

Psalm 127 – The Dependence of the Pilgrims:-

This Psalm is similar to the Wisdom Literature (Proverbs and Ecclesiastes). The emphasis is on the futility of human effort without the help of God. It may have been written for general purposes but it found special application as a folk song of pilgrims.

Verses 1 – 2 - A dependence upon the Lord:- Man's utter dependence on God is illustrated by reference to basic human endeavours. Building a house and watching over a city cannot succeed (according to divine standards of success) if God is not included in man's plans and efforts. Even the diligent man who works from early morning until late evening cannot hope for success without God's blessings and sanction.

The words in verse 1 referring to 'The Wakeman' are used on the Town Hall in Ripon, Yorkshire, where the horn is blown at 9.00 p.m. every evening to 'set the watch'. See <https://www.riponcity.gov.uk/history/the-hornblower/>).

Verses 3 – 4 - A heritage from the Lord:- The recognition that children are God's gift is the basis of building a successful home. Joy and protection are pictured as the results of the bearing of sons. Remember this was written when the sons of a man's youth could gather round and protect him in his old age! They could plead his cause in the local court of justice which traditionally met at the city gate. e.g. Ruth chapter 4 verse 1 and following

Psalm 128 – The Home Life of the Pilgrims:- This Psalm is also based on Wisdom Literature. The basic Wisdom teaching "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*" (Psalm 111 verse 10) is the starting point for the psalmist. He then applies this truth to the ideal home situation.

Verses 1 – 4:- The picture of contentment, joy, prosperity and fruitfulness is given as an illustration of how the God-fearer finds perfect happiness. He eats the product of his labour rather than losing them in a time of drought or having to share them with oppressive overlords.

Verses 5 - 6:- The righteous man is seen as a blessing on the community. A vital part of the blessing enjoyed by one who fears God comes from beyond the limits of his home. The corporate nature of Israel's society can be seen in the adaptation of this psalm for public worship. It moves on beyond personal gain to the benefits the righteous have on the society of which they are part.

Like Psalm 125 it closes with a prayer for peace. "*Peace be upon Israel*".

Again in our prayers we need to be aware that Jerusalem and Israel have not enjoyed any lengthy periods of peace since the reign of King Solomon! We are like Simeon – "*looking for the consolation of Israel*" (Luke 2, verse 25). But for us 'The Lord has come'. We live in a time of 'already' – "*But God . . . made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved) and raised us up with Him, and made us sit with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus*", - Ephesians chapter 2, verses 4 – 6.

As we wait for his coming: Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. For a fair and peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israel conflict, with justice not only done but seen to be done. This can only succeed through the work of the Lord God!

1) All my hope on God is founded;
he doth still my trust renew,
me through change and chance he guideth,
only good and only true.
God unknown, he alone
calls my heart to be his own.

2) Pride of man and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray his trust;
what with care and toil he buildeth,
tower and temple fall to dust.
But God's power, hour by hour,
is my temple and my tower.

3) God's great goodness aye endureth,
deep his wisdom, passing thought:
splendor, light and life attend him,
beauty springeth out of naught.
Evermore from his store
newborn worlds rise and adore.

4) Daily doth the almighty Giver
bounteous gifts on us bestow;
his desire our soul delighteth,
pleasure leads us where we go.
Love doth stand at his hand;
joy doth wait on his command.

5) Still from man to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done,
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ, his Son.
Christ doth call one and all:
ye who follow shall not fall.

1680 by Joachim Neander.

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