

WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH YOUR SEVENTY?

Psalm 90

*Life is brief so live each day for God knowing
what you do for Him will count for eternity.*

According to Psalm 90 I have 5,020 days left on this earth; 8,670 if I make it to 80. Whatever the actual number of days I have left in this life, they are brief compared to eternity.

After my earthly days end I will stand before Jesus and give account of my life.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (2 Corinthians 5:10 ESV)

The Judgment Seat of Christ is not for sin, but service. It is for Christians. Faithful service will be rewarded. Failure to serve will be rebuked.

We need to live with the end in mind.

I saw a positive, short term example of this in our son. October 2012 Caleb made a commitment to the United States Marine Corps. Not until May 2013 did he report to boot camp. During that 8 month interval he trained relentlessly, frequently twice a day. With boot camp so far out, it would have been quite easy to slack on the training or delay it for several months. Caleb knew the fitness requirements, the pushups, the situps, the running the obstacle course. He kept the end in mind maintaining a disciplined, rigorous training regimen. In the end, he sailed through the physical fitness requirements without difficulty.

He experienced the practical blessing of living with the end in mind for those eight months.

We need to live each day keeping eternity in mind, keeping the Judgment Seat of Christ in mind.

Living today in light of eternity is not a new truth. Moses teaches this truth in Psalm 90, the oldest of the Psalms.

Moses wrote Psalm 90 to encourage the people of Israel to live each day for God. He composed Psalm 90 near the end of the 40 years of Wandering. The Wandering had been a forty year funeral march through the Sinai Desert. It was punishment for the Exodus Generation who, at Kadesh Barnea, doubted God's power to conquer Canaan (Numbers 13-14). Cemeteries marked Israel's path through the Sinai; an average of 87 funerals a day for forty years; 1.2 million graves. Rather than enjoying the bounty of the Promised Land, forty futile years were spent waiting for the Exodus Generation to die.

Moses wrote Psalm 90 for the Wilderness Generation, the children of the Exodus Generation, soon to enter the Promised Land. For two things he pleads: 1) that in light of God's eternity and mankind's brevity, the Wilderness Generation would learn to live each day for God and 2) that God end the Wandering and favor His people once again.

Psalm 90 (ESV)

A PRAYER OF MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD.

¹ *Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.*

² *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.*

³ *You return man to dust and say, "Return, O children of man!"*

⁴ *For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.*

⁵ *You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning:*

- ⁶ *in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.*
- ⁷ *For we are brought to an end by your anger; by your wrath we are dismayed.*
- ⁸ *You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.*
- ⁹ *For all our days pass away under your wrath; we bring our years to an end like a sigh.*
- ¹⁰ *The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.*
- ¹¹ *Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of you?*
- ¹² *So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.*
- ¹³ *Return, O LORD! How long? Have pity on your servants!*
- ¹⁴ *Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.*
- ¹⁵ *Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, and for as many years as we have seen evil.*
- ¹⁶ *Let your work be shown to your servants, and your glorious power to their children.*
- ¹⁷ *Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!*

At the time Moses wrote Psalm 90, the Israelites had lived forty years as nomads. Though they had yet to obtain permanent dwellings in Canaan, God had always been their dwelling place, their home.

WHILE GOD IS TIMELESS; OUR TIME ON EARTH IS BRIEF (90:1-6)

- ¹ *Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.*
- ² *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.*
- ³ *You return man to dust and say, "Return, O children of man!"*
- ⁴ *For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.*
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- ⁶ *in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.*

Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible; specifically the history of the Chosen People, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God had been with each generation, bringing them through such trials as famine in Jacob's generation and slavery in the Exodus generation. It was a comfort to know that God would continue to be the dwelling place of the Wilderness Generation as they began a new chapter in the history of the Chosen People, the conquest of Canaan.

The special relationship God had with Israel was all the more extraordinary given God's divine attributes. Eternal, timeless, Creator of the earth, yet God is personal and relatable. He is Israel's dwelling place, their safe place in an uncertain, dangerous world.

God is from *everlasting to everlasting*, He is timeless though He relates to us in time. God is eternal, without beginning or end. He is the Uncaused Cause. He is the only entity in all reality Who is self-sustaining.

As created beings we are time bound. To God, our lifespans on earth are incredibly short. Like a blink of an eye. If a thousand years is to God like yesterday, just 12 hours ago, then what is 70-80 years like for Him? Our lives on this earth are incredibly brief.

Why is this significant?

Because God has work of eternal value for us that can only be done in this life!

This is why we need to live each day with an eternal perspective.

How frustrating and futile it must have felt to Moses to spend his final forty years leading a death march around Sinai. He longed to be about God's great purpose for Israel – to establish His people in the land of Canaan to serve as a light and witness to the nations (Deut. 4:1-8)!

The brief time allotted a whole generation, 40 years, had been squandered. The Exodus Generation squandered their days because of a lack of faith and sin. Moses clearly understood our lifespans are brief because of man's sin against God – both in the Garden of Eden and, for the Exodus Generation, at Kadesh Barnea.

OUR TIME ON EARTH IS BRIEF BECAUSE OF OUR SIN (90:7-12)

⁷ *For we are brought to an end by your anger; by your wrath we are dismayed.*

⁸ *You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.*

⁹ *For all our days pass away under your wrath; we bring our years to an end like a sigh.*

¹⁰ *The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.*

¹¹ *Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of you?*

¹² *So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.*

God warned Adam that he would die if he ate from the tree. When he and Eve ate in direct disobedience, they became separated spiritually and physically from God; they died spiritually and began to die physically. Before the Flood, men and women lived hundreds of years. After the Flood, humanity's lifespan significantly shortened to eventually 70 to 80 years.

Our brief lifespan is the result of human sin.

Moses recorded the sin of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 and probably had this in mind when he wrote verse 7 that *we are brought to an end by your anger....* But I believe the disaster of Kadesh Barnea is definitely in mind in these verses.

You'll recall from Numbers 13-14 that Moses sent 12 spies into Canaan from their camp in Kadesh Barnea. Upon their return, the spies confirmed the bounty of the land, but 10 spies insisted the Canaanites could not be conquered; their cities were too fortified and their people too strong. Two spies, Joshua and Caleb stood against the majority and implored the people to trust God and take the land. Unfortunately, the people followed the majority report and in direct disobedience to God, refused to invade Canaan.

God was furious. After all the manifestations of His power; the plagues, the Red Sea crossing, the daily manna, they still refused to trust Him. Moses intervened; God did not annihilate the twelve tribes. He forgave them but punished them nonetheless; the Sinai became their graveyard.

Their children, the Wilderness Generation, now grown, were on the eve of entering Canaan. On their behalf Moses asked God to teach them to number their days, that is, to be mindful of the brevity of their lives and in light of that, to learn to live each day wisely and productively.

In verses 13-17, Moses asked God to bring the Wandering to an end and to favor his people once again.

BECAUSE THIS LIFE IS BRIEF WE SHOULD SEEK GOD'S FAVOR THAT WE MIGHT DO HIS WORK (90:13-17)

¹³ *Return, O LORD! How long? Have pity on your servants!*

¹⁴ *Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.*

¹⁵ *Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, and for as many years as we have seen evil.*

¹⁶ *Let your work be shown to your servants, and your glorious power to their children.*

¹⁷ *Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!*

God certainly was with Israel during the forty years of Wandering, but those years were not productive; they could have been in Canaan. Moses pled for the Lord to return in the sense of ending the Wandering and renewing His program to lead them into the Promised Land. He prayed that as the Wilderness Generation had been afflicted forty years so now God would gladden them for forty years. As He had done mighty works in bringing the Exodus Generation out of Egypt, so Moses prayed God would do mighty works and show His glorious power in leading the Wilderness Generation to possess Canaan. God answered Moses' prayers starting with the Jordan River crossing and the destruction of the walls of Jericho. Finally, Moses appealed to God to favor His people and their work by establishing them. In this way they would eventually realize God's purpose that they be for Him *a kingdom of priests and a holy nation* (Exod. 19:6); a nation revealing the one true God to all the nations of the earth.

Moses longed to see the new generation move forward and become productive once again for God. Thus he prayed that God would impress upon them the short amount of time they possessed to do His work and that He would inspire them to live their lives wisely and productively.

LIFE IS BRIEF SO WE NEED TO LIVE EACH DAY FOR GOD KNOWING WHAT WE DO FOR HIM WILL COUNT FOR ETERNITY

Jesus made this point in His parable of the three servants (Matthew 25:14-30). After entrusting his assets, the Master went away. Upon his return he required an accounting of his servants. The two who brought him profit he praised and rewarded. The Master severely rebuked the one who did nothing with his Master's assets. The point of the parable: when Jesus returns we will give account and either receive praise and reward for faithful service or rebuke for failing to serve.

Mark Cahill titled his book on evangelism, *One Thing You Can't Do In Heaven*. What is that one thing? Share the Gospel with the unsaved. As stated earlier, **God has work of eternal value for us that can only be done in this life.**

This is why the brevity of life is an issue; we have only a short amount of time to do the work of God. Let us not squander the few days we have as did the Exodus Generation.

Should we quit our jobs, sell our homes and become missionaries and traveling evangelists? As a general principle, no; though more of us should consider dedicating ourselves to full time service.

God's work is done by God's people as we live our daily lives in our culture. We do God's work in our marriages, families, workplace, school, church, community. In each of these contexts God calls us to love, serve, and declare the gospel. Psalm 90 calls us to have God's perspective about everything we do day to day.

Let's say you're an engineer at Qualcomm; are you an engineer who happens to be a Christian or are you a Christian who works at Qualcomm? Is your job your purpose in life or is it the means by which God provides for you and your family (Psalm 65)? Your job brings you into relationship with unsaved men and women; what does God want you to do? He wants you to pray for them. He wants you, through Bible study and training, to be prepared to share with them the way of salvation and to be able to answer their questions as they seek God. God wants you to represent him well at Qualcomm by being a dependable, skillful employee who does his/her work as unto the Lord. Perhaps there are fellow believers in your work

group or department. How does God want you to relate to them? To encourage them and build them up in the faith. Many of these works to which God is calling you in the work place you can do only in this life. But if you will do them, God can use you to accomplish things of eternal value such as the salvation of lost men and women.

Number your days. Live each day with an eternal perspective. Be about the work of God with the brief amount of time you have.

Let's say you're a full time homemaker raising children. You are doing the work of God raising your children in the Lord. You won't be raising children in heaven. We raise children in this life. How we raise them certainly has eternal consequences not only for them, but for those whom our children will affect. What is the goal of our parenting? Good grades? College education? Good paying job? The goal of our parenting is, with love and truth, to raise children of godly character and wisdom. We, first, must be parents of godly character and wisdom; we cannot pass on what we don't own. We must be in the Word, in prayer, in discipleship with older brothers and sisters from whom we can draw wisdom.

We need to number our days. Live each day with an eternal perspective. We need to be about the work of God with the brief amount of time we have.

What time wasters do we need to ditch? What activities are sapping our energies? In what ways are we squandering the little time we have to do the work of God? We all need to rest and refresh ourselves regularly; how we do this is an aspect of living wisely. So I'm not suggesting that living each day to do the work of God is a full throttle, dawn to midnight NASCAR race. But I don't think this is a problem for most of us. Probably a greater problem is the amount of time and energy we waste in front of the TV and on Facebook.

We need to number our days. Live each day with an eternal perspective. There are things that can only be accomplished in this life.

On the other side of the ledger is the fact that those who do seek to serve God every day are the ones who will in the next life experience greater joy in Jesus' victory and receive greater authority to serve in His Kingdom. At the Judgment Seat of Christ it will be too late to have a change in perspective. Heed Psalm 90. Take to heart the brevity of your seventy and live each day for God.

There is a Christian saying that memorably summarizes the truth from Psalm 90.

*Only one life, 'twil soon be past.
Only what's done for Christ will last.*