

Psalm 127

A song of ascents. Of Solomon.

¹ *Unless the Lord builds the house,
the builders labor in vain.*

*Unless the Lord watches over the city,
the guards stand watch in vain.*

² *In vain you rise early
and stay up late,
toiling for food to eat—
for he grants sleep to those he loves.*

³ *Children are a heritage from the Lord,
offspring a reward from him.*

⁴ *Like arrows in the hands of a warrior
are children born in one's youth.*

⁵ *Blessed is the man
whose quiver is full of them.*

*They will not be put to shame
when they contend with their opponents in court.*

INTRO to series “Summer in Psalms” – The Hebrew Psalms in our Bible are filled with ancient prayers, poems, laments, hymns, and spiritual songs written by God’s people throughout many generations. As the Holy Spirit spoke through them, their words of praise and faith were collected into five books with 150 different psalms.

Our Summer series will survey several of the Psalms which proclaim God’s faithfulness in all generations. They also call on us to trust the Lord in our own generation, seeking His best purposes in our homes, our church, and the world in which we live. A special part of this summer series will be the incorporation of music and singing led by our worship teams based on the Psalms we study.

INTRO to **Psalm 127**: This psalm is in the middle of a group of psalms known as the “Psalms of Ascent” (**Psalms 120-134**). These were songs sung by pilgrims making their way to Jerusalem, normally in groups or caravans traveling with one’s entire family. T

his psalm is also attributed to King Solomon, whose proverbs likely contributed to its content. Solomon’s building projects received the greatest renown in the history of Israel, and who was in charge of the greatest building project in Israel’s history—God’s Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

The psalm is split into two sections of proverbs: 2 proverbs about building and protecting a household and community, and 3 proverbs about children.

I. Despite our best efforts—apart from the Lord, we can do nothing. (vs. 1-2)

-The Hebrew word *bayit* (vs. 10) means house or home/household. Psalm 127 has both in mind!

-In language similar to that of Solomon's in Ecclesiastes, we are reminded that all our best efforts and activities, if the Lord is not in them, are merely "vanity" or "in vain". (see also **Proverbs 19:21** below)

-The second part of **vs. 1** moves from the household to the community: *Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain.*

-If it is not for the glory of God through Jesus Christ whatever we build or try to secure will not have eternal value (see **John 15:5b** below). On the contrary, that which is in Christ and for the glory of God through the Church can never be destroyed! (see **1 Corinthians 15:58** and **Matthew 16:18b** below).

-**vs. 2** moves the language from the builder and the watchman to a direct address: *In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—*

-Here, the Bible address issues that often plague the work-life culture of America today: overwork, unbridled ambition, anxious and endless striving, and lack of rest.

-God wants us to prioritize physical and spiritual rest (*Sabbath*) as gifts of His grace to be received. **Psalm 127** reminds us that He is working on our behalf even when we are asleep, and we can never outwork Him anyway! (see also **Proverbs 10:22** below)

II. The Lord is faithful to help us build strong families and households of faith. (vs. 3-5)

-The second half of Psalm 127 moves from the house and community to the family itself. In Jewish families, this psalm is often recited as part of a thanksgiving service after a child is born.

-Children also are not to be seen as a burden, but rather as a blessing. Imparting God's love to our children, grandchildren, and others is always an investment worth making.

-Offspring are reward—not because of anything good we've done to deserve them, but rather as the fruit of God's creative gifts to human beings.

--**vs. 4-5** give the picture of a father with many children by his side, to support him in battle and to stand by him when he is in need. Much like the wife of noble character described in **Proverbs 31**, where Scripture says "her children rise and call her blessed (31:28)," so also **Psalm 127** says: *Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of children. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their opponents in court (vs. 5).* The same language appears in the next psalm as well (see **Psalm 128** below).

-The picture of God's provision and care for the Christian family and the household of faith is also the picture of our salvation in Christ—we are saved by God's grace through faith, not by our own works. What we were unable to do for ourselves, God has given to us through Jesus Christ—the forgiveness of sins and true life in Him and for His glory both now and forever! (see **Ephesians 2:8-10** below).

Other Scriptures Referenced:

Proverbs 19:21: *Many are the plans in a person's heart,
but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.*

John 15:5b: Jesus said: *"Apart from me, you can do nothing."*

Matthew 16:18b: *...I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.*

Proverbs 10:22: *The blessing of the Lord brings wealth,
without painful toil for it.*

1 Corinthians 15:58: *Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*

Psalm 128

A song of ascents.

¹ *Blessed are all who fear the Lord,
who walk in obedience to him.*

² *You will eat the fruit of your labor;
blessings and prosperity will be yours.*

³ *Your wife will be like a fruitful vine
within your house;
your children will be like olive shoots
around your table.*

⁴ *Yes, this will be the blessing
for the man who fears the Lord.*

⁵ *May the Lord bless you from Zion;
may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem
all the days of your life.*

⁶ *May you live to see your children's children—
peace be on Israel.*

Ephesians 2:8-10: *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

Other Quotes/Resources:

“Remember this: every night when you have an opportunity to work (perhaps after a good day’s work), you have the opportunity to express your trust in God. He continues to work while we rest.” –Tony Merida

“We can plan something carefully, work hard at it, and be responsible and creative in implementing our plans, and everything can go wrong in a way we could never have foreseen.” -John Goldingay

“The Lord gives to His people by His grace what they never could grasp by their labor.”
–Daniel J. Estes