

Psalm 127

The need of relying on God
A Song of degrees for Solomon.

Psalm 127: The principal of this psalm is that all human efforts are in vain unless they have God's blessing. This principle is applied to four areas: building a house (verse 1a), guarding a city (verse 1b), working long hours (verse 2), and having children (verses 3-5). It is possible to accomplish all of these things without God's blessing, but it is not possible to accomplish them purposefully and with eternal value without God's blessing. The psalm includes, incidentally, two practical reasons for having children: they bring you joy and they protect you (verse 5).

Verses 1-5 (see note of Psalm 120:1-7). The author is Solomon (compare Eccl. 12:10), but the occasion is unknown. The major message of God being central to and sovereign in life sounds much like portions of Solomon's Ecclesiastes (compare Eccl. 2:24-25; 5:18-20; 7:13-14; 9:1). Psalms 112 and 128 also develop a strong message on the family.

- I. God's Sovereignty in Everyday Life (127:1-2);
- II. God's Sovereignty in Family Life (127:3-5).

Verses 1-2: God sovereignty is seen in 3 realms:

- (1) Building a house;
- (2) Protecting a city; and
- (3) Earning a living.

In all 3 instances, the sovereign intention of God is far more crucial to the outcome than man's efforts. Otherwise, a man's endeavor is in vain (compare Eccl. 1:2; 12:8).

Psalm 127:1 "Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh [but] in vain."

This psalm of Solomon begins with the most important truth in establishing a home: unless "the Lord build the house" it, it will not work. The family was His idea, and He wants to be the Head of every household. Until God is make the Head, all attempts to establish a strong family will end in frustration ("waketh but in vain").

I believe this to be a Psalm written by David to his son Solomon. David knew not to build the house himself, because God wanted a man of peace to build the temple. It was God's idea for Solomon to build the temple. Even if Solomon knew that God wanted him to build the temple, it would have failed, if he had not taken God's instruction on how to build it. The things we do ourselves, without God's authorization, seldom work. Notice also that God wanted Solomon to build the house, but Solomon had to do the work. God gave the instructions to Solomon, and Solomon built it. It took both things to make it work. A very good example of this very same thing was Noah. God gave Noah the wisdom and instructions to build the ark, and Noah built it.

We know that the tower of Babel was not by God's instructions, and it was never finished. We know that guards around a city are of no use at all, unless God guards the city. The great city of Babylon (heavily fortified) was overthrown, even though it seemed impossible. Guards are just fine to have, but the best guard we can have is the Lord and His angels.

Psalm 127:2 "[It is] vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: [for] so he giveth his beloved sleep."

A description of an industrious and laborious person, who takes great pains to get a livelihood, or increase his substance (see Psalm 104:23). Which, yet, as in the former instances, depends upon the blessing of divine Providence (Prov. 10:4). For, after all, it may come to nothing more at last than:

"To eat the bread of sorrows": That is, to eat bread gotten with much sorrow and labor. Such get bread, and that is all, and not that without the providence of God.

"For so he giveth his beloved sleep": That is, the Lord: such who are partakers of his grace, that fear and love him. To them, thus diligent and industrious, he gives not only bread to eat, but sleep, which to a laboring man is sweet. And having food and raiment, he gives them contentment, quietness, and satisfaction of mind, which is the greatest blessing of all. Sleep, even bodily sleep, was reckoned with the very Heathens a divine gift.

You can try to do all you can do in the flesh. You can stay up late and get up early, but it will not get done unless the Lord is in it.

Verses 3-5: The same principal of God's sovereignty applies to raising a family.

Psalm 127:3 "Lo, children [are] a heritage of the LORD: [and] the fruit of the womb [is his] reward."

Parents should have this positive perspective: "children are a heritage of the LORD". God gives them as a gift.

This has to be David saying, how blessed he has been in God through his son Solomon. David had wanted the temple built, but God would not allow him to do it. He will know of the building of the temple by his son. As we have said in many of these lessons, the most important thing you can leave to your children is the knowledge to know how to become sons of God. David loved God, and it was his desire that his family would love God also. He got his desire in his son Solomon. Wealth and fame are no good, except you have children to pass them down through.

Verses 4-5: As arrows are indispensable for a warrior to succeed in battle, so children are invaluable as defenders of their father and mother in time of war or litigation. The more such defenders, the better.

Psalm 127:4 "As arrows [are] in the hand of a mighty man; so [are] children of the youth."

An arrow goes to a place the archer cannot go to accomplish a purpose the archer cannot accomplish. With God's help, Christian parents raise their "children" in such a way that they become "arrows" sent out to do good for God.

These arrows in his hand symbolized the fact that he did not have to be in hand to hand combat to win the war. The arrows could go and fight for him. This is saying, that even though David would not be able to build the temple, he could send his son to do what he could not. It was one generation away from him. but the job was done.

Psalm 127:5 "Happy [is] the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate."

That is, his house full of them; called a quiver, referring to arrows before mentioned. This being the case in which they are put up: to have many children was always reckoned a great temporal blessing and happiness (see Job 1:2). The Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Ethiopic, and Arabic versions, render it, "that fills his desire" has as many as he desires or wishes for: The Targum, "who fills his school of them:" So Jarchi interprets the children, of the disciples of the wise men. It may be applied to young converts, the children of Christ and of the church. Which, when numerous, is a blessing to him and her (see Isa. 49:20).

"They shall not be ashamed": The father and his children, as Aben Ezra; parents rather are meant, who are not ashamed when they have many children. With the Romans, those that had wives and children were preferred in honor to senior persons that had none. And they that had most to those that had fewest; and so with the Persians (see notes on Esther 5:11).

"But they shall speak with the enemies in the gate": Where courts of judicature were kept. And so the Targum, "in the gate of the house of judgment." The sense is, that their children should stand and plead the cause of their parents against their adversaries in courts of judicature. Or publicly before the eyes of all, as Aben Ezra. And spiritually may design such of Christ's seed who are set for the defense of the Gospel, are valiant for the truth on earth, and earnestly contend for it. Meet the enemy in the gate, publicly oppose him, and behave themselves like men, and are strong.

In a battle, it was important to have many arrows to go and do the fighting at a distance. This is speaking of the children and grandchildren of David. He was pleased to have many children. This could also, be speaking prophetically of Jesus who certainly had many followers. This family would have been great indeed.

Psalm 127 Questions

1. Who wrote the 127 Psalm? Who did he write it to?
2. What was the purpose of it?
3. What was necessary, besides Solomon's desire to build the temple for it to be built?
4. What is a good example of God giving someone something to build, and them building it?
5. What is an example of someone building without God's blessing, and it failing?
6. What city, that seemed impossible to attack because of its fortification, was overthrown?
7. What is 127:2 speaking of?
8. Lo, _____ are the heritage of the Lord.
9. Who wanted to build the temple, but God would not allow him to?
10. Who did God instruct to build the temple?
11. Why did God choose him over his father?
12. What is the greatest heritage you can give your children?
13. Wealth and fame are no good except what?
14. What is verse 4 saying, about the arrows?
15. What is it speaking of prophetically?