

Psalm 128

This psalm of ascent is connected the previous one in its concern with the blessing of wife, children and home.

Psalm 128:1 - "Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways."

Rashi - Because it is written, "Praiseworthy is the man", "Praiseworthy is a man," it therefore says here "every," to include a woman.

The Fear of the Lord

- **Job 28:28** - "And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."

- **Psalm 111:10** - "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever."

- **Proverbs 8:13** - "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate."

- **Proverbs 16:6** - "By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil."

- **Psalm 33:8** - "Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the people of the world revere him

- **Ecclesiastes 12:13** - "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man"

- **Jeremiah 5:22** - "Should you not fear me?" declares the Lord. "Should you not tremble in my presence?"

- **Matthew 10:28** - "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

What is the fear of God? It is the "beginning" of wisdom, and Christ is its end and fulfillment. Fear and perfect love come together in Christ.

"God poses an ominous threat to my ego, but not to me. He rescues me from my delusions, so he may reveal the truth that sets me free. He casts me down, only to lift me up again. He sits in judgment of my sin, but forgives me nevertheless. Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, but love from the Lord is its completion."

- from 'Fearing God' in *Christianity Today* (2013), by William D. Eisenhower

- **Psalm 118:4** - "The LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love."

Psalm 128:2 - "For thou shalt eat the labor of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee."

i.e. it will not be devoured by enemies any more, as depicted in **Deuteronomy 28:30-33**

- **Isaiah 3:10** - "Tell the righteous it will be well for them, for they will enjoy the fruit of their labor."

- **Isaiah 65:21-23** - "And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them."

- **Ecclesiastes 5:18** - "Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in all the labor one does under the sun during the few days of life that God has given him— for this is his lot."

But also:

Targum: "Thou art blessed in this world, and it shall be well with thee in the world to come"

The psalm reflects a picture of peace, security and rest among family and lands, in possession of all their rights.

- **Zechariah 8:12-13** - "For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong."

Psalm 128:3 - "Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table."

Why this metaphor?

The vine and olive are in Hebrew poetry frequent symbols of fruitfulness and of a happy, flourishing state.

Kimchi observes that the vine is the only tree men plant within doors; which, when it is grown up, they bring out at a hole or window of the house without, to have the sun and air and to make use of the house itself as scaffolding for support; and so its root is

within the house, and the branches without: and he observes, that a modest woman is within the house, and does not go without, and is only seen by her husband; but her children, like the branches of the vine, go out to work. - Gills Exposition

In Hebrew, the "sides of the house" is better translated "within" or "in the innermost room"

Rashi - Because it is customary to have marital relations in secret.

"thy children like olive plants round about thy table" -

Said of David and thus of the Messiah: **Psalm 52:8** - "But I am like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God; I trust in the loving devotion of God forever and ever."

Rashi - Just as olive trees cannot be grafted, so will your sons not have any disqualification as being illegitimate.

- **Romans 11:23-24** - "And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut from a wild olive tree, and contrary to nature were grafted into one that is cultivated, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!"

Also, olive branches are green and moist all year, denoting a continuance of good works.

Psalm 128:4-6 - "Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD. The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel."

Said of the Messiah:

- **Isaiah 53:11** - "After the anguish of His soul, He will see the light of life and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant will justify many, and He will bear their iniquities."

"thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel" - The result of the New Covenant

- **Isaiah 59:21** - "As for Me, this is My covenant with them," says the LORD. "My Spirit who is on you, and My words that I have put in your mouth, will not depart from your mouth, from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of your children's children, from now on and forevermore," says the LORD.

"The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion" - A priestly blessing, out of the New Jerusalem:

- **Numbers 6:24-27** - "The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace. So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them"

