

Psalm 90

A Prayer of Moses the man of God.

Psalm 90:

This psalm is the only one written by Moses and thus the oldest in the Psalter.

From (verses 7-12), we may judge that it was written at the end of the 38 years of wandering in the wilderness.

It is a prayer for the new generation of Israelites who will enter the Promised Land.

There are four parts to its message.

First, Moses describes the eternity of God (verses 1-2).

Then, in contrast, he explores the brevity of man before God (verses 3-6).

Four key comparisons are used:

(1) A thousand years are like one day to God.

(2) A thousand years are like a watch in the night (three hours).

The implication of these comparisons is simple: if a thousand years to God are like a day or a night watch, man's life is like a vapor.

(3) Your life is like a particle swept away by a flood.

(4) Your life is like a blade of grass that sprouts, fades, withers, and dies in a day.

Moses was most qualified to speak of death, since he witnessed an entire generation that perished in the wilderness.

The third part of the psalm may be described as the condemnation of man (verses 7-10).

Moses speaks here of the wilderness experience.

Finally, he concludes with a petition (verses 11-17), in which he asks the LORD that the Israelites might be given God's work to do one more time, that is, the work of taking the Promised Land.

Verses 1-17:

The thrust of this magnificent prayer is to ask God to have mercy on frail human beings living in a sin-cursed universe.

Moses begins the psalm with a reflection on God's eternity, then expresses his somber thoughts about the sorrows and brevity of life in their relationship to God's anger, and concludes with a plea that God would enable His people to live a significant life.

The psalm seems to have been composed as the older generation of Israelites who had left Egypt were dying off in the wilderness (Num. chapter 14).

- I. The Praise of God's Eternality (90:1-2).
- II. The Perception of Man's Frailty (90:3-12).
- III. The Plea for God's Mercy (90:13-17).

Title:

"Moses, the man of God":

Moses the prophet (Deut. 18:15-22), was unique in that the LORD knew him "face to face" (Deut. 34:10-12).

"Man of God" (Deut. 33:1), is a technical term used over 70 times in the Old Testament, always referring to one who spoke for God.

It is used of Timothy in the New Testament (1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 3:17).

Verses 1-6: It is supposed that this psalm refers to the sentence passed on Israel in the wilderness (Num. chapter 14).

The favor and protection of God are the only sure rest and comfort of the soul in this evil world.

Christ Jesus is the refuge and dwelling-place to which we may repair.

We are dying creatures, all our comforts in the world are dying comforts, but God is an ever-living God, and believers find him so.

When God, by sickness, or other afflictions, turns men to destruction, he thereby calls men to return unto him to repent of their sins, and live a new life.

A thousand years are nothing to God's eternity: between a minute and a million of years there is some proportion; between time and eternity there is none.

All the events of a thousand years, whether past or to come, are more present to the Eternal Mind, than what was done in the last hour is to us.

And in the resurrection, the body and soul shall both return and be united again.

Time passes unobserved by us, as with men asleep; and when it is past, it is as nothing.

It is a short and quickly-passing life, as the waters of a flood.

Man does but flourish as the grass, which, when the winter of old age comes, will wither; but he may be mown down by disease or disaster.

Psalm 90:1 "LORD, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations."

“Our dwelling place”:

God is our sanctuary for protection, sustenance, and stability (compare Deut. 33:27; Psalm 91:9).

Now we see a totally different penman and a totally different time.

We clearly see the children of Israel on the way to the Promised Land in this chapter.

Moses was God's anointed leader to take them out of Egypt (world), to the Promised Land.

We see him spoken of as the man of God, in the “Title” above.

All men and women of God depend heavily upon prayer.

Moses was known to be very meek.

He depended entirely upon God.

They may be in the wilderness when Moses wrote this, but for a fact they were securely in the LORD's hands every step of the way.

As we go through our wilderness on the way to our Promised Land, we had better be dwelling in the hands of the Lord, if we plan to make heaven.

Just as the LORD provided all of their needs in their journey, He will provide our needs if we are stayed in Him.

He truly was Jehovah Jireh, their provider.

We must learn a lesson from this.

God is our shelter from the storm, He is our protector, He is our comfort.

He loves us as no other one ever has.

He loves us like He loved these Israelites, in spite of our faults.

He loved us so much, that He sent us our Savior.

Psalm 90:2 "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou [art] God."

“From everlasting to everlasting”:

God’s nature is without beginning or end, free from all succession of time, and contains in itself the cause of time (compare 102:27; Isa. 41:4; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:4; 1 Tim. 6:16; Rev. 1:8).

In the beginning, God says it all.

Even the word “in”, means surrounded by the beginning God.

There was not anything or anyone, when God existed in the beginning.

The first few chapters in Genesis tell us that He existed before anything else.

(In John Chapter 1), we read about this, also. Let me give one or two verses, but you read it all.

John 1:1-3 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "The same was in the beginning with God." "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."

Now, let us look at who we are talking about.

1 John 5:7 "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."

You see God made it all.

He is Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the Everlasting One.

Psalm 90:3 "Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men."

“Thou turnest man to destruction”:

Though different from the “dust” of (Gen. 3:19), this phrase is no doubt referring to that passage.

Humanity lives under a sovereign decree of death and cannot escape it.

From dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return.

Man was but a clump of clay, until God breathed the breath of life in him, and he became a living soul.

Man without God, is but dust.

We can see from the next Scripture that our eternal life came from Jesus (the second Adam).

1 Corinthians 15:45 "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam [was made] a quickening spirit."

Without God, we are as the first Adam, flesh that will return to dust.

Verses 4-6:

Eternity lives outside of time.

That God is eternal is a difficult concept for mere mortals to comprehend (2 Peter 3:8).

Psalm 90:4 "For a thousand years in thy sight [are but] as yesterday when it is past, and [as] a watch in the night."

"A watch in the night":

A "watch" was a 4 hour period of time (compare Exodus 14:24; Lam. 2:19; 2 Peter 3:8).

With God, time is nothing.

It is only in His dealing with men that He regards time.

2 Peter 3:8 "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day [is] with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

God is not controlled by time, as we are, but is rather the controller of time.

Days and weeks and months are for this life, not for eternity.

In heaven where God dwells, there is but one eternal day.

There is no night at all.

Psalm 90:5 "Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are [as] a sleep: in the morning [they are] like grass [which] groweth up."

"As a flood":

Humankind is snatched from the earth as though it were being swept away by floodwaters.

"They are as a sleep":

Humanity lives its existence as though asleep or in a coma.

People are insensitive to the brevity of life and the reality of God's wrath.

This is undoubtedly speaking of the life span of a person. It is in time as a blink of His eye.

We do not live very long.

We are like grass that comes up in the spring and is gone in the fall.

The wonder of it all to me is that if we are so insignificant, why did He love us so much that He sent His Son to die on the cross, that we might be saved to live eternally with Him.

Psalm 90:6 "In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth."

That is, the grass, through the dew that lay all night on it.

And by the clear shining of the sun after rain, when it appears in great beauty and verdure.

So man in the morning of his youth looks gay and beautiful, grows in the stature and strength of his body, and in the endowments of his mind.

And it may be also in riches and wealth; it is well if he grows in grace, and also in the knowledge of Christ.

"In the evening it is cut down, and withereth":

The Targum adds, "through heat"; but it cannot be by the heat of the sun, when it is cut down at evening; but it withers in course, being cut down.

This respects the latter part of life, the evening of old age.

And the whole expresses the shortness of life, which is compared to grass, that now is in all its beauty and glory, and tomorrow is cast into the oven (Matt. 6:30).

This metaphor of grass, to set forth the frailty of man, and his short continuance, is frequently used (see Psalm 37:2; 1 Peter 1:24).

It may be observed, that man's life is represented but as one day, consisting of a morning and an evening, which signifies the bloom and decline of life.

This is very much like our life.

We bloom when we are children and teenagers, but very soon old age comes, and we are gone.

This life is like a wind that blows and then is gone.

The only life worth living for is that eternal life with our Lord.

Let that second Adam (Jesus Christ), quicken your spirit that you might live forever with Him.

I love the sound of (forever).

Verses 7-11:

The afflictions of the saints often come from God's love; but the rebukes of sinners, and of believers for their sins, must be seen coming from the displeasure of God.

Secret sins are known to God, and shall be reckoned for.

See the folly of those who go about to cover their sins, for they cannot do so.

Our years, when gone, can no more be recalled than the words that we have spoken.

Our whole life is toilsome and troublesome; and perhaps, in the midst of the years we count upon, it is cut off.

We are taught by all this to stand in awe.

The angels that sinned know the power of God's anger; sinners in hell know it; but which of us can fully describe it?

Few seriously consider it as they ought. Those who mock at sin, and make light of Christ, surely do not know the power of God's anger.

Who among us can dwell with that devouring fire?

Psalm 90:7 "For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled."

“Consumed by thine anger”:

The physical bodies of the human race wear out by the effects of God's judgment on sin in the universe (compare Deut. 4:25-28; 11:16-17).

Death is by sin (Rom. 5:12).

God never intended for mankind to live so short a time.

Sin brought death.

The sad thing is that man knows he is destined to die.

In fact, man begins to die the day he is born.

All the smart people in all the world have not figured out how to live very long.

Thank goodness, God provided a way for us to live forever; Jesus is the Way.

Now when God looks at us, He is not angry. He sees the beautiful white linen garment of righteousness that Jesus gave us in exchange for our sins.

He sees His adopted children.

Psalm 90:8 "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret [sins] in the light of thy countenance."

“Light of thy countenance”:

All sin is in clear view to the “face” of God.

There is no sin ever committed that God is not aware of.

You may hide them from the world, but God knows every one of them.

His Light searches the heart and soul of man and reads us like a book.

Psalm 90:9 "For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale [that is told]."

“As a tale”:

After struggling through his life of afflictions and troubles, a man’s life ends with a moan of woe and weariness.

When our life is nears the end, we can look back and see it is like a short story that has been told.

Praise God! Believers do not feel the wrath of God.

When a believer dies, it is like stepping out of one room and going to a beautiful room that has been waiting for us.

Jesus is the Door we enter by.

Psalm 90:10 "The days of our years [are] threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength [they be] fourscore years, yet [is] their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."

“Threescore years ... fourscore years”:

Though Moses lived to be 120 years old, and his “eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated” (Deut. 34:7), human life was usually briefer and lived under the anger of God.

Because of this certain and speedy end, life is sad.

Moses is saying that 70 years is the natural life span of a person on this earth.

Some stronger people even live to be 80, but even at that, it is very short.

In our day, a few are living to be 100 years old, but even that when measured against all of eternity, is but one tick on God's clock.

I love the part that says (we fly away).

Christians, to be absent from this body, is to be present with the Lord.

What a wonderful homecoming we have.

This world is not our home.

We are but passing through.

Psalm 90:11 "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? Even according to thy fear, [so is] thy wrath."

“Thine anger ... fear ... wrath”:

Instead of explaining away life's curses, a wise person will recognize God's wrath toward sin as the ultimate cause of all afflictions and consequently learn to fear God.

In Exodus we saw just a small glimpse of God's wrath, when He drowned all of those Egyptians in the sea.

We also saw just a little of God's wrath when the children of Israel made the golden calf, and God killed many.

We know also, that God at one point, even regretted that He had made man and He sent the flood to destroy them.

In the flood, God saved Noah and his family.

God never forgets His own.

God makes a separation between His people and those who refuse to follow Him.

I greatly fear the wrath of God for those who refuse to follow Jesus.

Verses 12-17:

Those who would learn true wisdom, must pray for Divine instruction, must beg to be taught by the Holy Spirit; and for comfort and joy in the returns of God's favor.

They pray for the mercy of God, for they pretend not to plead any merit of their own.

His favor would be a full fountain of future joys.

It would be a sufficient balance to former griefs.

Let the grace of God in us produce the light of good works.

And let Divine consolations put gladness into our hearts, and a luster upon our countenances.

The work of our hands, establish thou it; and, in order to that, establish us in it.

Instead of wasting our precious, fleeting days in pursuing fancies, which leave the possessors forever poor, let us seek the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance in heaven.

Let us pray that the work of the Holy Spirit may appear in converting our hearts, and that the beauty of holiness may be seen in our conduct.

Psalm 90:12 "So teach [us] to number our days, that we may apply [our] hearts unto wisdom."

"Number of our days":

Evaluate the use of time in light of the brevity of life.

"Hearts unto wisdom":

Wisdom repudiates autonomy and focuses on the Lord's sovereignty and revelation.

An event that causes someone to seriously reflect on his or her life has a purpose.

Everyone needs to take inventory regarding how they are spending their days.

A day is like a dollar: it can be spent wisely or foolishly (39:4), but once it is spent, it cannot be spent again.

This is saying to me, that we are to treasure each moment and do good in that moment.

Take stock of how much time you have, and use that time wisely for the Lord.

The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord.

All of us can look back and see time we wasted on foolish things of the flesh.

You cannot do anything about that, it is past and gone.

Use the time you have left to do the will of God.

Psalms 90:13 "Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants."

Come back to thy people; show mercy by sparing them.

It would seem probable from this that the psalm was composed in a time of pestilence, or raging sickness, which threatened to sweep all the people away.

A supposition by no means improbable, as such times occurred in the days of Moses, and in the rebellions of the people when he was leading them to the Promised Land.

"How long?":

How long shall this continue?

How long shall thy wrath rage?

How long shall the people still fall under thy hand?

This question is often asked in the Psalms (Psalms 4:2; 6:3; 13:1-2; 35:17; 79:5).

"And let it repent thee":

That is, withdraw thy judgments, and be merciful, as if thou didst repent.

God cannot literally "repent," in the sense that he is sorry for what he has done.

But he may act "as if" he repented; that is, he may withdraw his judgments.

He may arrest what has been begun; he may show mercy where it seemed that he would only show wrath.

"Concerning thy servants":

In respect to thy people.

Deal with them in mercy and not in wrath.

When God looked down and saw that the children of Israel had made the golden calf, God wanted to destroy them all.

Moses pled with God for them, and God repented of His desire to kill them all.

Perhaps, this is what is intended here.

The cry of all mankind for ever has been for mercy.

We do serve a merciful God, who loves us.

He made a way for everyone to be saved.

1 Timothy 4:10 "For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe."

Psalm 90:14 "O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."

Or "grace".

The means of grace, the God of all grace, and communion with him.

Christ and his grace; things without which, souls hungry and thirsty, in a spiritual sense, cannot be satisfied.

These will satisfy them, and nothing else.

Namely, the discoveries of the love of God, his pardoning grace and mercy.

Christ and his righteousness, and the fulness of grace in him (see Psalm 63:3).

This grace and mercy they desire to be satisfied and filled in an unexpected time, early, seasonably, as soon as could be, or it was fitting it should.

It may be rendered "in the morning", which some understand literally of the beginning of the day, and so lay a foundation for joy the whole day following.

Some interpret it of the morning of the resurrection; with which compare (Psalms 49:14; 17:15).

Others of the day of redemption and salvation, as Kimchi and Jarchi.

It may well enough be applied to the morning of the Gospel dispensation; and Christ himself, who is "the mercy promised" unto the fathers, may be meant; "whose coming was prepared as the morning".

And satisfied such as were hungry and thirsty, weary and faint, with looking for it (Hosea 6:3).

The Targum is, "satisfy us with thy goodness in the world, which is like to the morning;" and Arama interprets it of the time of the resurrection of the dead.

"That we may rejoice and be glad all our days":

The love, grace, and mercy of God, his presence, and communion with him.

The coming of Christ, and the blessings of grace by him, lay a solid foundation for lasting joy in the Lord's people.

Who have reason always to rejoice in him; and their joy is such that no man can take from them (Phil. 4:4).

What a wonderful thing to make your decision to follow Jesus at a very early age.

There is a special peace that the people who know they are saved have.

It makes their life a joy to live and even death has lost its sting for them, because they know they are headed for their heavenly home.

Psalm 90:15 "Make us glad according to the days [wherein] thou hast afflicted us, [and] the years [wherein] we have seen evil."

"Glad ... afflicted us":

A prayer that one's days of joy would equal his days of distress.

Even the children of God have tribulation in this life.

Sometimes I believe the more tribulation that you have, the more blessed will the heavenly reward be.

One of the beautiful things, I remember pertaining to this, is the wonderful welcome that Jesus gave Stephen after he had been stoned to death.

No other place in the Bible do we read of Jesus standing at the right side of the Father.

I believe Jesus stood to welcome Stephen home.

Psalm 90:16 "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children."

That is, thy gracious work of interposition.

Let us see thy power displayed in removing these calamities, and in restoring to us the days of health and prosperity.

"And thy glory unto their children":

The manifestation of thy character; the display of thy goodness, of thy power, and thy grace.

Let this spreading and wasting evil be checked and removed, so that our children may live, and may have occasion to celebrate thy goodness, and to record the wonders of thy love.

This is not speaking of man's work, but God's work.

I believe this perhaps is prophetically speaking of the 6 hours Jesus worked on the cross for you and me.

The glory of God is from generation to generation.

These children of Israel would possess the Promised Land from generation to generation.

They did nothing to get it.

God gave it to them.

We did nothing to receive our home in heaven either.

The only thing required was that we believe, as Abraham had believed God.

Our belief and his belief, is counted unto us for righteousness.

Psalm 90:17 "And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it."

"The beauty of the LORD":

The LORD's favor implies His delight and approval.

"Establish thou the work of our hands":

By God's mercy and grace, one's life can have value, significance, and meaning (compare 1 Corinthians 15:58).

Galatians 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

The real beauty that we have, is Christ in us.

I have mentioned this before, that He has clothed us in beautiful snow white linen garments of His righteousness.

Moses wanted his work to be pleasing unto God.

So do I want my work to be pleasing unto Him.

Moses along with all of us, wanted to hear the LORD say well done, thy good and faithful servant.

Psalm 90 Questions

1. Who was the penman of chapter 90 of Psalms?
2. What is this Psalm?
3. What is Moses called?
4. What is this psalm all about?
5. Even though the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they were securely in _____.
6. If we plan to make heaven, where must we be dwelling?
7. He was clearly _____ their provider.
8. Name at least 3 things that the Lord is for us.
9. From _____ to _____, thou art God.
10. Where are 2 different places we can read that God created all things?
11. What are some of the names of God that show His eternity?
12. From _____ thou art, and to _____ thou shalt return.
13. The first Adam was made a _____.
14. The second Adam was made a _____.
15. A thousand years in God's sight is as a watch _____.
16. God is not controlled by time, He is the _____ of time.
17. In heaven where God dwells, there is one _____.

18. Verse 5 is speaking of what?
19. We are like _____ that comes up in the spring and dies in the fall.
20. What brought death to man?
21. When God looks at a believer in Christ, what does He see?
22. His Light searches the heart and soul of man and reads us like a _____.
23. What is it like when a believer dies?
24. How many years does verse 10 say we should live, if we have a normal life?
25. What could cause some to live longer?
26. To be absent from the body, is to be present _____ .
27. What are some examples of God's wrath?
28. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts _____ .
29. What was an example of God changing His mind about destroying someone?
30. Who is Jesus the Savior of?
31. Who did Jesus honor by standing to greet him into heaven?
32. What does the author believe verse 16 is speaking of prophetically?