

## **REVERENCE LEADS TO HAPPY HOMES**

Psalm 128: 1-6 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

A.W. Tozer said, “What you think about God is the most important thing you think.” It’s true. Knowing God and practicing His daily presence always is what calibrates our lives. Who do you fear more, God or people? The psalmist, probably King Hezekiah tells us in Psalm 128: 1 and 4, “Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways! ...Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord.” Solomon challenges us the same way in Proverbs 19: 23, saying, “The fear of the Lord leads to life, and whoever has it, rests satisfied; he will not be visited by harm.” I read this week about a very superstitious man who was walking down the street one morning when he suddenly saw a black cat crossing the road ahead of him. He knew now for sure he was going to have a bad day. Worried about seeing the black cat, he asked his friend at work, “What do you think will happen to me because of seeing that black cross the road in front of me this morning? His friend quickly replied, “It all depends on whether you are a rat or not.” Beloved, our fear of God helps us know who we are in Christ, so we need not fear people, the dark, the future, upcoming elections, layoffs or even black cats.

This Hebrew word used twice in Psalm 128: 1 and 4 is **yawray**. Yawray means to revere or reverence, to stand in awe, and to be a God-fearer. Psalm 128 in a nutshell shows us that yawray, reverence for God is the foundation of a blessed or happy home. I want to encapsulate this message into three rewards in a reverent man’s home. These three rewards of reverencing God are (1) The reverent man has a blessed home, walking in God’s ways and working to provide for his family. v. 1-2. (2) The reverent man has a fruitful wife and children shielding him around his table, v. 3-4. (3) The reverent man has a future filled with God’s prosperity, God’s posterity for his children’s children and God’s peace, v. 5-6. These three foundation stones are more than they look like at first glance and at face value. At face value, these rewards are wonderful, but as we look deeper at this psalm, these three rewards are priceless treasures: What are they?

### **THE REVERENT MAN HAS A BLESSED HOME, WALKING IN GOD’S WAYS AND WORKING TO PROVIDE FOR HIS FAMILY.** (I.)

Notice verses 1-2. “Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in His ways! You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you.” These blessings are external and internal blessings that come into the life of a reverent man or woman’s home. One of the external aspects of God’s blessedness in our lives is for a bread-winner to bring home the bacon—and see his wife and children eat the fruit of the labor of his hands. Obviously, in the history of the world, millions of laborers have faced times of war, oppression, drought,

blight, famine, insect infestations and disease. Even in the face of all these exceptions to happiness, it is a blessing the reverent man and woman know when the family sits down to eat breakfast, dinner or supper, and they bow to thank God for the fruit of labor, be it by his hand or by the industry and work of his wife. Only the reverent take time before eating to pray. Only the reverent pause to thank God for work and His provision so it is well with the family. Note that the fear or the reverence of the Lord is an inward principle while the walk in His ways is an outer expression. No one reverences the Lord who does not walk in His ways. The fear or reverence of God is a cause while the walk is an effect. The fear of the Lord is in the heart, while the walk is in the feet. The Christian life is ethical and emotional. In Psalm 1: 1, the blessing is in walking not—in the counsel of the ungodly, but here in Psalm 128, the blessing is in walking in God’s ways.

But there is more, so much more in this phrase, “who walks in His ways.” The Hebrew word for ways is **derek**. Derek comes from the root word **darak** which means to walk, to tread, to string a bow or to bend a bow, to lead or to guide. Think of it. It speaks of walking in the footsteps of the Lord, following His guiding and leading, and it means planning for our pursuits under His tutelage. The word **derek** literally means our course of life, our inner journeys, our customs and our conversation, the routes we take in life, our manner of life, meaning how and what we do, activities that control our life-style. Derek means walking before the Lord, including the fixed paths for our feet, and derek means any activity that controls our life—all these activities and customs and conversations and manner of life reflect either our reverence for God or our rebellion against God.

A life not lived in reverence to God as our Creator and Redeemer is best pictured in Romans 1: 18-32. Listen and learn afresh with me the many irreverent ways people live denying God, denying His order, and denying His design. Paul wrote, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason God

gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.”

Beloved, think of it! When we give God up, we give up His order in creation—we are disobedient to parents, we are heartless and ruthless and hate our parents. Leviticus 19: 3 states, “Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father.” This word for reverence is usually reserved for God, but God shares this word with parents, for we as parents, have an awesome high calling. Our calling to be revered and respected by our children because the reverence God expects sons and daughters to give their parents precedes the reverence He expects will later come to Him when He calls us to Himself and initiates a relationship with us. Our reverence for our parents prepares us to revere God. This is the reverent man’s way of walking. Think of this reverent man walking in God’s way. What else is here?

When we give up God and His order, men want to be married to men and women want to be married to women—which is a dishonorable passion—a shameful act, carrying God’s judgment in the very act itself with the participants receiving in themselves the due penalty of their error. When we aren’t reverent, go back farther, we deny the gender God gave us when we were born—men want to have a gender reversal to become a woman and women want to become men—denying God’s creative order. But go farther back. When we are not reverent, we dishonor God’s order in marriage—justifying our separation and divorce, when God calls us to union, to peace and to having a godly offspring. We can also hate God’s order so much that we reject our parentage and our parents as well. We can deny any offspring, by aborting our children—60 million such horrendous sins of giving God up and these sins are going on yet today. We sin by giving God up, giving up His plan for us by seeking to abort His plan by committing suicide. We can deny our heritage and so deny that the lines have fallen to us in pleasant places. In pride, we can separate ourselves from God’s order by falling into legalism, denying that other fellow believers are true sons and daughters of God who belong to Him. Beloved, God forbid! Go back to our text. “Blessed is everyone who fears the

Lord, who walks in His ways.” Are you reverently living in a blessed home, walking in God’s ways and working to provide for your family? May it be so for each and every one of us. There is a second reward for the reverent man or woman:

**THE REVERENT MAN HAS A FRUITFUL WIFE AND CHILDREN**

**SHIELDING HIM AROUND HIS TABLE.** (II.) Don’t jump to conclusions here before I flesh out this reward. We read, in v. 3-4, “Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD.” Before I say what this means, let me first answer the question posed to me last week? “Do all godly women get to be fruitful wives and mothers of children?” First, the Bible speaks of many godly barren women in the Word of God. Do you remember how Paul talked about Timothy being a son in the faith? God desires all of us to consider how we can be spiritual mothers and fathers. In that way every physically barren wife can be fruitful. But what if you are a single man or woman? Is that against God’s plan? Let me read to you from I Corinthians 7: 26, 28-31. “I think that in view of the present distress, it is good for a person to remain as he is... Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that. This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.” God does allow some men and women to remain unmarried and He does at times allow a couple married to be barren and have no children. Remember here that the psalmist however does not deal with the exceptions to his general principle. All of us know godly couples who are childless, and we know awesome men and women who have not found a spouse with whom to share their lives.

This passage is talking about a common Godly principle and a wonderful blessing and reward of a wife being like a fruitful vine within our house and our children like olive shoots around our table. Here is the man who is a husband and father. Here is the woman who is a wife and mother; and here are the children of them both. Notice the wife and mother is compared to a fruitful vine—single—nothing plural. This single vine is not in a vineyard, nor in a garden, but in the husband’s house where she is his fruitful vine. Like young olive shoots grow up around a well-rooted olive tree, so the children gather around their parents. These are independent children who themselves produce other olive shoots. The children are not compared to anything single, but compared to olive plants around the family table. This is more than a big harvest table full of children around it.

God is speaking of children becoming part of His shield around us as parents as we grow older—speaking with our enemies at the gate as in Psalm 127: 5. David said in Psalm 3: 3, “But you, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head.” Psalm 3 written when David fled from his throne when his own adult son conspired for his throne and conspired to kill him. It was not only a sword pointed at David’s heart physically, but Absalom’s conspiracy was a sword pointed to his soul. Psalm 3: 2 states, “Many are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for him in God.” It is in that context that the role Absalom should have played in David’s life as a shoot and a shield around David’s table was denied him. Beloved, when a spouse or children or grown children turn against you, remember—God is still a shield about you, your glory and the lifter of your head.

What are these “olive shoots around your table” speaking of? If you go to Israel, you will encounter the figure. Even in Gethsemane, the 3,000 year old trees have large olive shoots shielding the parent trees inside the circle or shield. If the old parent trees start to fall, the olive shoots, now large trees will catch the parent tree in their arms. It is God’s illustration of what our children are to be for us as parents in our old age. I see some of you now doing this very thing. You are faithful olive shoots encircling your living parents with love and care and support and help. God bless you. You are not against your parents, but part of God’s shield for them. A week ago yesterday, February 27<sup>th</sup>, Jinny and I were Nordic skiing between Moose and Jenny Lake. Jinny pointed it out to me. Like the olive trees in Jerusalem, the aspen trees were making the same encircling shields around the parent trees in the middle. It was pelting snow and almost a whiteout, but the picture was so clear. Those aspen trees around the parent aspens were bearing the leaning parent trees. It touched my heart.

I noticed one encircling grouping of aspens was still holding up a fallen dead parent tree, and the picture was clear. Even in death, nature shows its respect for the parent tree, catching the parent tree in its branches. But let me say to you all—though this is the blessing spoken of by King Hezekiah no doubt here—speaking of the fruitful wife and the shielding olive shoots around the table, showing how God blesses those who reverence Him, yet don’t despair if your life misses part of this picture. Psalm 128 clearly speaks of the fruitful wife and the shielding children, but Psalm 3 gives us God’s back-up. Even when an adult son or daughter turns on us, as in Psalm 3 and they say to our souls—there is no salvation for you in God, never fear. Cry out with David in Psalm 3: 3, “But you, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head.” Thank God for shielding wives and children, but most of all, thank God He is our shield. The third reward:

**THE REVERENT MAN HAS A FUTURE FILLED WITH GOD'S PROSPERITY, GOD'S POSTERITY FOR HIS CHILDREN'S CHILDREN AND GOD'S PEACE.** (III.) Notice verses 5-6. "The LORD bless you from Zion!

May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem, all the days of your life! May you see your children's children! Peace be upon Israel!" These words are very much like the Aaronic blessing in Numbers. God is pictured here as sending forth His blessing from Zion because it is His earthly dwelling place. But the blessing is not confined to a long life and many descendants. It includes also the prosperity of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the center of Jewish life. The sons of Korah in Psalm 87: 5 said, "And of Zion it shall be said, "This one and that one were born in her;" for the Most High Himself will establish her. The Lord records as He registers the peoples, "This one was born here." The symbolism speaks of God guarding the local church—the place where many of you were born again. The picture is of a godly man or woman being a member of the local Zion God has led him or her to be a part of. This blessedness is incomplete apart from the well-being of God's larger family, first our local church, and secondly, we are all incomplete apart from being part of the Zion/Israel of God—being part of the Bride of Christ, and having our register—with our names written down in Glory. Notice how Psalm 125 and Psalm 128 end the same way—"Peace be upon Israel."

This final reference to Zion in verses 5 and 6 remind us of the tabernacle in Zion, and it makes us think that when God's house is a blessing to our homes, then our homes will be a blessing to God's house. Perhaps the favorite song in England about home was written by an American, John Howard Payne who never knew what it was to have a home. He was born in America in 1792 and died in Tunisia, Africa in 1843. One cold night in New York, as a homeless man walking the streets, he stopped near a cozy house where he heard his five stanza song being sung inside. He died in Africa, an exile from home. We know one of his lines well, "Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home. I especially like stanza four-- How sweet 'tis to sit 'neath a fond father's smile, And the caress of a mother to soothe and beguile! Let others delight mid new pleasures to roam, But give me, oh, give me, the pleasures of home. Home, home, sweet, sweet home! There's no place like home, oh, there's no place like home!" As I come to the close of this psalm about the blessings of being reverent at home, I remember that Zion also speaks of our Home in heaven. When we rear our children for Jesus, as my father and mother did, and as Jinny and I have, and as many of you as parents have done the same, we can look far ahead, not just to old age, but to Home in eternity where Dad and Mom and you and I will see our children's children-v. 6. What a day that will be! Our eternal Home Sweet Home is where God's peace will be upon us all. Yes, blessed are all those who reverence the Lord. Amen & Amen.