

A Study in Psalms, Week 7 Psalm 127: A Word for Workaholics

“Because all his days his task is painful and grievous; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is vanity.”

Ecclesiastes 2:23

Introduction

1. One of the most **practical** passages in the Bible
2. Written by **Solomon** in about 970 B.C.
3. Teaches us that we must put God at the center of all we do
4. Deals with two aspects of our lives that are in tension—**work** and **family**
 - a. They **demand** and **compete** for most of our attention
5. In our “workaholic” society, it is easy for Christians to have **misplaced priorities**
 - a. Work is a **good** thing, right?
 - i. The Bible has much to say against the **sluggard** and the **slothful**
 - b. Problems occur when work causes us to **neglect** other, **more important** things!
 - c. We’ll look at the **cause** of this **neglect**, and the **cure**
6. This psalm helps us properly **prioritize** the demands of life

When Work is Worthless

1. <Read Psalm 127:1-2>

2. Let’s be clear—this is NOT a warning against work
 - a. Solomon had a **lot** to say about the **evils** of **laziness**

“Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth.”

Prov 10:4

“He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son.”

Prov 10:5

“The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.”

Prov 13:4

“Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest. How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.”

Prov 6:6-11

- b. Paul, too: *“If anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.”* (2 Thess 3:10b)
- c. Jesus characterized Godly work as **food** for the **soul**

“Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.’”

John 4:34

3. Rather, this is about those who cannot stop working
 - a. This is a **specialized** study, aimed specifically at one who **over-indulges** in work
4. God has called us to **build**—our **lives**, our **homes**, our **churches**, the **Kingdom**
5. **Two examples** where such labor can be **vain** or **futile**—building **houses** and seeking **security**
 - a. Neither is **improper**, and both are considered **acceptable** forms of labor
 - b. However, both can be **futile**—when we engage in such work **without God**
6. Why does God need to be a part of house-building? Is it really all that important?

- a. No **distinction** between the **sacred** and the **secular**—God is interested in **all** our work
“Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.”
 Colossians 3:23-24

- b. To be truly successful at **anything**, God must be **included!**

“...for apart from Me you can do nothing.”

John 15:5

- 7. Problems arise when we place **too much emphasis** on house-building

- a. Houses can become **status symbols**
- b. Some need the **biggest** and the **best**—in the “**right**” part of town
- c. If our security is wrapped up in earthly things, we’re trusting **material** things, not God

“Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.”

Ecclesiastes 1:2b

- 8. When is house-building vain?

- a. When we engage in it **without God**
- b. And when do we build without God?
 - i. When we do so with wrong **priorities**, wrong **motives**, or wrong **methods**

- 9. God cares about what we do—all the more if it’s endangering us!

- a. It can destroy us as a **family**
- b. It can keep us from **fellowshipping** with **God** and the **saints**
- c. It can divert us from **kingdom-building** to **personal-building**

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Matthew 6:19-21

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- 10. We’re all interested in **security**, but without **God** in the picture, our efforts are in **vain** (v.1b)

- a. Throughout history, man has sought to **protect** what he’s worked for
 - i. Watchtowers, guards, watchdogs, etc. are **necessary**
- b. Without careful, prayerful **watching** and **guarding**, our building is in **vain**

- 11. When is God not part of our efforts at security?

- a. **A1:** When safety is sought in the **midst** of **sin**
 - i. The sinner is **never** secure (*“The eyes of the LORD are in every place, watching the evil and the good.”* Proverbs 15:3)
 - ii. The people of **Babel** thought their security was in their **city** and their **tower**
 - iii. **Sodom and Gomorrah** were **defenseless** against God’s judgment
 - iv. We are most secure when we obey God (cf. Psalm 37)

“The wicked plots against the righteous and gnashes at him with his teeth. The Lord laughs at him, for He sees his day is coming... For the arms of the wicked will be broken, but the LORD sustains the righteous.”

Psalm 37:12-13, 17

- b. **A2:** When we strive for security in our **own strength**

- i. Trusting in ourselves takes the focus off God’s divine protection for us, His people
 (1) The message becomes “*we don’t need God!*”

“...I will spit you out of my mouth. Because you say, ‘I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,’ and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked...”

To the church in **Laodicea**, Revelation 3:16b-17

12. “Burning the midnight oil”

- a. Occasionally, this is called for, even praised:

“She rises also while it is still night and gives food to her household and portions to her maidens.”

The Virtuous Woman of Proverbs 31

- b. What is **not** called for is making this the **norm**
c. And even though we work for God, He still expects us to **rest!**
d. Solomon not contradicting Psalm 31, he’s putting it into **perspective**
e. God planned **rest** from the **very beginning**
i. *“He rested on the seventh day from all His work”* (Gen 2:2)
ii. God established the Sabbath as a day of rest (cf. Deut 5:12-15)
f. Several **reasons** for the Sabbath
i. Gracious **provision** for man to **rest** and **recover** from his **labor and toil**
ii. A time for **spiritual reflection** and **worship**—we need **time** to worship God
iii. Opportunity for men to **learn to trust God** and **strengthen their faith**
g. Those that consistently work without rest are either **greedy** or **unbelieving** or **both**
h. Workaholics **violate** a basic **spiritual principle**: God gives to those who’ve learned to rest in Him, not trusting in their own strength.

Children—A Gift from God

1. <Read Psalm 127:3-5>
2. Notice the **progression of thought** between vv. 1-2 and vv. 3-5
 - a. Children are an excellent **conclusion** to the argument of vv. 1-2
3. Children are a **gift from God**—a **reward**, not earned by **toil** or **work**
 - a. They are God’s “vote for the future of humankind” (Wiersbe)
4. They provide the things for which we strive
 - a. Children **build** our **homes**
 - b. Children provide greater **security** (“arrows”)
 - c. Children born in our youth are well established when we grow old (“social insurance”)
5. The city gate is a place of **business** and **justice**
 - a. **Widows** and **orphans** needed **extra protection**, but not parents of many children
 - b. Children see to it that parents are treated with **respect** and with **honesty** and **justice**
6. And while not everyone is supposed to be married and have children, we all have a responsibility to **pray** for children, be good **examples** for them, and **encourage** their spiritual upbringing.

“And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me; but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.”

Matt 18:5-6

Conclusion

1. Men who put too much stock in their **own labor** fail to understand God’s **grace**
 - a. In His grace, God provides man with **rest** and **relaxation**
 - b. Also in His grace He has provided **children** to supply many of our needs
2. Our activity on earth must leave time for **rest, worship, reflection, and family matters**

3. Are you spending too much time on work? Just ask your spouse!
4. Remember the example of **Adam and Eve**
 - a. **Toil** and **struggle** of work were a part of the **curse**, but children were part of the **promise**
 - i. Through Eve's seed Satan would be crushed

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.”

Gen 3:15

Review of our Study in Psalms

1. Look over the syllabus
2. Discuss favorite lessons—Any topics which stand out to you?
 - a. God is due our highest **praise**
 - b. God is due our utmost **trust**
 - c. God **loves us** and **cares for us**
 - d. God's **judgment** is coming; sinners will be **punished** and righteous will be **rewarded!**
(not everything works out here on earth, but God is in charge and knows what is best!)
 - e. God **delights** in our worship to Him—we were **created** by Him to **worship** Him!