

# Numbering Our Days

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[ 0 : 00 ] Please turn your Bible to Psalm 90. The 90th Psalm. I trust all of you had an enjoyable Christmas in which Christ was central.

In this year, 2019, and I believe that we this morning are going to be considering a fitting portion of Scripture as we prepare to leave 2019 and enter into the new year of 2020.

But Psalm 90 is not just appropriate for the end of one year and the beginning of the next. Psalm 90 is a very appropriate psalm for us to always consider because it's a psalm of reflection.

It's a psalm that calls us to consider the fact that time is marching on. And each one of us is coming closer to the day of our death or to the day of the Lord's return.

And so let us hear this morning the message from Psalm 90. Please follow along as I read. I'm reading from the English Standard Version. Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.

[ 1 : 41 ] Before the mountains were brought forth, wherever 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 is past, or as a watch in the night.

You sweep them away as with a flood. They are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning. And in the morning it flourishes and is renewed.

And 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.

[ 2 : 51 ] We bring our years to an end like a sigh. The years of our 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? 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 favor of the Lord our God be upon us.

[ 4 : 01 ] And establish the work of our hands upon us. Yes, establish the work of our hands. Let's pray. Father, we are grateful this morning that we can gather on this Lord's Day, the last of 2019.

Lord, doing so is a testimony that you've been faithful. And Father, we ask this morning that you would help us to hear your word as we ought to hear it.

And that we would indeed obey it as we ought to heed it. Lord, would you speak to our hearts in the deepest portions where we need to hear you.

And we need to have your voice resounding as we end this year and go into a new year. Would you speak to us now, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Psalm 90 is a prayer of Moses. You'll see that from the title of the psalm. And when we survey the verses of Psalm 90, what we see is that there's one thing in particular that Moses asked the Lord for.

[ 5 : 30 ] There's one particular thing. We see that in verse 12. In verse 12, Moses asked the Lord that he would teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.

That's the point of Psalm 90. Psalm 90 has been referred to as the oldest psalm or the oldest, certainly the oldest psalm with the latest message.

And the reason is that from the time that Moses penned these words, these words are still relevant. And I believe you'll hear that this morning. That as old as this psalm is, this psalm still speaks to us. It still speaks to us in ways that we need to hear it. So Moses, the man of God, is aware that we as people are prone to live our lives without the wisdom that is required.

And so he prays that God would teach us to number our days so that we can have wisdom and we can apply that wisdom to our lives.

[ 6 : 38 ] So here's the question that I want to consider this morning. I want to answer this question in the sermon. How do we learn to number our days? How do we learn to number our days?

And indeed, what does it mean to number our days? I believe that as we consider this psalm, we can learn to number our days by reflecting on three important truths that we find in it.

The first of these truths is the eternity of God. The eternity of God. Moses talks about it in verses 1 and 2. He makes a central point that God is eternal.

Notice how he does that. He writes, 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. These words are true. They've always been true and they will always be true. That God has been the dwelling place or the refuge for his people in all generations.

[ 7 : 45 ] And the reason he is able to do that is because he is eternal. Generations come and go, but God remains. He is eternal. He is everlasting.

And that's the way the psalmist describes God's eternity in verse 2. He says that God is from everlasting to everlasting. And that's about the best we could do to describe God as he is revealed in Scripture and indeed in nature.

What does it mean to be from everlasting to everlasting? To be from everlasting means that you have no beginning.

And to everlasting means you have no end. And this is kind of hard for us to fathom as people who are finite beings. People who live in time. But remember that God created time.

God does not live in time. God has, he always was. He has no beginning. He has no end. His days are not numbered.

[ 8 : 54 ] Because he is not dependent on time. He lives outside of it. We have our days numbered. Because we have been created. And God created us in time.

So if we rightly think about this, it really humbles us. Because immediately we see a difference. A major difference between ourselves and God.

God is eternal. We are not. God is self-sufficient and self-sustaining. We are not. And bearing that fact in mind, what it does for us or what it should do for us is it should put in perspective our relationship with our eternal creator.

We should be humbled by it. But we should also be encouraged by it. That God will always be there. God is an eternal refuge for his people.

He's able to take care of us. This is a wonderful thought for us to be thinking about as we go into an unknown 2020. That God is an eternal refuge for his people.

[ 10 : 06 ] No matter what we face. No matter what comes our way. God is able to be a refuge for us. So how do we consider this truth in terms of numbering our days?

Well, first we will settle the issue that we are not God. Settle the issue that only God is eternal. God is self-sufficient. God is self-sustaining. He placed us on this earth.

We're not here forever. God is the only one who remains forever. From everlasting to everlasting, God is God.

That's the core reality. The core reality is we are unlike God. And that brings me to the second truth that the psalmist raises in Psalm 90.

Which is the certainty of death. Death is certain. Death is certain for every single one of us gathered here this morning. And that's the point that the psalmist makes in verses 3 through 11.

[ 11 : 17 ] Notice how he begins in verse 3. He says, You return man to dust. And say, Return, O children of man. Now what should come to our minds if we're thinking about this and remembering God's word is this harkens back to Genesis chapter 3.

It harkens back to the day when man rebelled against God. When God spoke those words of judgment to Adam and Eve and said to them, For dust you are, and to dust you will return.

And the truth is, that's the verdict that hangs over every single one of us this morning. We are dust, and to dust we will return. Every single one of us has that verdict that was spoken on that doomful day over all of Adam's race.

We have come from dust, and we are waiting to return to dust, pointing to the day of our death. We hear those sobering words every time we attend a burial at a funeral.

Some of us have heard them recently. Some of us have heard them throughout this year. Dust you are, and to dust you will return.

[ 12 : 43 ] But here's the truth. The truth is that even though that verdict has been spoken, and even though that verdict continues to be fulfilled year in, year out, in the lives of loved ones, and friends, and strangers even, somehow, the message doesn't get to us.

And that's the point that Moses is getting at in this psalm. It still does not register us as it should that we are people who have a death sentence over us, that we are dust.

And to dust, we will all one day return. Notice in verse 4, that the psalmist compares our limited lifespan on this earth to God's eternity.

He says, For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it's passed, or a night, or watch in the night. What he's really saying to us is that when you think about God, who lives outside of time, for God, a thousand years is like yesterday for us.

So we think of yesterday, a day gone by, or just a portion of the night, that's the way a thousand years is to God. Meaning that if we lived a thousand years, and there were people, you can see in the Old Testament, who were living near to a thousand years, if we lived to a thousand years, it's nothing in the grand scheme of things.

[ 14 : 14 ] The verdict is still true. You live a thousand years, you're still dust. And to dust, you will one day return. Moses gives us a very vivid description of death in verses 5 through 9.

And I want us to capture the sweep of it again. Notice what he says. He says, You sweep them away as with a flood. They are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning.

In the morning it flourishes and is renewed. 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.

It's a vivid description of what is happening in this world in which we live. This death sentence is being carried out and we are being swept away into death as a flood.

[ 15 : 29 ] The grass that Moses talks about is not the would be called the crab grass that we see that could sometimes go for months without being watered. the grass that he would have talked about would have been the very tender grass of the Middle Eastern countryside that literally would flourish in the morning and by the evening it would wither and it would just die.

die. That's a vivid description of our fragile lives. Especially from God's point of view. It doesn't matter how long it is it's just like it's here in the morning it's gone in the evening.

I used to say here today gone tomorrow referring to death but one morning after a sermon

Alexander came up to me he said Pastor he said you know it's really not here today gone tomorrow it's really here today gone today.

And that is so true. See because we kind of bank on today we kind of think we have today but we don't have today we don't have the next second.

It's not guaranteed to us it is not promised to us. And the question is why do we die? Why is this death sentence hanging over us?

[ 16 : 55 ] We die because of sin we die because not just of Adam's sin we die because of our own sin. And you cannot read these words of Moses without recognizing that all of the human race all of humanity is under this sentence of death that you will go from dust to dust because of our sin because of the judgment of God.

We are living under the judgment of God. Yes in the midst of it God is merciful and in the midst of it God cares for us in unimaginable ways but we must recognize that life as we know it is life under the judgment of God.

Every one of us is living under that faithful judgment that was uttered on the day that Adam and Eve sinned and rebelled against God.

And notice the depth of God's judgment we see in verse 8 you've set our iniquities before you our secret sins in the light of your presence.

Our most hidden and secret sins are as if they are a light in light before the presence of God. Not hidden in darkness they are before him.

[ 18 : 22 ] And all that we experience in this life its difficulty its toil is because of sin. in verse 10 the psalmist says the years of our life are 70 or even by reason of strength 80 and just to be clear and we all know this by experience this is not a promise of 70 or 80 years it's not a promise at all.

It is just talking about what is an ordinary lifespan we know that there are people many people who die earlier and there are very few people who live later.

Not a whole lot of people are living beyond 70 and 80 years. Many do but far more die much earlier than 70 or 80.

But even this normal lifespan is not promised to any of us. and even if we live a normal lifespan or we live even longer than the normal lifespan look at how it is described it is but toil and trouble they're soon gone and we fly away.

You know as different as we are here is one thing we all have in common and I don't need to know the details of your life to say this your life like my life has been more marked by tears of sorrow than tears of joy.

[ 20 : 09 ] You like me have shed and I will indeed say will shed before you die more tears of sorrow than tears of joy.

It is a kindness of the Lord when we share tears of joy. It is a kindness of the Lord when we enjoy any good thing in this world that is under the judgment of God.

But what marks it and what is true about it more true than anything else is it is filled with toil and trouble. It doesn't matter if you're Bill Gates it doesn't matter if you're Warren Buffett because they can tell you better than anybody else money doesn't fix everything.

Money does not change the curse that we are under the judgment that we are under that we are dust and one day we'll return to dust and this earth in which we live will bring forth thorns and thistles naturally and to cultivate anything good we have to labor and we have to work and we have to toil and it reminds us that we are under judgment we are in a world that is affected by sin we are in a world that works against us and it doesn't matter how long our life might be whether short or long it's going to be marked by toil and trouble and friends again there's no distinction this is true for all of Adam's race in verse 11 the psalmist asks a question who considers the power of your anger and your wrath according to the fear of you the psalmist is asking a question in essence he is making a statement by asking a question what he is in essence really saying is that we do not consider the fact that the severity of God's power and anger and wrath is in accordance with the way he is to be feared there are some people who would say you know why is

God so angry at the sin of man why did God get so bent out of shape at what Adam did he just disobeyed see for us when a sinner sins against us it's not a big deal because we're sinners but when you sin against a holy God it's a different thing and what the psalmist is saying is he's saying who has considered who considers the power of your anger and wrath according to the fear of you according to the way you are to be feared the way you are to be revered the severity of God's power in his anger and in his wrath is in accordance with the degree to which he as a holy perfect God is to be feared and he gives no apology for that he he he he gives no defense for that he is

[ 23 : 42 ] God and his wrath being poured out upon sin is consistent with the holy God that he is if he did any less it would be besmirching his holiness and the fact that he is the sovereign Lord his power and the power of his anger and his wrath are in accordance with the way he is to be feared the toil and the trouble that we experience in this earth are to be reminders to us that God is to be feared God is to be revered God is God and we are not when we were younger and we would get into a conversation with our parents and we would say something my mother would always say to us you think we're company we're not company brothers and sisters we're not company with

God we're not company with God he's a holy God and even the way we've been taught to refer to our elders I think we should take some of those lessons and think about how we refer to God he's outside of our world he created our world and he created us so how should we respond to the fact that only God is eternal and because of sin we are living under his judgment how should we respond to that well Moses gives us the answer and the conclusion of this psalm which is the heart of the psalm he gives us the answer that brings me to my third and final point which is the brevity of life that's the third and final truth that he highlights in this psalm life is short life is short brothers and sisters if you live a hundred years life is short if you live a hundred and twenty years life is short we're like a dream that's one of the images that the psalmist uses to describe our lives dreams of

dreams of a vivid dream of you literally thought it was real we've had them this is our life is like that and isn't it true that when loved ones go friends go even though today we can have videos and we can have pictures and all the other things it does seem like a dream like a vivid dream that has now ended the life as long as it may have been at the end of the day seems very very short and so in light of this what the psalmist prays for us in light of the fact that we are under the judgment of God and our lives are brief notice what the psalmist prays he prays in verse 12 so teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom what's the clear implication of that prayer the clear implication is that even though we are not eternal like

God and even though we have this death sentence on us and even though we see death all around us we will not in and of ourselves live our lives in a way that reflects the reality of our death and live with wisdom as he prayed for us you would think that we should observe it and we should realize you know what I'm going to die one day so I need to live with wisdom no the psalmist has to pray Moses has to pray prays for himself and he prays for all of us that God would teach us to number our days and that's simply saying to recognize we are not here forever that's not saying trying to figure out whether you can live long or short no it's saying whether long or short recognize that you are not here forever that's numbering your days and the conviction of that is that we will live lives that reflect wisdom

I notice if we don't accept this reality that our days are indeed numbered we are indeed under a sentence of death we will not get a heart of wisdom we will not live wisely I want you to think for a moment the original setting that Moses was in we are told by scholars that some 2.5 million Israelites would have come out of Egypt somewhere around there we know from scripture that there was 600,000 in the army alone and they estimate that with women and children there would have been about 2.5 million who left Egypt in our country of 400,000 we have deaths every day we have deaths every day with modern medicine that we have and in those days you can imagine traveling in the wilderness in the extremities of the weather or the difficulties that they would have faced and they would have been experiencing death every single day we are told on one occasion in Numbers 25 that 24,000 of them

God killed them one day for sexual morality and idolatry death was all around them they were burying people every single day if there is anyone who should get the point that we are not here forever that we are under the sentence of death that one day we are going to die and we need to live wisely because of that it should have been these people and clearly they didn't get it Moses has to pray Lord teach us to number our days so that we can get a heart of wisdom so that we may live wisely but we just don't seem to be able to do it listen to what John Calvin writes about this reality for us as people he writes even he who is most skillful in arithmetic is nevertheless unable to count four score years in his own life it is surely a monstrous thing that man can measure all distances without or outside of themselves that they know how many feet the moon is distant from the center of the earth what space there is between the different planets and in short they can measure all the dimensions of heaven and earth while they cannot number three score and ten in their own case it is therefore evident that

[ 31 : 48 ] Moses had good reason to beseech God for the ability to perform what requires a wisdom which is very rare among mankind you know the reason that we really need to number our days to live a life of wisdom is because we are going to be accountable after death if it was when you're dead you're done if it was when you die there's nothing else why would you even need to live with wisdom why would it matter how we live but see it does matter how we live because we are accountable to our creator we are accountable to the one who created us to the one who pronounced a judgment over us to say you are dust and you're going to return to dust and the scripture is very clear that one day we will be judged by God but the point we need to see this morning is that even with that awareness and that reality left to ourselves we will still live without wisdom left to ourselves we will still live a haphazard life going to funerals hearing dust you are dust you will return writing obituaries and then we live our lives foolishly we live our lives as if we're going to be here forever or if when we die we're done but we're not done indeed we've just begun when we die and the implication of the need to have a heart of wisdom to learn to recognize that we're not here forever the implication is we are going to be judged we're going to be judged by a holy God we're going to be judged by the first perfect judgment that has ever happened not one where we can pull the wool over the judge's eye or we can curry favor with the judge this is a holy judge who will judge us by a perfect standard of righteousness and so

Moses says oh Lord teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom that we may get a heart to live lives that make sense for people who are not here forever and people who when they die will stand before you and they will give an account essentially saying Lord I don't want myself I don't want us to live the fool live live a foolish life and then stand before you verse 12 is one of six specific things that Moses prays and then he goes on and he prays other things in verse 13 he says return oh Lord how long have pity on your servants satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love that we may rejoice and be glad all our days that's an unusual prayer for Moses to pray because the reality is it is a prayer that will not be fulfilled in this fallen life we will never in this fallen world rejoice and be glad all of our days we're under the sentence of death and judgment yet Moses longs for this he yearns for this he's crying out for this yet it's not going to be fulfilled in our fallen world where we will rejoice and be glad all the days of our life in verse 15 he asks make us glad for as many days as you afflicted us for as many years as we have seen evil again another desire of his heart we won't see it in this life but he's yearning for something that really is God's intent for us but we will not see it in this fallen world brothers and sisters if we see that in this fallen world

Christ doesn't need to come and he prays let your work be shown to your servant and your glorious power to their children he's in essence saying God demonstrate that you're with us God let us see your hand and Lord not just for us our children as well let our children see it let our children see that you are the God of your people who's with your people and then he prays and we can see that Moses certainly had this heart of wisdom when he prays and establish the work of sorry verse 17 let your favor be upon us and establish the work of our hands upon us yes establish the work of our hands and what's very clear about that is that the only work that we can in faith pray to

God to establish is that is what is in accordance with his own will that is what is right in his sight and not just in ours it's not enough for us to sit down and say I'm going to do this in 2020 I'm going to get this done and I'm going to go after this and then say Lord bless it no that's not the way we do it we want to be praying God would you establish the work of our hands believing that we have sought to do his will believing that we are living with the wisdom that he gives us and it's reflected in how we go about making our plans and seeking to live so what does it mean to number our days it means to live mindful that we will die whether we live short or long the thing that we don't like to think about is the very thing we need to think about we don't like to think about death but we need to think about death because rightly thought about it encourages us to live wisely rightly thought about it helps us to make some decisions in the moment about what we'll give ourselves or what is important about what really matters but sadly for most of us you know when we think about death when death comes when death is right at our door that's when we begin to contemplate our mortality and the fact that we are here forever we begin to think about it when we get a diagnosis when we get some result that's when we begin to think about death but we need to think about death in an ongoing way as the psalmist is saying to us here

[ 39 : 34 ] Lord teach us the number of days teach us every day imagine how we would live if every single day we begin that day aware Lord my days are limited I could die today don't know how much more time I have God help me to be wise today that I would live a life that is pleasing in your sight brothers and sisters we need to live wisely because judgment just like death awaits every single one of us it's an appointment that we can't postpone we can't get around death is one we will keep judgment is another that we will keep well humanly speaking God answered Moses prayer

God answered Moses prayer humanly speaking by sending Christ it is only through Christ that we can truly learn the wisdom that is needed to live wisely Colossians 2 and 3 tells us that in Christ are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden we receive wisdom from Christ by which we can live our lives and the opposite is true for those outside of Christ despite going to the funerals despite being surrounded by death I mean think about us in this country a few months ago Hurricane Dorian came through and we have had an unbelievable death toll I think the last count that we have is somewhere around 74 bodies but hundreds are still missing next month in Abaco alone they're going to bury 60 persons who've not been identified and we're told that that's just a fraction of that group who have died they just don't know and just being surrounded by all that that's not enough to get those who have survived to live lives of wisdom it takes more than that it takes being in Christ and see this is one of the things that should humble all of us those of us if you're in Christ this morning and you're sober minded and your eyes are open and you're serving the Lord and you're saying no to what the world is running after that is the wisdom of God it's not

because we are morally good!

it's not because we are more wise than the wicked it is because God has had mercy on us and God has opened our eyes and helped us to see the wisdom that can only be found in Jesus Christ that when the world laughs at we'll weep and indeed some of the things that the world would weep at because we're in Christ we're able to laugh to live wisely is to live for Christ to live foolishly is to live for this world and to live for self but here's the more important truth I said humanly speaking God answered Moses by sending Christ what the Bible says is that

God answered Moses before Moses prayed the Bible says that before the foundation of the world God foreordained that he would send Christ he would send his son he would send his son the only one who will be able to deliver us from the judgment of death that is upon us the only one who will be able to wipe away all the tears from our eyes what Moses is longing for in heavens and in the new earth that God would satisfy us morning by morning with steadfast love that we would rejoice and be glad all of our days only through Christ will we experience the things that Moses has prayed but God in his kindness for a day and that Jesus would come and

[ 44 : 22 ] Jesus would enable us to pass from death to life enable us to hear those words that he spoke to Martha your brother is going to live again because I'm the resurrection and the life and those who die who believe in me even though they die yet shall they live and the evidence that we are living a life of wisdom is that we are living a life for God friends let's not deceive ourselves let us not delude ourselves if we are not living for Christ we are not living wisely the life that is lived for God is a life that is lived with wisdom wisdom is found in Christ and in Christ alone and

Christ alone overcomes death and so on this 29th of December I want to ask you the question how are you living are you are you numbering your days are you aware that you are here forever I received the sad news just two days ago of a cousin who was older than we were but he always kept himself young so we kind of thought he was in our age group heard that he passed away one of the things I remember 2019 for is that I believe this is probably the year that I was acutely aware! of how many of my contemporaries have died schoolmates cousins! Many of them! But away from the Lord that will go through one ear out of the next it is only the Lord and the wisdom that he brings that would remind me your day is coming!

you need to live wisely Remember only what is done for Christ will last and when I say that I don't want you to hear that we need to quit our jobs and we need to go on the mission field or we need to do something else we can live for Christ as we keep our jobs as we care for our families as we do the ordinary things that we do but we do them for Christ we do them with Christ in mind we do them reminding ourselves that one day we are going to be judged!

for them! And so you're living this morning that not one single second is promised to you in this life many of us have hopes of saying 2020 but there's no guarantee that we will no guarantee at all and so my question again as I close is are you living for the one who conquered death are you living for the one in whom is hidden wisdom and knowledge my prayer for us is that God will help us all to pray the prayer of Moses God teach me to number my days that I may apply my heart to wisdom let's pray Father we bow this morning on this last

[ 48 : 02 ] Lord's day of 2019 and Lord we together pray the prayer of Moses teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom but help us to see that the wise life is a life lived for Christ the foolish life is a life lived for self and for this world that is passing away with all of its desires Lord I pray all over this room that those of us who have indeed trusted Christ those of us who are seeking to live this life reflective of the wisdom that he brings that that will be renewed for us in the new year Lord may we grow in that commitment and conviction and father

I pray for any who are here this morning who are living with the wisdom that Christ provides on numbering their days and aware of their mortality and the brevity of life arrest them Lord convict them Lord open their eyes but help them to see that their very next breath is not guaranteed and they can pass from time into eternity God help us speak to our hearts and help those who don't know Christ to turn from sin to repent and to run to him as the eternal dwelling place of all your people would you do this we ask in

Jesus name amen to to you to you to you to!