

# Without The Lord, All Is In Vain

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Preacher: Gordon Macleod

[ 0 : 00 ] If you're following your Bibles, if you can turn to Psalm 127.!

Since we started at 126, we'll now go to 127. Looking at the Psalms, and you'll see this Psalm is, in your Bibles, you may have it appointed to as being a Psalm that's written by Solomon.

Solomon only wrote two Psalms, and this is one that we have. And in the way that we read in Ecclesiastes, where we see that Solomon wrote about things being vain and vanity, we see that that theme continues in the Psalm that we have here before us this morning.

Now, the title that I'm going to give to this sermon this morning is that without the Lord, all is in vain. And as we look through this, we will hopefully understand that without the Lord in our lives, everything else is in vain.

[ 1 : 37 ] And to help us break down the Psalm and look through it, we'll take three headings. Foundations and Futility for verse 1, Fatigue and Favor for verse 2, and verses 3 to 5 under the heading, Family and Fortress.

Just before we take these points to look at, what's the significance of the title of today's psalm and today's sermon?

Well, as I was reading through this, and you're maybe already thinking as you see the slides going up there, you become like the people you spend time with.

You might be saying that more so when the next slide comes up. I haven't been learning Latin. I'm still trying to struggle with Hebrew.

Is there anyone in the room here this morning? Let's get any idea where that comes from. Does anybody know what it means?

[ 2 : 48 ] Well, translation of it is, without the Lord, all is in vain. James Montgomery Boyce, as I was reading him this week, pointed out that this is actually the motto of the city of Edinburgh.

I never knew that. And when you read on, it tells us that it's actually a shortened version of the opening verses to Psalm 127. And it's interesting that when we read this, that unless the Lord builds a house, the laborers labor in vain, that founding fathers in many of our cities across Scotland and across England in deciding a motto for the city made sure that God was recognized in what he had done for them.

And just as Mr. Google helped me in doing this, a couple of other cities, capital cities, cities well-known that recognize that God is with them and founding fathers decided that in building and starting a city that they would recognize the hand of God in it.

I'm from Glasgow. I always knew that the motto for Glasgow was, let Glasgow flourish. And you can see there that it's actually a shortened phrase that was apparently preached by St.

Mungo, who's a patron saint of Glasgow. And the full term is, let Glasgow flourish by the preaching of thy word and by the praising of thy name.

[ 4 : 39 ] The importance that people in days gone by in setting up cities made sure that God was recognized in the work that they were doing.

which brings us to our first point of foundations and futility. Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.

Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. We see a repetition in what the psalmist is teaching us or seeking to teach us in this.

So as there's a repetition, what we'll do is we'll take it in two parts. And I'm noticing the time, so you are going to have to listen quickly. The first warning that's given to us, unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.

And what this teaches us is that God must be at the center of everything that we're doing. It doesn't mean that we don't go and build houses. We need houses to be able to live in.

[ 5 : 51 ] But what we have to recognize is that as we build a house, they won't say that this is my house, this is to protect my property, this is to protect all that I own.

Well, that's what a house does. What we have to recognize, that if God isn't in it, everything else that we do is vain.

Are we setting up for ourselves treasures here on earth? Laying up what can be stolen and taken away and wrought and not preparing for the life that is to come.

What is it that we are seeking to build here on earth? Is it a legacy to pass on that points to buildings and money?

Or is it a legacy to pass on that points to God? Are we building a house for our own needs? Or are we building a house that will praise God, that will be open to the stranger, to the visitor, that they can come and they can find rest, knowing that the householder is seeking to praise and glorify God.

[ 7 : 16 ] We learn as children, the wise man built this house upon the rock, the foolish man built this house upon the sand, are we building on false foundations?

Or are we building a house that praises and welcomes God? Each one of us in our own lifetime will have seen how dependence on putting money in the bank, putting money in stocks and shares, can have so much of an adverse effect we don't only have to put on our televisions, put on the news, and we see that stock markets rise and fall.

They rise and fall at the rumour of a merger or of a takeover or of somebody losing their business.

The shares go up and down. Millions wiped off stocks and shares in the twinkling of an eye.

we've read of people who have lost everything because they put their trust in the wrong things. Are we putting our trust in God?

Are we seeking to build a foundation? We spoke about it when we spoke to the children. Are we seeking to root and ground them in the ways of God?

[ 8 : 44 ] But we can only do that if we're rooted and grounded in the ways of God ourself. Are we rooted and grounded in God's word? And are we then passing that on to the next generation that come behind us?

The second part of the verse points to the watchman watching in vain. we see again the sovereignty and the providence of God.

The watchman can stay awake all night but unless God is in what is being done the watchman watches in vain.

You may be wondering why the verses are there from Matthew 6 22 to 23. To be able to watch our eyes need to be effective.

We're told in the verse there that if the eye is healthy the whole body is full of light. But if the eye isn't healthy the whole body can be full of darkness.

[ 10 : 00 ] What do we do with our eyes? We watch things. We read things. Are the things that we are watching are the things that we are reading are they bringing darkness into our life or are they bringing the light of God's word into our life?

What is it that's affecting our watchfulness in this life to prepare us for the life to come? Jesus said to his disciples watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.

And we learn from that that it's not just about watching we learn the importance of prayer. And if we come in prayer we're then recognizing that it's not in our own strength that we do things.

it's not looking to ourselves it's about looking to God and recognizing that God is in it.

How do we apply that to our own lives? What's the application behind this? Well as we move on we see in Matthew again 7 24 to 25 everyone who hears the word of God these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on a rock.

[ 11 : 40 ] The psalmist said I waited for the Lord my God and patiently to bear and that he lifted him out of the mire of life and he set him upon a solid rock and that rock is Christ.

And no matter what rains may have fallen what floods may have come what winds may beat upon him the house that he built because he trusted in God did not fall.

Are we building for God this morning? Are we building our lives on the solid rock of Christ? We go on to Colossians there.

Bond servants obey and everything those who are your earthly masters. We recognize that we have to work. We have to labor. We have to provide for our families.

We need food to eat. This doesn't mean that we sit at home and just hope that God is going to prepare something for us. We have a responsibility to work and to work diligently.

[ 12 : 50 ] But it's not just about being pleasers to men. What we have to recognize as Paul teaches us here that we're not just working for men but in everything we do we're serving Christ.

We're told to be living witnesses. So how we work, how we behave at work, how we talk about our work all reflects how we are as Christians and how we are as individuals.

And if we're always negative about things, people actually say, don't want to be with him. He's negative all the time. He brings me down. But if we recognize that as we work, we work for God, we should be able to say, this is the day that the Lord has made.

I will rejoice and be glad in it and everything I do will be done to God's honor and to God's glory. Each and everything that we do. Because while we may get tired, while we may get weary in everything that we do, we trust, as the psalmist says to us in Psalm 121, we trust in the one that never slumbers.

we trust in the one that never sleeps. Life can be difficult, life can be challenging, but if we do it for ourselves, it will be even more challenging.

[ 14 : 28 ] If we recognize that as we do it, we do it for God and for his honor and for his glory, and that he is with us each and every step of the way, it is not done in vain.

We learned before as we went through Psalm 126, that we reap what we sow. Are we sowing for God each and every day?

And are we seeking to build a foundation not for ourselves, but a foundation that shows that we are standing on Christ each and every day?

Because if we don't have our foundation fully upon Christ, everything is in vain. It is futile. Please, build your foundation on Christ.

Christ. And as we teach our young ones, teach them that the only foundation in life is to stand on Christ and on Christ alone.

[ 15 : 45 ] Fatigue and favour, verse 2. It's vain that you rise up early and you go to rest late, eating the bread of anxious toil, for he gives to his beloved sleep.

We all recognize that we need to work, we've said that already, but it becomes a danger that our work becomes our God. We get up every morning thinking I've got to be the first person into work. I've got to be the last person out of work. I've got to be the one that's seen there. I've got to be the one that does the most hours during the day. At the end of the day, what does it benefit us?

It benefits us nothing. because what we then spend our time doing is thinking I've got to go to bed, but I've got to get up. I've got to go to bed, but I've got to get up.

And we don't sleep because our motivation is not to glorify God. Our motivation is to be a man pleaser and to be seen as the first person in, the last person out.

[ 16 : 59 ] The person that doesn't take a lunch break, the person that doesn't take a tea break. I'm just going to keep working. And how does our health then impact? What does the psalmist teach us in this?

We know that we have to work. The reason we work is because of sin. we can go right back to Genesis 3 and 17.

After the fall in the garden, Adam was told that no longer would everything just be provided for him. No longer would the ground be soft and fertile and ready to receive the seeds that he would plant. It was going to be difficult. But while we have to work because of sin, our motivation for work can then become sin.

We want to provide for those that come behind us. But are we spending so much time at our work that our work is given so much of our time that the people that we're actually providing for don't benefit from our time and our presence.

[ 18 : 18 ] The responsibilities that we have to be able to provide not just money, not just food on the table, but to provide guidance and direction for the next generation falls off the table because we're not there to do it.

We seek to better ourselves. We seek to be the one that gets that next promotion. And I have to be honest.

I preach this to myself. I've been there. I've chased these things. And it only causes stress. It only causes strain. It causes sleepless nights.

how many of you struggle to sleep at night, worrying about what you've left at work or what you're going to face at work the following day. The psalmist tells us he gives his beloved rest.

Do we truly trust in what God has for each and every one of us? He will provide for us. He has promised that he will provide for us if we put our trust in him.

[ 19 : 39 ] Matthew 11, 28 to 30. Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.

Is that where you're at this morning? That you're chasing that next dream. You're feeling that you've got to be at work. You're feeling that they can't do without you.

That your time has to be there and other things are starting to suffer. It might be your health. It might be lack of sleep. The message to you this morning is come to me.

Come to me and rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. For I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls.

For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. That's why Jesus came. He came to call each and every one of us. And he calls each and every one of us.

[ 20 : 45 ] But we have to make a decision as to whether we hear that call or whether we choose to walk away from it. God. I forgot one of my duties this morning to pray the Lord's Prayer with the young folk.

We have a verse from the Lord's Prayer. Give us this day our daily bread. We think we know what we need. We think we need to work to get what we need.

and what we forget is the one that knows all things. The one that has promised that he will provide everything for us.

Not a hair from our head falls that he doesn't know about it. That if we come to him and ask he will give us our daily bread.

As the children of Israel went through the wilderness each and every day manna was provided for them. Enough for the day. If they took too much it had gone off overnight.

[ 21 : 58 ] Give us this day our daily bread. We learnt it as children. Do we pray it each and every day asking that what we need God will provide and do we trust in him for it?

finally family and fortress. We come here this morning as different families. We come to worship together.

In the providence of God some of us have been blessed with children some of us have not. God. But as we come here as a family we come here to share together.

We come here to grow together and we come here to learn together and we recognise the importance even as we've talked and prayed about this morning of the children that come here who are a blessing to each and every one of us.

and how we have a responsibility to train to equip them and to prepare them for the situations that they will face in life.

[ 23 : 16 ] We looked at the arrow. How many of us have had children whether as Sunday school teachers whether in our own homes.

I think I'm right in saying that on some Sunday mornings here we'll have three generations of the same family coming to worship together and the blessing that there is in that.

God said to Abraham that he was going to bless him. That he was going to bless him and he was going to make him a great nation. Are we praying that God will bless us as a church family?

That he will make us a great family not just in terms of numbers but he will make us a family that are united.

United in praising him and giving him all the praise, honour and glory that he is due. The psalmist teaches us as we see there, the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.

[ 24 : 41 ] We've said that we have three generations possibly of the community here gathering and those that are senior in years will have seen blessings, will have seen hard times, but through it all they'll have seen the faithfulness of God not just in their own lives but in the lives of others, in the lives of the church.

But that faithfulness is to those who keep his covenant and remember his commandments. And as parents, as grandparents, as a church family here, we have a responsibility to teach our young ones.

Teach our young ones and prepare them for life. As a family, how do they then go out from here?

We spoke to them and spoke to the children quite deliberately about the importance of being rooted and grounded in God's word.

Can we really teach them about what it is to be rooted and grounded in God's word if we're not rooted and grounded in God's word ourselves? We can take them along and we can ask them to go to Sunday school, give somebody else the responsibility for doing that.

[ 26 : 14 ] But we have a responsibility as parents, as grandparents, as members of this church family, in everything that we do to be rooted and grounded in God's word ourselves first.

How can we be living witnesses if we're not rooted and grounded in God's word? how can we pass something on to the next generation if we don't believe it and live it out ourselves?

And how do we do that? As Hebrews tells us, we meet together and we encourage one another around God's word.

I don't know if each and every one of you recognize the joy and the encouragement that it gives to the minister, to the Kirk session, and even to other believers within the congregation here in seeing people coming here Sunday after Sunday.

Yes, there are still empty seats and we pray that these seats will be filled. are still open. But as a family, you always recognize when there's an empty seat at the table.

[ 27 : 32 ] And it brings joy when somebody comes back, whether it be from college, university, or even just because they stay six doors down and they come back because they want to be around the family table.

It brings joy to each and every one of us. And that's what we should be thinking about when we come together as a church family. the joy that we bring to one another in being here on a Sunday and being in the prayer meeting on a Wednesday night, encouraging one another, upholding one another as we seek to witness for God.

Arrows. I spoke to the children about being arrows. an archer puts the arrow into the bow and pulls it back and lets go of the arrow and the arrow takes flight.

The archer has lost control of the arrow. Only the preparation that he's done in preparing the arrow for flight will hopefully guide the course or the path of its flight.

But before the archer lets go, it needs to consider what's the wind direction, what's the visibility, what's the humidity, is it going to impact the flight of the arrow?

[ 29 : 10 ] and as we let our young ones leave home, there are things that we need to consider for them.

What are going to be the influences on them in life? How do we prepare them for it? And we can't emphasize enough the importance of rooting and grounding them in God's word.

as the arrow takes flight, some might hit the target, some might go over the target, some might fall short of the target, some might get caught by a gust of wind and get blown way off target.

And that can happen with our young ones as they leave home. we can teach them God's way, but as they leave, they end up getting caught out as a gust can take an arrow.

A look to the left or a look to the right can change the path or direction, not just of our young ones, but of each and every one of us. The prodigal son left home.

[ 30 : 31 ] He had been brought up in a home where he knew God. We see that when he sought to return. We have a responsibility the same as the father had to watch and to pray.

Watch and to pray for them as they go. And if they go astray to continue to watch and pray for them.

Sometimes when the arrow misses the target, the archer has to go out and pick it up and clean it down and try letting it go again.

But our prayer for each and every one of them would be that if they do go off track, that as the prodigal son's father was able to say, for my son was once lost but now he is found.

Never ever give up hope. But the important thing that we have to do first is to root and ground them in God's word.

So what does this psalm teach us? The psalm teaches us as we come to a close that our foundations have to be in God, otherwise it is futile.

[ 31 : 52 ] Commit our paths, our work to the Lord. Lord, and he will establish our ways. We have to come to Christ.

We have to come to Christ. Christ stands and he says to each and every one of us, come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.

The only true rest that each and every one of us can receive is to come to Christ. And as I've said, maybe oversaid this morning, for families and for our families to be a fortress, a church family here to be a fortress, we need to be rooted and grounded in God's word, established in the faith.

And we have to walk in the way that Jesus walked. That just as we have received him, that we walk in him. Not walk by him, but walk in him each and every day so that we can be the living witnesses. My prayer would be that if you haven't come to Christ rest this morning. That if you're struggling with lack of sleep, that your focus is wrong, that you're thinking only about how am I going to get that next pound, that next whatever, that you stop and you recognize that Christ is calling to you.  
[ 33 : 40 ] Come unto me and I will give you rest. Let us pray. Amen. Amen.