



water from rock

Selah- Stop, Look, Listen- July 9, 2022

The Lord be with you.

Do you sometimes feel like you have the weight of the world on your shoulders? There's all these things that you need to do, and it feels like it all depends on you. I mean, you feel like you're a hamster running the hamster wheel.

Well, if you are feeling that way today, or you know someone who's feeling like that, I have a scripture for you. Well, and for me. It is Psalm 127, a psalm by Solomon. We usually associate Solomon with the Book of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, but here is a psalm by Solomon whom scripture says that he was the wisest person of his time.

Solomon was one of the great doers of the ancient Near East. Solomon was one of the great builders, one of the great administrators. You just read about Solomon in the Old Testament, and you will see that Solomon gets a lot done. Now, I wanna read Psalm 127, Beginning with the first verse where it says, "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord guards the city, the guard keeps watch in vain. It is vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil, for he gives sleep to his beloved."

Now, did you pick up on Solomon's repeating the word vain? Those who build it, labor in vain. The guard keeps watch in vain. It is vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, and hear what this word vain, Solomon is picking up on a theme that he writes extensively about in his book of Ecclesiastes. Vanity of vanities. It's something that is meaningless. It's futile, empty, stuck on, stupid. You see, trying to do all of these things without the Lord, trying to do these things without relying on him, whether it's trying to build a family, a business, a ministry, trying to do it without God, it's in vain.

I'm struck by Solomon's line where he says, it is, it is vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil. Notice the word "anxious toil". Now, you read Solomon in the book of Proverbs, and, well, you know that Solomon is not against hard work. He's not against toil; rather, Solomon's concern here is that we go about our work and it becomes anxious when we work as though it all depends on us. As though, it says, as a real success in life depends on us and are doing... And it becomes anxious toil.

So Solomon is not telling the builder to stop building. He's not telling the guard to stop keeping watch; rather, what Solomon is saying is that we've got to take God into account. We've got to trust in God in what we do because it's not about us. It never has been. It's about God. I was a young



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pastor when one Sunday in the car on the way home from church, I said to my wife, I said, "Well, I just resigned from being the fourth person of the God," and she said, "What do you... What do you mean by that?" And I said, "Well, what I mean is, I've got to stop doing all of this as though it all depends on me. And I realized that there had been a certain arrogance in thinking that it ever did depend on me."

And then Solomon, here he goes on to caution, he says, it is a vain empty, it is vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil, for He gives sleep to his beloved... That's quite a statement. He gives sleep to his beloved. Now, you check out those words in the margin of your Bible, it might be the New Revised Standard Version, it might be the New International Version, but you'll see there in the margin that translators are saying that this phrase would be better translated as He provides His for his beloved during sleep.

That's really the idea here, is that God does provide for you and me while we sleep, when we're not lifting a finger, God goes about his work of caring for us. And I wonder here if Solomon is thinking of God putting Adam into a deep sleep to provide Eve for him. I would have saw him and his thinking of Genesis 15, where God put Abraham into a deep sleep that as God enters into eternal covenant with him. Or maybe just maybe Solomon is thinking of Kings Chapter Three, when Solomon is sleeping, he's not working, but he's sleeping, and God gives to Solomon the gift of wisdom. We see a lot can happen while you and I are resting while we sleep. God is working, and that is why in the Hebrew Bible, the day begins not at sunrise when we go about our work, but the day begins at sunset as God goes about his work, and there's such an important lesson for us here. Just as we are saved by grace through faith, not of works, so God's greatest blessings for you and me come as we rest, remember, as we let go, this crazy idea that it all depends on us.

I have a friend who's active in the 12-step movement, likes to say, if God is your co-pilot, switch seats. I was thinking about when I was a boy, and my father was teaching me my first lesson on how to swim, and my dad told me that I needed to learn to trust the water to hold me. He said that if I would just relax in the water, and trust the water that it would hold me up. And that didn't make any sense to me at all, because I knew that the harder I tried, the harder I tried to stay afloat, the quicker I sank. And you know, God is saying to us, I think. He's saying, relax, trust me, I hold you up. Unless the Lord builds a house, those who build it labor in vain. And so our Lord Jesus Christ says to us, He says, Come to me, and I will give you rest.

I wanna close out today with just a couple of lines of William Newell's commentary on the Book of Romans, where he says, to believe and to consent to be loved while unworthy is the great secret, to expect to be blessed, though realizing more and more, our lack of worth. That is to live in God's grace. To expect to be blessed though realizing more and more our lack of worth. That it's all about God, not you and me. Come to me and I will give you rest, Jesus says.

I'm Tim Smith, a fellow traveler.

Thank you for listening. Until next time.