

Psalms of Ascent

Message 5b

III. Jehovah Grants Sleep to His Beloved —to Enjoy Complete Peace

Psalm 127: ¹ Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain. ² It is vain for you to rise up early, To sit up late, To eat the bread of sorrows; For so He gives His beloved sleep. ³ Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward. ⁴ Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth. ⁵ Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; They shall not be ashamed, But shall speak with their enemies in the gate.

Monday

You know how my father David could not build a house for the name of the Lord his God because of the wars which were fought against him on every side, until the Lord put his foes under the soles of his feet. But now the Lord my God has given me rest on every side; there is neither adversary nor evil occurrence. And behold, I propose to build a house for the name of the Lord my God, as the Lord spoke to my father David, saying, "Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, he shall build the house for My name" (1 Kings 5:3-5).

A. This chapter provides us with a vision that man himself and his nature are in vain in the Lord's work of building up

1. The author of this psalm, Solomon, is the builder of the temple. God's intention is to build a spiritual house on the earth, that is, to build a spiritual city. God is doing a building work on the earth today.
2. Before a house is built, there must be a blueprint. God first revealed the blueprints of the temple to David, and then Solomon built it on the basis of the wisdom God gave him. Therefore, before God, those who participate in this building

work surely have a fundamental need, which is to see the blueprint of this building in a deeper and more profound way.

3. Solomon was chosen by God to build the temple of God because he was a king of peace. This is a powerful spiritual principle (1 Kings 5:3-5). If we are to build the house of God, we must be at peace with God and at peace with one another; we can do the work of building only in an environment of peace. Otherwise, we cannot be entrusted with the ministry of service in the building.

Psalm 127 is also very wonderful; it was written by Solomon. He was very famous for his wisdom. He was still very young when he became king. He also needed to bear the burden of building the temple of God. In 1 Kings 3:4, Solomon went up to Gibeon. That was the great high place, but where was the ark? David had already moved it to Jerusalem and put it into a tent there. He hadn't moved the entire tabernacle from Gibeon. The first time David took the ark from the house of Abinadab he had not carefully studied how the ark was to be moved, so he put it on a cart. Then God was not pleased and Uzzah died when he touched the ark to steady it. But the good point about David is that he realized that he was wrong and carefully studied the word. Then he saw that the Levites should carry the ark (1 Chron. 15:12-13).

When Solomon went to Gibeon there was only an empty tabernacle without the ark, without God's presence. But Solomon did not realize this so he went to Gibeon to offer a sacrifice of one thousand animals. Then God appeared to him in a dream and said, "Ask! What shall I give you?" The Solomon said, "Now, O Lord my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted. Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" (1 Kings 3:7-8). Solomon did not ask for long life, riches or victory over his enemies. He only asked for an

understanding heart; so God promised to answer his prayer to give him wisdom and understanding. God gave Solomon more wisdom than anyone before or after him. Once God answered his prayer, Solomon immediately realized that he should go back to Jerusalem, to the ark, to God's presence, where he offered burnt offerings, peace offerings, and made a feast for his servants. Later he built the temple for God.

Tuesday

Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, To sit up late, To eat the bread of sorrows; For so He gives His beloved sleep (Psa. 127:1-2).

In whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Eph. 2:21-22).

B. Labouring in vain and watching in vain

1. "Unless the Lord builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the Lord guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain." In one way, we are the building that God desires to build up and in another way, the workers doing the building up. While we are building together based on the same base and foundation, more likely we will do as described in this song: rise early, sleep soundly, and eat what we get from our labour. From this perspective, it is good.
2. However, in spiritual matters, we need to put our whole spirit, entire energy into it. If we do it only by ourselves, then it will surely be in vain. This is the difference between matters of the world and matters of the spirit.
3. One who learns to serve the Lord must be a one who learns a basic lesson, the lesson of never depending on oneself, absolutely rejecting oneself in regard to spiritual matters. If you think that by putting your whole wisdom and intelligence, experience and learning, energy and capacity into God's

work, then you will complete the job and succeed, then you will surely be disappointed because the Bible tells us, “This is in vain.”

4. In the spiritual things, this is a very basic point. On one hand, God requires us to devote our time, spirit, energy to this building work; on the other hand, God tells us that all these are in vain. Therefore, the phrase *in vain* is mentioned three times in the Song of Solomon. Literally, *in vain* means *emptiness*.
5. The first thing that we must remind ourselves of is to never depend on ourselves, never trust ourselves in the building work of God. It is true that we are called by God to build but the actual builder is God Himself. Were the actual builder not Jehovah, the labourers would work in vain.

Psalm 127 is like a testimony: “Unless the Lord builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the Lord guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, To sit up late, To eat the bread of sorrows” (vv. 1-2a). *In vain* is mentioned three times; it means *empty*. If God is not doing the building, it has no value. Right after that it says, “He gives His beloved sleep.” This was Solomon’s experience; at night when he was sleeping, God appeared to him in his dream and promised him wisdom. When he wrote this psalm, Solomon realized that he was not building the temple by himself; it was God who was building it. “It is not my temple, it is not my ability, that can participate in God’ building. If it is of myself then there is no value.” The temple built by Solomon was a figure of the building in the New Testament showing that God wants to build a house according to His eternal purpose. We need to build a temple. Ephesians 2:21 says, “...the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.” This is the building that God wants on earth today.

The Old Testament temple was torn down in 70 AD when the general Titus from Rome attacked to Jerusalem, but the spiritual temple is always being built. How can we build it? By being joined and knit together, by growing increasingly to become the temple of

God. The spiritual temple is the result of our growth in life. When we have all grown, we will grow into the temple of God. This was written to the saints in Ephesus. Every local church has to be built together to become God's spiritual house. On one hand, Christ is the corner stone that links us together, representing the Body of Christ, the universal church, that is growing and being built together. When the universal church is being built, every local church is also being built together. That is why verse 22 continues, "in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit." Here we have the church in London with saints from Toronto, Windsor and Mississauga. In each locality we are to testify for the Lord in that place. We all have to grow in our own locality. When we are all released from our flesh and learn to live in our spirit, we grow together and are being built together in spirit to become the house of God in spirit. Each place can become God's spiritual house; this is what the Lord wants in the churches. Here Solomon shows us that we cannot build by ourselves. Building is not by our capacity, ability or cleverness. All these are useless; it is God who builds. How about us?

Wednesday

And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." ... And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man (Gen. 2:18, 21-22).

C. The need of sleep

1. "For so He gives His beloved sleep." This is not to say we should go to bed to sleep and not work anymore. In the proverbs of Solomon, he encourages people to be industrious and never be lazy. Solomon himself was an industrious man, his lessons are lessons of being industrious and he would never tell us, "Go to bed to sleep."
2. Another name that God gave Solomon is *Jedidiah* (2 Sam.

- 12:25), meaning *beloved of the Lord*. The Lord gave many things to him, the one beloved of the Lord, while he slept. When Solomon came to the throne, he went to Gibeon to sacrifice. As a result, when he went to sleep at night, God came to speak to him and gave him many promises. God promised him wisdom and a broadened heart (1 Kings 3-4).
3. If God had not given Solomon wisdom while he was sleeping, he would not have been qualified to build the temple. If Solomon had to build the temple using his natural intelligence, he would have been a man who would rise early, sit up late, and eat the bread of sorrows, yet all would have been in vain.
 4. Genesis 2 records that after God had made Adam, God said, "It's not good for the man to be alone." God caused him to fall into a deep sleep. In his sleep God took a rib out from his body and built it into a woman.
 5. Adam prefigures Christ and Eve the church. In the same way that God worked during Adam's sleep to make a woman, the church was created from the blood and water flowing from Jesus' side when He died on the cross.
 6. In principle, we are called by God to work together to build. On the other hand, God has completely rejected us and put every one of us to sleep. To sleep, in the spiritual sense, represents death. Those whom God loves He brings into death. If we do not share in the death of Christ, if we do not have Jesus' death on our body, we will not be able to share in the resurrection life of Christ
 7. The building up of the church is a spiritual work to form Christ in people for the increase and magnification of Christ in the church. If we are ones whom God loves, He will surely bring us to death. When we deny ourselves, accept the cross, and are willing to be put to death, we will see that in this sleep God will appear to us and give us wisdom to build His church.

Thursday

He gives His beloved sleep (Psa. 127:2b).

For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you (2 Cor. 4:11-12).

Psalm 127:2 concludes with “He gives His beloved sleep.” This means that you cannot do anything by yourself. Don’t trust yourself, your natural ability, or your experience; rather, deny yourself. If you rely on anything you can do, your building will be in vain. We need to learn to sleep. What does it mean to sleep? It means that you rest and also that our flesh is put to death. First Thessalonians 4 mentions those who sleep in Jesus; their bodies have died so they are sleeping. To put our flesh to death does not mean that we do not do anything. It is not that we are lazy. We know that Solomon stressed that we need to be hard working. He mentioned many times in Proverbs that we need to be hard working. He spoke of many excuses that lazy people give to stay at home such as there could be lions on the road. Some are so lazy that they will not eat even if there is bread in front of them. Solomon stressed that we cannot be lazy. We must not be lazy but we also cannot do anything by ourselves.

On one hand God is calling us for His building; on the other hand, God wants us to give up on ourselves, to sleep. He wants our flesh to be put to death. We cannot rely on our flesh or live by ourselves. When we participate in Christ’s death, life will be released and manifested. Second Corinthians 4:11-12 says, “For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you.” When life is being released, that is building, the building of the church. Christ increasing and spreading in the church is the building of the church. This is what Solomon wants us to see.

Many words in the Old Testament have very deep spiritual meanings, especially Solomon’s words. He wrote Song of Songs; it has a clear picture of the growth in life beginning with loving the Lord and continuing step by step until you reach maturity and are waiting for the Lord’s return. This must be applied to our spiritual life. We must put our flesh to death so that the life of Christ may

be manifested in our bodies. Within us there is the growth of life. This is the true building of the church. The whole building is joined together and grows into the temple of God. We are being built together in Him to become God's spiritual house.

After this, Psalm 127 speaks about children. What does that have to do with the building in the beginning of the psalm. Verse 3 says, "Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, The fruit of the womb is a reward." Verse 1 speaks of building a house. On the one hand, a house is the place where we dwell; on the other hand, it is our home. The home is of the house; the home refers to the people who constitute our home. The children are the increase of the home. It was only two people; then you bear more. The increase of life is called children. The Lord gives us a heritage. What do you do with it? Is it good enough to just receive it? If a person who gives you a heritage in a will passes on, the heritage becomes yours. A heritage is given to you freely. Have you ever received a heritage? There is nothing for you to do; you just receive it.

Friday

Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward (Psa. 127:3).

I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase (1 Cor. 3:6).

D. Children are a heritage and reward

1. "Children are a heritage from the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward." Previously the psalmist spoke of building the house, but here he says, "Children are a heritage from the Lord." In fact, these two are one. In English, the word *house* has two meanings; one means *a house*, the other means *a family*. Therefore, Solomon first spoke about building a house, but later he continues by speaking about the increase in a family. The increase in a family is the increasing of life. Therefore, the building is the growth and increase of the measure of life in the saints.
2. "Children are a heritage from the LORD." *Heritage* means

something is passed down to you; you get it without any work. “Children are a heritage from the LORD” means that the Lord gives you the growth in life. When you are sleeping, you have children. In other words, when you enjoy sleep, your spiritual life grows.

3. “The fruit of the womb is a reward.” *Reward* is different from *heritage*. Reward happens when man does well, so it is connected with receivers. Children are the heritage from the the Lord and a reward is from God. We need to grow in Christ and we should admit that it is God’s free gift. This is not of our will, nor of our running, but of God who shows mercy to us.
4. On one hand, the mercy from the God is given to those who really want Him. Some brothers and sister grow very fast, some slowly. This is not to say that God prefers someone but to say that some have a pure heart, longing for God; while some are cold to God and have no wish to have God in their heart. So the grace from God is different.

Children are also a reward. What is a reward? You need to do something in order to gain a reward. When the Lord comes to reward us, it will not be like grace that is free, it will be according to what we do. How we live after we are saved determines whether we will receive a reward or not. On one hand, the children are a heritage; on the other hand, they are a reward. The heritage is freely given by God, but according to reward you must do something. Children refers to the increase of life. How do you gain the increase of life? On one hand, this is something that God gives us. Only God can cause the growth. Paul said, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase” (1 Cor. 3:6). Our growth in life is all up to God, but on the other hand that also becomes a reward. God not only gives us life, this life needs to grow properly. It must have our cooperation; we need to do something.

Psalm 127:3-5 presents a picture that is a reflection of the first section about the building of the house. What is building? It is the increase of life, the growth in life as shown in Ephesians chapter 2

where the church is built by growing. The building of the church requires the growth in life. On one hand, God freely gives the growth in life while we are sleeping. There is nothing we can do. On the other hand, it is a reward that has everything to do with us. On God's side, it has nothing to do with our willing or running. It is God who gives mercy. But on the other side, is the reward that requires us to cooperate with Him. If it just a matter of heritage, then all we need to do is to receive. Then why do some grow and other do not grow? Some grow but others stop at a certain level. The key is in the second aspect, the aspect of reward. This requires our cooperation. Some desire to pursue, to put all things away to follow the Lord. Others do not have a heart for the Lord. They do not want to pay the price, to labor. They can't grow; therefore they cannot participate in the building of the church. For us to be in the building of the church by the growth in life, on one hand, we need the mercy of God. On the other hand we need to rise up to cooperate with Him. We must have a pure desire for God to pursue Him, to put away all things to follow Him which will result in the increase of life.

Saturday

Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth (Psa. 127:4).

Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it (Heb. 12:11).

E. Children are arrows; you are the warrior with arrows

1. "Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth." "Arrows in the hand" are arrows that have been processed before, and after the process they can be put to use. Children are like arrows. They need to go through several processes until they act as arrows, until they can be used.
2. In regards to spiritual matters, the life God gave us still needs teaching until it is growing well. The Holy Spirit is our teacher, He is working on us in our environment and in our

lives. He will train us until we become an arrow in the hands of God.”

3. Children are arrows and you are equipped with them. Once you are equipped with arrows you are warriors! When you were still young, you accepted the Lord’s hand, you trusted His sovereignty, you did not choose for yourselves, you learned to be one He loved, and you rested in His controlling hands. Thus God formed children in your belly, which means that you grow in life inwardly. Through the inward growth, power is produced and you become a warrior with arrows, you have your own pieces of equipment!

Psalm 127:4 says, “Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one’s youth.” Where do the arrows come from? Can you just cut down the branch of a tree to get an arrow? That is not an arrow. An arrow must be made. You have to cut the branch and use it to make an arrow. You must make the children into an arrow. That requires labor. Our growth into an arrow requires the work, the discipline of the Spirit, so that we can become arrows to deal with the enemy. Children are the increase of life. We become arrows, warriors to fight for the Lord to deal with the enemy. We need to cooperate with God. We must allow the Lord to work in us to become an arrow so that we can face the enemy.

The children are the children of one’s youth. We receive the Lord’s discipline. We do not choose for ourselves. We rest in the hands of His discipline so that the children which come out from our loins, from our inward growth in life which produces the strength that makes us arrows. Then we have the power to fight. This is a very important thought in this section. We need the increase of life to produce the children to build the church. We also need to let the Spirit work in us. This work is not that quick. For example, a piece of wood first needs to be sharpened and shaped. The Lord is working in us to make us into arrows with power.

Sunday

Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; They shall not be ashamed, But shall speak with their enemies in the gate (Psa. 127:5). And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it (Matt. 16:18).

F. A quiver full of arrows

1. The quiver is the church life you are in. Without the church life as the quiver, arrows will be scattered on the ground and cannot be found. No matter how capable you are, what achievement you accomplish, how useful you are, or what experience you have, you must understand that it is the church that holds you, it is the church that makes what you have valuable. With the quiver, all your arrows or even more arrows, can be held.

G. Fight and overcome

1. “They shall not be ashamed, But shall speak with their enemies in the gate.” The truly spiritual fight is the corporate fight. When the gates of the hell open, you will be powerful when you speak in front of those gates if you have those arrows in your quivers.
2. When you are confronted with your enemies, you stand firm and you will never feel shameful. Praise the Lord!

“Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them” (v. 5a). That means he is filled with arrows. God is working in us to the point that we are filled with arrows. The quiver here refers to the church life. The arrows must be kept in the church life. If you only have many arrows without a quiver, it is very hard to handle them. If we are not in the church life it is hard to keep so many arrows. You cannot shoot arrows if your hands are holding them all. You must have them in a quiver so that your hands are free. You must be in the church life. The quiver is the church life where you are. Without the church life as the quiver, the arrows will fall to the ground and be scattered. No matter how capable you are, what achievement you can accomplish, how

useful you are, or what experience you have, you must realize that is the church life that holds you. As long as you are in the church, you have the quiver that can hold many arrows. Without the church life all your arrows will be scattered and you cannot fight with the enemy. Our goal is to build up the church. We are being perfected and kept in the church. In the end we can overcome the enemy. They shall not be ashamed but shall speak with the enemy in the gate. Those who are being built in the church not only have growth in life, they also are strong to fight. The gates of Hades shall not prevail against the church and the church can become overcoming, helping each one to overcome. This is so precious. May we have a proper understanding so that we can all participate in the building of the church.