



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



# The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 127

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# Introduction

- This Psalm is titled *A Song of Ascents. Of Solomon*
- Most believe King Solomon to be the author
- Psalm 127 is one of the two Psalms attributed to Solomon
- As the author of Ecclesiastes and the book of Proverbs, Solomon seems to address themes in Psalm 127 which are also mentioned in these other books
- Some have supposed that it was written by David near the end of his life after the prophet Nathan had informed him, that his son Solomon, should build a temple for the Lord



# Introduction

- He wrote it as a guide to Solomon, his successor, in regard to the principles which should govern him in his reign
- However, there are others of opinion that it was written by Zerubbabel who helped rebuild the second temple, (Haggai 1); who is called Solomon, because he descended from him, and restored his work
- The sentiments and style are such as agree well with the idea that king Solomon was the author
- According to St. Augustine the author is Solomon





# Introduction

- He says, “This Psalm has a further addition in the title, that it is ‘Solomon’s.’ ... Solomon was in his time David’s son, a great man, through whom many holy precepts and healthful reproaches and divine mysteries have been wrought by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures.”
- St. Augustine further says, “The name of Solomon is interpreted to mean peacemaker: now Christ is the True Peacemaker, ...Since, therefore, He is the true Solomon; for that Solomon was the figure of this Peace maker, when he built the temple; that you may not think he who built the house unto God was the true Solomon, Scripture showing unto you another Solomon.”



# Introduction

- Psalm 127 lies in the heart of the *Songs of Ascent* (Psalms 120–134) which are believed to have been sung by pilgrims as they approached Jerusalem for religious festivals
- Psalm 127 focuses on trusting in God; acknowledging Him as the source of security and posterity
- Psalm 127 teaches a fundamental human dependence on God for life's most basic tasks
- It speaks of the futility of human endeavors without God's accompanying blessing
- This Psalm used to be sung to women after giving birth as a thanksgiving prayer



# Introduction

## Psalm Outline

- The Necessity of God's Blessing on Every Endeavor 127:1-2
- Blessing Upon the Family 127:3-5



# The Necessity of God's Blessing on Every Endeavor 127:1-2



- Verse 1 reveals the key to success in any endeavor and God's absolute sovereignty over every person and event
- This verse talks about two kinds of work: building and then guarding or maintaining
- The word *house* may refer to the Temple
- Or, it may be applied to anything we build in our lives, whether building a house, a business, or a church
- Hebrews 3:4 says: *"For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God"* (Hebrews 3:4)
- Proverbs 16:3 says: *"Commit your works to the LORD, And your thoughts will be established."* (Proverbs 16:3)

# The Necessity of God's Blessing on Every Endeavor 127:1-2



- Whatever one attempts in life, he ought to commit it to God from the very beginning, because if God is not in it, then God's blessing will not be on it
- Solomon understood that the work of man had its place, but it was of little use without the work and blessing of God
- Without God's work and blessing, *they labor in vain who build it*
- Three times in the first two verses we are reminded that all our efforts are in vain unless they are covered by the blessing of the Lord



# The Necessity of God's Blessing on Every Endeavor 127:1-2



- The psalmist warns against an attitude of self-sufficiency in these verses
- God wants everyone to find blessing and fulfillment in their work, but it is not going to happen apart from Him
- One may ask himself if he expects his work to succeed because of him or because of God?
- Jesus said in John 15:5, *"for without Me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5)
- No one ought to expect God to do his work for him, but they should not expect their work to succeed without God

# The Necessity of God's Blessing on Every Endeavor 127:1-2



- Without the blessing of Him Who has promised to build the house of Israel (Amos 9:11; Jeremiah 31:28) and Who is the Watchman of His people (Psalm 121:4), the most vigorous efforts of the leaders can avail nothing
- When Solomon resolved to build a house for the Lord, all things united under God to aid him in his great undertaking: even the heathen helped him as we read in 1 Kings 5:10: *"Then Hiram gave Solomon cedar and cypress logs according to all his desire."* (1 Kings 5:10)

# The Necessity of God's Blessing on Every Endeavor 127:1-2



- *Builds the house...guards the city*: It's especially meaningful that Solomon wrote this Psalm, because he knew what it was like to both build a house and guard a city
- Wise Solomon understood that though God welcomed and even commanded human effort and participation, His work and blessing were more important
- St. Augustine says, "Who are they who toil in building it? All who preach the word of God in the Church, the ministers of God's mysteries. We are all running, we are all toiling, we are all building now; and before us others have run, toiled, and built: but 'except the Lord build, their labor is but lost.'"



# The Necessity of God's Blessing on Every Endeavor 127:1-2



- *It is vain for you to rise up early, To sit up late,* The psalmist does not here say that it is improper to rise early
- He did not speak against hard work, because several of the Proverbs praise the hard worker who rises early (Proverbs 6:6-11)
- He did not mean that there could be no advantage in *rise up early*; or that people would be more likely to be successful in their undertakings if they did not rise early
- But he intended to say that the trust many put in their hard work and the anxiety that showed reliance on self, not God, *to eat the bread of sorrows*

# The Necessity of God's Blessing on Every Endeavor 127:1-2



- *For you:* He directs his speech to *the builders or watchmen*
- It is not a prohibition from work, but rather a warning to not put our trust ultimately in our efforts
- God wants us to trust Him rather than worry
- St. John Chrysostom says, “Now, what he means is something like this: even if you keep watch, even if you get up just about dawn, even if you are slow to go to rest, spending all your time in toil and trouble, all human things are lost unless you enjoy help from there, and no advantage will be served by this zeal.”
- *the bread of sorrows*, There may be a reference here to the original sentence pronounced on man, Genesis 3:17

# The Necessity of God's Blessing on Every Endeavor 127:1-2



- Mere early rising, without His blessing, would not secure what they hoped to accomplish, for everything is still in the hand of God
- God's blessing is to give His loved ones *sleep*
- They can be at peace knowing that God's hand is at work and His eye watches even as they sleep
- God makes the mind of His people - His beloved - calm and tranquil, while the world around is filled with anxiety and restlessness
- They are not kept disturbed and anxious about their worldly matters as other men are, for they leave all with God



# The Necessity of God's Blessing on Every Endeavor 127:1-2



- *His beloved*, There may be a reference to the name of Jedidiah, which was given to Solomon, and signifies the beloved of the Lord, *“So she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon. Now the Lord loved him, and He sent word by the hand of Nathan the prophet: So he called his name Jedidiah, because of the Lord.”* (2 Samuel 12:24-25)

# Blessing Upon the Family

## 127:3-5



- The psalmist considered the wisdom of trusting God in building a house, but he also understood that a home is built by more than bricks and wood
- He called upon all to see *behold* that children are a blessing
- *Children*, They come not from the power of mere nature, but from God's blessing, even as an inheritance is not the fruit of a man's own labor, but the gift of God
- The Israelites used to count children as blessing from the Lord: *"Blessed shall be the fruit of your body ... And the Lord will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body"* (Deuteronomy 28:4,11)

# Blessing Upon the Family

## 127:3-5



- Jacob in the Old Testament understood this
- When asked about his children, he replied *“The children whom God has graciously given your servant.”* (Genesis 33:5)
- Hannah understood this also
- She said about Samuel: *“For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition which I asked of Him”* (1 Samuel 1:27)
- He mentioned children because they are the most important and the highest of all these blessings
- And also because all the toil and labor he mentioned are usually undertaken for their sakes



# Blessing Upon the Family

## 127:3-5



- In commanding his people to “*Be fruitful and increase in number*” (Genesis 1:28), God was seeking godly offspring (Malachi 2:15)
- The blessing of children was significant in building the house of Israel
- In the psalmist’s day God’s gift of sons brought their parents a form of security
- And if the children according to the flesh are a gift from the Lord, much more will be those who are, “*born of the Spirit,*” (John 3:8)
- According to St. Augustine, the Church is the mother of the believers, and she gives birth by Baptism

# Blessing Upon the Family

## 127:3-5



- *children of one's youth*, Sons born while their parents are young and vigorous (Genesis 49:3)
- Such children protect their aged parents as effectually as arrows in the hand of a warrior
- In Old Testament times a large family was essential to survival
- Having plenty of children provided security and protection for the whole family
- In many ways children are like *arrows in the hand of a warrior*
- They must be carefully shaped and formed; they must be guided with skill and strength and they must be given direction; they will not find direction on their own

# Blessing Upon the Family

## 127:3-5



- According to St. Augustine, the children *of one's youth*, who are *like arrows in the hand of a warrior*, are the disciples and the apostles, whom the Lord Jesus Christ sent forth like arrows all over the earth, from the hand of a divine Warrior, God
- *"Their sound has gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world."* (Romans 10:18)
- They were called the children of youth because they preached with the Spirit of power
- *Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them*, If children are a reward, (verse 3), then there is great blessing and happiness in having many children



# Blessing Upon the Family

## 127:3-5



- The *quiver* is a case in which arrows are carried; and as a man - a hunter or warrior - feels secure when he has his quiver full of arrows, so a man is blessed in proportion to the number of his sons
- *They shall not be ashamed*, Such parents do not fear the reproach of barrenness, which was grievous, especially among the Jews, Luke 1:25; nor any other shame from their enemies
- *But shall speak with their enemies in the gate*, This is the blessing of Abraham, “*and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.*” (Genesis 22:17)

# Blessing Upon the Family

## 127:3-5



- The meaning is, that they would *speak* to their enemies in the place of conflict - for a battle occurred often in the gate of a city
- As the possession of a gate, or an entrance to a city was of so much importance to those who attacked, and those who defended it
- The idea is, that they would speak with effect; they would distinguish themselves; they would let their presence be known
- According to St. Jerome, he probably means here, the gate of paradise; where the enemy has nothing against the true believers in paradise

# Blessing Upon the Family

## 127:3-5



- Psalm 127 is bound together by the primary theme of God's sovereignty
- It is a beautiful Psalm that teaches us to rest in God's blessing at work and at home
- No matter what we do or where we are, the Lord is the One who makes things come to pass
- We are totally dependent on Him
- We can praise Him for He holds every aspect of our lives in His hands





# Discussion

- How is Psalm 127 really a call to trust God in the endeavors of life?
- How does this Psalm speak of the Sovereignty of God?
- What does the word “vain” mean in this Psalm?
- What blessings do children bring to their parents?



# Discussion

- How do verses 3-5 relate to verses 1-2?
- What does it mean to “speak with the enemy in the gates?”
- This Psalm is attributed to Solomon and is among many "Songs of Ascent" preparing God's people to gather in worship in Jerusalem at the Temple. How does the mention of “gate” in verse 5 fit into this context?