



The Sermon

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Psalm 90

October 8, 2023

"Live with an Eternal Perspective"

TRANSCRIPT

Well, good morning. We're going to be in Psalm 90. So while you're turning to there, I want to make an editorial note. There's been some misinformation from the pulpit the last couple weeks. Two weeks ago, Dr. Lawson did Psalm 1 and talked about how it was the gateway psalm, it was the most important psalm in the Psalter. And then last week, we had Austin Duncan teach Psalm 46, a song of confidence, and he said, "No, Dr. Lawson was wrong. That's not the most important psalm; it's Psalm 46." Well, I'm just here to say they're both wrong. The most important psalm is the one that was written first, not in that order – it wasn't put in that order – but it was written first, and it's Psalm 90. So, it's good you're here today to hear the most important psalm in the Psalter.

We're going to be in Psalm 90, as I said. So if you have your Bible, please turn there – it's right in the center of your book – and I'll read, pray, and then we'll get started. Psalm 90, verse 1, Moses writes, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. You turn man back into dust and say, 'Return, O children of men.' For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it passes by, or as a watch in the night."

Verse 5, "You have swept them away like a flood, they fall asleep; in the morning they are like grass which sprouts anew. In the morning it flourishes

and sprouts anew; toward evening it fades and withers away. For we have been consumed by Your anger and by Your wrath we have been dismayed. You have placed our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your presence. For all our days have declined in Your fury; we have finished our years like a sigh."

Verse 10, "As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, or if due to strength, eighty years, yet their pride is but labor and sorrow; for soon it is gone and we fly away. Who understands the power of Your anger and Your fury, according to the fear that is due You? So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom." That's the verse that this psalm hinges on, that's the key verse.

Verse 13, "Do return, O Lord; how long will it be? And be sorry for Your servants. O satisfy us in the morning with Your lovingkindness, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days You have afflicted us, and the years we have seen evil. Let Your work appear to Your servants and Your majesty to their children. Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us; and confirm for us the work of our hands; yes, confirm the work of our hands." Let's go to the Author of this Psalm.

[Prayer] Dear heavenly Father, we thank You for Your richness in putting these books together. We thank You for the 66 books, the 44 authors, the thousands of years that this was compiled. And it's one revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ and Him crucified. From beginning to end, it is salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. We thank You for Moses' words here that You've inspired him to write. Thank You for this psalm. We ask that You would teach us to number our days, that we might have a heart of wisdom. So we ask that Your Spirit would do a great work this morning through this text. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. [End]

About two weeks ago, actually two weeks ago to the day, my wife and I were in Birmingham on a trip. And I turned my phone on and I got a text from one of the leaders in my office that said, "Call me immediately." Well, that's usually not a good thing. And so, of course, I called him. And as

Mark Becker is often fond of saying, "Life can change with a phone call." And it wasn't long before I had gotten my leader on the phone that he had told me that one of my close friends and colleagues at work, a man I had known in office next to for 30 years was gone. He had tragically died the day before. And having been in my office just a few days ago, that was it, he was gone.

Death is a sobering reality. In the Bible, death is an interloper. It wasn't supposed to be this way. It's abrupt. But the one positive thing about death is that it brings perspective. Solomon, the wisest man that ever lived, said that it's better to be in the house of mourning than in the house of feasting. The reason he said that, I think, is because death brings perspective. When we go to a funeral, it forces us to take stock of our lives. It forces us to take inventory of what we're doing, of why we're here, of why life matters. And we come face-to-face with the reality that we will die, as the person that we're honoring at the funeral had.

And so as we come to this passage this morning in Psalm 90, Moses is, in every jot and tittle of this prayer, telling each of us, as he told the Israelites, to live with an eternal perspective. And that's really the title of this message this morning: "Live with an Eternal Perspective." Live with the end in view.

You'll see the superscription above Psalm 90 simply says, "A prayer of Moses, the man of God." Truly, Moses was a man of God because he was God's man. Moses' life was filled with providence and paradox. He was, on the one hand, the meekest man that ever lived, and yet on the other hand, he had murdered an Egyptian. He was clearly an introvert and didn't want to speak on God's behalf, and yet he was an incredible mouthpiece before Pharaoh. He was a humble servant, and yet he was a conquering hero against the greatest army of his day. He was a little baby that was put in a basket and given up in the hands of God's providence, and yet God carried him all the way through to the markless grave on Mount Nebo. And so this was a man who had walked with God. This is a man who had seen the finger of God. This is a man who knew God, and he says, "Live with eternity in view."

The author of the Hebrews in chapter 11 gives us a divine commentary, at least in brief, on Moses' life when he says, in Hebrews chapter 11, verse 24 and following, this: "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the temporary pleasures of sin," – notice that: sin is fun for a season – "considering," verse 26, "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt"; here it is, "for he was looking to the reward." Moses lived his life with the end in view, and he writes this psalm with that same perspective, that we ought to live with eternity in our hearts.

Now, the context is important. I've already alluded to the fact that this is the oldest psalm. This was the first one that was ever written, that's obvious. Moses was the first one in the Scriptures, he wrote the Pentateuch. The reason that it's put here in Psalm 90, as Steve has said, these are not in the order they were written, they're written and they were put in a specific order for a reason. So this is the oldest psalm and it's the only one in the Psalter written by Moses, but it's not the only psalm that Moses wrote. Moses wrote in Exodus 15 a psalm of praise. In Deuteronomy 32, he wrote a psalm of instruction. And here in Psalm 90, he writes a psalm about eternity.

Now, some debate over when Moses wrote this prayer, what was the timestamp when Moses actually was inspired to write it. And there's really two camps, as I've come through the study to see, there's two camps. One, Dr. James Boice and many other great theologians put it in Numbers 20. They say that Moses wrote this during Numbers 20. And in the account of Numbers 20, we see, number one, the death of Miriam, Moses' sister. Number two, we see the account of Moses being punished for striking the rock in disobedience to God's command and, thus, he was kept out of the land of promise. And the third thing we see in Numbers 20 is that the death of Aaron, Moses' brother and mouthpiece, dies. And so that's probably, that's what I think, led him to write this psalm.

But there's another camp, and that camp says that, no, it was written probably during the time of Numbers 14. And Numbers 14 is a chapter that would be all familiar to you, those of you who have read the Old Testament. And in verses 11 and 12, Numbers 14 says this: "And the LORD said to Moses, 'How long will these people disrespect Me? How long will they not believe in Me, despite all the signs I have performed among them? I will strike them with a plague and dispossess them, and I will make you into a nation greater and mightier than they.'"

Of course, Moses talks God off the ledge in a sense and says, "No, the nations will say, 'God brought them out of the exodus into the wilderness only to destroy them. What kind of God is He?'" And, of course, God relents. But that could be the time date that Moses wrote this as well. But as we go through here, I want you to notice five things as we go through this psalm. I broke this up into five digestible parts. And the first thing we see in verses 1 and 2 is that God is eternal. Verses 1 and 2, "God is eternal."

Look at verse 1: "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations." The Hebrew word here for "dwelling place" simply means to remain or to abide. Those of us who are students of the New Testament, bells ought to be going off because that sounds familiar to us: "remain or abide, to dwell."

God Himself was Israel's protection in the wilderness. As you remember, He went behind, He went before. He was a visible picture in the tabernacle as a dwelling place during their wanderings and their journeys, he was both behind, as I said, and before. And the true believer is only at home in God. Our soul longs for God. "Our soul," as the psalmist says, "thirsts for God, as a deer pants for the water brooks." And so, that is where our home is, and that is where we look forward to being. And really, as I alluded to a minute ago, this word "dwelling," really, foreshadows Jesus' words in John chapter 15, where He says, "I am the vine, you are the branches; abide in Me, or you can do nothing." That's the idea here. Our dwelling place is in God hidden with Christ.

Jesus, encouraging His disciples in John 14:1-2, said this: "Do not let your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house there are many" – here it is – "dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you. For I go to prepare a place for you." So, I think as we come face-to-face with this first verse, we have to ask ourselves a very simple question: "Is our dwelling place here in this world, which is passing away – we know the Bible tells us – or is our home, our dwelling place, our yearning for the place in heaven that Jesus refers to here?"

In verse 2, he goes on and says, "Before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting, You are God." The Bible starts and ends with God. The Bible begins with, "In the beginning God." And it's fascinating that Moses, in Psalm 90, in this prayer, begins with who? God. And so, we see the same. He is the Sovereign One. He is before all creation.

Moses had seen face-to-face the burning bush. Remember, he had gone through the desert there; and in Exodus chapter 3, he sees a bush and he's fascinated because it's burning, but it's not consumed, because God didn't need the fuel of the bush to burn. He is self-existent. And so, Moses comes face-to-face for the first time with the living God. God does not depend on any cause outside of Himself, He is self-existent. He has no realization or need for other things to give Him life, He has life within Himself. He is His own reason for His existence.

And so, Moses starts this prayer with the eternality of God, and he says, "You gave birth to the earth." He's not only the Creator, as Moses penned in the book of Genesis, He is the sustainer of all things. He is before all things that ever existed, and yet He controls and providentially moves all things that exist. "He is" – look at Moses' words – "from everlasting to everlasting." He never had a beginning and He never had an end. Now, I know that's hard for us to wrap our minds around as finite creatures who have a beginning and an end. We are bound by time. God is outside of time. God created time. We live *chronos* – a watch, chronometer. God lives eternally.

And so, he says, "You gave birth to the earth." And God is independent of His creation. Believers can take comfort in the fact that though we are mortal, God is immortal. This is the highest language Moses could possibly use to describe God's eternity, and he says at the very end of verse 2, "You are God." Think about all the idols that we saw in the nation of Israel, all the idols that we saw in the land of Egypt, and Moses says, "You are the true and living God." Isaiah 45:5 says this: "I am the LORD, Yahweh, and there is no one else; there is no God except Me."

And so we see, first, God is eternal. Number two, we see that "man is ephemeral." Notice the stark contrast. God is eternal, man is ephemeral. God is everlasting, man is finite. Verses 3-6, "man is ephemeral," the second point. Look at verse 3: 'You turn mortals back into dust and say, 'Return, O children of men.'" Moses had seen God's judgment upon Israel and Egypt, and he understood the need to fear a holy God.

Go back to the burning bush in Exodus chapter 3. What's one of the first things he hears God say? "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." He understood that God was holy other. He was sinful, God was holy and He was only to be approached through a blood sacrifice, a mediator between God and man.

And so we see here that Moses understands the need to fear a holy God. And notice this phrase here in verse 3: "Return, O children of men." Now, in the Hebrew, this is not the idea that we would think in the New Testament of return, meaning, "Come back to Me and repent of your sins." That's not the idea of what he's saying here. What he's saying here is that God, rather, is commanding man to return back to dust where he came from. It's a play on words to get us to remember and focus back to Genesis chapter 3, verse 19, Genesis chapter 3:19. It's a phrase that you've probably heard at a funeral: "From dust you've come, and from dust you shall return." Derek Kidner says about this verse, "The Hebrew word for 'dust,' while different than the one in Genesis; however, the verb tense is the same, so the idea is the same. It points back to the curse of Adam our first father." And so God will call all men back to dust because of the curse of Adam.

You know, one of the greatest things, the veracity of Scripture, that you can look to is a cemetery. All men die, one out of one. Now, I know there's somebody here who Mr. Smarty Pants who's saying, "Well, there's a couple guys that left in a chariot of fire." Okay, Enoch. Let me know when that happens. But one out of one die. Why? Because of the curse of our father Adam, because of the punishment for the sin that is due us.

So God is warning man about our mortality. We will return to dust; it's a fact. And now Moses gives us five images about man being ephemeral. Notice these five images that Moses paints to show us our mortality in the brevity of our lives. First, he says that, "A thousand years are like yesterday when it passes." Think about that: a thousand years. Probably nobody in this auditorium will live to be a hundred or more. Maybe there will be. But a hundred years old is an incredibly long life for a human being. And yet, Moses says, "A thousand years is like yesterday to God."

And so he uses this timestamp, because God stands outside of time; He's not like us. He's trying to drive home the point here that a thousand years, as 2 Peter 3:8 says, "One day to God is as a thousand years, and a thousand years is as a day." They're one and the same. Whether it's a thousand years or a day, they're all the same to God, because He has no time. He created time. He transcends time.

The second thing Moses says here is that, "It's like a night watch." He likens our life to a night watch. Now, we sleep typically from six to eight hours. But a night watch was typically three hours. So this isn't even a full night's sleep, this is a three-hour night watch. That's the time derivation that Moses gives here for man's life, like a night watch: three hours and it's over.

In God's economy, man's time durations mean nothing. He relates to time on a completely different scale. Verse 5, Moses goes on and says, "You've swept them away like a flood, they fall asleep; in the morning they're like grass that sprouts anew." Verse 6, "In the morning it flourishes and sprouts anew, and toward evening it fades and withers away."



And we see the third thing Moses gives us here to picture "man's brevity." He says, "that they're swept away like a flood." Now, Moses had some experience with this, did he not? He wrote in Genesis 6 through chapter 9 about the flood that had come at the time of God's judgment, because the wickedness, it says in chapter 6, was great upon the earth, and men sinned continually. And yet, there was some who mocked. And I'm sure it was real funny until the water got up to their nostrils, and then they couldn't breathe anymore. So Moses understood the cataclysm of a flood of judgment. He also had seen the flood of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, did he not, where the Red Sea came back upon them and washed them away. And so Moses understood the swift power of a flood here. And so he had seen the finger of God destroy men in an instant.

The fourth thing he says is in verse 5, "It's like falling asleep. It's like falling asleep." Now, there's two ways to take this. The first way is like the times I've had surgery. If any of you in here have had surgery, it's the most fascinating thing to me, because the anesthesiologist comes and puts the IV in. And the three surgeries that I've had, the only thing I remember is the anesthesiologist's hand coming down with a syringe to put in the anesthetic and tell me to count backwards or something else, and the lights go out in Georgia. And the next thing you know, you're in recovery. That's the way Moses says our lives are; they're over just like that.

Now, the second way to take it is the way Matthew Henry takes it here. He says this: "Men are yet asleep and consider not their own frailty, nor aware how near they are to an awful eternity." So his point is that men are asleep in the sense that they don't think about the brevity of their days.

It's been fascinating to see the response within our company to this passing. Some are barely able to even acknowledge it and don't want to discuss it. It's as if they don't want to think about it happening, because man fools himself into thinking that he'll just go on forever; he'll be the only one to get off the earth alive. And yet, Moses is saying here, our lives are like falling asleep, or we're asleep about the fact that we'll die and face judgment.

And finally, fifth, he uses the idea, or the analogy, of grass here. He uses the idea of grass. I grew up; golf used to be a very big part of my life, and there's still nothing I enjoy more than to be on a golf course when the sun is coming up on a beautiful morning. The grass is green, the grass has dew, it's verdant, it smells good and it's so lush. And that's the way he says our lives start. We're like the wet, verdant grass.

But then the severe heat of the day comes, and if the superintendent's crew don't syringe the greens, what can happen? In the heat of the day, 3:00 or 4:00 in the afternoon, especially here in Texas in the pizza oven, the grass can wither and die and it could turn brown just like that. This is also a picture of man. He's here today, gone tomorrow. He's green one day, he's burned and brown the next, just like my friend: here today, gone tomorrow. Isaiah 40:6 says, "All flesh is grass." Moses is reflecting, again, upon the brevity of a man's life, and he's urging us. You can almost hear him in these texts screaming to us, "Live with eternity in view. Live with an eternal perspective."

The third thing we see here in Psalm 90, number three, verses 7-11, we see, "God's wrath is real." First, we saw that God is eternal; second, we saw that man is ephemeral; and now we see, number three, God's wrath is real. Look at verse 7: "For we have been consumed by Your anger and by Your wrath we have been dismayed." Notice this, "consumed by Your anger." God is angry with the sinner every day, the Bible says. Israel lost an entire generation in the wilderness, dying off over 40 years. Moses was all too familiar with God's wrath in response to sin. He knew that the wage of sin was death.

As I alluded to a minute ago, in Genesis chapters 6-9, he talked about the flood at the time of Noah, God's judgment upon man's sin. In Genesis chapter 19, we saw that He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for their serial sin sins. In Exodus 15:7, we see the defeat of Pharaoh and the Egyptian army as God's judgment rolled over them. Numbers 16, we saw the suppression of Korah's rebellion, where the earth literally opened up and swallowed 250 men, in disobedience to God's word, and their leader.

Numbers 21:6-9, we know the famous story about the poisonous snakes. And Moses was urged to lift up the bronze serpent, the best, maybe, Old Testament picture of Christ being exalted on the cross. By looking at the serpent, they were not going to be affected by the poison of the snakes. The only saving work they could do was to look at the serpent; just as today, the only thing we can do to avoid the brevity and judgment of our lives is to look to Christ hanging on the cross as our substitute and our sacrifice on behalf of our sins.

And so, as Austin Duncan said last week in Psalm 46, nobody wants to talk about God's wrath anymore. It's a subject that is not for polite company. You certainly won't hear it from most pulpits. But by denying it, by not preaching it, doesn't change the truth. As I've said many times, you can go up on the top of a building and deny gravity, but it's a stubborn reality if you jump.

So, God's wrath, Moses said, was real. Paul, in his magnum opus, in the book of Romans starts off in the very first chapter with this concept of wrath. Starting in verse 18, he says, "The wrath of God is being" – present tense – "revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who" – what? – "suppress the truth in unrighteousness." That's a picture of a dam with water building up behind it. Well, when water gets too much, the heaviness and the density of that water eventually will break forth and that dam will fall, and God's wrath will be unleashed upon this world. Psalm 7:11, David, the great psalmist, said, "God is a righteous judge, and a God who shows His wrath every day."

But look what Moses says about it. He says, "By Your wrath" – in verse 7 – "we have been dismayed." Some of you in your translations may have the word "terrified, terrified." Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, one of the great preachers of the last century, gave his last interview with *Christianity Today* in 1979. Now, given the rapidity of our serial sins today, think about the difference between today and 1979. My wife and I talk about this frequently. It's breathtaking how much faster we run into sin than we did when we were kids.

So, 1979, he's having this interview. And Dr. Lloyd-Jones is talking to this reporter, and she comes to the end of the interview and she says, "Dr. Jones, our interview is now over. Do you have any parting words for our readers?" and he said, "Yes, as a matter of fact, I do. Flee the wrath to come."

Verse 8, "You have placed our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your presence." Notice this word "iniquities" or "hidden sins," "secret sins." There's nothing hidden from God's sight, He sees all our sins. We like to use this word "hidden sins." There are no hidden sins. The author of the Hebrews makes it clear, verse 13 in Hebrews 4: "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight, everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account." And that's not just for believers, my dear friends, that's all men will give an account for their sins, either in themselves or in the substitutionary work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's been said that men have three lives: they have a public life, they have a private life, and they have a secret life. The public life is what all of us see. Those of us at work, those of us at church – all of us see the public life. And then there's the private life, that's what only your family sees, only your close relatives, only those within your household, those who are in your family. But then there's the secret life, and that's the life that's just between you and God. And He sees all three. And the idea of integrity – integer, one – is that all three of those lives are the same. You ought to be the same in public as you are in private as you are in in secret.

And so this is the idea of what Moses is saying here. Verse 9, "All our days have declined in Your fury; we have finished our years like a sigh." Think of the wilderness wonderings. Forty years they had gone around in circles. And he says, "All our days have declined in Your fury." He was rooting out a whole generation. And it's been said that it took one day to get Israel out of Egypt, but it took forty years to get Egypt out of Israel. We can almost feel here that Moses was tired, he had experienced God's fury over and over, and there was a sense that Moses literally sighs here in recognition of man's frailty, the futility and temporal nature of sinful man passing away in

such a short lifespan. Romans 6:23 says, "The wage of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

So, continuing on with God's wrath is real. In verse 10, Moses says, "As the days of our lives, they contain 70 years, or if by strength, 80 years, yet their pride is only labor and sorrow; for soon it is gone and we fly away." Now, this idea of "if due to strength" could also be "due to breadth," in other words, the length of our time. But either way, man's body, if you can believe this – I saw this two or three years ago. Scientifically, man's body begins to break down at age 28. That is the peak of most men: 28.

And so, this 70 or 80 years is not any kind of exact lifespan or any kind of a guarantee; each day we march closer to the grave. Moses, we know, lived 120 years. But it provides a sense of how quickly life passes by. And those of us who have some gray hair understand how fast life speeds up as we go. It seems like when you get married and have kids, you have benchmarks in your house: there goes 10 years, there goes 12 years, there goes 18 years. And it seems like when they get to kindergarten, it goes even faster as they're growing up; and we see that every year goes faster. My wife and I just celebrated 23 years. We can't believe we're 23 years went – gone, just like that.

And Moses is saying 70 or 80 years, while maybe for young people sounds long, it goes by incredibly fast. And he says not only that, "But yet their pride" – in verse 10 – "is only labor and sorrow." Yes, life has many blessings, blessings we should be very grateful for. But do we not also know that it has many sorrows? Life is full of many sorrows. Job said that, "Man's trouble is like sparks surely flying upward."

Genesis 3:17, Moses had written in the book of Genesis, "Cursed be the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat your food from it all the days of your life," a result of the curse. Who of us that works doesn't understand the thorns and thistles that we have to deal with at work because of the curse. And Jesus, in John 16, encouraging His disciples, in verse 33, said, "I have told you these things, that in Me you may have peace. In this

world you will have trouble, but take heart; I have overcome the world." What an encouragement, that Christ alone, in the midst of a fallen and broken and brief world, can provide peace, not just peace with God, but can provide us the peace of God.

And, finally, verse 11. Verse 11, Moses says, "Who can fully comprehend God's anger?" He says, "Who can understand it?" It's a rhetorical question. Even Moses, despite all he had seen of God's anger and wrath for sin, he still couldn't process and comprehend it all. And so he rhetorically asks, "Who can understand it, according to," he says, "the fear that is due You?" How much we ought to fear God. How much the fear of God needs to be restored within the church; and yet, how few truly fear Him.

Listen to Jesus' sobering words in Matthew 10:28. Matthew 10:28, Jesus says, "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear the One who can destroy both body and soul in hell." The author of the Hebrews in chapter 10, verse 31, says this: "It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." And then Solomon, at the end of the book of Ecclesiastes, says, "In conclusion," in verses 13 and 14 of chapter 12, "when everything has been heard: fear God and keep His commandments."

The one key distinction - among some others - but the one key distinction between the believer and the unbeliever is that the unbeliever does not fear God and does not honor God. David said in Psalm 36:1, "Concerning the sinfulness of the wicked, there is no fear of God before their eyes." And I find it fascinating, as I thought about this, that in Luke 23 when you have the account of the dying thieves that are on either side of Jesus, the one who is being drawn to salvation, who understands who Jesus is hanging next to him and says, "Lord, remember me when You come in Your kingdom," he says to the other man, who continues to cast dispersions upon the Lord Jesus Christ, "Do you not even" - what? - "fear God, because you are under the same condemnation, and that justly?"

And so, we come here to number four, verses 12-15, the fourth thing: "God's wisdom is required." God is eternal, man is ephemeral, God's wrath is real, and number four, God's wisdom is required. We need wisdom to navigate this world. Verse 12 – remember I said this was the key verse upon which this psalm hinges: "So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom." Now, Moses urges four things for us in prayer. He gives us four things to pray for here, and the first is that, "We might ask the Lord to teach us to number our days."

I remember when I was a baby Christian, about a year into Christianity, a man at a Bible study taught Psalm 90, and it made such an impact upon me, because he had talked about this verse, verse 12, that we ought to pray to the Lord to teach us to number our days. And I've never forgotten that; and it's been a recurring prayer in my life, and I pray that it is for you as well, that God would teach us to number our days. Why, Moses? Well, he tells us here in the second part of the verse: "to gain a heart of wisdom."

Now, I want to stop here and make sure we understand. There is a huge distinction between intellect and wisdom. We praise intellect today. We laud intellect. And there are people who have gigantic IQs and have tremendous intellect, but they have no wisdom. They have no wisdom. Intellect commonly refers to a capacity for academic learning and logical thinking; wisdom, however, is the ability to navigate life, discern life experiences, gain insight into human nature; and biblical wisdom can only be found through the revelation of God. The book that you hold in your hand, that is where wisdom comes from; that is the only source of wisdom.

Turn with me to Proverbs chapter 1. Turn with me to Proverbs chapter 1. Proverbs 1:1, look at how Solomon starts off Proverbs. Remember, psalms are how we learn to worship the Lord, proverbs are how we learn to live. Look at how he starts off Proverbs. Proverbs 1:1, "The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, to discern the sayings of understanding, to receive instruction in wise behavior, righteousness, justice and integrity; to give prudence to the naive, to the youth knowledge and discretion, a wise person will hear an increase in learning, and a person of understanding will acquire wise counsel, to

understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles." Notice verse 7: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction."

You can turn back to Psalm 90. You remember, you've probably heard of Calvin's signature. He had a stamp, and on that stamp was a picture of his heart in his hand, and he was going, "Sincerely and promptly, Lord, I give this to you." That's the idea here of what Moses is saying, is that we need the Lord to give us wisdom regarding the number of our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. And so, like Calvin, may we all have a heart offered up to the Lord promptly and sincerely, because we all have a date with the Lord God our Creator. We will all face judgment; we need to be wise about each day.

Hebrews 9:27 says it very succinctly: "It is appointed for men to die once and then face the judgment." And we'll either face it in ourselves or we'll face it in the righteousness of Christ. Thomas Tymme in *The Treasury of David* said this: "Of all the arithmetic rules, this is the hardest: to number our days. Men can number their herds, their flocks, their oxen, their sheep. They can estimate the revenues of their manners and their farms, they can take little pains in counting all of their coins, and yet they are persuaded that their days are infinite and innumerable, and, therefore, they never begin to number them." In other words, man can count all of these things in his life, but he fails to take stock of the days of his life because he feels as if they'll just go on forever.

And what did Jesus say to the rich fool, who was storing up hordes and barns and silos, and he said, "Me, my; me, my," and Jesus said, "You fool, this day your soul will be accounted for you. What good is it do for a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?" As Austin Duncan taught in the series on Ecclesiastes – it was very transformative for me as I listened through that, because he says that Solomon's point in the book of Ecclesiastes – and I agree with him – is that we might live life backwards. That's Solomon's ultimate point in Ecclesiastes, that we might live with the end in view, that we know that, like my friend who died at 60, life could end at a moment. And so we live in light of eternity, and we live



in light of the fact that our lives should be lived backwards, not as if we have all the time in the world.

Verse 13, Moses says, "Do return, O LORD; how long will it be? And be sorry for Your servants." This is the second thing Moses asks us to pray for. He asks for a prayerful response to God's judgment. He says, "Do return, O LORD." Here's the point. In verse 3, God spoke to mankind in judgment, remember, "Come back to the dust." Now in verse 13, Moses asks God to turn away His anger from judgment. And so that's the second thing Moses says that we ought to pray for. Here's the point: if you turn away from God, you'll return to dust in judgment. Your only hope is to turn to God in repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And here in verse 14, he says, "O satisfy us in the morning with Your lovingkindness, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days You have afflicted us, and the years we have seen evil." Here's the third thing we should be praying for. Moses says, "Satisfy us in the morning with Your lovingkindness." That's a word that ought to be familiar to you in the Old Testament, the word *hesed*, or grace.

True satisfaction is not rooted in money. It's not rooted in fame or success or romance or worldly endeavors, all of the world's trinity – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life. It's found in God's faithful covenant goodness to His people. That's where we find true peace, true contentment, true joy. Alexander Maclaren said this: "The only thing that will secure lifelong joy is a heart satisfied with the experience of God's love. This means that nothing will satisfy the human heart ultimately except for God." Much like Augustine said that, "We have a hole in our heart that only Christ can fill."

And then, fourthly, he asked that we might pray – look at the end of verse 15: "Make us glad according to the days You have afflicted us." Moses had experienced many days of affliction, did he not; and yet he also knew that if God is our chief joy, "those afflictions are," as Paul says in Romans, "light and momentary, building for us an eternal weight of glory."

And so, we come, fifthly, to verses 16 and 17: "God's work is eternal." God is eternal, man is ephemeral, God's wrath is real, God's wisdom is required, and finally, five, God's work is eternal, verses 16 and 17. Look at verse 16: "Let Your work appear to Your servants and Your majesty to their children. May the favor of the Lord our God be upon us; and confirm for us the work of our hands; yes, confirm the work of our hands." Moses prays here for remembrance by future generations. Notice, he wants the servants and the children to remember. This generation is dying off and he's saying, "May we remember who You are in future generations."

We are a forgetful people, are we not? And we see all through the Pentateuch, in particular, Moses is writing over and over again, "Do not forget the LORD your God. Do not forget the LORD your God. When you come into the land and you have houses you did not build and you have things you did not plant and you eat food that you did not produce, you will forget the Lord your God." And he says in Deuteronomy 6:12, "Be careful that you do not forget the LORD who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery." How frequently do we forget.

Let me ask a question. If you're anything like me, sometimes we pray and we pray and we pray and we pray and we ask God for something that He graciously, eventually gives us; and yet, how long sometimes, if ever, does it take for us to come back and thank Him for that? We just forget. He answers, and we move on. Why do we take the Lord's Supper regularly? Because we're forgetful of what the Lord has done. Jesus said, "Every time you take this cup, every time you take this bread, do this in" – what? – "remembrance of Me."

Notice, Moses prays here for the favor of the Lord. He prays for the favor of the Lord in verse 17. The Hebrew here is rich. This word "favor" literally means a deluge of grace. It's a deluge of grace. It reminds me of John 1:16 where John in his prologue says, "Grace upon grace." It's unlimited grace. And how? How do we pray for the favor of the Lord? He says, "by asking the Lord to confirm the work of our hands." And notice, he repeats that phrase twice, "confirm the work of our hands"; second only to

verse 12, this is my favorite phrase in this psalm, because what Moses is praying here – in some of your translations you have "confirm," others of you have "established"; same concept. But he's saying, "We want the blessing of God to make our work permanent, to make our work permanent."

It's been rightly said there's only two things in this world that are eternal: the souls of men, and the word of God. That's where we ought to be focusing most of our investment. And so, Moses says, "Lord, establish our hands; make what we do eternal." In New Testament parlance, he could be saying what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:9, "For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, you are God's building." That's what's so amazing. God does not need us, but God is graciously willing to use us; and as we co-labor in Christ's field, He does works of permanence by His grace through the works of His people.

John Calvin said this: "True believers alone, who know the difference between this transitory state and the blessed eternity for which they were created, know what ought to be the aim of their life. No man, then, can regulate his life with a settled mind but He, knowing the end of it, that is to say his death, is led to consider the great purpose of man's existence in this world, that he may aspire after the prize of the heavenly calling." In other words, Calvin is saying, "Only the man who understands his end, understands his death, understands his mortality, will spend and invest his life in those things which are eternal." And so, again, Moses is saying here, "Live with an eternal perspective."

So as I close, think about some points of application – and I'll be brief. There are few things in this world that are more sanctifying than living with an eternal perspective. If we live with eternity in view, it affects the way we live now, in the present, because we know, as Spurgeon said, "We don't want to have thorns of regret in our death pillow." So it should impact the way we live now.

Number one, "We realize that we have an eternal destiny." Remember Dr. Lawson in Psalm 1, "There is the righteous and the wicked. There are two

destinies, two paths, two ends." Which path are you on? Are you on the path of the righteous, on the narrow way to the heavenly kingdom, or are you on the broad road to the world of destruction, living in this present world?

Number two, "Realize that life is very short." Death and judgment are a certainty. It may come, as my friend, at 60. It may come at 80. Our one daughter in Auburn called the other day. One of her dear friends at Auburn lost a high school classmate just two weeks ago in a car accident. So just because we're young doesn't mean that we're guaranteed tomorrow.

Number three, "Realize that Jesus Christ is the only dwelling place of safety from God's wrath." He is the safest place you can be, under the mighty hand of the omnipotent Son of God, Son of Man, who was a sacrifice for sinners, that we might repent of our sins, come under His care; and He would save us from the wrath to come. Jesus said it this way in His own words, John 3:36, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." Sobering words indeed.

And I started with Hebrews 11 talking about Moses, who had given up the riches of Egypt to take the reproaches of Christ as greater riches. Well, in that chapter, the Hall of Faith it's called, all of those men and women who are commended by God as faithful citizens of the heavenly kingdom said what? They didn't receive the reward; but they were looking forward to God's kingdom, whose builder and architect is God Himself. That's what they were looking forward to. And you and I as believers, if you're in Christ, ought to be doing the same thing. And so I'll close with the immortal words of C. T. Studd: "Only one life will soon be passed; only what's done for Christ will last." Let's pray.

[Prayer] Dear heavenly Father, we thank You for this time in Your word. We thank You for Psalm 90 and the richness of the words that we find here. And, Lord, I pray that You would mark these words on our hearts, stamp them on our eyeballs; and may we live in light of eternity. We don't know

how many days we have, we don't know how many years we have; but, Father, may we invest in the kingdom of God and the men on this earth who have eternal souls. I pray for any who are here who do not know Christ, that You would give them no rest, nor peace, until they find it in the Prince of Peace, the Good Shepherd: Jesus Christ. We ask these things in Christ's name. Amen.