

Psalm 90 "The Facts of Life"

Greeting

Introduction

Attention Step: The most valuable resource that we have is our time. But time never stops ticking away. So we look for ways to save time and we think of how to make the most of our time.

Often when decisions are weighed or plans are considered, the phrase 'life is short' referring to our limited time, will determine the course of action. Popular ways that this is applied are as follows:

- Life is short, spend it with people who make you laugh and feel loved.
- Life is short, time is fast, no replay, no rewind, so enjoy every moment as it comes.
- Life is short, break the rules.
- Life is short, buy the shoes, drink the wine, order the dessert.
- Life is short, smile while you still have teeth.

transition: The idea is that our lives, like the sand in a hour glass, is steadily draining away; make the most of it! And you apparently make the most of life by living in the moment. *Just consider if that is true. Living in the moment produces fleeting happiness but doesn't yield lasting fulfillment.

This morning our text will show us that we aren't fulfilled by living in the moment to please ourselves, but instead by living with eternity in view to please God.

Purpose Statement: Psalm 90 teaches us to respond to the brevity of human life and the brokenness of this world by finding satisfaction and success in the Lord.

We still suffering in this life, and one day soon all of bodies will expire. But God gives our lives meaning and purpose by transforming our lowly existence into a glorious experience of His grace.

Context: The superscription of our psalm says that this is *a prayer of Moses the man of God*. It was very fitting for Moses to write this psalm. During the wilderness wandering, he was reminded, probably daily, that our lives are short and difficult. Shepherding 12 tribes (over 2 million people) while living in a desert landscape with few resources helped him realize that the struggle is real.*

And let's remember that Moses saw an entire generation of people die during their 40-year wilderness journey. Conservative estimates put the number at over 1 million. On average: 25k/year, 2k/month, 480/week, 68/day. He was frequently reminded that our days are short.

With those experiences in mind and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he wrote Psalm 90. ~~Let's read the psalm now and hear the beautiful prayer of Moses.~~

Text: ~~A PRAYER OF MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD.~~

~~¹ Lord, you have been our dwelling place
in all generations.~~

~~² Before the mountains were brought forth,
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.~~

~~³ You return man to dust~~

and say, "Return, O children of man!"
~~4 For a thousand years in your sight
are but as yesterday when it is past,
or as a watch in the night.~~

~~5 You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream,
like grass that is renewed in the morning:~~

~~6 in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;
in the evening it fades and withers.~~

~~7 For we are brought to an end by your anger;
by your wrath we are dismayed.~~

~~8 You have set our iniquities before you,
our secret sins in the light of your presence.~~

~~9 For all our days pass away under your wrath;
we bring our years to an end like a sigh.~~

~~10 The years of our life are seventy,
or even by reason of strength eighty;
—yet their span is but toil and trouble;
they are soon gone, and we fly away.~~

~~11 Who considers the power of your anger,
and your wrath according to the fear of you?~~

~~12 So teach us to number our days
that we may get a heart of wisdom.~~

~~13 Return, O LORD! How long?
Have pity on your servants!~~

~~14 Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,
that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.~~

~~15 Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us,
and for as many years as we have seen evil.~~

~~16 **Let** your work be shown to your servants,
and your glorious power to their children.~~

~~17 Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us,
and establish the work of our hands upon us;
yes, establish the work of our hands!*~~

Sermon Outline:

- The eternity of God and the brevity of human life (v. 1-6).
- The holiness of God and the brokenness of this world (v. 7-12).
- The mercy of God and the blessedness of a relationship with Him (13-17).

The eternity of God and the brevity of human life

Verses 1-2: 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.

1. The address "Lord" acknowledges God's sovereign rule over our lives. We are his to command and he is ours to enjoy. He is our "dwelling place" (like Deut. 33:27 and Ps. 71:3).
 - a. This idea that God is our dwelling place, our refuge, our fortress can be found throughout the bible.
 - b. *In this world followers of God may own a house or be native to a city, but we are never at home. God alone has been (in all generations) and will be our habitation. Even now as sojourners and pilgrims we make our abode in the Lord.
 - c. The people of God in all generations learned this lesson. God was with Abraham leading him to a land that he would show him. God was with Isaac as he sojourned through the land. The same was true for Jacob and especially vivid with his son Joseph... Potiphar's house, in prison, and in the palace. *And

the Lord made this point very clear to the Israelites and to Moses in the wilderness, giving them manna and quail and water and guiding them by day and by night. God goes with his people and they make their abode in Him.

transition: Our eternal God is our dwelling place, both now and forever. He is with us as we sojourn through this life and we will be with him forever when Christ returns. *After praising God's eternity in these opening verses, the focus shifts to our transience.

Verse 3: You return man to dust and say, “Return, O children of man!”

2. Here our text harkens back to Genesis 3 where God said to Adam after he sinned, "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" (Genesis 3:19).
 - a. As a result of sin, our existence is cut short. One day soon our bodies will return to dust.
 - b. And sometimes we are reminded of that reality... we are fading. The mirrors preaches that message: the multiplying of gray hair, the loss of hair—fading. Ball players that you followed in college are now retired and in the hall of fame; you’re fading. The popcorn sound your knees make when you get out of a chair...fading. A couple of months ago a group of us from Hinson went to a 3-day conference. We stayed up late each night, playing cards, laughing, having ourselves a time; man, it took me two weeks to recover from that trip. Back in the day I would have bounced back—fading. I am going back to the dust.

- c. The psalm continues to illustrate God's eternity and our transience in verse 4...

Verse 4: For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.

3. In verse 3 we are told that we are going back to the dust. Now in verse 4 we are humbled to dust. Here our time-span is put into the huge setting of eternity. "For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past..." Wow.

- a. The prophet Isaiah, in praise of God's greatness said, **Behold**, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales; behold, he takes up the coastlands like fine dust (Isaiah 40:15).
- b. God is great and we are small; very small, speck size, microscopic. If all the nations are a drop from a bucket, then that makes us a fraction of a water molecule.
- c. **This theme** continues in 5a...

Verse 5a: You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream.

4. Floods, especially in ancient context, would wipe away entire villages and towns. Those places would be a distant memory, just like a dream.

- a. History teaches us that two generations from now most of us will be swept away like that, we will be forgotten. Our lives are short and the memory of our lives is short.*
- b. My grandmother was the matriarch of my family. She was a strong faithful woman. I spent many summers at her home in Virginia. We made wonderful memories together, but now that is all they are. She went to be with the Lord when I

was 15. My wife never got to meet her and my grandmother never held my babies. Her memory lives on now in the stories that I share with my kids but that will be the end.*

- c. The brevity of human life is further illustrated with one final metaphor...

Verses 5b-6: Like grass that is renewed in the morning: in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.

5. This metaphor is repeated throughout the bible. Our lives are like grass renewed by morning dew, at first alive and vibrant but then scorched by the afternoon sun and withered by evening. Like a hot day in August; many things that are alive those mornings will have withered by the evening and that is a reminder of the brevity of human life.*

- a. As sobering as these metaphors are, we ought to be mightily encouraged. One might think that the Lord who is eternal, to whom a thousand years is as a day, to whom all the nations are like a drop from a bucket and like dust on the scales, that this marvelous God would not bother with lives that are like the grass of the field.
- b. But notice what Jesus said about God's concern for you, ²⁸ **And why** are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ **But if** God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? (Matthew 6:28-30)

c. I love what Jesus did with this metaphor. **He calls** it to mind and then shows that within our brief transient lives lies the grace of our benevolent God. Our lives are like the grass of the field but we are not grass; our worth to God is far greater. Jesus shows us that while our lives are brief, God cares for us and with such great concern that he gives attention to the details of our daily lives; down to the food we eat and the clothing we wear.

transition: Our lives are like the grass of the field but we are not like the grass of the field. After talking about the eternity of God and the brevity of human life, our text now addresses the holiness of God and the brokenness of this world.

The holiness of God and the brokenness of this world

Verses 7-8: 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.

1. At first our lives are characterized by brevity and now by brokenness. We now transition from the dust of Genesis 3, to the condemnation of Genesis 3. In the first point, the quick passing of time was the issue, but now, death is the issue. Death is a curse resulting from our sin and the outcome of God's holy judgment.
 - a. Because of our sin, we are brought to an end by God's anger, we have no resources with which to save ourselves.
 - b. By his wrath we are dismayed. When the moment of truth confronts us, we are undone and without excuse. All of our iniquities are before God and our secret sins are in the light of his presence.*

- c. I have the “Ring” app. It’s new school neighborhood watch and a way for people to out criminals. Video doorbells are able to record at night, without much light. So crooks may think that they are being stealth and going unnoticed, but theirs crimes are being recorded and shared broadly.
- d. This is our reality before our all-knowing holy God. Our secret sins are in the light of his presence; we have no escape.* It is the equivalent of DNA, fingerprints, eyewitnesses, and motive in a murder trial.
- e. Our sins are great and Psalm 90 continues to unpack our guilt before the Lord...

Verse 9: For all our days pass away under your wrath; we bring our years to an end like a sigh.

- 2. This verse continues the theme of God's wrath against us because of our sins. Because of rebellion against God, humanity lives under the wrath of God. Death is the ultimate end and it casts its shadow over each of our days. All of our days pass away under his wrath.
 - a. And what is the end of it all? We bring our years to an end like a sigh. Years implies a prolonged effort; an effort that comes to nothing. You cannot escape death.*
 - b. But it's not just the end that is grim.

Verse 10: The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.

- 3. On average, 70-80 years is the number of our days, they are soon gone (brief) and we fly away (like a shriveled flower in the wind).

- a. *But not only is life short, it is hard; characterized by toil and trouble. Illness, relational conflict, the weaknesses of the flesh, an unreasonable boss, war, unwanted singleness, injustice, a bad marriage, a recession, a prodigal son, death and various hardships make life difficult.
- b. And what are we to make of it all? How should we process the brevity of life and the brokenness of this world? The word tells us in verses 11-12...

Verse 11-12: 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.

- 4. The question is posed: Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of you?
 - a. Who has considered the relationship between mortality and sin? We so often live in the moment, not thinking of eternity or the consequences of our actions.
 - b. So he says, "So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom." The prayer is that we consider the brevity of life and the weight of our sin, and walk in the fear of the Lord.
 - c. This prayer is that we gain, or rather that God gives us an eternal perspective. "Lord teach us to think long-term, don't allow our lives to be a conglomeration of trivial pursuits providing temporary pleasure but no lasting significance. Help us apprehend the brevity of life.
 - d. ~~This heart of wisdom is gained by considering God. He is eternal and he is holy and we are accountable to him. The wise person will think on these things continually.*~~

- e. Wisdom comes to our hearts when we learn to fear the Lord. This was a consistent message that Moses preached.
 - i. **Oh that** they had such a heart as this always, to fear me and to keep all my commandments, that it might go well with them and with their descendants forever! (Deuteronomy 5:29)
 - ii. If they were wise, they would understand this; they would discern their latter end! (Deuteronomy 32:29)
 - iii. **Many** live like they are not going to die; that is one of the challenges of youthfulness. And we have our ways of trying to put off death. Creams, elixirs, vitamins, etc. But we all are destined to die and then to face judgment.*
- 5. And in these verses the Moses highlighted a quality of God's character rarely discussed--His wrath. I read a good definition once of God's wrath: *God's wrath is his steady, unrelenting, unremitting, uncompromising antagonism to evil in all its forms and manifestations.* His wrath is how he justly deals with sin.
 - a. God's anger is often viewed is a misinterpretation. Like, that's the Old Testament God, but we have Jesus who holds lambs in his arms and tells stories to children.
 - b. The emphasis is often on God's benevolence not his holiness. Jesus is viewed as a winsome wise religious leader but not really someone who hates sin and needed to die on the cross in our place.
 - c. That kind of sentimentality warps our understanding of God. Our God is a consuming fire. He is holy. Through Christ he is forgiving, but he is not lenient. God is terrifyingly awesome

and there is a great fierceness to his wrath; his holiness requires it and justice demands it.*

- d. *Now just in case you are tempted to think only of benevolence when you consider the Lord, let's look at the great benevolent verse, the most quoted verse in the bible, John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). That is good news about a gracious God.
- e. Lots of people camp out on that verse without ever reading to the end of the chapter. So let's put it in context. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him (John 3:36).
- f. The God who loved the world and gave his only Son, that benevolent God is holy. His wrath was against us because of our sins but thanks be to God his justice was satisfied by Jesus.
- g. However, for those who do not obey the Son, the wrath of God remains on them. *If you are a Christian, then you know the joy of sins forgiven and conscience cleansed of death defeated and life without end. If you are not a Christian, hear me clearly. Your Creator will judge sin. One day, he will finally deal with evil and evil doers. His judgment will be fierce. But you need not be condemned. By God's own initiative, he has provided a way to satisfy his wrath against evil by sending his Son Jesus to live for us and die in our

place, forever atoning for our sins and triumphing over sin and death through his resurrection from the grave.*

- h. Everyone who believes that good news and follows Jesus receives new life. If you would like to know more about what that means, speak with one of the leaders here following the service.
- i. *Psalm 90 closes with a powerful petition for God's favor.

God's mercy and the blessedness of a relationship with him

Verse 13: Return, O LORD! How long? Have pity on your servants!

1. In verse 3 God said, "Return, O children of man!" to the dust from which you came. And now man says to God, "Return, O LORD! How long?"
 - a. This expresses the longing of mankind to be rescued out of the darkness of this world. "God, we need salvation!"
 - b. This prayer, in keeping with the hope of the Scripture, looked forward to the Messiah, the Lord Jesus who is the Savior of the world.
 - c. "Return, O Lord!" is like "Come Lord Jesus." Ultimately, the solution for our ills and the brokenness of this world is not better policies, medical advancements or peace treaties. We need the One who can finally deal with sin and its effects. That man is Jesus. He will vanquish evil in all of its forms, forever end suffering, free us from the entanglements of fallen flesh, unite us perfectly with himself and one another, destroy the dark empires of this world and rule in his everlasting righteous kingdom. Return O Lord, how long?!

transition: In response to the brevity of life and the brokenness of this world, we wait for Jesus, longing for his return. And while we wait, God transforms our fading existence.

Verses 14-15: 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.

2. What a contrast! And what great hope! Remember the devastating metaphors about our existence from earlier in this psalm.* This prayer teaches us that the brevity of human life and the brokenness of this world can be made sweet by a blessed relationship with the Lord.

a. 13 years ago I was blessed to serve in Sudan, the conflict was still great at the time, many Christians had suffered severely for their faith. But during our worship services, the rejoicing was exuberant. People living under the constant threat of persecution had gladness and joy in Christ. The same can be said for faithful believers dealing with loss or dysfunction in the home, the one suffering from illness, those under financial strain. The Lord is our dwelling place, he is our refuge, he is with us in the struggle.

i. Life is hard but made sweet when lived with Christ.

b. And through Jesus, we enter that joy eternally. Psalm 90 is more than a modest prayer that balances the sorrows of life with joy in the Lord. This psalm expresses a hope in God that extends beyond enjoying his goodness now; and looks forward to eternal life.*

- c. Our psalm closes with a request of the Lord that shows how God can transform our lives into a glorious experience of his grace.

Verses 16-17: 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, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!

3. This is the crowning contrast is between what was seen as perishable in verses 3-12 and what the Lord can accomplish through his abiding presence in our lives.
 - a. This is the heritage for our children, our churches, our communities and others that we love in a transitory world. We cannot guarantee our presence in their lives, our lives are like a vapor, but we can leave a spiritual heritage of the glorious power of God. We may be forgotten in 2 generations but God's work through us will live on.
 - b. Here also is delight and the possibility that our labor is not in vain. Not only will God's word endure, but by his grace our work will as well. The cry, "establish the work of our hands" is a prayer for purpose and significance. Though brief and marred by brokenness, our lives are not destined to be meaningless. God can make the work that we do in this life matter for eternity.
 - c. I mentioned my grandmother earlier... Her memory is almost gone but her work lives on. My mother is 1 of 11. She and most of her siblings are walking with the Lord. Obviously my mother's faith had a tremendous impact on my life. And

Lord willing, the same will be said about my kids. The Lord has established the work of her hands.

Conclusion

Psalm 90 teaches us to take refuge in the Lord by comprehending the enormity of God's eternity and the transience of our existence.

- We can very easily get swept up in the "right now" in the moment lifestyle that pervades our society. But thinking about eternity is sobering and centers us on God's purposes for our lives.
- When this happens we become deliberate about living on mission; being thoughtful to use our lives to honor the Lord and leave a spiritual legacy.
- That could mean showing hospitality in your home; reaching out to neighbors and friends to create space for evangelism. Taking more risks for the gospel.
- It could entail investing more of your time in serving others or giving away more of your resources to support worthy causes.
- It looks like family devotions, praying for lost souls, helping others know God deeply in this Word, and for all of us it means being a member of a local church where together we work to see lives transformed, believers matured, and build a healthy church in your community that will be a faithful witness of Jesus Christ long after you're gone.
- This kind of life involves taking an inventory of our gifts and abilities and asking God to make the most of them.
- For our family, that meant leaving a healthy church that we loved. In the fall of 2017, my wife and I began fasting one day each week, simply hungering for the Lord. During that time, Psalm 90

was a regular prayer. I remember praying and asking God to use me up. Specifically, “Lord, I want to be wrung out.” Stewardship became one of my chief concerns. It was then that God made it clear that I was going to move one from Gresham Bible Church, and eventually, it became clear that that meant planting a new church in Portland.* Thinking and praying about eternity and asking God to establish the work of my hands, led me to take some bold steps of obedience.

- God’s word is true... We have been satisfied with his steadfast love and the Lord has given us great joy...

Brothers and sisters consider these things and push back against the world's ideas of living in the moment. Live for the Lord and delight yourself in him.

Prayer