

God's Blessing.

Text: Psa 127:1-2

Suggested Hymns:

Ade: 563, 566, 560, 388, 567

Tan: 563, 560, 388, 283, 564

1) How necessary it is

2) How we may retain it

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Psalm 127:1-2, *Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain. ² It is vain for you to rise up early, To sit up late, To eat the bread of sorrows; For so He gives His beloved sleep.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

In the Old Testament certain festivals were instituted by divine command. The Passover was held in memory of Israel's deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. At Pentecost, seven weeks later, the first-fruits of the new harvest were to be offered to the Lord. The Feast of Tabernacles commemorated the journey in the wilderness and was also the harvest festival.

The Day of Atonement was a penitential festival with high-priestly acts and sacrifices foreshadowing the sacrifice for the sins of the world to be made by the great High Priest of the New Testament, Jesus Christ.

New Testament Christians are no more bound by the Ceremonial Law.¹ Still the Church has its festivals. Appreciation of, and gratitude for, the much greater gifts we have received at the hands of God have prompted the introduction of annual festivals celebrating the grace and goodness of our God.

Thus at Christmas we celebrate the surpassing love of the Father, who, sent His only begotten Son to be our Saviour. On Good Friday and Easter we commemorate our full salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ. At Pentecost we rejoice in the outpouring of the Spirit of God, beginning the great harvest of souls that has been going on ever since.

Also the material blessings of God are recognised by a special festival. To offer up thanks for these blessings, we observe Harvest Thanksgiving Day. To help us toward a proper observance of this day, let us consider God's Blessing. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. God' Blessing How Necessary It Is

Our text says, *Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain.*² *It is vain for you to rise up early, To sit up late, To eat the bread of sorrows.*

Here four things we are told of people.

First, they *build*. They construct, they make something new — a house, a church, a school, a factory, ships, cars. People make inventions. Farmers raise crops. In short, they produce.

The second thing that people do is to *guard*. People preserve what they have acquired. Many people devote their entire time to this and thus make their living. They wash windows, wash clothes, clean by sweeping and dusting, oiling, painting, and repair things.

Thirdly, we are told that people *rise up early and sit up late*, that they work from dawn till late into the night; many 'as busy as bees.' Especially here in Australia, life is a ceaseless strain and striving, a continual hurry and chase, so much so that many people break down, and some people in consequence of it, lose their health.

A fourth thing that people do is to worry. They *eat the bread of sorrows*. People worry about daily bread, money, health, relatives, or children. Some people even worry about what is none of their business.

But all these efforts of people, the psalmist asserts, are vain, abortive, unavailing, if they lack God's support. All man's building is useless if God does not approve of it and bless it. How many a house was begun, but never completed; or if completed, the one who hoped to move into it was removed from this earth; or hardly had it been completed, when it was burned down.

Often, too, all keeping and guarding is altogether in vain. The extensive provision of governments to safeguard properties still cannot prevent fires.

The Roman guard at his post at the gate whom archaeologists dug out of the ashes of Pompeii saw the city he was guarding buried by a higher hand.

San Francisco guarded against the crumbling of its buildings, but when the earth trembled and shook, the glory of the city collapsed. People cannot prevent earthquakes, tidal waves and storms.

Many people have saved for decades and carefully invested their savings; but stocks and bonds tumbled, and today these people are where they began.

What good did all its preparation and its mighty army do for Germany? The resulting misery was only the greater. Our text says, *Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain.*

So also the restless planning and scheming of men, their ceaseless toil and overworking, is a waste. If God has not destined a person to become rich, he will not attain riches, even though he robs himself of much sleep, thus ruining his health and making his family miserable.

Or if he obstinately seeks riches, God may give him wealth as a curse to make him unhappy and miserable. Call to mind the rich fool of whom the Lord tells us in Luke 12. He was very successful and made great plans. But the Almighty sent him the message, as we read in Luke 12:20-21, ²⁰ *“But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’* ²¹ *“So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”*

And as to worry, it is not only useless, but also sinful. Jesus earnestly warns us in Matthew 6:24-27, ²⁴ *“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*

²⁵ *“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?”* ²⁶ *“Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?”* ²⁷ *“Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?”*

Jesus declares it to be foolish and heathenish. No one has ever by worry made himself or others happy. Clearly man's striving and planning, work and efforts, are in vain if God does not crown them with success.

But when God blesses, things progress as in a dream. When Peter laboured without the blessing of the Lord, he worked all night in vain and did not catch a single fish. But when he labored with the Lord's blessing, it was only one cast, and the net was so full that it tore.

When the Lord builds the house, it is built well and brings joy to the heart. When the Lord tills the land, it will so bear fruit that the farmer is all smiles. When the Lord blesses our work, we are richly and daily provided with all that we need.

The hymnist writes,²

*All depends on our possessing
God's abundant grace and blessing,*

God's blessing also preserves our possessions. If the Lord keeps the city, there is quiet and order, and every one enjoys their possessions in peace. If the Lord keeps the country, peace prevails, and people can enjoy life. If the Lord blesses, the good things drop into our lap. Our text says, ***For so He gives His beloved sleep.***

While they sleep, God fills their coffers. He so rules things that we can feel it, sense it, that it is not our doing that everything goes so smoothly and successfully.

The hymnist writes,³

*O Lord, of this and all our store
Thou art the author blest;
Thou keepest watch before our door.
While we securely rest.*

Looking around us, we must admit that we have enjoyed the blessing of the Lord. True, God has taught us also that our efforts in themselves are vain. A lack of rain in some areas of the country have resulted in poor crops. In these economic times several businesses have closed. Many people are out of work or

put on part-time. Savings have melted away, and bonds and stocks have lost value.

Still, who among you has not had his daily bread? Who of you has been without clothing and shoes, food, etc.? Even those who could not earn for themselves it was given to them through government benefits. Who had to curtail luxuries, and get along without desirable conveniences. Still we received sufficient to see us through.

If a person was to cross our country with his eyes closed and his ears open, he would think there was nothing but hard times and distress throughout our land. But if he would return with his ears closed and his eyes open, he would everywhere see ample reason for us to be thankful. What country on earth would you rather live in than ours? Truly, you have reason to thank God.

And God desires to bless us in the future. We read in Psalm 145:14-16, *The LORD upholds all who fall, And raises up all who are bowed down.* ¹⁵ *The eyes of all look expectantly to You, And You give them their food in due season.* ¹⁶ *You open Your hand And satisfy the desire of every living thing.* And Psalm 52:9, ⁹ *I will praise You forever, Because You have done it; And in the presence of Your saints I will wait on Your name, for it is good.*

We read in Psalm 145:9, ⁹ *The LORD is good to all, And His tender mercies are over all His works.* And Psalm 106:1, ¹ *Praise the LORD! Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.*

God's promise is given to us in Psalm 121:7-8, ⁷ *The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul.* ⁸ *The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in From this time forth, and even forevermore.* If this promise is not fulfilled in us, it is we who make its fulfilment impossible. Let us therefore also learn how to retain the Blessing of God.

2. God' Blessing How We May Retain It.

The words of our text are wasted on us if we do not take home this lesson, that everything we have, even what we have acquired by hard work, is God's gift.

God is the Source of all good. We read in Psalm 147:8-9 that it is God ⁸ *Who covers the heavens with clouds, Who prepares rain for the earth, Who makes grass to grow on the mountains.* ⁹ *He gives to the beast its food, And to the young ravens that cry.*

We read in Psalm 103:3-5 that it is God ³ *Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases,* ⁴ *Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,* ⁵ *Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*⁴

We dare not become self-satisfied. And yet we very readily become self-complacent if successful. God's Word says in Proverbs 20:6, ⁶ *Most men will proclaim each his own goodness, But who can find a faithful man?* Only too quickly we forget God, the Giver of all good things, and ascribe our success to ourselves. But it is heathenish to pride yourself with your success and to walk, as if others were less successful or poorer than you, merely because they are lazy or silly.

It may be a person's fault. However, it may also be that God gave lesser gifts or granted less success. Therefore bear in mind that your success is God's undeserved gift and blessing, and therefore you are to remain humble.

Let your heart be filled with true gratitude toward God and let the words of your mouth bear witness of the sentiment of your heart, as expressed in Psalm 103:2, ² *Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits.* Sing with the psalmist, *I will lift up my eyes to the hills -- From whence comes my help?* ² *My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth.*⁵

And regarding the Lord as the Source of all good join the psalmist in saying, as written in Psalm 11:1, *In the LORD I put my trust.* But knowing your weakness, let your prayer be Psalm 51:15, ¹⁵ *O Lord, open my lips, And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.*

But note, too, that our text distinctly says, *For so He gives His beloved sleep.* Only God's beloved are justified in being at ease. God promises fatherly care and provision only to His children.⁶ To make people His own, Christ has ordained *"that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations."*⁷ And of those who daily repent of their sins and daily

appropriate the merits of Christ by faith the apostle says in Galatians 3:26, ²⁶ ***For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*** Let that, then, be your concern that you remain children of God. Then His blessing can and will rest on you.

Furthermore, is the psalmist cautioning us in our text not to work, or not to watch? On the contrary, work on our part is necessary, but it is insufficient in itself. We are to do our part, to work diligently and faithfully in our calling.

Everyone is to have a calling in which he is serving, and to benefit his fellow-men. It is wrong to excuse laziness and negligence by saying, *“All depends on God’s blessing.”* Only if we apply ourselves diligently to our work and do it *“as unto the Lord,”* will His promises apply to us and may we expect His blessing.

But God as the Giver, and we as His grateful children, includes also this, that we use His gifts according to His will. We are to use them, first of all, for the support and wants of the body,⁸ and to provide for the needs of our family.⁹

However, we are to use them also for the needs of our soul. We must diligently hear and learn God’s Word, or else our faith will die and we shall be lost. We must continue steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine. Our children, too, should learn the glad tidings, and learn to live as is fitting for God’s children. For that purpose we need churches, schools, pastors, teachers, and educational institutions.

We are also to labour for this purpose as written in Ephesians 4:28, ***let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.*** And so we are not to seal our hearts against the bodily needs of our neighbour.¹⁰

God has especially set us the great task recorded Mark 16:15-16, ¹⁵ ***And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶ “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”***

Proper gratitude therefore includes this, that we use some of the goods God blesses us with to send the Gospel to the heathen. Then we are laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven; then we are by means of the mammon of

unrighteousness making friends who will receive us into the everlasting habitations.

Let us, then, add the thanks of our hands to the thanks of our heart and mouth, using God's gifts according to His will.

If then we look up to God as the Source of all good, and implore Him for Jesus' sake, to bless us also in the future, our prayers will be heard, and we shall always find new causes to sing His praises. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Gal. 2:16-17

² Hymn 388

³ Hymn 560

⁴ See also Psalm 111:5, 9

⁵ Psalm 121:1-2

⁶ Psa 34:7-9; Psa 31:19; Psa 65:4; Psa 103:13

⁷ Luke 24:47

⁸ Rom. 13:14

⁹ 1 Tim. 5:8

¹⁰ Isa 58:7; Matt 7:12; Prov 19:17