

Don't Lose Track of Time

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[0 : 00] In a day, how many times do you check the time?

! I don't know the answer, I've not counted it myself, but I reckon it's in the same category! of how many times we pick up our phones.

And the answer is a lot more than you think. Our lives are ruled by time, aren't they? Whether work or school or uni, deadlines or meetings or even just dinner with friends. A few of you are in the middle of exams at the moment, aren't you? Constantly checking the time. How long do I have left? How long before I need to get out the door? How long before I can go home? We are constantly looking at the clock, checking the time. Our lives are ruled by time. But the message of Psalm 90 is that perhaps our lives are not ruled by time in the way that it should be.

That the message of the Psalm is, right, don't lose track of the time. Maybe I should have made that a bit more explicit. Don't lose track of God's time.

And we'll see that we are taught this lesson through this Psalm in a pretty sobering way. But sobering messages are often the ones that hit home hardest, aren't they?

[1 : 45] That is what we are going to see this evening. And over the coming weeks, we're going to see how the message of this Psalm contributes to the overall message of this whole section of Psalms.

Over the next few weeks, up until the start of summer, we as a church family are, in the evening, is going to be going through Psalms 90 through to 100. And as we do that, we'll see as we go that these Psalms are all about the Lord as the great king, right? The Lord reigns.

The Lord reigns. We'll see that time and again as we go through these wonderful Psalms that dwell in the majesty, the greatness, the reign of our Lord. And even just seeing that pattern, okay, is maybe helpful for how we see the Psalms. Because Psalms is a book, isn't it, that is often kind of just treated as a hymnal rather than a book. Like, we can just pick out anyone we want at a certain time and just roll with it. It doesn't matter where they are. There just happens to be 150 of them.

Now, it's not wrong to kind of pick out a Psalm to open your Bible and read a Psalm that means a lot to you. They really do kind of stand alone in a sense that maybe other chapters of the Bible don't.

But every Psalm in the book of Psalms is where it is for a reason. You might have seen actually a big clue to that order just at the start of our reading. We didn't read it, but what does it say there in your Bibles just above the title of Psalm 19? Book 4, right? The 150 Psalms are divided into five books.

[3 : 40] And someone, we don't know exactly who, but someone has put these Psalms together into books within the whole book. There is obviously a structure here.

Now, we're not going to go to kind of too much detail this evening, or we'd never actually get to Psalm 90. But to help us with Psalm 90, it will, I think, be helpful just for a moment to think about where book 3 ended. Okay, so, well, book 2, the book before that, ended with kind of the high points of David and Solomon's rule in Psalms 72. We sing that Psalm a lot, don't we? And then book 3, from 73 through to 89, sort of traces like the decline of the Davidic dynasty. There are some okay moments. It's much like the book of Kings. There's some okay moments, but generally, things are heading south. And it all ends with there being no king in Israel and the people in exile. Just look there with me at Psalm 89. Just glance back a page. The ESV editors have put in the subtitle, I will sing of the steadfast love of the Lord. That is kind of gloriously optimistic.

It does start there, but it does not end there. Just look. Look at where it ends. Verse 49. Lord, where is your steadfast love?

Where is it? There is a serious problem. We see God's promise, what was that David's offspring shall endure forever. See that in verse 36.

But, verse 38. But now you have cast off and rejected. You are full of wrath against your anointed. You have renounced the covenant with your servant. You have defiled his crown in the dust.

[5 : 41] You have promised a throne that shall last as long as the sun. We are looking at a crown defiled in the dust. And so the question, right, book three ends with, is basically, what is going on here?

Lord, you have promised to love us, but right now it feels like your love is pretty absent.

And so book three finishes with a great kind of juxtaposition between the promise of God and the reality faced by his people. And book four comes in to help answer this great question.

And I hope even just from that little bit of context, we can already begin to see how Psalm 19 and all the Psalms that follow will, I hope and pray, be of great help to us.

Because I think there are times when we all feel that tension, isn't there? God, you have promised this in your words, but I seem to be experiencing something very different.

[6 : 58] You promised joy, I am living in sorrow. You promised peace, my life seems to be in turmoil. What is going on here? And book four begins to answer that question by getting us to think about time.

We kind of get that actually, even just for the very first line there. It's either a prayer of Moses. This is the only Psalm written by Moses, and it is the oldest Psalm in the whole book.

We are immediately, aren't we, brought way back into the past. Even for kind of the original audience here, Moses was the best part of a thousand years earlier.

So we are pulled back in time. And in the ancient history of ancient Israel, we learn three timeless truths.

Three truths that were the same for the Exodus generation as they were for the exiles in Babylon. The same for the early church as they are for us today.

[8 : 09] In a Psalm all about time, we are given three timeless truths. So let's look at the first of those in verse 1 and 2, where we see our God, who is from everlasting to everlasting.

Just look there with me at verse 1. Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. A dwelling place, isn't it, is a place of security, a refuge.

Somewhere you are safe. It's often the place we call home, isn't it? Where we feel secure, where we want to go in times of trouble.

I just want to go home. But Moses says, for you and me, that place is not bricks and mortar somewhere in Aberdeen. Our dwelling place is God.

From Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to Moses, to David, to the exiles, the apostles, to you and me here this evening, God is our dwelling place.

[9 : 19] He is our sanctuary. Our place of security and comfort and rest. And notice, it's not, is it, our dwelling place is God's dwelling place.

No, our dwelling place is God himself. He is our place of safety and security. In him, we have refuge in times of trouble.

So we start, don't we, with an encouraging truth. Wherever we are right now, whatever circumstances we find ourselves in, whatever disconnect we might feel between God's promises and our reality, here is an eternal truth.

In God, we are held secure. He is our eternal dwelling place. But Moses wants to expand our horizons here.

Who is the God in whom we find refuge? We are saying, don't we, as old as the hills? When we're saying that, we're saying something that's kind of incomprehensibly old.

[10 : 32] You stand on top of Benahe and you know, don't you, that the ground beneath your feet, it has been there, isn't it, far longer than you can fathom.

But look there at verse 2. Before, right, before the mountains were brought forth. As old as the hills doesn't do it for God.

Before the mountains. But actually, even that isn't enough. Wherever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

Before there were mountains, there was God. Before there was an earth, there was God.

Before there was a sun, there was God. Before there was a universe, there was God. And before there was a universe, God had always been.

[11 : 45] From everlasting to everlasting. And after the world, and our solar system, and our galaxy, and every other galaxy has come to an end, God will continue to always be.

You should be hearing that, I think, thinking a mixture of two things. Firstly, wow. Secondly, what?

Because we cannot really comprehend it, can we? We cannot get our head around it. And so we should simply stand in awe before God.

God. Our God is not like us. He's not just a bit older. He's not just been around a bit longer.

He is from everlasting to everlasting. Sometimes it really is good just to sit and think for a moment about just how great God is.

[13 : 04] And that on its own would be a psalm well worth meditating on. But when we are perhaps struggling to put together God's promise with our experience, we might wonder at this point, so what?

God is eternal. That is great. But what does that mean for me now? Well, let's just keep putting together the pieces of the puzzle here as we turn to point number two.

God is forever. We are for a moment. Our God is from everlasting to everlasting. Our lives are, well, they are just from morning until evening.

Verse three confronts us immediately, doesn't it, with an uncomfortable truth. The everlasting God says to man, return to dust.

God is from everlasting to everlasting. We are not. This is Genesis three language, isn't it? You are dust and to dust you shall return.

[14 : 12] And there is such a stark contrast here, isn't there? Between God's time and our time. God is eternal.

We have an expiry date. And it is very, very, very short. If Moses was middle class, he'd probably say that we age like an avocado.

You cut it up, you turn your back, you look at it again and it's brown. Verse five, our lives are like a dream. They feel forever when you're in them, don't they?

But then you wake up and look at the clock and three minutes have passed. Or verse six, like grass that is renewed in the morning. In the morning, it flourishes and is renewed.

In the evening, it fades and withers. In a hotter climate, like the one that Moses was writing in, grass would come. It would be revived by the morning dew. But then the heat of the sun, it would just wither away from morning until evening.

[15 : 27] That is your life. It is over before you know it. And we love to pretend that's not true, don't we?

But if you stop and think for a moment, you know that is true. Look at your life from the day of your birth until now.

Honestly, how long has it felt? Gone, isn't it? And however much longer you think you might have left, that is going to pass just as quickly.

That is the length of our days. But for God, for God, verse 4, for God, a thousand years, a thousand years is like a day is for us.

Or even just a few hours in the night. We think, don't we, about how long ago Jesus walked the earth. Two thousand years ago. It's like unimaginably far in the past.

[16 : 50] Ancient history, isn't it? In God's timing, that was Friday. I think back to the day before, right, Thursday.

Thursday doesn't feel that long ago, does it? For God, that's when Moses wrote this psalm. So we are confronted, aren't we, with the brevity of our lives in complete contrast to the eternal God.

And maybe that makes us a little uncomfortable. But not nearly as uncomfortable as we will be when we dig a little deeper here.

Because did you notice, as we read through those verses, did you notice whose hand your life is in? Verse 3, God says, return to dust.

Verse 5, God sweeps us away with a flood. It is the everlasting God who shortens our days.

[18 : 05] We love, don't we, we love to think we're in control. That we can just kind of introduce a few healthy habits and add on a few years to our lives.

we love to think our lives are in our hands. But they are not. We love to pretend otherwise, but again, we know that, don't we?

We don't have to look very far to know that people's lives are cut cruelly short. Turn on the news, look around you, see countless tragic stories of people's lives cut cruelly short.

And you and I sitting here, we think, don't we, that'll never be us. But we think that, I think, only because we can't bear to think it might be us.

Our lives are not in our hands, they are in God's hands. But God does not callously cut down people in the prime of their lives.

[19 : 15] God brings an end to our days because we bring an end to our days. See how the psalm puts the two things together.

Verse five, you sweep them away. Verse nine, we bring our years to an end. Like a sigh. It just fades away.

It's a murmur. We bring our years to an end. And the answer to it all is in verse eight, isn't it? You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.

If you want to find the reason for the brevity of human life, look no further than sin. sin is the cause of our suffering.

Sin is the reason that our lives last only from morning until evening. We live our lives under God's wrath because we have brought his wrath upon ourselves.

[20 : 19] us. That is a sobering reality, isn't it? We were not made to be mortal, but we have brought mortality upon ourselves.

I think we maybe do need to kind of make a distinction here just for clarity's sake that there is not always a direct line between personal sin and personal suffering.

and early death is absolutely not a sign of a particularly sinful life. Jesus makes that point really clearly himself. But humanity's sin, our sin, is the cause of our suffering, our death.

From Genesis 3 onwards, all of our years have been cut short and we only have ourselves to blame. And so we can try, can't we, we can try with all our strength to stretch the span of our years.

Verse 10, the years of our life are 70, or even by reason of strength, 80. Yet their span is but toil and trouble and they are soon gone and fly away.

[21 : 42] What Moses says, you know, by strength, maybe 80. I mean, we could perhaps add a couple of decades on, advances in modern medicine and all the rest. I mean, we could get to 100 maybe, couldn't we, in our day and age?

But that's not really much progress. 3,000 years and we've added 20 years tops. Right?

In God's timing, we've added 20 minutes onto a two-hour long life. If we wanted to get to 1,000 years old, which would still only be a day in God's sight, we would have to keep going at the same rate of progress for 135,000 years.

And even if we did manage to stretch it that far, right, to a whole day in God's sight, 1,000 years, we would only actually be extending our misery.

What does it say at the end of verse 10 again? Yet their span is but toil and trouble.

[22 : 52] They are soon gone and we fly away. I'm not going to ask for a show of hands, but honestly, how many of you are really enjoying life right now?

Well, hopefully a few of you and we give thanks to God for that, but we know, don't we, that's not actually that normal.

How many of you actually just put a brave face on a Sunday but are broken inside? I know it's a lot of you and I know it's more than I know.

our lives are short and the few moments we do have are full of trouble.

Well, here's the two timeless truths so far. God is from everlasting to everlasting. Our lives are very, very, very short because we are sinners living under God's wrath.

[24 : 04] And here's the big question. Who is living in light of those two truths? Our brevity is a fearful thought, isn't it?

Death is waiting for us, for you and me. Unless Jesus returns soon, every one of us in here this evening is going to die.

There is a day coming much, much sooner than you'd like to think when there will be a six-foot hole in the ground and it will be you that is being lowered into it.

That is a scary thought, isn't it? And what do we so often do when we are afraid? You're watching TV and something, you know something really, really bad is about to happen.

What do you do? I don't want to see what happens next. We close our eyes, we look away. Our instinct, isn't it, when we know something bad is going to happen is to cover our eyes.

[25 : 29] Let me ask you, are you doing that with the day of your death? Verse 11, who considers the power of your anger?

Who considers the power of your anger and your wrath according to the fear of you? that question should really get under our skin. Who amongst us stops and thinks really what it means for sinners to fall into the hands of an angry God?

It's a scary picture and so we close our eyes and we can close our eyes but we cannot run away. It is coming whether you like it or not and so Moses doesn't he peels our eyes open so that we would see the danger we face.

It is sobering but it is what we need to hear because if we live with our heads buried in the sand pretending our days are long, pretending that death will never come, right, it kind of be like putting your finger in your ears when the doctor is telling you you have a terminal illness and there's a treatment you need to undergo.

It's there, isn't it, whether you want to hear it or not but if you do hear it, if you let Moses open your eyes, if we are willing to hear the diagnosis then we can begin to receive the right treatment.

[27 : 09] So let's turn now to our third and final point this evening. Our hope. I think at this point hope is what we need, isn't it?

Our hope from transient to eternal. In light of these two timeless truths, Moses turns to prayer and his prayer begins with a petition for wisdom.

Verse 12, so teach us to number our days. Teach us to number our days that we might gain a heart of wisdom. Moses is just praying that we might consider these things, think about what we've seen so far.

He tells us these hard realities of life not to lead us to despair but that we might seek God and gain an eternal perspective. That is what Moses wants for us.

that is what a heart of wisdom does. Wisdom is living with eternity in mind. And when we look to eternity and see the eternal God justly judging those who live in sin, when that is our perspective, we know, don't we, we know we need one thing more than anything else.

[28 : 31] verse 13, return, O Lord, relent, O Lord, show us mercy.

How long have pity on your servants? Lord, show us mercy. Moses cries out to the covenant Lord to have mercy on his people.

But he does not end there, does he? He goes on, satisfy us. Lord, satisfy us that we may rejoice and be glad for as many days as we've been afflicted. Give us purpose, show us your work, that the work of our hands might be established.

It is a prayer for God to relent and to provide. and it is a prayer that God would answer. It is a prayer that God has answered in his son, Jesus Christ.

In Jesus, we have been shown mercy. Our sins have been placed on his shoulders and carried to the cross of Calvary.

[29 : 53] If our hope is in Jesus, then we no longer live under the wrath of God. Our outer selves might continue to waste away, but our inner self is being renewed day by day.

We are fully satisfied in him and can rejoice in the Lord always, in every circumstance, even in our sorrow, not gleefully, but genuinely. not just for as many days as we were afflicted.

Moses prayed there, doesn't he, that we would be glad for as many years as we have seen evil. God is lavish in his generosity to his people. God gives us so much more than we ask for.

God in his son, Jesus, we are given hope, not just of another good 80 years to come, but an everlasting life to come in which there will be no toil or trouble.

None of it, forever and ever and ever and ever. God has, hasn't he, verse 16, God has made his power and work known to us in raising Jesus from the dead.

[31 : 09] We saw that in Ephesians wonderfully, didn't we? And because that is our hope, the work of our hand is established. As my Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15 that we can always be abounding in the work of the Lord knowing that in the Lord who looks to eternity our labor is not in vain.

If this life were it, all that we do would be pointless, wouldn't it? People talk of creating a legacy for who?

For what? Why? But if we live with eternity in mind then we can work for eternity. Mercy, satisfaction, purpose, all in Jesus Christ.

This prayer has been answered. And so fearfully short as our days in this life are, because of Jesus, us.

Because of Jesus, we not only pray the prayer that Moses prayed, we put our hope in the answer to Moses' prayer. But as we just kind of loop around back to where we began as we close up, I think it's helpful to remember, isn't it, when Moses prayed this prayer?

[32 : 48] It was answered in Jesus, it was prayed a thousand years before. A day in God's sight, a very, very, very long time for us.

So what does it mean not to lose sight of God's time? I think we can summarize it very simply as lift your eyes to eternity and so put your hope in Jesus.

Our lives are very short because we are sinners living under God's wrath. God is from everlasting to everlasting, everlasting, but our hope is in Jesus, that we who are transient, fleeting, brief, might now have the sure and certain hope of eternity.

To those of us who are given wisdom to number our days, we can put our hope in Jesus, the one in whom we have been shown mercy, the one who has satisfied our greatest needs and our deepest desires, the one who makes our work worthwhile, for we no longer live transient lives that will quickly fade away.

In Jesus Christ, however old you are, 20, 40, maybe 80, you are that many years into a life that will last forever.

[34 : 36] Let me just close by reading again for us those verses that Stefan read for us in 2 Corinthians 4. So we do not lose heart, though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day, for this light's momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison as we look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen, for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

well, in Jesus alone, in Jesus alone, we have a sure and certain hope beyond the short years of this life.

May that be the hope of every one of us, that we would number our days, look to eternity, and put your hope in Jesus.

Let us pray as we close together. Lord, you are from everlasting to everlasting, and Lord, because of our sin, we last but for a moment, but we come to you, the eternal God, with praise and thanks in our hearts, for we who deserve your wrath, you have shown mercy to in your son, Jesus Christ.

May he alone be our hope in life and death, that we would lift our eyes and look into eternity and so trust and hope in him, that we might have everlasting life in his name and be able to live to your glory, not only in the short days of this life, but forever more.

[36 : 50] In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.