Light and Life Class

Psalm 127: “Unless the Lord Builds the House . . .”

June 30, 2019

Type of Psalm: a wisdom psalm (along with Psalm 128)

* authorship of Solomon (1 Kings 4:32 that Solomon wrote 3,000 proverbs and 1005 songs)
* framework of v. 5 especially characteristic of wisdom literature (cf. Psalm 1)
* would be natural for pilgrims to Jerusalem to recite wisdom to one another as encouragement

Five Statements of Wisdom

#1: (v. 1) Anything a human being does without faith in God will ultimately be in vain.

* Notes on the text of v. 1
  + a prime example of the grammatical device called “synonymous parallelism”
  + Solomon knew what it was like to build a “house” (1 Kings 5-7), but in light of v. 3, the term “house” has more than one meaning
* The teaching of v. 1
  + I say that v. 1 commends work done with faith in God because of v. 2.
  + Obviously the Bible wants us to work diligently, including the building of houses and the guarding of cities (Proverbs 12:11; 28:19; Colossians 3:23; etc.). Verse 1 does not commend laziness.
  + This verse seems to mirror the teaching of Jesus in John 15:5: “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”
    - In the Acts 17:28 sense neither believers nor unbelievers can do anything apart from Jesus.
    - However, Jesus in John 15:5 means that we can do nothing to the glory of God without the grace he supplies in our spiritual union with him.
    - Paul captures the sense of John 15:5 in 1 Corinthians 15:10 and Galatians 2:20: “But by the grace of God I am what I am [an apostle], and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.”/“And the life I live now in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”
  + What kind of faith does Solomon seem to have in mind?
    - faith in God’s grace in the form of his providence for timing and results (James 4:13-16)
    - faith in God’s grace in the form of the totality of his provision for the work (wisdom, strength, relationships, etc.)
  + Why is doing our work without faith in God “in vain”? (See 1 Corinthians 10:31; Romans 1:21; 3:23.) How does faith especially glorify God?

#2 (v. 2): Anxiety in our work thus causes our work to be in vain.

* Anxiety is the opposite of faith. See the similar teaching of Jesus in Matthew 6:25-34.
* See the account of john Piper for his remedy for a period of sleeplessness in his life.

#3 (v. 3): Our children are God’s blessing to us.

* See July 21 article in the *WSJ* titled, “It’s Okay to Feel Ambivalent about Your Children”
* Abortion obviously devalues children.
* What do I say to a Christian couple who is not able to conceive a child and may think God is punishing them or depriving them of this blessing?

#4 (v. 4): Our children are like arrows in the hands of a warrior.

* What are the two purposes of this metaphor?
  + A warrior certainly considers arrows to be a valuable gift.
  + And as we shoot arrows, so we send our children out into the world to do the work to which God has called them. (Hear the testimony of the missionary Jim Elliot on this point.)
* Where do we get the wisdom and patience and strength we need to raise our children the way Ephesians 6:4 commands, so that they will be “straight-flying” arrows?
  + Remember that v. 4 assumes vv. 1-2 (good counsel from Pastor J.D. Greear).

#5 (v. 5): The parent who has lots of children is especially blessed.

* This verse is in light of the creation “mandate” of Genesis 1:28.
* Has this “mandate” changed with the rapid rise in the earth’s population?
* Hear the “stewardship view of parenting” of Pastor Jared Kennedy.