

Long Term Pro-Life Strategy

Psalm 127

Preached by Philip Kayser
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Intro:

Today is pro-life Sunday, and though I was planning to continue in the book of Acts, I kept feeling like I needed to bring a word of encouragement as to what the family can accomplish for the long term. It's easy to feel hopeless when you read some of the websites already popping up for the 2008 elections. If you vote for candidate A who appears to be solidly pro-life, you will have to swallow his aggressive socialistic policies. Candidate B wants to hem in the socialism a little bit and expand the rights of homosexuals. Candidate C doesn't seem to offer anything other than hollow rhetoric for how he stands for America and for America's values (whatever that means). And you get tired of it after a while. There are strategists who know how to play in this mad arena. And I praise God for them. But what are we peons to do as things get worse and worse no matter which candidates get in?

Well, I am optimistic. Though Christians must fight on many fronts to preserve our freedoms, I don't think it is the fight out there that is the biggest problem. Yes, we must engage the world. But there are numerous battles that must be waged within the church to turn it into a winning army. And one of the biggest fights that we face is with our own discouragement and cynicism. We give up too easily. We feel helpless in the face of political tyranny when we really have every reason to be optimistic. And I hope to share some of those reasons. It really is interesting to see the number of issues homeschoolers have won simply because they weren't cynical. They believed they could make a difference. Even this last week the homeschool lobby was terrific. And this Psalm gives us some perspective on what difference families can make.

I. Humanism is Self-Destructive (vv. 1-2)

The first encouraging thing that I see in this Psalm is that humanism is self-destructive. Verse 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.** He's not denying that humanists can build houses or that they can guard cities. But he is saying that ultimately all their

work is futile because it self-destructive. Let me repeat that. *All humanism is self-destructive and vain, whether conservative or liberal.* Verse 1 says that the humanistic contractor builds his house in vain; the humanistic city magistrates guard their city in vain. Verse 2 says that the humanistic laborer runs on the treadmill of his labors in vain. It may seem as if they are going somewhere, but God has guaranteed that there will be such major weaknesses that they will be no match for a righteous church.

Let's start by defining humanism. Humanism is simply the concept that man is the measure of all things. I do a thing because it relates to me and benefits me. The humanists of verse 1 did not look to the Lord for how they run their affairs, nor do the laborers of verse 2. The humanist doesn't view life from God's perspective. Now certainly, he might think about God once in awhile, when he's having devotions, or when he is in church, but he doesn't submit his plans to God's law. And that's why these verses say, **"Unless the Lord builds the house . . . Unless the Lord guards the city"** When you leave God out of the picture all is vanity. So humanism is leaving God and His Word out of our decisions. That makes some of us humanists sometimes, doesn't it? Ecclesiastes defines humanism as living life under the sun rather than under heaven; and even Christians can fall into the trap of humanism.

Now both points of today's sermon are supposed to be very encouraging. I may not succeed, but they are supposed to be. Point I, the humanistic worldview is self-destructive. Point II, Christianity will ultimately triumph.

So let's look first at how humanism will crumble. The word "**vain**" is translated elsewhere with these words: "desolate, desolation, destroy, destruction, storm, wasteness, emptiness, ruin, devastation, vanity and ruin." It's a pretty negative evaluation of what it means to leave God out of the picture. Now sometimes we Christians for pragmatic reasons think that it is best not to tell the world that the Bible informs our economics, our child rearing or our politics. But to leave the Bible out of the equation is to at the very least to give the impression that we have no problem with humanism, we just come to different humanistic conclusions. And I think this is the problem when the culture wars of today are framed as being liberal versus conservative. The real culture wars are all humanism versus King Jesus. And God says that unless the Lord is clearly lifted up, God will guarantee that your plans will not succeed. Now that's encouraging to me. Let's trace out humanism's self-destruction, first in its social structures (v. 1) and then in its dominion (v. 2)

A. *In its social structures (v. 1)*

1. Homes Will Crumble

Verse 1 says, "**Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.**" One of the first contrasts we see is the building of a house (in verse 1) versus the building of a household (in verses 3 and following). Though the word for house can metaphorically refer to a household, it is a brick and mortar word and the emphasis in the first three verses has to do with the accumulation and guarding of things. Solomon at the end of his life lamented that he had spent so much of his life in the pursuit of things that he neglected developing godly children. And over and over again he expresses his regrets. The pursuit of the American dream didn't start in America. You would think that Solomon was a full-blooded American by the way he wrote Ecclesiastes. And in this psalm there is an intentional contrast between *things* that are pursued in verses 1 and 2 and *people* that are pursued in verses 3-5. What is the highest priority in an average humanist's home? The accumulation of things, pleasures, comforts and more things. Now certainly, there are many humanists who try to be good parents and try to provide good homes, but the focus of attention in your average American Dream home is the house, the structure, the material goods that they have accumulated, the clothes that they have bought for their children, the latest Nintendo games to pacify their children, the dishwasher, the wide-screen digital TV, the riding lawnmower. It is the pursuit of the material. What did Christ say? "**Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.**" God does add things to our lives. He is not against things. But those must only come as a stewardship to those who serve God with absolutely everything they have.

Now if the word "vain" means that humanism is self-destructive, there must be a reason. And actually, if we were to really dig into it we would find multiple reasons – economic, social, dynastic and otherwise. I'm just going to investigate a couple.

If you have been following the population statistics around the world, you will notice an interesting thing. Wealthy humanists are not replacing themselves, are they? In fact, the wealthier they are, the less they are replacing themselves. In some countries this is due to infertility caused by venereal diseases, infections and abortions. But in many cases, it is simply choice. There are increasing numbers of humanists who simply don't want to have any children. Homosexuals certainly are not reproducing. But neither are the feminists, the socialists or even the libertarians. If it weren't for Christians, the American population would be like Europe's – in steady decline. We are slightly declining. The population replacement ratio in any

given nation would be 2.1 children per woman of childbearing age. America has the highest rate among Western nations at 2.0 – slightly under the replacement ratio. But all other Western nations are in radical decline. And when they don't want to reproduce (or in the case of homosexuals, they can't reproduce) how do they expand? By recruiting new homosexuals and new humanists. And what is their chief vehicle for recruitment? Well, they have said it themselves: It's the government schools.¹ What would happen if government schools were closed down completely? These infertile people would have a tough time carrying their agenda into the next generation. Humanism would be instantly reduced.

And what is so ironic is that most Christians gladly hand their children over to the humanists and let them disciple their children. It boggles my mind that Christians don't get it. What's the number 1 reason for Christians sending their children to the government schools? It's money. They won't be able to pursue their hunger for the accumulation of things if both parents don't work. Which means that they are playing the same self-destructive game that the humanists are playing.

How do we make America a Christian nation? Well, step one is to stop letting humanists disciple our children and take seriously verse 4 which says that those children need to stay in our hand. Those arrows must not be shot out prematurely or they will shoot crooked. They need to be straightened, fitted, feathered, sharpened and polished. If the church in America would just take that simple step, it would hugely undermine the humanists' power base. But it shouldn't surprise us that when Christians leave the job of education to our enemies that a majority of Christians leave the church by the time they are in college. And it's frustrating to see how the church is desperately trying to reach these lost children by becoming even more like the world – or what they call becoming more relevant. We need to be doing the opposite and educating our own children in a radically consistent Biblical world and life view. So step one is to take kids out of the government schools, or better yet, get on school boards and vote to defund them. Wouldn't it be great if we got a school board who voted to defund and privatize the schools?

¹ One such quote that is quite bold was made by Charles F. Potter, the founder and leader of the first humanist society of New York: “[E]ducation is thus a most powerful ally of humanism, and every public school is a school of humanism. What can the theistic Sunday school, meeting for an hour once a week, and teaching only a fraction of the children, do to stem the tide of a five-day program of humanistic teachings?” Charles F. Potter, *Humanism: A New Religion*, p. 128

Step two is to start educating our own children in a consistent Biblical world and life view. We need to take seriously the Blueprints of the Old and New Testaments. Don't just buy any textbooks. Buy Biblical textbooks.

Step three is to model for our children what it means to contend with our enemies in the gates and not to be totally self-absorbed in homeschooling and in our own pursuits. When children see us contending at an abortion clinic, at the homosexual meetings, at city council and in other gate-issues, they will learn a lot. We will look at this issue of contending in the gates in a bit because I think it even includes business competition, but let me spend a bit more time on the vanity or self-destructiveness of American humanists.

The first is that they are building houses, not households. And even when they are having children, they are building their houses, not their households. There is many a millionaire that has to give their money to a foundation because they have never taught their children to carry on their vision. And the foundation doesn't either. It's the constant frustration of rich people who don't know how to build a dynasty.

The second self-destructive thing is that they are declining in population precisely to give Christians the opportunity to outnumber the Egyptians.

Thirdly, they thus can't perpetuate their humanism to the next generation through any other means that recruitment. If we can cut off the source of recruits, we can hinder the expansion of humanism. They are vulnerable at that point.

Fourth, their building of things is in vain because God has ordained that the righteous will inherit the wealth of the wicked, not vice versa. Isn't that what Proverbs 13:22 says? **the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous.** Of course, that assumes that the church is willing to be righteous and to do things God's way. But we have nothing to fear from the humanists who are pursuing the American Dream.

2. Societies Will Fall

And what is true of homes is true on a grander scale of whole societies. The second part of verse 1 uses the image of a city-state. It says, "**Unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.**" Notice that the emphasis is not on issues, but on acknowledging God. It doesn't say, "Unless Roe v Wade is reversed," we are in trouble. Obviously, I want Roe v Wade reversed too. But the way it is framed is that God Himself must be acknowledged and God Himself must be on the side of the city-state. Humanism is making man the measure of all things. *The opposite of humanism is not the conservative movement.* The opposite of humanism is

a viewpoint that makes God and His Word the measure of all things. Too many Christians have been lured by the siren cry of conservatism and have poured their money and energies into stealth values. Stealth values are humanistic values that have the same name as what the Bible gives them, but by appealing to secular authority. And time after time they end up never doing anything with those values. But that is simply another tower of Babel that will fall apart because there is no mortar that will hold the bricks together for generations to come. Now some forms of humanism are better than others – that’s a topic for another day. But we must never be the purveyors of humanism. Never. Not even for pragmatic reasons – because this says that it is self-destructive. God is against it.

The problem with most pro-lifers is that they are conservatives, not Biblicists. And there is a radical difference. Let me read to you what R.L. Dabney said in the 1800's about American conservative movement. I think it is something that is just as relevant today. He said,

"[t]his is a party which never conserves anything. Its history has been that it demurs [which means that it takes exception to; it demurs] to each aggression of the progressive party, and aims to save its credit by a respectable amount of growling, but always acquiesces [that means, “gives in”] at last in the innovation.

"What was the resisted novelty of yesterday is today one of the accepted principles of conservatism; it is now conservative only in affecting to resist the next innovation, which will tomorrow be forced upon its timidity and will be succeeded by some third revolution to be denounced and then adopted in its turn.

"American conservatism is merely the shadow that follows Radicalism as it moves forward towards perdition. [I love that sentence. He said, “American conservatism is merely the shadow that follows Radicalism as it moves forward towards perdition.”] It remains behind it, but never retards it, and always advances near its leader. This pretended salt hath utterly lost its savor: wherewith shall it be salted?

"Its impotency is not hard, indeed, to explain. It is worthless because it is the conservatism *of expediency only, and not of sturdy principle*. It intends to risk nothing serious for the sake of the truth, and has no idea of being guilty of the folly of martyrdom.

I think Psalm 127 is an indictment of the conservative movement just as much as it is of the radical liberal movement. It is conservative only in

being slightly behind what the radical Democrats are trying to do. It used to be 50 years behind, and now it seems like 5 years behind. Although, some republicans are trying to outdo democrats in spending and being compassionate conservatives. So all humanism is vain and self-destructive. But again, this is encouraging to me. What it shows me is that God will not bless anything that does not honor Him. Humanism is no match for Christ and His kingdom. It is not match for the church when we are willing to affirm Christ's crown rights.

The American humanist watchman stays awake in vain. We can have the best military in the world, the most advanced technology, a resilient economy, but God says that those efforts are vain and self-destructive. If you are intimidated by the virulent humanism of American culture, don't be. It *will* be replaced. If Christians don't take the second half of this psalm seriously, it will simply be replaced by another form of humanism. But it will be replaced. Actually, it's already been replaced more than once. America is not the same country that it was when the Constitution was written. But Christianity could replace it if the church would wake up and take advantage. We are no match for humanism if our goal is to try to insert a stealth value into the humanistic system. Martin Luther said, "did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing." The Reformers who transformed the face of Europe were not content with stealth incrementalism. They were bold to affirm Christ in all that they did. We don't need more stealth Christians. We need more bold Christians like the Reformers.

The reason this is not a Christian nation has nothing to do with the power of humanism. America's policies are suicidal and self-destructive. The reason we are not a Christian nation is because the church needs reforming and the families need reforming. You can't build a Christian nation from pagan educated Christians. It won't happen.

So we have seen that humanism is self destructive in its social structures. Homes will crumble and societies will fall without Christ.

B. In its attempts at dominion (v. 2)

But humanism is also self-destructive in its attempts at dominion. In verse 2 the Psalmist points out that every area of endeavor and dominion is subject to destruction, futility if God is not in it. "**It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows;** [that's the rat race that the ordinary humanist is on. But then he adds] **for so he gives His beloved sleep.**" They have not learned what rest in the Lord is. Now does this mean

that Christians should not think about security for themselves, should not strive to have homes, and save up for the future, should not get up early and stay up late? I used to think that this psalm was only saying we ought to get more sleep, but after reading about the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 I came to realize that it is not always wrong to stay up late or get up early. Her hands were by no means idle. What this is saying is that the dominion, the industry, the labors of the wicked are bound for failure, but God prospers those who follow His law so much that He gives them satisfying sleep, or if the NASB is right, He gives them prosperity even while they sleep. What a contrast. Here's how the NASB words it: **He gives to his beloved even in his sleep.** The NAB has it: **all this God gives to his beloved in sleep.** In other words, all the things that the humanists are striving for God gives to the righteous, and He continues to give even while he is sleeping.

Don't think that God wants to hold out on you. He loves to bless the industry of the righteous. And when the righteous have this proper, God-centered perspective in all that they do, they have an entirely different attitude to children and family than the humanist, and on this pro-life Sunday, I want to focus the rest of our attention on that proper view of the family.

C. It is no match for Christians who have the favor of the Lord (vv. 1-2)

We already have hints in verses 1-2 that the humanist is no match for consistent Christians. The word "unless" in verse 1 implies that when God builds the house and guards the city the opposite is true. But let's focus most of our time on Solomon's answer to humanism in verses 3-5.

II. Christianity Will Ultimate Triumph (vv. 3-5)

A. Despite the fact that it is the opposite of power religion

Point number II is that Christianity will triumph. But it won't triumph in the way that those who are versed in humanism would expect. They might expect God to say that we must capture the robes of an empire. That is what humanism has always done. The robes are the positions of power and the fulcrum points of a nation. They are equivalent to the gates of a city. Judges wore robes; academics and civic officers also wore robes. Pastors wore robes. And in our modern culture we could add that the media is another fulcrum that would fit into this idea of gates. And so the power brokers have systematically sought to capture all the robes of a country and to try to control a nation's economics and values through those robes. Now, we are

going to be seeing that each of these fulcrums of a culture must be captured before a nation can be a Christian nation, but we are not to do it the way the humanists do.

But Christianity does not start from the top down. It's not a power religion. It starts from the bottom up. It's a grass roots movement. Verse 3 says, "**Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is His reward.**" Now, isn't that a strange place to start your answer to the power of humanism? We might think that getting a high position in government would be a heritage from the Lord. Well, eventually it is. But it has to be won from the ground up. And so he starts with children, the most helpless of all. *Your children are the greatest weapons that you have in our culture.* This is the beauty of God's kingdom. It turns everything upside down

God's solution starts with a family.

It continues by adding children.

It continues with education of those children.

It continues with multiplication of the family's numbers and influence

It continues with these well-trained offspring beginning to take on enemies in the places of influence in the gates of the city. That's verse 5. There were three things that happened in the gates of the city. And any good Bible dictionary will point this out. The gates were the places of commerce, judgment and rule. That's where *we* want to start, but God's answer is to make that the eventual goal, but not the start of our dominion. We want to rule, but the Bible says that we must begin by serving.

Before God can trust the church with the gates of the city, it must learn to train the family. Self-government precedes godly civil government. This has always been a rule of Christian civics – self-government precedes godly civil government. If you want a quick fix, yes, pour all your energies into politics. But if you want a long lasting solution, then start with the family and influence every Christian family that you know to start with the family. This in no way neglects politics. It simply puts first things first. And as millions of self-governing law-keepers begin to grow up they cannot *help* but have an influence in the gates of a culture.

But this *does* mean you will instantly be at war, because the humanists want to recruit your children. Right? We saw that in the first point. So they will always want to interfere with your education. And there should not be a single battle aimed at capturing our children that we should be ignorant of. Don't allow cynicism in the political process to let you give up in fighting for your children. Any bill that relates to education, child care, corporal punishment, invasion of privacy, the right to bear arms or other family

matters needs to be studied very carefully because it probably has the devil's handiwork written all over it. Though this is involvement in politics, it is to protect what God says is our heritage and reward. The state does not give us the right to educate our young, God does. Even if it means civil disobedience we must strive to educate our children. If we lose on this level, we lose everything. Children are not wards of the state, they are rewards of God. And to give them up to the state is an insult to the God who entrusted them to us.

1. It starts from the bottom up (family)

Look at the subpoints under A. I want you to notice that this verse begins at the bottom of society, not at the top. This is a grassroots methodology. Our trust is not in Princes, though we sometimes bring reproof to princes, and God sometimes gives success to such reproofs. And any time you wish you had the government, the media or the big bucks that Planned Parenthood has, just realize one thing: since their source of income comes mainly from one place – big government, their source of income can instantly be dried up by budgetary woes, disaster or change in government. When God sent Jesus into the world, He didn't send Him as a Caesar or a Pharaoh who was already wielding earthly power. No. He sent Him into a humble homeschooling family.

2. It starts with weakness (babies)

Secondly, this verse begins in weakness, which is where God's strength is made perfect.

3. It sees the family as the most basic institution

This verse sees the family as being the most basic institution in the land. Where does Timothy say that we learn how to be elders? We learn it by training our children in the family. The family must be restored to its most important role. So many churches undermine the family. In fact, Gil told me about one church that said that when they walked through the church doors their family ceased to exist as a family. He meant that they were now going to be treated as individuals equally under church authority and that the church could bypass parental authority. I know of another pastor that wouldn't let parents discipline children in the church. He disciplined the children with a paddle. That's a church that you want to avoid like the plague. So, God's answer is to start with the family.

4. It has a long term perspective (generational)

This strategy requires a long-term perspective. It's multi-generational. Now, there are immediate things that we can do, and contending with our enemies is one of them. But success is multigenerational. If you think it's got to get done in five years, you will probably be discouraged. But if you are committed to a multi-generational approach, you will be encouraged. It's not all up to you.

5. It starts with those who initially have the least influence (children)

Fifth, this strategy begins the process of influencing our country with those who seem like they will have the least influence in our country. A little baby can't do much, can it? But that's where God wants us to focus. And if we are willing to do so, we will see in a moment the power that this has.

B. It will triumph because of God's blessing

1. "Heritage"

Point B. Christianity will triumph because of God's blessing. The words "heritage" and "reward" indicate that there is more than human effort involved here. The supernatural is also involved. When we invert the humanist pyramid and begin to have servant hearts within our own homes, amazing things will happen over the generations. There will be a multiplying effect to the point that a family can become a dynasty. There have been a few pagan dynasties in America that have had huge influence generation after generation, but almost always it is because they borrowed this family value from Christianity.

So under point II we have first seen that Christianity will triumph and be given success by God despite the fact that Christianity is not a power religion; it's not a top-down religion. Christianity is a religion of service not of position seeking.

2. "Reward"

C. It will triumph through people, not institutions (v. 4)

But point C says that it will triumph through people, not institutions. Verse 4 says, **Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth.** An archer's primary weapon is his arrow. So this is saying that our primary weapon is our children. What a remarkable thought. The world tends to think that the most powerful weapons are either money, position,

office or sword. They are *things*. And admittedly, those can be powerful. But Christ has chosen to conquer through our children.

And I am just staggered by the brilliance of God's methodology. While humanists average 1.6 children in their lifetime, and fail to train those 1.6, we are raising up an army at an average rate of 5 or more children and are thoroughly training these children in spiritual martial arts and with a spiritual passion to take the nation for king Jesus. Decade after decade there is a multiplication effect.

Verse 4 says, "**Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth.**" Those of you who are adults are warriors who are in the thick of the battle, and your children are spoken of as being arrows. And there are three points that I want to draw from this imagery.

First, arrows are tools of conquest and dominion. Now if you don't believe in dominion. If you are expecting to get raptured out of this world at any time, then it is logical to think of children as burdens that might hinder a last frantic effort to pour all of our resources into missions before Christ comes back. The dispensationalist who wrote the book, 88 reasons why Christ has to come back in 1988, convinced many people to sell their homes and all they had in a last ditch effort to win souls. I was told by more than one person in that camp not to have children.

But God has called us to dominion, and our children are a vital part of the division of labor that accelerates dominion over time. If I take dominion by myself, I do well. So I am not knocking the dominion that singles can take. Daniel, Shadrack, Meshek and Abednego were all singles that had a tremendous influence. Isaiah 56 speaks of the tremendous influence that eunuchs would have in the new covenant. But if I not only take dominion as an individual, but I also train five to ten children to take dominion, I have hugely increased the scope of dominion. And if each of my five children has five to ten children, I will have a significant clan of warriors. And if they catch the same vision, then before I die, there will be a Gideon's army of people trained to make a difference. That's just my family, and then you add your families to it. What can a Gideon's army do? What can several Gideon's armies do? According to the Bible, quite a bit. Gideon's army completely changed the face of his culture within one year.

But there's a second lesson in verse 4. Before dominion can occur, those arrows must be formed rightly. And so the second point is that arrows don't grow wild. They have to be prepared. One of the functions of a soldier was to prepare his arrows and when they became warped, to straighten them out. It doesn't do any good to have 20 arrows if they are all

crooked. Quality is more important than quantity, though ideally we should desire both.

And the forming of the arrow is the area of education, discipleship of discipline and of mentoring. God has placed these children in your family as a stewardship trust. They are not going to become tools of dominion automatically. Let me read you what George Swinnock, a Puritan, had to say,

"Children are compared to 'arrows.' Now, we know that sticks are not by nature arrows; they do not grow so, but they are made so; by nature they are knotty and rugged, but by art they are made smooth and handsome. So children by nature are rugged and untoward [which means unruly and hard to manage], but by education are refined and reformed, made pliable to the divine will and pleasure."

Unfortunately, many parents fail to see their responsibility of turning their children into arrows. They shoot their children out of the quiver prematurely by sending them to public school expecting them to be missionaries. They expect them to be arrows just by virtue of the fact that they are born into their family. But those children must be taught the principles of dominion, of what the Biblical blueprints are, of character, goals, strategies and tactics. It does no good to study a pagan textbook in a Christian school. That's the problem that I have with the classical approach to education. It's still discipleship by the pagans, though it may go on in a Christian school or in a homeschool. God wants our children's fingers trained for spiritual battle. He wants them to know first and foremost the Bible and how to apply it to economics, science, math and every other endeavor. Our children must be carefully formed while they are young so that they can grow up to be powerfully used in the world. Now if I had done it over again I would change some of our instruction. But the very fact that my kids and your children are out of the government schools has given them a huge head start. So don't be discouraged if you have regrets like I do. They can build on what we have given.

I'd like to make a third observation about this arrow in verse 4. While an arrow is in the hand it can be prepared, but once it has left the hand and been shot from the bow, it is too late to bend the arrow straight. Don't be too quick to shoot the arrow forth. Personally, I think that girls should be kept in the hand (that is, in the home) until married. The first time they are shot out of the nest is when they are placed under the authority of a husband. But that's a topic for another time.

D. It's influence will reach all the way to the gates of culture (v. 5)

One last point. Verse 5 indicates that ultimate victory is what is in view. Our influence will reach all the way from the family to the gates of the culture. The last clause says, "**They shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with their enemies in the gate.**" Remember that the gates are the fulcrum points of a society. God wants us to have influence in each of those fulcrum points such as the arts, business, media and civics. But to do it in a way that includes the family and trains the family. This might mean letting a child seek you verbally duking it out with an abortionist. Or it might mean showing a child how you were able to get a market that your competition was after because you served with quality and efficiency. That's not as exciting as winning a landslide election, but it will have a much more profound impact upon our country long-term. Sometimes God allows short flash in the pan revivals such as happened under a few kings, where there were instantaneous changes in these fulcrum points. But more often than not, these gates of media, civics, arts and business are only influenced as we serve them effectively and prove ourselves indispensable. Proverbs 22:29 says, **Do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings.** Water rises to its own level. That's what happened to Daniel, Shadrack, Mesheck and Abednego. They served the king so effectively, that their views prevailed. They had a huge influence.

The Hebrew in this passage for "speak" is taken in the sense of to compete. So some versions translate it, **They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gate.** If your enemies put you to shame, it means that you have lost the argument, or the sales deal, or the military plan or the science contract. If you are not put to shame, it implies that you have won the argument or the sales deal or the military contract. So education can have as its goal effectiveness in the market place of ideas, values or even products. Some of your children may have to compete in business, and you may have to train them much more in practical skills than in speaking skills. Others may primarily be the market place of ideas and may have to be taught apologetics, logic and rhetoric. But most people will be competing in some arena. And if you have studied much about free market economics, you understand that the businessman who serves the best wins. Or as Christ worded it, the one who wants to be first must be servant of all. So we are not talking about lording it over other people, but of making ourselves so valuable that people need us. But whether your enemies like your competition or not, this passage calls us to 1) honor God in everything, 2) learn to be the best at what God has called you to do, 3) do your best to

Psalm 127 – Long Term Strategy • page 15

Preached by Phil Kayser at DCC on 1-21-2007

prepare your children to work in the gates of culture; don't shoot them out too quickly, 4) have lots of such children, 5) model what it means to contend in the gates (whether it's at the abortion clinic or at some other place of competition), and then 6) by faith expect His blessing. He loves to bless His people.

There is lots to be discouraged about in our nation. But I am encouraged by how many people are training their children for long-term victory. Abortion, homosexuality, socialism, imperialism, irreverence and many other sins are on the rise. And we must oppose such evil to the best of our ability. In fact, that can be part of the training for our children. But our chief goal should be to train soldiers who won't give up, who know how to think, and who are unashamed to own Christ in all that they do. Make it so Lord. Amen.