

Teach Us to Number Our Days

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Preacher: Bo Wong

- [0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. My name is Chez, and we are going to be reading Psalm 90 together, if you'd like to get your Bibles out. Psalm 90.
- A prayer of Moses, the man of God. Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.
- Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.
- You return man to dust, and say, Return, O children of man. For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday, when it's past, or as a watch in the night.
- You sweep them away as with a flood. They're like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning. In the morning it flourishes and is renewed.
- [1 : 12] In the evening it fades and withers. 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 pass away under your wrath.
- We bring our years to an end like a sigh. The years of life are 70, or even by reason of strength, 80.
- Yet their span is but toil and trouble. They are soon gone, and we fly away. Who considers the power of your anger and your wrath according to the fear of you?
- So, teach us to number our days, that we may get a heart of wisdom. Return, O Lord, how long?
- [2 : 25] Have pity on your servants. Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.
- Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, and for as many years as we have seen evil. Let your work be shown to your servants, and your glorious power to their children.
- Let the favour of the Lord, our God, to be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us.
- Yes, establish the work of our hands. This is the Lord's word. Amen. Good morning.
- Hi. My name is Bo, one of the elders in the church. Yes, this is the holiday time, so we would have a different series, and today is the first of the series on prayer.
- [3 : 47] There will be four of them. Sam Gorek would do the second one next week, and after that Adam Collison, the third one, and then Don McMarie would do the fourth one in the four weeks.
- Hopefully, through this talk on prayer, the talks on prayers, that we would learn how to pray, what to pray during the new year.
- Okay, let's pray first then. Father God, we thank you that we could gather today as we consider your word.

May it help us to focus on you, on your kingdom, and to yearn for the coming of your kingdom. May it help me to speak your word, and for each of us to learn and to rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ, for in his name we pray.

Amen. I'm not sure what sort of years, or what sort of year you all have. I suppose there will be highlights and challenges, and some of us may have more challenges than others.

[5 : 04] Today, the message is more for people who have experienced challenges during the year, and how we could cope with that.

As a church, though, we do have highlights. I mean, for this year, we have had the church camp. I think many people enjoy that together, and also we have witnessed a number of baptisms as well.

And for challenges, I would think the biggest one will be people leaving us, going away for various reasons. And today, we will be interviewing Tom and Tianan, because they will be moving away after this.

But today, in Psalm 90, we hope to see how, what Moses prays about towards the end of his life, because Moses' life was full of challenges, a lot more than many of us do.

Actually, today, we have a visitor with us, Catherine Gibbons' good friend, Carleen. Welcome, Carleen. Why I mention her? Because I'm sure her life was full of challenges, because she fell from a horse, 15 years old, had broken her spinal cord, or injured her spinal cord.

[6 : 39] The doctor said that she would not walk again, and for sure, she won't walk again. But she worked very, very hard. And we are seeing in Mariko that she's walking and doing things.

I mean, her life has not been easy. There's lots and lots of medical problems, challenges. But somehow, through the difficulty that she's gone through, the Lord has just renewed her, not only the body, but more so as a person, a new person in Christ.

And we are seeing the same, I think, from the psalm in Moses. Before we even talk about the psalm, we have been hearing about Moses the last few months.

Let's consider what sort of life Moses has had. In terms of highlights, I suppose the highlights that he mentioned will be in Exodus 15, when he wrote the song of rejoicing because of the deliverance and the drowning of the Egyptian soldiers.

That was about it. You can imagine he was born during a time when all the Israelite boys, baby boys, were to be drowned.

[8 : 04] And the family was under a lot of stress for that. And eventually, he was rescued in the river by the princess of Egypt.

But then, she'd been separated from his own family, from birth, from three months old. And growing up in the palace, we can imagine he would be the odd one out.

Not only the odd one out, he was the son of the slave. What sort of life would he have? Even though his adopted mother would have protected him and loved him so that he could grow up there.

But I could imagine he would have no friends. He would have gone through a lot of bullying by other children, I suppose.

And then, when he grew up, I suppose that's why he didn't become an Egyptian. His heart was still with the Israelites. And when he grew up, 40 years old, he wanted to do something.

[9 : 13] Maybe he wants to, because he learned all the skills, ways of organizing things, he might want to organize these people to be united.

and to, not to suffer so much under the Egyptians. But he didn't anticipate that his own people actually rejected him after he tried to do something.

I mean, how do you feel when you, when you stick your leg out and want to do something for, for them, not appreciated, except, instead, they said, who selected you, elected you as our leader.

So he ran away, and in median, at least he found the family that adopted him, and so he settled down as a shepherd, just caring for the father-in-law's animals for 40 years.

he's, at 80 years old, he was still doing his father-in-law's business. I could, for most people, I suppose you will have your own business by then, your own flocks.

[10 : 26] But I suppose he could be just, he's given up, whatever, he just go on. I suppose he was looking for retirement, maybe thinking of buying caravan to travel around with the wife.

But then, God appeared again and, and told him to go back to Egypt. That's the last thing that he wanted to do. I mean, he, at this age, he just didn't want to have any more challenges, any adventures, or whatever.

He just have, he just want to have a retirement life. So he told, asked God to send somebody else. But then God said, you are the somebody else.

He, somehow, he got no choice. God did send Aaron, gave him some comfort, at least he got a family member to go back with.

And when he went back and talked to Pharaoh, he was kicked out of Paris. and his people also rebuked him for making their life harder.

[11 : 38] How would you feel? How would Moses feel? I told you, God, I told you that this would not work. Why do you still do this to me? So, but, somehow, Moses just went on from there.

from, he becomes stronger in his faith instead of weaker. So he let the people out of Egypt. Then, I thought he might be thinking, oh, my life would be simpler now or easier now after leading the people out of Egypt.

But you can imagine, it actually becomes harder because the Israelites were, in some way, maybe worse than the Egyptians in terms of their demands or things and complaints.

And so, his life wasn't easier. And then, eventually, they reached the promised land and at the border, Moses could be thinking, now, we've gone in there, I can complete my task and finally retire.

But what happened? They refused to go in and then Moses found that he had got another 40 years of work around the wilderness. And during that time, many of his people died.

[13 : 06] All the people that he knew as adults, including his sister Miriam, brother Aaron, as you get older, we will get lonelier and lonelier if you are the only one left behind.

If you calculate, if there are 600,000 people out going out and for them all die in the 40 years, you need to have a funeral every half an hour for all these people to die out.

What sort of life there is? So, you can imagine how bad it is. But, it's not the worst thing. The worst thing was that Moses found that he could get into the promise than himself.

It's not even, I mean, sort of his fault, but it was because he become too angry with the people's rebellion. And Moses, yeah, really felt that.

So, what sort of prayer would you pray with a life like this? He might have prayed like Jeremiah did. What did Jeremiah pray in Jeremiah 27?

[14 : 20] He said, Oh Lord, you have deceived me and I am deceived. You are stronger than I and you have prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all the day.

Everyone mocks me. You can feel for Jeremiah as a prophet. He wanted to serve God, but his life turned out to be very, very bad in that sense.

so he prayed like that. Or Psalm 73 asks us in verse 13, 14, he said, In when I have kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence, for all the day long, I have been stricken and rebuke every morning.

Sometimes when we try to serve God, things become worse rather than better or things didn't come as expected.

But when we look at Psalm 90, Moses didn't pray like this. He's much closer to God even than Jeremiah and Esther by his older age.

[15 : 38] What he said, he said, Lord, you have been our dwelling place for all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you have formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

What is he praying? He's saying that, first of all, in relation to God, God is a source of his being, or everybody's being. He's the dwelling place.

Without God, there's no other things. Or even if there's other existence, it wouldn't have any meaning in it without God, because God is the source, he's the dwelling place.

Dwelling place also can mean a refuge, and so it is also a place of protection, of help. And so when our life is difficult, if we blame God and run away from God, it is, I think, the worst thing that we can do, because he is our dwelling place, our refuge, and if we don't run to him, we are cutting ourselves off from the only help that we will have.

And we notice that when he adored God, he didn't actually, like most of us would do, which is right to do, praise God for his being God of love, or God of righteousness, or something else.

[17 : 05] But there's one thing that's enough, is that from everlasting to everlasting, you are God. To him, God is so, so, so big that that is enough for him to say that you are God, you are my God, regardless of how my life turned out.

That could be because when God first appeared to Moses, God said, I am who I am. I have no beginning, I have no end. I am the origin of everything else.

And that Moses grew through his experience to know God as that God that is, even in a sense, even if God is not a God of love, or a God of righteousness, I mean, that is not possible, but even if that is the case, Moses will still submit himself to this God because he is the origin of everything.

And in comparison to man, which is so frail, what did he say about man? He said, you return man to dust and said, return, O children of man, for a thousand years in your sight, about like as yesterday when this passed, like watching the night, and you sweep them away as a flood.

They are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning, in the morning it folishes and renews, in the evening it fades and wetters.

[18 : 50] And that's how he understands about life. First of all, it is very transient, like a grass, a plant that lives only for one day.

But even he said, even if you live for a thousand years, it is still very short. It's like one day in God's eye, to eternity.

And man are made from dust. All the matters in this world will not last. Anything that is only make of matters, matters like dust.

We don't last on its own without God's help. We know that since Adam and Eve rebelled against God and kicked out of the Garden of Eden, then we lost that communication with God.

We lost that part of life that we supposed have in God. But without that relationship with God, we lose that life. So we are left with only the material thing that will deteriorate and that will last.

[20 : 08] And obviously, it is worse than that because we rebelled since Adam and Eve. If we rebelled against God, we also re-inherit the same nature.

And so it is God who said return. So it's not only a natural decay, but also God has view that we shouldn't live forever.

You can imagine why because if we all want to be God ourselves and we all live forever, it wouldn't be a world paradise.

you'll be held because everybody just try to do their own things and fight against God. And it's actually God's mercy that people don't live forever in their natural state.

love. So he goes on and talks about sin and the wrath of God from verse 7.

[21 : 22] 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 life of your presence.

for all our days pass away under your wrath. We bring our days to an end like a sigh. The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty, yet they're spent but toil and trouble.

They are soon gone and we fly away. Who considers the power of your anger and your wrath according to the fear of you? when we look at people in the world or even look at our life before we come to Christ, it's hard to imagine that people understand a sense that they live under the wrath of God.

It's everybody or people just try to get the maximum enjoyment from life and have no consideration about anything about God or about their life at the end.

However, for most people, I think as we get older, at least for me, after sixty years old, if we do look back to our life, many of us would sigh, wouldn't it?

[22 : 55] because there's many things that we wanted to do or plan to do, we couldn't do or didn't do or didn't do a good work of it.

Or even if we succeeded in our plan, it wasn't satisfactory. Many things when I was younger I thought it's important, I must have, but now looking back, there were nothing much.

You start wondering why you put so much time and effort onto those things. And your life, our life seemed to come into an end where you can just sigh, that's life, couldn't do anything more than that, is there any meaning in it?

not many people would realize that life like this is because of God's anger and because we have lost our relationship with God.

And God said you have set iniquities before you, our secret sins and lies of your presence. Imagine how annoying it is, if you were God, to be knowing and seeing all the sins that have been committed second by second.

[24 : 32] Millions of things are happening. It's like if you have many flies inside your house that keep troubling you.

even though we feel that God is like a big brother watching us, but do you think that God enjoys doing that?

In the sense that even our secret sins that we think what is in our heart is before him and he's aware of that.

But instead we ourselves the people are not aware of that fact that God knows all these things and our days are passing away under his wrath.

The years of our life are 70 even by reason of strength 80. So it is a very very short life in the light of eternity.

[25 : 39] But Moses said even so their span is but toil and trouble. And that is still God's mercy, isn't it?

If our lives are not toil and trouble like the Israelites, if they were not slaves in Egypt, then they would not have hope for a better place to go or better life.

If our life on earth is very comfortable, then we would never think about eternity or think about God. And so Moses said, who will conceal the power of your anger and your wrath according to the fear of you?

And then so he prayed. Then after saying that, he prayed for at least four things in here. first of all, he asked that God would teach them to number the days.

Secondly, he asked God to restore the love that's between him and man. Fourth is to be able to see the work of God, what God was working on.

[26 : 57] And fourth is to not to live in vain, to just about his own work that is counted.

He didn't want to live in vain. So he started with 12. So teachers to number our days that we might get the heart of wisdom.

So numbering our days is not only to count how much time we have to live. But also to know that there is judgment after we die.

It is appointed for men to die once and after that comes judgment. And so numbering of days we live wisely with the time that we have.

the Lord also told us a parable in Luke 12 18 about a rich farmer who said I've got so much products that I need to build bigger barns and store up things.

[28 : 20] But the Lord said fool your life will be taken from you tonight. who will inherit your or your goods then. And that is what Moses praying that he would not be a fool in terms of how he lives and to know that his days are limited.

And that's the start, isn't it? If we don't know that, we would live on just like everybody else enjoying the things of the world and seeking for nothing.

So this is a starting point to know that we are limited in our life on this earth and also limited in terms of what we can do and without God it all makes not much sense.

So he continued to say that return oh Lord how long have pity on your servant satisfied us in the morning with your steadfast love that we might rejoice and be glad all our days make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us and for as many years as you have seen evil.

So that prayer is that his life his people's life will be satisfied. That means he's not he was not satisfied with his life then and he knew that there's something far better God had planned and he's asking for it and it's not wrong to ask God to satisfy us because only him is the one who can satisfy us if we don't ask from God then nothing else would and it is pleasing to God for us to ask God for their satisfaction because that's where we derive the real satisfaction from he said that make us glad for as many days as you afflicted us so it's not I think he's thinking about slavery in Egypt and the suffering they have had but in the bigger picture is the suffering of the world since the fall of mankind and even a bigger picture is asking for the restoration that

[30 : 55] God intended us to be he did not create people to suffer he created people to enjoy him and that's what Moses is saying and we can only enjoy God when we love God but we can only love God when we know that God loves us and so here is he asked satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love in the morning again is a hope the darkness is over the morning has come and he asked God to satisfy us with his love and 16 let your work be shown to your servants and your glorious power to their children this request is not only that God will work something more to convince people but it's more that people can see

God's work can see the difference you see the Israelites they saw God doing the miracles in Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea the drowning of the soldiers turning bitter water into sweet water manna coming down from heaven water coming out from the rock but did they see it I mean they saw it but did they understand it no they didn't they were seeing all these things instead of worshipping God what did they do they make a golden calf and worship the golden calf what's going on it's so easy for us to miss things that's happening even in our life our family friends church whatever and did not appreciate what God has been doing and miss so many things that

God has done and still we complain and did not have the joy and that's why Moses is asking that your work to be shown to your servants and the last year in 17th and establish the work of our hands upon us establish establish the works of our hands so that is the God did not just create us to be like animals or pets that's got no significance whether we are here or not whether we live or not Moses is asking that God would help them to see that how they live and whatever they do for God has got eternal value has got some meaning in it just not something whether it happens or not and so he's like whether we come to church or not whether we pray or not whether we do something or not

I think God can help us to see that it is all work together for our own good and for the good of his kingdom and that's what Moses pray so far for these four things we know that by the time Moses died most of these were not answered people were still as rebellious as ever even the new generation and Moses himself couldn't get into the promised land and God's word seemed to have no conclusion in that Moses wasn't sure what's going on I suppose why all this trouble rescuing the people from Egypt in the wilderness for 40 years and now Moses is going to die and he couldn't see what else is going to happen not until when

Moses saw Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration I think there's a time when Moses could see the bigger picture okay what did he see he said return oh return oh lord how long how long would God be waiting to actually do something and he know that between his death and on the Mount Transfiguration there's about 1,500 years in our time but Moses knew that in God's time it's only one and a half days or something like that and he could see that God has returned in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and God is going to do something and Moses can see that his work was not in vain because he has laid the groundwork for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and Moses knew that all the trouble more than worthwhile and

[36 : 28] Moses also knew that in advance maybe in talking to the Lord Jesus that God is going to show his love to God's people God revealed or show his love to us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us and what more can God do for that and that's God's word throughout history and the plan and God revealed that and I hope that we can see it and rejoice as well and Moses also knew that through Christ God is going to restore to us the affliction that he has put upon the world for as many years we have seen evil he has made more than that he is going to make us glad forever in

Christ just like the thief on the cross when the Lord told him today you will be with me in paradise and that he restored the paradise to that thief and he restored to us as well when we are in Christ even though we still suffer in this world but we have the hope that he is going to return again he won't be long and then he will make all things right we thank God for this hope so for if you have had a tough year challenging year I encourage you to go on even though sometimes the challenges comes in because you try to serve the Lord I would still encourage you to go on as 1 Corinthians 5 58 says therefore my beloved brothers be steadfast immovable always abounding in the word of the

Lord knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain let us pray almighty god you are a big god so big that we cannot comprehend but we thank you like you have done to Moses to our walk with you that you gradually helped us to appreciate who you are father we thank you for having such a big god and a god who would show us your love will reveal to us what you are working at and you are making us more like Christ day by day may help us to be steadfast and immovable through this new year thank you

Lord we pray in Jesus name amen