

# (How to Understand the KJV Bible) 33 Psalm 127

by Keith Simons

---

*The sermon emphasizes the importance of God's involvement in building and defending a nation, and the role of children as a gift from God.*

**Duration:** 23:10

**Scripture:** Psalm 127:1

**Topics:** "KJV Bible", "Dependence On God", "Family as a Blessing"

---

## Description

Keith Simons teaches on Psalm 127, emphasizing that without God's involvement, all human efforts to build and protect our lives are in vain. He explains that the psalm, attributed to Solomon, highlights the importance of relying on God for success in our endeavors, whether building a home or safeguarding a city. Simons illustrates that children are a divine blessing and heritage, essential for the continuation of God's work through generations. He encourages believers to trust in God's provision and guidance, as true success comes from Him, not merely from our hard work. The sermon concludes with the assurance that those who trust in God will not be ashamed when facing challenges.

---

## Transcript

Welcome. We have builders working next door. Is there a psalm for builders? Yes, of course, there's a psalm for everyone, but the psalm that particularly is for builders is Psalm 127, and that's the subject for today's talk.

My name is Keith Symons. I'm a Bible teacher from England, and I present these talks each week explaining the meaning of a particular psalm by looking at it verse by verse and word by word. And Psalm 127 begins with the title A Song of Degrees for Solomon.

So let's explain it. A Song of Degrees. No one really knows the meaning of that title, but degrees means steps upwards, and Jerusalem is on a high hill in the middle of Israel.

And so a likely explanation is that it's describing the journey of the pilgrims going up to Jerusalem to worship God at his house, the temple. And so they would go up through the hills until eventually they reached Jerusalem and the temple, which was itself on or near the top of the hill above Jerusalem. A Song of Degrees for Solomon.

So if this song was for this particular journey, then Solomon's name is especially appropriate because it was Solomon who built up Jerusalem, and Solomon, the son of King David, who was responsible for the building of the great temple, the house of God itself. Solomon was a great builder. David had taken Jerusalem as his capital city from the Jebusites, and he built a palace there.

But Solomon vastly enlarged David's little city onto the adjoining hills, extending the walls, building new palaces and vast buildings. Much of his life was spent building up Jerusalem. And so this says A Song of Degrees for Solomon.

People have suggested that it could have other explanations. It might be by Solomon, but I think it's best left as the King James Bible has it, that it's for Solomon. There's a reference to Solomon's name or the special name God gave him in verse two.

That word beloved is similar to the name that God gave specifically for Solomon in 2 Samuel chapter 12 and verse 25. And he, God, sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet, and he called his name Jedidiah because of the Lord. And that Jedidiah means beloved.

It's another form of the word beloved that occurs in verse two of our psalm. So let's look from the first verse, and the first verse makes a bold declaration. Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.

In other words, God needs to build your house because if God doesn't build your house, then all your effort and all your work building your house is labouring in vain, working in vain, working to no good purpose. That word vain, it's different from the word vanity in Ecclesiastes, but that word vain in this psalm suggests it's destructive. You're destroying your own house.

You're trying to build your house. You're destroying it. Vain means achieving nothing.

You're working so hard to build your house, but God's not building it. God's not in it. And so your work is wasted.

Your efforts are destroyed. So what does it mean for the Lord to build the house? It means that he's got to be in charge of the process. It means that it's got to be his decision, his choice.

You are working, yes, but you should be doing God's work as you build the house. You should be doing what God wants in line with his directions. And we could apply it to any part of our lives and any achievement that we want to make.

If this is just a human achievement, if we're doing it because we're proud of ourselves, or we want to be great people, or we want to be successful or wealthy, or to have a successful family, well, we might be working to no good purpose. We might be wasting all that effort we're putting in, and we will be wasting it if we haven't placed God in the first place. If we haven't given God the power over what we're doing.

If we've chosen to rebel against God, to do our own thing, then we are certainly wasting our effort. The psalm continues with another statement that is very similar. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.

The watchman waketh, waketh. Usually when we speak of someone waking today, we mean waking up from sleep. They've been sleeping and they wake up.

But here the word waketh means staying awake. It was the job of the watchman or the guards or the police, if you like, of an ancient city to stay awake through the night. And they would stand on the walls of the city, which had a pathway around, and the wall completely surrounded the city for its defense from enemy armies that might attack.

And they would wander around these walls, keeping watch out, staying awake through the night, blowing a trumpet at various times to indicate the hours passing through the night. But all that effort, all that staying awake, is in vain unless it's God who defends your city, unless it's God who looks after your city. You need God to be the person who looks after you, who cares for you, who keeps you safe, who watches for dangers, for troubles, for enemies.

How important it is to give God the proper place in your life, because otherwise all your care, all your worry, trying to look after yourself, well, all that is in vain. It's achieving nothing. God has to be central to what you want to achieve, like the building of a house, and to defending what you've already achieved, like keeping a city safe.

In fact, says the author of this psalm, verse 2, it's in vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows. The bread of sorrows, well, the food that you've earned for yourself by your sorrow, by your sad and hard work, you're struggling in life, rising up early in the morning, staying up until late at night, trying to achieve all the things that you need to do. And all you've got yourself is food and nadda and through trouble.

And the author of this psalm says, that's in vain. That isn't the way God wants you to be living. God doesn't just want you to be struggling for the food so that you can stay alive and to struggle.

No, to those he loves, his beloved, he has a precious gift. End of verse 2. For so he giveth his beloved sleep. As a child, I used to think that was saying that sleep was a lovely thing, but I now know that the meaning is, for so he giveth sleep to his beloved.

He gives sleep to the one he loves. And as we've already seen, the one he loves is a play on words. It's a reference to that special name that God gave to Solomon.

But the promise is equally true to all God's people. God loves all his people and he doesn't want them to work hard, struggling to do their own things, eating the bread of sorrows, as the middle of the verse says. No, God wants them to rest properly.

This isn't an encouragement to laziness. Of course we should work at the proper time. Of course we should do the tasks which God has given to us, but we shouldn't work beyond the proper time.

We shouldn't be doing tasks which God hasn't appointed us to do. We should be enjoying the God gives to those he loves. Verse three.

And here in verse three, there seems a change of emphasis with the psalm. It seems to be discussing children and therefore a different subject. Of course, there isn't a different subject.

So we've got to link the second part of the psalm to the first part of the psalm. Let's listen to verse three first. So we've just heard that the things you want to achieve in life, like the building of a house, like the defending of a city, depend on God.

And for Solomon, those meant particular things, because what house especially needed to be built in Solomon's day? Answer, the house of God, the temple. What city needed to be kept or defended in Solomon's day? Well, especially the great city that he was building, the city of Jerusalem. And that work, that work to build up Jerusalem, to build up the nation, and to build it up on the basis of its relationship with God, as shown by the temple, well, that was a work for God to do.

And Solomon had to work in obedience to God's direction and God's call. And so the future of his nation and the future success of his nation depended on God and not on all his hard work. Solomon worked very hard on all this, arranging vast teams of labourers and so on.

But if he were just doing his own work, or if he were working for the sake of pride, then it would fail. And how easily the future of that country, which Solomon was building strong, could fail. It needed children.

It needed another generation to continue on the work of the previous generations, just as Solomon had continued his father David's work. So he needed his own children to continue that work. But how could Solomon achieve it? How could he have children who served God loyally? How could the future of Israel as a nation be secured? Let's read verse three again.

Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward. Children literally in the Hebrew means sons. Lo means look.

Look, sons are an heritage of the Lord, an heritage, an inheritance. This seems a long way round in a way, because we usually think of an inheritance as a gift that a father gives, typically on death, to his son. Yet here, the inheritance is that the father receives children.

How is that possible? Because this inheritance comes from God. This is a gift of God to the fathers, that they should have children. And the fruit of the womb, in other words, what comes forth from the womb, the success of the womb, the womb being the part of a woman's body where a child is carried.

So this is God's reward for people, that they should have children, children to continue their work, children to continue the special things they're doing for God. That is God's reward. That is God's heritage.

That is God's gift to his people, the future of nation, the future of a church. Our church has become an elderly church, and we're wanting new families and young people and young children to join it. But we know that it doesn't depend on our effort or our work, although there are many in our church who are working so hard to make that possible.

We know it depends on God, that it's God's gift that will raise up a new generation in our church, just as Solomon needed to know that it was God's gift that would bring a new generation in Israel who would continue the work which had been done by David and by Solomon. So they needed to look to God for that. Verse four, as arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of the youth.

A mighty man means a soldier, a brave and bold soldier. They didn't have guns then, they didn't have modern weapons, but they had arrows. And an arrow was a powerful weapon as they saw it then.

You know, we think of bows and arrows now, and it seems like it's cowboys and Indians from the films. But in those days, this was how you fought wars. These were your most powerful weapons.

If you could fire an arrow, you could attack an enemy while that enemy was still far away from you, and you were still in a position of relative safety. And you don't want your arrow to be put away, you want it to be in your hand so you can fire it immediately and it's ready. The end of verse four, so are children of the youth.

By children of the youth, it means when the soldier, when the mighty man, is still a young man, he has children. And just as he can send forth his arrows to fight for him, so these children, born when he's young, when he's a young and strong man, as he gets a little older and a little more mature, and the children are grown up and he can send those children to fight his battles for him. Verse five, happy is a man that hath his quiver full of them.

Here it sort of mixes the metaphors. A quiver is a bag for carrying arrows. But it's not talking about a bag full of arrows, it's talking about a quiver full of them.

Happy is a man that has a family of many young men. Many young men who can go forward like those arrows of verse four and win the battles on behalf of that man. That man is still using the Hebrew word which was translated mighty man in verse four.

Happy is a soldier that does this. The word for happy is the same as the word blessed that begins the book of Psalms. It's describing someone who's truly content.

Truly content is a man who has many brave and bold young children. Young men who he can send forward to do his work and to win the victories that he would have fought as a young man. Oh he's trusted God, he's put his faith in God and God has given him a family, a family of young men.

And that is what will bring success to the future of his nation. And verse five concludes, they, that's the sons, shall not be ashamed but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate. So the enemies are in the gate.

The idea is an ancient city had, as we've already seen, a wall that went right round it and the entrance to that city was at the city gate. And that was an important place therefore for meetings because everyone would have to go through that gate. And we see in the book of Ruth how, how the court held its meetings in the city gate.

And of course if you were, you're meeting with an enemy of that city, then that meeting would take place at the entrance to the city and the city gate. The enemy wouldn't be allowed in but you would stand in the gate and shout across and he would shout his replies. So whether these, these young men were dealing with enemies from outside the city or, or people who were hostile to our brave warrior inside the city and had maybe taken him to court, they're going forward at their father's direction to do his work and they will not be ashamed.

They'd be ashamed if they were too afraid to speak to the enemy. They'd be too ashamed if they didn't have a proper answer to the enemy. They'd be too ashamed if this was a situation where they were weak and they were unsuccessful but they shall not be ashamed.

They will go forward, those sons, at their father's direction to do their father's work and they will boldly go forward and they will speak with the enemies, they will contend with them, they will argue with them. Whether it's arguing in court, whether it's proclaiming that they in the city will, will fight and will defend the city from an army that is against it, we don't know, but they will speak with the enemies in the gate and

they will not be ashamed. And so we see that these young men, these children, have learned from their father.

They are bold and they are brave because they've learned the lesson in verse one. They've learned that the future of their nation, the future of their homes, the future of their cities doesn't depend on them but on God. How can they speak those bold words of which they're not ashamed? Unless they're speaking with the support of the Lord, unless they are speaking because they are trusting in God, for they are weak, they can't really fight against and defeat every enemy, no one can do that, but God can.

And if God before us then who can be against us? So they go forward with that boldness because they're trusting God, God who helped their father, God who allowed their father and enabled their father to build their family home, God who defended their city until then, God who established their church and who gave them that place. They are trusting that same God, they are living for that same God and when the enemies approach and when the enemies speak against them, they speak with boldness, they're not ashamed because they can declare what God has done in the past, he will continue to do. Please write to me, my email address is 333kjb at gmail.com. Please tell me that you heard the talk on Psalm 127, 333kjb at gmail.com. And now here is the whole Psalm, Psalm 127, a song of degrees for Solomon.

Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is in vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows, for so he giveth his beloved sleep.

Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them, they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/30/SID30049.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/keith-simons/how-to-understand-the-kjv-bible-33-psalm-127/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**