

Psalm 90 • Numbering Our Days

Introduction

This Psalm was written by Moses and is therefore probably the oldest of all the Psalms. It's particularly powerful as it provides us insight into how Moses personally viewed the historical situations documented elsewhere in Scripture, revealing his concern that the right lessons not just be learned but applied as a result of God's working in their lives. Essentially Moses appeals for us to embrace the considerable contrast of the eternal character of God versus man's limited opportunity to connect with Him and to realize why every second is precious and a resource not to be squandered on the pursuit of anything else but His will and ways.

¹LORD, You have been our dwelling place
in all generations.

²Before the mountains were born
Or You gave birth to the earth and the
world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting, You
are God.

³You turn man back into dust
And say, "Return, O children of men."

⁴For a thousand years in Your sight
Are like yesterday when it passes by,
Or as a watch in the night.

⁵You have swept them away like a flood,
they fall asleep;

In the morning they are like grass which
sprouts anew.

⁶In the morning it flourishes and sprouts
anew;

Toward evening it fades and withers
away.

⁷For we have been consumed by Your
anger

And by Your wrath we have been
dismayed.

⁸You have placed our iniquities before
You,

Our secret sins in the light of Your
presence.

⁹For all our days have declined in Your
fury;

We have finished our years like a sigh.

¹⁰As for the days of our life, they contain

The Contrast of God's Eternal Nature vs. Man's Frailty [Read v.1-6]

Q: Is there a difference between being "immortal" vs. "eternal"?

A: Man is immortal from the point of view that his soul will never die; God is eternal because He neither has a beginning nor an ending. As Moses describes it using the most enduring thing known in his day, God existed before the mountains, even before the earth itself.

Point: Through faith in Christ we come into possession of eternal life and therefore become a part of eternity.

"For I, the LORD, do not change..."
Malachi 3:6a

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.
Hebrews 13:8

Q: What are the illustrations provided to describe the contrast of man's frailty?

1. Dust (v.3)
2. A watch in the night (which is about 3 hours long) (v.4)
3. A brief flood after a rain that soon dries up (v.5)
4. Grass that shoots up but before evening is cut down (v.5-6)

then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.
Ecclesiastes 12:7

Point: We are dust, we are creatures of time, we are frail. We are nothing if not in a right relationship with eternal God. Only through faith in Christ can we know God and share His eternal life. To do otherwise is to misapply our immortality according to all its inherent weaknesses.

The Contrast of God's Holiness vs. Man's Sinfulness [Read v.7-12]

Q: This specifically being Moses speaking, what events do you suppose he is referring to in which they experienced God's anger?

A: It could refer to specific instances of Israel's rebellion in the wilderness between Egypt and Canaan such as their failure at Kadesh-barnea (Numbers 13-14), or be speaking of their collective, repeated failures.

Q: What are the specific problem areas detailed in v.3?

1. "Our iniquities". This is knowing God's Word and will but choosing to twist it to justify one's own choices and behaviors to the contrary.
2. "Our secret sins". This is the futile attempt to live a dual life that seems to

Psalm 90 • Numbering Our Days, Page 1 of 3

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.
¹¹Who understands the power of Your
anger
And Your fury, according to the fear that
is due You?
¹²So teach us to number our days,
That we may present to You a heart of
wisdom.

¹³Do return, O LORD; how long will it be?
And be sorry for Your servants.
¹⁴O satisfy us in the morning with Your
lovingkindness,
That we may sing for joy and be glad all
our days.
¹⁵Make us glad according to the days You
have afflicted us,
And the years we have seen evil.
¹⁶Let Your work appear to Your servants
And Your majesty to their children.
¹⁷Let 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.

embrace God's ways but is actually seeking to satisfy one's own desires.

*For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. **And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.***

Hebrews 4:12-13

Point: *The issue is not the general hardships of life, but the specific rejection of following God's will and ways.*

Q: What is the result of living according to one's own ways and so incurring God's anger for it?

A: Our finite "days" and "years" in this life are fruitless from God's eternal point of view. They produce only "labor and sorrow" (v.10) with no lasting benefits. ("For soon it is gone and we fly away.")

Point: *The work of God's holiness is to either prepare something for His presence, making it clean and pure from sin so as to be acceptable, or to eliminate it so that sin is removed from His presence. The opportunity provided man in which to either become eternally acceptable or eternally removed is limited.*

Q: What is the proper application of this lesson according to v.12?

A: We should make our life count and not waste our lives on useless endeavors. We should possess the biblical wisdom gained by placing the things of God in the right priority over the things of this earth, to apply ourselves to the things that truly matter in eternity.

The Contrast of God's Blessings vs. Man's Yearnings **[Read v.13-17]**

Q: How does Moses begin his prayer on their behalf?

A: Moses prays for the return of God's favor, His restoring them to the place of favor and blessing in the wake of the consequences of judgment for their past behavior. (v.13)

Q: How did God literally satisfy Israel each morning in the wilderness? (v.14) How might this hint at a greater teaching concerning His Word?

A: Each morning they rose to gather the manna He provided by which to physically feed them. However, we know that this had a deeper spiritual teaching regarding their need to be fed by His Word.

"He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD."

Deuteronomy 8:3

Both the physical food (manna) and the spiritual food (God's Word) were provided as a daily reminder of His grace (lovingkindness).

[Continued on the next page.]

Psalm 90 • Numbering Our Days, Page 2 of 3

Q: Why do you suppose Moses requests God's provision of joy and gladness in the midst of all they were enduring?

A: They needed to see the greater working of God through these things in order to see the greater spiritual activities at work. They could have become focused on the consequences of God's discipline rather than embraced the greater good it was working in their lives.

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Q: Why does Moses pray for God's work to be done? (v.16)

A: Because even in the midst of everything else going on, He is more concerned about God's glory and name than his own situation. It's a kind of rebuttal to what he stated in v.10 that man's work is futile, providing only "labor and sorrow", whereas God's work actually reveals "Your majesty". It connects to the final verse in his appeal that God's work will become their work in his request to "confirm for us the work of our hands".

Point: *When man sets aside his personal yearnings and desires to instead embrace God's, everything changes. Not just the work itself, but the heart and soul and mind pursuing it as well. Setting aside one's yearnings is the key to experiencing God's blessings personally and corporately, not seeking "blessings" to cover one's choices not to live fully according to God's Word and ways.*

Overall Application

Moses provides for us the specific application of this teaching: "So teach us to number our days". (v.12)

- *Are there parts of your day, activities in your life, which you don't consider having a need to be dedicated according to God's Word and ways? Why? How might they indicate the source of spiritual tension in your life?*
- *Do you approach each and every day as something entrusted to you by God, something to be properly invested for His kingdom?*
- *What's wrong with the thinking that you can always put something off until tomorrow? How well do you regard that you can never get a single, spent day back? Or that you probably have less days remaining in front of you than already are behind?*