

## Psalm 128

This psalm describes *the blessed life*. It comes from finding our intended role in this life. All of his involvements are satisfying at some level. His job and his family relations are going well. This is also called *the abundant life*. This is not synonymous with salvation.

We might be saved, but we have some *serious hang ups*. Being blessed is not just having good things happen to you. It's also about having the blessed perspective. It really relates to believing that God is in charge, and that he knows what he is doing. Paul wrote a lot about how much better life can be for some believers. Job had it all; but he felt like he had everything to lose. He had a messiah complex. He was concerned about his family and belongings. He was a worry wart. He said "the very thing I have worry about has come upon me". That is not enjoying what God has given you,

Jonah was also not on the same page with God. He was angry with the way God chose to use unbelieving nations as his tools. He was filled with bitterness against the violent and abusive Assyrians. We can quickly dismiss our answered prayers and become anxious about the next thing on our radar. Reflection on our inventory of blessings keeps us from just focusing on future concerns.

Our command center in heaven is always under control and worshipful. Our land base on earth can be chaotic and seemingly under siege.

*If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*  
(Colossians 3:1-3)

There are many people who are saved, living in regret, anxiety, disappointment and are just underwhelmed with the way life has turned out. Is this just *the hand they have been dealt* or is it possible for these burdened believers to improve their quality of life? The simplicity of enjoying your job is listed here. If I am bitter about my out-of-town assignment; it is not just because of the inconveniences. It is also about my wanting to be served on some level. Solomon never got past this.

If I can just find satisfaction in my contribution, that is far better for me. I may not get to pick what my contribution will be. That is the role of a servant. One reason that we are told that is better to give than receive is that we are built to be happier

that way. Having a servant's heart removes you from so much disappointment. Any expectation I have in others is on shaky and tentative ground.

It comes down to what we set our mind on. Our mind naturally fills itself with all of the imagery of our daily concerns. We have to displace these concerns with something better. When we fill our minds with thoughts of God and heaven, that displaces our broken dreams and anxiety. Either way, our mind will automatically get filled with what is in front of our eyes.

*I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*  
(Galatians 5:16)

Ministry is not just about helping others. We are helping ourselves in the process. When I bless and serve my wife, I am creating a lifelong savings account that I will draw on and find satisfaction in her. When I invest time with my children I am creating a well of relationships to draw from. If I wait to be served, neither of us will be happy.

**Read Psalm 128:1-4:** This whole psalm comes down to the definition of being blessed. It basically describes a blessed man. Solomon had all of the stuff; but he was miserable. Satan sells us on trading quality time for more stuff. In fact, he concluded that just being able to be happy with your own life as it is, is a huge victory. The psalmist tells us about his family and his affairs. He sees the blessed man's wife as *the heart of their home*. My wife is certainly the heart of our home. She is on the phone with our daughter daily. She continues to cultivate that relationship and provides good advice and friendship. She keeps in very close contact with both of our sons as well. She is a confidant to all of them. Our family would be a much more desolate confederation if she was not at the center of it. Let's look at Blue Letter Bible at the word *blessed* that is used here:

**אָשָׁר** 'esher, eh'-sher; from [H833](#); happiness; only in masculine plural construction as interjection, how happy:—blessed, happy.

The best way to get a feel for the meaning of the word is to view it in it's original context. The first time H 833 (blessed) is used is in Genesis 1:28:

*Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (Gen. 1:28)*

**The original usage of God blessing men is with responsibilities, not gifts.** We tend to tie blessings to gifts, and not to our work, effort, management or administrative things. We derive satisfaction from faithfully shepherding things. God has tied our gifts and blessings to our obedience and efforts to comply with God's assignments. In other words, we receive an invigorating shot in the arm as we comply with our God-given tasks. Eve is a perfect example of how we can never be happy just being given stuff. I am always blessed if I try my hardest to be obedient to the task at hand. It may not be easy; but it always works out.

God has built blessings into assignments that are *revealed as we continue on making our best efforts to walk according to his word.* In a sense, God is telling us that he has blessings for us...but we have to suit-up and go get it.

I can conclude that something will not work before I even try. Sometimes I will humble myself to discover that it was possible. The demonic messages in our media and our minds are that our government and our workplace and our neighbors and our bodies are falling apart, so don't even get your hopes up. "Don't even try". "Your government leaders are selling you out" "Murphy's Law is around the corner". Depression becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, if we wait long enough for something to fall apart.

The parable of the servants and the talents describes one servant who was given opportunities according to the skill level that God had built into the man. The expectation is that he will apply himself accordingly. This man is called *lazy and wicked* because he let himself off the hook. God does not make mistakes in his assignments. Our self-doubt is just personal confusion. Just put one foot in front of the next. There are frequent times when I feel like I am in over my head; but I just do the simple and obvious stuff in front of me. That invariably turns into eye-opening experiences and pathways forward. We must *move our shoes* and stop contemplating. God provides where he guides.

*"For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. .... "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.' "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I*

*reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. (Matthew 25 various verses)*

Think about how the children of Israel had shoes that did not wear out for 40 years. Do you think that they saw the blessing in that; or that their shoes were old and outdated? One definition for faith is hope against clear evidence to the contrary.

Just get out there and do it! If it does not work out; then that is God's problem...not yours. Depression is sparked by not completing the things that we know that we should be doing. There are usually more blessings as things fall apart, than when things remain the same anyway. We just try to hold on to the way things are. Only God holds things together.

Moses blessed all of the tribes of Israel on his death bed. Their blessing was not in what was being given to them in his will. It was in their assignments. Moses gave a blessing to each tribe as he prophesied about their future roles. He basically told them that now they were going to finally get to live in the land of God's abundance and blessings. In other words, the abundant life is not about sitting around and waiting for good things to happen. It is about engaging and moving forward tangibly in what God has told you to do. God is allowing us to feel yucky because we still have not taken action on his assignment. If your feet are not moving, then you are just fooling yourself. **God wants us all to continue to take risks based on his promises.**

*Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.*

*(Deuteronomy 33:29)*

We tend to look forward to retirement and to be free of responsibility. For many people, this is the ultimate state to reach. God is telling us that we will only be happy when we are serving others. We are all like Lego toys that snap into each other. You cannot be complete by yourself. Helping your neighbor meet God is more satisfying than another round of golf. You cannot be squared away in your health and finances and family enough to be full of joy. In fact, the more that you *close out* the world and your neighbor's needs the more your satisfaction begins to

fade. Steady church attendance without helping those in need is going to leave a void in your soul. We are healed as we heal.

*“Is a fast such as this what I have chosen, a day for a man to humble himself [with sorrow in his soul]? Is it only to bow down his head like a reed And to make sackcloth and ashes as a bed [pretending to have a repentant heart]? Do you call this a fast and a day pleasing to the LORD?*

*[Rather] is this not the fast which I choose, To undo the bonds of wickedness,  
To tear to pieces the ropes of the yoke, To let the oppressed go free  
And break apart every [enslaving] yoke?*

*Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry And bring the homeless poor into the house; When you see the naked, that you cover him, And not to hide yourself from [the needs of] your own flesh and blood?*

*Then your light will break out like the dawn,  
And your healing (restoration, new life) will quickly spring forth;  
Your righteousness will go before you [leading you to peace and prosperity],  
The glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. “Then you will call, and the LORD will answer;  
You will cry for help, and He will say, ‘Here I am.’*  
*If you take away from your midst the yoke [of oppression], (Isaiah 58 excerpts)*

God is telling us very plainly that he expects us to put ourselves to the hazard; and *put some skin in the game* and get out there and help others in a tangible way. We will not be truly blessed to this degree until we do. How many times have we felt the surge of energy and purpose when we helped someone in need? It is very invigorating and rejuvenating. That is the Holy Spirit's positive reinforcement. In other words, the Good Samaritan is blessed; but the ‘holy man’ who side steps a potential *problem person* is not so blessed.

It is also interesting that the psalmist focuses his definition of being blessed to the man's family. Not much is said about his career or his house or his accomplishments.

There are many studies of the aged and dying. Here are the top consuming thoughts that fill their minds in the later years of life:

- I wish that I followed through on my dream
- I wish that I had cultivated better family relationships
- I wish that I was more forgiving, and let myself be happier

**Read Psalm 128:5-6:** Part of being blessed is to expect it. Part of being blessed is to know where blessings come from. They do not come by accomplishment or accumulation. Many business tycoons and celebrities and politicians are tortured souls.

*Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, For my heart rejoiced in all my labor; And this was my reward from all my labor. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done And on the labor in which I had toiled; And indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun. (Ecclesiastes 2:10-11)*

We will miss our blessings if we do not *count them*. God is blessing us from his throne. There are things flying at us in the form of co-worker assistance, periods of quiet progress, good health and undetectable day to day things. The simple pleasures of life need to be savored. Anything good that I encounter originated in heaven. It is more satisfying to let God provide my rewards, than to fight or expect my rewards with my fellow man.

The focus of the psalm is not on being squared away, and fixing my life. It is about letting God bring blessings to me as I fear him in love and dedication.

I have prayed to be more of a servant. Why should I cringe when I am treated like one? Some of the most dissatisfying situations for me have been when I was treated like a servant. Deep down, I want to be considered as an equal or someone who deserves some level of respect. I have worked with arrogant men and women; who have been either dismissive with me or they had no regard as to how their requirements impacted my personal life. I generally make plans to balance work and free time. Sometimes a necessary work requirement will blow out my free time; so it seems that I am just on a work treadmill. That is going to happen at times. The question is: do I take it as a challenge to serve with a thankful heart; or do I rehearse the unfairness of it over and over, making myself angry and sick?