

PSALMS: DIARIES OF GODLY OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS

Psalm One Hundred And Thirty-Four - Directives For Those In Unheralded, Hard Ministries (Psalm 134:1-3)

I. Introduction

- A. It is easy to serve the Lord when the job is to be a high visibility, easy one. It is harder to stay faithful and fervent in the Lord when the job carries a low visibility and the task is more difficult.
- B. This pilgrim psalm addresses those in unheralded, hard ministries with helpful insight as follows:

II. Directives For Those In Unheralded, Hard Ministries, Psalm 134:1-3.

- A. This pilgrim psalm addresses those temple priests who ministered in the Jewish temple at night, Ps. 134:1.
- B. Reviewing Alfred Edersheim's work, The Temple, p. 147-148 leads us to see this as an unheralded, difficult ministry of which much was demanded of the priests involved:
 - 1. During the day, it was the duty of the Levites to guard the entrances of the temple to keep the unclean from entering where they were not supposed to enter, and thus defiling the temple, Ibid., p. 147.
 - 2. By day, these guards were periodically relieved, giving them opportunity to stay focused and sharp in their activities of keeping the temple clean of unsanctifying intruders, Ibid., p. 148.
 - 3. However, this task became much more difficult and unheralded at night:
 - a. By night, all 240 temple priests and Levites on call to minister at the temple were stationed **without** relief, meaning they had to stay watch **without sleeping**, Ibid.
 - b. As the "captain of the Temple" made his rounds to the twenty-four guard stations, each guard was to stand and properly salute him. However, failure for the priest or Levite to stay awake when the captain passed his way meant that that guard's clothes were to be set on fire, Ibid.! This is where the phrase, "Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments" in Revelation 16:15 takes on particular import as it reveals God's desire that believers serving God do not become spiritually complacent just because things are moving slowly or imperceptibly in an arduous, unheralded work!
 - c. Accordingly, service in "watching" at the night temple watches was **humanly** seemingly unrewarding and hard as fewer people often showed up to be screened at the temple, and physical limitations made it hard to stay awake! Nevertheless, the job was just as important as was the daily watch because of the necessity to keep the temple area sanctified for divine blessing!
- C. Accordingly, Psalm 134:1-3 is a call to those in unheralded, difficult ministries to stay fervent with God!
 - 1. The psalmist called on **all** the servants of Jahweh who ministered in the temple by **night** to stay in right relationship with the Lord and thus to bless Him, Psalm 134:1.
 - 2. They were to lift up their hands, a formal expression of prayer, an expression that no one else might see at the time except the Lord in a picture of doing one's service **not** as unto **men**, but unto **God**, v. 2.
 - 3. Accordingly, the psalmist pronounced a benediction on such faithful service in unheralded, difficult circumstances, calling the Creator of heaven and earth to bless them from His dwelling in Zion, 134:3!

Lesson: If ANY ("all" in v. 1 to be either a Levite or a priest) believer has been ASSIGNED by GOD to serve in an unheralded, hard task (v. 2), he must commune with the Lord (v. 1b-2) as his means of staying fervent over the difficulties he cannot handle and thus be blessed by God (v. 3).

Application: (1) Since this psalm addresses "all" servants in the temple, EVERY divinely appointed ministry is important! Thus, if we find ourselves in an unheralded "night" ministry, view it as being just as strategic as any "daytime", humanly more visible job! (2) Since night-watching carried a stiffer accountability due to the penalty for sleeping when sleep was much easier than in the day watch job due to the circumstances and weakness of those ministering, there are HARDER as well as EASIER assignments from God. If we find ourselves in a HARDER one, view it as an encouragement as God feels we qualify to fulfill the job where others may not, and so stay FERVENT! (3) Do so by keeping in close fellowship with God, 134:2 (cf. 2 Tim. 1:8 with 13-14 in the contexts of both Timothy's hardships (2 Tim. 1:3-4) and Paul's (2 Tim. 4:16-18).