

Psalm 128.¹⁻⁶

Blessing

Background

This next 'song of ascent' picks up on the theme of 'grace' which ran through the previous psalm and highlights again the distinction between the two ways (the 'narrow way' and the 'broad way' of Jesus' teaching) and the two worlds (the kingdom of God and the dominion of darkness).

There's no middle ground. Everyone is either in one or the other – the world of grace in which there is blessing and life, or the world of 'works' in which the curse prevails and death reigns.

The gospel, in essence, declares that by enduring the cross and exhausting thereby the wrath of God, Jesus has undone the curse. In Jesus, therefore, we enter the realm of blessing: and it is this theme of the enjoyment of God's blessing which pervades Psalm 128 – as evidenced by the repetition of the word in vv.1, 2, 4 & 5. It's worth noticing the contrast, for instance, between v.2 and [Gen.3.17-19](#) – an instance of the blessing-replacing-curse theme which runs through the psalm.

'Blessing' is a big thing in the Bible: but it's a notion which has been hugely devalued over the years, and its huge reservoir of meaning has been subtly drained in countless different ways to the point where all that remains is a puddle or two of what is in truth little more than merely sentimental tosh! The biblical understanding of 'blessing', by contrast, is rich with a weight of significance.

Right at the start of the Scriptures the creation of humankind is immediately followed by the blessing of God on humanity. *God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number ..'"* ([Gen.1.28](#)).

God's blessing takes the form of a verbal command, parallel in character to the initial and foundational '*Let-there-be-light*' command with which the creation account begins: and the word of God is seen from the start to effect what it demands: it generates what it articulates.

The blessing of God bestows the power to generate life and creates the fruitfulness it commands. That's what the psalm celebrates – vocational fruitfulness and relational fruitfulness are what's in view in the opening 4 verses.

And you'll see that this opening section is 'topped and tailed' by a pointer to the nature of our relationship with the LORD – "*.. all who fear the LORD .."* (v.1) and "*.. the man who fears the LORD .."* (v.4). The fear of the LORD finds expression in our obedience to the LORD – or, in the language and terminology of the New Testament, our affirmation that Jesus is Lord: we are submissive and obedient to Him. This should not be confused with a 'legalism', and it may be that in your Community Group you'll wish to tease out a bit that important distinction.

Along with '**days**' (1) and (2), the opening verses of Paul's letter to the Ephesians will repay further study, so I suggest that '**day**' (3) is a third set of questions you might consider. In each case, as ever, additional questions have been inserted.

1) Monday 28th February – fruitful

Read [Psalm 128.1-4](#)

“Blessed are all who fear the LORD, who walk in obedience to Him ..” (Ps.128.1)

The opening word of the psalm highlights its theme. The grace of God translates us from a life lived under the curse of God to a life abundantly blessed by God. And the essence of such a life is a God-given fruitfulness.

What does it mean to ‘fear the LORD’?

The references to ‘obedience’ and ‘the fruit of your labour’ could suggest that God’s blessing is *earned*: how do vv.1 and 2 express a gospel of *grace* rather than of *works*?

The psalmist presumes an ‘agricultural economy’ in v.2: how does the promise of this verse translate into the experience of believers today?

What would you say to those who, on the basis of v.2, argued for a ‘prosperity gospel’?

How does the truth to which v.3 points have application for those who are single and those who have no children?

Prayer: *I cling to You afresh today, my Lord, eager for Your blessing – apart from You I can do nothing, with You I can do all things!*

2) Tuesday 1st March – blessing

Read [Psalm 128.5-6](#)

“.. May the LORD bless you from Zion ..” (Ps.127.5)

The final picture of Himself which Jesus left with His disciples was that of Him with His arms raised and blessing them ([Lk.24.50f](#)). The Lord’s blessing is marked by a permanence, brings a true prosperity, and effects a healing peace for you and yours.

‘Count your blessings .. name them one by one:’ what will your list include – in what ways are you conscious of the Lord’s having blessed you from Zion?

Why did the psalmist pray specifically for the ‘prosperity of Jerusalem’, and in what ways should his prayer be applied by ourselves today?

In what ways should the perspective of the psalmist (thinking two generations down the line) find expression in our own life as a fellowship of God’s people?

For whom might you pray this prayer today?

Prayer: *Oh that You would bless me and enlarge my territory. Let Your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain* ([1 Chron.4.10](#))

3) Wednesday 2nd March – peace

Read [Ephesians 1.1-3](#)

“.. who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing ..” (Eph.1.3)

The experience of God’s rich and abundant blessing is known specifically by those who are in relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ: and the primarily *material* blessings of the Old Testament become now primarily *spiritual* blessings.

What is signified by the fact that believers are described by Paul as “God’s holy people” and “the faithful in Christ Jesus”?

To what extent is your life characterised by this ‘peace’ from God?

Read [Luke 24.50-53](#): what do these verses suggest a life lived under the blessing of the Lord will look like?

What features of our life as a fellowship of believers convey the fact that we are a people blessed by God ‘in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing’?

Prayer: *Lord, grant me Your peace that I in turn, by the power of Your Holy Spirit, may be an instrument of Your peace to others with whom I’ll engage today.*

4) Thursday 3rd March – grace

Read [Ephesians 1.4-6](#)

“.. to the praise of His glorious grace..” (Eph.1.6)

Paul begins to list the spiritual blessings which are yours in Christ, each an expression of His amazing grace. Chosen, predestined, adopted – your life has real significance: all that you are and accomplish redounds to His glory, because wrought by His grace.

What is the practical consequence of your having been ‘chosen’ in Christ?

Why is your ‘adoption to sonship’ such a blessing?

Prayer: *How deep Your love, my God and Father, how vast beyond all measure, that You should give Your only Son to make a wretch Your treasure.*

5) Friday 4th March – restoration

Read [Ephesians 1.7-10](#)

“.. to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ ..” (Eph.1.10)

The blessing of God both brings you renewal (a new start, your being made a new person and being given a new future) and affords you the revelation of what He is effecting in and through His Son – His restoring a fractured universe.

When and how did you first experience the assurance of God's complete forgiveness?

In what ways are you seeing the unifying power of the gospel – in your own life and in the life of your fellowship?

Prayer: Grant me grace today to forgive the debts of others as You have forgiven me: help me to reach out a reconciling hand in all that I say and do.

6) Saturday 5th March – glory

Read [Ephesians 1.11-12](#)

".. in order that we .. might be for the praise of His glory .." (Eph.1.12)

The Lord knows what He's doing and never works in a merely random fashion! What He does (and the order in which He does it) is always such that it redounds to His own greater glory. Paul was conscious that God's dealings with him were to that end.

How are God's dealings with you a demonstration of, and result in the praise of, His glory?

How would you describe the hope that you have in Christ?

Prayer: I stand amazed in Your presence, Lord Jesus: I wonder how You could love me, a sinner condemned, unclean: how marvellous, how wonderful is Your love for me.*

7) Sunday 6th March – sealed

Read [Ephesians 1.13-14](#)

".. the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance .." (Eph.1.14)

There's a progression in God's salvation. You heard. You believed (faith comes by hearing). You were 'sealed' with the Spirit. And along with all God's people you now await an inheritance of which, thus far, you've only got the smallest foretaste!

In what ways is the gift of the Holy Spirit a foretaste of what's still to come for believers?

How did you come to the point of believing? Give thanks today for those whom the Lord used to bring you to faith.

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, for those who faithfully taught me and through whose instruction and example my heart was opened to Yourself: bless them abundantly!