

Psalm 126:1-6

A Song of degrees.

“When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them. The LORD hath done great things for us; *whereof* we are glad. Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves *with him.*”

Introduction: The Concept Of Being In Captivity And Being Released From It

“we are in the Songs of Ascent, 120 to 134, pilgrims would go through these Songs as they would come to Jerusalem for the Feasts. And we have come as far as the 126th Psalm, we’ll read through it and look at it. It says **“When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them. The LORD hath done great things for us; *whereof* we are glad. Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves *with him.*”** This Song originally, as it was added to the Songs of Ascent, is in the context of some captivity. You can, it’s amazing to read, study through and hear all of the different opinions of which captivity this was. Is this speaking of the Assyrians, is it speaking of the Babylonians, is this speaking of others that surrounded Jerusalem? It isn’t saying, by the way, the captivity of Jerusalem or the captivity of Judah, it specifically says the captivity of Zion, which is an unusual phrase to put into the context of captivity. It could be when Sennacherib surrounded the city of Jerusalem, ah, it could be when God’s hand of blessing was removed in one era or another. But the point is, God’s children through the centuries have always experienced captivity in a particular context or another. And here, this is written during an age when it’s an agrarian society, they understood all the process of sowing and reaping, and then in fact you would reap what you sowed, that was no mystery to them. And they believed that in laws of nature, spiritual truths were reflected. And, ah, they knew that well. So as we read into this Psalm, there is some captivity historically. This is a reflection of that in the lives of all of

God's people, that if we sow the wrong thing, if we get involved in the wrong things, we can sit right in church, no one around us may know it, but you can be in that isolated place, in that place of kind of solitary confinement, where you're experiencing some captivity, something. And you come to realize, you know what? I've earned this, this didn't come for no reason, God doesn't deal indiscriminately with his own sons and daughters, with his own people. I've sown to the wind and I'm reaping the whirlwind. God, because he loves us, will never let us succeed in being sinners, he won't let us be successful in that endeavor. Neither would I with my children, if I could interrupt them. You know, if you had a kid whose going out on Friday night with his goofy friends and they were going to buy a case of beer and get drunk, and you could show up there without him seeing you, and mess with him, would you do that? If he's going to be in the back seat of a, if your daughter goes out and some guy tries to get in the back seat of the car, and you could be there and you could be invisible? Oh man, that's a dad's dream. Would you mess with it? And here there's a process, God because he loves us, won't let us get away with being successful sinners, because he can be there, and he is involved. And it seems like the song writer here, on behalf of God's children in every age says **'You know what, there is a process here, and there's something that's gone wrong in the seed that was sown was not a precious seed, it was something else.'** And Zion, the hill of Zion where the Temple would be built and was built, Zion itself, was the center of worship in Israel. You know, it says **'Isn't mount Zion beautiful, the joy of the whole earth, isn't mount Zion on the sides of the north the city of the great king,'** it was there where worship would take place. And then they're realizing here as this is written, **'Captivity is the result of sowing something that should not have been sown.'** So **"When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream."** (verse 1) **'When he released them, it was kind of like those that dreamed, this is like a dream, you know, we're being set free again, it's almost too good to be true.'** Christians will do that, you know, when God turns the tide and he starts to return his blessing, and Christians will think, **'I don't know, this is too good to be true, I don't deserve this, he wants me to let my guard down so he can get me again.'** No, no, he doesn't do any of that, he's not like us at all. It says **"When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream."** (verse 1) **"Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them."** (verse 2) **'and the unbelievers, they were surrounded with, those nations said, you know, the LORD hath done great things to them,'** they acknowledged the blessing of God on God's people. And then there's an agreement here by the writer, **"The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad."** (verse 3) and then again, turning to the LORD, it's interesting, **"Turn again our**

captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south.” (verse 4) “as the streams” the Hebrew word here is actually **“wadis.”** One of the interesting things if you go to Israel, you go down there to Engedi, you go down near Masada, down near the Dead Sea, you go into the desert, and of course many of the places in the Mid East, when the rainy season comes, there are all of these ravines, they call them wadis. And as the rain comes, all of those streams lead, when they come together, and all of a sudden you can have a flash flood, all of a sudden these streams that have been dry, these wadi beds can fill up, they can take away a life sometimes, the rush of water can be violent enough. He’s saying **‘LORD, we want to be like that, we want to be released and filled, and if you’ve turned our captivity again, you’ve released us LORD, the rain’** always a picture of God’s blessing, **‘is on our lives again, we want to be released, we want to be filled, LORD, like the wadis in the south, LORD, the blessing again, to flow through our lives, LORD, we want them,’** amen, we want that, don’t we? We want to be released and filled.

“They That Sow In Tears Shall Reap In Joy”

And the song writer then, through the Holy Spirit says **“They that sow in tears shall reap joy.” (verse 5)** They understand, there is no reaping without sowing, if there’s no sowing there’s no reaping, they understood clearly. We’re very confused about that in our culture today. *‘These people were just dumb farmers, they weren’t as smart as we were, so they weren’t confused at all.’* In our culture if you sow pond scum, you get a salamander, if you sow a salamander you get a frog, you sow a frog you get a fish, you sow a fish, you get a lizard, you sow a lizard, you get a monkey, you sow a monkey you get a human. They understood you’re going to reap the same thing you sow, we’re all confused about that these days. You sow apple seeds you get apples, you see peach seeds you get peaches, and it’s one of the laws of sowing and reaping. Paul tells us in **Galatians, ‘Don’t be deceived, God is not mocked, as a man sows so shall he reap.’** Then again, here’s the confusion of it. If you, you’re going to reap the same kind as you sow. If you sow to insanity, and you sow to carnality, that’s how you’re going to reap. You’re not going to sow over in this field with insanity and crazy people, and drinking and drugging, and then run over into this field at harvest time and figure you’re gonna harvest something over there. But here’s the confusion, the harvest always comes later, so people sometimes feel *‘Hey man, God understands, me and my girlfriend are living together, we’re doing this, and things are going good,’* well they ain’t doing good, you’re running out of space and running out of time, and you can only reap the same thing you sow, if you’re sowing apple seeds you’re gonna get apples. But because the harvest comes later, people are misguided, and they do this,

'This is cool with the Man upstairs,' stuff. They'll find out how cool it is. And the third rule is, you'll always reap, in the final analysis, more than you sow. You so to the wind, you reap to the whirlwind, you always reap more. Look, turn that around. Marriages, homes, your own worship, your own walk with the LORD, understand this, here's the thing, and it's a promise, it's a spiritual law just like in the natural. You will reap what you sow. You've messed everything up, you come to the Lord, you're family can be a mess, kids a mess, home a mess, finances a mess, whatever it might be. And then you're in the process, *'Alright, I want to do what's right, but I don't know how it's gonna work out Lord, I want to do what's right.'* You just do what's right, you trust God. You sow precious seed. It may be weeping in the beginning. Do that, because that's what you're going to reap. The thing you're going to struggle with is the harvest comes later. You can't sow good things into your marriage [or in your relationships with others close to you, family etc.] without reaping good things down the line. You can't sow good things into your kids without reaping good things down the line. You can't sow good things into a relationship without reaping that down the line. The problem is, it comes later, some in this world, and some in the world to come. And it will always come in greater measure, your reaping will be in greater measure than your sowing. That's good for us to know, as we walk with the Lord and want to do what's right. Here is this song writer on behalf of Israel, realizing their failure, as they're in captivity, realizing, and sometimes we have to get there, don't we? we have to get in captivity before we say *'Alright, uncle, I give, I'm such a knucklehead, I'm so stubborn, I've been doing the wrong thing, I want to turn around, I want to get right.'* They're realizing in their captivity the problem of their sowing and reaping. And it seems they turn back now and they say, ***'OK LORD, I want to do this right,'*** and the writer says, ***'Well you know those who sow in tears, they reap in joy. It may be a really hard time.'*** ***'He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.'*** (verse 6) "precious seed," it would be a picture of God's Word here, "precious seed." ***'shall doubtless'*** without question, ***'come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves'*** bringing the proper harvest ***'with him.'*** Sowing the precious seed, look, in your marriage, precious seed, the Word of God. And no doubt, people are free, they make choices, that's true. Jesus was a sower that went forth weeping. We see him at the tomb of Lazarus, weeping. He wept there, because he saw the fruit of death, he saw all these people wailing at the tomb of Lazarus. He didn't agree with all of their religiosity, but he understood what an impact death has had through sin on the human race, and he was looking at the evidence of sin, this graveyard. Jesus wept as he came over Jerusalem in ***Luke chapter 19, verse 41,*** he said ***'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that slewest the prophets, killest those that are sent unto thee, if thou***

had only known this thy day the things that belong unto your peace, but your house is left unto you desolate, your children will be slaughtered in the streets. He looked at Jerusalem, and again, Palm Sunday [which really occurred on a Friday], riding in, we call it the Triumphal Entry, he's sobbing, he's crying, and he had come with precious seed, didn't he. Then once again we see him weeping in Gethsemane, and the writer of the Book of Hebrews tells us something very interesting, that he cried out to God with pleading and weeping, it's ***'In that he feared,'*** isn't that an interesting idea? It wasn't just that he was weeping, it wasn't just that he was going to be crucified, he wept because he didn't want to drink the cup, Psalm 78, Psalm 76, Jeremiah 23, Revelation 14, the cup of God's wrath, poured out without mixture. He knew on the cross, it says in ***1st Peter chapter 2*** that ***'He bare our sin upon the tree, and the wrath of Almighty God came down on him, in that he was separated, 'My God, my God, why' separated, for the first time in eternity, 'hast thou forsaken me?'*** So, he came forth, and it says ***'you and I now are born-again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible seed, which is the Word of God.'*** He doubtless went forward, sowing seed, precious seed, with weeping, and he doubtless will come again bringing his sheaves, being the fruit of that [i.e. at the time of the first resurrection to immortality at his 2nd coming, reaping with joy unspeakable]. For you and I, we share the Lord with people, it says in his precious seed, if we're broken about people's lives, we should be sharing the love of Christ with them. He says that the Word of God, in this context, is seed, not a club. It doesn't say ***'Go club them on the head with the Word of God,'*** some Christians do that. Don't they? You get around them you know you're in for a beating. In certain contexts, the Word of God is a sword. If you're in the context of the church, and there's heresy, and you need to straighten things out, it says we should study the Word to show ourselves approved, a workman straightly dividing the Word of God, there's a time when it's a sword [or when a non-believing friend needs a sword, applying Genesis 12:3 and Galatians 3:29 to them for their own good]. There's a time when it deals with you and I, and it's sharper than any two-edged sword, it divides down into our very being, and it's separates that which is soulish and that which is spiritual in our lives. But going forth, in the lives of others, in the life of a community, and the life of a nation, look at our nation, how corrupt it is. What's going on in this country? You and I, bearing precious seed. It says if we go forward that way, sowing, we'll doubtless come again rejoicing."

Psalm 127:1-5

A Song of degrees for Solomon

“Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh *but* in vain. *It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep. Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.*”

Introduction

“Now as he moves into Psalm 127 and 128, he talks about the idea of that, letting the Word of God sway us, and letting that be the thing that bears fruit in our lives. No doubt these Psalms as they were collected, these Songs of Ascent, there’s a flow to them, as the Holy Spirit put these together through the writers. Psalm 127, and it says “A Song of degrees for Solomon,” 127 is the central Psalm in these Songs of Ascent. We’re not sure if it’s for Solomon or by Solomon. But the Psalmist says this, **“Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh *but* in vain. *It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.*”** I enjoy that, I don’t know about you. **“Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath a quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with enemies in the gate.”** So, interesting Psalm again, it gives us the picture of several things. First, social life, the builder of the house, there’s only one, that’s the LORD. Civil life, keeper of the city, there’s only one, that’s the LORD. Ah, corporate life, business life, there’s only one who can be successful there, and it isn’t the guy who stays up late and never gives himself any rest, and in domestic life, in the home, he has to be in the center of domestic life in the home, he has to be in the center of that.

The LORD, Builder Of Our Social Lives

So, builders, **“Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it.” (verse 1a)** Wonderful to be in any trade, wonderful to be a builder of any kind. But whatever you’re trying to build, if you’re trying to build it without him, it says, **‘you’re building in vain,’** there’s an emptiness, there’s a, it’s like the wind, it doesn’t weigh anything, it doesn’t mean anything, if the LORD’s not in it. Now this is certainly written to God’s people, we’re not expecting unbelievers to sit around and

read this. But for you and I, if you're a builder, what are you building? Some people are just builders. You put them in the woods and come back a year later, there'll be a development there. The trees will be cut down, everything will be, you know, some people are just builders. **'But except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it.'** Certainly that's true with a home when it comes down to the domestic things, our families.

The LORD, Protector And Builder Of Our Cities

Look, **"except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."** (verse 1b) Boy are we concerned about that these days, aren't we. **"except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain"** magistrates, those who are supposed to keep the city safe, those who are supposed to keep the population safe, **'except the LORD keep the city, guard it, the watchman watcheth but in vain.'** You and I, we're watching what we're watching now is not the city, we're watching the news. What happens with ISIS? There's an ideology there, they believe what they're involved in. Are they coming here? What happens, again, the endura virus, it's a form of polio, it's coming to our country. What happens with Ebola? My wife won't stop talking about it, I don't want to be around her, she talks about it at home all day...are we threatened by this? Look, Houston, the mayor is making all the pastors hand over their sermons to the city counsel in case they've said anything that's not politically correct, are you kidding me? This is the world that we're living in. [Comment: pretty soon we'll be like the Pilgrim Separatists that had to flee England and come to Plymouth in "the new world, to escape religious persecution and intolerance and censorship. See <http://www.unityinchrist.com/history/saga.htm> and just read that introduction.] What are you going to do if Ebola comes? I know what I'm going to do, I'm gonna die, I'm going to go to heaven. But it's going to come one way or another. The guillotine would be preferable, that always just seemed fast to me. I don't want to be eaten by shark, there's certain ways I don't want to do this. But we're supposed to walk worthy of our vocation, Paul tells us in Ephesians, and part of that vocation is finishing here and stepping into the next world. That's the graduation, that's where longevity is, that's where we finally enter everything we were made for. And before we're Americans, we're Christians. I don't want to live in America for a thousand years. I want to go to heaven [in reality, the Millennial Kingdom of God, when we return with Christ (cf. Revelation 19:1-21) and then heaven, the New Jerusalem, comes to earth for eternity (cf. Revelation 21:1-23)]. What's coming? I don't know all the little details, but I know this, Jesus Christ is coming. And all of these other things are telling us that the things he warned us about are true. **'Take heed to yourselves that you're not**

deceived, men will come in my name saying I am the Christ, don't follow them. You're going to hear of wars, rumours of wars, famine, pestilence (it's not bugs, it's deadly infectious diseases), famine, pestilence, earthquakes in divers places, these are the beginning of sorrows, but the end is not yet. See that your heart is not troubled.' And I think *'That's easy for you to say.'* Because my heart tends to get troubled. But he said **'I've told you these things, so that you will know, so when you see them, lift up your head, your redemption draweth nigh, I'm at the very doors.'** That anticipation, on the scale, should outweigh the fear and all the stuff that will give us ulcers about everything else that's going on. He's coming for us. Nobody's going to keep the city safe but him. That's what it says here. Nobody's going to build anything successful in this world without him.

The LORD Must Be The Head Of Our Corporate Life

It says **'You can rise up early, sit up late,'** the King James says **'you can eat the bread of sorrows,'** it's **"you can eat bread of toiling,"** the idea is "working," **'this person's driven, they sleep three hours a night, they're always up, on their laptop, they're working, they're building this business, they're going to get it together,'** no that's not the way it happens. Without God's blessing, you're burning out, it's all you're doing. It says here **'It's vain for you to rise up early, stay up late, eat the bread of toiling,' "for he giveth his beloved sleep."** **(verse 2)** You know, if you're ways are committed to the LORD, you're living your best without compromise, and of course we're in his grace, we understand that, but we don't have to be tortured, we don't have to get ulcers, we can do our best and commit the rest. And it's wonderful to get a good night's sleep on top of that. [Comment: the melatonin levels in my system have tanked, gone down, in my older years, so that good night's sleep is harder to come by. I wish the Lord would supplement it for me.] And by the way, if you have insomnia and you go to bed tonight, you say *'I'm your beloved, I could use some solid hours right now, ok?'* it's just a suggestion.

Domestic Life: Our Children Are Like The Arrows Of A Mighty Warrior

Now we come to domestic life, that begins with **"Lo, children..."** we just changed gears. **"Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward."** **(verse 3)** King James is "are an heritage," the Hebrew is **"children are the inheritance of the LORD," "the fruit of the womb is his"** is in italics. **"the fruit of the womb is his reward"** It's very hard to say here, is it specifically saying the fruit of the womb is "his reward", I believe it is, because in Malachi he says he

hates divorce because he wants a godly seed. [Comment: Sometimes that divorce is necessary, when the spouse, say, is a wife-beating, cheating, conniving husband who would destroy that “godly seed.” In such cases, divorce is necessary, especially when dealing with two non-believing parents, especially if their son or daughter just happens to be a believer. I know of one such specific case like this, that child is precious seed of the Lord.] So, certainly I believe the fruit of the womb is his reward, your kids are not yours, they’re on loan, and you’re going to give an account for them. But also in this culture, of course, child bearing was considered a blessing from God. If you were barren, they would ask questions about if God’s blessing was real on you. Look, life has changed, we’re not worried about that now. Because even if you can’t conceive and have children, you can give birth to many spiritual children, we don’t measure life the same way in this day and age. Not having children is never a sign these days of being in God’s disfavor. But here, that’s what the culture believed, that’s what was being said, **“children are an inheritance of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.” (verse 3)** Look, we’re still seeing a million abortions a year, in this country. And if you’ve had an abortion, we’re not here to come down on you tonight, if you come to Jesus Christ, he’s forgiven you, you have a reunion waiting for you in heaven. Remember, the Bible says if you lust after a woman, you’re already in adultery as far as God is concerned. If you’re angry with someone and want to hurt them, you’re already a murderer. So none of us are better than anyone else. Let’s settle that. But life is sacred. In fact, in the Book of Genesis it says God breathed into Adam’s nostrils the breath of, and it’s plural, the breath of lives, breathed into his nostrils the breath of lives. So at conception, it’s life. Conception is life, children, they’re the inheritance of the LORD. And the fruit of the womb, his reward, both to you and to himself. And he says this about them now, **“As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth.” (verse 4)** certainly David, Abishai, Benia, Joab, they all understood this in that day. “of the youth” of the young man, his children in the life of a young man, the season of your life where you’re having children. Like arrows in the hand of a mighty man. I love the picture, because first of all, for a mighty man with arrows, the first thing that is necessary to be successful is that the archer himself has to be disciplined. You know, if your kids are like arrows, and you’re going to draw back and let them go and aim them at somewhere, if you’re home cursing, drinking, abusing your wife or your husband or you’re carrying on, it’s really hard for the archer to get anything accomplished if in the first place the archer himself is not disciplined. The first thing necessary is for the archer to be disciplined. Secondly, that arrow has to be straight. You didn’t go to Cabella’s and buy two dozen arrows in that day, you got sticks out of the tree, you worked it, you wanted that arrow straight, you do that with the life of your child, you prepare them, polish them, you want them to be straight,

you want them to be right, talk about the right things. And your whole life, it is a season of getting ready to release them. They have to be aimed properly, they also have to be released properly. If you're going to hit something with an arrow, that's important. Because you take your target into consideration, you take the wind into consideration, what's blowing around, what's messing with your aim—which way is the wind blowing? What do you have to say before you let this kid go? And you know, any of you that are parents, realize this, as a parent you are always a rookie. Cathy and I got married, and we decided to wait two years before we had [he chuckles] kids. She was pregnant in four months. By the time we were pregnant with Hannah, our fourth child, Don McLure said to me, *'Joe, wait till you find out how this is happening, it'll blow your mind.'* My good friend, Don McLure. We're married for a year and we already have a kid, however old Joanna is, we were married one year older than that, so it's easy for me to remember my anniversary and how long we've been married. *'How old are you Joanna? Ok.'* married a year longer than that. And then another one comes, you're just learning to be married, and then this creature interrupts the process. You just got married, you've decided to forsake everything and spend the rest of your life with this human being, and then that human being has a baby, and you all of a sudden are the odd man out. *'No, don't do that to her, no we need this,'* and you drop the nook, *'No, don't give it to her, boil that before you give that back to her.'* Then all of a sudden, *'Well, ok, it's her and her against me I guess.'* And then the second one comes, things change a little bit, because then it's the one screaming, the nook falls on the floor, you just pick it up and stick it back in there, you don't boil it anymore. And by the time the third one comes, then it's three of them against two of you, and the marriage comes back together again, just for survival. And then four of them, and they're all different. All the kids are completely different. You think opposite is two directions until the third kid comes. So you're a rookie in all that. They're little, you're just learning what to do with little kids, then they're in school. And then you're learning whole other things, sports and homework, how do you balance all this. And the next thing you know, they're asking about cologne. *'You do not need Nautica Cologne, ok, I still have Old Spice from 35 years ago, you don't need Nautica Cologne.'* And then they're dating, *'You're bringing around here What!? Some girl?'* You look at this girl and think *'You are messing with my aim, I'm trying to shoot this arrow straight, and you come around here? I'm the one who changed this arrow's diapers, I'm the one who fed this arrow, I'm the one who cleaned this arrow for years, I get all my strength to pull back the bow, the tension's higher than, the further you pull back the string, the more tension there is, and I'm getting ready to release and now you're coming around messing with my aim, are you kidding me!?'* And you think, you know, there's the terrible two's, nobody ever tells you

about the terrible 18's and 19's, which is not as terrible for them as it is for you, because you're a rookie and they're getting ready to get married to somebody, getting ready to move out—I don't know anything about what's happening now. But I'll tell you this, when you got 'em little, sitting around the table going [raspberry sound] spitting out food in the high-chair, thank God every day. When they're getting older, because I was raising teenagers ten years ago, if you're raising teenagers now ten years later, you're in a world I was never in, that's how fast things are changing [in the world and our society]. And we want to get our kids, we want to teach them what's right, we want to teach them the truth, and they are inundated with data on the horizontal, with mobile devices, all this, and you're trying get this "arrow" to be straight, you want to pull him back, and the greatest tension is before you release that "arrow." And to me, I would say this parents, AIM HIGH, the shot will go further, aim high, whatever your target is, let it be something this high. Because if you shoot low, that arrow will hit the ground, the dirt really fast. Aim high. Don't let your target just be an education. That's good, get it, but don't let it just be the hourly wage, the money, that's good, get it, but if you don't aim at those things that are high, the calling, the relationship with Jesus Christ and with eternity, again, if all you leave your kid is something that a lawyer can settle, you haven't left him anything. He says ***'they're like arrows, kids are like arrows in the hand of a mighty warrior, a mighty man,'*** and that's the way children are, children of the youth, in those young years, when you're young and still vital, and you're able to pull back the arrow and release them, that's the stage of life that you're in, is what he's saying here. [My divorce got in the way of this, wrecked two kids, looking back. They know where God is, they'll ask me to pray about important things in their lives, but they're holding God off at arm's length. It's my prayer the Lord redeems them before the end of this age comes.]

If You Aim High, Here's What Those Arrows Become

And then he says, **"Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate." (verse 5)** Now that's different for some of us than it is for others "hath his quiver full of them." My quiver was full at four, we have folks here in the church their quiver wasn't full until they had fourteen, we have folks here that had ten, their quiver was full, mine was full at four, that was good for me. I had four big fat arrows that filled up the whole quiver. One author I read said, *"You know your quiver is full when you're fully quivering."* Look, who knows who they are, we're living in really difficult times. Right? We keep coming back to that. So was Moses when he was born. We don't even know his name. Here's the big patriarch of Israel. What's his name? We don't know. We know the

name that Pharaoh's daughter gave him, which means drawn out [in Hebrew. In Egyptians Mose' means "son of", as in Thutmose, "son of Thut." But because they didn't know who Moses was the son of he, was merely called Mose', for "son of"]. We don't know his Hebrew name. He's the biggest star on the Israeli stage, they don't even know his name [and neither did the Egyptians or Pharaoh's daughter, who was Hatshepsut. See <http://www.unityinchrist.com/lamb/exodus1.html>]. Moshe is a name that the Egyptian princess gave him, when she drew him out of the water. But he was born for a time, he was an arrow that was released in a remarkable way. You look at Elijah, you look at Joseph, you look at a very difficult day, look at Noah, he had three children when he was building the ark. It doesn't mean as we look at the world, we're freaked out, it's so troubled we can't have kids, we can't have a family. **No, sometimes in the most desperate of times, God puts an arrow in your quiver that's going to effect the world.** We don't know who they are. You don't know who they are before you let them fly [i.e. God knows the beginning from the end, so he knows who they are and what they're going to accomplish]. But it's interesting, F.W. Borham, he said this, "When God sees that in this poor old world a wrong needs righting," to be made right, "or a truth needs preaching, where a benefit needs to be invented, he sends a baby into the world to do it." Which is why nearly 2,000 years ago he sent a child who was born in Bethlehem. So you don't know who you've got there in that quiver, prepare them. The archer himself has to be disciplined, you want things in the home to be right, you want them to be good, you know there's a process of sowing and reaping. If you do what's right, and you reap what's good in the long run, and you take that kid and you pull way back, you pull way back, you hold that tension, you don't release, you just hold it and you aim high, and you release that kid and see where he goes. It says it wonderfully here, it says **"Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed"** it's talking about the arrows, the children, look what it says, **"but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate." (verse 5)** No Social Security back then, what it says here, is that this man who raised his children the right way, released them the right way, he finds himself at the end of his life, where his kids pick up the mantle, they sit **"in the gate."** That's where all the wars were planned, where all the civil decisions were made, it was the court in the city of that day. It says the kids are not going to be ashamed, they're going to be sitting in the gate, it's going to be a blessing to you in your old age, when you're surrounded with them. What a blessing to think, hey, your old age, whatever age that comes, I'm 64, it hasn't come yet unless I'm in denial. But you know, you got your kids around you. You look at them, 'What a blessing that is,' and again, you're in hospice, you're taking your last breaths, you're in the hospital, I don't care if my kid is president, got a PhD, if he digs holes for a living, if he photographs for National Geographic, I don't care what he does. If I can close my eyes

and say to them, 'You know, see ya soon, see ya soon.' If I know every one of them is going to be there in glory, I can close my eyes and go. Aim high, release them properly. It says in your old age you'll have the blessing of them being around you, they're the ones that will take up the mantle, sit in the gate, deal with the enemies. Great thing, I love it, great picture.

Psalm 128:1-6

A Song of degrees.

"Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD. The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel."

The Problem With Our Nation Is There's No Fear Of God

"Now, **Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be and it shall be well with thee.**" again, looking in the home, **"Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD. The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel."** "Blessed is everyone that feareth the LORD." This is not the fear of cowardliness, or cowering before the LORD. This is a cleansing fear, it tells us back in **Psalm 119, 'The fear of the LORD is clean.'** The problem with our nation today, is not that we don't have enough ICBMs to defend against the enemy, it's not that we don't have a Star Wars program to keep missiles from coming in, it's not that we don't have enough intelligence, the problem with our nation is there's no fear of God, that's the problem with this nation, there is no fear of Almighty God. It says "righteousness establishes a nation." This fear that it's speaking of here is a cleansing fear, it's a phileo fear. You know, if you had a good dad, and sadly I know a lot of us grew up in broken homes, tough stuff, but if you had a good dad, I had a good dad. He wasn't a believer, but he was a good dad, worked hard, for 30 years, out the door, same minute every morning, walked back in the door, **snap!** same

minute every night, it was just that culture, you know, that time. He had been at Pearl Harbor and Midway and Okinawa, you know, that generation kind of a guy. [My dad, too, Lieutenant-jg in charge of degaussing ships at Pearl Harbor, worked 40 years, just as Pastor Joe described here, in a job he didn't necessarily like so he could raise three of us (when if he'd stayed in Harvard Business School he could have become an economist). Wasn't a believer, but a quiet, rock-solid person, like the Rock of Gibraltar, a very good man.] But my mom did most of the beatings, you got out of line she whacked us, in our house it was the kupfleffel spoon, she had the kupfleffel, which was the head-spoon, it was a big wooden spoon, and if you got out of line, you got whacked on the head with a kupfleffel. In fact, she would grab anything and whack ya, you know, and I kind of resented that. When she said, *'I'm telling your father,'* that was never good. That was bad. Ah, because he didn't mess around, he got out the strap, took care of business, when that was over you were relieved, you were still alive, your eyeballs were in your head, they weren't on the floor, everything was good. So, I loved my dad, but I had great reverence, there was a phileo cleansing respect in our home, my dad, my dad ran the home. And that's the idea here, it's phileo, it's family, it's not cowardly, it's the fear of the LORD, and **"Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD." 'because they walk in his ways.'** That's a great thing. Again, you're blessed, because **verse 2, "For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee."** It doesn't say you have to be a millionaire, it doesn't say you have to be making six figures. It says this person knows something about peace and about well-being, and they enjoy their life, they're under the blessing of God, and they walk in his ways, things are going well.

Another Benefit Of Fearing The LORD: Your Wife And Kids

"Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house:" (verse 3a) now it isn't outside the house, guys don't say that to your wife, *'You should be like a fruitful vine, outside the house.'* The idea is, **'all through the house,'** "the fruitful vine" here is singular, interesting, you have one of them, you have a license for them and everything. **'Your wife should be like a fruitful vine,'** that's part of God's blessing, **'throughout the house.'** **"thy children like olive plants round about thy table." (verse 3b)** "Olive plants" that's plural. Olive plants don't come from the vine, by the way. They are their own creatures, they are their own personalities, they are distinct, their life-source is from something else in a Christian home [i.e. "spirit in man," which comes from God, giving each and every human being his or her personality and mental software that runs the human brain, each and every human brain, giving it computing power and individual intellect, and this is for

all humans, whether they be in a Christian home or not, cf. 1st Corinthians 2:9-13, that is the mental life-source that comes from God into each and every living human being.] The wife is like a fruitful vine, the husband walking in the ways of the LORD, there's a blessing on the home, that blessing is not necessarily monetary, there's a blessing of God's peace, and that's guidance. There's a home where you can breath, relax and laugh, and look at each other at the table. And the kids are like, literally, like **"olive clippings,"** the picture here is, the Hebrew is "cuttings" not olive plants, where they would cut the branches of the olive tree, and they would put them in the ground. They had to be tended, they had to be watered, they had to be cultivated. But every Israeli knew, if you get that olive cutting to grow, if that starts to grow into a tree and becomes fruitful, you produce something for over 20 generations. You can go to the Middle East today, there are olive trees over a thousand years old [some of them over 2,000 years old, were planted at the time of Christ]. Sometimes floods would come and cover areas, and when the floods are receded, the olive trees are still alive. The idea is, who knows whether you have a little Spurgeon sitting there, a little Whitfield sitting there, a little Esther sitting there, the idea is they're cuttings, their life is from another source (cf. 1st Corinthians 2:9-13), you plant them, you cultivate them, you care for them, and they grow. And they're going to end up like that "arrow," you're going to let them go someday, they have a distinct life. Who knows what they might effect three generations from now, or five generations from now. I spend time with Spurgeon every day [and I get him every day from you, Pastor Joe]. I wish they had tape recorders back then. I would love to listen to him, but I read him every day.

'We Shall See Peace Upon Israel And Our Children's Children'

The blessing, fearing the LORD, walking with him, this is what goes on in the home, happiness, there's peace, you're wife is like a fruitful vine, your children are like olive cuttings around your table, what a wonderful thing when they get together. Our life is crazy, sometimes we eat together, sometimes we don't. A lot of our eating together is something we order out and bring in. Certainly the holidays all the kids, all the grandkids are there, that's always a wonderful experience, I'm the richest man in the world. Christmastime I buy a standing rib roast, I'm a carnivore, all seven ribs, it's expensive, everybody comes, free meat, everybody shows up. And I'm the richest man in the world, I envy no man on the planet, I look around and see my sons and daughters, their spouses and the grandkids, and the whole house is like a circus. I just sit there and look at it and shake my head. I'm the wealthiest man in the world. And one of my little granddaughters, again, she's a real carnivore, she loves meat too, we get along great. And even when

Christmas comes, her mom says *'Christmas is coming,'* the other ones are saying *'Toys, toys,'* she says *'It means Grandpa's Christmas meat!'* that's what she's excited about. And a couple years ago, when we stood at the Christmas table, we were cutting up the prime rib, and she said "put a little salt on it." She's just a little squirt, wasn't even four years old, and all of a sudden she said *"When I grow up, I'm gonna marry Grandpa."* I thought *'You are in for the rest of your life, kid, you are in.'* As ridiculous as that idea is, I understand what you're saying, we were in, this was good. ***'The children, they're like olive plants round about the table,'*** just the picture, domestic. ***"Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD."*** (verse 4) One Hebrew scholar was reading this, said, *"This word behold, there isn't an exact translation of it, it means this 'stop, look, listen, and think, behold, stop,'* guys, *'stop, look, listen and think.'* Behold, this is what you, stop, look, listen and think about, ***"Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD."*** (verse 4) ***'Think about that, look at it, think about it,'*** wonderful thing. ***"The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life."*** (verse 5) In other words, that's where the Temple was, his presence, God's blessing. ***"thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel."*** (verses 5b-6) We shall see that, "peace upon Israel," we shall see that, we shall see that. We shall see peace, what a blessing to see your children's children, what a blessing.

In Closing

Look, guys, you know, life in this pilgrimage is a very different value system than what the world wants to force on us on the horizontal every day. God is telling us we're sojourners, we're pilgrims, we're passing through. And there's a process of sowing and reaping that has an effect on your life, it has an effect on your home, it has an effect on the way you release your children into this world and what they might accomplish. And if you're fearing the LORD, you're walking with him, then you're sowing and reaping the proper way [even if it's sowing in tears and reaping in joy]. It's a blessing in your home, it's a blessing on your wife, it's a blessing on your children, it's a blessing on your table. And in the final analysis, you're going to get to see the peace in Jerusalem, you know, for a thousand years you're going to see it, a thousand years [see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/kingdomofgod/mkg1.htm>]. It says ***'People of ten different nations are going to come to Jerusalem when Jesus is there, and take hold of the skirt of a Jew and say 'Take us to the Temple, I want to see him, I want to see him.'*** So, ***'Behold, stop, listen, think,'*** you're going to stay, we want to see him,

we're going to look at him with our eyes. Job said, ***"I know that my Redeemer lives, in the latter days he's going to stand upon the earth. Me, as for myself, after worms have eaten me, this skin, body destroyed, yet my eyes shall behold him, I'm going to see him,"*** Job said, the day's coming. Exhortation, these verses, look, sowing and reaping, just remember it [sow in tears, reap in joy], you can never sow the right thing and get ripped off, God will never let that happen. It has an effect in the way you build things, it has an effect in the way the city's kept, it has an effect in your work, staying up late, get up early, getting some rest, has an effect in your home, your family, it effects the way you release your children into this world, and if you're the kind of man or woman that fears the LORD, you're going to walk in his ways. If you walk in his ways, that blessing is going to be upon your life, you're going to see it. And ultimately it brings you to peace. If you're here this evening, you don't know Christ, you don't have peace, we'd love to talk to you up here afterwards. You're watching Ebola, you're watching the news, watching everything fall apart, and the next thing you're going to be hearing is it's on money, so we've got to do away with money. I mean, where's it gonna go, this is crisis management, they love that kind of stuff. [After 9/11, they used that big scare to shove us into crisis management of all kinds, where all kinds of freedoms have been quietly stripped away in the name of security.] Jesus is coming, that's the good news. Ebola's not coming, Jesus is coming, Jesus is coming. If you don't have peace tonight, you don't know him, we'd love to talk to you afterwards. Let's stand, let's pray, let the musicians come, let's lift our hearts to the Lord...ok, so we're not thinking, *'What does it matter, I do what's right, I worship the Lord, I go to church, I sing songs, I study the Bible, then I'm going to get Ebola and rot away and die.'* You're going to be blessed, that's what the Bible says. You can't do what's right before God and get ripped off, can't happen. And I got news for you, we're all gonna die. It's gonna happen, it's part of the journey. Isn't it? Again, for all of us it's a journey of loss, we lose our youth, we lose our innocence, we lose our parents, we lose our teeth, we lose our hair, we lose our hearing, God lets it be a journey of loss so that we let go of this world and we take hold of the next. Cheerful study tonight, you're thinking *'I could have stayed home, I come here, get all cheered up by this stuff,'* let's pray, Jesus is coming, remember that, let's let the Word of God be like the rain tonight, come on our life, it never returns void, it accomplishes what he sends it forth to do, let's bow our heads...[connective expository sermon on Psalms 126:1-6, Psalm 127:1-5 and Psalm 128:1-6, given by Pastor Joe Focht, Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia, 13500 Philmont Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19116]

related links:

Persecution's coming, just like it did for the Pilgrims. See <http://www.unityinchrist.com/history/saga.htm>

Moses was one of God's "arrows" who changed the world. See <http://www.unityinchrist.com/lamb/exodus1.html>

We'll see peace in Jerusalem, for 1,000 years (and then forever). see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/kingdomofgod/mkg1.htm>