

## The Lord of the Blessing

Psalm 147:11-20

<sup>11</sup> The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy. <sup>12</sup> Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion. <sup>13</sup> For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; he hath blessed thy children within thee. <sup>14</sup> He maketh peace *in* thy borders, *and* filleth thee with the finest of the wheat. <sup>15</sup> He sendeth forth his commandment *upon* earth: his word runneth very swiftly. <sup>16</sup> He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes. <sup>17</sup> He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold? <sup>18</sup> He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow, *and* the waters flow. <sup>19</sup> He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. <sup>20</sup> He hath not dealt so with any nation: and *as for his judgments*, they have not known them. Praise ye the LORD.

For our Thanksgiving weekend 2017, this passage is full of blessings for God's people. Here we find the Lord who blesses mankind generally and His people specifically. We are called upon to praise Him for His work in Jerusalem, His seasonal demonstrations in creation, and His wonderful Word. These are blessings that we will need to “... run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith;” (Hebrews 12:1-2)

Have you ever thought of your life as a race: an obstacle course with some significant hurdles and challenges? Let that illustration from Hebrews 12 settle into your thoughts for a moment. If your life were like an obstacle course, what would you want to know about it? What kind of guidance would you seek for this great challenge? Would you seek out a trainer to run your race course? Would you like to watch someone else run it before you take on the challenge? Would it help you to get specific training advice about how to get through some of the biggest obstacles ahead?

About two and half hours' drive to our south, there is a world-renowned obstacle course. On the banks of the Little Miami River, in Oregonia, Ohio, the Kings Domain course is more than 5 miles long with about thirty-five obstacles. The 2014 Obstacle Course Race World Championship was held there. On a recent trip, I had the opportunity to see part of that course. If you don't think we have any “real

mountains” here in Ohio, you should stand at the bottom of that river valley and look up at the obstacle course rising several hundred feet above you.

What if your life were like the Kings Domain course? What would you want to know and how would you train for it? Is it a timed event or just an endurance trial? What is the goal? Who are the referees and judges for this event? How is your success measured, and how would you avoid being disqualified before you reach the finish line?

In Psalm 147:11-20, we can find what we need to run the obstacle course that we call “life.” And that training is provided by the Lord of blessing who is our Judge and our Guide. How can we run our race to please this great Lord of the blessing?

**<sup>11</sup>The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.**

### ■ Pleasing the Lord of the blessing, v. 11

On this Thanksgiving weekend, verse 11 assures us that the Lord takes pleasure in certain people. Who are these people? He takes pleasure in those who reverently place their confidence in Him. They “**fear Him**” and “**hope in His mercy.**”

Ultimately, this focus on your relationship with the Lord – not merely on His rules and commands. Verse 11 describes an attitude of reverence in those who have respectfully received the promises of God’s mercy (His loyal love.) About these promises, the Apostle Paul wrote, “**For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us**” (2 Corinthians 1:20). One author commented, “Christ is God’s ‘yes’ to the promise to Abraham that by his seed all the nations of the earth will gain blessing and to David to raise up David’s offspring and to establish his throne forever. In Christ we not only see all God’s promises coming to fruition but also God’s unqualified ‘yes’ to humankind.”<sup>i</sup> God takes pleasure in those who take pleasure in His Son. Do you adore the Christ who died for your sin and rose again? True Christians fear to displease Him and yet confidently trust in His loyal love. And the Lord of blessing takes pleasure in them. Through trusting in Jesus, we can face the one who judges this race that we call “life.”

Throughout the Scriptures, we find God’s blessings upon those who fear Him. In Proverbs 14:26-27, we learn that, “**In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge. The fear of the LORD is a fountain of**

**life, to depart from the snares of death.”** On this Thanksgiving weekend 2017, it’s important to ask: do you take pleasure in the blessings of the Lord or the Lord of the blessings? Do you seek to please Him? In 1 John 3:22, we are called upon to “keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.”

## ■ Praising the Lord of the blessing, v. 12-20

Verse 11 teaches us how to please our Judge. Verses 12-20 give guidance from our great Guide to run the race of life. The framework for this guidance may surprise you.

### ○ For His blessings and guidance to Israel, 12-14, 19

Look at the words of Psalm 147:12: “**Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion.**” Historically, the Lord God has revealed His power and gracious compassion on Jerusalem, on Mount Zion.

King David defeated the Jebusites at Zion (2 Samuel 5:7, 1 Chronicles 11:5) and captured it for his capital city. Psalm 2 prophesied that God’s Anointed One would be poured on this mount. This was a reference to the Messiah, and Matthew 1:21 explains, “**thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.**” So, Psalm 50:2 declares, “**Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.**” Pay close attention to the words of Psalm 147:19-20, “**He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them.**” God chose a special people for Himself, the people of Israel (Jacob), to show forth His Word, His statutes and His judgments. He has given no other nation such marvelous revelation. What a privilege!

His approach has bothered some people. They ask, “Why did God bless Israel in this manner, and not my nation?” They look upon this blessing with jealousy and dismay. But let’s look at it another way – running your obstacle course. If you looked upon your life as an obstacle course with some significant hurdles and challenges, then you can see your advantage here. You have the advantage of watching someone run the obstacle course before you. Watch Israel run the hurdles! Watch their victories and their dismal failures. Learn how to turn back to God and take hold of Him (Isaiah 64:7). Surely this is the right way to look at the history of Israel, Romans 15:4: “**For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the**

**scriptures might have hope.”** (See also 1 Corinthians 10:1-11, taking special note of verse 6 and verse 11). Learn how to run your race and overcome your obstacles. Learn from what was written in God’s Word, and you will find patience and comfort to give you hope. What do we learn, according to Psalm 147:13-14?

**<sup>13</sup> For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; he hath blessed thy children within thee. <sup>14</sup> He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat.**

There have been times in the history of Israel when God strengthened their capital city. He gave them peace and filled them with the finest of wheat. Here is the very place where we can apply the lessons of Israel on an international level. Israel has run the obstacle course before us, but have we learned the lessons of the race? His Word, His statutes and His judgments can still guide us today.

On this Thanksgiving weekend in these United States, we have much to be thankful for. We have been blessed with peace within our borders for generations. And we have been blessed with some of the finest foods that the world has to offer. But we must pause to ask: did Israel forfeit its blessing of peace? Was it invaded by marauding bands? Did God’s chosen people later experience famine? Yes, through rebellion, they turned their backs on God. They loved the blessings of the Lord, but forgot the Lord of the blessing. You can see this pattern plainly in Deuteronomy 6:10-16.

### ■ **For His blessings in each of our seasons, 15-18**

Verses 15-18 reveal just how practical and relevant this psalm is for us today. “**<sup>15</sup> He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word runneth very swiftly. <sup>16</sup> He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes. <sup>17</sup> He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold? <sup>18</sup> He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow.”**

About verse 15, John Calvin wrote, “*He again touches upon some instances of the operation of God, everywhere to be seen in the system of nature. And as the changes which take place in the air, and upon the earth, and which should be considered evidences of his power, may perhaps be regarded by the world as the effect of chance, the Psalmist, before proceeding to speak of the snow, hoarfrost, and ice, expressly declares, that earth is governed by his power and control. The sending forth of his word is nothing else than the secret influence by which he regulates and governs all things, for without his orders and appointment no*

*movement could take place among the elements, nor could they be borne, now one way and now another, upon their own spontaneous impulse without his foregoing secret decree.”<sup>ii</sup>*

So when you put on your coat and walk out into the cool air after Sunday School remember who controls the weather. The snow, the frost, and the ice all call us to answer the question, “**Who can stand before His cold?**” And then when the warm weather of spring comes, we will know (v. 18) that “**He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow.**” The change of the seasons with every cool wind and every warm breeze testify to the Lord of the blessings. His cold weather is a blessing that kills the pests and pathogens and provides enough chilling hours for the bulbs to bloom in the spring. His warm winds will cause the tender branches to bud and bloom to bear precious fruit.

When they testified to the work of the Living God at Lystra, Paul and Barnabas taught, “**Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness**” (Acts 14:17).

Psalm 147 is similar to Psalm 19. Both portray “the natural revelation” of Creation (or “Nature”) and “the special revelation” of God’s Word. In the history of Israel, God’s chosen people, the Lord has used His seasonal winds and His glorious Word. And today, we can be thankful that we enjoy the benefits.

Can you see your life as a race: an obstacle course with some significant hurdles and challenges? If so you can use Psalm 147 to run your race.

- God blesses you with guidance by His glorious Word.
- God blesses you by giving you an example in His chosen people, Israel.
- God blesses you by continuing to give you fruitful seasons to this very day.

## **Applications**

- ✓ Search the Scriptures learn more about what pleases your Judge (v. 11).
- ✓ Live before Him with reverential respect and place your confidence in His steadfast love (v.11).
- ✓ Search your Old Testament to see how Israel ran the race before you. Learn how to overcome your individual obstacles by learning from Israel (vs. 12-14, 19-20).

- ✓ Enjoy the seasons and remember that they are God's gift to you even today (vs. 15-18).
- ✓ Praise God for His Word, His Statutes and His Judgments given to Israel (vs. 19-20).
- ✓ Praise the Lord with thankful hearts (v. 20).

*Pastor Gordon Dickson*

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<sup>i</sup> David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, vol. 29, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 103.

<sup>ii</sup> John Calvin and James Anderson, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol. 5 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 300–301.