



**BETHEL**  
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# **MINISTRY OF THE WORD**

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The Glory of Sacred Work

Psalm 127

The Psalm before us heralds “The Glory of Sacred Work.” And with a focus like that, we need to understand what is meant by Sacred vs. Secular work. The word “sacred” references anything that has been dedicated or set apart for the service or worship of God. In contrast “secular” comes from a Latin word which translated means “this age.” Accordingly, “secular” refers to that which pertains exclusively to this age.

In church history, when these words were used to describe a person’s work, their living became bifurcated. Anything related to the church was viewed as “sacred” and anything related to the world was viewed “secular.” And so, under this rubric, things like these:

- Praying, reading Scripture, worshipping the Lord, fellowship, evangelism were/are viewed as Sacred activities which please the Lord.
- But such things as working a trade, fixing a meal, changing a diaper, washing clothes were/are viewed as Secular activities NOT inherently blessed by God.

**15 Words of Exhortation for Christian Pilgrims**

1. **Psalm 120**: We must ensure that the burdens of this life drive us to Christ.
2. **Psalm 121**: In our burdens, we must know that God will never abandon or forsake us.
3. **Psalm 122**: In Christ our identity is that of a worshipper who exalts in the character of God.
4. **Palm 123**: The love/mercy of God is that which buoys us in life!
5. **Psalm 124**: In light of the darkness of this world, we must be spiritually vigilant to be driven by the person and work of Christ!
6. **Psalm 125**: God protects the genuine servant of Christ over and against the false servant.
7. **Psalm 126**: Though we minister in an evil world, someday we will enter the Final State with “joyful shouting”!

The result of this thinking was the formation of a class of people known as “priests” who were viewed as more important and more holy than others by virtue of their work.

Now this idea of a unique class of people called “priests” was challenged during the Reformation. Listen to Peter speaking of the child of God:

1 Peter 2:9a, “...you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession...”

Get this! When a person comes to a saving relationship with God, they become these things:

- A people “chosen [selected/claimed] by God.”
- Nation/people “set apart unto the Lord” for His purpose- that is the idea behind “holy.”
- A people whom God “claims as His own possession.”
- A people who serve the Lord as “priests!”

Did you get that? The saving grace of God makes a sinner into a “saint” (who has been set apart by God unto a holy end) who consequently serves the Lord at all times as “a priest”! This is the Reformation doctrine of the “Priesthood of the Believer.”

From this I want you to see that the distinction between Sacred/Secular is determined NOT by the work that is done, BUT the Lord who has deigned to work through an individual! And that is the focus of Psalm 127<sup>1</sup> & Psalm 128.

Derek Kidner wrote of Psalm 127:

...the opening verses are in fact contrasting two attitudes to God (dependence and independence) rather than two attitudes to work... (Kidner 1975, 478)

From this we note that Psalm 127<sup>2</sup> was placed in the Songs of Ascents to frame our thinking when it comes to the activities in which we involve ourselves in life.

As the inscription indicates, the author of this Psalm is Solomon,<sup>3</sup> who you may know wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes which goes into great detail describing that which constitutes “the vanity of life.”<sup>4,5</sup> In this regard, Psalms 127 can be viewed as a Mini-Ecclesiastes. Notice how it begins by declaring the vanity of “secular” work.

### The Vanity of “Secular” Work, v. 1.

Psalm 127:1, “Unless the Lord builds the house,<sup>6,7,8</sup> they labor in vain who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain.”<sup>9</sup>

At the outset, we note that which constitutes the work of vanity and that which constitutes the work of substance: Again, it is NOT the work we do BUT the presence of the Lord working in and through our labors. Notice the text:

- unless the Lord builds the house... unless the Lord guards the city... the work is vain

If God is NOT working in and through the individual, then all they do is “vanity” and so secular.<sup>10</sup>

That being said, this verse does NOT say that there WON’T be results when it comes to “the work of vanity”- there could in the form of a “house” that is constructed or “a city” that is protected. What it does say is that outside of the Lord working in our lives, the work we do, and the fruit enjoyed will be empty, temporal, and unfruitful.<sup>11,12,13,14,15,16</sup> As Kidner inquired, “The house and the city may survive, but were they worth building?” (Kidner 1975, 441)

With that, consider the word for “vain” or “vanity.” In the Hebrew the word is **שָׁוְיָ** (*shav*) and is used of anything that lacks weight or substance and so is translated as “empty,” “vanity,” “deceit,” or “of no account.” You may recall that the opposite of this word is **כָּבֵד** (*kabad*) which speaks of something that has substance or impact. It is translated as “heavy,” “fat,” or “glory.” It is this word that is used of God when speaking of the fact that unlike the false gods

of the gentiles, He truly “acts on behalf of the one who waits for Him” (Isaiah 64:4). Or as it is written in Hebrews:

Hebrews 10:31: “It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

Why is that? Because God is glorious! What He says He will do! He always fulfills His promises!

Again, this is the opposite of the word used in our text, “vanity” or “vain.” So, while “the house” may be built, it’s inhabitants may not flourish. While “the city” might be secure, it may be filled with deceit (and so, not a place you’d want to live). And so, if God is NOT involved in what a person is doing, no matter what they are doing, the end ultimately will be the same: fruitlessness, emptiness, vanity!

That, brothers and sister, is what constitutes secular work. It is work in which God is NOT involved and so NOT working. Accordingly, name the activity... whether that be something as menial as eating or drinking OR of such value as ministering in the church (worship, reading the word of God, evangelizing) it is secular if God is NOT involved!

In Contrast, when God is involved notice the glory of “sacred” work.

### The Glory of “Sacred” Work, v. 2.

Psalm 127:2, “It is vain for you to rise up early [to read the Bible], to retire late [paying the bills], to eat the bread of painful labors [Why?]; for He gives to His beloved *even in his sleep.*”

Here we have an enumeration of what constitutes sacred work. And it is quite the opposite of what we might naturally think. Our world says, “It is the early bird that gets the worm”- which stresses the importance of “rising up early.” Our world says, “We can rest when we die”- which stresses the importance of “retiring late.” Our world stresses the importance of working to the point of exhaustion and sacrifice- which speaks of “painful labors.”

Yet, as we just saw, all of this is the vanity/secular IF God is NOT involved! BUT if He is involved, what is the result? “He gives to His beloved even in his sleep!”

There is debate here, as the words “even in his” is NOT in the Hebrew.<sup>17</sup> That is NOT to say that the nuance isn’t implied -- which is why the NASB translates this verse as it does. Yet, other common versions have something to the effect of this:

- ESV: “...for He gives to His beloved sleep.”
- NKJV: “...for so He gives His beloved sleep.”
- NIV: “...for He grants sleep to those He loves.”

The idea with the latter translations is that when God is working in the life of an individual, even when he is at rest, the Lord is working- which means that even rest is Sacred when God is involved!

Now, whether you take the NASB version or the other translations, the nuance essentially is the same. Sacred work is determined NOT by the work itself (its type or its intensity) BUT the Lord's involvement in that work (by virtue of His saving activity) -- even if that work is sleeping or those times when you are the most inactive!

This is so counterintuitive. Many of us have heard of the Protestant Work Ethic. Modern dictionaries and encyclopedias caricature it this way: Merriam-Webster defines it as "an ethic that stresses the virtue of hard work, thrift, and self-discipline."<sup>18</sup> (The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism 2023) gives something of the history of the expression:

German sociologist Max Weber, in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904-05), held that the Protestant ethic was an important factor in the economic success of Protestant groups in the early stages of European capitalism; because worldly success could be interpreted as a sign of eternal salvation, it was vigorously pursued. Calvinism's antipathy to the worship of the flesh, its emphasis on the religious duty to make fruitful use of the God-given resources at each individual's disposal, and its orderliness and systemization of ways of life were also regarded by Weber as economically significant aspects of the ethic." (The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism 2023)

All in all, the idea is that God calls upon us to work hard, labor to the point exhaustion, to be frugal, and NOT to value the passing things of this world like pleasure, ease, or recreation.

Yet there is a massive problem with Weber's definition of the Protestant Ethic! It eviscerates the biblical work ethic<sup>19</sup>- as defined by our text this morning- which *BEGINS* with the presence and so blessing of God! If God is present in an activity, what will be the impact when it comes to our labor? We will work with vigor.

Colossians 3:23-24: "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; [why? So that you will get a lot of money? So that you'll get the worm? NO! It is...]; knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve."

*ORIGINALLY*, because God is present with His people such that their work of faith is a work in which God is involved, the result was working with zealously, diligence, and a heart of joy and gladness. YET, as things typically go, in time God was removed from the equation, leaving hard, sacrificial work as the heart of the Christian ethic for work.

So, let us SHED what has become the Weber's Protestant Ethic and GO BACK to the biblical ethic for work/ministry/vocation as taught by our text. The result will be you and me doing all

things for the Lord, relying upon the Lord, and therefore doing all things in the presence of the Lord (Coram Deo), knowing that it is the Lord who will bring about the fruit according to His will. That is the call of this text!

So, if you have been called to a ministry of ignominy where no one notices or even cares:

- Changing diapers.
- Laboring to raise a family.
- Making bricks without straw.

If God is present with you by virtue of your salvation, then get this: your work is sacred, is acceptable to the Lord, and most certainly will follow you into glory (Revelation 14:13)!

That's the principle... how does this translate to life? Anticipating this question, Solomon gave the following case study: children.

[A Case Study: Children](#),<sup>20</sup> vv. 3-5.

Solomon could have chosen many examples of the difference that God's presence makes when it comes to the Christian's labor -- think of the Exodus and the parting of the Red Sea, Gideon, etc. Yet what is the realm that Solomon chose? A realm which in the culture of his day was most insignificant and even looked down upon: Children!

[A Shocking Reward](#), v. 3.

Psalm 127:3a, "Behold..."

This word, both in the Old Testament and New Testament, was used by the biblical writer to introduce something amazing (and so could loosely be translated, "You're never going to believe this!"). See, Solomon knew that the example he was about to give would have been quite shocking in the world in which he lived. What is that example?

Psalm 127:3b, "Behold, CHILDREN are A GIFT of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a REWARD."-

In the ancient world children were valued less than work animals. In most cultures, they were viewed as sacrificial fodder up until the time they became adults. BUT NOT SO in the Kingdom of God! God claimed for His own the children of His people (cf. Genesis 17:7) -- which gave dignity and gravity to the raising of children. Recall, what God told Moses.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7, "And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when

you rise up.”-

Because God claimed the children of His people to be His own, they must NOT be viewed as unimportant BUT disciples of the Kingdom!

It is in this context Solomon is talking about child-rearing as an example of sacred work. In and of themselves, children are NOT a blessing from the Lord. In fact, they can be quite the curse. BUT in the context of the Covenant Home where God is present such that the parent's raise their child as His disciples, notice the result: They are “a gift of the Lord” and quite “the reward”! And so, in a realm which the world never would have associated with sacredness of any kind -- Childbearing and Rearing -- God's presence makes all the difference. This brings us to a shocking reversal.

[A Shocking Reversal, vv. 4-5a.](#)

Far from being worthless children are described this way:

Psalm 127:4, “Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth.”-

Contrary to what some Bible commentaries say, “arrows” were NOT defensive weapons BUT offensive ones.<sup>21</sup> A wise general would have begun his attack with these. That is what the realm of childbearing and rearing is when God is present! Childbearing is NOT an after-thought BUT a key element in the advancement of God's Kingdom in this world.

So, what does God's presence do to one of the most insignificant act or event in our lives (like childbearing)? It transforms it into an eternal work of great importance! Martin Luther, using the realm of child rearing, described the change that occurs when God either is present or is the object of our work:

Alas! Must I walk the baby, wash its diapers, make its bed, smell its stench, stay up nights with it, take care of it when it cries, heal its rashes and sores? And on top of that care for my spouse, provide, labor at my trade, take care of this, and take care of that? Do this and do that, endure this and endure that, and whatever else of bitterness and drudgery married life involves? Why should I make such a prisoner of myself? ¶ What then does Christian faith say to this? It opens its eyes, looks upon all these insignificant, distasteful, and despised duties in the Spirit; and is aware that they are all adorned with divine approval as with the costliest golden jewels. [IOW, they are Sacred] It says, ‘O God! I confess today that I am not worthy to rock the little babe or wash its diapers or to be entrusted with the care of the child and its mother. How is it that I without any merit have come to this distinction of being certain that I am serving Thy creature and Thy most precious will. Oh, how gladly will I do so though the duty should be even more insignificant and despised. Neither frost nor heat, neither drudgery nor labor will distress and dissuade me, for I am certain that it is thus pleasing in Thy sight.’” (Luther 1522)

That is the point of this Psalm. All labor that we do as servants of God is sacred by virtue of the fact that in Christ, we are priests who live our lives in the presence of God! In Christ, our feet are always standing on holy ground! Appropriate this truth and your daily work will be radically transformed!

That being said, it is important to note that Solomon is NOT elevating child-rearing to the point of highest value for His people. Again, this is AN EXAMPLE Solomon chose which was driven by the values found in the world in which he lived (which again placed little value on children). The point is this: what the world might consider to be the most insignificant realm, if God is present, that too is sacred and so “blessed” by the Lord!<sup>22</sup>...

Psalm 127:5a, “How blessed is the man whose quiver is full<sup>23</sup> of them<sup>24</sup>...”

The word for “blessed” (אֲשָׁר [’āšār]) is a word in the Hebrew that meant “to be envied”. Victor Hamilton wrote this:

There are two verbs in Hebrew meaning ‘to bless.’ One is *bārak* and the other ‘āšar. Can any differences between them be tabulated? For one thing *bārak* is used by God when he ‘blesses’ somebody. But there is no instance where ‘āšar is ever on God’s lips. When one ‘blesses’ God the verb is *bārak*, never ‘āšar. One suggestion to explain this sharp distinction, i.e. that ‘āšar is reserved for man, is that ‘āšar is a word of envious desire, ‘to be envied with desire is the man who trusts in the Lord.’” (by R. Laird Harris (Editor) 1980, 80)

So, you want to know the man who is to be most envied? The man -- who may have cancer, who has found himself in the dumps, whose station in life has become low -- yet if God is working through that man -- if that man is serving the Lord in his weakness -- his life and work is sacred!

With that, we return to Solomon’s illustration. Presuming God is working in the life of a man and that man has multiple children, notice what God can and will do.

[A Shocking Result, v. 5b.](#)

Psalm 127:5b, “They [speaking of the adult children] shall not be ashamed, when they speak with their enemies in the gate.”

The picture here is that of a legal case where charges have been entered against an elderly man’s estate.<sup>25</sup> Recall, at this time “the gate” of a city was the gathering place for the elders and judges who settled disputes, rendered judgments, and made decisions regarding the community.<sup>26</sup> And so, for example, if a parent has a rebellious son, what ought they to do? According to Deuteronomy:



Deuteronomy 21:19: "...his father and mother shall seize him, and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gateway of his hometown." (cf. also Amos 5:12; Ruth 4:1-6)

So, Solomon pictured a time when the head of a household is old, and his faculties have faded. At this time "an adversary" makes a move against him to take his property/resources. Yet on account of God's presence in this man's family (which transformed his children into disciples of the Kingdom), when the "enemy" appeared before the city elders to sue for the man's property, who came to the man's defense? His children!<sup>27</sup>

This is an example of what occurs when God is involved in an endeavor; when as His servants we do our work -- as menial as it may be -- for His glory and honor! Truly, we won't always succeed in the world's eyes, but because God is present, the work will never lack God's provision. Paul told the Corinthians who labor unto the Lord these things:

2 Corinthians 9:10, "Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness."

That's the point here! We are NOT talking about worldly success BUT Kingdom success! This is how Paul exhorted the wealthy:

1 Timothy 6:17b: [not] "...to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy."

In the words of Hudson Taylor:

Depend on it. God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply. He is too wise a God to frustrate His purposes for lack of funds, and He can just as easily supply them ahead of time as afterwards, and He much prefers doing so.

It was this song God wanted His people to sing as they made their way to Jerusalem. And so, they may be:

- A small and insignificant people.
- Aliens and strangers in the land in which they live.
- Lack much of worldly wealth, position, or power.

BUT they must know that their work in the Lord -- regardless of what it might be -- is noble, eternally significant, and most certainly will be multiplied by the Lord unto His good purpose.

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## End Note(s)

- <sup>1</sup> "One of the most telling features of this short poem is that it singles out three of our most universal preoccupations-building, security, raising a family- and makes us ask what they all amount to, and to whom we owe them." (Kidner 1975, 476)
- <sup>2</sup> "In Jewish tradition, Psalm 127 is recited as part of the thanksgiving service after childbirth." (Willem A. Vangemeren 2008, 793)
- <sup>3</sup> "The psalm is ascribed to *Solomon*, and has perhaps a concealed signature in the expression *his beloved* (2), which is the word from which Jedidiah, his personal name from God, was formed (2 Samuel 12:25)." (Kidner 1975, 476)
- <sup>4</sup> "'Useless!' That was the first word of a sermon I heard some years ago, and it was arresting. The speaker was R. C. Sproul, and in the introduction to that sermon he said that of all the words in the English language useless was the word he hated most, at least if it was applied to him. He was willing to work hard, to start early and labor late. He was willing to forego present pleasures or benefits. But not if it was useless! 'Because,' he explained, 'if you say that what I do is useless, you are saying that I am useless. And what that means is that somehow I don't count.'" (Boice 2005, 1116-1117)
- <sup>5</sup> "Solomon's best-known words are, 'Meaningless! Meaningless.... Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless' (Eccles. 1:2). The more familiar King James Version said, 'Vanity of vanities.... All is vanity!' In Psalm 127 the words "in vain" or "vanity" occur three times, two times in verse 1 and a third time in verse 2." (Boice 2005, 1117)
- <sup>6</sup> "The two parts of the psalm are so well marked that some have thought them to be separate poems. But both parts proclaim that only what is from God is truly strong; and further, the two senses of the word 'house' (a dwelling or a family) make a well-known wordplay in the Old Testament, all the more ready to hand for the similarity of the Hebrew words *bōnîm*, 'builders' (1), and *bānîm*, 'sons' (3)."

(Kidner 1975, 477)

<sup>7</sup> “...the work of God did not stop on the seventh day of creation when God ‘rested from all his work’ (Genesis 2:2). God continues to work and works constantly. Part of what God does is work in, with, and through those who are working for him and in his name.” (Boice 2005, 1119)

<sup>8</sup> “In its immediate context in Psalm 127, *house* in v. 1 most likely refers to the Jerusalem temple, just as the word *city* in the third colon most likely refers to the city of Jerusalem, since the Songs of the Ascents are pilgrimage songs sung by worshippers on their way to Jerusalem for various festivals, and especially since the superscription of Psalm 127 ascribes it to Solomon, the son of King David.” (Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford (Author) 2014, 918)

<sup>9</sup> The American statesman Benjamin Franklin was not a Christian; he was a deist, though he appreciated Christians. He thought well of George Whitefield, the Calvinistic evangelist, for example. Franklin understood the futility of work without God and expressed it well in his ‘Speech to the Convention for Forming a Constitution for the United States,’ delivered in Philadelphia in 1787. ¶ ‘In the beginning of the contest with Britain when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayers in this room for the Divine protection. Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence. To that kind Providence we owe this opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten this powerful Friend? Or do we imagine that we no longer need his assistance? I have lived for a long time (81 years), and the longer I live the more convincing proof I see of this truth, that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it possible that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings, that ‘Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.’ I firmly believe this, and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall proceed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel.” (Boice 2005, 1118)

<sup>10</sup> “A Latin motto says, *Nisi Dominus Frusta*. It comes from the first words of this psalm and means ‘Without the Lord, Frustration.’ It is the motto of the city of Edinburgh, Scotland, appearing on its crest, and is affixed to the city’s official documents. It could be attached to the lives of many who are trying to live their lives without the Almighty.” (Boice 2005, 1118)

<sup>11</sup> “The psalm isn’t teaching that those who fail to depend on the Lord will fail to put bread on the table (millions of godless workers testify that one can work and provide without depending on God). The emphasis isn’t on temporal results but on the eternal kingdom value of one’s labor. If you don’t depend on the Lord and order your life around his Word, you can live an insignificant life.” (Daniel L. Akin, Johnny M. Hunt, and Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Psalms 101–150*, pp. 215-216)

<sup>12</sup> “It is not simply that our projects will fail- there is at least ‘bread’ to show for them- but that they lead nowhere. In terms of verse 1, the house and city may survive, but were they worth building?” (Kidner 1975, 477)

<sup>13</sup> “A television commercial for Infinity, the Japanese luxury car import, that aired some time ago began with provocative questions: ‘Why do you work so hard? Why do you start early and stay late? Why do you care?’ Good questions. Why indeed? Unfortunately the answer seemed to be, ‘In order to own a luxury car,’ since the commercial ended with a woman’s voice saying, ‘Infinity. Thinking of you.’ It was not clear whether this comment referred to the company thinking of its customers or the customers thinking of the car. In either case, it was hard to listen to that commercial without thinking how meaningless it all was. For, in spite of the sophistication of the ad, the bottom line is surely that our extremely hard work and caring is vain if all we get out of it at the end of life’s rat race is a car.” (Boice 2005, 1117)

<sup>14</sup> “It is the same with whatever we are doing. Without the Lord, frustration. With the Lord, satisfaction. The important thing is to look to God for the blessing.” (Boice 2005, 1119)

<sup>15</sup> “The psalmist describes well frenetic contemporary life, in which people in their vain search for success take on more work, grasp additional opportunities, and become enslaved to an impossible schedule.” (Dr. Daniel J. Estes 2019, 480)

<sup>16</sup> “This kind of supposed success, which leaves the Lord out of the equation, is empty, as Leupold notes sagely: ‘Success depends on more than hard work and honest endeavor. The unseen but all-important factor is that God must bless what man does.’ For a life to be truly significant, it must focus on whom it can build for God for tomorrow, not just what it can build for itself today. The challenge given by Psalm 127, then, is not to settle for mere success as our culture measures it but to strive for genuine significance as the Lord views it. sures it but to strive for genuine significance as the Lord views it.” (Dr.

Daniel J. Estes 2019, 483)

<sup>17</sup> “The unusual form *šēnā*, ‘sleep,’ which occurs only here, may be the Aramaic spelling for the typical Hebrew *šēnā*, and this suggests that the Lord gives to his people by his grace what they never could grasp by their labor. If *šēnā* is taken as an adverbial accusative, then as they sleep, the Lord is active on their behalf, taking good care of those whom he loves. As Ross explains, ‘Those who place their complete trust in the Lord may rest assured that he knows their needs and will provide for them, and that agonizing and laboring in fear and anxiety will not get any more done than what he chooses to give. The life of faith is a life that rests in him; it may be diligent and industrious but it will be free of the restless anxieties.’” (Dr. Daniel J. Estes 2019, 480-481)

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Protestant%20ethic>.

<sup>19</sup> For a better understanding of a biblical work ethic, noted Puritan William Perkins outlines it in his writings.

<sup>20</sup> “The two halves of the psalm are neatly illustrated by the first and last paragraphs of Genesis 11, where man builds for glory and security, to achieve only a fiasco, whereas God quietly gives to the obscure Terah a son whose blessings have proliferated ever since.” (Kidner 1975, 477)

<sup>21</sup> “For the ancient warrior the arrow was a primarily offensive weapon intended to be used against a long-range target, in contrast to weapons such as the sword or the spear that were used for short-range battle. Arrows are propelled by the strength and according to the aim of the archer. Similarly, children can extend the influence of a parent beyond what the parent can do personally.” (Dr. Daniel J. Estes 2019, 481)

<sup>22</sup> “Children are indeed a ‘building project’ of life. But the term ‘children’ includes far more than our biological offspring. The fruit of our womb may be a project to end hunger in our community, the hope and encouragement we give to the seniors who wait anxiously every week for our visits, the changed lives of teens who come to our church on Friday evenings instead of cruising with their friends. These children, these ‘building projects,’ are the sources of our contentedness in life, the purpose for which God gives us sleep (v. 2).” (Nancy L. deClaisse-Walford (Author) 2014, 920)

<sup>23</sup> “And it is not untypical of God’s gifts that first they are liabilities, or at least responsibilities, before they become obvious assets. The greater their promise, the more likely that these sons will be a handful before they are a quiverful.” (Kidner 1975, 478)

<sup>24</sup> “No warrior would place an arrow in his quiver unless it were battle ready, so the implication is that the parent has nurtured the child to maturity so that he is fully prepared to enter into adult life.” (Dr. Daniel J. Estes 2019, 481-482)

<sup>25</sup> “The enemies are those who oppose the values of the father, but the children as his arrows are able to extend his values into the community.” (Dr. Daniel J. Estes 2019, 482)

<sup>26</sup> “In the ancient world, the gate (*šā‘ar*) was the center of commercial, legal, and intellectual life, comparable to the Greek *agora*, the Roman forum, and the modern marketplace or public square.” (Dr. Daniel J. Estes 2019, 482)

<sup>27</sup> “Older people around the world are often vulnerable. Violent men prey on widows regularly in impoverished, unjust societies. They physically assault the defenseless widow and seize her property. Other aging men and women suffer from loneliness and abandonment, having no children to visit them. One of the responsibilities given to the church is to care for widows (and more generally, for all the vulnerable of society), especially those in our local churches. We must honor the elderly as if they were our mothers and fathers and ourselves their sons and daughters, providing the protection and care they need (1 Tim 5:1–16).” (J. Josh Smith 2022, 218)