

Laboring With the Lord

by Chuck Smith

The sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting in the Lord and His work, rather than relying on our own abilities, and recognizes the blessings of reverencing God and having a large family.

Duration: 25:05

Scripture: Psalm 127:1-2, Psalm 128:1-2, Psalm 128:4, Proverbs 3:5-6, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Lord's Work"

Description

In this sermon, Pastor Chuck Smith discusses the importance of relying on the Lord to build and establish our lives. He emphasizes that the success of a program or event is not measured by immediate results, but by the lasting impact it has on people's lives. Pastor Chuck references Jesus' words about bearing fruit that remains. He also mentions the concept of settling disputes at the city gate and the significance of having a quiver full of children. Overall, the sermon encourages listeners to commit their ways to the Lord and trust in His plan for their lives.

Transcript

Oh, let the Son of God enfold you With His Spirit and His love Let Him fill your heart and satisfy your soul
Oh, let Him have the things that hold you And His Spirit like a dove Will descend upon your life And make you whole
Psalm 127 is a song of a sense for Solomon. Thus, we would think of it relating to the building of the temple. And thus, it reads, except the Lord build the house, They labor in vain that build it.

I think that this is one of the major lessons that we need to learn as Christians. The futility of our efforts. The importance of God's work.

And trusting in the Lord for His work. Rather than in our own efforts or in our own abilities. For unless the Lord build the house, Unless the Lord does the work, All of our efforts are in vain.

I think that this is an important scripture for every pastor As he thinks about his church. And the building of the church. Not the physical building, but the building of the congregation, the people.

Because it seems to be the ambition and desire of every pastor To have a larger church, to have more people. And it's amazing the things that they do In order to draw a crowd, to increase their attendance. I read of pastors that climb on the roof of their church to eat lunch.

In fulfillment of a vow that they made to the people. If you'll have 250 in Sunday school next Sunday, I'll eat my lunch on the top of the church. And so everyone wants to see the pastor up on top of the church looking foolish.

And so they bring their friends and up he goes. But they look to gimmicks, promotional gimmicks To add to the church, to increase the attendance. But it's important to remember, unless the Lord builds the house, They labor in vain who build it.

All of that stuff is just a lot of wasted effort and time. I know by experience. I am ashamed of what I have done in the past To try to build the church.

As I was following the design programs of the denomination And doing my best through all kinds of gimmicks To build the church. And it was vain. Man is filled with ideas.

I remember the last programs When I was still in a denomination that was foistered upon us. We didn't follow it. I was too tired.

I was worn out by then. But some friends of ours who pastored a church in Phoenix They went gung-ho. They had all kinds of ideas this year for the building of attendance.

The forming of the committees. Transportation committee to transport anybody to church That doesn't have means of transportation. The telephone committee.

And so they took the Phoenix phone book and cut the thing apart, every page. And then they had people pledge to call all of the names on the page And invite them to church. And let them know that if they needed transportation That someone would pick them up.

And so they would turn those names over to the transportation committee. They had balloons that they filled with gas And checked with the weatherman And went outside of Phoenix and released these balloons And had sufficient gas and all designed to They would fall down on the city of Phoenix. And inside of these balloons was a little card And the card was an invitation to come to Sunday school.

And they were all numbered. And it said, you know, there will be a number drawn And the one who has the lucky number will get a special prize, you know. And so, I mean, it was well designed.

It was a classic program. And they went the whole ten yards. I mean, they did the whole thing.

And some three months after the whole promotional thing was over Because you always work towards one grand Sunday, get them all there. But that's never the thermometer of the success of a program. It isn't the last day of the program, the great final, you know, Giving away prizes and all.

That's not the true test. The true test is, you know, a few months later. How many have you really gained? Jesus said, I've chosen that you should bring forth fruit that your fruit should remain.

It's the abiding fruit that really counts. Not just how many you can get into a building on a certain day. But how many are lasting, how many are there.

What has been the real, true fruit. The permanent type of growth. And so I asked the pastor about three months later.

I said, you know, you went through this whole thing. What did your church really gain from this whole program that you were in? And they said, well, there's one old man in his 80s that lives 25 miles out of Phoenix That these people have to go out and pick up every Sunday. And bring him to church.

All of that effort, all of the money that was spent. And the effort that went forth. But except the Lord build the house.

They labor in vain who build it. Oh, that we would learn that. Except the Lord keep the city.

The watchman waketh but in vain. Unless the Lord keeps your house, all the burglar alarms and everything else aren't going to work. Trust in the Lord to keep the house.

To keep the city. Now the watchman. Going on the walls.

Watching for the enemy. It was a duty that they had. Men who all night long would walk on the walls of Jerusalem to watch out for enemies.

But he's saying, hey, if the Lord doesn't watch us, you know, the watchman waketh but in vain. He's not going to protect the city. The Lord is the one.

And to recognize it's the Lord that is the one that is. It isn't saying don't take precautions, but it's just saying don't trust in the precautions that you've taken. Trust in the Lord to take care of you.

For it is vain for you to rise up early and to sit up late. To eat the bread of sorrows. That is, it's vain for you to wake up and just worry.

About things. How many people spend restless nights as they're worried about pressures of life? The bills. The things that are happening.

Maybe a suit against you. And you wake up and your mind starts going over things. And you just sit there, lie there.

And, you know, just your mind just going over all these things. And you can't go back to sleep. And you just think, oh, woe is me, woe is me.

Eating the bread of sorrows. That's vain, the scripture says. For he gives his beloved sleep.

Now, if you're trusting in the Lord to keep you. And when those nagging thoughts come to you in the middle of the night. And you're awake and your mind begins to turn to these problems.

And to these difficulties and all. It's good to just say, Lord, you take care of it. You know, you take care of it.

Because it's vain for you to worry about it. It's not going to do any good. All of that pillow planning is worthless.

If the Lord doesn't take care of it, man, you're in big trouble. It's vain to sit up late. To get up early.

To eat the bread of sorrows. Because he gives his beloved sleep. Now, the scripture does emphasize that the strength of a nation is in the family.

The family unit that God created. Families are of God. God created the family in that family unit.

And so here we read, lo, children are a heritage of the Lord. And the fruit of the womb is his reward. In that culture, it was considered absolute blessings to have a child.

Especially if it was a boy. Girls, I'm sorry about this, but that's just the way it was culturally. When a gal was pregnant, and when she would go into labor, they would all come to the house.

And they would bring all of the refreshments and the band and everything else. You know, going to have a baby. And they're going to have a big celebration, you know, a party and all.

Because she's going to have a baby. And if it was a boy, man, the party was on. The band was playing.

They were dancing. And they were taking the refreshments. If it was a girl, they'd just go home.

Foolish culture. Children are a heritage of the Lord. The fruit of the womb.

Children are God's reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of the youth. That is, in your old age, have a bunch of sons.

They'll protect you. They're a better protection than a bunch of arrows. And blessed or happy is the man that has his quiver full of them.

For they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate. Now, the gate of the city was a place where disputes were settled. Judgment went forth at the gates of the city.

It was the city court kind of a thing, and disputes were settled. All right, here's a guy that has 12 big strapping sons, you know. And you're brought in judgment, and there's a dispute at the gate.

So you stand there, and here are these big bruisers standing with you, you know, your sons. Man, they're as much protection as a quiver full of arrows, you know. And so, as arrows in the hand of a mighty man, so are the children of your youth.

For happy is the man who has his quiver full of them. They shall not be ashamed when you stand in the gates and have to dispute your enemy, man. Yeah, my sons will take care of you, man, if you don't behave yourself, you know.

The next psalm goes on, and it extols further the family life and the blessings of the family life. But it begins with, blessed is everyone that fears the Lord. So this is sort of a beatitude of blessedness to those who really reverence God.

Those who really serve the Lord, fear the Lord, have a reverence for God. Who have the place for God in their lives. Who have placed God in that priority spot of their lives.

Oh, how blessed is the man that has put God first. The fear of the Lord, who walks in his ways. Now, these are the blessings.

He will eat the labor of his hands. One of the sad tragedies in those days was the fact that the battles were often fought right after the harvest. In fact, right after the harvest was called traditionally the time of going to war.

And the idea was to go and rip off from your neighboring nation the harvest that they just brought in. They just harvested their crops, you know, for their winter store and all. And so you go in and rip off their harvest.

And thus many times you labor all year to bring in the harvest only to have it plundered by the enemy. But those who reverence God, those who have put him at the forefront of their lives, will eat the labor of their own hands. You've labored and now you have the privilege of eating.

In the prophecy of the future age, the kingdom age, the age of peace upon the earth, remember the prophet said, And every man neath his own vine and fig tree shall eat and be unafraid. That is, you will enjoy the fruit of your own hands. It wasn't always that way, especially in those days.

Happy you will be, for it will be well with you. He will be a happy man, the man that fears the Lord. He's blessed.

Your wife will be as a fruitful vine by the side of your house. Your wife will have lots of children. And your children will be like little olive plants around your table.

I love that. I just, I can see that, you know. Here's the dad and the table and all these little kids around the table.

The olive plants around the table. You see, when an olive tree gets old, all of these little shoots come up from its roots. And so from the roots of the old olive tree come all these new little plants.

These new little olive trees, they come up out of the roots. And the old tree ultimately withers and all, but these new little shoots, they become the tree. And here is the picture of all these little, the olive tree, but all of these little shoots coming up around it.

And thus your children, like little olive plants around the table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord. And so the blessing is a large family.

The blessing is a lot of children. The blessing is eating of your own labor. The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion.

You will see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. And then finally, the ultimate supreme blessing. You will see your grandchildren.

And I tell you, it's true, it's the ultimate blessing. Your grandchildren. And peace upon Israel.

So the promise of God's blessing upon those that fear the Lord. The blessing of the grandchildren. Oh man, I better not get started on that.

It's just, but it's glorious. Many a time, and this one deals now with the afflictions that they have gone through. Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth.

I've gone through, I've experienced afflictions. And let Israel say, many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, yet they have not prevailed against me. Paul said I am cast down, but I'm not destroyed.

They haven't prevailed against me. Yes, they have set their snares and I've been afflicted, but they haven't prevailed. The plowers have plowed upon my back and made long their furrows.

This could be a reference to the slavery, especially in Egypt, when their taskmasters would lay across their back the whip and they would leave these long welts, like a furrow that has been plowed across the back, the long welt as the result of the whip laid on the back. Many a time, the plowers have plowed on my back. They've left the furrows, long furrows on my back.

But the Lord is righteous, and He has cut asunder the cords of the wicked. Those cords of the wicked wherein they held me, wherein I was bound. The Lord has cut them.

He has set me free. Let them all be confounded and turn back that hate Israel, or they hate Zion. And then let them be as grass upon the housetops, which withereth before it grows up.

Now, over there they have flat roofs, and many times they cover the roofs with dirt as waterproofing. So, with the dirt on the roofs, seeds get blown in the wind, and so you have weeds growing on the roof of your house. The weeds, though, that grow on the roof of the house, or the grass that grows there, burns up quickly in the late spring, early summer.

When it starts getting hot, it just withers and dies quickly. It never gets high enough to mow, nor does it ever get high enough that you could bind it in a sheath for storage. Now, in those days, they would bind the hay and all in sheaths, and they would store it in sheaths.

We do it in bales today, bales of hay. And they would store these sheaths as the fodder and all for the cattle and all during the winter months. And so, those that hate Zion, the wicked, let them be as grass upon the housetop, which withers before it really grows up, withers quickly and dies.

Wherewith, the mower cannot fill his hand. In other words, it never gets big enough to mow, nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom. It never gets harvested.

Neither do those that go by say, The blessing of the Lord be upon you. We bless you in the name of the Lord. Now, this was a very familiar phrase during harvest time.

When you would pass by a field, and the people would be out there harvesting the field, the familiar phrase is you see their harvest, see them harvesting, you say, The blessing of the Lord upon you. The Lord be with you. And it was just a typical, and even to the present day, typical.

As you see the man harvesting his field, you'll see his friends walking by and he's out there harvesting. They'll say, The blessing of the Lord upon you. And he'll say, I bless you in the name of the Lord.

So, it's just typical as you are enjoying the fruit of harvest to recognize that God has blessed. And to just pronounce the blessing of God upon the man as he harvests the fields. We'll return with more of our verse-by-verse study through the Psalms in our next lesson as Pastor Chuck continues with Fear the Lord.

And we do hope you'll make plans to join us. But right now, if you'd like to secure a copy of today's message, simply order Psalm 127, verse 1 when visiting thewordfortoday.org. And while there, be sure to browse through the many additional biblical resources by Pastor Chuck. You can also subscribe to the Word for Today podcast or sign up for our email subscription.

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If you prefer to write, our mailing address is The Word for Today, PO Box 8000, Costa Mesa, California, 92628. And now, on behalf of The Word for Today, we'd like to thank all of you who share in supporting this ministry with your prayers and financial support. And be sure to join us again next time as Pastor Chuck continues his verse-by-verse study through the Bible.

That's right here on the next edition of The Word for Today. And now, once again, here's Pastor Chuck Smith with today's closing comments. God bless you.

And may the Lord guide you in His plan for your life. And may you learn as David to just commit your ways unto the Lord, knowing that the Lord will take care of things as you just submit your life, its facets, unto Him. And may God just continue to use you as His instrument in bringing His love to a needy world.

Sometimes it's difficult to celebrate the holidays like Christmas or New Year's Eve because of a recent death in the family or a sudden tragedy that's happened. And it's in times like this that we want to be used by God to bring encouragement, hope, and most of all, love to our family and friends who are going through a hardship. That's why I'd like to tell you about a book by Chuck Smith called *When the Storm Hits*.

I'm amazed when I read this book, that it's able to encourage and strengthen a person and persuade them to look to Jesus and not at their problem. It encourages us to be patient, not to lose hope, and when the storm hits, to get anchored on Jesus, the rock, and don't let go. To order a copy of Chuck Smith's book, *When the Storm Hits*, please call the word for today at 800-272-9673.

Or you can visit us online to read a preview of the book by visiting thewordfortoday.org. This program has been sponsored by The Word for Today in Costa Mesa, California.

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