

THE BIBLE SPEAKS:
STUDIES FROM THE WORD OF GOD



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Psalm 90:

God
is
Eternal

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By Harold Camping

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Foreword

In this Bible study we are going to focus upon Psalm 90, which God informs us is a prayer of Moses, the man of God. God of course gave him the words of this wonderful prayer, so that they would be written as part of the Bible. Moses, you may remember, was the man chosen by God to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and through the wilderness for 40 years. God has included this beautiful prayer in the book of the Psalms. All of the Psalms are very rich and meaningful, and so we want to see what more we can learn about our relationship with God as we examine this particular Psalm.

PSALM 90

A prayer of Moses - the man of God.

1. Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.
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.
3. Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.
4. For a thousand years in Thy sight *are but* as yesterday when it is past, and *as* a watch in the night.
5. Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are *as* a sleep: in the morning *they are* like grass *which* groweth up.
6. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.
7. For we are consumed by Thine anger, and by Thy wrath are we troubled.

8. Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret *sins* in the light of Thy countenance.
9. For all our days are passed away in Thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale *that is told*.
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 labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.
11. Who knoweth the power of Thine anger? even according to Thy fear, *so is* Thy wrath.
12. So teach *us* to number our days, that we may apply *our* hearts unto wisdom.
13. Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent Thee concerning Thy servants.
14. O satisfy us early with Thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.
15. Make us glad according to the days *wherein* Thou hast afflicted us, *and* the years *wherein* we have seen evil.
16. Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children.
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.

Psalm 90: God is Eternal

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Psalm 90 starts out with these impressive words:

Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.

“Lord!” That name alone should set us on the edge of the chair, because “Lord” is the title that God takes when He is making reference to the fact that He rules everything. He is the king of power and Lord of all, and we immediately want to bow down and worship Him. He is our Lord, and here He is showing us in Psalm 90 verse 1 that He is the Lord of our lives. He is the Lord of everything that God has created.

Before we go on in Psalm 90, we are going to really make sure that we have this truth solidly in our minds. God is Lord. Christ is Lord. That means He is the king. He is the chief ruler over all generations, and He has been our dwelling place. What does that mean? It focuses our attention back on Christ; He is the Lord.

The Bible does not know of more than one Lord. Oh, there are men who call themselves “Lord So-and-so,” because they are trying to show how important they are, but that is nothing compared with the fact that Christ is Lord. He is King of the world and no one can set Him aside. He is everything. Jesus is the Lord of all the earth. We must keep that in mind constantly so we don’t get lost in our admiration of somebody else, and we stay with absolute truth.

“Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.” “In all generations” means the entire time of the existence of mankind. It is always the Lord Jesus who is in view. If we really think about this, we should tremble and have the feeling that we ought to bow the knee right now. The moment I talk about Jesus, He is never less than the Lord over all. So we should always think of Him with great awe. He is our Lord. He is the Lord of the world.

None of us has been here more than one generation, but the Lord is Eternal God. Christ is Eternal God; let us always remember that. Whenever we hear the word "Jesus" or "King" or "Lord" in the context of the Bible, we are talking about the Lord Jesus, and that should make us want to kneel and do obeisance. We don't physically do that but it certainly would be appropriate, because Jesus is the God of the universe. No one is higher in authority than the Lord Jesus. He has existed throughout all generations; there is no one else who is Lord. We know instantly what our position is. We are ready to bow down and worship Him as our Lord. God Himself has been our dwelling place.

Who has the Lord as their dwelling place? God has the true believers in view here. God has been our dwelling place. A dwelling place is a home; it is where you live. For the true believers, God is their home. He shelters, comforts, protects, and cares for His own. The true believers dwell in their God; they dwell in God Himself. He is their spiritual home. The fact is that we abide in Christ when we are a child of God. This is the same principle. We abide; that is, we live in God Himself. He is our dwelling place – our home.

God has been our dwelling place in all generations. That is, He is a safe abode for successive generations. Whether we lived at the very beginning of the world, or a hundred years ago, or we are alive today; all generations of mankind abide in Christ. That is, they abide in Christ if they are living for Him and are not in rebellion against Him. This Psalm speaks of those who do abide in Christ. All generations dwell in God, and no generation is left out.

God is a God of history, and despite the passing of centuries, there is no change in the relationship of God to humans. God has always been our spiritual home if we are His children. There was never a point in time when humans could not abide in Christ, or could not live in God Himself. That is so because Christ is from everlasting to everlasting, and Christ is the one who gives us life. It all ties together as He gives us a tremendous desire to do His will and we are able to live in Him.

This possibility was always available for a child of God, no matter when they lived, or will live in the future. All generations of man are included. You and I have only been on the earth a short time, but all this time God has been Lord. That signifies ruling. He has been here from everlasting to everlasting. That is, God is eternal.

We see this again in verse 2 of Psalm 90:

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God.

Verse 2 is talking about the creation of the world. God was in existence from everlasting past. He has always been in existence. At a certain point in time God began the creation of this universe. All of this is God's work and therefore we can speak about it very confidently.

The account of Creation in Genesis 1 explains how God made the waters, and then caused the dry land to appear. This would have been when the mountains were brought forth, as God formed the earth and the world.

In the original Hebrew manuscript it reads, "**Before the mountains were born...**" Creation was the birth of our world. God created our earth to look like the mountains were already well-established, but they were brand new on that day that God created them.

Before God formed this earth and this universe, God was here. From everlasting to everlasting, He is God and never ceased to be God. We can't understand that, because it is beyond our mind's capacity to understand. In our world everything has a beginning and an end. But not so with God. He has no beginning and He will not have an end. He is from everlasting to everlasting. He existed when nothing else existed. We have no understanding of what this really means; we just know it is true, because that is how the Bible explains God.

These verses really point us to the greatness of God. He is the God of Creation. He is the God of history. And above all, He is the God of eternity. He is infinitely greater than the universe He created. There is a great contrast between the eternal existence of God and the brevity of human life.

God is supreme in power, and His power has been from eternity. He is the supreme ruler, the all-powerful, the all-glorious. He has been all of this from eternity past, and will be for eternity future.

For such an Almighty, powerful God to be our dwelling place is beyond comprehension. Who are we, to deserve to have such a home? It is only because of God's incredible love for His own that He provides us with such a wonderful, beautiful promise of safety and security. Because that is what it is - our home is normally where we are safe and secure. We can have that ideal in our mind because God keeps us spiritually safe and secure as we rest upon His almighty arms. That is a figure of speech that includes everything that God has provided for us.

So we have seen that in all generations – over all time - we never escape the presence of God. God has always been here in this earth, regardless of when or where we live, since before time began.

God is the manager; He is the keeper of this earth. This earth is not just dust and rock and animals without relationship to God. They are all an integral part of God's plan. We don't know all the details, but we know it's all under His control. He is in control of everything. There is nothing going on at any time in history that is outside of God's control. Everything on earth is temporary, but there has never been a change in regard to all that God is. That is, God is eternal, but as He has dealt with planet earth and its development, it has always been under God's control. He never changes; He has been the same omnipotent God throughout all eternity. We can't really understand that. We say it with certainty because the Bible tells us of the nature of God, but we can't understand it.

When we see a person get to be 100 years old, we say he is very old and he will die soon. But when we look at God, we never look at Him with the idea that He will die soon or be gone. God is from eternity to eternity; we really do not understand that but we know it is absolutely true. What an encouragement to us that He is the one we serve; He is the one we look to for our guidance. He will never lead us astray because He is from everlasting to everlasting. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He never changes. He will never fail.

We know these are huge statements, but we know they are true because God is God. That is encouraging because when we talk about our relationship with God, we are dealing with truths that will never go away or change. God relates 100% to us. We don't always maintain a right relationship with God, but He does with us. He never

leaves us or forsakes us (Hebrews 13:5). That gives us great encouragement in this sin-cursed world.

When God is speaking or thinking about mankind, we know that He means whatever He says. God is the one who is in charge; we are not. He will not tell us He has done something if it is not true. If the world depended on us it would be a mess, but we can place our dependence entirely upon God. What a comfort that God is in charge! We never have to worry whether God will be able to do what He says He will do.

Now let's go on in Psalm 90 as we read verse 3:

Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.

"Return, ye children of men." Can we do that? No, and thankfully, it does not depend upon our ability. If it did, it would be hopeless, because we have seen how sinful mankind is. But we are told to "return." That is a statement of grand hope that there is a future for mankind. Although it is not emphasized in this passage, we know from the rest of the Bible that there is a future for some of mankind because of Jesus Christ who is God. We have the promise in Scripture that He will provide a new world when this world comes to an end. He will make sure the new world will be brought into existence.

As we spread the Gospel, we are helping to set the stage for a new world in which there will be no sin. We wish we could look at that new world right now that God will bring into being. But we have to be patient and wait upon God's timing. But as we read the Bible and get some details, we know it is going to be a wonderful world. And you and I, if we are following Christ and listening to Him, will be a part of that new world. It will be for every true child of God.

We will return from the dust – once God has decided we are going to be a part of the new heaven and the new earth and has taken hold of our life. And some of us definitely will be a part of this. We don't know the details, but God does.

Who can know how glorious it will be? It will be glorious beyond any expectation. It is one of the reasons we stay upbeat and

excited about the future. We don't know who will be part of the future, except that we know that they will be those who are completely surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. If we truly belong to Christ, we can sense that we want to serve Him with our whole life. What a wonderful situation that is!

God created mankind out of the dust of the earth. Because of Adam and Eve's fall into sin, the whole universe was brought under the curse of death. God has described in various places in the Bible how this did happen. God told Adam in Genesis 3:19, "**dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.**" That is a big statement. It is not given to us by the world; it is given to us by God Himself.

God turns men to destruction. The action is God's. He is in charge – not man; not nature; not evil forces. Man is not in charge of his final end. His body will die and go back to the dust, and this is God's action.

We like to be in charge of our life; that is in our nature. But God reminds us that He is in charge of this universe, and He is in charge of life and death. We are so small in comparison to God that there is no comparison.

God is the Creator, and He is also the Destroyer. The direction that God is emphasizing here in this passage is not the building up of His kingdom, but the destruction finally of man.

Every living thing on earth has a life expectancy, which is known only to God. The expectation of every human being is that he will die, and when that happens, his body will go back to the dust of the earth as God has decreed. This is important to know; God has it all worked out that we will die. God is telling us that this will happen, and we can expect it. Remember, we read in Genesis 3:19: "**dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.**"

Let's go on to verse 4 of Psalm 90:

For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.

This is telling us that God has full control: not just of today or tomorrow, but of every day that we can expect. A thousand years is a

very long time in our world. Yet in comparison to eternity, it is a small point in time. Because how long is eternity? It is forever, without end.

God says here that a thousand years for God are no more than yesterday, which is already past and gone. That's God's statement about how long a thousand years are. In relation to the strength and character of God, a thousand years are as a day that has passed, or as a watch in the night. God is not under any time constraints. He is not limited in any way in His timetable of what He wants to happen.

We are again reminded of the frailty of man in comparison to the eternal nature of God. He is from everlasting to everlasting, as we read in verse 2 of this Psalm: **"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God."**

That is written by God Himself, about Himself. It is absolutely true and shows that we are under the guidance and care of a God who is way more significant than any one of us. We must never forget the eternal character of Almighty God. God has been here forever; far in excess of what man is. So we don't have to take on any airs. We are mankind. Even though God uses us in amazing or important ways sometimes, it is still only for a short period of time. We must never forget that He is in charge of everything. We are completely at His mercy in every aspect of our being.

We have seen that God is eternal, from everlasting to everlasting. God created this universe by just speaking. He had a plan for our earth and for mankind. That plan included having a people for Himself, chosen by Him and saved by His mercy and grace. It should be a wonderful comfort to us to realize that God is in charge of everything in this universe.

Now we are going on to verse 5:

Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up.

Here God is using language that really is addressed to every human being. God has not set forth very nice language here concerning the endurance or the strength of this world that He has created. Actually, God created this world exactly the way He wanted it

to be and to come to full expression. It is set for destruction because of the weakness of man. Man was created to be number one in the Creation, but he only lasts a little while on this earth.

God states that man is carried away as with a flood. The waters of a flood rush down a riverbed and carry everything away. In the same way, the Lord carries away by death the succeeding generations of men. Our lives are quickly passing. Time removes mankind very quickly. Sometimes we get very discouraged when we realize this truth, but this earth identifies with the nature of man.

We do not notice time passing when we are asleep, and that is how quickly time passes. Once it is past, it is nothing. That's why as we live out our lives we have to take that into account. One of these days the Lord will take you or me or anyone else home, so we must be ready to meet the Lord. And the wonderful thing is that even though we may have only lived a short life, if we are living to the glory of God, that is everything. We must keep our eyes on our Savior, because when we die, the fact is that if we are Christ's we will go to be with Him forevermore. We have to be ready to meet Christ at any time.

In verse 6 God uses the analogy of grass growing. We read there:

In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.

Notice He does not compare mankind with mighty trees or mountains; no, we are as grass. Grass grows for a little while, but it does not last. It is green and beautiful in the spring, but then in the hot summer it dies. It can be easily mowed down, and then it immediately withers.

Mankind is the same way; in our youth we are strong, but we soon grow old and feeble, and then our life is over. As grass is green in the morning but cut down and dried in the evening, so mankind can change from health to corruption in a few hours' time. We may grow old, but disease or disaster can take our lives much earlier. We are as frail as the grass. Our life can be over in a moment. In fact, we must always remember that every one of us is only one breath away from eternity.

Our mortality is not accidental. We might exercise and eat the right foods, but eventually we will die. We do not die because we don't try hard enough to live. No, it is our sin that has brought death into this world.

We read on in Psalm 90:7:

For we are consumed by Thine anger, and by Thy wrath are we troubled.

When the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, they often felt God's judgments upon them. They were doomed to die in the wilderness because of their unbelief. God's anger was upon them. God is a just God, and must bring the correct penalty for sin. There must be a penalty of some kind. This has held true for all of mankind, except those for whom Christ died. He paid the penalty for the sins of His chosen people, and they will not be consumed by God's anger and wrath.

No fire consumes like God's anger, nor is anything more troubling than His wrath. God declares in Hebrews 12:29: "**For our God is a consuming fire.**" This is speaking about being under the wrath of God.

When someone dies unsaved, he doesn't look any different than a true child of God who dies. Our outward appearance does not show what is going on in our heart. But we know from what the Bible teaches that only the souls of the true believers will go to live in Heaven with Christ. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, the Bible declares. We read this in 2 Corinthians 5:8.

On the other hand, we read in Ezekiel 18:20: "**The soul that sinneth, it shall die.**" That is, the soul of an unsaved person comes under God's judgment and does not have eternal life. It is a dead soul. So when that person dies, he is dead both in body and soul. He no longer has any hope of eternal life. He has paid the penalty for his sins.

But wonderfully we know that God has His election plan, although we do not know who His elect are, nor do we know the details of His plan. That is why we proclaim the Gospel, because God saves through the hearing of His Word.

The Lord Jesus gives us this beautiful promise in John 5:24:

Verily, verily I say unto you, He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

This is speaking about someone that God has saved; he has been given a new resurrected soul. We know from many other Scripture passages that it is the work of Christ that saved us, and not any action we take. We are able to hear His Word and believe on Him only because God has done His work of redemption.

In contrast, we read in Psalm 90:7: **“For we are consumed by Thine anger, and by Thy wrath are we troubled.”**

So these words clearly apply to someone who is not saved and is still under God’s wrath. Unless God saves someone and pardons their sins – that is, gives complete forgiveness for their sins - they remain under God’s wrath until they are **“consumed by Thine anger.”** To be consumed in the Bible means to perish; to be cut off. These are words God uses that mean to be under His wrath. They are words of death.

But as long as we have breath, there is hope. We do not know if we are one of God’s elect, or chosen ones, so we can cry out to God for mercy. He is our only hope. He alone brings us life. We do know that God’s election to salvation can apply to anyone upon whom God puts the application of His Word. We do not know at all if that includes me or any of my loved ones. But we talk about it because it might mean one of us, and this is what we desire: to be one of God’s children. This is the big purpose of God’s work – that there are those who are elected of God to eternal salvation.

We have now come to verse 8. We read there:

Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance.

We read that statement very easily, but it is dripping with meaning. God is telling us in the plainest kind of language, the kind of language we almost tremble before, that there are no secrets. He is

saying, essentially: "You know how sinful you have been; you don't have to try to hide your sins or say nice words about your sins. You have to remember I know what your iniquities are. As you are discovering, they are plenty serious, and they take strong action on My part, which should then bring strong action on your part."

When God has a declaration of this kind, it means that we must look at it as something serious. It is something you want to deal with if you can. That is to say, we must bring our sins before God. The problem is that by nature we are disinclined to want to air our burdens and problems to anyone else, and certainly not to God. So we normally pass over these passages rapidly and don't pay attention, but when we do pay attention it makes us uncomfortable. It is not mankind who is offering this information – it is God Himself who is speaking.

This is what we are finding in Psalm 90. We stand at attention, as it were. We are ready to listen carefully even though we are trembling with fear, because the sin that is talked about is in our lives just as well as in anyone else's life. We can't hide from God; we must be ready to be exposed. As we stand exposed, we pray that God will have mercy on us. The one big thing that sustains us is the fact that God is a merciful God. Oh, how wonderful that is. We don't always know how far that mercy goes, but we know He is a merciful God and that is a good place to begin thinking about our relationship with God.

"Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee." Does He find iniquities in me? Yes, of course. Does He find iniquities in you or anyone else? Yes. If we try to pull our self-righteous robes around ourselves and say that God is talking about someone who is very wicked, but not about me, we are kidding ourselves. That is not true. And therefore we are declining the help that God gives us when He sets our iniquities before us so that we can see our wickedness.

He is doing us a huge favor; we can see our need of a Savior. Jesus Christ is the Savior; let's never forget that. God has made Christ our Savior. This is where we get help from God. We know we can talk with Him; cry out to Him; plead with Him. The Bible talks about Jesus Christ, and therefore we know it is wonderful that Jesus Christ is our Savior.

As we read these verses seriously word by word and it makes us want to weep, we must recognize that it had better make us feel that way because it is true. These verses are given to us from the mouth of the Almighty Himself; therefore it is important that we listen and think about it and react to it because God is not wasting His time. He is saying what He is saying because He loves us. He wants the best for us. This language was given to us in order that we might have a guide that would lead us back to Christ as our Savior, because He is the only Savior. He is the only one we can go to in answering to the wrath of God.

There is no question that we are under the wrath of God as we look at our lives and see how frequently we have gone our own way. Have you looked at these verses plainly? **"...our secret sins in the light of thy countenance."** First of all, remember that the countenance of God is perfect. He is without sin. He is Eternal God; the very essence of perfection. So we are on holy ground, and we should tremble as we stand here in the presence of God, because our sins are in the light of His countenance. They are in the presence of God, right where the holiness of God can be fully seen and appreciated.

What has God done with our sins? He has not hidden them away. They are our sins; our secret sins - the ones we don't want to admit to; the sins we have to search our lives to find. They are there and must be dealt with. We must confess them. We must go to the Lord and ask for mercy, because we are sinners. We don't like to do that, but it is so wonderful and necessary, because it is in the presence of God that we want to stand without sin.

How can we stand for a moment without sin or without confession? "Oh Lord, have mercy on this sin and that sin. We set our sins and iniquities before You in the light of Your countenance." God is the very essence of pure light. When we stand in that light, nothing is hidden any longer. It stands out there like the proverbial sore thumb. We are exposed - to whom? To the Judge of all the earth, the Lord Jesus Christ. And so what we should expect is the sword to come down on us. We should expect God to demand, "Get out, dirty sinner." But no, as we bring it to God with our full desire for mercy, we hear these wonderful words: "I will have mercy on you; I have come to bring mercy."

We are standing in the presence of Almighty God who knows every detail of every sin we have committed, so we might as well confess all of our sins. We don't have to try to reduce the shock by saying, "I have been less than perfect." We don't have to prove we have been partially good. No, we come with full disclosure: "It is true I have sinned." God is God; there is not one sin God does not know all about. We go to him with full exposure.

We might as well get straight with God because we know He is a merciful God. There is the answer. We don't deserve mercy; we deserve God's wrath, but we thank Him that we can read in His Word that He is a merciful God and we can plead with Him, "Have mercy." And may it be right from our heart that we are asking, because it is so easy just to say words. But we are saying this because we mean it; we need God's mercy. We know from His Word that He is merciful. That is something we do not understand. We don't know the enormous capacity of God's forgiveness, except that God declares that He is a forgiving God and that He will wash away our sins. We accept that even though we don't understand it, because God is a merciful God; a forgiving God.

How can it be? We don't deserve forgiveness but yet we dare to ask for these blessings and we know He does provide them because He is a merciful God. And so we can dare to stand; to live; to walk; to exist in His presence - not as victorious people who can shake their fists at the world because God has forgiven us. No, we stand humbly and are able to say we don't deserve it at all, but our God is a merciful God, and He has had mercy. Otherwise we could never stand here. And because He has given us mercy we find an enormous desire in our life to serve Him all the way till the end.

But we know that is impossible unless God Himself takes us by the hand and guides our lives so we are walking with one hand in God's hand. Then God becomes our God; our master; our king; our everything. So we just walk along with all of our strength coming from God Himself. What a wonderful God we have!

We have come down to verse 9 in our study. We read there:

For all our days are passed away in Thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale *that is told*.

Verse 9 certainly begins with a difficult statement; it is pointing right to the one who is reading it. Who is God's wrath against? We know that mankind who has been around for many thousands of years has really messed things up. Man wants to get his glory in his own way, and again and again he has violated the law of God. So what is God thinking as time goes on? God is up there watching what's happening in the whole world every single moment, and most of what He is seeing is mankind wanting to do his own thing, and not caring at all what God wants. That is the typical situation.

God created this beautiful world to give mankind all kinds of blessings. But the human race has turned it over to make the focus: "What's in it for me? What can I get out of it?" He should be asking, "What is pleasing to God?" But no, it's what I want. So of course our days go by under the wrath of God because they are not being lived in a way that is pleasing to God. It is just like "a tale that is told." It is something mankind thought of. He wants it to be his plan; his desires; like a storybook that mankind writes and makes it as interesting as possible without any real regard for what God might want.

When you pick up a storybook, it is written in a very interesting way but not necessarily with much truth. God has put us in an exciting, interesting world with lots of fun, interesting things that are possible. And He has given us a desire for fun and a desire for happiness. If we are not careful we will end up trying to satisfy our desire for fun and games, and even a desire for mischief. So we want to emphasize that life is not a time just of fun and games; it is a time for serious thinking, especially when we are alone with God. God gives all of us some time every day when we can be alone with God and we can think slowly and carefully. That is so important, because if God is not an important part of our life, how will it end? We can easily see why God says that our years are like a tale that is told, and they do not have the seriousness they should have.

God has given us the Bible - that's why we come again and again back to the Bible because there is so much truth that we can offer, and that is where the great value is. And so the Bible goes on in this warning. God is indicating that He has a right to be wrathful, because look at the way we spend our years. Do we spend them focusing on God and what He wants? Do we say, "Oh Lord I am so glad I have the Bible as a guidebook"? Is that true? Is that how we are

passing our time? What would God want me to do? What is His plan for me? That is where the difference begins to develop.

Unfortunately, that frequently is not the way it is. So God makes the statement that our days are passed away in God's wrath and it is like a tale. But what we would like in this life has to be measured against the yardstick of what God would want us to be doing. Don't hesitate to ask this question as you are living out your life: Is my life patterned after what the Bible asks for, or is it patterned after what my friends tell me, or what I think would be nice? Or after what is fun? And so on and on we look for things that are agreeable to us.

No, we have to look for things that are agreeable to God. That's why God gave us the Bible. It is a wonderful measuring stick to tell us how we are doing in living for the Lord, and in the measure in which we are doing it God's way. In that measure we are finding joy; we are finding happiness; we are doing God's will. But just about the time we get a little taste of what it is to do it God's way, we notice there are so many enticements all around. For example, our friend's experiences that had nothing to do with the Bible – he is so happy and I want that happiness too. And so my friend told me some things because he thought he is making my life better, but actually he was taking my mind away from the direction it should be going. So we have to be so careful with how we spend our time.

Now verse 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.

As you will notice, I have said many things we can identify with and be ashamed of. God has instructed us in the Bible, and we must be sure we are focusing on our own life. Please don't look at other people's lives; the place to look is at yourself alone. Go to a mirror and read these words of Psalm 90 to the person who is standing there. Who will it be? As it makes application to your life be sure to pray for mercy. "Oh Lord I have to correct this; I have to look at my own problems, not other people. I must look at myself seriously and honestly."

There are people who look in the mirror and want to see a lovely person, so they put on things to make them look nicer. They look at themselves, and think they look so nice, but they have just deceived themselves. Not one of us can look in the mirror honestly and say how wonderful this person is that I am looking at. We should see things that need correction. If we could look long enough so that our experiences are recorded there, we should remember what we did wrong. We should turn around and ask for mercy and help from God every day. "Oh Lord, help me to be more patient and more careful in what I say. Oh Lord, I am a long ways from the truth."

We should be growing in the Lord. It should come upon us like the balm of Gilead, which was something wonderful and helpful in the Bible that brought healing. "Oh Lord, I want that kind of balm in my life so I can see it and others can see it, that my life is consistently living closer to the Lord and further away from my own desires."

We have a strange habit: it is "me." I am all-important. What happens has to satisfy me. It's alright to say that, but we have to spend serious time looking at ourselves when we are asking the Lord for strength to walk more carefully in a way that is pleasing unto Him. The scoreboard is the Bible. We can't read it casually or incidentally. We must read it seriously; every word and every sentence has importance. Often we don't understand what it is saying, but then we have prayer. "Oh Lord, what should I understand by this?" We don't have to rush. God has given us 24 hours in a day; we have time. We just have to put it to use in the right place.

How many years; how many days has God looked at me and said, "I could be angry with you"? We would like to have Christ happy with us, but if the way we live is self-serving, wanting it for me, even sub-consciously, then we earn the wrath of God. How terrible. If we want to be under the love of God and His blessing, we have to look again and remember that what God is telling us is for us, so that we can pattern our lives in a good way out of these wrong things.

In our examination of Psalm 90, we have seen that our life span on this earth is entirely under God's control. That is, He decides the duration of each person's life. We cannot know the day of our death. That is known only to God because He is the one that makes the final determination. And even if we could live a little longer, we might not

use that time to live to God's glory, so what is it worth? We may not be focused on being pleasing to God; we are focused on our own pleasure, whatever that is.

We like to think we are in control of our life, but it isn't true. We are under the control of God. God makes the decision that has to do with how we are to live. That is why it is good as we go through life to constantly tie our life in to God. We may wish God would leave us alone, but the fact is that the more God has to do with our life, the better it is, because God is infinitely wise. Any time we can bring His wisdom into our life we are well ahead of any other kind of living. So we should not feel shortchanged when we learn that our lifespan on this earth is entirely under His control. God knows the best, not us.

Now we will go on in our study to Psalm 90:11, the next verse we are going to look at. We read there:

Who knoweth the power of Thine anger?

Why talk about the anger of God? Why not write something nice about our relationship with God? The problem is that when we are doing a study, we are looking for truth. And when you look for truth, you have to put down every aspect of truth, and that includes that which is negative as well as that which is positive. So we read verse 11: **"Who knoweth the power of Thine anger?"**

This is a rhetorical question. Who knows the power of God's anger? Does God get angry? Read the Bible very carefully and you will find there are many accounts in the Bible which show the anger of God. Man was created in the image of God and created to serve God obediently, but so often mankind crosses swords, as it were, with God Himself. God wants us to live in one way; we in our arrogance want to live our own way. So there immediately is a contest going on. And we must realize this will not do. God is addressing this important question. Woe unto us if we read this psalm and pay no attention to this verse. It is there by God's action, and it means we are to look at it very seriously.

When we read the whole Bible, and learn what we can about the power of God's anger and His power in all He does, we find that we cannot really know God or the power of His anger. God is God and He is super in all that He does. So when we read this verse, we can only

say humbly and quietly: I don't know. There are those who will experience God's anger. That isn't a good place to be - under the thumb of God's anger.

God's anger comes because of our sins, and ultimately death is the consequence of God's anger. Because of the curse of sin (and sin immediately identifies with me and you and every human being), which was the result of man's rebellion against God, the whole world is under God's wrath.

The unbelievers will remain under that wrath until they die. When they die, the power of God's anger brings death, but they still cannot know the power of God's anger.

On the other hand, the elect believer also is involved in this. The elect come out from under that wrath because it was taken by Christ on their behalf when He paid for their sins. The sins had to be paid for. There is no human being who can say they have no sin that have to be paid for. We all by nature live with sin; sin is an integral part of our life.

One of our constant prayers is for God's mercy in all that we do that is contrary to God's divine will. We only want to do God's will. That kind of a prayer should be constantly on our lips if we are really are seeking to be one with God, and if we end up as a child of God we should not hesitate to pray again and again for God's mercy.

One of the pitfalls is that we get tired, and then we easily get upset and angry. But there are no excuses. Then we must recognize that we need more help, and we should be praying more diligently for God's help and strength to be able to live in a way that at all times is serving God faithfully. That is the desire of every true believer.

And of course we only become a true believer when it is God's intention to make us a true believer. We might have that desire but that doesn't mean we will automatically become a true believer. It must be God's desire and His blessing in our life. That is why we pray: "Oh Father, I need You every hour. I can't live without You; You are my Savior; You are my strength; You are everything to me. Let me never forget that or try to live in my own strength." We live for God as God strengthens us and we must desire help for that strength no matter how old we are or how strong we feel.

Wonderfully, we are free to ask for it and to seek it. We should be seeking it constantly and should not just expect God's help automatically. The world is all around us threatening us and making impacts upon our thinking and our nature, and then we find we are not as God-fearing as we should be. So we want to make that prayer an integral part of our life.

Our sins are a grievous offence to God because of His perfect holiness. We are assuming that God has saved us, and if He has saved me then my life should be different. It should be a life of joy and happiness. So anytime we begin to be short-tempered or unkind or angry, that is evidence that somehow our relationship with God is not what it should be.

This is the final desire of a child of God: not how he looks in the eyes of other people, but how he looks in the eyes of God. How do we look to Him? What a grief it is when we examine our life and see that we have been ungodly in our actions. That conduct should not be there and it grieves us. But wonderfully we can go to God in our grief and sense of sorrow over how we have been living, and can plead for mercy. "Oh God, help me to live a more faithful life. This is my desire."

We do not want to grieve God; He loves me and gave His life for me, and I claim to be a part of Him, and I have acted like this. How terrible. This brings a feeling of great sorrow. What have I done to my testimony as others have witnessed the way I have conducted myself? So we should be crying out to God when we see uncontrolled temper in our life, or even begin to see that behavior in our life. We should begin to cry out, "Oh God, have mercy on me. I need Your strength; I need Your correction. Have mercy." And wonderfully there is God; we will find that He will help us and give us the evidence that He has paid for our sins. He will ensure that we will turn around and begin to say the right things and think the right things toward our fellow man and toward God.

Because He is a just God, He must bring consequences for our sin. That is why we need a Savior to pay the penalty for our sins; that is, to cover those consequences.

Psalm 90:11 goes on: "**even according to Thy fear, so is Thy wrath.**"

The fear of God is a gift that God gives us when He saves us. We will not fear God on our own, because we cannot. Until God saves us, we are dead in our sins. If God saves us and gives us a new living soul, then we can begin to fear God. Unless He does that, we will not turn away from our sin. But when you start looking at your life if you are not a child of God, you will find there are lots of pitfalls in your life. The fact is, before we are saved we are not humble before God. We think we have it all figured it out; we are very arrogant and proud. We live in a way that is not God-fearing at all. We must recognize that we of ourselves have nothing to be proud of. Pride is sin; dirty, rotten sin. And it will get us into deeper and deeper trouble, so let's keep that in mind as we go on in this study.

There is a vast difference between someone who claims to be saved and someone who really has been saved. When God saves us we become a new creature. It is like we are a new personality, because it goes all through our life and impacts our life. If we don't see that impact, then we are not saved. As a new creature who truly has become saved, we are vastly more humble in our attitudes toward others and God. Then we begin to really fear God. God has to give us the mighty transformation when He gives us a new soul. That is not something just casual, or something we kind of experience for the first time. It is something that is overwhelming. God has changed our life, and we will begin to notice that.

Therefore it is imperative that God's action enter into the situation, because without God's action we will not turn away from our sin. Without God's action, we may think many things about how we have changed, but none of it is true. After a little while we will find we are right back in the same rut as before, and we won't know how to get out. The answer is that God must work in our lives and make the difference in our lives.

God tells us the results of Godly fear in Proverbs 14:26-27. We read there:

In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and His children shall have a place of refuge. The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

Here God lists four wonderful results of the true fear of God. The fear of God gives us confidence, a place of refuge, a fountain of life,

and safety from the snares of death. These all relate to salvation. This is a gift from God. What is that place of refuge? It is God Himself; something God has made possible.

We know we have found that place of refuge when we are really listening carefully to everything in the Word of God, and we don't hesitate to go quickly in our troubles to the Bible, to see what God has to say about this problem or that problem. We have found that this is where we have found some strength, and we don't hesitate to go quickly to the Word of God and spend time there. We have learned it is a place of refuge. That is, we have found that the more we read the Bible and believe the Bible, the more we will know our weaknesses and our sins, and the more we will have confidence in what we are doing if we are doing it right. That is, we will understand we are doing it right and not wrong.

When we sense that we are trusting our own thinking instead of God's thinking, as we all do because we are so confident in our own strength, we have to stop everything and begin to pray for help. "Oh Lord, I need help; I have been trying to do it alone and it doesn't work. What do I do?" And then we go to the Bible and read carefully and slowly and we find that the Bible is a true place of refuge for us; a true solution to our immediate needs. Only when that has begun to happen on a regular basis do we have any confidence that indeed we are getting closer and closer to the wonderful, spiritual nourishment that we can get from God. This is a gift from God.

The true believers who have this kind of fear of God are not under God's wrath, because the wrath that should have come against them was taken care of by God placing it upon Christ. Ah yes, that sin didn't just blow away into the vast unknown. It is all encompassed by the fact that we have a Savior who is God Himself, upon whom that wrath has fallen as He made payment for our sin, so that now we can know it is gone forever.

We find we are going to God for help again and again, trembling and beseeching Him for mercy. As we begin our life in Christ we don't understand why we want to cry out to Him all the time, but when we really begin to discover the spiritual strength and the spiritual assurance we can get from God, we will be going more and more to God, because He has become our strength. He provides

everything that we need in life in order to face all the problems of life, and there is never an end. We will find that life in Christ becomes more and more wonderful because it just solves so many problems in our lives.

There is another kind of fear of God, however, and it is not a gift from God. We can read about this in the book of Isaiah. Here God talks about people who look very religious but are not true believers. We read in Isaiah 29:13:

Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor Me, but have removed their heart far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the precept of men.

God is talking here about those people who are convinced they are a child of God, but God is going to set the record straight. Many of us may be guilty of what this verse is saying. This fear of God is from the precepts of men. That is, it is from the conclusions that man will make. And you know we are quick to make conclusions, because all of us have a certain smartness in our lives and attitudes, so we express it readily and want others to listen to us. Remember what God said in this verse. This fear of God is from the precepts of men. It does not come from God. It came from ideas of mankind. It is not the result of God's work of salvation, but comes out of these people's own hearts which are far from God.

The people with this kind of fear of God are still under God's wrath, and the end result will be death. Not only the first death, physical death, but the second death, which is eternal death. They do not have eternal life.

The world is full of religious people who fear God in their own way, but that fear will not lead to eternal life, which is the life that we should be desiring. Ultimately they will continue under God's wrath for eternity. That is the death that comes to them. They will not inherit eternal life or spend eternity with Christ.

So according to the kind of fear of God we have, which is displayed in our life, so is the resulting wrath of God. What is really going on in our life in relationship to God will betray where we are spiritually. Are we really with God, or are we just trying to live a good

life that God will appreciate, but is not in harmony with the law of God? We must follow the law of God, even as we recognize that only Christ can make us eternally secure in Him.

Now let's go on to verse 12, where we read this petition to God:

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

Our days on earth are numbered by God. Only He knows the day of our death. God is the only one who knows the timing and manner and circumstances of our death. And because there is a certainty that our days will come to an end, God needs to teach us and apply our heart unto wisdom. That is, we want to develop a heart of wisdom.

You sometimes hear of someone who discovers that he has, for example, about three months to live because he has terminal cancer. That person will then spend every day doing only things that he deems to be very important. He will spend time with his loved ones and get all his affairs in order. He feels the need to make every day count. No time must be wasted, because time is running out.

That is how we, as Christians, should number our days. We need to live out our life as if each and every day could be our last one.

As we live out our life as a child of God, we want to live for Christ in all that we do. When we are living for Christ in a serious way, it will also mean that we are prepared to meet the Lord. Have we lived our life so close to the Lord that at any time we can say we are prepared to meet God? If we are not prepared to meet God, then we have not been living for Christ as we should.

In other words, living for Christ means that every action, every hope, every desire and thought of my life is that my life will tell for Jesus. He will be #1 always - in my conduct; in my relationships with other people; in my thinking about God at all times. This is easier to say than to accomplish, however.

We do not want our days to be wasted; we want to do everything to convey God's glory. We need to make every day count

for Christ. That literally and seriously affects the decisions that I make; the nature of my thought life – in fact, every aspect of my life.

We must live with the ongoing sense that Christ is always King who rules over every aspect of our lives, and the way we live out each day, moment by moment.

God is the giver of the gift of salvation, so He is the one who is able to teach us to number our days and to apply our hearts unto wisdom. To apply our hearts unto wisdom means to live out our lives in the fear and the knowledge of God and His Word.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, the Bible tells us in many places. As we grow older, we should be growing in grace. That is, our life should be more and more a testimony for Christ as we exhibit the fruits of the Spirit. Everything in our life should be evidence of our love for Christ and our desire to please Him. Our Christian walk should be more and more in evidence as we apply our hearts unto the wisdom that only comes from God's Word.

As we number our days, we should be looking at what is really important to us as a child of God. We should be examining our thoughts and actions in the light of God's Word. Every word of God is tremendously important.

Our lives should always fit into a perfect union and harmony with Christ. This will only happen if there exists in our lives a constant focus on Christ. We must be aware that by nature our lives are alien to Christ's life, simply because the whole world is alien to Christ; and that is where we spend our time – in the world. But as we are talking about our relationship with Christ we want to remember that it is far more important than a relationship that begins with harmony with the world.

Praise God for the great assist we can receive as we humbly cry out to God for His continuing mercy. In the remaining verses of Psalm 90, we will be looking at God's mercy and salvation, and we will see the beautiful results of God's intervention in our lives.

The opening verses of Psalm 90 give us the idea that we are under God's wrath. He is angry with mankind, and why wouldn't He be? We all deserve to be under God's wrath because of our sins.

Then verse 12 implies that God must help us to number our days. That is, we are aware that our time on earth is limited, and we do not want to continue to be under God's wrath. The alternative is to cry out to God for mercy. Verse 13 shows the result of being able to cry out to God, where we read:

Return O LORD, how long? and let it repent Thee concerning Thy servants.

We need God to return to us and take us out from under His wrath. How long will that take? Maybe God will save us; that is our great desire. We have seen God as the one who brings judgment; now we want to see Him as the God who brings mercy. We want God's mercy. So we go on in verse 14:

O satisfy us early with Thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

We would like that mercy to come upon us as soon as possible. We would like to live out our days rejoicing because of God's mercy upon us, instead of feeling His judgment upon us. We don't want God to return to tell us how sinful we have been and how we deserve judgment. We want the assurance of His mercy.

God has reminded us of our sins and how we deserve God's wrath. He has brought us under affliction – either because we are not saved, or because He is chastising us as believers. But we do not want to be under affliction.

Verse 15 states:

Make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.

To make us glad is again a cry for salvation. That is the only way we can be glad or rejoice: if God takes away our affliction, and the years we have seen evil.

Oh, we would like God to look at us with love and forgiveness. To receive the mercy of God is not an incidental matter. It is the whole story of salvation – the victory of Christ's payment for sins. It is all because of God's wonderful mercy.

We are dealing here with eternal life and death forevermore. These are life and death issues. An individual who is going through misery because of a lot of sin in his life feels God's heavy hand and anger. He slowly realizes that God is a God of mercy – there *is* mercy. So he cries out to God: "Oh God have mercy on me, even though I don't deserve it, that I might know You as my merciful Savior. O God, how wonderful You are, that this is possible."

Psalms 90 shows us that we are facing the wrath of God; but there is hope! That's the way God wrote the Bible – it is dripping with hope. But we don't know that until God plants that message on our hearts. So finally we dare to say to the Lord the wonderful words of Psalm 90 verses 13 to 15. As we read these verses we see how this unfolds.

This is the result of what God said in verses 11 and 12. This is the glorious statement of a glorious God. It is the glorious message that is way beyond our understanding.

Isn't it wonderful that we can pour our hearts out to the Lord and just leave everything with Him? He is our merciful Savior; He is the one that can make the difference. He is the one that can pick us up out of the ruins. He is the one that we look to for everything. It is so wonderful to have in mind always as we read these parts of the Bible that we have a Savior; a glorious wonderful Savior. It is not just talk; it is fact that He is present as our Savior, and what an assurance that gives us. Oh how that binds it all together! Christ is the one who is our hope. He is everything; we can leave it with Him. Oh what comfort we derive from that!

We have come down to the last few verses in our examination of Psalm 90. We looked at the psalmist's cry to God for mercy. This came after the realization that we are under God's wrath, and the fact that the only remedy for that wrath is God's merciful forgiveness and salvation.

Now we are really starting to see what this Psalm is all about. Let's go back and read again from verse 11, and we will see how this all fits together.

11. Who knoweth the power of Thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is Thy wrath.

God's anger is poured out against us because of our wickedness. We deserve to be under God's wrath because of our sin. In our rebellion, we have no proper fear of God.

12. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

Now we are asking God to teach us so that we will begin acting more wisely.

13. Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent Thee concerning Thy servants.

We see that what we need involves God. We are asking God to be with us. We need Him to return to us quickly – as soon as possible. We want Him to repent of the wrath that we are under. We have been His servants, and that is why this applies to us. God has brought His chastisement upon us. Now we want Him to look at us once more, but with mercy instead of anger.

14. O satisfy us early with Thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

The first thing we need to feel is God's mercy. It is only His mercy that can begin to make us glad. We want to rejoice all our days – this is a permanent situation, not temporary mercy. Now we are under the joy of God because of His mercy and forgiveness. We want to establish a relationship with God for the rest of our life that is full of mercy, not wrath.

15. Make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.

That evil is a result of the kind of life that we have lived. God has been pounding on us. He has greatly afflicted us. Why have we seen evil? First of all, we were surrounded by evil and we were interested in it, but we shouldn't have been. Secondly, before God changed us, we were rebellious against Him, and our heart was evil. And finally, God's affliction and judgment came against us as evil.

This is not evil to God, but we have seen His oppression as He was dealing with us. As we were under affliction for so many years, now we want God to make us glad as He takes us out from under His oppression.

Now we go on in verse 16:

Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children.

The servants and their children are ourselves and our families. This is the remedy for the affliction God had put upon us. The affliction was God's work in our lives. If He has afflicted us greatly, we should be glad, because now we can rejoice all of our days. When God saves us, we give our lives completely over to God.

Effectively God is saying: My work upon you will not be lost; it will make an impact upon your life forever. My glory will be seen in you and your family. The glory of the Lord includes all the wonderful sense of what God does. We no longer will see Him as our punisher; we see Him as our Savior. We want His glory to be established in us.

And so we read in verse 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.

This is a plea with God that His work will be done in order that our works will be pleasing to God. God must turn us around so that His beauty can be seen in us. He makes us beautiful so that we can be pleasing to Him.

We are looking at the Lord's beauty. As God does His work in us, the product is that our work and our will now will be in agreement with God. God has changed us. It isn't our work that changed us. We can't think that we can work hard enough to be pleasing to God. That is not possible. After God works us over, then we will be under His will and be pleasing to Him. It is not by our efforts.

We had to wait for God's mercy and for God to make us glad. As we have waited upon God, His glory came upon us. We have to wait for Him to do all the work of changing us. The result is that the

work of our hands has been established so that we are pleasing unto God. Our will becomes in accord with God's will. We must see that it is all God's work. We are only glad because God has done an immense work upon us.

Look at how God has emphasized this through this psalm:

Verse 14: God's mercy lets us be glad and rejoice.

Verse 15: We are asking God to do a work of mercy (make us glad)

Verse 16: God's work and God's glory

Verse 17: The beauty of the Lord – it is His beauty, not our beauty, that is the focus.

The last part of verse 17 really shows the end result. We are asking God to take the action. He has to do all the work. Every phrase is asking God to take the initiative. We can't take the initiative – we don't have that ability, but God does.

The action of God is required from beginning to end. It is all His work. And notice that God repeats the final phrase, calling our attention to it. **“Establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it.”** It is God's action altogether.

Now we can see how this all fits together. When we began this psalm, we did not see the final result. God is merciful, and He does all the work of changing us from being under His wrath to being under His mercy.

Because of His action, we go from being a miserable sinner to having the beauty and the glory of the Lord Himself upon us. God has made us into a new creature in Christ who can be glad and rejoice all our days.

Oh, let God be praised!

