

XII. A Heritage from the Lord.

 3 Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. *– Psalm 127:3*

The term "heritage" is not used much in our day, but this is the word employed by the Psalmist to describe God's gift of children to parents. A heritage is equivalent to an inheritance or legacy. It is something passed down from one generation to the next intended to be a blessing. In Psalm 127, however, children are not a gift from the previous generation, but from the Lord. Indeed the Psalmist says that the "fruit of the womb [is] a reward."

This passage comes in the context of a Psalm dedicated to the raising up of families. It is one of two Psalms attributed to Solomon, the wisest man to ever walk on earth (excepting Jesus). Solomon recognizes, "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain" (v. 1). In other words, we are not in control when it comes to family planning and bearing children. Children are a gift and blessing from the Lord. He exercises His sovereignty and grace to give or withhold children. Because of these truths, Solomon confesses that the one whose family is filled with numerous children is considered blessed (vv. 4-5). A couple's children help provide strength to the home and fill their parents' hearts with joy and pride.

It is no surprise that the prevailing attitude towards children today (sadly even in the church!) is completely antithetical to the principles of this passage in God's Word. Children are often considered a chore, nuisance, and inconvenience. Parents are sometimes resentful about the things they have had to sacrifice in order to raise their children. In order to pursue personal ambition with their careers, many parents have surrendered the responsibility of raising their children to grandparents, daycares, and nannies. Many couples put off having children so they can pursue personal pleasures and freedoms like travelling and other hobbies.

The great heart issue that needs to be addressed is whether we believe the Scriptures and trust that children are a gift according to God's goodness and grace. Instead of cultivating worldly and even sinful attitudes towards children, we ought to promote parenthood and be thankful for God's grace to us. Many godly couples come to find that they are unable to have children, though they intensely desire it. For whatever reason in the plan of God, He has withheld this blessing from them (perhaps to bless them by some other means).

If God has blessed you with children, it is important to develop a biblical understanding of your role as a parent and to view your children as God views them – a gift of His grace. We need to guard ourselves from having a worldly attitude and think God's way. For the sake of our children, let us consider ourselves tremendously blessed by God because of the precious heritage he has passed on to us. Parents serve as stewards of God's gift and our children are entrusted to our care so that we can raise them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Eph. 6:4)

1. Read Psalm 127 in its entirety. What observations about parenting and children stand out to you from that passage?

a. v. 1 –

b. v. 2 –

c. v. 3 –

d. v. 4 –

e. v. 5 –

2. Read Ephesians 6:4 and answer the following questions.

a. In what ways do parents provoke their children to anger? Try to think of at least three.

b. The word "discipline" shares the same root as the word for "child." It could be rendered "nurture" or even "education." It is not the parents' strategy or plan that the Lord desires, but His own. They are to raise their children in the discipline of the Lord. To put it simply, the idea means to nurture and raise children God's way.

1) What are some worldly and unbiblical ideas when it comes to raising children?

2) How can you raise your children in the discipline of the Lord?

c. The word "instruction" has the idea of putting something in the mind. One of the primary responsibilities of parents is to teach their children how to think. But again, this is not according to the parents' wisdom and understanding. We are to raise our children in the Lord's instruction.

1) What worldly influences surround your children that might affect the way they think?

2) How can you help ensure that your children will think God's thoughts?

d. Read the parallel passage in Colossians 3:21. The word "discourage" literally means to lose one's spirit. In other words, by provoking their children, parents can cause them to lose any good motivations in life. Of course the most drastic consequence is that their children may lose any desire to seek the Lord.

1) Instead of being a source of discouragement for our children, how can we encourage them to live life the right way with the right mindset, motivations, and goals?

2) From reading Ephesians 6:4 and Colossians 3:21, in your own words, why is it so dangerous to provoke your children?

3. In what way did the Lord intend for Abraham to be a godly father (Gen. 18:19)?

4. Read Deuteronomy 4:5-10, Deuteronomy 6:6-7, and Psalm 78:5-8. To whom did God give the responsibility to pass on the Word of God to the next generation?

5. How did Job minister to his children (Job 1:4-5)? What principles can we draw about godly parenting from the example of Job?

6. What sort of treatment should parents give to their children?

a. Psalm 103:3 –

b. Proverbs 22:6 –

c. Proverbs 22:15 –

d. 2 Corinthians 12:14 –

e. 1 Timothy 3:4, 12 –

**"Because He Lives"**

God sent His Son, they called Him Jesus,

He came to love, heal, and forgive;

He lived and died to buy my pardon,

An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives.

*Because He lives I can face tomorrow,*

*Because He lives all fear is gone;*

*Because I know He holds the future.*

*And life is worth the living just because He lives.*

How sweet to hold a newborn baby,

And feel the pride, and joy he gives

But greater still the calm assurance,

This child can face uncertain days because He lives.

And then one day I'll cross the river,

I'll fight life's final war with pain;

And then as death gives way to victory,

I'll see the lights of glory and I'll know He lives.

Thoughts for Application:

1. What are the most important and helpful lessons you learned from your parents? Give at least three.

2. What do you think are some unbiblical and even sinful reasons for putting off parenting? What are some unhealthy views towards parenting that you have witnessed in yourself or others?

3. How might you counsel a Christian friend who resented their kids or regretted becoming a parent?

4. In what ways have your children been a blessing to you? If you do not have kids, in what ways do you feel the children of the church serve as a blessing to the Christian community?

5. What steps can you take to become a more faithful parent? If you are not a parent, what sorts of qualities do you think characterize a godly parent?