

22nd November 2020

Bible reading: Psalm 90

“Number your Days”

Well, it is possible that there are only seven sleeps to go before we can resume meeting together!! Stay tuned for the announcement from Premier Andrews TODAY!

During the week Vision Christian Media posted a clever, thought provoking message that caught my eye in the language of COVID 19! It said:

Make sure you test positive to FAITH.
Socially distance from DOUBT
And isolate from FEAR.

How often do you have to re-set the clock in your house? Maybe the power went out and your microwave clock is flashing, daylight saving, or maybe you had to move some electronic equipment around. Maybe your car battery died. Whatever the reason, when you have to re-set any of these clocks, where do you go for the correct time?

In times past we would dial a certain number on our phones to get a precise time. Now, I always use my cell phone for the right time. I feel like, since that time is coming from 'out there' somewhere, maybe from some satellite, that it has to be accurate. But have you ever asked where the cell phone provider is getting the time?

Well, time is one of those topics we all think about far more than we realize. I find it interesting that one of the most common prayer requests I've heard over the years from fellow travellers has to do with “time management”. “Please pray I would be better at time management.” “I just need wisdom to manage my time better.” I'm sure you've heard that before. I'm sure you've made that request before.

Did you know God is always pleased to answer that prayer? But the lessons in God's school of time management do not necessarily line up with the best-selling self-improvement, or 'life skills' books out there. So, let's open up our Bibles to Psalm 90.

Read the Passage: “*From Everlasting to Everlasting*” (90:1-17)

This psalm, according to the subtitle, was written by Moses, “the man of God”. Look at what he writes: The first thing we note is that this psalm is overflowing with the vocabulary of time. Did you see all of the 'time terms'? “Generations” (v. 1), “everlasting” (v. 2), “yesterday” (v. 4), “a watch” (which was a four-hour period) (v. 4), “night” (v. 4), “morning” (vs. 5, 6, 14), “evening” (v. 6), “days” (v. 9, 12, 15), “years” (v. 9, 15), and specifically, “seventy years” and “eighty years” (v. 10), and “a thousand years” (v. 4). Wow! But what's the point of this vocabulary? Why is Moses using these terms? I think there are at least three lessons here for us, lessons that provide a foundation for God's lessons on time management.

1. First, we need to see that the God of the Bible is the Lord of time. (v1-6)

This is spelled out a number of ways in verses 1-6. Moses can talk about God as the “dwelling place” of Abraham's offspring throughout “all generations” because God is (v. 2)

“from everlasting to everlasting”. He always has been and He always will be. Moses doesn't say before the world was created God WAS. He says before anything was here, from eternity past to eternity future, you ARE God. God always IS.

This concept is hard for us to grasp because we exist in a world of beginnings. Everything we know has a beginning. But trace all of those beginnings back, and there must be a 'beginner'. That's God.

Look at how Moses goes on to emphasize this point. He does so by contrasting God's eternality with humanity's temporariness. Our lives are like a single blip that flashes once on the radar screen of eternity. We are like a fleeting dream. We are swept away, all of us, by the flood waters of time. We are no more permanent than grass. In the morning of our life we are green, but in the evening, in the end, we wither away.

And even our idea of a long, long time (expressed here and several other places in the Bible by the generic “a thousand years”) our idea of a long, long time is like a single day to God, like a few hours in the night.

Shouldn't this cause us to be in awe of God? Shouldn't this drive us to always turn to him as the keeper of time, as the Lord of time, as our ultimate reference point when it comes to time? Only through God can we have an accurate view of time. The clocks in your life should not define how you ultimately think about time. When it comes to time, we really need His perspective, don't we?

2. The second thing Moses teaches us or reminds us of here is that our experience of time is dramatically tainted by the reality of our sin. (v7-11)

Since we've been told that Moses is the author of this psalm, the language of v7-11 should remind us of what we know about the Israelites when they came out of Egypt. In spite of God's power and provision, the people continually grumbled and complained. They consistently doubted and despaired in the face of obstacles. And they were hardened by their adversity. They were stubborn in the face of encouragements and warnings. Therefore, as Moses indicates here, the people were brought to an end by God's anger, and dismayed by His wrath. In fact, the word anger is mentioned twice in verse 7-11, and the word “wrath” three times. As we know from the book of Numbers, the people were judged and denied entrance to the promise land. They were made to wander for forty years.

Forty years! An average life, according to Moses is only seventy years, or maybe eighty. But again, our lives are so fleeting in light of God's eternal nature. AND on top of that, our fleeting lives are marked by “*trouble and sorrow*” (v. 10). The one thing that most dramatically affects our experience of time is the reality of our separation from God...our rebellion against God. Our view of the past is tinged by regrets, our present outlook is tainted by foolish desires, and our view of the future is tangled up in anxieties and fears. We complain both when times flies, and when it seems to be dragging along.

The reality of sin has not only limited the span of our life, it's also limited the goodness of our life. Turning from God we've turned from the source of everlasting life, and the source

of goodness and joy. In a fallen world, our time has become enslaved to our brokenness. It's no wonder we pray prayers about "time management"!

But Moses doesn't leave us in despair. Look again at the last part of this prayer.

3. In spite of the fact that our rebellion taints our time, by numbering our days, wisdom can ground our time in the joy and grace of God. (v12-17)

Did you see how Moses ends this song with a string of prayer requests? "Return", "satisfy", "have pity", "make us glad", "let your work be shown", "let [your] favour...be upon us", and in the last verse, two times, "*establish the work of our hands*". But the first of these requests is the pivotal requests...v12: "*So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom*".

But what does that mean? Well, look at the context. Look again at what precedes v12. V10-11. "*Our days may come to seventy, or eighty, if our strength endures; yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow; for they quickly pass, and we fly away. If only we knew the power of your anger! Your wrath is as great as the fear that is your due*"

So, there are two things Moses has in mind when he talks about being taught to number our days. We could say, to number our days is to clearly see the whole of our lives through God's lens, knowing how few days we have, and how much they truly matter. The fact that we are not guaranteed a tomorrow, the fact that life is fleeting, the fact that we will have to answer for our choices and our thoughts and our desires and priorities, for our appetites and allegiances, these realities should drive us toward wisdom.

The 17th century English commentator Matthew Henry expressed it this way: "*We must live under a constant apprehension of the shortness and uncertainty of life and the near approach of death and eternity. We must so number our days as to compare our work with them, and mind it accordingly with a double diligence, as those that have no time to trifle.*"

And I love the fact that v12 is a prayer. Moses is not simply encouraging his listeners to number their days. He is asking for God's instructions. He is placing himself in God's school of time management. To number our days is to understand our present in light of God's lessons on our past and our future. (2x) That is clearly seeing the whole of your life!

And as God's people are renewed in true wisdom, as that new generation of Israelites prepares to enter the Promised Land that was denied to their parents, the subsequent prayers in verses 13-17 are for a transformation of their experience of time. "*Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us...*"

And the final prayer, the prayer that is repeated, is a plea against the flood waters of time. V17: "May the favour of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!" Oh God, let our efforts last; let our work for you be fruitful for far longer than our temporariness should allow...

Is that your prayer? That beyond your life, the effects of your faith would be felt in the lives of your children, and your children's children; that people, for generations to come, would be blessed by your life and ministry, even if they never know your name?

Conclusion: The Fullness of Time

Of course, Psalm 90 is not the end of the Bible. In some ways, it might be a fitting end. But if this was the end of God's message to us, it would leave us with a troubling uncertainty. Would we be wise enough to escape the wrath of God? And does our experience of the gladness of God, and the favour or grace of God, the love of God, does our experience end with the end of our short lives?

Thankfully, there is much more to the Bible. Thankfully there is a new covenant. Thankfully, in regard to time, there was a fullness. There is a time when time itself ripens in all of its goodness. Listen to two verses from the New Testament that speak of this "fullness of time":

Mark 1:15, *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."*

Galatians 4:4-5: *"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law the Law which brings the wrath of God in light of our sins, so that we might receive adoption as sons"...*

Both of these verses speak of the gospel. Jesus is at the centre of the fullness. All time, past, present, and future ripened at the cross...ripened at the empty tomb of Jesus. God has a plan for all time. God has a plan for your time. You see Jesus is the wisdom we need. He is our wisdom (I Corinthians 1:30) and in Him are *"hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"* (Colossians 2:3).

The heart of wisdom we need is only found in Christ. Because of His sinless wisdom, He was able to go to the cross in our place. Because of Him, and Him alone, our days can be numberless. Yes, our days on this earth will end, but our days in His presence will be innumerable.

Because of Jesus, the second half of that formula that Moses uses to describe God, *"from everlasting to everlasting"*, we can enjoy that second half with God. We can enjoy gladness; we can be satisfied for time *"everlasting"*.

This is my prayer today: that God would teach us to number our days...that God would show us that our days are few and that our days matter. And teach us to see that only Christ can give us hope in our fewness of days...that His end of days on the cross brought us days without end in eternity...that His newness of life can bring us hope, in spite of our failures, in spite of our stubbornness, in spite of our sin.

This is the foundation we need to understand, what God wants to teach us about biblical 'time management', about numbering our days. Let's ask God to help us apply these things!

Prayer: *"LORD, we do want our limited time here on earth to have some lasting significance in the lives of those around us. Please use us this day to sow Your eternal truths in others."*