

Number Your Days
Psalm 90:1-17
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We're going to consider this morning the eternity of God, perhaps a topic you have never given any consideration to. That's all right. We'll do it today, at least get you started. We're going to do that from Psalm 90. So, I'm going to read the entire psalm and then pray. And then we'll dig in here a little bit. Now you'll notice if you're using a paper Bible or Bible that's got headings, the ESV, that I'm going to be reading from: this is book four of the Psalms. And you can read in the study bible, help you understand, how the psalms are broken up. I'm going to spend time on that. The heading for this, at least the title, is given in the ESV is: *from everlasting to everlasting*. This is attributed to Moses, so you're to imagine this as Moses, reflecting on some probably portion of the time, of the people of Israel, probably in exodus. That's their setting. Okay. So, let's hear God's word from Psalm 90.

*Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.
Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and
the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
You return man to dust and say, "Return, O children of man!"
For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a
watch in the night.
You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream, like grass that is
renewed in the morning; in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the
evening it fades and withers.
For we are brought to an end by your anger; by your wrath we are dismayed.
You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your
presence.
For all our days pass away under your wrath; we bring our years to an end like a
sigh.
The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty;
yet their span^[c] is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.
Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of
you?
So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.
Return, O LORD! How long? Have pity on your servants!
Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be
glad all our days.
Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, and for as many years as
we have seen evil.
Let your work be shown to your servants, and your glorious power to their
children.
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! [ESV]*

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Let us pray together.

Father if you were simply a slightly more glorious creature, we might be tempted to elevate ourselves to think that we could perhaps attain to you. Be all wise, all-knowing, all these attributes that you reveal are you, all together, all at the same time, and yet you don't reveal yourself that way, as some grown-up superhero of a creature. You reveal yourself to us mercifully, kindly, as entirely other than us. When we look at these ways in which you are, you're completely different than us. It's challenging. So, open our hearts. Strengthen our minds. Make us willing to receive. Make me willing to receive what you say about yourself. Let me be in, let us be in, awe. And rejoice to be satisfied with you because you're stunning. Help us to behold your glory. We pray in Jesus's name. Amen.

I gave you a few weeks ago, sort of an introduction as to why we should study the attributes of God. I love this quote from A.W. Tozer, who was very influential for me early in my Christian life. He has a book on the character of God that's worth your reading. There are others that are newer but here's what Tozer says: *What comes into our minds when we think about God...* But what does come into your mind? When I say God, what comes into your mind? Here's what Tozer says: *what comes into our mind when we think about God is the most important thing about us. Worship is pure or base, as the worshipper entertains high or low thoughts of God. The most pretentious fact about any man is not what he, at any given time, may say or do, but what he, in his deep heart, conceives God to be like. We tend, by a secret law of the soul, to move toward (or my edit or away) move toward or away from our mental image of God.*

More simply, in a newer book Michael Reeve's very helpful book: *we become like what we worship*. We become like what we worship. J.I. Packer says: *those who know God have great thoughts of God*. And, of course, knowing God is the design of what Jesus came for. You might remember there is an outline in the bulletin. The big name (I think I forgot to tell Megan this) of this series is called 'Behold Your God.' There's an outline in the bulletin. I am going to reference a number of scriptures today; and I encourage you to look them up, because I'm just going to characterize them. I'm not going to read a lot of them, but it's worthy of your study this afternoon or throughout the week, as you're meditating on and trying to apply the sermon to yourself, into your life. So I'm going to reference a bunch of scriptures and that's a great place to write them down. So John 17:3 Jesus says, 'I came that they might know you.' Know. Not know about, but know you personally, experientially. In Galatians, Paul talks about the wonder of knowing God and then he stops himself. And he goes: but isn't it quite wonderful that God wants to know us.

That's pretty stunning. You remember the reflection in Luke 1:48. Our Lord's mother, that you have gained to know and use me in this way. And yet this is what God does. He gives us His word, that we might know Him. And in that word, we find out that He wants to know us. Isn't it wonderful when you meet somebody, and it's obvious that they actually want to know you. They want to know your story, and your history, and your present, and your struggles. We feel honored. It's so infrequent, but it's such a privilege. And that's what God says. He's interested in us, and he invites us to know Him. And sometimes when I talk in the attributes of God. I said

this a few weeks ago. People say: is it going to be practical? It's kind of heady, especially starting with eternity. Is it going to be practical? If by practical, you mean: will this benefit me in my daily living? Then it better, or I haven't done my job.

Okay. So, my attempt in these sermons is going to try to note the doctrine, to tell you what it is, what's the attribute of God. I'm going to try to relate it to the gospel of Christ and His kingdom. and I'm going to try and help you understand what difference it makes, that God has revealed Himself to be like this. I'm also going to try and alternate between attributes of God that we share with Him, and so the formal language for that is that those are communicable. That's the big language. And attributes that are incommunicable. God does not give to us eternity. But He says He's love. And gives us love, pours love in our hearts, and calls us to love. He communicates that one to us, that attribute. Okay. So, we'll alternate between the two. We'll have the opportunity to spend some time in focus, beginning even next week, talk about the four G's. And we'll spend some more time on that. That God is glorious, and great, and good, and gracious. And so, we'll do some of the traditional ones like eternity and some ones that have gotten more focus of late. And I'll explain more about that. Maybe we'll put some handouts in the bulletin or something.

Number Your Days, Psalm 90

1. Struggle to grasp God's eternity

All right. So, let's get started by putting on your thinking caps and start to think about eternity. So, we're going to struggle to grasp God's eternity. Look at the first four verses here in Psalm 90: Lord, you have been. It's a talk of stability, right. You've been our dwelling places. You're where we can settle in, and that's been constant in all generations. Now we're time-bound. God is not. So, whenever He speaks to us, somehow, He has to try and get across the difference between Him and us. But He can only do it in language that we can understand. So, He accommodates Himself to us and speaks to us so that we can try and get a hold of what He's like. But He uses our language to do it. And that begins at verse two. Before. See, even there, you're stuck in time. But notice where the before is before. And this is key to describing God accurately, as he's before. Before what? He's before creation. He's before anything else, because He made everything, including time.

Before the mountains were brought forth or ever you had formed the earth in the world. From everlasting to everlasting. So here, Moses is struggling to describe God's nature as exterior to time. So, from everlasting to everlasting, you were God, and how that is so distant from us. God so different from us. We are returned by God to the dust. From dust you came. Into dust you return. And say return, oh children of man, to the dust. And then we're given a comparison here. There're several comparisons as we go through the psalm. For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday. Quick and done. As yesterday when it's passed or as a watch in the night. That's a three or four hour interval. Right. A thousand years like a three or four hour interval. The comparison is just trying to help you understand the difference between us and God. So, God exists outside of time. His experience is not that of a succession of moments.

But all moments in time are all captured in His view. I'll give you an analogy for that in a minute. a favorite one from one of my seminary professors from a long, long time ago. All right. So, what psalm 90 is trying to talk to us about. It's trying to talk to us about the fact that God existed before anything was made. Okay. So, Genesis 1:1. In the beginning God created. We get that repeated in John 1:4. In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things. How many things? Including time. Time's a thing. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

God has, in Himself, life. Ours is derivative. You remember. Moses is trying to say to God, burning bush, right. And you are? And remember what God says, I Am. Say with me. I Am. It's fascinating. Wait. Wait. You are? I Am. I Am life. I give life. I Am life. I Am life itself. I give life to everything. Revelation 1:8. I'm the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God. And again, we're trying to take time-bound language and describe God as exterior to time: Who is and Who was and Who is to come, the Almighty. Paul in Colossians 1:17. And He is before all things. Right. Again, he's trying to take time bound language but describe God exterior at a time. And this most wonderful phrase that I, as somebody with a science background, that I just love: and in Him all things hold together. You and I would be jelly piles of atoms if God didn't, moment by moment, hold us together. There's no good reason why the gravitational forces, the microgravitational forces that we observe about atoms. There's no good reason for them to keep going. You do realize that, right? They don't have existence in themselves. Every single one of those atoms working around, producing those microgravitational fields that hold things together, that make up you, moment by moment. Every single one of those atoms is kept in existence. They cohere in Christ. That's what this is saying.

Because God has life in Himself. 1 Timothy 6:16. God alone has immortality. Yes, we live. We have a beginning point. You can observe that when you have your shirt off later. You can see that you have a belly button. That indicates to you that you have a beginning point. God does not have a belly button, though Jesus does. And we will consider that carefully in a bit. It's actually quite wonderful that Jesus has a belly button. Quite wonderful. God alone has immortality, which is why Hebrews 1:8 teaches us that His throne is forever. All right. So, let me see if I can formulate it for you. God exists outside of time and doesn't experience time as a succession of events, but He does work within time. So, He exists outside of it, but we experience Him working within time. Because indeed He does. He works within our succession of events or else we would be hopeless.

I promised an illustration. This is from John Frame, who's one of my seminary professors. And I really appreciated this. I grew up in New York. Maybe I've mentioned that before. That's the fast talking, and maybe you hear a little bit of accent. But we grew up in New York watching the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade. Can I, can I, get a witness? Anybody for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade? The big balloons. All that, okay. All right. So, here's the analogy that John Frame came up with, that I think is really nice. Imagine it this way: that God's perspective is that He is standing on top of the Empire State building. And from the top of the Empire State building, you can see the entire Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade. All of it from

start to finish. Okay. You with me. But we stand in front of Macy's, and we experience the parade as a succession of events. These dancers and baton twirlers and people playing instruments and flying balloons. They all come past us one by one. That is the way that we experience life. But God sees the whole all at the same time, because He exists outside of that succession. Is that helpful? It's always been helpful for me to have some way to try and grasp this.

2. Grasp the Gospel Consequences of God's Eternality

So, that's the way that God reveals Himself to be. Let's start working through some of the consequences. Particularly let's grasp the gospel consequences of God's eternity. Before we consider some good news, there is some bad news in this psalm. You may have heard it as we go through. God's eternity isn't good news to all people. Look with me at verses 7 through 11. For we are brought to an end by your anger. We considered a few weeks ago why God's wrath is righteous. He's infinitely holy and good, and when we suppress the truth and unrighteousness, He is righteously angry. He is hurt and for good reason. Because we have, we've raised, our hands in rebellion against Him. And said you're wrong. I'm right. I'm going to do what I think is best, right. And we considered that a couple of weeks ago. We are brought to an end by your anger, by your wrath. You are dismayed. Why is God got wrath? He has set our iniquities before you. The sins that we think are secret? No, they're exposed in the light of your presence. As we consider our days, they pass away under your wrath. We bring our years to an end like a sigh Might get 70. Might get 80. But the nature of them is toil and trouble. You hear a refrain there from Genesis, thorns and thistles. From Ecclesiastes, under the sun. They're soon gone, and we fly away.

And then this question. Verse 11 is a little haunting. Who considers the power of your anger and your wrath according to the fear of you? The question's posed to you. The singer of this, the prayer of this, the reader of this, the hearer of this, today: do you consider the power of God's anger and His wrath according to the fear of Him? See. This eternity is not necessarily good news to all people. For rebels who keep rebelling, who don't come in repentance and faith. Who don't lay down their weapons of rebellion. Who don't lay down their self-attempts to save themselves. Who don't stop suppressing the truth in unrighteousness. For rebels who don't consider God's wrath and die rebelling. This is not good news. God's eternity is not good news to them. Revelation 14:11 talks about the nature of what is it like to die under God's wrath. Again, it's not good news. I'm telling you. The smoke of their torment. Revelation 14:11. The smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, because they keep on living or keep on dying, whichever way you want to put it. Because God keeps on living and they stay under his wrath. They have no rest day or night. You see the gospel that we hear, the gospel call from God to repent and believe, is meant to be a merciful word. Is to say there's an opportunity not to be under the wrath of God but it, the opportunity, only comes.

You see, the gospel ends up as a..the way you can think about it, the way it's analogized in the book of Hebrews is a word sword. It's a word sword. It divides between those who will obey by faith and those who won't. Jesus speaks of two topics throughout the gospels with great frequency that we tend to avoid. The top two, the top two, hits in the gospel from Jesus are. Do

you know what they are? They're money and hell. Those are his top two topics to talk about. There's the two that we tend to avoid. Isn't that interesting? He talked the most about them. We talk the least about them. There may be a mismatch there. Why?

This topic of hell is not pleasant to talk about, but Jesus talked about it a lot. Why? It's because hell is eternal for those who won't bow, because sin is rebellion against an infinite God who lives forever. And thus will punish forever. And now I recognize this is an unpopular thing to say. I agree that it is entirely counter to our emotions, but I would encourage you. I would encourage me to remember who we are as we try and make that evaluation of God in His ways. We need to remember that we are limited. We are small and frail. We have puny minds, disordered hearts. We are sinners, unholy sinners, judging an absolutely pure and holy God in His ways. And we must be very careful, friends, to not do that. We are not in the place to judge God in His doings

Well, it's not good news for everybody but it is good news for those who bow their knee to Jesus. Should we find ourselves walking daily in repentance and faith, we should be overwhelmed in thankfulness for undeserved grace. And we should yearn to love our neighbors, to pray for them, to spend time with them, to befriend them, to make space for them, to make choices that would allow that in our life. To stop doing some things that we can do that. I was just helping a church in North Carolina. I got in late last night, and in evaluating their church, much like the church health assessment that you all heard about a few weeks ago here at CPC. I'm doing an evaluation of their church and the most frequent word that I saw in all of what I did with them. I did interviews. I did a survey stuff. The most frequent word that occurred was the word 'busy'. I think that could be said of this room too, and of those who might be watching online. Frenetically busy. But busy with the right things? Busy loving your neighbors, busy befriending people who don't know Jesus? You see, friends, this life that we're called into, calls us to make kingdom-oriented choices. You all made choices to make yourselves busy. Recognize that. You made that whole succession of choices. And you have the freedom to re-choose. In the church that I led in Seattle, we coined a phrase that oftentimes repentance means rechoosing. This way in which God's eternity is bad news for those who are rebels should move us with pity towards those who don't yet know Christ. Remember the gospel spoken to people in the context many times of relationships. But the spoken gospel is the means that God uses to bring people from death to life, to save people from eternal hell. Someone spoke the gospel to you. Many people spoke the gospel to me. I'm simply asking you to be those kinds of people

It's a big part of what it means to number your days, which is the title of sermon, and it's also the application. We'll get to that in a bit. All right. So, consider this is bad news for people who are still rebelling against God. It's good news for God's people, for those of us that are turning from our sins, trusting in Christ, living in daily gratitude. This is good news, right. Look with us in verse 14. Look in verse 14. This ask, this request to satisfy us, this is really what I've been meditating on a lot, as I've been coming towards preaching this week. Satisfy us. Isn't it the case that when we're overly busy, when we are sitting in the ways that seem most near and dear to us. Ponder with me. Isn't it what we're doing is: we think that this thing can satisfy us, that it can finally make us happy. And here is the counter: satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast

love. That we are pitied in Jesus, satisfied with God that we can rejoice and be glad all our days. I have learned, friends, and later than I wish I had, that gratitude can take you a long ways and bitterness will kill your life. But gratitude can take you a long ways. Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

Romans 8. There's a lot there. There's no condemnation anymore for those who are in Christ Jesus. The beginning of Romans 8 and at the end, you have this golden chain of God setting His love on us and calling us in time, justifying us, eventually sanctifying us, and glorifying us, and all of that is forever. God is for us forever. If God is for us, what's the second half? If God is for us, you are meant to ponder there that God is for you and forever. You ever had a champion? One of the founders of our ministry Flourish, now with the Lord, is a guy named Ted Strawbridge. And he passed away, to my sense, trying to repent of trying to accuse God of doing wrong. He passed away in an untimely way, I would say, from my perspective, obviously not God's perspective. And maybe a little less than a year afterwards I was out to dinner with his widow, and we were talking. We're reflecting together about the profound ways that this man had affected our lives, and she looked at me with tears in her eyes. And she said, 'I lost my champion.' I lost the person who was most for me.

Do you realize that God is like that to you? That He is for you, and He is for you forever. That's what it means to be one of His children. Ephesians 1:4 talks about the fact that that God was thinking about you. This is crazy talk. I'm going to tell you ahead of time that this is crazy talk. But I'm still going to say it, because of how wonderful it is. He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. You were on His heart, before your mom and dad ever made you. It's stunning that, that's the way He is. It's the way He reveals himself to us. God set His love on you and that won't change. Why? Jesus chose. This is crazy to talk too. Jesus chose to leave the blessedness of unlimitedness. He chose to leave being unconstrained by time to enter. Jesus chose this. To enter the succession of time as we experience it. Why?

Why? Love. It's what we needed. We were hopeless without it. He pitied us. That's what your savior is like. He did it on purpose, to do all that was needed to bring you into His family. And maybe the best news about Jesus is that He's the same yesterday, today, and forever. That's what Hebrews 13:8 says. And if that's true and He loves you, then it's done. This should lead us, most obviously, to worship. 1 Timothy 1:17. To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen. To know God is to feel the pull to worship Him because He's glorious. There's more also.

3. Number Your Days

There's an application here that we're given which is to number our days. Psalm 90 is a contrast. God is eternal, outside of time, but works within time. We are in time, time limited. But we can fight that. I can fight that. So, we look at Psalm 95 and 6. There's this, and also verse 10, there's this contrast, right. What are people like. You sweep them away like a flood. The hours are gone like that. Like a dream. Like grass. But God, as easily sweeps away, as he renews in the morning, right. He renews us, that we might fade in the evening with rest. He renews us. The years of our life for 70, 80 maybe, but their span is toil and trouble. They're soon gone. We fly

away. Life goes by so quick. So, there's the contrast. We can fight this contrast, though, in some very distinct ways. I will recommend books as I go. My friends call me the book guy, so you just take it in stride. Write it down. Read it when you get time. Jen Wilken's book, *None Like Him*, is a book on the incommunicable attributes of God. Entirely worth reading. Don't need a lot of theological background. Don't need seminary education. Super, super good. If you're a more advanced studier, James Dolezal, *All That Is In God*. Find me afterwards. So, here, we can fight this in some really distinct ways. Here's two that Jen Wilken points out. Busyness. Busyness believes that the time God has given is not adequate. Laziness believes that the time God is given is not precious. Being time-bound, I find it rather challenging. If you combine it as I do, many times, with a lust for control, you end up stuck in the dynamic of Matthew 6 25-34, where Jesus talks about fear and stress and anxiety and worry

So, the question I think for me to wrestle with, for you to wrestle with, is: do you have a good father who is weaving a tapestry of your life? Yes, it's time bound. But he's doing something. He's shaping you. He's using you for something. Ecclesiastes 3, 1 through 15, of course. Wonderful song from the 60s, but there's time for all that's needful. My wife so gloriously has tried to tutor me in this. I used to be a rather slavish person to lists, and I come home from work. And she'd be like, how was work? And I'd say, you didn't get enough time, too many things left on my list. You're right. There's so many things on my list. I didn't get them all done. And she'd be like. So here I'm hoping I'll get to have her come with me once the school year is done, and you get to meet her. Because she's wonderful. So what she'd say to me. She's like, oh that's fine. The things that are on your list, it'll be there tomorrow. She thought that was good news. She's been a very good tutor for me because she's right. They'll still be there and it'll be okay. What was needful for today. What's needful for you today. What does it look like to follow God today? To following moment by moment, to pay attention to the person who's in front of you, and act like they're the only person on earth. There will be time for all that is needful.

Packer again. Marvelous, his book on the attributes, in my early Christian formation. Those who know God have great contentment in God. There is though, in each day, things that are needful, which is why we need to hear this application that God gives us here in verses 12 to 17. So what's the point? What does Moses ask? What are we to ask, in light of the way that God is? Verse 12, so teach us because we don't get this natively. We need to be taught it. It's an ask. It's a prayer. Teach me. Part of our repentance and faith, daily living. Part of our daily response to grace: teach me to number my days. Teach us to number our days. God's days are without number. Ours are limited, so teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.

We long for the Lord's return. We ask for his pity. We ask for us to be satisfied in Him. I think that's really important, because if you if you are satisfied in God, it frees you. The way Tim Chester puts this, and I'll talk more about Tim Chester and his insights and a lot of these attributes that are so helpful to me um. But the way that Tim Chester talks about growth in the Christian life is: he says that when I can, when I can, make this formulation right now, I know that I'm growing in the Christian life. The formulation like this: I need not be stressed last night that my first plane was late, because whenever in my Father's care, I lay my head on my pillow.

He will grant me the rest I need to serve his people tomorrow. That's the formulation I needed yesterday. So when I can connect, and I need not to a way that I'm tempted to sin. Because I've connected it to my understanding of God and his gospel, his fatherly care for me. Then there's hope for me to stop sinning. That's why this is so powerful. Satisfy us in the morning with you, with your steadfast love, so that we rejoice and be glad for as many days as you give us, for as many years. Let your works be shown. That's our posture. Your glorious power to their children's. Multi-generational visions always in the scriptures. In this request, let the favor of the Lord, our God, be upon us. Yes, establish the work of our hands.

Why do we need to number our days? Why do we need to pay attention to them? They're not infinite. You only have a certain number. So do I. Use them well. Use them for God's glory. We ask God to establish the work of our hands because we can't do that alone, especially if we're aiming to see the kingdom advance. Another great general can quote. Here's a remarkable truth: God is able to bring eternal results in the lives of people who will live forever from our time-bound efforts. Which makes sense of Paul's exhortation in Ephesians 5, right. That the old translations used to call 'redeem the time.' The newer translations say 'make the best use of the time in a kingdom way,' doing that of course humbly. James 4 13-16. That's where buddy missed, and you actually don't know. Will it snow tomorrow? Will the traffic be horrible? Will you still be alive? You know none of that. I know none of that.

So pay attention to people in front of you today, your real neighbors that you live, work, and play with. Packer. There is no peace like the peace of those whose minds are possessed with full assurance that they have known God, and God has known them. And that this relationship guarantees God's favor to them in life, through death, and on forever, because God lives forever. Is that the kind of peace that you have? In Christ you can have that. If you want to talk more about that, please grab PD or I or Dick or any of the elders that you've seen around. We would love to talk to you more about this Jesus, who chose, who purposed to enter time, to enter our painful world, out of love, out of love for sinners like us. Let's pray together.

Father, it does stretch our minds as creatures, as we would try and come to some sense of understanding about how different you are than us. And we struggle with this one, analogies aside. It's just hard to conceive because we are bound up in time. And it's all we can feel and see and experience. Thank you that you're not like that. Thank you that you chose to create, that we might know the joy of being alive as you are natively. It is good to be alive. Help us as you teach us here. We ask you to teach us to number our days. We ask you, that you would. I ask you, that you would, satisfy me with you. Then I might be grateful, that we might be grateful people who do indeed number our days because we're thankful to you. Help us to. We pray in Jesus's name. Amen.