

ABOUT TIME

PSALM 90:1-12

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, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

You turn man to destruction, and say, "Return, O children of men."

For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night.

You carry them away like a flood; they are like a sleep. In the morning they are like grass which grows up: In the morning it flourishes and grows up; in the evening it is cut down and withers.

For we have been consumed by Your anger, and by Your wrath we are terrified. You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your countenance. For all our days have passed away in Your wrath; we finish our years like a sigh.

The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knows the power of Your anger? For as the fear of You, so is Your wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

This morning I want to begin with a riddle...

Who can you tell me what I'm describing: "Some people save it... other people make it... most people waste it... some people kill it... and a few people are actually on it..." The riddle's answer is... *"TIME!"*

You might say our study today is *"About Time."*

Once, a businessman needed to be on time for an early morning appointment. Not knowing how congested the commute might be, he left hours early.

The traffic that day was lighter than usual, so he arrived for his appointment way ahead of schedule.

The businessman noticed a nearby park. He pulled his car up under a shade tree, and took a quick nap.

Before long he heard a tap on the window. It was a jogger. He rolled down the window. The jogger asked him, "Do you know the time?" He said, *"Sure it's 6:24."*

All was fine, until a few minutes later. Another jogger stopped to ask for the time. He answered, *"It's 6:32."*

The driver could tell from all the joggers in the park this was going to continue to be a problem, so he took a sheet of paper from his briefcase and made a sign to put in his window... *"Attention: I do not know the time!"*

Before long, he heard another tap on his window. It was another jogger! He angrily rolled down the window and snarled, *"What do ya want?"* The jogger pointed to his watch. *"I thought you would want to know it's 6:43."*

Can you tell time?

Don't look at your watch - that's not what I mean.

I know you can tell me the *specific* time, but I wonder if you're aware of the importance of time in *general* - the significance of this commodity we call "*time*?"

The preface to Psalm 90 tells us it was written by Moses. It was probably penned shortly before his death - at the end of Israel's forty years in the desert.

If so, this makes Psalm 90 the oldest of all the psalms. Next to Job, Psalm 90 is probably the oldest passage in the Bible. But there is no more *timely* a passage than this one. In fact, its message is *timeless*.

Psalm 90 teaches us about TIME.

And it emphasizes two truths: **First**, that time is a gift from God. It's an opportunity... And **second**, though time is an opportunity, it is a limited opportunity...

Verse 1, "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, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God."

Notice, God is "*from everlasting to everlasting.*" The Hebrew word "*everlasting*" means "*vanishing point.*" The Almighty God exists beyond the vanishing point.

Think back as far as your mind can stretch - as far in the past as your imagination can take you: *10 years, 10,000 years, 10 million years...* and God is there...

Think ahead until history's timeline fades into the distance, and again you'll find God. The God of the Bible was before the beginning. He'll be after the end.

The early church father, *Augustine of Hippo*, was the first Christian theologian to think of eternity not just as infinite time, but as a place outside of time.

Augustine reasoned that since time is an entity created by God along with the rest of creation - God was not *part of time*, but He was *separate from time*.

Augustine drew his observation from the Scriptures. Today, modern scientific theories have validated Augustine and the Bible. Moses, Augustine, and Albert Einstein's physics all see time as a physical property.

God exists outside of the dimension called time.

Often when we think of God's eternal nature we think of God as having *lots and lots of time*, but that's a limited picture. Rather than have lots of time; He dwells outside of time all together. God isn't bound by time.

This allows God to occupy the past, present, and future - at the same time. On Mount Sinai, when God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, He introduced Himself as "the I am" - not the "I was" or the "will be," but "I am Who I am." The true God is eternally present.

He dwells beyond the parameters of time. He occupies a different dimension. The Bible calls Him, the God "Who is, and Who was, and Who is to come."

To God time is not a long, linear progression. God doesn't occupy a dot on the timeline. He dwells in the past, in the present, and in the future simultaneously.

In Revelation 4 the skies open and John gets a peek into heaven - *and guess who is there? You are... if you're a*

follower of Jesus! John glimpses into the future, and sees all the saints from all the ages at God's throne praising the Lamb Who is also a Lion.

When Jesus raptures His Church, and takes us to heaven, He'll literally be taking us "Back to the Future." And He won't even need Doc Brown's DeLorean and the flux capacitor. Jesus is Lord over space and time.

Realize, time is not an issue for God. Time only matters to creatures like us who occupy the timeline.

Today, we dwell within time. But one day we'll cross from time to eternity, and join God in His timelessness.

Again Moses expresses the outcome of God's timeless nature in verse 3, "You turn man to destruction, and say, "Return, O children of men."

God ends epochs, concludes eras, and forges time periods. He authors the rise and fall of civilizations.

Like an orchestra conductor, God directs the course of history. He can stop a runaway society in its tracks and steer it in a new direction. As the psalmist quotes Him saying in verse 3, "Return, O children of men."

In fact, for God *history* is "His Story."

Verse 4, "For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night."

This was probably the verse that inspired the Apostle Peter. In 2 Peter 3:8, he writes, "with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day..." A timeless God sees time differently than we do. God's perspective isn't bound by time constraints.

To an eternal God time is relative... The psalmist says to God 1000 years is like a night watch - *a four hour shift* - 2000 years is nothing but *an 8 hour day*.

Which reminds me of the greedy fellow who read this verse. He prayed, "God, is it true, that to You a thousand years is as one second?" God said, "Yes."

"Then is it true, that to You a million dollars is as one penny?" God said, "Yes..." "Well, then, can I have just one penny?" God said, "*Sure, in just a second!*"

Think back a thousand years and all that's happened in our world... Around 1000 AD the first crusade was launched - the feudal system was at its zenith - the Chinese had just invented gunpowder and fireworks.

A thousand years ago was 300 years before the compass was invented - it was 400 years before the printing press, and 500 years before Columbus.

Think of all the advancements, and rulers, and discoveries, and trends over the last 1000 years. So much has happened, yet to God its all like yesterday.

No wonder our impatience has so little effect on God.

Here's the truth Moses wanted etched into our minds, **God is the builder of time, not its occupant.**

If God were *limited to time* or *captive by time* there would be an entity more powerful than the Almighty God. Certainly, God intervenes on earth in timely ways, and uses time as He chooses and for His purposes.

But God Himself dwells outside of time.

God created time. Genesis 1 implies this is one reason He created the celestial bodies - *the sun and moon and stars*. He said, “**Let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years...**” He created the heavenly bodies above us a means to measure time.

In fact, this notion that God created time is extremely provocative. Think this through... *if God created time, then the time we have on earth is a gift from Him... and if time is a gift from God, then it has a purpose... and if time has a purpose, then obviously, we're accountable to God for how we spend the precious time we have...*

Thus, time becomes an **opportunity**.

Actually, this is why God entered time - **when Jesus took on human flesh and God became a man the eternal Deity became a child of time**. In Jesus, the God who overflows all time and measurement became a man, and became bound by time. Think of it, for once in history, **the eternal God was on the clock**.

Apparently, there are opportunities only possible within the constraints of time. There are kingdom deeds that can only be accomplished within time.

This is why you and I are *children of time*.

Apparently, **“time” is the one time to accomplish works for God that can't be done at any other time**.

Eternity solidifies our choices. Nothing changes in eternity. Once you and I pass from time into eternity, we forfeit the possibility for change. In Dante's “*Inferno*” the author

inscribes the following words on the gates of hell, “Those who enter here abandon all hope!”

Realize, if you enter eternity apart from God, you will live forever isolated from God. But if you enter eternity with God, you’ll live forever in fellowship with God.

But time is the only opportunity we have to change our position - or help alter another person’s position.

Only in time can changes be made for God!

Psalm 90 teaches us that *time is an opportunity* - but it’s equally clear that **time is a limited opportunity.**

It’s a commodity we can’t waste. The remainder of Psalm 90 informs us that we don’t have much of this stuff called “*time.*” Moses writes of God in verse 5, “**You carry them away like a flood; they are like a sleep.**”

To God a thousand years is as a day. In contrast, human beings possess the longevity of a momentary rising tide, or a daydream. *Life is brief and temporary.*

According to verse 6 we grow up, we spend 12 hours in the sunshine, then we get mowed down by sunset.

Listen to Moses, “**In the morning it flourishes and grows up; in the evening it is cut down and withers.**”

That’s not even “**Here today and gone tomorrow**” - that’s, “***Here today... and gone... well, TODAY.***”

Once, when Billy Graham was asked by a reporter, “**What’s been the biggest surprise in your life?**” Without any hesitation at all, Billy replied, “**Its brevity.**”

In 2016, over 134.5 million babies joined the human race. The same year over 58 million people died and left time for eternity. *Notice the flow of people on and off our planet* - every ten seconds 43 babies are born, and every ten seconds 21 people die. That means every minute 256 people are born, and 126 people die.

That means during this morning's Bible Study over 10,000 people will be born, and over 5,000 will die...

Hey, if I go over my time this morning by just two minutes it means 252 more people are dead. *Hopefully, it's not me who sends them over the edge.*

Here's a startling statistic, out of every 113 people living on planet Earth right now, one will be dead this time next year. That means a handful of the folks in this room right now won't be alive and with us next year.

Yet why is it, *most of us are under the illusion we'll live forever, while all around us humans are coming and going at a furious pace?* We need to come to terms with reality! Time is **a limited opportunity.**

And according to verse 7, we should be careful how we spend our time. **"For we have been consumed by Your anger, and by Your wrath we are terrified. You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your countenance. For all our days have passed away in Your wrath; we finish our years like a sigh."** Listen to verse 9 in the Old KJV, **"All our days are passed away in Thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told."** A life without Jesus is like a re-run...

At its end, if you lived without Christ; then your life was no different than anyone else's... Your *secret sins* were *common sins*. The culmination of your life produced barely *"a sigh."* You lived and died, and cause only a yawn... **A God-less life is a wasted life.**

Moses adds in verse 10, *"The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."* Apparently, Moses is quoting life expectancy rates in the 15th century BC - roughly 3500 years ago. And surprisingly not much has changed between then and now.

According to the World Health Organization the average human lifespan in 2016 was **72.0** years old.

Obviously, the life expectancy is higher in North America and lower in sub-Saharan Africa, but 72.0 is the average human lifespan. That means 3500 years of medical research has bought us an extra two years.

That's why in verse 10 Moses is pretty blunt.

He's saying, you might reach age 70 - and if you stay healthy - you could top out at 80. But every life *"is soon cut off, and we fly away."* Compared to eternity our lifespan is like the steam off a football player's head.

Several years ago the oldest person on earth was a woman in Arles, France named Jeanne Clament.

On her 120th birthday she was asked, *"What kind of future do you expect?"* She replied, *"A short one."*

And she spoke for us all... Life is short.

Another older lady was asked about her plans for the future, she responded, “Honey, at my age I don’t even buy green bananas.” She’s living with the truth.

Think of a 70 year lifespan as a 16 hour day... from 8 AM to midnight... If you’re 16 years old and getting your driver’s license it’s already 11:40 AM, midday...

If you’re 20 it’s past noon - you’re half-way through your lunch hour, it’s 12:35... At 30, it’s 2:52, the middle of the afternoon. You’re starting to plan for the evening... At 40, it’s past quitting time, its 5:10. You’re heading home.... At 50 years old, you’ve just finished watching the nightly news, it’s now 7:27 at night...

At 60, the kids are in bed, and you’re winding down. Get a glass of milk. It’s now 9:45 PM... And at 70, it’s over, baby. The clock has already struck midnight...

To borrow from a soccer analogy, if you’re over 70, the clock on the field is reading stoppage time. Put in a more common way, you’re living on borrowed time.

I hope you get my *drift*... you’re life is *drifting* away!

And there’s nothing you can do about.

There’s no pause button on time. Everyday, you are given 24 hours, or 1,440 minutes, or 86,400 seconds, and once they’re gone - they are forever gone. Unlike cell phone usage, there are NO roll-over minutes.

As the old saying goes, “Time Flies.” Time is an opportunity that doesn’t last forever. And here’s the question, *are we taking advantage of our opportunity?*

Every person in this room has been given the exact same amount of time. God is an equal opportunity dispenser of opportunity. With each new day He deposits 86,400 seconds in every human's account.

It's been said, "Our days are identical suitcases, all are the same size, but some people can pack more in their suitcase." *How good of a packer are you?*

In verse 11 Moses asks God, "Who knows the power of Your anger? For as the fear of You, so is Your wrath." Each one of us should fear God. He holds us accountable for the gifts He's given us - *including time.*

Verse 12 is the key verse in Psalm 90. Moses sums up his thoughts on time, "So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." Here's the question: *How do you take advantage of time?* And here's Moses' answer, "***learn to number your days.***"

To understand what Moses means, *notice what he doesn't mean...* He's NOT expecting us to get out our calculator, and literally try to add up our days.

There are life expectancy calculators on the internet that take in various personal factors, and try to predict how long you'll live. But they're unreliable. A Mack truck on your way home can trump all the other criteria.

The truth is, no one knows the day of their death.

Purchase a tombstone in advance, and immediately they'll engrave your *date of birth*, but the *date of death* is yet to be determined. No one knows when their time is over. You never know when your number is up!

What Moses means in verse 12 requires more than good arithmetic. The Hebrew word translated “*to number*” means “*to weigh*.” But not to weigh in a casual manner - or to weigh simply for curiosity’s sake. It’s to assign an official weight, or register an exact count.

“*To number your days*” is to understand their weight and importance... to get a feel for their heaviness...

A lot gets wrapped up in this word “*to number*.”

“*To number our days*” implies three vital truths: **First, I need to be an observer of time. Second, I am an owner of time.** And **Third, I am an organizer of time.** Let’s tackle each point in *the short time* we have left...

First, “*to number*” my days is to realize **I am an observer of time.** Even today, when a General numbers his troops they’re paraded in front of the grandstand as he inspects them for their readiness.

The point isn’t just to tally their number, but to take an inventory of their preparedness, and usefulness, and effectiveness. *Is the army ready to be deployed?*

And this is how we should observe time.

On a regular basis we need to inspect our usage of the time we’ve been given. Take an inventory of how you treat your time. The Living Bible renders verse 12, “**Teach us to number our days and recognize how few they are; help us to spend them as we should.**”

Here’s another exercise to get you to think...

If you live to be 70 years old, and throughout your working life you put in 5 days a week, 8 hours a day on the job - you sleep 8 hours each night - travel about 1 hour each day - spend 2 hours eating - and an hour everyday on grooming and hygiene... then here's the discretionary time you've got left to live as you please:

If you're **20**, you've got about 13 years left to invest in non-mandatory life activities... If you're **35** years old you've got just 9 years of *your* life left... If you're **45** you've got only 6.5 years to live as you please... If you're **55** you are down to 4 years... And if you're **65** years old you've got a little less than 16 months left to spend your life as you see fit... and if you're **70**, well all you need is a second hand to measure what's left...

I would say none of us have any time to waste!

This means I need to become an observer of how I spend my time... **Minutes, hours, days - get gobbled up in the strangest ways...** If you live to be 70, and sleep 8 hours a night, you'll spend 20 years asleep.

Believe it or not, the average person will spend 7 years of their life lying in their bed trying to get to sleep.

But this means one less hour of sleep each night will add 2½ years to your life - *if you can stay awake*. My point is to be watchful and careful how you spend time!

Over the course of a lifetime **the average person spends 5 months tying shoelaces, men spend four months shaving, women spend a-year-and-a-half styling their hair, we all spend 3 years of our life waiting in line, 4 years on the phone,**

5 years getting dressed, as much as 1 year deciding what to wear. And the average person spends 11 years watching television.

And here's the most sobering statistic...

Say you come to church once a week, and pray just five minutes a day - over a lifetime, you will have spent a mere ten months worshipping God. *Eleven years in front of the TV, and ten months before the throne of God?* I would say, there's something wrong here!

Think about how you spend your time...

Second, *"to number"* my days is to realize **I am an owner of time**. In antiquity *numbering* implied ownership. A man had no reason to count a neighbor's sheep. You numbered only what belonged to you.

I think it's healthy to think of ourselves as the owner of our time. Obviously, all things belong to God. Each day is a gift from God to us, and God holds me accountable for how I use it - but while that time is in my possession I ultimately determine how it gets spent.

And I'm not about to let someone steal my time!

Carl Riblet writes, **"There are four kinds of thieves - the love thief, the embezzler, the base runner safe at second, and the thief who steals your time.**

The latter is the worst thief because, while love can be replaced, stolen gains repaid, and the base runner put out at third - time can never be renewed."

It's true, "time flies," but it's equally true that I am its pilot. It's up to me to steer how my time gets spent.

Don't let the enemy steal your time! Every week God entrusts you with 7 days of 24 hours each - and it's our job to use His gift strategically. Listen to verse 12 in the CEV, "Teach us to use wisely all the time we have."

You are an owner of your time - but do you invest it in worthwhile activities, or do you throw it away on frivolous pursuits? How well do we guard our time?

Listen to this short jingle, "Just a tiny little minute, sixty seconds in it; forced upon me; did not ask it, did not choose it. Yet, it's up to me to use it; and give account if I abuse it. Just a little minute..."

You can do nothing about yesterday. Tomorrow may never come. But **you** are the owner of today. Today is God's gift to you. That's why we call it "**the present.**"

The question, *how will we use what we own?*

And third, "*to number*" my days is to realize **I am an organizer of time.** When a General numbers his army it's usually to arrange the troops in some rank or order.

Usually, efforts to organize require us to number.

You could translate the phrase, "*to number my days*" as "**to organize my time.**" That's how the New English Version renders verse 12, "Teach us to order our days rightly, that we may enter the gate of wisdom."

When I was a teenager Jim Croce sang a song, "**If I could put time in a bottle.**" But no one can bottle up time. *With time*

you either use it, or lose it... There's no resurrection for time. Kill it... and it's gone forever.

This is why Paul tells us in Ephesians 5:16 “redeem the time.” We need to make every second count for God's kingdom, His glory, and the good of others.

It may surprise you, but next to prayer and your Bible, your calendar may be your most important spiritual weapon. There's an old saying, “If you don't plan your time, the devil will.” That's true. The enemy can monopolize *your time* with *worthless pastimes*.

He'll distract you with *evil things...* even with *good things...* in fact, he'll use *anything* to keep you from the *most important thing...* which is obeying the Lord!

There's was a popular tract that was published by Campus Crusade, that Christians used for years to share the Gospel. It's called “*The Four Spiritual Laws.*”

Law One in the booklet states, “God loves me and has a wonderful plan for my life.” But I've found Law One for a pastor can read a little differently, “God loves me... and people have a wonderful plan for my life.”

Everyone has expectations of how a pastor should and shouldn't spend his time. That's why it's vital I get my priorities and schedule from God... *And it's no different for any of us!* If you don't prioritize your time there are people in your life who will prioritize it for you.

That's why we need to be the organizer of our time.

Why not start each day with a plan for how you'll use your time? Surely, we'll run into situations that disrupt our plans. There'll be days when God has other plans.

We need to be flexible, *but if we don't begin with a plan, precious time will end up wasted and lost forever.*

And the biggest loss of time is not in hours and days, but in minutes. We waste whole hours, by not planning our minutes... Think of it this way, a bucket with a tiny hole in the bottom gets as empty as the bucket that's deliberately kicked over. It just empties drop by drop.

This is the way it is with time. Plan to utilize the 10 minutes here, or 15 minutes there - the time you wait in the Chick fil-A drive-through, or at the doctor's office.

In the long run, good planning will accumulate time.

Consider this, *fifteen extra minutes a day over a year adds up to eleven full work days, or an extra two week vacation...* Benjamin Franklin once said, **"If you love life, do not squander time - for that is the stuff life is made of."** Be an organizer of the time you're given.

When a man named Jarvis Anderson read Psalm 90:10, he focused on this lifespan, **"seventy years."**

Anderson then penned a poem about his own life... **"The question comes: How long is life? Seventy years, the Good Book reads; is time enough for men to write the record of their deeds. Seventy years - how fast they fly! Seventy years - they're almost gone! And I, who dreamed of castles high, have only laid the cornerstone."** What a sad line, **"And I, who dreamed of castles high, have only laid the cornerstone."**

Time is a gift from God, but a gift that's limited. It's a door of opportunity that one day slams shut on us all.

Yet today, right now, time is our opportunity! Use it wisely!
**Be an observer of your time. Take ownership of your time.
Look for ways to organize your time.**

Don't get to the end of your *"seventy or eighty years,"* if you make it that far - and regret the time you wasted..... With Moses, let's all pray, *"So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."*

Don't you think it's *about time!*