

God, Our Dwelling Place
Psalm 90
September 27th, 2026

1. The eternal God is a permanent _____ for transient people. (90:1-6)

2. Death is an ever-present _____ on the subject of divine _____. (90:7-11)

3. Pray for wisdom, satisfaction, and _____. (90:12-17)

4. Applying the Word

- a. _____ lives for more than this brief life.
- b. _____ can still be found in this brief life.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on Psalm 90

1. What events from Moses' life likely informed the writing of this Psalm?
2. What does it communicate about God and our relationship with Him to call Him our "dwelling place?" See also Deut. 33:27; Psalm 91:1-2, 9
3. Why is the fact that God has no beginning or end good news for us? What are some ways that His eternity and unchanging nature can be a comfort?
4. Why might some people want to leave vv. 7-11 out of their reading of Psalm 90? What do they miss if they leave it out?
5. What does it mean to "number our days?" How can we follow this? How does it lead to wisdom? See also Psalm 39:3-6
6. How can gladness and affliction coexist in v. 15?
7. How does 1 Cor. 15:58 further explain how our work can be confirmed and lasting?

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Big idea: A satisfying life recognizes time-bound human frailty in contrast with God's eternity.

Intro

On January 30th, 1965 life in London paused for the state funeral for Winston Churchill. 20 years earlier Churchill had lead England through the dark days of WW2. His resolute speeches still set the standard for eloquence and tenacity for a nation at war and the nation remembered that with his funeral.

The service began at 9:45 AM when they silenced Big Ben, the famous clocktower, and placed his coffin in a gun carriage to be escorted by a collection of 40 different military units. Big Ben would remain silent the rest of the day in his honor.

The procession moved through London for 90 minutes until it reached St. Paul's cathedral. The service was attended by the British royal family and representatives from 112 countries. After the service the procession continued by boat and then private train to the place of burial.

Four hymns were chosen for the service, one of which was "Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory" – the Battle hymn of the republic – an American addition requested by Churchill to honor his American mother and the alliance with the America in WWII.

The final hymn at the end of the service as his coffin was carried out of the church was "O God, Our Help in Ages Past" by Isaac Watts.

Many of us know the great first verse of this hymn,

O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
our shelter from the stormy blast,
and our eternal home.

But we may be less familiar with the final verse before the first verse is essentially repeated:

Time, like an ever rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly, forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day.

The language of the hymn comes from Psalm 90. I've found myself reflecting on this hymn often over the past few months so I wanted to take some time to teach on it before we start a new series.

We experience time "like an ever rolling stream" that "bears all its sons away." True of a gigantic global figure like Churchill, who has now been gone for 60 years and few in this room are old enough to remember him outside of history books. And it's true for each of us.

In his commentary on Psalm 90, James Mays wrote:

Time is the medium of our mortality and so the favorite focus of our folly. ... The young think they are immortal, the old despair because their time is over. Time is a burden when we have to wait, a scarcity when we are busy. It is the source of anxiety, illusion, remorse.

Psalms 90 shows us how we can have a satisfying, wise, even happy life, though we are time bound and frail creatures.

1. The eternal God is a permanent **home** for transient people. (90:1-6)
 - a. This is the only psalm attributed to Moses.
 - i. He led God's people from Egypt, to Mt. Sinai, mediated God's law, prayed for them when they rebelled, led them through 40 years in the wilderness where he saw an entire generation die out.
 - b. This psalm is a prayer – it is directed to God
 - c. God is our dwelling place
 - i. Home, refuge –
 - ii. They had been a nomadic and unsettled people
 - iii. Abraham left home, his great grandson Joseph ended up in Egypt and the rest of the family joined, but they were strangers there. Initially welcome but then viewed as a threat and became unwelcome and treated as outsiders. Moses fled and then returned 40 years later to lead them out. They spent 40 years wandering before entering the promised land.
 - iv. They had no home but the land God had promised but they did not yet possess.
 - v. But the Lord was their home – their dwelling.
 - vi. What do you think of with home? For most people home is a haven, a rest, security, comfort.
 1. There's no place like home
 2. Make yourself at home
 - vii. Psalm 91 picks that up also
 1. **Psalm 91:1-2** He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. ² I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!"
 - d. God is eternal (v. 2)
 - i. Before the mountains – solid and immovable – were created (birth language is used) – He already was.
 - ii. From everlasting to everlasting – from eternity to eternity – we usually say something is “from beginning to end” but that language doesn't work for God. He has no beginning and He has no end. There was a time when we were not. There was never a time when God was not.
 - iii. Patrick Miller, “Finding meaning in our life *now* in the face of death *then* depends on placing the starting point of our understanding outside ourselves.”
 - e. We are temporary, mortal, fleeting, transient (vv. 3-6)
 - i. God turns us back into dust – our physical bodies

1. **Genesis 3:19** By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."
 2. "children of men" is literally "sons of Adam"
 3. Christopher Ash – the combination of the singular in the first line (any particular man or woman) and the generic plural (humankind) in the second line is frighteningly comprehensive. On any day, the Creator can decree that any man or woman or any number of men and women must return to dust. There is no appeal; on that day he, she, or they must die.
 4. One day that will be us. We'll be the ones in the ground. We'll be in the urn or the coffin.
- ii. What is lengthy for us – a 1,000 years! – is like a passing day to God.
 1. It's not that He measures time differently – like dog years – but rather that His whole relationship to time is different than ours.
 2. Martin Luther, what we in point of time consider and measure as a long-drawn-out measuring tape, all of that he sees wound up in a single ball. And so both the last and the first human being, death and life, are to him no more than a moment.
 - iii. Our life is swept away like by a flood
 - iv. We are like grass which sprouts and fades in a day
 1. Each of these has a sense of frailty and finality
- f. For Israel in the wilderness with Moses, God as their dwelling place would have had special significance as the moved from camp to camp to camp for an entire generation.
 - i. It also would have been significant as an entire generation died off as a consequence for their unwillingness to trust God and enter the land.
 - ii. **Numbers 14:28-29** "Say to them, 'As I live,' says the LORD, 'just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will surely do to you; ²⁹ your corpses will fall in this wilderness, even all your numbered men, according to your complete number from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against Me.
 - g. Patrick Miller, "Finding meaning in our life *now* in the face of death *then* depends on placing the starting point of our understanding outside ourselves."
 - h. The psalm takes a turn in v. 7.
 - i. So much so that some scheduled readings for more liturgical churches leave out vv. 7-11.
 1. It isn't seen as comforting and takes away from the language about the brevity of life.
 - ii. But I think it's a mistake to leave it out.
 - iii. The brevity of life is not an incidental facet of our humanity.
 - iv. The wages of sin is death – Rom. 6:23
2. Death is an ever-present **teacher** on the subject of divine **anger**. (90:7-11)
 - a. We have been consumed by your anger.
 - i. Perhaps a million Israelites died in the wilderness.

1. On average, that would be 25,000/year
 2. 68/day
 3. 68 funerals every day. 68 burials.
- ii. Mason: They wandered until an entire generation had passed away. Can you imagine that? Every day, another death. Funeral after funeral after funeral. So it makes sense for Moses to write, “We are consumed by your anger” (v. 7); “We end our years like a sigh” (v. 9); “They [our years] pass quickly” (v. 10).
- b. Even our “secret sins” are before Him – nothing hidden, nothing unknown.
 - i. Book of Common Prayer, “Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid.”
 - c. Our days decline – like the fading of the sun when it sets, earlier and earlier each day for us as we approach winter – our life is like that, which we know, but it is an evidence of divine judgment on humanity, which we forget.
 - d. 70 years on average, 80 if an extra measure of strength.
 - i. We have some octogenarians present, more common with better healthcare
 - ii. But even those years of hard, productive labor fade away –
 - iii. **Eccl. 2:11** Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun.
 - e. So it leads to the question – who understands the power of Your anger?
 - i. Moses, the author, understood it
 1. Pharaoh in the plagues
 2. The people of Israel after they worshipped the golden calf idol
 - ii. We are more comfortable discussing the kindness, love, patience, and grace of God – which are certainly true – but death is an every present teacher that reminds us that God is also just.
 - f. The wages of sin is death
 - i. A few weeks ago we walked through the death of Jesus in John 19.
 - ii. How sobering it is to think of His death in the light of Psalm 90.
 1. He only made it half of the 70 years, dying at 33
 2. He was consumed by the wrath of God, but it was wrath for our sins
 3. He had no secret sins
 4. In Isaiah 53 when it describes how He was crushed, it is the verb form of the word for dust that we see in Psalm 90 – we are turned to dust/pulverized – He was pulverized
 - g. What should be the result of this? What should it lead to?
 - i. V. 12 begins with “So...”
3. Pray for wisdom, satisfaction, and **significance**. (90:12-17)
 - a. Teach us to number our days (v. 12)

- i. How do we number our days?
 - 1. Average life span for a male in Idaho is 77-79 years
 - 2. I'm 46, which means I have on average 31-33 more years remaining.
 - 3. That is 11,323 days
 - 4. Of course it could be more or less.
 - 5. If the last 5 years tend to be more limited by physical problems, that give me about 26 more years.
 - 6. The number of our days is not knowable to us – but we can live knowing that our days are limited and each one is a gift.
- ii. Numbering our days leads to a heart of wisdom because we live with a sober understanding of life.
- b. Return and have compassion on Your servants (v. 13)
 - i. Death and the hardship of life leads to this groan, this lament.
 - ii. For wandering Israelites, it may have been as they experienced the pain of divine discipline and they asked for compassion.
 - iii. For us, we experience the pain of life in a sin cursed world and we long for the day – how long? – when Jesus makes it all right.
- c. But now, we can be satisfied in our brief, fleeting lives. (vv. 14-15)
 - i. Satisfy us with your lovingkindness
 - ii. That we can sing for joy and be glad
 - iii. Even make us glad according to the days you have afflicted us
 - iv. They almost seem like contradictory thoughts, don't they?
 - 1. joy and affliction
 - 2. gladness and evil
 - 3. satisfy us in the morning with your lovingkindness and his fury, anger, wrath are great
- d. Let your work appear to your servants (v. 16)
 - i. Let us see and understand what you are up to
 - ii. John Piper, "God is always doing 10,000 things in your life, and you may be aware of three of them."
- e. Confirm for us the work of our hands – repeated (v. 17)
 - i. Confirm – establish – used of a building that is unshaken
 - ii. Again a seeming contradiction – life is fleeting and brief, but let us be a part of something that is lasting.
 - iii. That only happens as we gain a heart of wisdom and realize that pouring ourselves into investments that don't last past our own deaths.
 - 1. What is it that lasts?
 - a. People, God's Word, God Himself

2. if we pour a legacy into our children and pray for generations of godliness
3. If we give to send missionaries who take the gospel where Christ isn't known
4. If we use our gifts, time, energy in the local church to see people equipped and encouraged to follow Jesus
5. Those things last, and those things are only accomplished as the Lord does His work in and through us.

iv. Spurgeon – We come and go, but the Lord's work abides. We are content to die, so long as Jesus lives and his kingdom grows. Since the Lord abides forever the same, we trust our work in his hands, and feel that since it is far more his work than ours he will secure it immortally. When we have withered like grass, our holy service, like gold, silver and precious stones, will survive the fire.

4. Applying the Word

- a. **Wisdom** lives for more than this brief life.
- b. **Joy** can still be found in this brief life.

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