

“Except the Lord Build the House”
Psalm 127
(Preached at Trinity, August 4, 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. The Catechism asks the question:
What is the chief end of man?
Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.
2. But what does this mean? Thomas Watson described it as consisting of four things:
 1. **Appreciation** – To glorify God is to have Him in our highest thoughts; we rejoice in His glorious attributes, the excellence of His Divine character.
 2. **Adoration** or worship – to glorify God is to give Him the glory due to His name.
 3. **Affection** – To glorify God is to have God as the highest object of our love and our greatest delight. He is our greatest source of happiness.
 4. **Subjection** – to glorify God is to dedicate ourselves to Him, to bow before Him in absolute submission.
3. I’ll add a fifth – **Exhibition** – to glorify God is to put Him on display.
4. We were created for this. All of our labors should have one single design—to bring God glory. God should be at the center of everything in our lives. Without this everything is meaningless. We read in **Ecclesiastes 1:14 NIV** - "I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind."
5. **Psalm 127** opens with this truth. If God is not at the core of our life ultimately everything is without value.
Psalm 127:1 KJV - "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it"
The word means emptiness, nothingness. The word is used three times in the first two verses.
6. The sad reality is lost human beings are at enmity with God.
They don’t want Him in their thoughts. We can see this illustrated clearly with the Tower of Babel.
Genesis 11:4 – “And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top *may reach* unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.”
 - a. They wanted to make a name for themselves but a name void of God.
 - b. They didn’t realize that without God in their lives nothing else matters. God was against their plan and it all came to naught—emptiness, nothingness.
7. The superscription designates the psalm as “for Solomon” or “of Solomon,” probably written by David for his son, knowing he had a house to build, a city to govern, and a family to raise. Or it could have been written by Solomon himself.
8. There are many things men give their attention to. We are builders. We have endless projects. But what good is it to build marvelous structures if God is not in it. What good is it to guard a city if God’s blessings are not upon it?

9. Men work long hours seeking to accomplish their plans. What good is it to rise before dawn and stay up well after the sun sets if God is against your plans?
Psalm 127:2 KJV - "*It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows.*" It is vain, empty, nothing.
 10. **Psalm 127** is among the group of psalms called the Psalms of ascent – psalms written for the pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. They often traveled in family groups. This psalm has been called a “Family Psalm.”
Psalm 127:1 KJV - "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it"
 11. Tonight I want to direct your attention to the importance of building your home with God’s blessings.
"Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it"
 12. **Psalm 127** gives us three principles of God being Lord in our families
 1. Allow God to build your house
 2. Allow God to protect your city
 3. Allow God’s blessing of children
 13. Tonight we will look at the first two and then next week by God’s will we will focus upon the third.
- I. The first thing here is the importance of allowing God to build your house
- A. Solomon was charged with building the house of God
 1. David wanted to build the Temple but God did not permit it
1 Kings 8:19 KJV - "Nevertheless thou shalt not build the house; but thy son that shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house unto my name."
 2. And what was David’s response to God denying him the privilege of building the House of God?
2 Samuel 7:25-26 KJV - "And now, O LORD God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish *it* for ever, and do as thou hast said. ²⁶ And let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts *is* the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee."
 3. David had a great desire to build the house of God. Had David pursued his plan to build the house contrary to God’s command it would not have been blessed of God.
 4. Solomon, on the other hand, was ordained by God to build the Temple and God was with him.
1 Kings 8:20 KJV - "And the LORD hath performed his word that he spake, and I am risen up in the room of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and have built an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel."
Psalm 127:1 KJV - "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it"
 5. David understood the importance of God’s blessing upon our labors

- B. What kind of house are you building? Is God in it?
1. There are homes that are man-centered
They are filled with all manner of activity
 - a. For some it is all about career and self-advancement
The children are often neglected and all energy is focused on career and making money. I'm not talking about physical neglect. The children may be well-provided for with all of their needs met and more. They may live in a large house and wear the finest clothes but in the end it is all vain – empty, nothing
 - b. For some it is all about the children – sports, cheerleading, dance, gymnastics—but Christ is not at the center.
 - (1) I had a young father tell me he had to give up teaching Sunday School because his daughter's dance competitions were all on Sunday.
 - (2) Your children may enjoy all of the attention and have their lives filled with activity but in the end it is all for naught.
Psalm 127:1 KJV - "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it"
 - c. God will not have rivals. He has given us a clear declaration:
Exodus 20:5-6 KJV - "for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me; ⁶ And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."
 2. There are generational consequences to how we build our house
 - a. The parent that build's a man-centered house are not only destroying the lives and souls of their children, often it will have an impact for generations
Psalm 49 speaks of their folly
Psalm 49:11-13 NAS - "Their inner thought is, *that* their houses are forever, *And* their dwelling places to all generations; They have called their lands after their own names. ¹² But man in *his* pomp will not endure; He is like the beasts that perish. ¹³ This is the way of those who are foolish, *And* of those after them who approve their words."
 - b. On the other hand children brought up in a Christ-centered home will also have a generational impact
 - c. Stephen Lawson relates the testimony to Jonathan Edwards' house
"Jonathan Edwards came from a godly heritage and married Sarah Pierrepont, a woman of great faith. Together, they sought to leave a legacy of godliness. Among his male descendants were: 300 clergymen, missionaries, or theological professors, 120 college professors, 110 lawyers, over 60 physicians, over 60 authors of good books, 30 judges, 14 presidents of universities, numerous giants in American industry, 3 U.S. congressmen, and one vice-president of the United States"

3. What kind of house are you building? Are you willing to make sacrifices in order to maintain the proper priority? What place does God have in your family? Is your marriage Christ-centered? Are the decisions of your home Christ-centered? What place does the church have in your home? Do your children know clearly the place of Christ in your life?
"Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it"

II. Allow God to be the protector of your house

Psalm 127:1 - "except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh *but* in vain."

A. In Solomon's day Jerusalem was surrounded by a wall

1. During the day people went in and out of the city but at night people came into the city behind the protection of the walls
2. Watchmen stood on the walls to guard the city and sound the alarm in the event of danger.
3. But it wasn't the walls or the watchmen that ultimately protected the city. Their protection was from the hand of God.

This is expressed in **Psalm 18**

Psalm 18:2-3 KJV - "The LORD *is* my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, *and* my high tower. ³ I will call upon the LORD, *who is worthy* to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies."

4. But Israel ceased to follow God. After the Temple was completed God told Solomon:

1 Kings 9:4-7 KJV - "if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments *and* my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them: ⁷ Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people:"

5. When God judged Judah and the Babylonians laid siege to the city no human effort would suffice. The strong walls came crashing down.

Jeremiah 39:8 NAU - "The Chaldeans also burned with fire the king's palace and the houses of the people, and they broke down the walls of Jerusalem."

B. From what source do you seek protection for your family?

1. Is it your good job, your bank account, or insurance?
Is it your good neighborhood and state of the art alarm system?
By themselves these things are a vain confidence.
2. This doesn't rule out the use of means. You want a good job. You desire good medical care. You need to use every means of protecting your family. But upon what do you rest your confidence?
 - a. Notice it does not rule out our labors in building. Rather, it teaches us that all of our labors must be under God's sovereign care.
 - b. Oliver Cromwell — "Trust in God, and keep your powder dry":
3. If your home is not built on Christ you have no source of comfort and every effort will be brought to naught.

- C. We must make a sincere evaluation of our lives
1. What place does your work have?
 - a. Work is a creation ordinance. It is honoring to God. Laziness is sinful and displeasing to God.
 - b. But work must have purpose
 - (1) To reflect the glory of God
 - (2) To strengthen the family
 - c. **Verse 2** speaks of the vanity of making work our God
Psalm 127:2 KJV - "*It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows*"
 - d. Spurgeon (*Treasury of David*) – “. . . all men must work. But no man should work beyond his physical and intellectual ability, nor beyond the hours which nature allots. No net result of good to the individual or to the race comes of any artificial prolonging of the day at either end. Early rising, eating one's breakfast by candlelight, and prolonged vigils, the scholar's "midnight oil", are a delusion and a snare. Work while it is day. When the night comes, rest. The other animals do this, and, as races, fare as well as this anxious human race.”
 - e. The Godly man finds sweet rest.
He works hard but work is not his idol. At the end of the day he lays down his tools and goes home.
He spends his days with an eye towards God's design.
Psalm 127:2 KJV - "he giveth his beloved sleep."
 2. What place does your family have?
 - a. For some the family becomes a place of idolatry
 - b. There must be balance in all things. Everything must be for the glory of Christ.

Conclusion:

1. The point is this: Is God the center of everything in your life?
Psalm 127:1 KJV - "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it"
 - a. Do you make your plans and then consult God or do you consult God first?
 - b. When your plans don't work out do you complain or do you trust God's infinite wisdom?
2. The best thing you can do for your children is raise them in a Christ centered home—a home where everything revolves around Him, a home where He is shown to be wonderful, a home where the children can see that He is worthy of being served. Nothing can replace this. Others cannot do this for you.
3. This isn't the worldview of most. This is wisdom from God.
Proverbs 3:13 – "Happy is the man *that* findeth wisdom, and the man *that* getteth understanding."