

SERMONS FROM SELECT PSALMS

**THE TIME OF OUR LIVES
PSALM 90**

“As for the days of our life, they contain 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.” (v.10) “So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom.” (v.12)

This Psalm is the oldest of the 150 Psalms. Its author is Moses who pre-dates any of the other Psalm writers. Moses and God were on good speaking terms. God said of Moses, *“My servant Moses...He is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face....”* (Num.12:7,8)

In addition, it is recorded that *“the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.”* (Num. 12:30) Moses was also a great leader. He is certainly qualified to communicate God’s perspectives on time and life which he does in this Psalm. For 40 years, under God’s supervision, he led God’s people out of slavery in Egypt, through a wilderness on the way to their promised home.

But have you ever thought of him as a poet? I know he was a singer for Exodus 15:1 says, *“Then sang Moses and the children of Israel.”* However, Psalm 90 is Moses’ own, personal poetical prayer song. The heading of the Psalm reads: *“A prayer of Moses the man of God.”* The term “man of God” is usually reserved for prophets. However, Moses is called “the man of God” in Joshua 14:6.

He prayerfully sings about some very weighty matters in his Psalm. He sings about God, the Immortal and man, the Mortal; God transcendent and man transient. With those themes in mind, let us consider the Psalm as follows:

GOD, THE IMMORTAL. vs.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, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.”

Moses has a very exalted view of God as the first two verses show. Let us begin at the end of verse two and work our way backward to the beginning of verse one. In these opening stanzas of his Psalm, Moses says:

He is the Eternal God – *““from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.”*

He was God, He is God and will ever be God. He is the same God today that He was in eternity past. He will be the same God in eternity future as He was in the past and is presently. *“I am the Lord, I change not.”* (Malachi 3:6) The passage of time does not affect Him.

In pre-history He existed; He will exist in post-history. He was before everything and He will be after everything. He is from eternity to eternity. He is from the unlimited past to the unlimited future.

Consequently, God is not circumscribed by time. *“A thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it passes by...”* (v.4) He looks upon a thousand years as we would look upon 24 hours. Methuselah lived nearly a thousand years (Gen.5:27). From God’s perspective Methuselah lived one day. A thousand years is as nothing to the God Who lives, not in time, but in eternity.

We humans live as though this life is all that there is. We cram everything we can into it. However, when we view life from the Eternal One’s perspective, we will realize that we must live *earthly life* within time, but *with eternal life* in view.

He is God the Creator – “formed the earth and the world”

Here again, as in many other scriptures, God is seen as the Creator: *“You formed the earth,”* said Moses. The One Who pre-dates the earth is the One Who formed, fashioned, finished and furnished the earth! This event in the ancient past serves to give us perspective on eternity. Because we are so time conscious we have a limited view of history. God’s perspective comes into our view when we put the creation of the world into the context of eternity, not time.

He is God our Home – “You have been our dwelling place in all generations.”

The Hebrew for the phrase *“dwelling place”* is translated *“refuge.”* God, *“our dwelling,”* is our refuge, our Home! We, *“are His offsprings”* and had been away from *“Home”* for a very long time until, in Christ, now, *“we live and move and have our being”* once again. (Acts 17:28) We are passing through time on our way to our Eternal Home!

These first two verses of this Psalm give us the perspective from which we can view The Times of Our Lives. The only way to make sense out of ourselves and our time on earth is to get the correct perspective on our lifetimes from *“the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity.”* (Isaiah 57:15)

Walter C. Smith’s grand, God exalting hymn, captures Moses’ view of God in these words:

*“Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great Name we praise.*

*To all, life Thou givest, to both great and small;
In all life Thou livest, the true life of all;
We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
And wither and perish—but naught changeth Thee.”*

Against the background of God Immortal, Moses describes the Times of Our Lives in rather realistic and sobering terms. He writes about:

MAN, THE MORTAL. VS. 3-6

“You turn man back into dust and say, “Return, O children of men.” For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it passes by, or as a watch in the night. You have swept them away like a flood, they fall asleep; in the morning they are like grass which sprouts

anew. In the morning it flourishes and sprouts anew; toward evening it fades and withers away."

How do you view life as a mortal transient in the wilderness of this world on you way Home? How do you view your life in the context of time and in view of eternity? Most live as though they were going to live forever upon earth, with basically the same circle of relatives and friends; awaking each morning to wend their way through another day; doing rather routine tasks; lying down to sleep for six to eight hours and then repeating the same cycle of mundane existence all over again. Said one disillusioned soul, "Life is so daily!"

Not all have attached significance or importance to their lives. Some of our literary giants have verbalized their thoughts about life as follows:

- Shakespeare said, "Life is a walking shadow."
- Edmund Cook said, "This life is a hollow bubble."
- Robert Browning said, "Life is an empty dream."
- Mary Roberts Rinehart said, "A little work, a little sleep, a little love and it is over."
- Voltaire said, "We never live; we are always in the expectation of living."

Moses said, "*We spend our years as a tale that is told.*" (v.9) The story of all our lives is very similar: "*In the morning it flourishes and sprouts anew; toward evening it fades and withers.*" (Ps. 90:6) What is needed is God's perspective on time and life. Moses puts the times of our lives into perspective in verses 3-6 as follows:

***The Frailty Of Life.* v.3**

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

Dust. Plain old dust. Not even dirt! We're made of stuff smaller than dirt! Webster says of dust: "fine particles of matter of earth; particles into which something disintegrates."

When God created the first humans, the material that He used does not flatter us. He did not use gold! Oscar De La Hoya, the boxer, is promoted as *The Golden Boy*. His Los Angeles-based promotion company is named Golden Boy Promotions. He is called "the golden boy" but he is not comprised of gold. Some cigar stores may have wooden Indians in front of them but no one is made of wood, even though I have seen some people who have a chip on their shoulder!

The Genesis record states: "*The LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.*" (Gen.2:7) And in Genesis 3 God says, "*dust you are, and to dust you shall return.*" Not very flattering, is it? Dust is not a substantial foundation upon which to build a huge ego is it? No wonder there is great emphasis upon improving one's self-image!

The name "Adam" in the Hebrew is "*adamah*" which means "man of the soil." Science has proved that the substance of our bodies consists of the very same elements as the soil. It serves to humble our pride when we consider we are of the dust of the earth.

Dust is frail stuff. Dust is small stuff. Jeremiah visited a potter's shop and watched the potter making vessels from clay. God said to him, *"as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand...."* (Jer.18:7) Dust in the hands of God becomes a marvelous masterpiece. David said, *"I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works."* (Psalm 139:14)

Fearfully made, but frail! That which is frail will eventually fail because it is of the earth and is decomposable and perishable. There comes that time to all of us when dust must return to dust. We are reminded of our mortality every time we stand at a graveside and hear the minister say, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust."

A little girl went to funeral and then the burial of her grandmother. The minister said, "We come from dust and to dust we must return." When they went to the cemetery she heard the minister say, "Ashes to ashes; dust to dust." Later that week she was looking for something under her bed and saw dust balls on the floor and ran to her mother saying, "Mom, come quick! Someone's under my bed and I don't know if they are coming or going!"

A little humor after discussing such a "grave" subject may help us to temporarily forget our frailty, however, the truth of our transient existence upon the earth is always in the back of our minds, isn't it? The news reports of auto accidents, murders, war deaths, deaths of prominent citizens from natural causes, the obituary page in the newspaper, the mortuaries and cemeteries by which we pass, all remind us of the inevitable. The Center for Disease Control informs us that approximately 2.5 million people die in the USA every year, an average of just over 6,500 every day. Moses addressed the frailty of life and then he wrote about the brevity of life.

The Brevity Of Life. vs.4-6

"For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it passes by, or as a watch in the night. You have swept them away like a flood, they fall asleep; In the morning they are like grass which sprouts anew. In the morning it flourishes and sprouts anew; toward evening it fades and withers away."

Verses 9-12 continue the theme: *"For all our days have declined in Your fury; we have finished our years like a sigh. As for the days of our life, they contain 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. Who understands the power of Your anger and Your fury, according to the fear that is due You? So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom."*

What we have in this Psalm is the infiniteness of God and the finiteness of man articulated; time flashed against the screen of eternity. Time is our environment whether we are conscious of it or not. We ignore it and take it for granted much the way a bird might take air for granted. So how do you view time? According to Psalm 90, time is the stuff of which life consists. Time is life! People live by the clock, because time is important to all of us. Benjamin Franklin said, "Do not squander time, for it is the stuff life is made of."

Everyone has an expiration date. Even Moses, who lived 120 years, expired! (Deut. 34:7)

God knows the day we were born and He knows the date we will expire. When Confederate General Andrew “Stonewall” Jackson was asked how he could be so fearless in battle, he responded, “I feel as safe in battle as in bed. God has fixed the time of my death.”

The brevity of life is accentuated repeatedly in the scriptures by direct statements and also by analogy. Some of the analogies are:

“as a swift ship” – (Job 9:26)

“a tale that is told” – (Ps.90:9)

“as swift as a weaver’s shuttle” – (Job 7:6)

“an eagle swooping on its prey.” – (Job 9:26)

“a deep sleep” – (Ps.90:5)

“my life is wind” – (Job 7:7)

“grass that withers” – (Ps. 90:5,6; I Peter 1:24)

James asks the question, “*What is your life? You are a midst that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.*” (James 4:14)

*“Life at best is very brief,
Like the falling of a leaf,
Like the mist upon the mountain,
Like the passing wave of the sea,
Quickly the years of our lifetimes flee.”*

We are aware that life is frail and brief and consequently earthly life comes to an end eventually. Solomon said there is “*a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die.*” (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2) After death, what then?

The Accountability For Life. v.12

“So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom.”

Since life was created by the Creator, we are accountable to Him for the gift of life and the time-frame in which we live out our lives. If life evolved and there is no Creator, then there is no one to whom we must give account after life is ended. However, we are indeed accountable to God.

Every person has three unavoidable, inescapable appointments made by God. Job asks, “*Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth?*” (Job 7:1)

- The first appointment is the appointed day of our birth. Eccles. 3:2 – “*A time to be born.*”
- The second appointment is the day of our death. Hebrews 9:27a – “*It is appointed unto men once to die.*” Job further comments as follows: “*Since his days are determined, The number of his months is with You; You have appointed his limits, so that he cannot pass.*” (Job 14:5)
- The third appointment is the day of judgment. Heb. 9:27b– “*It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment.*”

As we think of the passing of time and how quickly it flies by, we should be mindful of these appointments. Here is where the good news of the gospel comes in. Jesus Christ came into

the world to give us eternal life. We may live only a comparatively short life here on earth, but through His death on the cross for our sins we have the offer of eternal life. Jesus said, *“he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”* (John 5:24)

It is plain to see from scripture that God is the Giver of life, both temporal and eternal; physical and spiritual. Therefore, we are accountable to Him as to how we live life. In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus told a parable about a man who called his servant to him and said, *“Give an account of your stewardship.”* (Luke 16:2) Apart from the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord, time is the most valuable gift we possess. Time is a stewardship for which we are responsible and we are accountable to God for how we use it. Paul reminds us in these words, *“So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.”* (Rom. 14:12)

Moses recognized that he was accountable to God, therefore, he prayed for God to teach him how best to utilize the time that God had allotted him. Moses prayed *“Teach us to number our days.”* (v.12) He asked God to teach him to count his days – not years, but days! He was aware of the frailty of mankind and of the brevity of life and he wanted to make every day count for God and good. Every day is precious. No one of us has an unlimited number of days.

The average age of a male in the United States is 77.5 years, reports the CDC in Atlanta. That’s 28,288 days. Time is life. People live by the clock, because time is important to all of us. Benjamin Franklin said, *“Do not squander time, for it is the stuff life is made of.”* One of the worst misnomers that has become part of our vocabularies is the term *“Life Insurance.”* Its meaning is not that it insures that we will live, but that it insures that we will die! Have you ever heard the expression, *“time is money?”* That’s not true. Time is much more valuable than money. It may be hard to make more money, but it can be done. But it is totally impossible to make more time. Time is more valuable than money. Every moment is a gift from God that must be managed wisely.

A man went in for his annual physical checkup and received a phone call from his physician the next day. The doctor said, *“I’m afraid I have some bad news for you.”* *“What’s the news?”* the man asked. *“Well, said the doctor, you have only 24 hours to live.”* *“That is bad news!”* said the shocked patient. *“I’m afraid I have even worse news,”* the doctor continued. *“What could be worse than what you’ve already told me?”* the patient stammered. *“Well,”* said the doctor *“I’ve been trying to call you ever since you left the office yesterday.”*

Imagine that there is a bank that credits your account each morning with \$86,400. The money does not accumulate, the balance is not carried over from day to day. Every night what you have not spent disappears never to be reclaimed. What would you do? You would use every cent every day, of course!

Each of us has such a Time Bank. Every morning we are credited with 86,400 seconds to be spent during the next 24 hours. It cancels out every night what we have failed to invest to good purpose. No balance is carried over to the next day. Each day a new account is opened for us and 86,400 seconds are deposited. If you fail to use the day’s deposits, the loss is yours. Make the most of each day. We should treasure every moment that we have!

Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift, that's why it's called it the "present!"

A.W. Tozer wrote: "Time is a resource that is nonrenewable and nontransferable. You cannot store it, slow it up, hold it up, divide it up or give it up. You can't hoard it up or save it for a rainy day—when it's lost it's unrecoverable. When you kill time, remember that it has no resurrection."

There are 168 golden hours in each week. How and where are we investing those hours? We can invest them in:

- Gold - The gold of service to God.
- Bonds - The bonds of human relationships. To do something, however small, to make others happier and better is the proper employment of time.
- Stocks – The stocks of constructive labor. No Christian, on their deathbed, will ever say, "I wish I had spent more time watching T.V."
- Real Estate – I mean the estate that is real! The Church of Jesus Christ!

Time can be either a master or a servant. We can be slaves to time or we can make time our slave. Choose to make time your servant by employing time in beneficial ways.

The Bible speaks of "redeeming" the time." Paul writes: "*See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil.*" (Ephesians 5:14- 15)

What does he mean by "redeeming the time"? He means buy up every opportunity to use time wisely. That's what it means to redeem the time. It means basically the same thing Moses meant when he prayed, "*teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom.*"

When we live with our frailty and the brevity of life in mind and live with eternity's values in view, we will value the passing of time with a clearer perspective and live life with purpose. We will keep our priorities in the right order and value family and friends rather than take them for granted. We will focus on the things that really matter. In the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years!

CONCLUSION

There is an entire field of study called "time management." In almost every business in America, consultants are hired to teach busy executives how to better manage their time. Time management is a hot topic. In his book, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey writes: "Time management is a misleading concept. You can't really manage time. You can't delay it, speed it up, save it or lose it. No matter what you do time keeps moving forward at the same rate. The challenge is not to manage time, but to manage ourselves."

Now that we've seen what Moses said about the frailty of mankind, the brevity of life and the accountability that we must give at the end of life, does that give you a different perspective on The Time of Our Lives? We need God's perspective because our perspective is so very limited. God is infinite and unlimited; we are finite and limited.

CLOSING PRAYER

“Lord, teach me to make the most of the time You have entrusted to me. I pray that You will bless me, guide and protect me. And, may my life be pleasing to You and a blessing to others. Amen.”

A NEW PAGE – A NEW YEAR

*"He came to my desk with quivering lip-
The lesson was done.
Dear teacher, I want a new page,' he said,
'I have spoiled this one,'
I took the old page, stained and blotted,
And gave him a new one all unspotted,
And into his sad eyes smiled,
'Do better, now my child.'*

*I went to the throne with quivering soul-
The old year was done.
Dear Father, have You a new year for me?
I have spoiled this one.'
He took the old year, stained and blotted,
And gave me a new one all unspotted,
Then into my sad heart smiled,
'Do better, now, my child'."*

- Kathleen Wheeler

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