

# PSALMS

## Chapter 128

*Blessed Is Everyone Who Fears the LORD*

A Song of Ascents.

**Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in his ways! 2 You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you. 3 Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table. 4 Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD. 5 The LORD bless you from Zion! May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life! 6 May you see your children's children! Peace be upon Israel!**

**Ps 128** The blessedness of the godly man; another word of wisdom concerning hearth and home (see Ps 127). The concluding benediction suggests that the psalm originally served as a Levitical (or priestly) word of instruction to those assembled from their homes to worship in Jerusalem. Its date may well be pre-exilic. Structurally, the frame (“who fear[s] the LORD”) around vv. 1–4 sets off those verses as the main body of the psalm. (CSB)

This psalm repeats the theme of the preceding psalm: a contented enjoyment of the possessions and the family which the Lord gives is true happiness. This psalm is both a promise of blessing and a prayer of blessing. (PBC)

Likely a pilgrim song, recited by the travelers in the company of their families as the mountains of Jerusalem come into view. (TLSB)

Format: Vv 1–2, blessed are those who fear the Lord; vv 3–4, a family that fears the Lord is blessed; vv 5–6, blessings from Zion. (TLSB)

The 128<sup>th</sup> psalm is a psalm of comfort in which the estate of marriage is splendidly praised. Marriage partners are given this great comfort: they should not look only at the trouble, work, discouragement, and discomfort they feel and experience in marriage, but rather look at the gracious will of God toward them, that their station and life are a gracious creation of God and are blessed by him. Therefore, marriage is dear to him and he gives it much more happiness and blessing than discomfort, if one only believes and adapts oneself to marriage and faithfully remains within it. Thus in the beginning and middle of the psalm it says, “everyone who fears the Lord...” When the godless go astray, on the other hand, it is no surprise. (Reading the Psalms with Luther)

**128:1–4** Blessedness affirmed. (CSB)

This psalm is a blessing on the family, and is also a blessing on the nation, because as the family goes so goes the nation. The blessing of a nation starts with godliness in the hearts of parents. Such parents fear God and obey his commandments. Their strength flows to the children through the contentment and peace it produces in the family. (PBC)

From solid families strength flows to the nation. From solid godly families come works who will build up the nation, parents who will raise godly children, and children who are our hope for the

future. Without such families the future is dark. From such families the nation and the church will find strength. (PBC)

**128:1 Blessed** – The happy condition of those who revere the Lord and do his will (see 94:12; 112:1; 119:1–2; 128:1; Pr 29:18; cf. Ps 41:1; 106:3; Pr 14:21; Isa 56:2), who put their trust in him (see 40:4; 84:5, 12; 144:15; 146:5; Pr 16:20; Isa 30:18; Jer 17:7; cf. Ps 2:12; 34:8), and so are blessed by God (see especially 41:1–3; 144:12–14; see also Mt 5:3–12). The Psalter begins by proclaiming the blessedness of the godly and ends by calling all living things to praise God in his earthly and heavenly sanctuaries (Ps 150). (CSB)

*his ways*. Metaphors for “the demands of his covenant.” (CSB)

Hbr *derek*, “trodden path,” used for a “pattern of behavior or custom.” “The way of the Lord” is twofold: He punishes sinfulness, but He also shows mercy to the repentant. (TLSB p. 844)

**128:2 Blessings upon labor.** (CSB)

As the psalm begins with blessing, so this first pair of verses ends with an assurance of blessing. Rabbis associated “blessed” with this life and “well” with the life to come.

TLSB – p. 842 – Hbr *barak*, “To bestow ability for success” (from the greater person to the lesser) or “to praise a person’s ability for success” (from the lesser person to the greater). Refers to bending the knees, perhaps to kneel and receive a pronouncement of inheritance with all its wealth (cf Gn 27). “Bless the Lord” has the sense of “greet” and is common in the Psalms, expressing thanks and praise (34:1; 145:1, 10). In faith, praise is the greatest gift we can offer to our Lord. The blessing that came from the temple at Jerusalem now resonates through the Church, brought by pastors, missionaries, teachers, and other Christians who proclaim the Gospel of Christ’s sacrifice. (TLSB)

**128:3 A faithful and fruitful wife.** (CSB)

*vine*. Symbol of fruitfulness (Ge 49:22)—and perhaps also of sexual charms (SS 7:8–12) and festivity (Jdg 9:13). (CSB)

*within your house*. She is not like the faithless wife whose “feet never stay at home” (Pr 7:11). (CSB)

Hebrew refers to the most private chamber, reserved for marital relations. The blessings of a wife and children are compared to the most important fruit-bearing plants, which fill the house with life. Cf 127:4. (TLSB)

*olive shoots*. Ever green and with the promises of both long life and productivity (of staples: wood, fruit, oil). The vine and the olive tree are frequently paired in the OT (as, e.g., in Ex 23:11). Both were especially long-lived, and they produced the wine and the oil that played such a central role in the lives of the people. (CSB)

*around your table*. Converting each family meal into a banquet of domestic joys. (CSB)

Ancient tables commonly stood no more than a foot above the floor, where families sat or reclined on cushions during meals. (TLSB)

**128:4** *fears the Lord* – The blessing of the fear of the Lord, which began the psalm, returns here. (TLSB)

The wonderful blessings of produce and posterity are bestowed on those who are devout and obedient. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

**128:5–6** The benediction pronounced—completing the scope of true blessedness: unbroken prosperity, secure relationship with God and secure national existence (the prosperity of Jerusalem entailed both), and long life. (CSB)

The extent of the blessings promised in vv 1 and 4 is to be seen both within the house and family of the one blessed and in the larger setting of Jerusalem, God’s dwelling place. (TLSB)

**128:5** *from Zion* – God’s heavenly throne (see v. 7) has its counterpart on earth in his temple at Jerusalem, from which center he rules the world.). (CSB)

**128:6** *Peace be upon Israel*. Perhaps a concise form of the priestly benediction. (CSB)

If God’s peace is granted to thee nation, then the people would be able to work, their families would flourish, and they would enjoy the good things in life. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

**128** May God grant us the blessings of a life lived under the fear and respect of God. May we see our families as the kindness of God. In our relationships with our children and our grandchildren, God shows His power and mercy. • O Lord, open our eyes to appreciate Your gifts and praise You for their richness. Amen. (TLSB)