

Sermon Text: Psalm 127-128

The covenant family under the blessing of God is vital to the prosperity of the Church.

- Psalm 127 and 128 form a unit, beginning with the city and ending with the city, with the covenant family as the vital force of God's blessing.
 - The city in view is Jerusalem/Zion, the City of God, which represents all God's Covenant People. In the New Covenant, this includes families from every tribe, language, nation and people.
 - Psalms of Ascent were collected for Pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem for the three annual festivals of worship in the post-exilic era.
 - The House of the Lord and the City of the Lord were still being rebuilt. The People of God faced many discouragements in the rebuilding of the City of God. **How would they complete this enormous undertaking while facing hostility from their neighbors?**
- 1) The Church and the covenant family only flourish under the blessing of God (127:1-2, 5).**
- a) "Unless"—a necessary condition; "the LORD builds . . . the LORD watches"—the LORD is active in our daily lives; "Vain"—builders and watchmen are only effective where God builds and watches
 - b) "Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them!"—God's blessing makes the womb fruitful.
 - c) John 15:5 "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."
 - d) **Application:** Is your family eating the bread of anxious toil (127:2a)? Or, is your family working from the rest that God gives to those He loves (127:2b)? What about our church?
- 2) The Church and the covenant family serve each other (127:3; 128:5-6).**
- a) "Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD"—key word in the covenant with Abraham and Israel; "inheritance"
 - i) Corporate blessing upon the covenant community
 - ii) Blessing upon the covenant family as they serve the covenant community (127:5)
 - b) Note the Alternation of City and Family in 128:5-6, which shows how the fortunes of the two are intertwined
 - i) "The LORD bless you (sg.) *from Zion!*"—**family**; Zion is a geographical/geopolitical space that refers here to the worship center of the people of God; the family is blessed by God *from* the worship center of His people
 - ii) "May you (sg.) *see* the prosperity of Jerusalem"—**City**; the sense of "see" is "see to"—the imperative mood of the verb indicates this is not a wish for you to look *at* something, but a command to look *after* something, namely, the good of God's City
 - iii) "May you see your children's children"—**family**
 - iv) "Peace be upon Israel!"—**City**
 - c) **Application:**
 - i) Are you taking advantage of the ministry of the church for your family? If your family is ignorant of the Bible/Christian life perhaps the church is not teaching or you are not attending.

- ii) Are you looking after the prosperity of the Church? Is your family using your gifts and resources to advance the work of the ministry?

3) The covenant family is vital to the prosperity of the Church.

- a) What is a covenant family?
- b) God-fearing, community-engaging **fathers** (127:5; 128:1, 4)
 - i) “when he speaks with his enemies in the gate”—refers to opponents within the community, whether in legal disputes or, more likely, in regular debate about community governance
 - ii) He “fears the LORD” and “walks in His ways”—heart attitude of worship that issues in obedient way of life
 - iii) “eat the labor of your hands”—vocation
 - iv) “Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD.”—“man” in his strength and vitality; warrior
 - v) **Application:** Men, are you leading your families in the fulfillment of the dominion mandate for the love of God? In your vocation? In your community leadership? In your service in the Church?
- c) God-centered and family-focused **wives/mothers** (128:3a)
 - i) “Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house”
 - (1) immediate context focuses on fruitfulness of child-bearing
 - (2) broader context entails being a help-mate to her husband in exercising dominion over the creation (Gen. 1:28)
 - ii) “within your house”—does not confine the woman’s work-space, but emphasizes the family as the center of her activities; the “Proverbs 31 woman” is industrious for her household and community, but she is not a captain of industry who abandons domestic responsibilities
 - iii) “blessed is everyone who fears the LORD”—would include the wives/mothers as well as the husbands/fathers
 - iv) **Application:** Women, are you strengthening your husband to fulfill his calling? Are you investing in the growth of your children? Are you serving your neighbors? Are you serving your church?
- d) Religiously cultivated **children** (127:4-5; 128:3b)
 - i) “a heritage from the LORD . . . blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them . . . like olive shoots around your table”—children are a blessing
 - ii) “Like arrows in the hands of a warrior”—children’s minds, bodies, and character are to be honed for the dominion mandate
 - iii) “like olive shoots”—children’s hearts are to be ploughed with the Law and sown with the Promises of God; they are to be watered with prayer; and bathed in the light of the God-fearing example of their parents
 - iv) **Application:**
 - (1) Children, you are members of this covenant community. Are you listening to your parent’s instructions? Are you paying close attention to your Sunday School lessons? Are you listening to the sermons? Are you really participating in worship? Are you memorizing Scripture and the catechism?

- (2) Mom and Dad, are you bringing up your children in the nurture and admonition of the LORD? Are you maintaining regular family worship/devotions?
- e) Multi-generational faith (128:6)—
- i) again “see” is not merely a wish that you would look *at* your grandchildren, but that you would look *after* their covenant faithfulness
 - ii) **Application:** Grandma and Grandpa should not be Thing 1 and Thing 2. Grandparents are pleasant and relaxing, but must reinforce godly lessons taught by parents and impart the wisdom of walking with Jesus for years.
- f) The realities of single-parent homes and guardianships do not negate God’s covenant blessings or our covenant responsibilities. The Church, as a covenant community, can assist in appropriate ways.

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A Warning: The love of money is the root of all manner of evil—especially the neglect of the covenant faithfulness of a family.

An Exhortation: The LORD bless you! God’s covenant blessings attend your obedience. You will eat the fruit of the labor of your hands.

Doxology: Praise the LORD! Praise the name of the LORD, give praise, O servants of the LORD, who stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God! Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; sing to His name, for it is pleasant! For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel as His own possession. For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps. He it is who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth, who makes lightnings for the rain and brings forth the wind from His storehouses.—Psalm 135:1-4