

Psalm 90 begins book four of the Psalms. The Psalms were arranged in compilation in five books: **Book #1** - Psalms 1-41; **Book #2** - Psalms 42-72; **Book #3** - Psalm 73-89; **Book #4** - Psalm 90-106 and **Book #5** - Psalm 107-150.

In this section of book four there are 17 Psalms and all but three of them are anonymous. Psalm 90 is a prayer of Moses. Psalm 101 and 103 are Psalms of David. This particular section opens with a prayer of Moses and ends with a Psalm in which Moses is the dominant theme.

Psalm 90 is the oldest Psalm in the entire book of Psalms. It is a wonderful prayer that sets forth some wonderful concepts for the people of God. Moses had personally been involved in seeing God do some miraculous things. He literally saw God deliver him and Israel from Pharaoh and the Egyptians. But after Israel crossed the Red Sea, things started falling apart. People began to die and instead of being blessed with fruitful land, they were wandering in a wilderness. Time was ticking away so Moses decided to pray. He knew that if Israel was to experience joy and success, it would have to be God who would grant it. So in this Psalm what he prays is this:

IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT GOD IS ETERNAL AND MAN IS TEMPORAL, AND IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT TIME SWIFTLY FLIES BY, GOD’S PEOPLE NEED TO ASK GOD TO TURN SORROW INTO JOY AND LABOR INTO SUCCESS.

We do not have long to live on this earth. In every life there are failures and funerals. In view of this reality, we need to ask God to specifically bless us by giving us joy and success. As one writer said, this Psalm is about asking God to bless His people in view of life’s brevity. Life is short and if we want to enjoy life with God’s blessings, we need to cry out to God.

Now from the superscription there are two observations to make about this prayer:

Observation #1 - This is a prayer of Moses.

Observation #2 - Moses was a man of God.

This prayer is not being prayed by some spiritual lightweight. This is a prayer coming from a very unique man of God. Now there Moses develops about four different themes in this Psalm:

THEME #1 – God is the everlasting God. **90:1-2**

God is God and He has always been God. God gave birth to everything created. As Paul said concerning Jesus, He is the firstborn of all creation (Col. 1:15). God gave birth to everything. Now notice what is stated in **verse 1**, all generations need to realize that God is the refuge. God has been the “dwelling place” or the “hiding place” in all generations. The everlasting God, who gave birth to all things, is the God who has cared for people throughout all of time. God is God from all eternity. God has been involved with people throughout all of time and He will always be involved with people throughout all of time.

When Moses says God has been “our dwelling place,” what he means is that God has been the protective shelter in “all” generations. God preserves His people; He protects His people; He gives them security and satisfaction.

Our homes, our lives, our incomes, and our provisions have been given to us by our God. Moses begins with this point. Proper prayer always begins with a focus on the greatness of God, who is everlasting Creator of all things. All generations of believers have found God to be the safe haven in times of storms.

THEME #2 – Man is a temporal man. **90:3-6**

Compared to God, man is nothing. God continually brings one generation into existence and then another. Generations come and go by the decree of the Everlasting, Sovereign God. In fact, just as **verse 3** says, when you think it through it doesn’t take long for a man to die, go back into the ground and become dust.

Time is everything to us; but it is nothing to God. For us, 70 ,80 or 90 years seems like a major time span; but for God 1000 years is just like yesterday or, as this text says, 1000 years is just like one simple watch of the night to God, which amounts to about 4 hours (**verse 4**). Peter said that 1000 years to God are like a day to us (II Pet. 3:8).

This does not mean that God isn’t in time or that He is outside of time. The truth is He is the One who created time. But time does not limit or bind God in any way like it does us. We mark our time by years and when you compare those years to the eternal God, our life is brief.

In these verses there are two metaphorical pictures that are both designed to show man how temporal he really is:

Metaphor #1 - Man’s life is swept away as quick as a flood. **90:5a**

Floods quickly move into an area and then just as quickly it is gone. That is exactly the image of a man’s life. He surfaces, makes some splash and then is gone just as quick as he came.

Metaphor #2 - Man’s life withers away as quick as new grass. **90:5b-6**

This is a fascinating metaphor because God says we are not like some big oak or cedar in our existence; we are like grass. If you analyze the history of grass, it is sown, grown, blown, mown and gone.

In the mid-east, one night’s rain can turn the grass green; but by the afternoon it can be burnt brown. That is how brief life is for a human being.

Compared to the everlasting God, human life is temporal, frail, brief and weak.

THEME #3 – Man is temporal because of sin. **90:7-12**

When we look at **verse 7**, what we realize is that all but two—Joshua and Caleb—were consumed in the wilderness (Num. 26:63-65). We are all on borrowed time that has been allotted to us by God.

What becomes so theologically significant about this section is that it is obvious that the reason why we only live 70-80 years is because we are all sinners. We have all sinned against God and death is a penalty for sin.

According to **verse 8** God knows our “iniquities,” which is the perverted stuff we have done and He also knows our secret sins.

Whenever we attend a funeral, we should be prompted to fear God because what that funeral says is I still hold man responsible and accountable for his sin. God’s own people were consumed by God because of their iniquity. They made God angry. If you make God angry, life is not joyful. In fact, according to **verse 9**, we finish life with a sigh.

The truth is the anger of God about sin is what eventually takes any human life at some point in time. In view of the fact that this is true, there are two reactions we should have:

Reaction #1 - We should live our lives with a fear of God. **90:11**

Very few people understand the anger of God. God does hold a grudge against sin. He is so mad at sin and rebellion that every single man who is a sinner sooner or later dies. Wise people fear God in view of that point.

Reaction #2 - We should live our lives with a wise, temporal view of ourselves. **90:12**

Wise people realize the clock is ticking, moving them toward eternity. Wise people go after the wisdom of God in their hearts because they know their days are numbered.

Now notice **verse 12**; God must teach us to think right about time and eternity. There are many things battling for a person’s heart and mind and God must cause His wisdom to work in our hearts in order to teach us to number our days. We need to use our time wisely in carefully discerning God’s Word and will.

Most people are wasting their lives without any thought of what is right or wise before God. Every birthday should be a day that reminds all of us that our own time is ticking away. Wise people realize the importance of having a relationship with the everlasting God.

THEME #4 – God is able to bless sinful man. **90:13-17**

Now as we said, Moses had a reason for praying. He has a purpose for his prayer.

His purpose was to remind God of His greatness and man's unworthiness and the reason why he did this was to move God to be sorry for the plight of His people to the point that He would turn their sorrow into joy and their labor into success. In other words, Moses wanted God to bless His people even though he knew they had blown it.

There are five wonderful observations we want to see here:

Observation #1 - It is possible, in view of blown blessings, to move God to return to blessing us again. **90:13**

Observation #2 - Satisfaction in life will come from a relationship with God based on His mercy **90:14a**

It is the grace and mercy of God that enables us to enjoy life. We need God's grace and mercy every morning.

Observation #3 - In the midst of sorrow and struggle, it is possible to have gladness and joy in one's life if God puts it there. **9:14b-15**

God is able to make His sinful people happy and glad even though they have this death sentence on them.

Observation #4 - When God turns sorrow and struggle into gladness and joy, His work will be seen and known and should be taught to children. **90:16**

God is a majestic, wonderful God who does amazing things for sinners with a death sentence.

Observation #5 - When God blesses our work, His favor is upon us. **90:17**

When God permits us to enjoy our work and enjoy our life, His favor is on us.

Someone said we could easily call this Psalm reflections on the brevity of life. Moses was a man of God who figured out the secret to life—focus on God and His Word and His grace.

LESSONS:

- 1) Life is brief for all of us.**
- 2) The reason life is brief is because we are all sinners.**
- 3) It is still possible for us to enjoy our lives if our life is right with God.**
- 4) Part of our responsibility is to communicate these truths to others.**