

“The Happy Home of the God-Fearer”  
Psalm 128  
(Preached at Trinity, August 18, 2013)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. We are continuing with the series of **Psalms 120-134**, each designated by the title, “A Song of Degrees,” or “A Song of Ascent.” They picture the ascent of pilgrims going up to Jerusalem for the feasts. They begin in a distant land and move closer and closer to Jerusalem.
2. This is the second of the Psalms of Ascent that deal particularly with the family and home. As I stated last time, those traveling to Jerusalem for the annual feasts often traveled in family groups. We can see this in the New Testament account of Jesus going to the Temple at the age of twelve.  
**Luke 2:42-45 KJV** - "And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. <sup>43</sup> And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not *of it*. <sup>44</sup> But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among *their* kinsfolk and acquaintance. <sup>45</sup> And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him."
3. So it shouldn’t surprise us that these Psalms dedicated to these pilgrimages should direct our attention to the family.
4. We saw last time that **Psalm 127** has been called a “Family Psalm.”
  - A. God must be at the center of everything in our homes.  
**Psalm 127:1 KJV** - "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it"
  - B. I focused on three principles of God being Lord in our families
    1. Allow God to build your house
    2. Allow God to protect what you have built
    3. Allow God’s blessing of children
5. As we come to **Psalm 128** we find that again the focus is on the family. This psalm is a beatitude pronouncing God’s blessings upon the family of the one who fears Him. It is a perfect follow-up to the previous psalm  
**Psalm 127:1** - "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it"  
If your home is not Christ centered nothing else will be in order.
6. We’ve already seen God’s general blessings upon those who fear Him  
**Psalm 112:1 KJV** - "Blessed *is* the man *that* feareth the LORD, *that* delighteth greatly in his commandments."
7. **Psalm 128** repeats this promise of blessing.  
**Psalm 128:1 KJV** - "Blessed *is* every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways."

I. What does it mean to fear God?

- A. On one hand this speaks of holy reverence
1. The God-fearing man is a man that stands before God in awe and adoration. He recognizes God's splendor and majesty
  2. God is immense in his life. In other words, he understands the greatness of God. He serves a big God. He is all-consuming.
  3. This affects everything in his life. God overshadows everything. Many people profess to know God but He has little impact upon their lives. Their view of God has little impact upon their behavior.
- B. The God-fearing man also looks upon God with a sense of terror
1. The greatness of God's majesty and splendor is terrifying. God is infinitely immense. He is distinct from His creation. He is holy other. He is infinite in all His divine being. To come into the presence of such a God is terrifying
    - a. Most have no concept of this. When you look upon God as being insignificant there is little cause to be afraid
    - b. It is a terrible thing to have an unholy familiarity with God. It is a terrible thing to fail to fully apprehend the weightiness of God.
  2. The Bible gives warnings of those failed to look upon God with an overpowering sense of awe
    - a. King Uzziah took it upon himself to enter the temple of God to offer incense, something only priests were permitted to do. When the priests complained Uzziah became angry and God smote him with leprosy.  
**2 Chronicles 26:19 KJV** - "Then Uzziah was wroth, and *had* a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar."  
**2 Chronicles 26:21 KJV** - "And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death"
    - b. Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, offered up incense of their own making which the Bible refers to as "strange fire." God killed them in a fearful display of His wrath.  
**Leviticus 10:2** - And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD."
    - c. Eli's sons, Hophni & Phinehas were killed because of their lack of reverence for the priestly office
    - d. Uzza was killed for daring to put his hand to the Ark of God.
    - e. These examples serve to as a great warning to us  
**Hebrews 10:31 KJV** - "*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*"
  3. I'm not talking about an unholy fear
    - a. An unholy fear is a fear void of repentance and yet filled with the terrors of hell. He is filled with guilt without sorrow
    - b. An unholy fear is filled with a mistrust of God such as the servant in the Parable of the Talents who hid his master's goods because he saw his master as hard and unmerciful.

- c. An unholy fear is filled with terror in the face of God's Providence, always mistrusting what God will bring upon his life
- 4. A holy fear, on the other hand, flows forth from a right understanding of the infinite holiness of God. It protects us from unholy familiarity and carelessness.
  - a. A holy fear results in a holy disposition – a delight in holiness. There is a difference in obeying God and delighting in obedience
  - b. A holy fear results in a constant sense of God's presence
  - c. A holy fear results in a desire that God direct all our ways—that our way be conformed to His way  
**Psalm 119:2-3 KJV** - "Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, *and that seek him with the whole heart.* <sup>3</sup> They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways."

## II. **Psalm 128** describes God's blessing upon the home of the God-fearer

- A. These things should not be claimed as universal axioms  
 This psalm falls into the same category as wisdom literature and must not be read as absolute promises.
  - 1. God has gracious designs for His people
    - a. Sometimes He withholds his temporal blessings for good purposes.
    - b. Sometimes God determines that we should suffer for our greater good.
  - 2. Suffering isn't always a sign of God's displeasure. It isn't always an indication of God's chastisement
  - 3. Also these blessings are in the context of family. It does not infer that all God-fearing men get married and not all raise up children. But God's blessings are upon his people. And as a rule these things will be found more often than not.  
 There are blessings that come upon the God-fearer
- B. He will be blessed in his labors  
**Psalm 128:2 KJV** - "For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee."  
 There are characteristics that accompany the person that has God at the center of his life
  - 1. He is a hard-worker
    - a. There are principles of blessing that accompanies work  
**Proverbs 14:23 NAS** - "In all labor there is profit, But mere talk *leads* only to poverty."  
**Proverbs 28:19 NAS** - "He who tills his land will have plenty of food, But he who follows empty *pursuits* will have poverty in plenty."
    - b. The man that does not practice hard work can expect poverty  
**2 Thessalonians 3:10** – "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat."
  - 2. He is thrifty – frugal, content  
 Such people tend to have much because they spend little

3. He tithes – a declaration of God’s sovereignty over his wealth  
**Malachi 3:8-9 NAS** - "Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed Thee?' In tithes and offerings. <sup>9</sup> "You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation *of you!*"  
**Malachi 3:10 KJV** - "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that *there shall not be room enough to receive it.*"
4. The most basic sense of this can be understood as we compare **Psalm 128** with **Psalm 127**. If God is not at the center of your life NOTHING you do has value. If God is at the center of your life nothing is without value. What a glorious thought this is.

C. The next blessing we see is the blessedness of a good marriage

**Psalm 128:3 KJV** - "Thy wife *shall be* as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house"

1. We read this and immediately think of the blessing of children—she shall be fruitful. In the previous psalm we saw children as a reward  
**Psalm 127:3 KJV** - "Lo, children *are* an heritage of the LORD: *and* the fruit of the womb *is his* reward."
2. But this is not limited to the fruitfulness of childbearing. It is actually referring to the blessing of marital fidelity – by the sides of “thine” house Spurgeon describes this fruitfulness:  
 “Good wives are also fruitful in kindness, thrift, helpfulness, and affection: if they bear no children, they are by no means barren if they yield us the wine of consolation and the clusters of comfort. Truly blessed is the man whose wife is fruitful in those good works which are suitable to her near and dear position.”  
 James Montgomery Boice – “The psalm is promising that however hard the day-to-day work in the fields may be for a laboring man, to come home to a good wife is somewhat like coming home to harvest. It is a time to forget the hard summer work and enjoy God’s bounty.”
3. A faithful wife is content with the care of her home—a fruitful vine, an adornment to her home, a blessing from God.  
 Compared with an unfaithful wife  
**Proverbs 7:11 NAS** - "She is boisterous and rebellious; Her feet do not remain at home"  
**Proverbs 27:15-16 NAU** - "A constant dripping on a day of steady rain And a contentious woman are alike; <sup>16</sup> He who would restrain her restrains the wind, And grasps oil with his right hand."  
**Proverbs 21:19 KJV** - "*It is* better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman."
4. It is a blessing to come home to a gracious and loving wife  
**Proverbs 31:28 KJV** - "Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband *also*, and he praiseth her."

- D. His children will grow and prosper and protect  
**Psalm 128:3 KJV** - "thy children like olive plants round about thy table."
1. The righteous seek to lead their families in righteousness.  
 The wicked focus mainly on this world – this includes the worldly religious.  
 God wondrously blesses the faithfulness of His people
  2. Olive plants grow slowly before they become productive  
 Training children is a long process but the reward is rich
  3. Those who live upright before God will see this character passed onto their children. When God is great before our eyes our children will see His greatness. When He is small before our eyes our children will find Him easy to dismiss.
  4. The picture extends our thoughts a little further. The mature olive tree sends off young shoots around its roots. In time these shoots become self-sustaining plants even while the main tree withers and dies.  
 We are raising up children to the next generation.
- E. A blessed and long life – **Verses 4-6**
1. **Verse 5** speaks of God's general blessings
    - a. It is in the context of His blessings upon Jerusalem. This was implied in the previous psalm  
**Psalm 127:1 KJV** - "except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh *but* in vain."
    - b. Carrying this blessing onto the home we can see God's wonderful blessings upon His people. This doesn't mean we never suffer affliction, disease, or sorrow. It does mean that we enjoy the wonderful blessing of a life lived in the presence of God
  2. Long life  
**Psalm 128:6 KJV** - "Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children"
    - a. Again, we should not read this in a mechanical sense. There are righteous people who die early.
    - b. But there are general principles. Wickedness often ends lives early. There are blessings that accompany the righteous.  
**Ephesians 6:1-3 KJV** - "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. <sup>2</sup> Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) <sup>3</sup> That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."  
**Proverbs 3:1-2 NAU** - "My son, do not forget my teaching, But let your heart keep my commandments; <sup>2</sup> For length of days and years of life And peace they will add to you."  
**Psalm 128:6 KJV** - "Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children"
    - c. I have experienced this in my life – the joy of seeing my grandchildren.  
**Proverbs 17:6 KJV** - "Children's children *are* the crown of old men; and the glory of children *are* their fathers."
    - d. But what better way to extend your life than that your Godliness might extend unto the next generation?

Conclusion:

1. The God-centered life of a God-fearer is truly a life worth living.
2. But regarding the man-centered life, it would be better if you had never been born.
3. We cannot fail to miss one other point—the effect of the family to our society as a whole. With the pronouncement of God’s blessings upon the family of those who fear Him we also read: - "thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life."  
**Psalm 128:6 KJV** - "*and* peace upon Israel."
4. Is it not true that most of the ills and difficulties of our current culture is directly related to the decay of the family?
  - a. We need to labor towards strong families.
  - b. And we must labor that our strong families might have an impact upon our world. There is a tendency in our generation towards escapism. Christians are increasingly desiring to move out to the country. But the country isn’t where people are. We are about Kingdom work.
  - c. And in the end we will find we cannot escape. James Montgomery Boice wrote on this: “Christians should reside in our cities and work for their good. Just as our families are a blessing to the city—the city needs sound, wholesome, productive families more than any other single thing—so will the city bless us, if it prospers. If it does not, then we will suffer too even if we attempt to escape its influence by going someplace far away and more attractive.”  
He quotes, “If one percent of evangelicals living outside the inner city had the faith and courage to move in town, evangelicals would fundamentally alter the history of urban America.”