

# PSALM 127

This is a family-psalm, as divers before were state-poems and church-poems. It is entitled (as we read it) “for Solomon,” dedicated to him by his father. He having a house to build, a city to keep, and seed to raise up to his father, David directs him to look up to God, and to depend upon his providence, without which all his wisdom, care, and industry, would not serve. Some take it to have been penned by Solomon himself, and it may as well be read, “a song of Solomon,” who wrote a great many; and they compare it with the Ecclesiastes, the scope of both being the same, to show the vanity of worldly care and how necessary it is that we keep in favour with God. On him we must depend,

**I.** For wealth (v. 1, 2).

**II.** For heirs to leave it to (v. 3-5). In singing this psalm we must have our eye up unto God for success in all our undertakings and a blessing upon all our comforts and enjoyments, because every creature is that to us which he makes it to be and no more.

## PSALM 127:1-5

### DEPENDENCE ON PROVIDENCE

*A song of degrees for Solomon.*

We are here taught to have a continual regard to the divine Providence in all the concerns of this life. Solomon was cried up for a wise man, and would be apt to lean to his own understanding and forecast, and therefore his father teaches him to look higher, and to take God along with him in his undertakings. He was to be a man of business, and therefore David instructed him how to manage his business under the direction of his religion. Parents, in teaching their children, should suit their exhortations to their condition and occasions. We must have an eye to God,

**I.** In all the affairs and business of the family, even of the royal family, for kings' houses are no longer safe than while God protects them. We must depend upon God's blessing and not our own contrivance, 1. For the

raising of a family: *Except the Lord build the house*, by his providence and blessing, *those labour in vain*, though ever so ingenious, *that build it*. We may understand it of the material house: except the Lord bless the building it is to no purpose for men to build, any more than for the builders of Babel, who attempted in defiance of heaven, or Hiel, who built Jericho under a curse. If the model and design be laid in pride and vanity, or if the foundations be laid in oppression and injustice (<sup>301</sup>Habakkuk 2:11, 12), God certainly does not build there; nay, if God be not acknowledged, we have no reason to expect his blessing, and without his blessing all is nothing. Or, rather, it is to be understood of the making of a family considerable that was mean; men labour to do this by advantageous matches, offices, employments, purchases; but all in vain, unless God build up the family, and *raise the poor out of the dust*. The best-laid project fails unless God crown it with success. See <sup>302</sup>Malachi 1:4.

**2.** For the securing of a family or a city (for this is what the psalmist particularly mentions): if the guards of the city cannot secure it without God, much less can the good man of the house save his house from being broken up. *Except the Lord keep the city* from fire, from enemies, *the watchmen*, who *go about the city*, or patrol upon the walls of it, though they neither slumber nor sleep, *wake but in vain*, for a raging fire may break out, the mischief of which the timeliest discoveries may not be able to prevent. The guards may be slain, or the city betrayed and lost, by a thousand accidents, which the most watchful sentinel or most cautious governor could not obviate.

**3.** For the enriching of a family; this is a work of time and thought, but cannot be effected without the favour of Providence any more than that which is the product of one happy turn: “*It is vain for you to rise up early and sit up late*, and so to deny yourselves your bodily refreshments, in the eager pursuit of the wealth of the world.” Usually, those that rise early do not care for sitting up late, nor can those that sit up late easily persuade themselves to rise early; but there are some so hot upon the world that they will do both, will rob their sleep to pay their cares. And they have as little comfort in their meals as in their rest; they *eat the bread of sorrows*. It is part of our sentence that we eat our bread in the sweat of our face; but those go further: *all their days they eat in darkness*, <sup>303</sup>Ecclesiastes 5:17. They are continually fell of care, which embitters their comforts, and makes their lives a burden to them. All this is to get money, and all in vain except God prosper them, for *riches are not always to men of*

*understanding*, <sup><291></sup>Ecclesiastes 9:11. Those that love God, and are beloved of him, have their minds easy and live very comfortably without this ado. Solomon was called *Jedidiah* — *Beloved of the Lord* (<sup><125></sup>2 Samuel 12:25); to him the kingdom was promised, and then it was in vain for Absalom to rise up early, to wheedle the people, and for Adonijah to make such a stir, and to say, *I will be king*. Solomon sits still, and, being *beloved of the Lord*, to him he gives sleep and the kingdom too. Note,

**(1.)** Inordinate excessive care about the things of this world is a vain and fruitless thing. We weary ourselves for vanity if we have it, and often weary ourselves in vain for it, <sup><306></sup>Haggai 1:6, 9.

**(2.)** Bodily sleep is God's gift to his beloved. We owe it to his goodness that our sleep is safe (<sup><498></sup>Psalm 4:8), that it is sweet, <sup><302></sup>Jeremiah 31:25, 26. God gives us sleep as he gives it to his beloved when with it he gives us grace to lie down in his fear (our souls returning to him and reposing in him as our rest), and when we awake to be still with him and to use the refreshment we have by sleep in his service. *He gives his beloved sleep*, that is, quietness and contentment of mind, and comfortable enjoyment of what is present and a comfortable expectation of what is to come. Our care must be to *keep ourselves in the love of God*, and then we may be easy whether we have little or much of this world.

**II.** In the increase of the family. He shows,

**1.** That children are *God's gift*, v. 3. If children are withheld it is God that withholds them (<sup><410></sup>Genesis 30:2); if they are given, it is God that gives them (<sup><435></sup>Genesis 33:5); and they are to us what he makes them, comforts or crosses. Solomon multiplied wives, contrary to the law, but we never read of more than one son that he had; for those that desire children as a heritage from the Lord must receive them in the way that he is pleased to give them, by lawful marriage to one wife. <sup><305></sup>Malachi 2:15, *therefore one, that he might seek a seed of God. But they shall commit whoredom and shall not increase. Children are a heritage, and a reward, and are so to be accounted, blessings and not burdens; for he that sends mouths will send meat if we trust in him. Obed-edom had eight sons, for the Lord blessed him because he had entertained the ark, <sup><136></sup>1 Chronicles 26:5. Children are a heritage for the Lord, as well as from him; they are *my children* (says God) *which thou hast borne unto me* (<sup><260></sup>Ezekiel 16:20); and they are most our honour and comfort when they are accounted to him for a generation.*

2. That they are a good gift, and a great support and defence to a family: *As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man*, who knows how to use them for his own safety and advantage, so are children of the youth, that is, children born to their parents when they are young, which are the strongest and most healthful children, and are grown up to serve them by the time they need their service; or, rather, children who are themselves young; they are instruments of much good to their parents and families, which may fortify themselves with them against their enemies. The family that has a large stock of children is like a quiver full of arrows, of different sizes we may suppose, but all of use one time or other; children of different capacities and inclinations may be several ways serviceable to the family. He that has a numerous issue may boldly *speak with his enemy in the gate* in judgment; in battle he needs not fear, having so many good seconds, so zealous, so faithful, and in the vigour of youth, ~~☞~~ 1 Samuel 2:4, 5. Observe here, *Children of the youth are arrows in the hand*, which, with prudence, may be directed aright to the mark, God's glory and the service of their generation; but afterwards, when they have gone abroad into the world, they are arrows out of the hand; it is too late to bend them then. But these arrows in the hand too often prove arrows in the heart, a constant grief to their godly parents, whose gray hairs they bring with sorrow to the grave.