

## **Sermon Outline**

### **“Teach Us To Number Our Days”**

**Psalm 90 – Joshua Harris – Dec. 26, 2010**

#### **Eternal God and Insignificant Man (verses 1-6)**

1. Background: Moses was writing to the people of Israel in the midst of bleak circumstances. Because of their unbelief and rebellion, they had been wandering the desert for the past 40 years. Thousands of Israelites who were miraculously delivered from captivity in Egypt and who should have entered the Promised Land died in the wilderness. This was Moses vantage point as he penned this psalm.
2. Despite Israel’s circumstances, Moses began with expressions of faith in the only thing permanent—the eternal nature of God. In light of God’s eternality, Moses declared that even though the Israelites did not have a home, God alone was their dwelling place for all generations.
3. In contrast to the God who had no beginning and no end, Moses reminded his readers, in verses 3-6, of the brevity and insignificance of man.
  - a. Compared to God, man is but dust.
  - b. A day or a year may seem long to us. But to God, a thousand years passes like one of our days.
  - c. Man is like a dream, fleeting and momentary.
  - d. And man is like the grass that springs up in the morning and withers by night from the scorching sun of the day.

#### **Causes of Man’s Desperate Condition (verses 7-11)**

1. Then Moses considers the reason for the brevity of our lives. Because of our sin, God limits our lives. After 70 or 80 years, if we have the strength, we are brought to the end of our days by God’s anger and wrath for our iniquities and sins.
2. Why should we remember that death exists because of sin? Our death points us to the main problem we have—our sin. But our death also points to the only hope we have—the One who conquered death on our behalf, Jesus Christ.

#### **Two Requests: Wisdom and Compassion (verses 12-13)**

1. Then Moses prays two very important and significant prayers.

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2. Request #1: In light of the eternity of God and the brevity of life, Moses asks God to teach us to make the most of our days, for they are few, and to give us a heart of wisdom to live rightly all the days of this earthly life.
  - a. So often we lack an eternal perspective. We assume that we have all the time in the world and therefore walk foolishly.
  - b. Moses' prayer is that we might have wisdom to live the few days we have for what really matters, to live with the realization that God alone is our only hope and that eternity is not far off. It is a prayer to live wisely in the light of the deadline of death.
3. Request #2: In light of the truth that God's anger and wrath has limited our days because of our sin, we need compassion, mercy and forgiveness.
  - a. The answer to this prayer request is why we celebrate Christmas. Jesus is the only One who fully experienced the wrath of God. As he hung dying on the cross, he absorbed the full fury of God for our sins. Because Jesus was pierced for our transgressions, we have received mercy, grace and forgiveness.

### **Wise and God-Fearing Prayers (verses 14-17)**

1. The prayers in verses 14-17 are the kind of prayers that we offer when we have wisdom in our hearts and are confident of the grace of God.
2. Prayer to be satisfied in God (verse 14): When we see the fleeting nature of life, we pray that God alone will be our satisfaction so that our hearts can rejoice and be happy in him.
  - a. Like another psalmist, we can pray: "Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." (Ps. 73:25-26).
  - b. Often, however, our prayer is "Lord, satisfy me with \_\_\_\_\_ (you fill in the blank) \_\_\_\_\_." (e.g., rest, quiet, comfort, peace, affection, attention, power, vindication, control, smooth sailing, intimacy, communication, obedient and respectful kids, meeting all my needs, financial stability, a hassle-free life, good health, joy, happiness, my agenda being accomplished, etc.)
3. Prayer for God's renewal (verse 15): God knows the trials, the adversities and the sufferings through which we have walked. And he has used these sufferings to produce in us spiritual good. But God also desires us to be renewed. This is a prayer that believes that God is good and that he can renew and revive us, despite our afflictions.

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- a. However, in light of the brevity of life and the promise of eternity, no matter the number of our days of suffering, we will have an infinite number of days in eternity free from sin, suffering, sorrow, and death!
4. Prayer to see God's work in the earth (verse 16): So often, we long to see things that are insignificant—success for our sports team(s), the next TV series, the next sequel to our favorite movie, etc. But when we see how fleeting and insignificant life is, we long to see different things, eternal things, God's work. We dream God's dreams and are ambitious for the work of God in our midst. For example we might long to see:
  - a. the Lord bring salvation and changes in our family and friends that are beyond our imagination.
  - b. the Lord bring down the regime of North Korea and allow the gospel to flourish.
  - c. the Lord bring revival and restore righteousness to America.
  - d. the Lord open up doors for the gospel to spread in the Muslim world.
5. Prayer to establish our work (verse 17): "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain" (Ps. 127:1). Apart from Christ, we can do nothing of eternal significance. This is a prayer for God to shine his favor on our simple acts of service and obedience in every aspect of our lives (relationships, marriages, parenting, work, church, etc.) that they may resonate into eternity.
6. Closing encouragement: Meditate on this psalm as you end 2010 and begin 2011. Meditate on the greatness of God and the brevity and insignificance of our lives. And make the prayers of verses 14-17 prayers that you pray in 2011.

## **Fellowship Starters**

1. Josh reminded us that Moses wrote this psalm while still in the desert. Why does that context make the words of verses 1-2 so weighty and meaningful?
2. What do we learn about the nature of God from verses 1-6?
3. In verses 3-6, what metaphors/images does Moses use to impress on us the brevity of life? Why is it so spiritually helpful for us to meditate on this reality?
4. In verses 7-11, God reveals through Moses that there are theological reasons for the limits to our span of life. Why does God allow death? What effect should that have on us?
5. Why does verse 11 point us powerfully to Christ and his saving work on the cross?

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6. How can the four prayers in verses 14-17 shape your prayers in the coming new year with a wise and eternal perspective?