

PSALM 128

This, as the former, is a psalm for families. In that we were taught that the prosperity of our families depends upon the blessing of God; in this we are taught that the only way to obtain that blessing which will make our families comfortable is to live in the fear of God and in obedience to him. Those that do so, in general, shall be blessed (v. 1, 2, 4), In particular,

- I.** They shall be prosperous and successful in their employments (v. 2).
- II.** Their relations shall be agreeable (v. 3).
- III.** They shall live to see their families brought up (v. 6).
- IV.** They shall have the satisfaction of seeing the church of God in a flourishing condition (v. 5, 6). We must sing this psalm in the firm belief of this truth, That religion and piety are the best friends to outward prosperity, giving God the praise that it is so and that we have found it so, and encouraging ourselves and others with it.

~~BCB~~ PSALM 128:1-6

BLESSEDNESS OF THE GODLY

A song of degrees.

It is here shown that godliness has the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

I. It is here again and again laid down as an undoubted truth that *those who are truly holy are truly happy*. Those whose blessed state we are here assured of are such as *fear the Lord* and *walk in his ways*, such as have a deep reverence of God upon their spirits and evidence it by a regular and constant conformity to his will. Where the fear of God is a commanding principle in the heart the tenour of the conversation will be accordingly; and in vain do we pretend to be of those that fear God if we do not make conscience both of keeping to his ways and not trifling in them or drawing back. Such are blessed (v. 1), and shall be blessed, v. 4. God blesses them,

and his pronouncing them blessed makes them so. They are blessed now, they shall be blessed still, and for ever. This blessedness, arising from this blessing, is here secured,

1. To all the saints universally: *Blessed is everyone that fears the Lord*, whoever he be; in every nation he that fears God and works righteousness is accepted of him, and therefore is blessed whether he be high or low, rich or poor, in the world; if religion rule him, it will protect and enrich him.
2. To such a saint in particular: *Thus shall the man be blessed*, not only the nation, the church in its public capacity, but the particular person in his private interests.
3. We are encouraged to apply it to ourselves (v. 2): "*Happy shalt thou be; thou mayest take the comfort of the promise, and expect the benefit of it, as if it were directed to thee by name, if thou fear God and walk in his ways. Happy shalt thou be, that is, It shall be well with thee; whatever befalls thee, good shall be brought out of it; it shall be well with thee while thou livest, better when thou diest, and best of all to eternity.*" It is asserted (v. 4) with a note commanding attention: *Behold, thus shall the man be blessed*; behold it by faith in the promise; behold it by observation in the performance of the promise; behold it with assurance that it shall be so, for God is faithful, and with admiration that it should be so, for we merit no favour, no blessing, from him.

II. Particular promises are here made to godly people, which they may depend upon, as far as is for God's glory and their good; and that is enough.

1. That, by the blessing of God, they shall get an honest livelihood and live comfortably upon it. It is not promised that they shall live at ease, without care or pains, but, *Thou shalt eat the labour of thy hands*. Here is a double promise,

(1.) That they shall have something to do (for an idle life is a miserable uncomfortable life) and shall have health, and strength, and capacity of mind to do it, and shall not be forced to be beholden to others for necessary food, and to live, as the disabled poor do, upon the labours of other people. It is as much a mercy as it is a duty *with quietness to work and eat our own bread*, ³¹⁹²2 Thessalonians 3:12.

(2.) That they shall succeed in their employments, and they and theirs shall

enjoy what they get; others shall not come and eat the bread out of their mouths, nor shall it be taken from them either by oppressive rulers or invading enemies. God will not blast it and blow upon it (as he did, ^{<300>}Haggai 1:9), and his blessing will make a little go a great way. It is very pleasant to enjoy the fruits of our own industry; as the sleep, so the food, of a labouring man is sweet.

2. That they shall have abundance of comfort in their family-relations. As a wife and children are very much a man's care, so, if by the grace of God they are such as they should be, they are very much a man's delight, as much as any creature-comfort.

(1.) The *wife* shall be *as a vine by the sides of the house*, not only as a spreading vine which serves for an ornament, but as a fruitful vine which is for profit, and with the fruit whereof both God and man are honoured, ^{<303>}Judges 9:13. The vine is a weak and tender plant, and needs to be supported and cherished, but it is a very valuable plant, and some think (because all the products of it were prohibited to the Nazarites) it was the *tree of knowledge* itself. The wife's place is the husband's house; there her business lies, and that is her castle. *Where is Sarah thy wife? Behold, in the tent*; where should she be else? Her place is *by the sides of the house*, not under-foot to be trampled on, nor yet upon the house-top to domineer (if she be so, she is but *as the grass upon the house-top*, in the next psalm), but on the side of the house, being a rib out of the side of the man. She shall be a loving wife, as the vine, which cleaves to the house-side, an obedient wife, as the vine, which is pliable, and grows as it is directed. She shall be fruitful as the vine, not only in children, but in the fruits of wisdom, and righteousness, and good management, the *branches* of which *run over the wall* (^{<42>}Genesis 49:22; ^{<301>}Psalm 80:11), *like a fruitful vine*, not cumbering the ground, nor bringing forth sour grapes, or grapes of Sodom, but good fruit.

(2.) The *children* shall be *as olive plants*, likely in time to be olive-trees, and, though *wild by nature*, yet grafted into the good olive, and partaking of its *root and fatness*, ^{<311>}Romans 11:17. It is pleasant to parents who have a table spread, though but with ordinary fare, to see their children round about it, to have many children, enough to surround it, and those with them, and not scattered, or the parents forced from them. Job makes it one of the first instances of his former prosperity that *his children were about him*, ^{<305>}Job 29:5. Parents love to have their children at table, to keep up the pleasantness of the table-talk, to have them in health, craving food

and not physic, to have them like *olive-plants*, straight and green, sucking in the sap of their good education, and likely in due time to be serviceable.

3. That they shall have those things which God has promised and which they pray for: *The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion*, where the ark of the covenant was, and where the pious Israelites attended with their devotions. *Blessings out of Zion* are the best-blessings, which flow, not from common providence, but from special grace, ^{<AM>}Psalm 20:2.

4. That they shall live long, to enjoy the comforts of the rising generations: “Thou shalt *see thy children's children*, as Joseph, ^{<KB>}Genesis 50:23. Thy family shall be built up and continued, and thou shalt have the pleasure of seeing it.” *Children's children*, if they be good children, *are the crown of old men* (^{<AM>}Proverbs 17:6), who are apt to be fond of their grandchildren.

5. That they shall see the welfare of God's church, and the land of their nativity, which every man who fears God is no less concerned for than for the prosperity of his own family. “Thou shalt be blessed in Zion's blessing, and wilt think thyself so. Thou shalt *see the good of Jerusalem* as long as thou shalt live, though thou shouldst live long, and shalt not have thy private comforts allayed and embittered by public troubles.” A good man can have little comfort in seeing his children's children, unless withal he see peace upon Israel, and have hopes of transmitting the entail of religion pure and entire to those that shall come after him, for that is the best inheritance.