

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – June 23, 2020

The lord be with you.

You sometimes feel the weight of the world on your shoulders, you feel like it all depends on you.

You might be a single mom trying hard to keep it together, you might be scrambling to restart your business, restart your job after COVID-19, you might be a pastor trying hard to hold your flock together during the lockdown and you're feeling the weight of the world. You're feeling like a hamster... Running the hamster wheel.

Well, if you've ever felt that way or care about someone who does feel that way, I've got a Scripture for you, and for me, it is Psalm 127, a psalm by Solomon. That's right, Solomon, we've looked at several songs by David, but here is a psalm written by David's son, Solomon, of whom scripture says that Solomon was the wisest person of his time.

Solomon was one of the great doers of the ancient near east. He was one of the great builders, one of the great administrators. And you read about Solomon in the Old Testament, and you'll see that Solomon gets a lot done.

Reading now in Psalm 27, beginning at the first first, 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 gifts sleep to his the love.

Now, did you pick upon Solomons repeating this 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 here 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. Futile, empty, stuck on stupid. Trying to do all of this without the Lord, trying to do this without relying on him, whether it's trying to build a family, a business, a ministry, I'm struck by Solomon's line where he says, It is vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil. Note the word anxious, anxious toil. You read Solomon in his book of Proverbs, and you know that Solomon is not against toil, Solomon is not against hard work, where there's Solomon is wording here about toil, that becomes anxious, it's working as though it's all up to you, as though true success depends on you, and not on God.

Solomon is does not tell the builder to stop building. He does not tell the guard to stop keeping watch. Whether Solomon says, said, We've got to take God into account. We've got to put our trust in Him in what we do.

I was a young pastor one Sunday in the car on the way home from church, and I said to my wife, I said, I just resigned from being the fourth person of the Godhead. She said, What do you mean?

And I said, Well, what I mean is I've got to stop doing this as if it all depends on me, and I realized that there was a certain arrogance and ever-thinking that it does all depend upon you in me, and so Sam and cautions, he says, It is vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil. For he, God, gives sleep to his beloved.

Water From Rock

That's quite a statement. He gives sleep to his beloved.

Now, check out this line and the margin of the new revised standard version of the Bible, or the margin of the New International Version, and you will see there the translator suggest that this phrase is better translated as for He provides for his beloved during sleep.

Love, I like that. Because that really is the idea here, is that God provides for you and me during our sleep, but we're not lifting a finger, God is going about his work of providing for us as we rest. I wonder here of Solomon is thinking of God putting Adam into a deep sleep to provide Eve for him, I wonder, or Solomon is thinking of Genesis 15, where God puts Abraham into a deep sleep as God enters into eternal covenant with Abraham. Or maybe, maybe soon is thinking at First Kings 3, When Solomon is sleeping, not working, but sleeping. And God gives to Solomon the gift of wisdom. We see a lot can happen while you and I are resting... For while we sleep, God is working. And that is why in the Hebrew Bible, the day begins, not a sunrise when we go to work, but the day begins at sunset as God goes about his work.

There's such an important lesson here for us that just as we are... Say by grace through faith, not of works. So God's greatest blessings for you and me come as we rest from our works, as we let go the crazy idea that it's all about us in the first place, the blessing and to fill in and like depends on us.

I was thinking about when I was a boy and my father was teaching me my first lesson to swim and... And my dad told me that I needed to learn to trust the water to hold me up, he said that if I would just relax in the water and trust the water that it would hold me up. And that really made no sense to me at all, because I knew that the harder I tried, the harder I flung of the round to stay afloat, the quicker I sank. And God says, relax, trust me, I hold you up. Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.

Jesus says, Come to me, and I will give you rest.

I'm gonna close out today with just a couple of lines from 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 lack of worth, that is to live in God's grace.

And so I tell people today that I really do expect to be blessed by God, not because I deserve it, not because I earned it, but because it is God's will to bless us people, and so I lift up to you the blessing that is commanded in Scripture, The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon you and give you peace.

I'm Tim Smith, a fellow traveler in the pilgrim way.

Thanks for listening until next time.

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