

The Blessed Man

Psalms 128

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In Psalm 128 the psalmist says, “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. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord. The Lord bless you out of Zion, and may you see the good of Jerusalem all the days of your life. Yes, may you see your children’s children. Peace be upon Israel!”

We don’t know who authored this psalm, but we do know who the psalm was addressed to. Not knowing the author doesn’t affect its inspiration. The Bible says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God.” So whoever the human author was who God used isn’t essential, but what they say is given by divine inspiration.

This psalm is addressed to the man of the house. I know that because of verses 3 and 4. “Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house.” This man was married, he had a wife, and he also had children. “Your children [shall be] like olive plants all around your table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord.” So this psalm, although anonymous, is written to the man of the house; he is married, and he has a wife and children. And verse 6 says he even has grandchildren. This psalm tells him how he is to be blessed.

The key word in this psalm is the word “blessed.” Verse 1 says, “Blessed is every one who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways.” It appears again in verse 2: “You shall be happy.” In the Hebrew, “happy” is the same word as “blessed.” It appears again in verse 4: “Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord.” And it also appears in verse 5: “The Lord bless you out of Zion.” So four times in six verses we see the repeat of the word “blessed.”

“Blessed” means “O how happy” and “to be envied.” What it conveys is the idea that this man has the approval of God, the approval of heaven. In Matthew 5, we have what’s called “the Beatitudes,” which Jesus gave at the beginning of His sermon on the mount. And they all start with the word “blessed.”

When Max Lucado wrote his book on the Beatitudes, he called it *The Applause of Heaven*. I like that title. Being blessed is God clapping for you. It’s the applause of heaven, the approval of God. It’s God’s grace or favor poured out upon you.

There are two questions I want to ask and answer from this psalm. The first is, “What is the secret of the Lord’s blessings?” The second is, “What is the scope of the Lord’s blessings?”

First, “What is the secret of the Lord’s blessings?” Verse 1 says, “Blessed is every one...”—it has universal appeal and application—“...who fears the Lord, “who walks in His ways.”

Notice that when the word “Lord” appears in this psalm, it is written in all capital letters. That is an indication of the name “Jehovah” or “Yahweh.” That is the covenant keeping God, who always keeps His promises.

Men, I can’t emphasize enough—and it’s hard for me to get past this first point—that you be men who fear the Lord, because this is the foundation for all of life. If I were to summarize the most important quality for a husband and a father from the Word of God, it would be a man who fears the Lord.

This phrase “fears the Lord” doesn’t mean that we’re afraid of what God would do to us; it means I’m afraid of what I might do to God. I’m not cowering and thinking God’s going to strike me with lightning or judge me or is going to be mad at me. Rather I love God so much that I don’t want to disappoint Him. I want to please Him, to honor Him, to respect Him and I want to bring glory to Him. So fearing the Lord is not me being afraid of what God might do to me but fearing that my attitude and my actions might bring grief and pain to the heart of God. It’s basically saying that I love God so much that I don’t want to do anything to disappoint Him or affect Him or wound His sensitive heart. It means we are to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” So this is the foundation for all of life.

To fear the Lord implies that you first “know” the Lord. It doesn’t do any good to fear the Lord if you don’t know the Lord, so dads need to be born again of the Spirit. And you are not a Christian, you are not saved, you are not a child of God unless you’ve been born again by the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, in John 3:5, to Nicodemus, a very religious Jew, “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

The theological term for that is “regeneration.” It is the work of the Holy Spirit bringing life into the heart of the believer who is dead in sin. So when we see our sinful condition and believe Jesus died on the Cross for us, and then we trust Him or put our faith in Him or believe in Him, who died and rose from the dead, God gives us the Holy Spirit, who quickens us or gives us life, so we are born again of the Spirit. Now we are children of God, we’re saved and on our way to heaven. So you first have to “know” the Lord.

If you’re a dad and you’re not born again, you need to get born again. There is no way you can be a godly father and be the influence on your children that you should be without being a man who knows the Lord and fears the Lord. It’s so very important.

Someone described the fear of the Lord as “a reverential awe.” It’s a respect for God. It’s taking God seriously. Someone said, “He must not be trifled with, but He must be as He actually is—the center of everything: who we are, what we think, what we aspire to do and to be.” So basically it’s saying loving God more than your own life, more than your wife or husband, your job, your career or your hobbies. It’s saying God is everything to you.

Dads, is God the center of your life?

Psalms 111:10 says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” Proverbs 1:7 says, “The

fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." Proverbs 15:16 says, "Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure with trouble." I like that. And Proverbs 14:27 says, "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life." Psalm 2:11 says, "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." The fear of the Lord brings great joy.

One of the great characters in the Bible is the Old Testament character Joseph, the son of Jacob. Joseph was sold as a slave by his brothers. He didn't have an easy life, but he was a man who feared the Lord. And God was with him when he was in the pit, when he was in prison and when he was in the palace. He always kept his eyes on God. He didn't grow bitter in his trials; he grew better. He is one of the most Christ-like characters in all the Bible in everything he said and did. The Bible says nothing bad about Joseph. There is no condemnation of Joseph.

I noticed that when I studied the life of Joseph years ago, every time Joseph speaks on the pages of Scripture he mentions God. When he saw his brothers, who had wronged him, Joseph said, "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good." When Potiphar's wife was tempting him, she said to Joseph, "Lie with me." It's called "the subtle approach." How did Joseph respond? "When in Egypt, do as the Egyptians do"? No. He said, "How...can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" It kept his life pure. It kept him being a man of integrity. He was a God-fearing man.

It's the fear of God, which is "the beginning of wisdom." Wisdom is knowing what to do with knowledge. Knowledge is the accumulation of facts, and wisdom is knowing what to do with those facts.

We have a lot of highly educated fools in our world today. Many people have PhDs, but it actually stands for "phenomenal dud." By all means, get your education. But the knowledge of the Bible is better than having a PhD without the knowledge of the Bible. I would rather know God's Word than have all the learning in the wisdom of the world.

So wisdom is what we need, to know how to apply that godly wisdom to our lives. We all know people who are really smart but live really dumb lives. So we need wisdom to know how to relate in our marriage, to know how to raise our children, to know how to interact with people, to know how to view life. It all comes from the fear of the Lord. It's so essential and so important.

The second secret of the blessed life is the answer to the question, "What is the scope of the Lord's blessings?" Verse 1 says, Walk "in His ways." The fear of the Lord is the attitude which leads to the action of walking "in His ways." The fear of the Lord leads to a life of obedience to God's will found in the Bible, God's Word.

I'm so glad that growing up in church I learned this song:

"The B-i-b-l-e.

Yes, that's the Book for me.

I stand alone on the Word of God,

The B-i-b-l-e."

Build your life on God's Word. The fear of the Lord and the Word of God are linked together. You can't tell me that you fear the Lord but don't read and reverence His Word, which is "a lamp to [your] feet and a light unto [your] path." So if you're going to be a God-fearing man, you're going to be a man who also feeds on God's Word.

Psalms 1 says, just like our Psalm 128, "Blessed..."—or "happy"—"...is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord..."—which is "the Scriptures"—"...and in His law he..."—this blessed man—"...meditates..."—not medicates—"...day and night." A lot of guys get medicated these days.

Meditation in the Bible isn't emptying your mind and allowing thoughts to come in that are not pleasing to God. It's filling your mind with the Scriptures, the Word of God. The word "meditate" in the Bible is the same concept as a cow chewing its cud. When a cow chews its cud, it takes a bite of grass, chews it, swallows it and then brings it back up. The cow chews it a bit more, swallows it and then brings it back up again. Then it does it again.

So you take God's Word in, you meditate on it or "chew on it," you digest it and then you bring it back. You meditate some more on it. You digest it again. Then you bring it back to your mind again. The Bible says in Psalm 119:9, "How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word." There is nothing more important than for a God-fearing father to instill God's Word in his own heart and in the hearts of his children.

In James 1:22-25, James says, "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed..."—there's our word—"...in what he does." Where James says that he "looks into the perfect law of liberty," that word "looks" means that he bends down and looks closely into it.

So this blessed man is a man who studies his Bible. Men, be men of the Word.

Sometimes I run into men who say, "Well, I'm not the scholarly type" or "I don't read; I'm not into books." Learn to read your Bible. If it's anything that God will enable you to do it will be to give you the ability to read the Bible. It's not over your head; it's not something you can't do.

When I graduated from high school, I surrendered my life to Christ; I became a Christian. I barely got out of high school, because academically I hated school. And I was almost illiterate; I could barely read. But when I had been born again, I was hungry for God's Word, so I began to read Kenneth Taylor's The Living Bible, the simplest thing I could find. I read and I read and I

read. I learned to read by getting saved and reading the Bible. That's what happened in my life. So I believe God can do a miracle and teach you to read just so you can read His Word, if you really commit yourself to that.

I really encourage men to be the leaders in this: to be men of the Word and be "doers of the word."

So you love God, love God's Word, spend time in prayer, lead the family in fellowship and take them to church. Don't just send your wife and your kids to church. "Religion's for women. It's not for men." Nothing could be further from the truth. The most manly men I know are men who love God, love God's Word and love their wives. That's so important. It takes courage to be a man of God, fear the Lord and be obedient to Him in this culture that we live in today.

God is the priority of your life, your marriage comes second, your relationship to your children is third and your job, your occupation, your ministry comes after that. I've mentioned this before, that my marriage comes before my ministry. If my marriage fails, my ministry fails. If my marriage fails, I fail as a man of God and as a pastor. So make that a priority: make sure you fear the Lord and "you walk in all His ways."

Now the second question we want to look at and answer is, "What is the scope of the Lord's blessings?" This is covered in verses 2-6. It has three categories: your job, your home—your wife, your children and your family—and your nation or country you live in.

First, God wants to bless you on the job, verse 2. "When you eat the labor of your hands, you shall be happy, and it shall be well with you." In verse 1, we saw the principle: fear the Lord and walk "in His ways." And when you do that, you will "eat the labor of your hands, you shall be happy, and it shall be well with you." I believe that is in the spiritual sense, that it will be well with your soul. It's not necessarily a guarantee that on the job you'll prosper, but God will bless you spiritually.

You need to remember that whenever you're studying the Psalms, you're reading what is called "Hebrew poetry." So what is laid out for us in the Psalms are not promises but general principles that are true. But they are not carte blanche guarantees or promises that if you fear the Lord and you walk "in His ways," everything is going to be smooth sailing.

Have you ever found that to be true? Christians' air conditioners break down. Christians' cars break down. Christians' toilets get stopped up and overflow. Christians' dogs dig under the fence and run away.

Years ago we had a dog. And we lived down the street from a church, but it wasn't the one I pastored. Every time our dog got out of the yard and ran away, it went to that church. They would always call me and say, "Pastor Miller, your dog is down here at our church again. Can you come get him?" I thought, Where else should a pastor's dog go when it runs away than to a church? Thank God I have a spiritual dog.

But life isn't going to be perfect. Life isn't going to be smooth sailing if you're a Christian. But it's going to be blessed. My life isn't perfect, but it's certainly blessed, because of fearing the Lord and walking "in His ways."

Joseph was sold by his brothers as a slave. He was lied about, thrown into a prison, was forgotten, but then God blessed him and made him second to Pharaoh. So notice verse 2 says that "You will eat the labor of your hands. You shall be happy" or "blessed." God will give you joy in your employment.

In Colossians 3:23 Paul says, "And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men." How important that is.

And notice in verse 2 of our text it says, "And it shall be well with you." That means that God will bless you. "Yes, the air conditioner broke, the car broke down, my dog ran away, but I'm blessed!" God blesses you because you're walking in the fear of the Lord and keeping His Word. It's the foundation of our lives.

The second category of God's blessing is that He blesses your home. So God will bless you on the job, and He will bless you in the home. Again, these are principles, but they are backed up by some clear, New Testament teaching. God will bless a godly marriage in a wonderful way. Verses 3-4 say, "Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house, your children like olive plants all around your table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord."

There are a lot of men who are successful on the job but are failures at home. I've seen them so many times. Successful businessmen. Successful entrepreneurs. They make lots of money and provide a beautiful house for their family. But they fail as a husband and as a father. So get your priorities straight. Know what is most important in life.

The qualifications for spiritual leaders in the church are in 1 Timothy 3. They are to be "the husband of one wife" and one who rules his own house well. He is also to have "his children in submission with all reverence." If he doesn't know how to rule his own house, how can he take care of the church of God?

Where it says, "the husband of one wife," it's not talking about polygamy, which is condemned in the Bible. It means that you're devoted to, committed to, in love with and have eyes for only one woman—your wife. It means you're locked in to that wife who God has brought into your life as that special gift.

The great need in our world today is for God-fearing families and marriages. Families start with marriage. Children start with marriage. This man who has children first has a wife. That's the procedure: you marry and then you have children.

I read a story that a fourth-grade, Sunday-school teacher wanted to see how much his class knew, so the teacher asked the class, "What did God say in the Bible about marriage?" A little

boy in the back row of the classroom piped up, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." That's so true.

Today we have no idea what marriage is. Marriage is intended by God to be a blessing. Notice verse 3. "Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house." What does that mean? In the Bible the vine, with its grapes and wine that it comes from, symbolizes refreshment and lavish enjoyment. In Song of Solomon 7:8-9, it likens the joy of marital love to the vine and the grapes on the vine. It says that your marriage will be like a harvest celebration: refreshing and joyful.

A lot of people get the idea that marriage is a drag. I remember when I was engaged to get married, I talked to an unbeliever, who wasn't a Christian. I told him, "I'm getting married next week!"

He said, "Why would you want to do that?!"

I thought, Thank you very much. I appreciate the encouragement.

"I'll tell you why I want to do that. Because the Bible says in Proverbs 18:22, 'He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord.'" Second only to being saved, my wife has been the greatest blessing of my life. And the longer we're married, the more I value her, treasure her and appreciate her. What a blessing that is! Proverbs 31:10 says, "Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies." So a Christ-centered marriage is a blessing from God.

And here's what the Bible says what husbands are to do in their marriage, in Ephesians 5:25. It says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her." So you should love your wife sacrificially, unconditionally and undyingly. And the list could go on. But in Ephesians 5, it says that husbands should love their wives.

In this passage in Ephesians there is a very special Greek word for "love." It is the word "agape." "Agape" is a sacrificial, self-denied, giving love. It is a love that wants the object being loved to be blessed. It's not selfish or self-centered; it's self-sacrificing. Love is not a passing emotion; it's a continual devotion. When you enter into the covenant relationship of marriage, pledging your love to that individual, it is to seek their highest good. "Till death do you part" or until the Lord takes you home in the rapture. It's not as long as you both love each other. Love is not just a feeling or an emotion, but in marriage love is a commitment you make to seek the highest good of that person you love—your wife or your husband.

Notice the children in this marriage, verse 3. "...your children like olive plants all around your table." Some of my children and grandchildren are coming over, and I can't wait for those "olive plants" to be around my table. What a blessing.

What the psalmist is talking about here is the joy and blessing that comes from children. And the best way to bring blessing to your children is to have a strong marriage. First, the wife is

“like a fruitful vine,” and then the children are like “olive plants.” Vines and olive plants are not food staples, like wheat and corn, but are symbols of abundant blessing that bring joy.

Psalms 127:1 says, “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.” Verse 3 says, “Children are a heritage...”—or “gift”—“...from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward.” It’s not a punishment, parents. “What did I do to deserve this?!” God is rewarding you. Verses 4-5, “Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth.” It’s a good idea to have your children when you’re young. “Happy...”—or “blessed”—“...is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate.”

Over and over again in the Bible, it says that children are a blessing. They’re not a burden but a blessing.

You say, “Yeah, but Pastor, you don’t know my children!” I don’t need to know your children. Children are a gift from God. They have been loaned to you for a short time. You say, “Praise God for that!” Those of us who are empty-nesters know how quickly those years go by. The kids are raised, then they go off and you miss them so.

That’s why you build a strong marriage. So when your kids leave, you and your wife have something to talk about. You still love each other. You still get along. The priority is the marriage before the children. And when the kids come back, what a joy and what a blessing that is that they bring to your heart. So children are a gift from God.

It is one of the purposes for marriage in the Bible: procreation. God told Adam and Eve, “Be fruitful and multiply.” He didn’t say, “Don’t have kids; they’re a bummer! Just hang out in the garden for a while and enjoy the fruit.” No. He said, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth.”

We have a problem in America right now; we’re not repopulating. Not enough people are getting married, and not enough people are having kids. We’re in trouble. Children are not only a gift to us but to our church and to our nation. Families are a blessing to the church, and the church is a blessing to the families. It works together; as goes the family, so goes the church and the nation and society around us.

I noticed in my study that it takes seven years for olive trees to produce fruit. They require patience—just like children. So when you have children, be patient. It takes time for them to blossom and then bear fruit. Patiently cultivated, olive trees will produce for centuries. That is longer than any other fruit-bearing tree.

And, in verse 6, this blessed man has “children’s children” or grandchildren. Chuck Smith used to say, “If I knew how fun grandkids were, I would have had them first.” When I text my daughter, I catch myself saying, “I just want to talk to Madison right now! I don’t want to talk to you. I’m really not concerned with how you’re doing. How’s my granddaughter doing?” The parents are okay. I just want to talk to the grandkids.

So he had “children’s children” and maybe even children’s children’s children. What a blessing that is.

And the words to dads are found in Ephesians 6:4. “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” There are four commands in this verse. First, don’t provoke your kids to anger. Don’t exasperate them by being overly strict. And “bring them up” means to love them and second, show them affection.

Dads, listen. Hug and kiss your children, and tell them that you love them. It’s so important for a father to show affection to his children, especially to his daughters. A lot of what your children learn about God they learn from your life and the pattern you set.

Then this verse says, third, to nurture them. That means to discipline them.

“Pastor John, I thought you just told us to love them and kiss them.” Yes. But also spank them. I’m just old enough and Biblical enough and Scriptural enough that I’m fine with spanking. God has given them a little cushioned pad for spanking. And it should be done in the appropriate way.

Sometimes when I’m at the store, I see kids carrying on and I think, Can you please spank your children! If not, give me the permission to do it. God have mercy! Remember, you are the parent. You’re the boss. You’re the authority. You’re the leader in the home. You don’t have to beg your kids and plead with them to obey. They need to learn respect for authority.

Then fourth, admonish your children in the Lord. That means to teach them. Dads should take the lead in reading Bible stories to their children. Maybe your work schedule is such that you can’t always do that. But find a time to read the Bible to them. Get a Bible that is at their level. Get a Bible in Pictures for Little Eyes. Get a Bible that they can relate to. Dads, open it up and share the Word of God with your children. It’s so very important for you to take the lead. And it’s important that you lead them to church; don’t just send them off to church.

So God will bless your job, He’ll bless your home and the third category where God will bless you, in verses 5-6, is He will bless your nation. “The Lord bless you out of Zion...”—which is the mountain where the temple in Jerusalem sat on—“...and may you see the good of Jerusalem all the days of your life.” Jerusalem was the spiritual capital of Israel. “Yes, may you see your children’s children. Peace be upon Israel!” That was the nation.

The nation is only as strong as its families. Our families are only as strong as our marriages. Our marriages are only as strong as we have husbands and wives who fear God and walk “in His ways.” George Washington said, “It’s impossible to govern a nation without God and the Bible.”

What we’re seeing in America today is that we’re trying to govern our nation without God and the Bible. We have wholeheartedly, completely rejected God’s Word. In 2015, the Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage in all 50 states. That was more than the beginning of the

end; that was the end.

The degeneration that we're seeing in our culture now is the direct result of forsaking God and His Word. You don't have to be a PhD to figure that out. You don't have to be a scientist to figure that out. You don't have to be a politician to figure that out.

We need to come back to God and the Bible. God's design for marriage, which Genesis tells us, is between one man and one woman. God designed marriage for a man and a woman. By the way, there is such a thing as a man. There is such a thing as a woman. There are only two sexes, two genders. Gender and sex aren't different. Gender is just a manufactured word. The idea that gender can be different than your biological sex is a lie from the devil himself.

It has nothing to do with being homophobic. It has nothing to do with hating gay people or the homosexual lifestyle. Rather it has everything to do with loving God, fearing the Lord and wanting to be blessed.

The reason we are in the mess we are in is because we've thrown God's Word aside, and we've followed our own hearts and gone our own way.

I was heartbroken this past Wednesday. I was eating lunch at home and flipping through the TV to watch the news. I came to PBS, the public news station. I saw there that President Biden signed an executive order advancing LGBTQ+ equality, addressing what is called "conversion therapy." He called it "dangerous and harmful for Americans." This means that federally it is against the law to tell somebody that God can save you, change you and you don't have to live like this. That is pretty radical.

So we rejected God's design for marriage. We don't even know what a man is and what a woman is anymore.

When Jesus was asked about marriage, in Matthew 19:4-6 He quoted Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 by saying, God "made them male and female," and Jesus then said, "For this reason a man..."—a "male"—"...shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife..."—a "female"—"...and the two shall become one flesh...Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

So I don't care what the world is saying, what the culture is saying or what society is saying. I'm a follower of Jesus Christ. I'm going to stand with what He says. Amen. Because I want to be blessed by God. I don't want the approval of man, the praises of man. I want to be blessed by God. I want to make God smile and win God's approval.

The sanctity of the home brings the security of the homeland, the nation. Jesus said in Matthew 5:13-14, "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor...it is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden." It's so important.

So dads, know the Lord, fear the Lord and walk in the ways of the Lord.

One last thought. When Jesus gave His famous sermon on the mount, in Matthew 5-7, he ended with a story, in Matthew 7:24-27, about two men who built houses. The houses looked the same, but the foundations were different. He said there was “a wise man” and “a foolish man.” The wise man built a house, he dug deep and got to rock and built his house on that, a solid, rock foundation. Then when the wind blew and the rain and the flood came and hit the house, this wise man’s house stood strong.

And the foolish man in this story built a house as well. It looked pretty impressive. But he just built it on sand, no firm foundation. And when the wind blew and the rain came and the flood beat on his house, this foolish man’s house fell. It was destroyed.

Jesus said that the wise man is the man who “hears these sayings of Mine, and does them.” The foolish man is the one “who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them.” It’s that simple. They both heard the Word of the Lord. One obeyed and his house stood strong. One disobeyed and his house fell.

What is your house built on? Is it built on the solid rock of Jesus Christ and His Word, and are you obedient to His Word? Then it will stand the test of time, and you will be blessed by the Lord.