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The Happy Home Psalm 128

Thank you all for being here tonight. Please take your Bible and join me in Psalm 128. We will spend the next 8 Wednesday nights in Ephesians considering what Paul wrote to the Ephesians about the family. But I think a class on the family needs to include at least one lesson from the older testament. I'm convinced like you are that every word of Scripture is breathed out by God and every word is profitable. We need the whole counsel of God's Word to keep living for God's glory. I want to begin our time tonight in one of my favorite Psalms about the family and how God's blessings flow into our homes.

I will admit that one of my reasons for doing this class is that I know I need to grow in the role God has for me as a husband and a father. I am not where I want to be as a husband or a father. By God's grace I think I fit the qualifications of an elder in Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 3, but I know I still have a long way to go in order to reflect Christ in my home. I'm not satisfied with where I'm at and I hope you're not satisfied either.

When I think about where I am at right now in the specific roles God has given me, I do take some comfort in the words of a man named John Newton who said at the end of his life:

"I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I want to be, I am not what I hope to be in another world; but still I am not what I once used to be, and by the grace of God I am what I am"

Thankfully, God's grace doesn't save us and then leave us the way it found us. No. **That's not how the grace of God works.** The grace that saves also goes to work on us training us to honor Christ in all we do. God is committed to making us more and more like Christ. I like to joke around that believers are still a piece of work, but according to Ephesians 2:10 we are God's piece of work. After describing our salvation Paul ends with this reminder, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

A while back someone that poured his life into challenging men to live for Christ went to be with the Lord. Steve Farrar's ministry was all about equipping men to be the spiritual leaders of their home and churches. I was watching a sermon from Steve Farrar a while back where he talked about the last conversation he had with his dad. His dad was about to die and Steve and his brother were in a room with his dad. His dad was still alive, but Steve didn't really know if his dad could hear him or understand him. But he still walked over to his dad and said, "Hey dad, thanks for showing me how to follow Christ. Everything I do with men, dad, I learned from you. Thanks for loving mom and showing me how to love a woman. Thanks for loving the Bible. Thanks for listening to me. Thanks for disciplining me. You don't need to hang around dad. You did a great job. We got mom taken care of. You just go on and be with the Lord."

Evidently Steve modeled what he learned, where? In the home. From his dad. **He learned what it meant to have a relationship with Christ in the home.** His dad was a conduit of God's blessing, a channel through which God blessed his home.

Here is what I want to say tonight from God's Word - **We should all want to be a channel of blessing for our family.** This is where Psalm 128 can help all of us. **Psalm 128 shows us how God's blessings flow into our families.** That's the point of this Psalm. If you want God's blessings to flow into your home this is a Psalm to memorize and seek to live out every day

with the help of the Holy Spirit. I hope this becomes a go to Psalm for us when we think about our families, especially during seasons where it seems like things aren't going well. If things don't seem to be going well, go back to this Psalm and work it through.

Let's read Psalm 128 and then we will consider the context and then we will consider 3 ingredients of a happy home:

Psalm 128

128:title A Song of Ascents.

- 1 Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord,
who walks in his ways!
- 2 You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands;
you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you.
- 3 Your wife will be like a fruitful vine
within your house; your children will be like olive shoots
around your table.
- 4 Behold, thus shall the man be blessed
who fears the Lord.
- 5 The Lord bless you from Zion!
May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem
all the days of your life!
- 6 May you see your children's children!
Peace be upon Israel!

Before we consider the details of this Psalm I want you to look at the title of the Psalm. Please look above verse 1. What words do you see above Psalm 128:1? **It describes the Psalm as A Song of Ascents.** You can trace that heading all the way back to Psalm 120 and ahead to Psalm 134.

Psalm 120-134 are all called Songs of Ascents. These were Psalms God's people repeated to one another on their way up to Jerusalem to the temple to worship. **They quoted these Psalms to one another in preparation for**

worship. As they climbed the hill up to Jerusalem they would recite these Psalms.

What's the point? **God wanted His people regularly reminding one another of the importance of the family as they made their way up to the temple to worship God.** The One who designed the family wanted them to keep reminding one another how family life is done the right way.

Imagine doing this today. Imagine on Sunday mornings walking in from the church parking lot quoting these Psalms to one another. Imagine being reminded every week how important the family is and how God's blessings pour into our families. That wouldn't be a bad idea. We're not going to get anything like this from the world. We need these reminders of how important the family is and how God blesses our families.

What word does the Psalmist keep repeating in Psalm 128? The unifying theme in Psalm 128 is the word blessing or blessed. The Psalm is only 6 verses long. **The Psalm is only 6 verses and the words blessed or blessing are used in verses 1, 2, 4, and verse 5.**

The Hebrew word for blessed or blessing has to do with joy and happiness. **William Mounce describes it as "a heightened state of happiness and joy, implying very favorable circumstances, often resulted from the kind acts of God."** I don't know about you but I'll take three scoops of that for my family. Right? We want homes filled with happiness and joy. Being blessed has to do with God's particular favor on His people. This Psalm shows us how God's favor becomes a reality in the family.

If we go back and read Psalm 127, which comes right before Psalm 128, we are reminded that unless God is working in us and with us, every human endeavor is in vain. Psalm 127 reminds us that unless God builds the house we labor in vain. Psalm 128 shows us how God's blessings flow into the family and *how we do bear responsibility in this.*

James Montgomery Boice, “In Psalm 128 the poet reminds us that there are nevertheless several important responsibilities that rest on the person who would partake of God’s blessings. In short, he must fear God and obey him.”

Tonight I want you to consider with me 3 ingredients from Psalm 128 for a happy home:

1. The Foundation of a Happy Home - Psalm 128:1a
2. The Focus of a Happy Home - Psalm 128:1b
3. The Fruit of a Happy Home - Psalm Psalm 128:2-6

Let’s begin with the foundation of a happy home. Where does a happy home begin? I remember growing up in East Texas my dad was a runner. He would take me with him to 10k and 5k races when I was little. He would run the long race and I would run in what was called the fun run. It was a 1 mile race before my dad's longer race. Before the race started I would make my way to the front of the crowd, to the front of the starting line. This was in Texas so of course someone would shoot a gun, it sounded more like a canon, to start the race. When the gun went off I’d take off running as fast as my little legs could move and I’d be winning the race for about the first 200 yards. It felt great for about 30 seconds. Then I would slowly but surely get overtaken by most of the group.

What’s the starting place for a happy home? **Picture a gun going off.**

Where do we begin if we want a happy home? Look at the first part of verse 1. Psalm 128:1, “Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord.” That’s 1st base for a happy home. **A happy home begins with fearing the Lord.** Notice who this particular Psalm is directed to in verse 1 - It says everyone.

This Psalm is about everyone in the home, not just mom's and dad's. It's the privilege of parents to fear the Lord and help our children understand what it means to fear the Lord.

Remember the days when being a God fearing person was a good thing? I remember when we first moved into our home in Kansas and our next door neighbor came over. He knocked on our door and introduced himself and told me what he did for a living and then he pointed at several other houses and he told me what they did for a living. You could tell he liked the neighborhood. Then he asked me what I did for a living and I told him I was a pastor. He kind of got a funny look on his face and he said, "Well, we need more God fearing people in this neighborhood." Then he shook my hand and walked away.

It didn't come across as if he was interested in being a God fearing man himself, but it seemed nice to have one next door. What does it mean to fear the Lord? Fear describes an attitude of submission to the Lord and an openness to receive divine instruction.

James Montgomery Boice, "God must be taken seriously. He must not be trifled with. He must be, as he actually is, the center of everything we are, think, or aspire to do. He must be our starting point for every project, the strength we seek for every valuable endeavor, the one we earnestly desire to please and honor as our goal."

The Bible connects fearing God and wisdom. I think we would all say that one major thing our families need to be happy is wisdom. Where does wisdom begin? Proverbs 9:10, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight." Fearing God is foundational. It's the foundation of all wisdom and righteousness. This was key to God's people in the Old Testament. He kept reminding them of this. **Allen Ross, "In the final analysis those who fear the Lord, add to their**

learning and receive discipline, will look forward to a long and productive life.”

Remember Proverbs is wisdom literature. These are maxims. It doesn't mean people who fear the Lord will always live a long and productive life. We know people who feared the Lord and loved the Lord and they died early in life. This is a wisdom principle for life in a fallen world.

Let me slow down and ask a basic question - Does anyone fear the Lord naturally? Did you wake up one day and think to yourself, “You know, I don't fear God, but I really want to fear God?” The answer is no.

Romans 1:18-3:20 describes the sinfulness of man and why we all need a Savior. Paul summarizes what it means to be under the power of sin in Romans 3:9-18 and he summarizes that section with this verse in **Romans 3:18**, “**There is no fear of God before their eyes.**” Paul here quotes what God says about man from Psalm 36:1, “Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in his heart; there is no fear of God before his eyes.”

Being under the power of sin means that there are no natural God fearing people. Old Testament people didn't fear God apart from the revelation God gave them. For the original audience in Psalm 128, fearing God would be connected to everything He had already revealed about Himself to His people. He is the Creator who spoke the world into existence. He is the God who made man in His image. He is the God who called His people out of Egypt, putting His power on display in the process. He's the great I AM. There's no other God except for Him and there is no other God like Him.

Psalm 96:4-5

- 4 For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;
he is to be feared above all gods.
- 5 For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols,
but the Lord made the heavens.

Fearing God in the Old Testament is connected to how God reveals Himself. That was them. What about us? **Why do you fear God?** I think its safe to say that the majority of people in our world do not fear God. They don't take God seriously. So, why do you take God seriously?

I want you to turn to 1 Peter 1:17. As you are turning to 1 Peter 1, I was told one time by another preacher to never use a cross reference in a sermon without explaining the context. We can't take Scripture out of context and understand what God means by what He says.

Peter is writing to persecuted Christians who were being tempted to fear man more than God. Why? Because of their loyalty to Christ they were hated by the world and because of their worship of Christ alone they were called idolaters. They lived during a time in which they could be arrested at any moment and killed for their faith in Christ. They weren't able to hold out for mid term elections to turn the tide of wicked government. They were in a pickle from a human perspective.

Peter helps them by redirecting their focus in 1 Peter 1:17-21.

1 Peter 1:17-21

- 17 And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile,
- 18 knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold,
- 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.
- 20 He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you
- 21 who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Do you see the connection in these verses between fearing God the Father and the cross of Christ? **We fear God as we pass through this sinful world because we know something.** What do we know? We know the price God the Father paid for our redemption. Ransom in that day was the price paid to free a slave. We were all slaves to sin and God bought us back with the ultimate price.

What price did God the Father pay to redeem the church back from its futile way of life? **He paid the ultimate price.** Sometimes, well most of the time, we probably read the Bible too quickly. Slower is better than faster, especially when we are talking about the cross. When we slow down and take in these verses we are reminded that what God gave to buy us back is the greatest motivation in the world to fear God the Father.

God couldn't give more than He gave to redeem us. One man writes, "**The high cost of salvation—the beloved Son's precious blood—calls for believers to live in reverent fear before God. Holy living is motivated by a God-fearing faith, which does not take lightly what was purchased at so great a cost.**"

As a result of the gospel we no longer fear God's wrath. God's wrath was removed by Christ at the cross. 1 John 4:18, "Perfect love casts out fear." We don't fear God's wrath because it has been removed by Jesus Christ. *But we do fear His disappointment.* We don't want to do anything that would grieve the Spirit of God and disappoint our heavenly Father. Our new goal is Ephesians 5:10, "Trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord." We want to please Him because He loves us and paid the ultimate price to adopt us as His children.

What do we do if we have lost something of the fear of God?

If we struggle to take God seriously we need to spend more time in the shadow of the cross

The cross is the place where perfect love and justice meet. The reason we fear God is because God knows how sinful we are and He still sent and sacrificed His Son in our place to buy us back. We belong to the One who bought us. God does not love us because Christ died for us. Christ died for us because God loves us. This is foundational. This is why we fear God. When we understand how sinful we are and how serious God takes our sin and what He did to ransom us from our sins how can we not fear God?

The question now is this - what does fearing God lead to? What do God fearing people look like in everyday life? How do we spot them?

Look back at Psalm 128, the second part of verse 1:

1. The Foundation of a Happy Home is in the first part of Psalm 128:1
2. The Focus of a Happy Home is in the second part of Psalm 128:1

Psalm 128:1

1 Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord,
who walks in his ways!

How do we know who really fears God? People who fear the Lord show it. How? The end of verse 1 says, "By walking in His ways." Do you see the connection? *The first part of verse 1 shows us who a blessed man fears and the second part of verse 1 shows us what a blessed man follows.* He both fears and follows the Lord. **His fear shows up in His following.**

How do you know you fear the Lord? You do what He says. Is this easy to do in this world? No. Obedience is challenging. Jesus said the world will hate us for following Him. We go upstream against the tide of culture. We're a little flock. Does that mean it's impossible to walk with God in the midst of a wicked culture? One thing I love about Scripture is that it is filled with real

life examples of people who walked with God in the midst of a wicked world. If other men did it, with God's help, we can do it.

In the midst of a wicked world a man named Enoch walked with God. In Genesis 5, the place in the Bible where we meet him for the first time, we are told twice in the space of just four verses that Enoch "walked with God"

Genesis 5:21-24, "When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. And after he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Enoch lived 365 years. Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away." Three hundred years is a long time to walk with God. It is no casual stroll. But that is what Enoch did and is remembered for. He was known for his long obedience in the same direction.

Is this what we do? Is our highest priority in life walking with God? God, I know you, but I want to know you better. God, I obey you but I want to obey you better. God, I love you, but I want to love you more. The more our culture runs away from you please help me to run to you. Colossians 2:6-7 reminds us, "Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving."

A few years ago we were invited to a families home for thanksgiving. They invited us and they invited their grown up kids. After we ate dinner we were all still seated at the table. The dad asked his adult son to get the Bible close to the table and told him what to read. He read some verses and the dad made a few comments on the verses.

You could tell that even though his son was older, this was their routine growing up. We keep a bible close to the dinner table and after dinner someone reads it and some comments are made about what's being read. That's not complicated, is it? If you don't know how to make comments on

verses you can get a good devotional and read it together as a family. To obey God we have to fear God and we have to know what He says.

Now this man who asked his son to read that day and made a few comments has the worst form of brain cancer. He was diagnosed a few months ago with a brain tumor called a glioblastoma. We don't know how much longer he has left. God seems to be taking this man home earlier than he wanted.

What are his kids going to remember about their dad? He feared and followed the Lord. **My dad loved the Lord and he showed it by doing His will.**

Where does Psalm 128 begin? The foundation of a happy home. The foundation of a happy home is fearing God. Taking God and His glory and glorifying Him serious. Not living for yourself. Denying yourself, taking up your cross daily and following Christ. Why do we do this? Because our Savior is our substitute. Jesus Christ is Israel's Messiah and the Lord of the church whose death and resurrection provides the one time payment for all our sins.

The foundation of a happy home is fearing the Lord.

The focus of a happy home is following God.

Now I want you to see in verses 2-6 what flows from this foundation and this focus. Notice the ripple effect that fearing and following the Lord has in the home.

Let's finish with:

3. The Fruit of a Happy Home - Psalm 128:2-6

Notice what flows into the home of a man who fears and follows the Lord. Notice how God's blessings flow into the family from work to the wife and

then the kids and then the nation. Fearing and following the Lord affects everything.

Psalm 128:2 begins with:

a. Work that is Blessed - Psalm 128:2

Look at verse 2. Please notice how the Psalmist starts with everyone who fears and follows God in verse 1 to the man. Psalm 128:2, "When you shall eat the fruit of your hands, you will be happy and it shall be well with you." Verse 2 is a reminder that work is part of God's good design for the man.

Derek Kidner, "Hard work is taken for granted, but this Psalm makes it clear that enjoyment of its fruits is a gift from God." The ability to enjoy life and work and what comes from it is a gift from God.

Sinclair Ferguson has some helpful thoughts when it comes to work. He writes, "**Twentieth century man needs to be reminded at times that work is not the result of the fall. Man was made to work, because the God who made him was a 'working God.'**"

Being made in the image of God means that man was made to be creative. Man was made to put his mind to work and put his hands to work. It's all part of being made in the image of God. **Work is part of the dignity of existence.**

What's the point? The man who fears God and follows God has a good work ethic. He's not lazy. He knows what is at stake in being the provider for his family by God's grace. Proverbs 10:4, "Lazy hands make for poverty, but diligent hands make wealth." This past summer we did a godly man's picture study. All the lessons were helpful. Probably the one I remember most was Chad Hankinson's sermon on a godly man's work ethic. You could tell that

Chad has spent a lot of time thinking about how to work the right way for the glory of God.

The issue in God rewarding the man who works hard is not prosperity - it's perspective. Colossians 3:23-24, "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve." The man who fears and follows the Lord uses his job as an opportunity to please God. His work is blessed.

Look at Psalm 128:3:

b. Wife that is blessed

Psalm 128:3, "Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house"

We need to be careful with this language. This is Hebrew poetry. In the Bible the vine with its grapes is a symbol of refreshment and lavish enjoyment. Vine is a symbol for fruitfulness. Notice it says she is like a fruitful vine within your house. **She flourishes through the right kind of loving leadership. The God fearing man is a blessing to his wife.**

The psalm is promising that however hard the day-to-day work may be for a laboring man, to come home to a godly wife is meant to be refreshing. It's meant to be enjoyable. It's something he looks forward to. The man works hard and yet he finds himself glancing at the clock because he can't wait to see his wife at the end of a long work day.

Next we see that not only does God bless his work and his wife:

c. Wittle Kids that are Blessed

I know I am trying to hard to keep every letter starting the same. Sorry.

Look at the end of verse 3, “your children will be like olive shoots around your table.” Olive trees in that day took a long time to mature and become profitable. But if you took the time to cultivate them, they became valuable and continued to produce a profitable crop for centuries, longer perhaps than any other fruit-producing tree or plant.

Parenting children well is very time consuming. It’s hard work. But it’s worth it. William Van Gamera speaks of children who are raised in a God fearing family this way, “They are not like grass, which is here today but is gone tomorrow. Rather, they are olive trees that in due time bear their fruit. The blessedness of the godly man will extend to other generations. What a privilege God bestows on his children in this life that we may already taste the firstfruits of our heritage!”

We need to be careful with this. I have only been here for 8 months and God has put in my heart a deep love for you and for this church. As I have spent time with several men in the church I have heard reports of their children who have chosen to depart from how they were raised and pursue a life of sin. I can’t imagine anything harder than that. I know my joy in life is often tied to how my kids are doing so to live with children who don’t pursue Christ is really hard.

This Psalm is not a promise. Remember again the Psalms are wisdom literature. Do godly men fear and follow God and still have hard marriages and children that walk away from the Lord? Yes. That’s a sad reality. This Psalm is also a reminder that we all have a responsibility to fear and follow the Lord and to leave the results up to Him.

James Montgomery Boice, “Families are made up of people; people are sinners; and sin disrupts even the best of relationships. Psalm 128 is not promising utopia. When it speaks of the God-fearing, fruitful family, as it does in verse 3, it is not implying that there will never be difficulties any more than it is promising material blessing, as it does in

verse 2, without the frustrations and even failures of physical work. Of course there will be problems, but if a man truly fears and obeys God, God will bless him with a fruitful wife and prospering children.

This does not mean that no properly raised child will ever rebel against his or her background. The children of godly parents can and often do rebel. What it does mean is that as a rule godly training issues in godly lives. As the twig is bent, so grows the tree. That is the kind of thing being said in this psalm: As a rule the person who is God-fearing and tries to obey God will be blessed with a God-fearing and obedient family.”

Being a God glorifying husband and dad or a God glorifying wife and mom is hard work. It's hard after a long day to spend quality time with your kids before they go to bed. To talk to them about their day and pray with them. To be there for them, but it's worth it when we see our children responding to Christ the right way. We're not in charge if or when the gospel clicks. That's the Spirit's work. But we are called to be faithful and to pray and trust Him to do His work.

The God fearing and following man's work is blessed and his home is blessed. The Psalmist then moves outward. Look at Psalm 128:5-6. The Psalmist traces God's blessings to the man who fears and follows God to his work life, his home life and his legacy on the world around him. A godly man leaves a godly legacy on this broken world. He makes a dint in this sinful society for the glory of God.

c. World that is blessed

The fourth reward for fearing God and walking in His ways is that you will make a powerful impact on a sinful society. Psalm 128:5-6, “The Lord bless you from Zion, And may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of

your life. Indeed, may you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel!"

Wherever we are in the Bible God expects us to bring with us prior revelation. What do we see throughout the Old Testament? When God's people fear Him and follow Him God protects them from other pagan nations who want to wipe Israel off the map. When God's people don't fear God and follow God, God sovereignly ordains other nations to come in and punish them for their rebellion. Remember the Assyrians wiped out the northern kingdom in 722 BC and the Babylonians came into Jerusalem and wiped out Judah in 586 B.C.

The Psalmist wants people to live in such a way that God protects His people so they can live in peace and prosperity. In the ancient Near East, the ultimate earthly blessing would be prosperity for one's nation, long life, healthy offspring, and peace.

I think Derek Kidner is right. "The quiet blessings of an ordered life are traced from the center outwards in this psalm, as the eye travels from the godly man to his family and finally to Israel. Here is simple piety with its proper fruit of stability and peace."

What are the three ingredients of a happy home:

The foundation of a happy home is fearing the Lord

The focus of a happy home is going to the Lord for guidance and doing what He says. You know you fear the Lord when His will in His Word is driving your life. This affects everything. It affects how and why we work and the condition of our marriages and our children and the world around us. The fruit of a happy home is the positive ripple effect fearing and following the Lord has in your work, in your home and to the world around you.