

“Blessed Are the People”

INTRODUCTION: When God speaks He needs only to say something once. When He does it becomes a truth we should believe...

1. ...when He says it a second time it becomes our duty to pursue that truth...
2. ...and when He says something a third time, it becomes a passion of God we dare not ignore for our own good.
3. Three times in the Old Testament, God says this...
 - a. *Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,
 the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!* (Psalm 33:12)
 - b. *Blessed are the people to whom such blessings fall!
 Blessed are the people whose God is the LORD!* (Psalm 144:15)
 - c. *Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob,
 whose hope is in the LORD his God.* (Psalm 146:5)
4. And, perhaps even a fourth time in Deuteronomy 33:29.

*Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you,
 a people saved by the LORD,
 the shield of your help,
 and the sword of your triumph!
 Your enemies shall come fawning to you,
 and you shall tread upon their backs.”* (Deuteronomy 33:29)
5. *“Blessed is the nation, the people, he whose God is the Lord...”*
6. **Elizabeth deGravelles** and **Joseph Barlowe** have put this verse from Psalm 144 into song.

*Blessed the nation whose God is the Lord
 Blessed the land where He reigns
 Blessed the people who trust in His Word
 And worship His glorious name.*

*He is a loving and merciful God
 We are but children of dust
 He is our Refuge our Strength and Shield
 And He is the Lord that we trust*

*Blessed the nation whose God is the Lord
 Blessed the land where He reigns
 Blessed the people who trust in His Word
 And worship His glorious name.*
7. Tonight as we *bless the children*, I wanted to focus on Psalm 144...
 - a. And, in particular, verse 12

*May our sons in their youth
 be like plants full grown,*

our daughters like corner pillars

cut for the structure of a palace. (Psalm 144:12)

- b. What we should pray for our sons
- c. What we should pray for our daughters

8. The Psalm overview...

- a. First: It is a Psalm *of David*: a song from the King of Israel for the nation (people) of Israel.
 - i. Hence: a Psalm for the church by the head of the church
 - ii. David = a type of Christ (“son of David” – Messiah)
 - iii. Israel = the Old Testament church
 - iv. *Covenant Day School*
- b. Second: a hymn (prayer) with *four stanzas* and a *benediction*
 - i. Stanza one: a praise for God’s protection (1-4)

1. *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. (Psalm 144:1-4)

- 2. *Gist*: despite the fleeting nature of man and his susceptibility to danger, God has protected the King

- *Protector*: rock, fortress, shield, refuge
- *Teacher*: trains the King’s hands for war

- 3. **Note**: replace *King* with “*President*” (*government*)

- ii. Stanza two: A prayer for God’s rescue (5-8)

1. *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.* (Psalm 144:5-8)

- 2. *Gist*: David asks God to come down from heaven and rescue him and his people from other peoples who attack them – “*foreigners*”

- 3. **Note**: The dangers are as much *ideological* as they are military: *false ideas*; *destructive ideas*.

Whose mouths speak lies

and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood. (Psalm 144:8)

4. **A prayer for God to deliver us and our children from unbiblical, pagan and godless ideas (teaching)**

iii. Stanza three: a praise for God's victory over danger (9-11)

1. *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. (Psalm 144:9-11)

2. A second declaration of God's trustworthiness

3. But here the celebration is over God's gift of "victory to Kings (v. 10)

4. **Note a second time: A refrain...**

• *Rescue me and deliver me*

from the hand of foreigners,

whose mouths speak lies

and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood. (Psalm 144:11)

• **Deliverance from false religion and lies**

iv. Stanza four: a prayer for national prosperity (12-14)

May our sons in their youth

be like plants 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! (Psalm 144:12-14)

I. THE BLESSING OF OUR SONS (Psalm 144:12a)

1. "May our sons in their youth be like plants full grown..."

2. Here's a poetic picture of what a young boy should be growing into as a full grown man.

a. The span of life: "in their youth...full grown"

b. The picture: *plants* (not weeds)

i. Plants are wanted; weeds are not

ii. Plants are fruitful; weeds are not

iii. Plants are cultivated; weeds are wild

iv. Plants are useful; weeds are not

- c. Imagery: *young men growing up into mature males, ready to assume the responsibility of manhood.*
- d. **C. H. Spurgeon:** *Treasury of David; vol. 3; p. 359.*
Our sons are of first importance to the state, since men take a leading part in its affairs; and what the young men are the older men will be. He desires that they may be like strong, well rooted, young trees, which promise great things. If they do not grow in their youth, when will they grow? If in their opening manhood they are dwarfed, they will never get over it. O the joys which we may have through our sins and, on the other hand, what misery they may cause us! Plants may grow crooked, or in some other way disappoint the planter, and so may our sons. But when we see them developed in holiness, what joy we have of them!
3. This is the *imagery* the Scripture uses to present **Jesus Christ**.
- a. Jesus is described as a *root, stem, branch* and a *fruitful vine*.
- b. *There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
 and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.
 And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
 the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
 the Spirit of counsel and might,
 the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.
 And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.
 He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
 or decide disputes by what his ears hear,
 but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
 and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
 and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
 and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
 Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,
 and faithfulness the belt of his loins. (Isaiah 11:1-5)*
- c. *Who has believed what he has heard from us?
 And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?
 For he grew up before him like a young plant,
 and like a root out of dry ground;
 he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
 and no beauty that we should desire him.
 Surely he has borne our griefs
 and carried our sorrows;
 yet we esteemed him stricken,
 smitten by God, and afflicted.
 But he was pierced for our transgressions;
 he was crushed for our iniquities;
 upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
 and with his wounds we are healed.
 All we like sheep have gone astray;
 we have turned—every one—to his own way;*

and the LORD has laid on him

the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:1-2, 4-6)

- d. *In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'* (Jeremiah 33:15-16)
 - e. *And say to him, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD. It is he who shall build the temple of the LORD and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."'* (Zechariah 6:12-13)
 - f. *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. (John 15:1-8)*
 - g. *And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.*
"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. (John 12:23-27)
4. What is true about a *plant*, this *Jesus Christ*, a *man's life*? **Three things are pictured here...**
 - a. **Rootedness:** A plant only grows strong if its roots go deep into the soil and spread out. *A boy will only become a godly man if he is rooted and grounded in Christ, the church, and the Word of God.*
 - b. **Fruitfulness:** A plant has but one purpose and it is not ornamental; it just bears its fruit. *Men are not placed in the world to look pretty. Men are to work, do ministry, serve and produce a fruit of blessing for family, church and nation.*
 - c. **Sacrifice:** a plant gives its life for its fruit; its life-juices (sap), flow through it until all the fruit is harvested. Then it dies. *A boy will never become a man until he gives his life for his spouse, his family, his church, his country and his God. Selfish boys never become true men!*
 - d. **Mothers and fathers:** the *worst* thing you can do for your sons is to spoil them and coddle them, amused at their selfish, boyish ways. *"Boys will be boys!"* is true, but if we find that amusing, they will forever be boys and never become men.
 5. American boys are by nature spoiled. Males are spoiled, especially by their mothers. America is suffering because of a lack of firm, fruitful and sacrificial male leadership. We have become a nation of

men who are boys: *underemployed, irresponsible, addicted to porn, gender-confused, consumed by video games, obsessed with sports, self-focused, self-absorbed, selfish, feminized.* What we need are moms and dads committed to turning boys into men.

II. THE BLESSING OF OUR DAUGHTERS (Psalm 144:12b)

1. *May...our daughters (be) like corner pillars, cut for the structure of a palace."*
2. The Hebrew can be translated as *pillars, cornerstones* or *cornices*.
 - NASB:** "corner pillars"
 - KJV:** "cornerstones"
 - CEV:** "columns in the corner"
3. Three beautiful pictures –
 - a. *Cornices:* to adorn the top of a pillar in a palace or a home (domestic)
 - b. *Cornerstone* of a public building (civic)
 - c. *Column or pillar* for a temple (religion)
4. The verb is key to the metaphor "cut" or "carved" – shaped by an artisan.
5. In the ancient world, *virtues* were usually pictured in a female form:
 - a. The *muses* of Greece and Rome: the 9 goddesses who were daughters of Zeus presiding over (1) lyric, poetry, (2) history, (3) astronomy, (4) religious hymns, (5) choral singing and dance, (6) comedy, (7) tragedy, (8) romantic poetry and (9) epic poetry.
 - b. The *four cardinal virtues* of the Greco-Roman world were always depicted as maidens: *Temperance, courage, wisdom and justice.*
 - c. Female figures (virtues) usually adorned the *corner pillars* of temples, civic buildings and palaces.
6. The Holy Spirit depicts *wisdom* this way: "Lady Wisdom"
 - a. *Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice; at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks: "How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge? If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you. (Proverbs 1:20-23)*
 - b. *Wisdom has built her house;*
she has hewn her seven pillars.
She has slaughtered her beasts; she has mixed her wine;
she has also set her table.
She has sent out her young women to call
from the highest places in the town,
"Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!"
To him who lacks sense she says,
"Come, eat of my bread
and drink of the wine I have mixed.
Leave your simple ways, and live,
and walk in the way of insight." (Proverbs 9:1-6)
 - c. **Please note the parallelism** between Psalm 144:12 and Proverbs 9:1.

- i. *May our sons in their youth
be like plants full grown,
our daughters like corner pillars
cut for the structure of a palace.* (Psalm 144:12)
 - ii. *Wisdom has built her house;
she has hewn her seven pillars.* (Proverbs 9:1)
 - d. Virtuous pillars carved for the House of Wisdom
- 7. Here is a *beautiful picture* of what a gracious, godly and virtuous woman is like...
 - a. **H. C. Leupold:** *Psalms*, p. 973
The nation consists of persons, very important among whom is the coming generation. Therefore prayer is first made for the coming generation, the sons and the daughters. For them prayer is made that they may be healthy and strong and comely. If the sons are like “plants full grown” they have not been stunted in their growth by wartime famine. Similarly the daughters are thought of as having enjoyed a healthy development and as being, so says the choice figure, “like corner pillars carved fit for a palace.” This would connote a slim beauty and a sturdy strength.
 - b. **Derek Kidner:** *Psalm: TOTC*; vol. 2, p. 479.
The sons, the young olive shoots are not pictured as sturdy, well-established saplings, and the daughters as the very picture of statuesque elegance and strength.
 - c. **Not** a physical description of young females anymore than a grapevine, olive tree or squash plant describes the male physique.
 - d. Women of godly, mature, virtuous character possess the inner-beauty of a cornice, pillar or cornerstone for a temple or palace: *statuesque = noble and good.*
- 8. **Joseph S. Exell:** *The Biblical Illustrator: The Psalm*: vol. 5; pp. 374-375.
 - a. *The charming young woman is one of the most useful and beautiful objects of earth; God’s improvement on man; His masterpiece; a being inspiring those who meet her with all good desires, and worthy of all reverential admiration when one beholds her adorned with the perfections that her Creator has ordained for her glory. 1. The charming young woman whom we all know was a girl as long as she could be, and when she passed to the stature of womanhood she put on strength, but not a bit of coarseness or mannishness. She became a womanly woman. 2. The charming young woman is full of fine feelings. She loves and cultivates the beautiful, and her soul naturally clings to the elegant in nature, as it does also to the spiritual splendors of God. Her fine feelings recoil from unrefined gush and lawless sentiment, but easily run into the ways of generous charity. 3. The charming young woman does not rest her power of fascination upon her shapeliness nor her array of second-hand clothes borrowed from the ostrich and silk-worm. Her charm-power is from within. Her ideal is industrious. 4. Our charmer is pure in heart; the “racy” jest or double-meaning pun is quickly scouted out of her presence, even when she is among the intimates of her own sex. Her purity is her panoply; a glance of her sincere eye would be to the insinuating rake like a section of the day of judgment. She has principles, and lots of them. She is pious. Religion and women were made for each other, and each needs the other. A young woman with no bent easily to accept the Saviour gives evidence of a radical defect in her nature.*
 - b. *Likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works.* (1 Timothy 2:9-10)

- c. *Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.* (1 Peter 3:3-4)
- d. *Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,
but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.* (Proverbs 31:30)
9. There is a **parallel** mobility and **complementary** beauty to these two metaphors:
- a. *May our sons in their youth
be like plants full grown,
our daughters like corner pillars
cut for the structure of a palace.* (Psalm 144:12)
- b. Both metaphors speak of stability and sureness.
- c. Both pictures communicate a process of development: a growing plant a carved pillar.
- d. Both images reflect an order and design of purpose: one of nature (plant), the other of culture (pillar).
- e. Both symbols point to community responsibility: the plant growing the fruit for the garden; the pillar holding up the palace/temple for the community.
- f. Both statements necessitate God's work: the rain of grace and the construction of virtue.
10. And, both these boys becoming self-sacrificing men and girls growing into virtuous women depend upon the **blessing of God**.
11. **Charles H. Spurgeon:** *Treasury of David: vol. 3; p. 359.*
We desire a blessing for our whole family, daughters as well as sons. For the girls to be left out of the circle of blessing would be unhappy indeed. Daughters unite families as cornerstones join walls together, and at the same time they adorn them as polished stones garnish the structure into which they are builded. Home becomes a palace when the daughters are maids of honour, and the sons are nobles in spirit; then the father is a king, and the mother a queen, and royal residences are more than outdone. A city built up of such dwellings is a city of palaces, and a state composed of such cities is a republic of princes.

CONCLUSION: Our society depends on sacrificial young men and virtuous women.

1. In fact...this is the fountainhead of a healthy and happy society...
- a. *May our sons in their youth
be like plants 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!* (Psalm 144:12-14)
- b. Godly sons and virtuous daughters

- c. Self-sacrificing men and noble women
 - d. Full granaries: abundant harvests
 - e. Sheep that bear many lambs: good herdsmanship
 - f. Cattle bearing without mishap: freedom from disease
 - g. No outcry of distress in our streets: civic safety with law and order.
2. If all this is so, then the results are obvious...
- Blessed are the people to whom such blessings fall!*
Blessed are the people whose God is the LORD! (Psalm 144:15)
3. **Arthur R. Weisner:** *The Psalms: Old Testament Library*; p. 825.
The earthly wealth of a healthy rising generation, endowed with vital energy, the blessing of a rich harvest, fecundity of the flocks and peace both in country and in town are the visible signs of the blessings imparted by the divine grace. And joy in God and in communion with him is the root-cause and the deepest meaning of the bliss that unites the king and his people before God, in the sure knowledge of his salvation, to extol him in a song of praise.
4. **Tonight**, on the eve of our 2015-2016 *school year*, I must ask you these questions...I must! To fail to do so would be both negligent and cowardly.
- a. **First:** *Are America's young men self-sacrificing, mature, stable, fruitful and life-giving males?* Or is our nation full of "lost boys"; pampered by helicopter moms and ignored by passive dads, unemployed, unmotivated, immoral, and unchurched?
 - b. **Second:** *Are America's young ladies noble, virtuous, steady, God-centered young women of moral courage?* Or are they aggressive, increasingly immoral, more and more foul mouthed, "strong" females with submission issues with God and males:
 - c. **Third:** *How is our economy doing?* Is there a steady growth in prosperity, job opportunities, career advancement, college educations openings, and a growing GNP to give our young people motivation and hope for the future? Or are we more and more competing for less and less, causing us to be fearful, angry, rude, crude and desperate?
 - d. **Fourth:** *How is agriculture in America?* Abundance at the market, stable prices, good weather, good crops and healthy livestock? Or are the drought in California, rising food prices, and looming shortages clouding the horizon?
 - e. **Fifth:** *Can we say there is no cry of distress in our streets?* No racism, no riots or looting, no killing of our policemen/women, law and order, just courts, trusted government and a culture of civility from New York to LA?
5. **I believe our beloved nation is in trouble for one reason:** Psalms 33:12 and 144:15 are no longer true for us.
- Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,
the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!* (Psalm 33:12)
Blessed are the people to whom such blessings fall!
Blessed are the people whose God is the LORD! (Psalm 144:15)
6. And, this is where all of us fit into the picture –
- a. Parents who must rear Christ-centered, God-oriented, spiritual sons and daughters.
 - b. Grandparents to back them up with prayer, wisdom and sacrificial support and resources.
 - c. A church that will preach the Gospel and guard the vision of the Christian school.
 - d. A school that earnestly seeks to fulfill its mission as stated...

The mission of Covenant Day School is to assist the Christian family by providing an education marked by a Biblical worldview, academic excellence, and affordability so that students are equipped to be salt and light for God's glory.

7. Children, teens, young people, please listen to me: *Do not be afraid to pursue God's plan for you and your gender.*
 - *Become a young man who brings to all of our sacred institutions – family, church, community – and our way of life the two sacrifices, service and stability, become a fruitful plant!*
 - *Become a young woman whose character, soul and faith are the guardians of a good and noble life at home, at church, and in the public square. Become a virtuous woman – a pillar cut for a palace and a column carved for God's Temple!*
8. **And let us all join together – right now – to bless the children of our church, schools and homes...**