

Psalm 128 "Blessing flows from fear"

1. Tim began the sermon by reflecting upon what has been coined the prosperity gospel. The belief that God's desire for you would be that you would have "health and wealth", and faith is the way to apprehend such a life. Have you had any interaction with such a conviction and what has been your response to it?

This psalm at first glance could be utilized as a "proof text" for such prosperity thinking. But is that what this psalm is all about?

Read Psalm 128

2. (vs. 1) How do you understand the phrase "the fear of the Lord"?
3. Read Psalm 130:4, and Psalm 147:11 and then use a concordance or a google search to find perhaps a different verse each that contain this phrase. Read each aloud and you may need to read the surround verses to give context. How does your reflecting on other passages that use this phrase help you to understand what the biblical writers mean by "fear of the Lord"?

Eugene Peterson writes: "Fear God - Reverence might be a better word. Awe. Will we let God be as he is, majestic and holy, vast and wondrous, or will we always be trying to whittle him down to size of our small minds, insist on confining him within the boundaries we are comfortable with, refuse to think of him other than in images that are convenient to our lifestyle? The Bible talks about the fear of the Lord not to scare us but to bring us to awesome attention before the overwhelming grandeur of God, to shut up our whining and chattering and stop our running and fidgeting, so that we can really see him as he is and listen to him as he speaks his merciful, life-changing words of forgiveness."

4. Discuss.

Fear of the Lord leads to obedience, to (as this psalm puts it) "walking in his ways". This is a phrase that points us to wisdom literature. Wisdom literature arises from the conviction that God has knit a pattern into every aspect of life and living it step with those patterns gives the best opportunity for success. His commands then are consistent with the way the world is meant to work.

5. What does the Psalm tell us will be the fruit of walking in his ways?

Read Matthew 7:24-27

This image is comparing the wise and the foolish. From proverbs the wise are those who live in step with the pattern that God has knit into creation, and the foolish are those who do not. When the storm comes, or when God's judgement in Jesus comes to flood the earth with new creation, to bring about the fullness of the kingdom all that is in step with that pattern will remain for it is eternal. All that is not in keeping with the pattern will be washed away.

6. What does this image invite us to in terms of how we live, relate, work, and play?