



“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom,” Psalm 90:12.

The Stewardship of Time

Central Truth: All time comes from God and should be used to honor Him.

L154. Date: August 1986. **Text:** Psalm 90:1-12. **Topic:** Stewardship.

Here is one of the most beautiful of the Psalms. It is a sad and stately expression of man's mortality and God's immortality. “It preaches man's mortality in immortal words” (Alexander Maclaren).

Here is one of the most original of the Psalms. It does not borrow expressions from any other psalm — not even in one single sentence; that is a surprising fact in comparison to other psalms in the Psalter.

Here is one of the most ancient of the Psalms. Its heading, “A Prayer of Moses, the man of God,” is probably a true statement of its authorship. (Compare Deuteronomy 33:1 and Joshua 14:6.) It relates to other parts of Moses' writings. Compare verse 1 with Deuteronomy 33:27; verse 2 with Deuteronomy 33:15 and 32:18; verse 3 with Genesis 3:19; verses 7-12 with Genesis 3; and notice the repetition of “*LORD*” for the name of God as in Exodus 15:17 and Deuteronomy 3:24.

Here is an impressive psalm. Interpret these verses in the light of the multiplied funerals Israel had during her forty years of wilderness wanderings. No wonder Moses wrote, “*Thou turnest man to destruction. . . . All our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told*” (verses 3, 9). What a text from which to study “The Stewardship of Time.” Let us pray, “*Teach us to number our days*” (verse 12).

I. THE MASTER OF TIME (Psalm 90:1, 2)

A. The master of time is the LORD (verse 1). Notice the solid capitals in spelling “*LORD*.” That indicates that His name in Hebrew is the covenant

name for God. It is He who loves us and redeems us. *"The LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else"* (Deuteronomy 4:39). Let us fall upon our faces saying, *"The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God"* (I Kings 18:39).

B. The master of time is our refuge. *"Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations"* (verse 1). Since He is *"our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble,"* we will not fear whatever comes (Psalm 46:1). Since He is our refuge, we are confident that *"underneath are the everlasting arms"* (Deuteronomy 33:27). It is safe to trust a God like Him.

C. The master of time existed before the world began (verse 2). He is God *"from everlasting to everlasting,"* the eternal one. From the most ancient past (eternity before time began) to the most remote future (eternity beyond time), He was and shall ever be the sovereign God. *"Thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end"* (Psalm 102:27). He is the unchanging God (Malachi 3:6).

D. The master of time is the Creator of all. He *"formed the earth and the world"* (verse 2). Read the detailed account in Genesis 1, 2. *"Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee"* (Nehemiah 9:6). As Creator and owner of all, He controls time as well.

E. The master of time is God. *"Thou art God"* (verse 2). As *"LORD"* refers to the one who loves and redeems, *"God"* refers to *"the mighty one"* who rules in sovereignty over all.

We stand in awe before such a person. He is LORD. He is our refuge. He was God before the world began. He is the Creator of all that exists. He is eternal, unchanged by the changing circumstances in time. He is God. To Him each must say, *"My times are in thy hand"* (Psalm 31:15). It gives one a great sense of assurance to say that in faith. God is in control of each of us.

II. THE CREATURES OF TIME (Psalm 90:3-11)

Man is a creature of time. He began in time and will end his earthly life in time. He is subject to the changes of time, growing older and suffering change. Psalm 90:3-11 mentions four obvious truths about man as a creature of time.

A. Man is a mortal creature of time. He came from the earth and he will return to the earth (verse 3; Genesis 3:19). He dwells in a house of clay here and his foundation is in the dust (Job 4:19). God can but speak the word and man perishes before Him (Psalm 90:3). It is wise for such a limited,

weak, and temporary creature to use his time wisely while here.

B. Man is temporal, a creature of limited time (verses 4-6). God looks on a thousand years and is as unchanged by them as by a single day (verse 4). Man barely manages to survive on earth for seventy years; but if he lives a little longer, it is only to suffer and still be cut off from his fellows here (verse 10). Our whole life is like *“a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again”* (Psalm 78:39). We are as a mist which appears for a little while in the morning but is soon taken away by the sun (James 4:13-15). Our days are as a shadow which grows shorter and shorter as the sun rises (Psalm 102:11).

Man is a limited person with a limited time. How wise he should be in the use of his allotted time here!

C. Man is sinful during his time (verses 7-9). More serious is the truth that God knows each of our sins. If He should judge our iniquities in full justice now, not one of us would stand (Psalm 130:3). There is no man who does good and does not sin (I Kings 8:46).

Man's sins are deadly serious. *“We have turned everyone to his own way”* (Isaiah 53:6). What a tragedy! The brief time we have here is spent in sin for which God will surely judge us. How we need wisdom!

D. Man is limited in his time on earth (verse 10). A normal lifetime is approximately seventy years. It may be shorter or a little longer, but man has no control over that. However long one may live he can say, *“My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle”* (Job 7:6).

If man's days seem short to him, how must they appear to God? *“Thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity”* (Psalm 39:5).

Does that sound a little pessimistic and depressing? It should. That is what man's situation is on earth. What hope can he have in himself, since he is so limited here? What hope can he find in his fellows, since they are as limited as he? What recourse does man have? He can turn to God!

III. THE USE OF TIME (Psalm 90:12)

“Teach us to number our days, we may apply our hearts unto that wisdom” (Psalm 90:12)

What does it mean to *“number our days”*? It means to count every passing day, to interpret aright our existence, to use our days here to their most profitable advantage.

We must not presume upon our time, as if we had forever. We must not

abuse our time, as if we were not accountable. We must not neglect our time, as if it were unlimited.

We must use wisdom in the investment of our time. What one does with his time, he is doing with his life. If an employee agrees to work for ten dollars an hour, he trades one hour of his life for each ten dollars he receives. If he purchases an item that costs fifty dollars, he trades five hours of his life for the item he purchased. It is important that time be invested, not merely endured, as we move toward our appointment with God in eternity.

Make your time count. Selfish living is a waste of time which has priceless value. Serving people in the name of God is an investment which will bring dividends beyond our wildest imagination.

There is something tragically wrong in our world. Let us recognize the problem and resort to God as the only dwelling place in this stormy existence. We who are so temporary can find our permanence only in Him who is immutable.

“O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. . . . Let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it” (Psalm 90:14, 17).

Be wise in your use of time. You will account to God for your stewardship of it.

Questions

1. What is time?
2. In what sense is time a gift from God?
3. How is God our *“dwelling place in all generations”*?
4. What is meant by the expression, *“from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God”*?
5. What does Nehemiah 9:6 teach about God and time?
6. What does Psalm 31:15 mean to you?
7. Why do we say that man is a creature of time?
8. What does Psalm 90:12 mean to you?
9. How can you make best use of your time this week?
10. How are you encouraged by Psalm 90:14, 17?