

Psalms of Ascent

Message 6

IV. Those Who Fear God and Do His Word Will be Blessed to Enjoy the Fruit of the Labor of Their Hands

Psalm 128: ¹ *Blessed is every one who fears the LORD, Who walks in His ways.* ² *When you eat the labor of your hands, You shall be happy, and it shall be well with you.* ³ *Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine In the very heart of your house, Your children like olive plants All around your table.* ⁴ *Behold, thus shall the man be blessed Who fears the Lord.* ⁵ *The LORD bless you out of Zion, And may you see the good of Jerusalem All the days of your life.* ⁶ *Yes, may you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel!*

Monday

Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it.... Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth. (Psa. 127:1a, 4).

When you eat the labor of your hands, You shall be happy, and it shall be well with you. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine In the very heart of your house, Your children like olive plants All around your table. (Psa. 128:2-3)

A. Comparison between Psalm 127 and Psalm 128

1. This psalm is the continuation of the previous psalm, but this one (Psalm 128) is higher, and has one more step. The previous psalm gives us a vision that God's work is to build a house, but Psalm 128 gives us another vision of the way to build the house.
2. The previous psalm shows us that unless we labor in the Lord, we will labor in vain. Psalm 128 tells us that we will eat the fruit of the labor of our hands. We will enjoy and it shall be well with us because this labor is not by our own power; it's the power of the

Holy Spirit. The previous psalm lets us see that children are like arrows in a quiver; there is an atmosphere of fighting; but this psalm (128) says, “Your children like olive plants All around your table.” This is full of peace, full of blessings. The previous psalm shows us that people have children, and children are blessings from the Lord, are a heritage. But this psalm shows us that we should see our children’s children, in other words, a continuous multiplication of life.

3. The previous psalm says that if people only have hearts to serve the Lord but don’t give the Lord His proper position when they serve and serve the Lord by their own power, they will find out that the result is in vain. But this psalm (128) tells us that the labor of those who fear the Lord and walk in His ways are all effective. They all can be enjoyed and they all are complete. God’s word shows us that if every service we do is in the Holy Spirit, it will be very joyful and very fruitful.

The Bible is so wonderful. These psalms bring us to ascend step by step, going deeper in life and higher in life. This is wonderful. Psalm 128 is higher than Psalm 127. Psalm 127 says, “It is vain for you to rise up early, To sit up late, To eat the bread of sorrows.” Psalm 128 says, “When you eat the labor of your hands, You shall be happy, and it shall be well with you.” This is a great contrast. One psalm talks about labor that is in vain, but the next about labor that causes us to be blessed. Psalm 127 speaks of children as arrows for battle, but it seems as if the battle is over in 128; it is filled with enjoyment and rest around the table. What does a family do around the table? They are enjoying, resting and satisfied. We are filled with satisfaction when we are around the table. At the home where I was staying, we not only were around the table ourselves but we also had other saints over—such an enjoyment. The battle is over; now is the time to enjoy.

In Psalm 127, children are a heritage and a reward. There is a difference between a heritage and a reward. You receive a heritage without any work but you must do something to earn a reward. We must labor on children for them to become a reward. In Psalm 128 it is not a matter of heritage or reward but of seeing the children of your

children. How blessed is this! Many older saints already see the children of their children. This is a blessing from God. This is God's divine life increasing in us continually.

Tuesday

Blessed is every one who fears the LORD, Who walks in His ways. (Psa. 128:1).

Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all 17 (as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did (Rom. 4:16-17).

B. Worship is to fear – to fear in love

1. *Worship is fear* in the Bible. "Blessed is every one who fears the Lord, Who walks in His ways!" We always think that if we fear God, we will be controlled and will have many limitations, so why are we blessed people? But the Bible shows us that the way to gain the real blessings is to fear the Lord, to walk in His ways. This is not the fear of punishment; this is the fear that God will not like it; it is to be concerned about how to please God, how to touch God's heart when we serve, so that we always have a trembling heart. People who have this heart of fear and trembling are the people who have the real love.

In Psalm 128 the labor is not in vain but a blessing. The key is in verse 1 which speaks of fearing the Lord and walking in His ways. The previous labor was in vain because it was speaking trying to do something for the Lord by yourself. Unless the Lord builds the house, the building is in vain. Trying to build God's house by yourself is in vain. But someone who fears the Lord is blessed. How can you say that being fearful is a good thing? When the Bible speaks of fearing God it does not mean that you are afraid to come to His presence. The fear here is very sweet; it is a fear out of love. It is to fear that we

cannot please our God, that we cannot follow His ways, that God cannot accomplish His eternal purpose in us. This is a godly fear.

Abraham was the first one that God called. He lived his entire life in God's presence. At the end, he reached the peak of his experience in Genesis chapter 22. When God asked him to offer up Isaac he did not say one word. He brought Isaac to Mount Moriah to offer him up. He had the faith to be willing to sacrifice his son because he believed that even if Isaac died, God would resurrect him. At that moment God came to stop him and give him a ram to replace Isaac. Then God said, "Now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me" (v. 12). The result was blessing. Fear here does not mean that Abraham was afraid of God. He was fearful that God could not accomplish His purpose through him. At the same time he was filled with faith in God, believing that God would cause his son to live again. So Romans says that Abraham believed in "God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did" (4:17). How great is our Lord!

2. The apostle Paul told us that he has a fearing heart before God. 1 Corinthians chapter 9 says, "But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified." 2 Corinthians chapter 5 says, "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences." Paul has only one ambition, which is to please God, because he loves God and he fears that God will not be pleased. At the end of the chapter 12 of Hebrews Paul said, "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire."

We also should have this kind of fear in love. In 1 Corinthians 9:27, Paul said, "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified." While Paul was running the race, he disciplined his body lest he be disqualified. This indicates an element of fear. Paul preached to others concerning a glorious reward for running the race.

How about us? Sometimes we feel like we cannot go on anymore; we are sore. But we need to buffet our bodies, bringing them under control. This is what the apostle Paul did. Such a spiritual brother still needed to do this to follow the Lord because in him was the holy fear that he might not be able to follow the Lord and reach the goal to gain God's reward. This was his testimony.

In 2 Corinthians 5:11 Paul said, "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences." We need to please our God. What was Paul afraid of? Our God is fearful, so Paul determined to please his God. We all need such a determination. Paul was afraid that even though he preached the gospel to others, he himself might not please God, so he was not loose or lazy. He said, "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14). We all need this same desire.

Wednesday

The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. (Isa. 11:2).

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. (Prov. 9:10).

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:28-29).

3. The prophecy Isaiah in chapter 11 says, "The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD." Our Lord has only one joy, only one requirement, which is to worship God, to fear God.
4. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the

knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” (Prov. 9:10) If we are God-fearing people, then we will not dare to do whatever we want. This is our Lord’s testimony on the earth. This is our own testimony also.

When Paul wrote the book of Hebrews, the focal point is to gain the reward. Do not lose the reward. Do not lose the salvation that God has for us. “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire” (12:28-29). Have you ever seen God as a consuming fire? Yes, He is filled with grace, but He is also a righteous and holy God. He must consume anything that does not belong to Him. So we must have a fearful heart that we may serve God acceptably. This word is sober. We must have a holy fear that is according to God’s pleasure, fearful that we cannot please God, that God cannot gain His eternal purpose in us. So Psalm 128:1 says, “Blessed is every one who fears the Lord.” To be fearful is to be blessed.

C. Walk on the Lord’s path

1. “Who walks in his ways.” (*Ways* is better translated as *paths*.) A person who fears the Lord will definitely walk on the Lord’s path. Although this path is rugged, is full of thorns, and has many crosses, a person who fears the Lord will advance on this path because he is not walking alone; he is walking with the Lord with a spirit of worship.

We must not only fear the Lord, we must walk in His ways. We walk on His ways because we fear the Lord. The ways of the Lord are not easy. This is the way of the cross. We must bear our cross to follow the Lord. We must deny ourselves, pick up our cross, and follow the Lord. There may be many sufferings, difficulties, oppositions, and persecutions on this way. But if we fear God, we can go forward. If we fail because of a little opposition, difficulty or persecution, this proves that we do not fear God. We live together in the church life. Sometimes persecution or discouragement comes from the brothers and sisters. That is why we need endurance in the

church life. Love is persevering. We must endure being able to receive from others even when we are offended. We will not always be praised in the church life. Being opposed is good for us. This is my experience. I gave my entire life to serve the Lord full time for over 30 years; in the end I was quarantined. The reason was not very reasonable. Many tried to defend me and told me to defend myself, encouraging me to go to court to sue them. How can someone be quarantined who has been seeking to serve faithfully? However, I can testify that I was not offended. I was even thankful to the Lord because the way we are walking on is the Lord's way. The Lord's way is filled with persecutions. So Paul told Timothy that those who desire to follow the Lord will have many persecutions (2 Tim. 3:12). If you are never persecuted, perhaps you are on the wrong way.

Thursday

When you eat the labor of your hands, You shall be happy, and it shall be well with you. (Psa. 128:2).

Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner (John 5:19).

D. Fruitful labor

1. The man who wrote this psalm was a person who feared the Lord, a person who walked on the Lord's path, a person in the Holy Spirit. So when he touches serving and building, he immediately said, "When you eat the labor of your hands, You shall be happy, and it shall be well with you." At this time, he is not laboring by his own strength. He really learned a lesson and lives in the Lord, so he can bear a lot of fruit.
2. The thing that the Lord dislikes the most is people standing there idle. The Lord spoke a parable in the Gospel of Matthew chapter 20. It says that when He went out in the morning, he "saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard'.... He went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?'" Our Lord is attentive and He never wants to see people

stand idle. Since the service in the church is corporate, He needs everyone to labor.

3. Although we labor here, God doesn't want us to use our own strength. Outwardly, we are laboring, but it is the work of the Spirit. Although we are laboring outwardly, we are enjoying and resting in Him.
4. Therefore, in terms of spiritual building, there are two conditions: first, the person himself must be right, and second, the ability to serve must be correct. If we fear God and walk in the His way, the Spirit is also working when we labor. Please remember that this is the way to build. Building can be successful only in this situation.

A person who fears the Lord and walks in His ways is blessed. He no longer labors according to himself but according to the Spirit. It is the Lord who is working through him for His own sake. This was the Lord's own testimony. He said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner" (John 5:19).

Friday

Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine In the very heart of your house, Your children like olive plants All around your table. (Psa. 128:3). I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit. (John 15:5).

E. Fruit full of life

1. "Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine In the very heart of your house, Your children like olive plants All around your table." Here we can see what is the building. At first you labor by the Lord's Spirit, you worship and fear God and walk in the Lord's ways. However, as a result we have a picture here of a great family. This is the building. Here you have life growing from only one person to a family. So the church is being built here.
2. "Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine In the very heart of your house." If a person fears God, walks in His ways, and serves in

the Holy Spirit, he will have a lot of fruit. The purpose of a vine is to bear fruit. The fruit on the vine is not one by one, there are many grapes in a bunch. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is the same.

3. According to Galatians 5:22-23, we can see: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” Here are nine fruits showing that the fruits of the Holy Spirit are a bunch of them together. When a person is filled with the Holy Spirit and bearing these fruits, this is to build.
4. “Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine In the very heart of your house.” *House* here can be translated as *inner court*. The vine is planted in the inner court where it is hidden from the outside; the fruit it produces is for the family so that the people in the household can rejoice and be satisfied. A man who fears God and who walks in the Lord’s way, is a hidden man and the fruit of the Spirit is hidden. Though it is hidden, the sons of the house of God are enjoying the supply.

Why did the psalmist’s labor become a blessing and enjoyment? He was not serving God by himself. Psalm 128:3 says, “Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine.” This is a vine filled with the blessing of life. In John 15:5, the Lord said, “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit.” Such a person is fruitful because he abides in the Lord; he is joined to the Lord in Spirit so the Lord can be manifested in him. This is what makes him a fruitful vine filled with life. The focus of this vine is not only to bring people to the Lord. This should include the fruit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. All these fruits are not from us; our natural man is not like this. All these are fruits of Christ living out through us. When a vine bears fruit, it is not one by one. The branch of a vine never bears only one grape; it bears a cluster of grapes. Sometimes the cluster of grapes can be huge. When the Israelites spied out the promised land, they brought back a cluster of grapes that needed two men to carry it. This shows the riches of life.

The fruit is born in the inner chamber. Outwardly people might not see it, yet it is enough to supply all the saints’ needs so that we

can all enjoy the riches of life. Also the children will be around the table. Here we have the children surrounding the table for supper. Everyone is around the table to enjoy the riches of life. The children are like olive shoots around the table. This is the result of the increase of life that is like many new shoots coming out from an olive tree. The family is full of feeding and rest. How blest is such a person. The vine is to produce wine which represents the Lord's love. The Bible said, "For your love is better than wine" (S.S. 1:2). This house is filled with the outflow of love.

Saturday

Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine In the very heart of your house, Your children like olive plants All around your table. (Psa. 128:3). But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. (Luke 10:33-34).

5. *Children* refers to the multiplication of life. Because of you, many people can receive grace; these people are all your children. Here it says, "Your children like olive plants All around your table." Usually there are many small olive trees growing around an old olive tree. These small trees are olive shoots.
6. "Your children like olive plants All around your table." Your house not only has an inner court; it also has a table. The inner court means rest, the table means feeding. Your family gives rest to people; you family feeds also people. Your family is a vine; your family is also an olive shoot. Your family produces wine; your family also produces oil.
7. Wine and oil usually are mentioned together in the Bible. When a Samaritan saw a person on the road who was left half dead by robbers, he had compassion, and poured oil and wine on his wounds. Oil and wine represent the supply that comes from the Lord. Oil represents the Spirit by which can enjoy the abundance of life. Wine represents the uplifting of life by which we have the

vitality and satisfaction of life. (Luke 10:30-37).

8. The wine that comes from the vine tree represents the Lord's love. Song of Songs says, "Your love is better than wine." Oil that comes from pressed olives represents the Lord's name; in other words, it represents the Holy Spirit. The Song of Songs also says, "Your name is ointment poured forth." You have wine and oil before the Lord; you have the love of Christ and the oil of the Holy Spirit. The result of your serving will definitely satisfy people who are thirsty, awaken people who are unconscious, and strengthen people who are weak.

The house also has the oil that comes from olives. The olive tree represents the Lord's humanity and also represents the Holy Spirit. The fragrance of the ointment is like oil poured forth. We need to learn how to enjoy the Lord's name; it is like oil poured forth. "Oh Lord Jesus. Oh Lord Jesus." The fragrance of the Holy Spirit is in this name. "No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:3). When you call "Oh Lord Jesus" you are in your spirit. The name of the Lord Jesus is connected to the Spirit. Call on this name unceasingly. How do you pray unceasingly? "You can't compose prayers unceasingly but you can say, "Oh Lord Jesus." The Lord has given us His name; how precious it is. There is no other name given to us for our salvation. It is above all names. Every time we come together, we must gather in His name. We gain life through this name. We must appreciate the preciousness of the Lord's name. It is represented by the ointment.

We must be those who fear God and walk in His ways. He produces good wine and also ointment. These two things are always related in parallel in the Bible. We enjoy the good wine, the Lord's love. We also enjoy the ointment, the Holy Spirit. These two things go together. Luke tells of a man who met some robbers on the way as he left Jerusalem. The robbers beat him and left him half dead. Both a priest and a Levite saw him and passed by. Only a Samaritan, who represented the Lord Jesus because He was despised by the Jews like a Samaritan, took care of the one beaten by robbers. He poured oil and wine on his wounds. If we are those who follow the Lord, the result of our serving must satisfy others. Those who were beaten until

half dead need to be taken care of. This means that the weak ones will gain their strength back because we can supply them with wine and ointment. This is to build the church with the increase and riches of life to cause others to be joyful and satisfied. Those who are weak get strengthened. Those who are in need get a supply. This is the true building, the growth in life becomes the building.

Sunday

Behold, thus shall the man be blessed Who fears the Lord. The LORD bless you out of Zion, And may you see the good of Jerusalem All the days of your life. Yes, may you see your children's children. (Psa. 128:4-6).

F. See prosperity all the days of your life

1. Verses 4 and 5 say, “Behold, thus shall the man be blessed Who fears the Lord. The LORD bless you out of Zion, And may you see the good of Jerusalem All the days of your life.” You are so blessed because you supply oil and wine to people, you serve Christ to people. You became a blessed person and became a blessing to the church. At the same time, Lord will give you more blessings through the church so that you can bless the church more.
2. “You see the good of Jerusalem all the days of your life.” *Jerusalem* represents *the church*. You will be the prophet of the Lord in this life, witnessing God’s blessing to the church, and blessing the church according to the blessings of God.
3. In verse 6: “May you see your children’s children.” This means that the blessings that you give to the church is not only for today, but also for the upcoming generations. For example, brother Watchman Nee passed away, but he has a lot of spiritual children’s children today, and they still can enjoy his riches. We hope that we can become a pipeline that supplies life and blessings, and that more and more children can be blessed because of us. This is such a blessing!
4. “Peace be upon Israel!” When a person serves the Lord under this kind of circumstance, he will bring in peace, bringing it to the

children of God's household.

Psalm 128 speaks of such a blessed person: "The Lord bless you out of Zion, And may you see the good of Jerusalem All the days of your life" (v. 5). When we can supply others with wine and ointment, when we serve Christ to others we become a blessing to the church. Then God will bless us from Zion. Zion is where David's throne is. This represents Christ's ruling. We can also say that it represents the overcomers. Such a person is already blessed who can supply others with the riches of Christ and thus participate in the building of the church. God will continually bless him all the days of his life and he will see the prosperity of Jerusalem. The church will be blessed. How wonderful it is when we become those who bless the church. When we grow to such an extent, many will gain Christ through us. How blessed is this. "Yes, may you see your children's children" (v. 6). The blessing is not just for one generation, but for the generation following. How great is that blessing! For example, we still get much help from Watchman Nee; we are still blessed through him because his ministry still helps, supplies and encourages us to rise up and follow the Lord in His way. How blessed is that! Have you read Watchman Nee's books? You need to because they are a blessing that God has given His church. In a sense, he is feeding his children's children because his books have become a blessing to the church. I often go back to read Watchman Nee's books. Each time I read them I feel that I am being helped and strengthened. We must be those who fear God and walk in His ways.