

April 8, 2007 (SS)

THE BLESSING OF CHILDREN
PSALM 127 (ET AL.)

Why should people with no children or with grown children sit through a series on child-rearing? Why not simply have a class and teach those for whom it is obviously relevant?

- (1) It is the responsibility of the pastor to teach the whole counsel of God.
- (2) The life of the church as a church. As a church we have responsibilities for one another.
- (3) Child-rearing is part and parcel to the mission of the church and expansion of the kingdom.

1. IMAGE-BEARING AND CHILDREN

Gen 1:26 - Dominion over the animals of the earth is the first thing spoken *about* man. After God creates man as male and female, the first words *to* man are a blessing which takes this form: “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.”

“Blessing” is not simply “a good word.” God’s word is powerful, creative, efficacious. He was granting them the power to be fruitful and multiply.

Bearing God’s image takes one its more tangible forms in procreation. God is fruitful, and he gives man the ability to be fruitful and expects fruitfulness. That is, God is the Creator of life, giving life to all things. Man, then, is to image God in being a *procreator*, the means of bringing new life into the world.

It is significant that this blessing of fruitfulness is connected so closely to dominion. The man and his wife were to be the head of the *race* of humanity. They were to multiply, fill the earth and through this subdue the earth.

2. THE CONTINUING BLESSING OF CHILDREN

Loss and Restoration - I do believe that Adam and Eve lost the ability to have children in the fall, albeit temporarily.

But we find that in God’s words to the woman there is a restorative word concerning her ability to have children. She will have pain, but she will have children (cf. **Gen 3:16**).

Another consequence: there will be a seed of the serpent. That “seed” of the serpent consists in ungodly children who grow to be ungodly adults. Cain, the firstborn of Eve was of the evil one (**1Jn 3:12**), the seed of the serpent.

But we also see that there will be godly seed, children, as well. Abel was righteous (**Mt 23:35; Heb 11:4**).

As we go through our series, we will see that we as God’s people have promises given to us concerning our children being godly and inheriting God’s promises. And we will see that we are to employ the proper means for our children to be godly ... because God uses means to make each one of us godly.

Even after the fall children are considered a blessing from God. See the reiteration of creation mandate to Noah in **Gen 9:1**.

There will be evil people in the world. But it will be through the bearing of children—the seed of the woman—that the world will eventually be delivered.

Fruitfulness as a cause of rejoicing - Cf. **Gen 4:1, 25**; God is recognized as the One who gives life.

Promises to Abraham and Sarah: They will be fruitful. Abraham will be the father of nations and Sarah will be a mother of nations. Kings of people will come from her (**Gen 17**). Isaac bestows blessing on Jacob; **Gen 28:3**

E.g., 1Chron 26:4-5. Example of Obed-Edom. He had eight children “because God blessed him.”

Cf. **Psa 127**. And this Psalm must be read in light of what God commissions man to do in the beginning. “House building.” God promised Solomon’s father David: God would build him a house (cf. **2Sam 7**). The “house” spoken of here in **Psalm 127** is not speaking narrowly about the structure in which people find shelter. It resonates with all the implications of the house God promises David: a dynasty and a kingdom.

Man's labor is involved in this house-building. And man must always recognize that a sovereign God is behind every success. Man must work within God's bounds and give God thanks. This is why it is not fruitful to *anxiously work*.

Within this context Solomon tells us how children are a part of that house/city building project. God gives children as an "inheritance." This again is us being in the image of God for God's people are, on a number of occasions, understood as his "inheritance" (cf. **Deut 4:20; 9:26, 29; 1Sam 10:1**). Children are the fruit of the womb. They are the reward for God's people.

The dominion, house/city building concept comes back into play as we see that children are like arrows in the hands of a mighty man. This is how he does battle with the enemies who seek to tear down the house. Cf. also **Psa 128; 113**

This is all in line with the pronouncements of covenant blessing upon the faithful people of God. God says that if his people will obey he will *bless* the fruit of their body (cf. **Deut 28:1-4, 11**).

When God gives children, that *is* a blessing. You have been blessed objectively. And God expects you to receive and nurture this blessing in faith; i.e., looking to him and obeying his word in regards to your child.

Barrenness is mourned - Cf. individuals: **Gen 25:21; 30:1; 1Sam 1**; corporately: **Deut 28:18; Hosea 9:10ff**. (The prevailing attitude in our culture toward children and the consequent birth-rate and abortion rate is not simply going to bring judgment from God, it *is* judgment from God.)

qualifications, general statements and answer some common objections

1. A couple who has few or no children is not necessarily cursed by God.

God distributes his gifts as he will. If you don't have children it is not necessarily because God knew you would be horrible parents. He gives children to horrible parents all the time. So that cannot be the reason. The answer lies with God himself and his secret, sovereign will.

2. God is the One who gives life. It is not simply the result of sexual activity.

Life is given by God. Certainly he uses means. But children are from the Lord.

We must be careful of our birth control attitudes that have been overwhelmingly adopted by our culture and even come to be expected in many segments of the church. I am not saying that there are *no* instances in which some forms of birth control can be used (e.g., when the health of the mother is at stake). But I am saying that if we take up the attitude that we must limit the number of children because of convenience sake (or some related reason), we have adopted the philosophy of death.

3. Large families are not always a blessing ... but they can be.

God gives children as a blessing. But with every blessing comes the responsibility to receive it and guard it by faith. That is, we are to be looking to God's word and obeying him in regard to his promises concerning his blessing.

Large families are a blessing to covenant-keepers, the faithful. They become a curse to those who just have children to have children.

4. God will supply the needs for the children he gives to you as you are seeking to be obedient to him.

5. The fact that children are a blessing is an objective truth, not a sentimental or emotional truth.

6. Those who don't have children must still adopt the biblical view of children.