

**THE SONG OF A HAPPY FATHER
PSALM 127**

NEED: DEPENDANCE UPON GOD FOR EVERYTHING

PROPOSITION: GOD IS THE SOURCE OF EVERY GOOD GIFT.

OBJECTIVE: TO ENCOURAGE MEN TO TRUST IN THE LORD

INTRODUCTION:

If a modern father were to write a Psalm that expressed his perspective on fatherhood, what would he use for a theme? Would he paraphrase the old song that says, “No body knows the troubles I see.” It is obvious that being a father in our day is not for sissies. It is a challenge. It may not be of much comfort to you, but it has actually never been easy to be a parent.

Would his song reflect despair or joy, faith or doubt, hope or depression? We could probably find a father in this congregation who would be glad to take one of those for his theme. Some would write a song of despair because of the experiences they are going through. Others would write songs of joy because of where they are at this particular point in time. What would you use for a theme? Our text for this morning was written as the song of a happy father. The name of Solomon has long been associated with this Psalm but many scholars question his authorship of the Psalm. Whoever it was that wrote this song wrote out of a profound sense of the place that God had in his life. His theme centers upon the providence of God as they are made known in every day life, especially in family life. On this Father’s Day I want every man in this congregation to come to the place that he can sing the song of the happy father.

The song of the happy father has two stanzas. The first stanza focuses upon his work and the second focuses upon his family. Let us take a careful look at the two stanzas of this song with a view making the theme of this song the theme of our song of testimony.

I. THE SONG ACKNOWLEDGES GOD’S PLACE IN OUR WORK.

The first stanza of this Psalm is rather familiar. It states a very positive truth in a negative way. It makes clear the place of God in the every day life of a father.

Each father has at least three assignments as he relates to his family. First, he is to provide his family with a house. Second, he is to provide his family with security and safety. Thirdly, he is to provide his family with sustenance – with food and clothing. All three of these assignments of the father find him in total dependence upon God. God enables the father to provide what the family needs.

1. God is the provider of shelter.

The Psalmist sings, “Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain.” The identity of the house in this statement has been of special interest. Some see it as a reference to the House of God, the temple in Jerusalem. Others see it as the physical house in which a man would house his family. Others see the house as representing the family itself – the word is often used in this sense in the Old Testament. Whichever identity you give to the word “house,” the statement is surely valid. It takes the prosperity of God to build the house of God or to build a house for your family, or to

build a family. The building of a family is uniquely a partnership between a sovereign and gracious God and a faithful and hard-working father. The heavenly Father and the earthly father become partners in the building of a family and the providing of a house for that family.

Some approach fatherhood as if they had no partner. They assume all the responsibility for themselves. They sweat and toil at the task of providing a house for their family and never consider that God desires to be a partner in that task. The Psalmist in his happy song of the father celebrates his partnership with God in this task. He is ready to admit that all of his efforts are “in vain” unless God is pleased to prosper his work.

Have you come to the place in your life that you are profoundly aware of this dimension of partnership in the building of your family? If you have – sing of it to the Lord.

2. God is the security for the family.

A second task assumed by the father is to provide a secure environment for his children. The Psalmist again recognizes God’s partnership in this task. “Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.” There would be in each of those ancient cities an organization of men who night by night and day by day stood at posts around the city as watchmen. It was their responsibility to warn the citizens of any approaching danger. They were vigilant in watching for the city.

The Psalmist knows that no number of watchmen can ever make a city secure. The only one who can provide a secure environment for your family is the sovereign God of the universe. This does not mean that you are not to have a part or that there is nothing for you to do, but it is a reminder that you have a strong and mighty partner. We must wisely and faithfully look to God to surround our families with his protective love. We must faithfully and continually look to him for the angelic hosts who encamp about the humble and the righteous. It is when we live with this deep God-awareness that we know we are living in strength and in security.

3. God is the sustainer of the family.

A third task of a father is to provide food and clothing for his family. It becomes a passion for a good father to make sure that the physical needs of his children are provided for day after day. However, the Psalmist knows that he is not alone in this task – he has a partner. “It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat bread of sorrow; for so he gives his beloved sleep.” The word “vain” has a prominent place in this statement. The word means false, empty, futile. What the Psalmist is describing is the feverish efforts of a man working night and day, to provide for the physical needs of his family. He gets up and goes to his task before the sun is up and stays at the task until after the sun has set. Whenever he sits down to eat, his bread is the bread of sorrow. There is a sense of despair in all that he does. There always seems to be more need than he has earning capacity. He works at the task as if he alone could provide for the needs of his family. He ignores the care and the love of a gracious heavenly Father.

The last part of this statement says, “For so he gives his beloved sleep.” The Amplified Bible provides an alternate translation of this statement and one that is adopted by many. It reads: “For he gives blessings to his beloved in sleep.” What the Psalmist is declaring according to this translation is that even when we lie down in sleep God continues to work in order to provide those things which we need to sustain our families. His work is not dependent always on our driving ourselves to the point of physical exhaustion. This must not be understood as a statement condemning hard work. It is a condemnation of an unbelieving approach to life that works as though everything depended on you and ignores the loving attention that your heavenly Father gives to you and your children. Jesus warned about this when he spoke of the lilies of the fields and the birds of the air, and how the heavenly Father cares for them. He kept reminding his disciples that we are “much more” an object of the heavenly Father’s care than the grass of the field, or the flowers in the front yard, or the birds of the air. We need to go about our tasks with the inner confidence that while we are at work God is at work along side of us providing through us the needs of our family. You may have heard that both poverty and insanity are hereditary—you inherit them from your children. And you may, if you do not take God as a partner in the task of providing for your family.

The song of the happy father celebrates the providential goodness of God. It declares that the hand of God is at work in providing home, security, and sustenance for your family.

II. THE SONG ACKNOWLEDGES GOD’S PLACE IN OUR FAMILIES.

The second stanza of the Psalm might at first seem to be unrelated to the first stanza but the more time you spend with the Psalm the more aware you will become that the two are joined together by this common theme of God's providential goodness. Not only is God the provider for the needs of the family: God is the provider of the family itself.

1. Our children are a gift from the Lord.

“Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from Him.” The older version translates the word “children” in both parts of the statement. Whether they are sons or daughters they are to be seen as a heritage of the Lord. By this statement the Psalmist means for us to understand that God gave them to us. They are measured out to us as a part of His blessing upon our lives.

I think we would have to acknowledge that children are not always seen in this light in our day. Some out of their concern over the growing population of the world see children as something of a curse. Others have so structured their lives that they see children as something of an inconvenience. This happy father in this Psalm, who reflects God's perspective on children, sees them as a gift from the Lord. They are a heritage and a reward from a sovereign and gracious God. They are to be welcomed and to be celebrated with song.

We need to remind ourselves of our Lord's attitude toward children. He always had time for a child. He warned those who would do anything to harm a child—it would be better

for them to be cast into the sea with a large stone tied around their necks. We must celebrate our children as a gift from God.

2. Our children are our protection.

The Psalm obviously reflects life as it was lived in the ancient Old Testament day. The family was a vital unit to everyone. Just as children are dependent upon parents when they come into this world, the family changes until a day in which the parents become dependent upon the children. It is this perspective that a Psalmist is celebrating in this song of the happy father.

“Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in ones youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gate.” “Arrows” were an important part of the soldier’s equipment in that ancient day. The Psalmist is declaring that what arrows are to a soldier, sons and daughters will be to parents when they are grown. They will be there for the protection of the parent in those closing years of life. However it is well to remember that arrows do not just happen. The soldier has spent time and effort in the making of his arrows. If your children are to be there for us when we are old, we must be there for them while they are young.

In the next verse he declares there is a special blessedness that comes to the person who has a quiver full of them. This statement would seem to indicate that the more children

you have, the better. Now we will have to understand this was written before the day in which we raise children in a city where they can contribute little to the support of the family in the early years of life. It was written in the day before the beginning of the manufacturing of expensive athletic shoes for them to wear or the fads would come and go with different kinds of clothing that they would have to have. However, the truth that the Psalmist is setting forth and celebrating is valid in any day. Children are a blessing when you get old. They will meet many needs in the life of the parent in those latter years of life. The psalmist knew that before life is finished it is very likely that the parent will become as dependent upon the child as the child was once dependent upon the parent. My family is experiencing this at the present time. My Dad needs his children to protect and support him today as much as we needed him when were small. Dootsie, Alice's mother, was like that in her last days. We tried to be there for her like she had been there for Alice in her childhood.

This is not a word of admonition to children concerning their elderly parents, but it does have strong implications for us. We are to be the defenders and protectors of our parents when they come to that point in life in which they are vulnerable to others. They are not to be neglected and overlooked when that point in life comes for them.

So your happy song that you sing unto the Lord should include special gratitude for the children and grandchildren that he has given you. They are a special heritage and reward from the Lord. Under the blessing of God they will be a blessing to you through all of the days of life. This is a part of the song of the happy father.

The obvious life perspective set forth in this Psalm is not very popular in our day. The recommended life perspective in our day is one in which you sing about your sufficiency. This Psalm is about your insufficiency and God's sufficiency. This Psalm conflicts with the self-centered, man-centered philosophy of the world in which we live. We need to make a dramatic and intentional return to the Biblical perspective. Every father in this room needs to approach life singing the song of the happy father. He needs to sing a stanza in which he acknowledges the place of God in his work and his continuing dependence on the prosperity of God. Then he needs to sing a stanza in which he celebrates the place of God in his family. He needs to acknowledge that family is a special gift from God. God the Father needs to hear this from our lips and the world needs to hear it as a testimony. Let's sing together the song of the happy father.