

The Gospel & Your Family
The Vine & Olive Trees
Psalm 128

Psalm 128 is a beautiful description of the home blessed by God. What can look at first glance like just a nice home is in fact a place of profound joy and power. God redeems the family to be potent blessing in His kingdom.

Blessed Fear

The Bible says two things we must hold together: “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment” (1 Jn. 4:18); “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7). To understand anything rightly about God causes you fear Him—His majesty, holiness, glory, beauty, power, wisdom, justice, mercy, *ad infinitum*. This is spiritual sanity. This is why the angels and the twenty-four elders—all who come near to God—fall down before Him (Rev. 4:10, 19:4). He’s not throwing them down; they bow in total awe, wonder, worship and fear. We fear all kinds of good things. God is infinitely good and personal. Blessed is everyone who fears Him (v1). This is a striking way to begin this psalm, and not popular way, even in the church, to think of how to build a great family. Blessedness is the result of fearing God, and that fear is seen by walking in His ways. The one who fears Him wants to please Him and live according to His commandments. God blesses this fear tangibly right down to the food on your plate at the end of an honest day’s work (v2). James tells us that every good and perfect gift comes down from the God who doesn’t change (Jms. 1:17). While God blesses everyone in countless ways, only those who fear Him can fully enjoy what He gives (Eccl. 5:19). The word “happy” in verse two is the same as “blessed” in verse one. Blessing always eventually results in happiness. Some blessings take time to unfold. As Cowper said, “The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower.” But they always bloom for the one who fears the Lord.

A Fruitful Vine

Not only is a God-fearing man blessed by the Lord, his wife is “like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house” (v3). Rich Lusk says, “A wife does not simply *make* the home; in a deep way, she *is* the home.” This is why a godly husband nourishes and cherishes her like the Christ does the church. She is not a beautiful addition to his house, but at the very center of it. Selfishness, neglect, and competition are self-destructive in a marriage because husband and wife are one. When a husband lays down his life for his wife, leading sacrificially with strength and gentleness, she thrives in love and security. He is responsible to cultivate the vine. The Bible doesn’t teach a woman’s place is in the home, but it honors her priority there (cf. Tit. 2:5). A fruitful vine bears grapes, and grapes make wine (cf. Prov. 31:16). Wine is given by God to gladden the heart of man, and it’s also very dangerous, which takes us back to the fear of God (Ps. 104:15; Prov. 20:1). Husbands must devote themselves to giving, serving, and protecting. The blessed man loves her and honors her fruitfulness, including her

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children who are like olive plants around the table (v4). Children are not the only kind of fruitfulness, and Spurgeon says “if they bear no children, they are by no means barren if they yield us the wine of consolation and cluster of comfort. Truly blessed is the man whose wife is fruitful in those good works which are suitable to her near and dear position.”

Olive Trees

In this house the children are like olive plants around the table and olive trees are packed with meaning in Scripture (v3). A dove brought back an olive branch to Noah when the floodwaters receded and the earth was rid of violence and renewed (Gen. 8:11). This is where we get our phrase “to extend and olive branch”, meaning an offer of peace. The cherubim above the Ark of the Covenant in the most holy place in the temple were carved out of olive wood (1 Kgs. 6:23). Olive oil was used to anoint kings and priests, symbolizing the power of the Spirit to equip them to serve faithfully before God. Jesus taught on the Mount of Olives and went to Gethsemane (“olive press”) to pray before His crucifixion (Matt. 24:3). The end of Jesus’ life was spent on the Mount of Olives, He may well have been crucified there on an olive tree, and He ascended from the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:12). Paul compares Israel and the church that is joined to her to natural and engrafted olive branches. The root is holy, and so are the branches (Rom. 11:16ff.). Olive trees are symbols of new creation by the Holy Spirit, of royal and priestly power, of holiness and joy (Ps. 104:15). This is what God says about your children! The one who fears God believes Him (v4). You don’t wait to see if your children are holy but teach, educate, lead, honor and receive them in Jesus’ name because they are: “Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me” (Matt. 18:5). The psalmist then blesses you from Zion, God’s holy hill, that you would see the good of Jerusalem all of your days, and may those days include your children’s children (vv5-6). This is the connection between the table in the home to the church, to the city, to the nation: “Peace be upon Israel!” (v6). This isn’t wishful thinking, as if peace magically happens in the world because a family gathers around the table. Psalm 128 connects with Psalm 127, and the children that grow up around the table blessed with the fear of the Lord become warriors who stand against enemies in the gate (127:4-5). Training for that isn’t magical, but it is covenantal, and Psalm 128 shows us it’s found around the table.