

Teach Us to Number Our Days

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[0 : 00] Let me ask you a question. What do you think is one of the most basic instincts in man?

The most primal drive of humans is survival. As a family, we like to go hill walking. When you get to the top of a mountain on a really clear day, you can see for miles glorious views.

However, it's when you get to the top of that mountain that there are steep verges. And in that very situation is where you see a vast disparity between how Hannah and my brains both work.

She's taking pictures getting ever closer to a steep drop, whereas I am quite happy taking in the views from a very safe distance far from an edge.

If Paul's teaching that to live is Christ and to die is gain was a spectrum, I can empathize with Paul's first point, whereas Hannah is much more empathizing with Paul's second point.

[1 : 14] We as human beings, we all have this desire to live as long as possible. For example, in TV and film, at times it can be an insight into our own psyche.

Movies like Highlander or Pirates of the Caribbean are all obsessed with the idea of eternal life. My son, he's currently obsessed with Doctor Who.

There's a high chance that he's currently drawing a TARDIS as he listens to me now. A character in Doctor Who, Lady Cassandra, is self-described as a last living human.

She's undergone 700 surgeries to prolong her life. Again, an insight into our desire to live as long as possible.

So, how do we gain eternal life? Tonight, we're looking at the oldest psalm in our Psalter.

[2 : 16] As we see from the title, Psalm 90 was written by Moses. It's a psalm of two great contrasts. First, between God and us, God being eternal and we are transient, verses 1 through 11.

The second is to do with time, time squandered or time well spent, verses 12 through 17. And we'll consider each one in turn.

It's not stated in the title on which occasion this prayer to God from Moses took place.

Commentators lean towards Numbers 21, where the Lord sent fiery serpents as a judgment towards the people because of their faithlessness.

Many died and the people compelled Moses to pray, saying, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to the Lord that he take away the serpents from us.

So Moses prayed for the people. Whether it was this specific incident, or Moses praying in general for the people when they'd be wandering the desert for 40 years, the psalm we have before us has wisdom that should shape the way we live as Christians in 2024 and beyond.

[3 : 44] But before we dwell into this teaching, let's pray for God's help as we look at his word. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word.

We thank you for Moses. We thank you for Psalm 90. We pray that your spirit teaches us that our hearts that can be like stone are malleable to your will and that you are glorified in everything we do here.

In Jesus Christ's name, amen. So our first point, God is eternal. We are transient. As our Presbyterian forefathers composed, we now confess, God is spirit, infinite and eternal, and unchangeable.

And his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. Psalm 90, is one of the proof texts for this doctrine.

In verse 2 of our passage, if you look at it, Moses declares, before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

[5 : 06] There is no analogy that I can draw on from our human existence to explain God's eternal nature, because no one is like God.

The prophet Isaiah declared this, stating, To whom will you then liken God? Or what likeness compare with him? Later, we will sing the hymn, Behold our God, and the chorus goes, Behold our God, seated on his throne, come, let us adore him.

Behold our God, nothing can compare to our God.

To say that God is eternal is not just to say that God can survive from time start to finish. But to say that God is eternal is to actually state that he is not subject to time.

Before time, God was. He is not a creature. He is not bound. He is the alpha. He is the omega. The same yesterday, today, and forever.

[6 : 29] He has no beginning. God forever has been and will forever be. From everlasting to everlasting. God is God because he preceded time.

God is God because he is the creator of time. And God is God because he is independent. He does not need the world to exist for him to exist.

He does not need us to exist for him to exist. He has been from everlasting and he will be to everlasting.

There is not a moment where God has not upheld all things and there will never be a moment between now and the end of time and beyond where our holy God is not in complete control of all things because he is truly God.

He is eternal. He is infinite. He is from everlasting to everlasting. He is God. Behold our God.

[7 : 42] So our God is eternal. However, in stark contrast, what are we? We are most definitely not eternal because we were born.

We had a start. Then, as the common saying states, there are only two absolutes in life, taxes and death. We will die.

We are not eternal. Our human existence is transient. Our time on earth is limited. Do you feel your frailty?

Our transience? Our transience? When arthritis strikes or you get injured doing the most menial task of pulling a bag over a wall or someone that's close to you gets a terminal diagnosis.

80.7 76.5 80.7 76.5 76.5 If you reside in Scotland, this is your life expectancy.

[8 : 54] For a woman, 88.7 years and for a man, 76.5 You can do a calculation about yourself but I am almost halfway through my earthly existence.

Verses 3 to 6 deal with this reality that we all face. Moses employs a series of analogies showing the sheer difference between God's eternal existence and our transient existence.

In verse 4, Moses compares a thousand years to a day in God's sight. Then he doubles down comparing it to a night watch.

A period of just four hours. Our lives are a speck on eternity while Moses confesses God's eternal nature.

Moses also uses language like being swept away like a flood, verse 5, or like a dream. So fragile is our worldly existence.

[10 : 02] His final analogy for us to understand our state is a picture of grass springing up in the morning. But then the sun, it beats down and that new shrub's life is extinguished in a blink of an eye.

Can you see the stark contrast between God who is eternal compared to us who are so transient, fragile, whose life can be extinguished like grass being trampled under the foot of an infant, under the foot of Sammy and Mary?

This is seen in verse 3. You return man to dust and say, return, O children of man.

This has echoes of Genesis 3.19, does it not? By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground for out of it you were taken for you are dust and to dust you shall return.

This here Moses himself who wrote Genesis is grounding our death in the original sin problem.

Then Paul and Moses in that famous verse also confirms this.

[11 : 23] Therefore just as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin and so death spread to all men because all sinned.

In verses 7-11 Moses soberly reflects on the wrath of God against the Israelite nation.

The people they've been wandering the desert for 40 years because of their faithlessness and their lack of confidence in God to subdue the Canaanites before them and because of this God stated that no one of that generation will enter the promised land.

They're in a season of judgment feeling God's wrath with every day. Verses 7-11 of our passage again. For we are brought to an end by your anger by your wrath we are dismayed.

You have set our iniquities before you our secret sins in the light of your presence for all our days will pass away under your wrath the years of our life are 70 or even by reason of strength 80 yet their span is but toil and trouble and they are soon gone and fly away.

[12:45] Then Moses changes his thought who considers the power of your anger and your wrath according to the fear of you. Never never has a spiritual leader overseen so many funerals as Moses.

If we spend a moment thinking about God's creation the stars the great wonders of the world that people spend their entire life savings to go and visit a God who created all of that then it does cause us to pause to think how powerful and how potent is God's just wrath.

Moses asks that rhetorical question in verse 11 and the question is rhetorical because no one can comprehend God's wrath and all its perfection and holiness that only God possesses.

But it is to draw us to our reverential fear of our king who does hate sin. God is eternal and justly wrathful.

We are transient fragile and sinful. God is eternal and we are transient. With this being true where does that leave us?

[14:11] If God is eternal and holy and we are transient fragile and sinful we are in trouble. Things are bleak. If this were the end of the story we would live in constant terror sadness and brokenness.

We'd be counting down to that 80.7 we'd be counting down to that 76.5 Can our spiritual forefathers help us?

Is the slide available? Ian? The Nicene Creed is approaching its 1700th birthday in 2025.

It was written to clarify Christology what the Bible reveals about Christ and it is this Christ who bridges the eternal to the transient.

This beautiful statement of faith includes I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ the only begotten Son of God begotten of his Father before all worlds God of God light of light very God of very God begotten not made being of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven.

[15:38] Christ God of all the universe came down Emmanuel God with us. Jesus in his interaction with the Samaritan woman at the well showed us he was the only way to access eternal life.

In John 4 13 and 14 Jesus said to her everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.

The water I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life. We all die and because of God's wrath on our sins as said in Romans before and that is both physical and eternal death.

However the good news is proclaimed from Emmanuel from his lips from God with us shows us that he is the only way he is the door he is a shepherd who never loses any of his sheep.

As I said in our introduction remember the Israelites situation they're under God's wrath in Numbers 21 serpents are wreaking havoc on the camp.

[16:59] How does Christ relate this instance with Moses to himself? You'll already know this if you were listening this morning to our lectionary readings but it's in John 3 Jesus interacting with Nicodemus teaching him that he had to be born again Jesus says in verse 13 no one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven the son of man and as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so must the son of man be lifted up that whoever believes in him may have eternal life so the Israelites they were temporarily saved from their distress by looking at a serpent on a raised stick now Jesus Emmanuel God with us is saying that when he was raised on the cross taking the full wrath of

God in our place that believing in him is the only way in which we will be forever saved from our eternal death God is eternal and we are transient our second point time squandered or time well spent we find ourselves at a pivotal point in Psalm 90 in verse 12 Moses says so teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom this so shows that Moses has understood the implications of his reflections on the brevity of our lives due to the wrath of God against sin he then offers a series of requests towards God on behalf of the people the request to number our days is not to be taken in its literal form of asking God when I will die like Simeon whom the spirit told him he would see Christ before his death or the apostle

Peter who stated the Lord informed him of putting off his body soon this means fulfilling the chief end of man to truly glorify God to truly enjoy him forever by knowing that he's our dwelling place as Moses declares at the very beginning of the psalm by knowing he will pity us in our state verse 13 by knowing that he will satisfy us through his steadfast love verse 14 how do we number our days how do we fulfill God's chief end of man it's important to remember that this is a prayer of Moses one that's been turned into song and repeated through the ages but it is primarily a prayer down and up it is to God Moses is primarily asking God to intervene it's not how to do list for the people on behalf of

Moses but it's a cry for Moses on behalf of the people for God to work through them and for them every verse of this psalm does directly apply to us but this shows us that we must as with Moses call on God to make lasting changes in our own lives in response to this psalm Christians must do three things they must remember they must know and they must do remember we are to remember who God is he's our dwelling place verse two he is the dwelling place of the Israelites even though they are currently wandering the desert they are nomads they have no place that they currently call home they are moving from tent to tent but he he was their dwelling place and he today is our dwelling place as we as pilgrims move through this land which is not our home

Paul in Acts 17 sums up our dwelling in Christ in him we live and move and have our being we dwell with him now we dwell with him already then the apostle John affirms our forever dwelling with God in Revelation 21 behold the dwelling place of God is with man he will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God he will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away we right now I don't know your situation we right now may be in a season of tears but that is not our future one day

[22 : 11] God himself will wipe away our tears and we will dwell with him forever he is our dwelling place we must remember who God is no we must also know turn back with me to 2 Peter chapter 3 in your Bibles if you please so the Israelites they had squandered their days 40 years wandering under wrath after being delivered from Egypt in such a glorious way they're now crawling along in verse 13 in our psalm Moses then prayed for the lords to return the churches that Peter here is writing to are facing similar trials waiting for God's return they're being mocked for believing in Christ's second coming in verses 3 and 4 we may also wonder where is

Christ come oh Lord look at your world we look at our news every single day and we ask come but like Moses before him Peter urges his readers to know the nature of God's eternal existence verse 8 but do not overlook this one fact beloved that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day God is eternal we are transient one day is like a thousand years to him he is holy and he will judge all for their sins however he is also a God of grace verse 9 he wants all who are numbered among the elect to hear and receive the call of Christ to repent let's read Peter continues in verse 9 then the

Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness but is patient towards you not wishing that any of you should perish but that all should reach repentance but the day of the Lord will come like a thief and the heavens will pass away with a roar and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved and the earth and the works are done on it will be exposed it's a promise 24th of July 2003 on the 24th of July 2003 that's the date I became a Christian I realized Jesus was real and I needed to trust in him I prayed the very simple prayer help me please that was my first prayer if Christ had returned on the 23rd of July 2003 my eternal destiny would be different from what it is right now so let us all trust

God because he knows what he is doing he will not lose any who are his I praise God that he did not return on the 23rd of July 2003 but this does not mean that we are to be complacent Peter is reminding his readers that Christ will come back and because of this he implores his readers to be diligent to be found without blemish or spot verse 14 let us live like Christ is coming back in the next hour before our benediction whilst trusting God is internal and in control he will fulfill all of his holy will let us know who God is and know Christ will return in God's perfect timing so we have to remember we have to know and we have to do what should we do as we await

Christ's return both Moses and Peter instruct us to make the best use of our time we should make our prayer Moses prayer our own prayer teach me to number my days so we may also enjoy the fruit of wisdom God gives good gifts to his children he will not leave us empty God offered Solomon anything what did he reply give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to

distinguish between right and wrong he asked for wisdom and God praises him for it like Solomon we should seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness χ bow and give half of r most or in place of them for this week, let's pray that prayer of Moses together as a body of the church.

[27 : 34] Teach me to number my days. Is our time well spent or is it squandered? Are we frittering away our time on our phones instead of praying for those that are perishing?

Are we giving generously to the church for kingdom work or is our own bank account its very own kingdom? Let us live for God both now and forever.

Let us enthrone him as king in our lives and not enthrone ourselves. He gives us eternal life so that we can eternally praise him.

We must do all things for him well because he first loved us and he did the best thing for us. But what about for those who are not Christians?

What do they have to do? There is one call and that is to repent. If you do not claim Christ as your own, do you feel your mortality?

[28 : 44] Do you feel your years on earth are meaningless? The psalm highlighted the problem of God's wrath towards sin.

Moses, he is described as the man of God. But he spoke of a new prophet like him who would be raised up. And that is none other than the Son of God, Emmanuel with us, Jesus Christ.

Jesus called those who he interacted with to listen and believe in him. He calls us too to make that choice. If we feel like our lives are being wandering in a desert, there's no better time than now to repent of your rejection to God and put your faith in Christ.

Find refuge in him, making him your dwelling place. I remember in that same year in 2003, sitting in my room in the house that my parents are about to sell, are about to move out of, and looking at my DVD rack.

When I was a kid, I used to value my worth dependent on how many DVDs I had. I knelt on that. I would alphabeticalize them and I would count them.

[29 : 56] And that's how I, at that time, would value my value. I remember kneeling there thinking, this is meaningless. This is actually meaningless.

Is that how any of your life feels right now? This is a serious call because we all will die. And our soul will go somewhere.

Will you dwell with Christ and enjoy eternal life? Will you continue to reject him? And that call to repent and end up in eternal punishment.

The call is to find your refuge in Christ, your dwelling place in Christ. God is eternal. We are transient. And our life on earth is like the blink of an eye to God.

We should seek wisdom to live on earth, a life that's focused on the everlasting, and not the transient. But how do we do this? How do we follow Christ?

[31 : 00] 87.6. 80.7, 76.5. The question is, will you make your dwelling place with Christ? What will you do with the rest of your days?

What will you do with the rest of your days? What will you do with the rest of your days? What will you do with the rest of your days? What will you do with the rest of your days? Why do you do with the rest of your life? You getdan.

You get reaction. I want to be right. I want to say that. We would go to the rest of your days. I want to watch your day next day. All you get to the rest of your days? You get to the rest of your days. I want to be right back in your days.

I have to make your right to the rest of your hands,