

Psalm 128

The rewards of faithfulness
A Song of degrees.

Psalm 128: The message of this psalm is that one is never truly happy until he is truly holy. It begins with a pronouncement of blessing (or happiness), on a certain kind of man, a man who fears the Lord (verses 1-4). It concludes with a prayer for blessing (verses 5-6).

Verses 1-6 (see note on Psalm 120:1-7). The author and occasion are unknown. Psalms 112 and 127 also address issues of the home.

- I. The Basics of Fearing the Lord (128:1-4).
- II. The Blessings of Fearing the Lord (128:2-3, 5-6).
 - A. In the Present (128:2-3);
 - B. In the Future 128:5-6).

Verses 1-4: Contentment is one of Yahweh's greatest blessings to those who are faithful.

Psalm 128:1 "Blessed [is] every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways."

"That feareth the LORD" (see note on Prov. 1:7).

(Psalm 112:1-6), also develops this theme. A good working definition is provided by the parallel line, "Who walks in His ways". Fathers (Psalm 128:1, 4), mothers (Prov. 31:30), and children (Psalm 34:11), are to fear the Lord. This psalm may have been the basis for Jesus' illustration of the two builders (compare Matt. 7:24-27).

Fear or reverence of the Lord, is the beginning of wisdom. It is one of the major factors that we build upon. Many of the other attributes that Christians have are started right here. If we did not reverence Him, we might not do the things that He wills us to do. Notice the word (walketh). Walketh means continues to walk. We must continue to walk in the fear and reverence of the Lord, if we are to be blessed. This blessing is for this earth and for the eternity to come.

Verses 2-3: Four blessings are recounted:

- (1) Provisions;
- (2) Prosperity;
- (3) Reproducing partner; and
- (4) Flourishing progeny.

Psalm 128:2 "For thou shalt eat the labor of thine hands: happy [shalt] thou [be], and [it shall be] well with thee."

That is, thou that fearest the Lord, and walkest in his ways. It is an apostrophe, or address to such, even to every one of them. Instancing in one part of the blessedness that belongs to them, and enjoyment of what their hands have labored for. Which may be understood both in a literal and spiritual sense. Man must labor and get his bread with the sweat of his brow. He that will not work should not eat, he that does should. And a good man may have a comfortable enjoyment of the good of his labor; than which, as to temporal blessings, there is nothing better under the sun (Eccl. 5:18). And, in a spiritual sense, good men labor in prayers at the throne of grace, there lifting up holy hands to God, wrestling with him for a blessing, which they enjoy. They labor in attendance on the word and ordinances, for the meat which endures to everlasting life. And they find the word and eat it, and Christ in it, whose flesh is meat indeed. And feed by faith on it, to the joy and comfort of their souls.

"Happy shall thou be, and it shall be well with thee": Or, to thy soul, as the Syriac version. Happy as to temporal things, and well as to spiritual ones: such having an apparent special interest in the love, grace, mercy, and delight of God. In his providence, protection, and care. In the supplies of his grace, and in his provisions for his people, in time and eternity. It is well with such that felt God, in life and at death, at judgment and for ever. And the Targum is, "thou art blessed in this world, and it shall be well with thee in the world to come."

We find that even though we are the blessed of God, we still must work. God will bless the work of our hands, if we are walking in His ways. He in fact, will bless the work of our hands, and make it to prosper. People who work and accomplish something with that work are happy. This happiness comes especially, when we know what we are doing is pleasing to God.

Psalm 128:3 "Thy wife [shall be] as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table."

It is not uncommon in the East, as elsewhere, to train a vine along the sides of a house. Partly to save ground; partly because it is a good exposure for fruit; partly as an ornament; and partly to protect it from thieves. Such a vine, in its beauty, and in the abundant clusters upon it, becomes a beautiful emblem of the mother of a numerous household. One of the blessings most desired and most valued in the East was a numerous posterity. And this, in the case of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was among the chief blessings which God promised to them. A posterity that should resemble in number the sands of the sea or the stars of heaven (compare Gen. 15:5; 22:17; 32:12). These two things, the right to the avails of one's labor (Psalm 128:2), and a numerous family, are the blessings which are first specified as constituting the happiness of a pious household.

"Thy children like olive plants round about thy table" (compare the notes at Psalm 52:8). Beautiful; producing abundance; sending up young plants to take the place of the old when they decay and die. To what particular circumstance does David refer in the 128th Psalm, where he says, "Thy children shall be like olive plants round about thy table"? Follow me into the grove, and I will show you what may have suggested the comparison. Here we have lilt upon a beautiful

illustration. This aged and decayed tree is surrounded, as you see, by several young and thrifty shoots, which spring from the root of the venerable parent. They seem to uphold, protect, and embrace it. We may even fancy that they now bear that load of fruit which would otherwise be demanded of the feeble parent. Thus do good and affectionate children gather round the table of the righteous. Each contributes something to the common wealth and welfare of the whole. A beautiful sight, with which may God refresh the eyes of every friend of mine."

Hebrews believed that children were a blessing from God. The Hebrew women were very upset if they did not bear children. It was thought to be a punishment from God if they did not have children. A good wife, who does her husband good and not evil, is said to be more precious than rubies to a man. The wife and husband are one in the flesh. When the husband is blessed, she is blessed, as well. This speaking of the olive plants round the table are speaking of the many children around the table of their parents. Olive trees have very long lives. Whether something about this is mentioned, I cannot say.

Psalm 128:4 "Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD."

In the manner before described, and in the instances already given, as well as in the following. This is said to raise attention, and fix a sense of the blessedness of such persons. And who are further addressed, and pronounced happy, in the next verses.

The blessings of a happy home are tops on the list of blessings. The fact that he had a good wife and many children would bring him happiness at home, and respect in the community. To fear the Lord, as we said, is the beginning of wisdom. This would be a wise man indeed, who would raise his family in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

Verses 5-6: Two realms of blessing are mentioned:

- (1) Personal blessing; and
- (2) National blessing.

Psalm 128:5 "The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life."

The church of God, where he dwells, out of which he shines. Even the Word of the Lord, as the Targum in the king's Bible. And where he commands his blessings of grace to descend on his people, even life for evermore (Psalm 133:3). Here he blesses them with his word and ordinances, which are the goodness and fatness of his house, and with his presence in them. So that the man that fears God is blessed, not only in his person, and in his family, but in the house of God (see Psalm 118:26).

"And thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life": The goodness of God in Jerusalem, which is another name for the church of God. The beauty of the Lord in his house and ordinances; his power and his glory in the sanctuary. Or should see the church of God in

prosperous circumstances all his days. True religion flourish, the power of godliness in the professors of it; the word and ordinances blessed to the edification of saints, and many sinners converted and gathered in. This may be applied to Christ (Isa. 53:11).

The Hebrews looked to the temple in Jerusalem for blessings. This is the same as Zion. In the spiritual sense, Zion being the church, the blessings do flow from the church to the people. The LORD (Jehovah), does bless the people through the workings of the church. Jerusalem was not overrun in David's time, and all the days of his life he did see the good of Jerusalem.

Psalm 128:6 "Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, [and] peace upon Israel."

“Children’s children” (compare Psalms 103:17; 112:2; Prov. 13:22; 17:6), on grandchildren. This is a prayer for prosperity for God’s people.

At the end of David's reign and the 40 years that Solomon reigned, there was peace in Jerusalem. One of the things that Solomon did was make peace treaties with the countries around them. Children's children are the crown of old men. We seem to live again in our grandchildren, and it is a joy to live to see them grow up.

Psalm 128 Questions

1. What does walketh mean?
2. Thou shalt eat the _____ of thy hands.
3. What is meant by thy wife being a fruitful vine?
4. What does it mean about children like olive plants round about the table?
5. Hebrews believed children were a _____ from God.
6. Hebrew women thought it to be what, if they did not bare children?
7. What would bring the man happiness at home?
8. In verse 5, what blessings is it speaking of out of Zion?
9. How long did Solomon reign?
10. Children's children are the crown of _____ .