

Psalm 128 | “The Blessed Life”

Preached on January 12, 2025 by Pastor Matt Brown

You can turn in your Bibles this morning to Psalm 128, for we are jumping right back into our series on the songs of ascents.

They are the songs that Israel would sing as they traveled to worship. *[pauseeee]*

Everyone is looking for the blessed life. *[pause]*

No one enjoys feeling like their life is cursed, or even that they are simply scraping by. *[pause]*

We want to be blessed, for it’s what we consider “the good life”. *[pauseeee]*

If you think about it, this desire for the blessed life is what drives much of what people do...

They strive to get good grades in order to have the good life someday.

They seek a spouse so that they can be happy.

They search for that ideal job, so that the blessings may flow. *[pause]*

They buy things, attend events, have friends, do hobbies—all so that they can attain that happy state that they long for. *[pauseeee]*

When you boil it down, much of the lives of many people is a hunting for a life of blessing. *[pause]*

Some get depressed or discouraged *because* they do not feel like their life is in that state of blessing. *[pauseeee]*

Now there’s nothing inherently wrong with looking to be blessed, for God made us with a desire to be in a blessed state. *[pause]*

Think back with me to Adam and Eve...

They started out in a blessed state when God created them in the beginning, but because of their sin, they lost that blessed state and plunged us all into a fallen state. *[pause]*

Since mankind lost that blessed state, no wonder we long to get back to it, for we live in a cursed world, where things aren’t right, but marred and messed up. *[pause]*

Yet the wondrous story of Scripture is that through Christ, God is seeking to bring us back into a blessed state, which will culminate in the new heaven and new earth someday.¹ *[pauseeee]*

¹ I’m thankful to the following commentator, who helped me see this—Tremper Longman III, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed. David G. Firth, vol. 15–16, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2014), 57.

So to long to be blessed is normal and natural—it’s not sinful in itself to want to be blessed.

[pause]

It’s what we as humans began with, what we lost, and what those with eternal life will experience *fully* someday. *[pause]*

But what about today, right now? [pause]

Can we experience a state of blessing today, even amid living in a fallen world, and the answer is most certainly ‘yes’. *[pauseeee]*

Psalm 1 says, “Blessed *is* the man...”² *[pause]*

Jesus said, “Blessed *are*...” and went on to explain who is blessed in the Beatitudes.³

And our text this morning says, “Blessed *is* everyone who fears the Lord.”

In fact, the psalm that we will be looking at this morning talks all about the blessed life, so it’s possible on this side of Heaven to be blessed, albeit not as fully as in Heaven someday.

[pauseeee]

Therefore, if longing for blessing is normal, why is it that large swaths of humanity do not find the blessing that they are striving for? [pause]

The answer: they are searching for it in all the wrong places. *[pause]*

They search for that blessed state in money, fame, power, sex, comfort, beauty, health, and experiences, but they ultimately come up short. [pause]

While some people who attain those things may *appear* blessed to many people, who look in on their lives, oo-ing and ah-ing over their perfectly curated social media pages, they are not truly blessed. *[pauseeee]*

So amidst all of this longing, amidst all of this failing to hit the mark of blessedness by many people, where can true blessing be found?

The Lord. *[pause]*

Let’s READ the psalm to see this truth. [READ]

This psalm is all about blessing, and it shows us a couple things...

First, it teaches us that...

I. True blessing comes from the Lord. (1–4)

² Psalm 1:1 (italics is mine).

³ Matthew 5:3ff (italics is mine).

Have you ever wondered where something is found? *[pause]*

Whenever my wife sends me to the grocery store with a list, I'm always puzzled about where certain groceries are found. *[pause]*

I wander around the store for a while, until I finally find what I was looking for.

And it probably takes me 5 times longer to find the groceries than it would be, if she had gone instead. *[pause]*

Well we don't have to wonder or wander looking for where true blessing is found because the Bible tells us.

It says there in verse 1, "Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways!" *[pauseeee]*

Now what does it mean to be blessed, according to the Bible? *[pause]*

To be blessed is to be highly favored, due to God's grace being bestowed upon you, and therefore to be in a happy state. *[pause]*

It's the "good life" so to say, but the "good life" as defined by God, and not culture.

So then when you think about what this psalm is saying, it really blows you away. *[pauseee]*

It proclaims "blessed *is*," meaning that we can both know and experience true blessing—true blessing is possible! *[pause]*

It's a true blessed state, for God declares it, and if God declares that someone is blessed, *they are*. *[pause]*

It's not some fake or counterfeit blessing that may only look like blessing, but isn't. *[pauseeeee]*

We see this all the time...

On social media or entertainment news, we see people who seem like they have it all, and to many people they think that that's the good life, the blessed life.

Yet when you look below the surface of these people's lives, you find that they aren't genuinely blessed. *[pause]*

With money, fame, and power come a lot of issues, not to mention the fact that these people are not truly satisfied with what they do have.

No, this passage doesn't say that true blessing is found in those things, yet that doesn't mean that true blessing is impossible to find. *[pause]*

Rather, there is a blessed state that is possible, it's available, and is the state of "everyone who fears the Lord". *[pauseeee]*

You see, the source of this blessedness is the Lord.

In Him and through Him, you can be blessed. *[pause]*

I mean think about it, it makes sense in light of what the Bible shows us...

True blessing comes from Him alone, for true blessing can *only* come from Him. *[pause]*

He is the Creator and ultimate Blessor.

He created life, good, and blessing itself, and so blessing *must* come down from Him.

And so to try to find blessing outside of the Lord is like trying to find water by walking away from a river to go into the desert.

Blessing must come *down*, it cannot originate within us. *[pause]*

James 1:17 says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights."

So always remember that blessing won't be found in the things of this world, or even within yourself, but you must look up for blessings to flow down. *[pauseeee]*

That's why it's a proper relationship with the Lord that opens up the gate to blessing, so that blessing can channel from Him to you....

Notice in verse 1 the important statement: "Blessed is everyone *who fears the Lord*." *[pause]*

It doesn't say, "Blessed is no one," it doesn't say, "Blessed is everyone,"—no, it says, "Blessed is everyone *who fears the Lord*."

The people who "have it good in life" are really those who are in a right relationship with the Lord God. *[pauseeee]*

Many times Christians are seen as the ones who are not blessed, and we are kind of disregarded and put down by others.

But this psalm tells us that it's the fear of the Lord that is the vital requirement for blessing, and therefore, if someone does not fear the Lord, they are not blessed. *[pause]*

No matter what our world says, if someone does not have a right relationship with the Lord, they are not blessed, but those who do, are. *[pauseeee]*

Now 'fearing the Lord' sounds confusing at first because when we think of fearing someone we think of hiding under our covers from the boogeyman or something like that.

But when the Bible talks about the fear of the Lord, it's different from that. *[pause]*

I'll define it this way...

Fear of the Lord is a profound respect, reverence, and awe for the Lord that impacts the way you think and live. *[pause]*

Think of Abraham...

When God called him to sacrifice his son, Isaac, Abraham was willing to follow what God said, and just listen to what the angel of the Lord says to Abraham...

“Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, *for now I know that you fear God*, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.”⁴ *[pause]*

Abraham's faith and reverential obedience to the Lord is an example of someone fearing God. *[pause]*

Now it's not merely someone who obeys in rote obedience out of mere trepidation, but it's someone who *delights* in God's commandments.⁵

So it's not cowering in fear, but a loving, reverential submission to God as God. *[pause]*

Therefore, it's actually love, awe, and fear all combined together.

That's why Psalm 147:11 can say, “the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.” *[pause]*

Blessing comes from a relationship with the Lord! *[pause]*

The source of the blessing is the Lord, and the channel of blessing is our relationship to Him in love, reverence, and awe. *[pause]*

You see, we don't just magically become blessed if we simply say, “Yes, I fear the Lord.”

No, we have to be someone who according to verse 1, “walks in his ways.” *[pause]*

What I mean is that our relationship with the Lord cannot be an empty, ritualistic thing, where as long as we do certain things with no heart, then we are good to go.

No, those who truly fear Him demonstrate their fear of Him by having the right mindset and attitude and lifestyle. *[pause]*

God has always been after our hearts, not our mechanical actions.

So do you truly know the Lord? *[pause]*

⁴ Genesis 22:12 (italics is mine).

⁵ Psalm 112:1.

Do you have a healthy fear of Him and love for Him? *[pause]*

Know that true blessing is found in Him, and it's available to anyone and everyone!

Just look at how it says, "Blessed is *everyone* who fears the Lord." *[pause]*

Blessing is available to all those who simply fear the Lord!

There's no barrier that you can't get over. *[pause]*

You don't have to be rich, powerful, famous, or born into a certain physical family to be blessed. *[pause]*

That's often how our world views blessing since they base it on wealth or status or popularity or something like that. *[pause]*

Most often there's a barrier in people's lives to experience that quote-on-quote "blessing".

But thankfully, true blessing doesn't have an unattainable barrier to try to scale.

No, you simply have to go to the Lord for it, and bow the knee to Him. *[pause]*

You see, this all points to the *blessing* of receiving blessing—it's all of grace! *[pause]*

It's not based on our works, but based on our trust in the Lord.

Blessing is a gift from God for those who simply go to Him. *[pause]*

Think of grace—it's receiving *undeserved* good, and that's what happens for those who fear the Lord.

And when you think about what this passage is promising, it's without-a-doubt astonishing grace. *[pauseeee]*

Think about what Genesis tells us of the state of our world...

Even though God created everything good, and He created man and woman, yet what did they do?

They sinned against Him and plunged the whole cosmos into corruption. *[pause]*

So even though God gave Adam and Eve utmost blessing, they spurned His grace and acted in rebellion.

And yet, amidst that state, we can still experience blessing?! *[pause]*

The Creator God, who was sinned against by us, promises a state of blessing to us?!

Just think about it, in light of what we did, we shouldn't be able to receive blessing at all, yet God promises a status of blessing amidst a sin-cursed world?

That's a marvel. *[pause]*

We can receive blessing even while being prior rebels to His will? Now that's something. *[pause]*

There is a blessing in being able to be called blessed when you see it in light of the Fall.

And it just goes to show that our God is so gracious, so patient, so merciful, so loving. *[pauseeee]*

Really, the blessings found in this passage are small glimpses of grace amidst the curses of the Fall. *[pause]*

Remember how God said that the ground would be cursed back in Genesis 3?⁶

Well now God promises that they can “eat the fruit of the labor of your hands.” *[pause]*

Remember how God said to Eve, “in pain you shall bring forth children”?⁷

There's still pain in childbirth, but now this psalm promises a wife who is “like a fruitful vine.” *[pause]*

And in Genesis 3, it all sounded horrible, yet amidst this sin-cursed world, God promises here in this psalm that “it shall be well with you.” *[pause]*

Wow, what a God we serve—He gives blessings to us even in our sin-cursed world!

He doesn't have to do that, yet He does. *[pauseeeee]*

Now what are the blessings promised to the Israelites, according to this passage?...

There's the blessing of enjoying the fruit of their labor—their work wouldn't be in vain, like the previous psalm said could happen. *[pause]*

It would be well with them, and they could have a growing family.

That is, their wife would be like a fruitful vine, which is a picture of having many children. *[pause]*

Their children would be like olive shoots, which pictures fruitfulness and longevity.

But not only that, they are promised long life and so being able to see their city flourish and their grandchildren. *[pauseeee]*

⁶ A reference to Genesis 3:17.

⁷ A reference to Genesis 3:16.

Now does this psalm mean that as long as we fear the Lord, then all of us are going to live long lives and have many children? *[pause]*

Well it's important to remember that this psalm was given in the context of the Old Covenant. *[pause]*

In the Old Covenant, God promised these physical, material blessings to the nation of Israel when they obeyed.

But now we are in the New Covenant, which doesn't promise those national, material blessings. *[pause]*

Even for individual Israelites, they didn't always have these material blessings, as is evidenced in the lament psalms or even in Job's life.

Rather, this is like a wisdom psalm, showing the ideal snapshot of a blessed life for an Israelite. *[pause]*

Think of Jesus' Beatitudes, and we see that blessing for us isn't necessarily material things now...

He says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit...Blessed are those who mourn...[and even] Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account."⁸ *[pause]*

We see that for us, our blessing doesn't necessarily mean that right now we will be rich and never sad, but that we are blessed in Christ...

And so we have things that transcend those temporary, material things and are so much better, and someday, we will get to experience the greatest blessings when Christ comes again. *[pauseeee]*

Now I don't mean that we are mere paupers right now, for even now we are rich in Christ, for we are "blessed...with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."⁹ *[pause]*

Our needs are supplied, according to the Lord's riches.¹⁰

And even if we leave houses and family now, Jesus says that "[we] will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life."¹¹ *[pause]*

So that means that we can be like Habakkuk, who said...

⁸ Matthew 5:3-4, 11.

⁹ Ephesians 1:3.

¹⁰ A reference to Philippians 4:19.

¹¹ Matthew 19:29.

“Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.”¹² *[pauseeee]*

Though we may not have loads of material blessings, we are still blessed in Christ!

We shall truly eat the fruit of our labor in the Lord, for Paul said that “in the Lord [our] labor is not in vain.”¹³ *[pause]*

It can be well with us, even amidst great trial and sorrow, for our souls are secure in Him, and we have all that we need. *[pause]*

Certainly, there is blessing found in the Lord! *[pauseeee]*

One author pointed out some of the ways that we as Christians are blessed, and so just dwell upon these things and let them sink in and remind your heart of how blessed you are. *[pause]*

He says, “[We have] an acceptance that can never be questioned.

An inheritance that can never be lost.

A deliverance that can never be excelled.

A grace that can never be limited.

A hope that can never be disappointed.

A joy that need never be diminished.

A nearness to God that can never be reversed.

A peace that can never be disturbed.

A righteousness that can never be tarnished.

[And] a salvation that can never be canceled.”¹⁴ *[pauseeee]*

Consider how blessed you are in Christ! *[pause]*

Do you see these things as blessings, and are you grateful for them?

Thank God for all that He has done, and for all that He has given to you freely by His grace!
[pause]

¹² Habakkuk 3:17–18.

¹³ 1 Corinthians 15:58.

¹⁴ F. E. Marsh, found at: <https://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/b/blessing.htm>.

All of these things come to us, even though we don't deserve them, yet that's how God works, and so we receive them only because of Him. *[pauseeee]*

It's said that the author Alex Haley "had an unusual picture hanging on his office wall—it was a picture of a turtle on top of a fence post. *[pause]*

When asked, 'Why is that there?'

Alex Haley answered, 'Every time I write something significant, every time I read my words and think that they are wonderful, and begin to feel proud of myself...

I look at the turtle on top of the fence post and remember that he didn't get there on his own. He had help.'"¹⁵ *[pause]*

Our blessed state is not because of us, but because of Him. *[pause]*

We are like that turtle on top of the fence post, only there because of someone else. *[pauseeee]*

We go to the Lord, and He does the work, for true blessing comes from Him, so what should we do then?...

II. Go to the Lord for blessing! (5–6)

Some of the best teachers that we have are those who not only teach a concept, but then demonstrate what that concept looks like. *[pauseeee]*

Think about a teacher who teaches all about how to shoot a bow and arrow from a textbook. *[pause]*

That's nice and all, but what's really helpful is when you can see the teacher demonstrate how to shoot an arrow by showing you where to put your hand, how to put the arrow on, and so forth. *[pause]*

That's a little like the psalmist here...

In verses 1–4, the psalmist explained the blessed state of all those who fear the Lord, and now in verses 5–6, we see him actually demonstrating someone who goes to the Lord for blessing. *[pauseeee]*

The psalmist here prayerfully asks the Lord for continued blessing upon the people, and that shows us that we must *pray* to the Lord for blessing! *[pauseeee]*

Do you actually *go* to the Lord in prayer for blessing?

¹⁵ Lou Nicholes, found at: <https://www.family-times.net/illustration/Blessing/202196/>.

Do you say, “Lord, please bless me and keep me, make Your face shine upon me, be gracious to me, and give me peace.”?¹⁶ *[pauseeee]*

By going to Him continually, we show that we understand that we can only find blessing in Him.

In Him and through Him is where true blessing is found. *[pauseeee]*

The psalmist’s desire for others was the prosperity of Jerusalem, long life, and peace for Israel.

Basically, he wanted the community of God’s people to *thrive*. *[pause]*

Likewise, we should want others to experience the blessing of thriving in Christ. *[pause]*

Don’t you want to see others thrive in Christ, or even this church thrive in Christ? *[pause]*

Don’t you want us to see more souls saved, more people disciplined and growing in Christ, more people serving, more people with healthy marriages and relationships? *[pause]*

Don’t you want to see more holiness among us, more love, more unity? *[pause]*

“The Lord bless you from Zion”—I want to see you thrive in Christ! *[pauseeee]*

This doesn’t mean that we won’t sin against each other, that we won’t have trials, hardships, and setbacks.

No, but we can truly flourish in the Lord—yet we must *go to Him!* *[pause]*

We must depend on Him, we must go to Him in constant prayer, we must go to Him in reverential fear.

We must understand that unless the Lord is with us, all of this is in vain.¹⁷ *[pause]*

So *go to the Lord* for blessing! *[pauseeee]*

“A young boy went to the local store with his mother. *[pause]*

The shop owner, a kindly man, passed him a large jar of [candy] and invited him to help himself to a handful. *[pause]*

Uncharacteristically, the boy held back, so the shop owner pulled out a handful for him. *[pause]*

When outside, the boy’s mother asked why he had suddenly been so shy and wouldn’t take a handful of [candy] when offered.

And the boy replied, ‘Because his hand is much bigger than mine!’¹⁸ *[pauseeee]*

¹⁶ A reference to Numbers 6:24–26.

¹⁷ A reference to the previous psalm, Psalm 127.

¹⁸ Unknown original source. Found at: <https://ministry127.com/resources/illustrations/blessings>.

When we try to grasp blessing ourselves, we come up with way less than if we go to the Lord, and let Him give blessing to us...

For undoubtedly, His hand is bigger than our's. *[pauseeee]*

*This psalm is reminding us that... **The Lord blesses those who fear Him.***

We are all longing to find that blessed life, but what is the true blessed life in your mind? *[pause]*

Do you find yourself aligning with the world's version of blessedness or the Lord's version?

One is true and one is false. *[pause]*

One will bring you true blessing and joy and satisfaction, and the other will keep you longing and longing for more. *[pauseeee]*

The world will try to paint the rich, powerful, popular, and beautiful as the blessed ones, but we know better...

The Lord says that the blessed ones are those who simply fear Him. *[pause]*

It's *in Him* that we find the blessed life—so go to the fountain of blessing, life, forgiveness, love, grace, and mercy—and find satisfaction in Him. *[pauseeee]*

The New Testament shows us that it's all *in and through Christ* that we receive these blessings! *[pause]*

Because He died and rose again for us, so because of simple faith in Him, we are blessed, for Scripture says, “blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.”¹⁹ *[pause]*

We have not seen Him in person, yet we still believe, and so we are called ‘blessed’.²⁰

And now, in Christ, we are blessed with “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.”²¹ *[pause]*

And when we remain steadfast under trial, we are blessed, for we will receive the crown of life,²² and get to eat of the marriage supper of the Lamb.²³ *[pauseeee]*

What a *blessing* it is to be Christ's, for we have so much because of Him. *[pause]*

Truly we can say, “Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord,” because we have experienced it, and we will fully experience all of what that means when He comes again.

¹⁹ Romans 4:8.

²⁰ A reference to John 20:29.

²¹ Ephesians 1:3.

²² A reference to James 1:12.

²³ A reference to Revelation 19:9.