whom such blessings fall! Blessed are the people whose God is the LORD!” Beloved, if there ever would be a song for us to sing out to the Lord in anticipated thanksgiving, it would be this one. Personalize it. Listen as I do. We all face our battles. To win the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, we must seek His help. The Psalmist knew the Lord could teach him how to fight in this battle, how to honor the Lord, how to kneel before Him, how to humbly bow and how to sing a new song to Him, and how to be happy in Jesus and how to see God’s blessings flow down from us as parents to our sons and our daughters, to their jobs and on to our nation.

When the cries of distress came in our streets on 9-11-01, when the terrorists drove those planes like missiles into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, they wanted to stick a dagger into the heart of America. In many ways, they did. They filled us with fear. They killed 3,000 lives. Along with destroying lives and buildings, they also struck a blow at our safety and security. It has struck a death blow to families. People have been saying, “How can you bring children into a world like this? Look at our world today—rioting in the streets. It’s fearful and dangerous. Beloved, the world has not changed since the World Trade Center fell to the ground. Whatever was wrong in America before September 11 is still wrong today. And whatever reasons we had in Jesus for hope before 9-11-01 in our fallen world are still true today. God hasn’t changed. His Word hasn’t changed. The gospel hasn’t changed. Every promise is still true. Nothing eternal has changed. We can still bring children into this world and we can still raise them for the Lord.

Join me in praying verse 12 for our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. “Paraphrase it. “Lord, make our sons right now like sturdy oak trees.” In their growing-up years, make them strong and powerful for You.” I am talking to you as young boys, teenagers and young men, college students and young adults. God has called you to leadership right now. Quit saying, “One of these days, I’ll be a leader.” Or “When I am married, or have children, I’ll be a leader.” No! Lead now! Jesus Christ needs you right now. Grow now! Lead now! Stand strong now! Don’t wait for tomorrow.” Men of every age—I call you to lead your families—in devotions, in faithful church attendance, in the Word, in prayer, in speech, and in action. Paraphrase it about your daughters. “Make our beautiful daughters both in form and function, pillars for you in our home and in their new homes. Help them like pillars, to help hold the family together and serve as the connecting points for your purposes in the home. Place them at the center of family life. Notice the difference between the oak tree and the pillar. The oak tree stands outside the home, as a supporter and a protector, as a leader and a defender, while the column

upholds the home within, with strength and beauty—for from our daughters are born our grandsons and our granddaughters. Pray for the farmers in our land, two of my sons in law are farmers. Bless their produce, make their sheep and cattle reproduce at peak level, with no mishaps in bearing their lambs and calves. Pray for our cities, “Stop the rioting in the streets, Lord. May there be no cries of distress. Stop ISIS. Stop terrorism. Bring us back to the Book of Books, the Bible, dear Lord Jesus. Make us truly happy as your blessings fall on us. Let us once more, be able-to say, in our land, “Blessed are the people whose God is the Lord.” Are these three blessings in your life alive and well? Do you honor God with your bowed knees and your adoration? Do you humble yourself before Him and sing new songs in humility to him? Are you happy in Jesus, raising your family and living as a happy believer, happy in Jesus? If so, you are blessed of God. Happy Thanksgiving!

together

CHORUS

Hallelujah, Hallelujah  
For the Lord Almighty reigns  
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