

Psalm 128 • The man who fears the Lord

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Psalm 128 is another short Psalm. It's all about the blessing that comes to the man who fears the Lord. This is a great little Psalm.

It says,

"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."

And then it goes on to say,

"5 The LORD bless you from (Mount) 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!" (ESV)

This is all about the fear of the Lord. It's probably important for us to begin by defining what is it to fear the Lord.

I don't know, maybe you've seen a movie. They used to do this in the old western movies. If you ever saw those, they talk about being God fearing. You a God fearing person? They'd say in the movie or something like that. Maybe you heard that in a book or whatever.

And God fearer is actually a term the Jews would use to describe Gentiles who had converted to Judaism. They were, Gentile God fearers. And a biblical fear of God, for the believer anyway, includes understanding just how much God

hates sin. And understanding also, that He will judge sin even in our lives, which He does through discipline. Right?

God is not going to judge sin in our lives unto death any longer because Jesus has already bore the brunt of our punishment. Right? But God still judges us for our sin, in the sense that we are disciplined as believers. And knowing that God will discipline us for our sin generates in us a fear of God. And it's a healthy sort of a thing.

When we're raising children, the whole idea of punishment is to put a fear into our children so that they won't do foolish things. Right? And that's the whole idea behind discipline.

And you probably remember when you were being raised. And you were afraid of your parents' wrath and rightly so. And I know that some parents went overboard, and if that, if your parents did, I'm sorry. But the fact of the matter is, it probably prevented us from doing some things that we shouldn't have done.

And it's really no different between you and God. We do fear His disciplinary action in our lives. And because of that we have a desire to live our lives in accordance with His will. We want to please Him. But you always have to remember that when we're talking about the fear of the Lord, it's not the same as being afraid of God.

There's a big difference between being afraid of God and having a fear of God. Because a fear of God understands that He is a holy God. Being afraid of God is thinking that He's a monster. And that the sword could swing my direction at any time because I might just make Him mad. And there's nothing I can do about it.

And I hate to say it, but there are people who are afraid of God. And it's a very sad sort of a thing. Because we don't have any reason to be scared of God. We do have reason though, to fear God in a healthy, biblical way. Because the fear of God is seen in our recognition of His final authority. We are not the final authority of our lives. He is. And when we recognize that, it is a healthy fear of God. And it is also seen in the way we want to submit to His will for our lives.

Notice the blessings that are promised here to the person who has this biblical fear of God. Verse 2, he says, *"You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands."* Now, this promise you need to know is connected to the Mosaic Covenant.

Do you remember reading in the Book of Judges how many times, because Israel became disobedient to God, that these neighboring nations would come into the land and they would plunder their crops. They would literally steal their crops. And they would work and labor all year long. And then they wouldn't be able to eat the fruit of their labors because these neighboring nations would come in and pillage. Right?

Well, the promise of God's Word was, if you keep My covenant you will eat the fruit of your own labors. (Psalm 128:2) And this promise is connected to the Mosaic Covenant. And it's basically telling the Israelite that, no enemy is going to come in and steal what you've worked so hard to produce.

Now, you and I aren't under the Mosaic Covenant. In a specific and literal sense, you got to understand that the promises of the Mosaic Covenant are not ours to claim. We're not under the Mosaic Covenant. We're under the New Covenant, the covenant of grace that was established and inaugurated through Jesus Christ to the church.

But there are principles that we can learn from the Mosaic Covenant that help us understand the heart of God and this is one. That we see that, to fear the Lord, is to receive a blessing from the Lord, that the fruit of your labors are yours.

And it goes on here to say, *"you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you."* And again, this is language from the Mosaic Covenant. But again, as believers, under the New Covenant, we understand that the heart of God is again, being expressed here. God wants to bless His children. He wants things to go well with them. And that happens when we have a healthy biblical fear of God. Right? It's important that we look at it that way.

Notice in verse 3, *"Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table."* And again, the fruitfulness, the blessings associated with family, are seen as one of the blessings that come from fearing the Lord.

In Jewish understanding, having a lot of children was seen as a sign of God's favor on you. And because of passages just like this and so forth. But the point here, is that once again, children are seen as a blessing from the Lord, not a burden and that the same with a fruitful wife.

Verse 4, *"Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD."* And then this Psalm ends with that uniquely, Jewish blessing saying, *"The LORD bless you from Zion!"* And of course, Zion, is where the temple was erected there in

Jerusalem. *"May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life! May you see your children's children!"* In other words, "may the LORD sustain your life to be able to see your grandchildren." And finally, *"Peace be upon Israel!"* This is a prayer. It's a prayer for blessing. It's a prayer for blessing.

And the blessings that are described here in the Book of Psalms, are really nothing more than the desire of people everywhere. And during all periods of time. You don't have to have lived back in ancient Israel to want to be blessed by God. You don't have to live just today. People always have wanted to be blessed.

The people of this world want to be blessed. But they don't call it blessed. They call it happy. They talk a lot about being happy. But what they're talking about is they're talking about living fruitful lives. They're talking about living satisfying lives. It's the universal cry of mankind. I want to be happy. I want my life to be good. I want to have a good life.

But too often the people of this world fail to see that goodness in their lives because they are seeking things outside of God. They're seeking the things of the world. And true satisfaction and genuine happiness isn't found from the things of the world. You can enjoy those things for a season.

But when your happiness is predicated upon your circumstances going well, what's going to happen when they're not going well? Then suddenly, you're not going to be happy anymore. And then suddenly, life isn't going to be worth living because you've been focused on happiness, as literally, your meaning for living.

I was also sharing... I teach a Bible class for our senior high kids for our school two days a week. And I was sharing with them, just yesterday, about having peace with God. Another blessing that you and I have that the world doesn't really understand.

Do you understand the blessing that you and I have of having peace with God? We have peace with God. And in fact, let me show you a passage in Romans. We'll get close, we're close to ending here. Romans 5:1 says,

Romans 5:1 (ESV)

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is believers. In other words, we're not in a situation where we've got this irritation - this problem between us and God. There's no problem between us and God. There's peace. We have it now through the cross. Through Jesus Christ, who died on the cross. He's made peace between God and us. Ahhh, it's nice having peace! Isn't it?

Do you know, the world doesn't understand that they don't have peace with God. They don't understand it. All they know is something's not right. And they're trying to fill it.

And they try to fill it with: money, and sex, and drugs, and pleasure. And I know, I know, I know! When we go on vacation, that's going to make me be at peace. And when I get that next job! And when I make that next amount of money! And I know, I know! All I have to do is get married and have kids and then I'm going to have peace. And then that doesn't work.

And then I got to buy more things. And I got to have a bigger this and a bigger that. And the world runs after all these things to try to have peace in their lives. And it doesn't come from those things. You can't get peace from things. It's elusive. Because it's based on what they have and what's happening.

People, the real joy, the real peace in our lives, comes from having peace with God. Knowing that we are at peace with our Creator and our Heavenly Father. Because you know what? Without that peace, nothing in life is going to satisfy you. You can run after all the things you want and they're not going to satisfy you.

And if you're in that position where you're running right now, looking for the satisfaction of the world. Keep running because you're not going to find it. It's just not going to happen. The blessing and the peace of God, comes from God. And it begins with the fear of the Lord. The fear of God in a biblical way.