

[wanted house]

:: psalm 127.1 ::

A contractor and one of his crew took a trip down to their local lumber yard to fill an order for some framing.

The crewman walked into the yard office and said, "We need some four-by-twos."

The clerk was a little surprised, so he asked, "You mean two-by-fours, don't you?"

The man took a minute to think, then answered, "I'll go check," and went back to the truck.

A few minutes later, he returned and said, "Yeah, I meant two-by-fours."

"All right. How long do you need them?" asked the clerk,

The man paused for a minute and said, "I'd better go check."

After a while, the crewman returned to the counter and said, "A long time. We're gonna build a house."

God loves to give us pictures and illustrations in His word. Jesus spoke often in parables, where every day objects and events conveyed spiritual truths and principles.

Think about it for a minute. As a Christian, you're compared to a sheep. You're compared to a tree. You're compared to a servant, a living stone, a light, a fisherman.

Tonight we're going to look at one of these analogies; the Christian life as a house. It's just one verse, but in these short phrases God is giving you and I the key to living life in His will, the key to receiving the abundant life Jesus talked about in John chapter 10.

It's Psalm 127, verse 1, where we read this:

Psalm 127.1 - A Song of Ascents. Of Solomon. 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.

This isn't the only time that the Bible refers to our lives as being like a house.

1 Peter 2.5 - You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 3.6 - ...but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

And then of course there is also the most famous use of this analogy.

Luke 6.47-49 - [Jesus said] Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great."

So here we've seen that 'the house' can refer to our lives as individuals and can also refer to the Church and our membership within Christ's Body here on the earth.

As Bible students, we also know that our primary calling from God in His service is to our own houses, speaking of the family.

Paul is talking about this very subject when he says to Timothy:

1 Timothy 3.5 - For if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?

And so we find that house-building is very important to God. Whether we're talking about your ministry to your family, your participation in the Church or simply your individual life, the Lord has a keen interest in exactly what kind of house He wants for you.

In Psalm 127 and in the parable from Luke 6 that we read, we discover that *improper* construction is going to lead to catastrophe in our lives. So the question is: **how do we build our lives, our church, our service to God in a way that is solid, strong and Biblical?**

To find the answer in our text, the first step is to discover who is speaking to us.

Of course, it's the Holy Spirit that authored the Bible, but who was He using in this specific instance?

We see at the top there: ***A Song of Ascents. Of Solomon.***

Now, these opening statements in the Psalms *are* a part of the inspired texts. As opposed to those chapter headings most of us have that give us a little summary of what we're about to read. Those were added later by translators and publishers, like the chapter and verse divisions. But here in the Psalms, these little prefixes can sometimes give us a lot of background information.

"Psalm 51: To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David when Nathan the Prophet went to him after he had gone in to Bathsheba." Lots of background and context given before verse 1 even begins.

So here we find that our text is written by Solomon.

If anyone was going to use the analogy of building a house, it was Solomon. One of history's greatest architects. An empire builder. The wisest man to ever live, chosen to build a house for God in Jerusalem, which has never been matched in beauty or extravagance or perfection.

This guy, with all his knowledge and experience and anointing comes to us and says,

Psalm 127.1a - Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.

Cut and dry. Solomon was good at getting to the bottom line in his writings.

He also talked a lot about vanity. All of Ecclesiastes tells us of his search for contentment and meaning and power and anything else he could think of and how he spent so much of his life pursuing knowledge and experience, yet always coming back to the same place.

Again and again, throughout his writings, Solomon, the wisest man in the world, comes to the conclusion that we see here: God. Jesus. Jesus is the answer. Unless the Lord is central to your house, it's all for nothing. There's nothing else out there that ultimately fulfills. Nothing that ultimately satisfies. Nothing that ultimately enriches life except this God who has revealed Himself to us and gave Himself for us.

We saw how our Jesus said this same thing in this parable. He said, "Unless you make Me your foundation, it's all for nothing."

If we do not begin our lives at this statement, Psalm 127.1, then the rest is vanity. That shouldn't be a discouragement, it should be a reminder and a warning. Solomon comes to us and says, "Look, your life is so important to God that He wants to build it Himself. But if you don't let Him build it, then it's just vanity. It's not going to amount to anything eternal."

Interestingly, this word *vanity* in Hebrew actually means *destructive*. And so the analogy for us is very clear: whether it's your family, your church, or your life itself, if God is not the one constructing it, the result is going to be disaster and failure and destruction, because He is the *ONLY* One who understands how this house is to be built so that it can last.

Do you know that God cares about your day-to-day life? Barring the rapture, tomorrow morning we'll wake up to a new sunrise, a new Thursday. Your Thursday is very important to the Lord. Because He loves you. Your thoughts and your relationships and your plans and your dreams are important to the Lord, not because He's power hungry, but because He loves you and He wants you to have life abundantly. He's concerned that your house will stand through the storms. He's mindful of what's going on in your life because He has invested Himself into you and He wants to spend time and eternity *with* you.

We tend to forget this principle for a couple of reasons.

For one, we're really pressured in our culture to build things by ourselves and for ourselves. Our culture tells us that life is about wealth and accomplishment and upward mobility and bigger and better and gratifying self. That cultural pressure plays right into the fact that, at our core, we are selfish human beings.

If we're not careful, we start to forget that God is concerned with the day-to-day. We forget that God's intention is to build us *Himself* and we start giving into this selfish pressure. We start building little empires for ourselves and have parts of our lives that are independent from God. And what we're learning from Solomon is that anything that we do independently from God has no eternal value. It's not going to last. And, in fact, it's going to start weakening the other aspects of our lives.

The word for *build* can also be translated as *make repairs*. Unless the Lord makes repairs to the house, they labor in vain who repair it.

This speaks to us of trials and struggles and problems we face in life. In those situations, the enemy comes to us and says that God isn't sufficient or relevant for us. The world comes and starts offering us other solutions and promises that they're going to work. The problem is, anything independent of God is flawed and not eternal, therefore it cannot serve to build our lives and our families and our churches in a way that will last.

Solomon continues this thought and says:

Psalm 127.1b - Unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.

A watchman is only beneficial to a city if it has a proper defense force. You can have 100 watchmen, but if you don't have any walls or swords or shields, then it doesn't really matter. This is what Solomon is saying.

Now, if you're like me, you read this verse sort of in the negative sense. "Yeah, Lord, I'm blowing it. My life is vanity. Thanks for noticing."

But, as is the case so often, I simply need to adjust my thinking. This is something we'll come back to in a moment, but we shouldn't look at this verse as a negative in the sense that *you're not doing enough as a Christian*. Instead, we see that this is a wonderful, wonderful promise from God. This is not a statement of defeat, it's a statement of victory.

Because God **DOES** want to build your house. He **DOES** want to protect your city. Throughout His word He speaks very plainly to us and explains His intentions in for our lives.

He reveals that He is a Protector.

2 Thessalonians 3.3 - But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.

He reveals that He is a Provider.

Genesis 22.14 - And Abraham called the name of the place, The-Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided."

He reveals that He is an Architect.

Psalm 19.1 - The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.

Nehemiah 9.6 - You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them, and You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You.

And so, Solomon comes to us and explains that this God, this great, protecting, providing Architect has offered to build you a house that is custom made, just for you. It will be firmly grounded, will be

able to withstand storms, it will be a place where you can grow and mature and work, in fact, He's going to keep adding onto it over the years.

God has given you a free will. He's offered you new life and discipleship. The choice is always yours.

Look at it this way. You need to hire a contractor to build the house. You have 2 guys making bids.

The first guy is God. Good references. Some pretty serious experience and ability. Forms people in their mothers' wombs, places the stars in the skies, lives in perfection, doesn't sleep, doesn't quit, doesn't change His mind, isn't late or even that expensive.

The other guy is anyone else. Someone, some pursuit, some ideology that's *not* God.

They're both making bids to build your life. To build your church. To build your family. Solomon is saying it's as if you go with the other guy. No matter how much money or instruction you give him, he just isn't going to get it right. In fact, he's not even building your house in the right place. You could give him all your money and all your plans and all your intentions for that house here in Hanford, but he's building you some shack over in Traver.

When you finally call God back to see if He's still available, He answers and says, "Actually, I've been working on your house for a while now...and I'm building you a vacation home in heaven to match."

God wants to build your life. He wants to build your family. He wants to build this church. He's committed to that.

So great. Now what do we do about it? We *understand* these principles, but how do we get from here to there? How do we get from page to practice?

What did Jesus say in the parable?

Luke 6.47 - [Jesus said] Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and *DOES* them.

Solomon also explains to us how to accomplish this building project:

Proverbs 24.3 -Through wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established.

Wisdom is simply the application of God's word.

Don't get confused by the simplicity. God is saying, "Look, I want to build your house, so let me build your house. Follow My instructions. Trust in My plan. Invest in Me as your Master planner."

It's very simple. Hear the word of the Lord and then do it.

Love your neighbor.

Honor your husband or your wife.

Be holy.

Give thanks.

God's word is the key to living. It is the key to the provision and protection and plan that we're all seeking. It's very simple.

This Psalm is called *A Song Of Ascents*. Scholars have different ideas about what that might mean in its entirety, but the literal meaning of *ascents* there is the act of a journey to a higher place. As the Israelites walked up the temple mount they could sing a song of ascents, focusing their mind on the Lord, reminding themselves that they were going to meet with God.

It's about adjusting our thinking. These choices to follow God and to receive the things He is offering you, like peace and patience and joy, have a lot to do with your thought life. Choosing to set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. Choosing to view life with a heavenly, Biblical perspective.

Who is my neighbor? How do I behave at my job? How do I speak to my wife? How do I make decisions regarding my finances or my future plans? What kind of lifestyle do I lead?

All of these little things are worked out for us in God's word and by God's Spirit, who gives us a perspective that is higher than that of the earth.

I think sometimes we get embarrassed, like we're the guy in the joke that doesn't know if we're getting 2 by 4s or 4 by 2s. Like we have to keep going back to God for these answers to life's questions. But God has the answers and we don't. God has the plan and we don't. God has the rest and we don't. Jesus in the boat, Peter in the prison, Paul on the island of Malta.

Wherever you find yourself, God has not left you or forsaken you. Instead, He is with you and plans to build you a life, a church, a ministry that is powerful, meaningful, eternal.