

## Blessed Labor

*“Blessed is every one who fears the LORD, Who walks in His ways. When you eat the labor of your hands, you shall be happy, and it shall be well with you. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house, your children like olive plants all around your table”. (Psalm 128:1-3 NKJV)*

This is the ninth “Psalm of degrees”, or “ascents”. Its progress from the previous one is quickly noticed. From building the house, to the house established. From man alone, to man with his wife. From children as objects to be used (aimed arrows), to children as free living creatures (olive plants). From immediate descendants only, to continuity. But the chief contrast is in the labor of man. From vain labor, “eating the bread of sorrows”, to fruitful labor, “you shall be happy”.

The contrast is essentially between two men: Man in ruin (Adam) whose life is marked by cursedness (Genesis 3:16-19), and man in redemption (Christ) whose life is marked by the blessedness described herein. The two men have different walks. The man before us walks in the fear of the Lord, heart devotion, love of God...walking obediently in His ways. Adam, on the other hand, walked in fear and deference to man. He heeded the words of his wife rather than the words of God. In the love of himself, he disobeyed the command of God and went astray in his own perverse way.

It is note worthy that the duration of the cursedness, vanity and futility is identical with that of blessedness, fruitfulness and happiness: “All the days of thy life”. See Genesis 3:17 and Psalm 128:5. One is equally as certain as the other. All the days of life in Adam shall be vanity, sorrow and cursedness. There shall not be a blessed one in the lot. All the days of life in Christ shall be blessed, joyful and fruitful. There shall not be a cursed one in the whole, forever!

But notice in all of this, the prominence of *labor!* God told Adam, “*in the sweat of your face you shall eat bread*”. Sweat, perspiration, in itself, is simply God’s provision for dissipating excess body heat. But it has become a synonym for frustration, stress, anxiety and fruitless labor. Man has erroneously branded labor as an evil thing to be gotten rid of. Nothing could be further from the truth. Labor is a blessing of God! Adam had plenty to do before he sinned, and there was joy and fruitfulness in it. The sin of Sodom was not primarily homosexuality, but fullness of food and abundance of idleness! (Ezekiel 16:49) Man’s mad scramble to stuff every belly, and eliminate hard work is a horrible curse upon us all that, left unchecked will damn the whole race.

Notice also the subtle switch from the third person in verse one to the second person in verse two. This is not merely an abstract doctrine to reflect on, but a blessed reality that we need to take to our bosoms and enter into personally: “*When you eat the labor of your hands, you shall be happy, and it shall be well with you!*” Gone forever is the sweat, frustration, the sorrow, the long days and sleepless nights when our fleshy striving gained us nothing. We have learned the blessedness of labors in the Lord!

-C. M.