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Psalm 90¹
New Year's Eve
Free Text, Old Testament
"LORD, teach us to number our days" &
"Lord, You Have Always Been
Our Dwelling Place"
New Year's Eve
Eisenach Selection for New Year's Day
(*Sermon Texts*, Ernst H. Wendland, editor,
Milwaukee WI, NPH, 1984, p. 11)

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Grace WELS Durand MI
7 p.m., Tuesday,
December 31, 2013

BOOK IV Psalms 90-106 Psalm 90 A prayer of Moses the man of God.

- ¹ Lord, you have been our dwelling place
throughout all generations.
- ² Before the mountains were born
or you brought forth the earth
and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting
you are God.
- ³ You turn men back to dust,
saying, "Return to dust,
O sons of men."
- ⁴ For a thousand years in your sight
are like a day that has just gone by,
or like a watch in the night.
- ⁵ You sweep men away
in the sleep [of death];
they are like the new grass
of the morning—
- ⁶ though in the morning it springs up new,
by evening it is dry and withered.
- ⁷ We are consumed by your anger
and terrified by your wrath.
- ⁸ You have set our iniquities before you,
our secret sins
in the light of your presence.
- ⁹ All our days pass away
under your wrath;
we finish our years with a moan.
- ¹⁰ The length of our days is seventy
years—
or eighty, if we have the strength;
yet their span is but trouble and sorrow,
for they quickly pass, and we fly away.
- ¹¹ Who knows the power of your anger?
For your wrath is as great as the fear
that is due you.
- ¹² Teach us to number our days aright,
that we may gain a heart of wisdom.
- ¹³ Relent, O LORD! How long will it be?
Have compassion on your servants.
- ¹⁴ Satisfy us in the morning
with your unfailing love,
that we may sing for joy
and be glad all our days.
- ¹⁵ Make us glad for as many days
as you have afflicted us,
for as many years
as we have seen trouble.
- ¹⁶ May your deeds be shown
to your servants,
your splendor be shown
to their children.
- ¹⁷ May the favor of the Lord our God
rest upon us;
establish the work
of our hands for us—

¹ *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984.
All Scripture references are taken from this translation unless noted otherwise.

yes, establish the work of our hands.

THE LORD IS OUR DWELLING PLACE
I. WE CANNOT ENTER WITH OUR SINS
II. WE ENTER ONLY BY HIS GRACE

In the Name of Jesus our Savior, who is “the same yesterday and today and forever,” Dear Fellow-Redeemed,

It is obvious why Psalm 90 is so often used at the end of the year. Psalm 90 speaks of the brevity of life on earth. It speaks of the length of the existence of the earth and of eternity, but compared to the world as well as to eternity, man’s life on earth is short. Why? The reason is sin.

Sin is the reason that man’s life on earth is short. A person dies because he or she is a sinner. Psalm 90 makes this clear. At the same time, Psalm 90 also provides hope for believers in Jesus.

Psalm 90 provides hope for believers in Jesus. That hope is expressed in the first line of the Psalm: “Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations” (90:1). The Lord is the dwelling place for believers in Jesus. Thus, we examine the words of the Psalmist: THE LORD IS OUR DWELLING PLACE; I. WE CANNOT ENTER WITH OUR SINS; but, II. WE ENTER ONLY BY HIS GRACE.

THE LORD IS OUR DWELLING PLACE
I. WE CANNOT ENTER WITH OUR SINS

The result of sin is death, not only physical death but also eternal death. The Psalmist writes,

**⁷ We are consumed by your anger
and terrified by your wrath.
⁸ You have set our iniquities before you,
our secret sins in the light of your presence.
⁹ All our days pass away under your wrath;
we finish our years with a moan (90:7-9)**

Sin results in death. God knows sin, and he knows sinners. Each person’s iniquities, sin, transgressions, trespasses – each person’s secret sins – are seen by God. “Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight” (Hebrews 4:13a). God sees our sins and is justly angered because of them.

The Psalmist expresses God’s anger with sin and sinners in words like “indignation,” “wrath,” “anger.” Mankind is consumed – devoured – by God’s anger. Yet, the Psalmist also states: “Who knows the power of your anger? For your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you” (90:11). Death is only a symptom of God’s wrath and anger and fury. The Bible pictures God’s eternal wrath, and yet those pictures do not adequately describe it.

The Bible provides pictures of God's eternal wrath as a place of outer darkness and of fiery torment where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 13:42,50; 25:30). The Bible pictures God's wrath as a burning lake of sulfur into which unbelievers along with the devil, his demons and cohorts, and the Antichrist, are thrown, and where they suffer forever (cf. Revelation 19:10-15; 21:8). Yet, even these words inadequately describe God's wrath against sinners. But these descriptions do allow us to understand why man's life is so short and sorrowful.

The Psalmist writes, "The length of our days is seventy years—or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away" (90:10). Compared to the centuries of the existence of the earth and the universe, mankind's time is short. And the extent of mankind's time on earth is full of toil, trouble, sorrow, turmoil, tribulation, problems, disappointments and anxieties. All of these things mount up to warn mankind of coming death and disaster. And death does come.

Death comes to all mankind. The Psalmist says, "You turn men back to dust, saying, 'Return to dust, O sons of men'" (90:3). Here is the curse that came upon Adam and Eve when they sinned in the Garden of Eden. God told them, "dust you are and to dust you will return" (Genesis 3:19b). This curse comes upon all.

So Moses states the case, the reality, for mankind on this earth, and for us. He says,

**⁴ For a thousand years in your sight
are like a day that has just gone by,
or like a watch in the night.
⁵ You sweep men away in the sleep of death;
they are like the new grass of the morning—
⁶ though in the morning it springs up new,
by evening it is dry and withered (90:4-6).**

So it is with mankind. So it is with you ... with me.

APPROPRIATION

Since you and I are sinful, we cannot come into the presence of a holy, righteous and perfect God. Thus, death is the destiny of us all. Death is the destiny of us all because of sin. St. Paul writes to the Romans, "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23a). Again, Paul states, "sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12). If you know someone who is so bold and arrogant as to say that he is not a sinner or that he no longer sins, then follow up with the question, "Are you going to die someday?" The answer has to be an obvious, "Yes." "Then you are a sinner, for sinners must die." As we gaze out at the cemetery; as we visit the funeral home; as we look into the coffin; let no one say: "Grandma looks good"; or, "Grandpa is out of pain now"; or, "Dad looks at peace." No! No! No! When you look into the coffin you are looking at the result of sin – death. Moreover, death is followed by a short time of remembrance.

Solomon writes in the Book of Ecclesiastes, “The wise man, like the fool, will not be long remembered; in days to come both will be forgotten” (Ecclesiastes 2:16). You may go to the cemetery on occasion to visit the grave of dad or mom, grandpa or grandma, but how long do you think their graves will be visited? Ten years from now? Fifty years? A hundred years? Look around at the other stones in the cemetery. Do you know any of the names there? Who were they? What they did? What they accomplished? There is no memory of them. There will be no memory of you either. In a couple or three generations, a century from now, you and I too will be forgotten. But the worst is yet to come.

Moses wrote, “All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan” (90:9). We finish our years on earth with a moan, a sigh. In addition, Moses says to you and to me, “Who knows the power of [God’s] anger? For [God’s] wrath is as great as the fear that is due [him]” (90:11). You do not want to know the power of God’s anger, for his anger is that of an eternal separation from him in hell. The fact that you and I have a glimpse of his anger through the pages of the Bible, creates in our hearts fear of God because we are sinners and deserve his eternal wrath. So what hope is there for you and for me during this miserably short and toilsome life?

What hope is there for you and for me during this short and toilsome life? We find the answer to that question in verses of Psalm 90.

THE LORD IS OUR DWELLING PLACE
I. WE CANNOT ENTER WITH OUR SINS
II. WE ENTER ONLY BY HIS GRACE

Moses writes, “Relent, O LORD! How long will it be? Have compassion on your servants” (90:13). We take note of the fact that this is the only place in Psalm 90 where Moses uses the word for God “LORD” spelled in all capital letters. Moses is appealing to the God of free and faithful grace. Moses is appealing to the God who loves people who really deserve his punishment. Moses is referring to the God of mercy, consolation, compassion, comfort, forgiveness – the God of all grace. Moses prays on.

Moses continues his appeal to this LORD God by saying, “Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailling love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days” (90:14). There is no singing for joy and no gladness in the days of mankind as he faces the certainty of death and an eternity of torment. But God can change that. Moses continues, “Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, for as many years as we have seen trouble” (90:15). For how many “days” does Moses want the LORD God to make him glad? “For as many days as [the LORD God] afflicted us” – for that many days and more! But how does God do that? Moses has the answer for that question too.

Moses writes, “May your deeds be shown to your servants, your splendor to their children” (90:16). “LORD God, make your deeds, your works, known to your servants, your people.” God does this through the Scriptures.

God makes his greatest deed known through the Bible. While mankind finishes his years on earth with a moan and a sigh, God's Son, Jesus, finished his time on earth with a shout: "It is finished!" (John 19:30). The death and punishment for the sins of the world, for which Jesus was suffering on the cross, ended with a shout of victory – "It is finished!" Sins removed! Iniquities covered! Trespasses washed away in the blood of the Lamb! And, here is the heart of the wisdom to which believers want to apply themselves.

Moses says, "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom" (90:12). The "wisdom" about which Moses is speaking is not the wisdom of this world but the wisdom that makes us "wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15). That is true wisdom. The wisdom that gives eternal life is the Gospel! Through the Gospel, the Holy Spirit works to bring a person to faith in Jesus. Through that faith in Jesus, a person has eternal life. Moreover, the proclamation of the Gospel is to be the work that is done by believers.

Moses concludes Psalm 90 with the words, "May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands for us—yes, establish the work of our hands" (90:17). To what work is Moses referring? Not the work that is too soon forgotten as generations pass away. Not the accomplishments of mankind in this world. But the work that is established and never passes away is the work of the Gospel – bringing people to faith in Jesus and keeping them in that faith. For it is only through that work of proclaiming the Gospel that a person is brought to faith in Jesus and has God as his dwelling place to all generations – into all eternity.

APPROPRIATION

Moses gives us a realistic look at life. You are fooling yourself if you think your existence on this earth is going to last forever. Sixty, seventy, eighty, ninety years – maybe less – then death. Your existence on this earth and in this time is meaningless. "[You] lie forgotten as a dream dies at the opening of day." But only God's grace endures, and you are recipients of that grace of God – the grace of God in Jesus Christ your Savior.

Through your LORD Jesus, you have an eternity of days waiting for you. Through Jesus, you have God's compassion, consolation, comfort, mercy and forgiveness. Through Jesus, you have God's grace. Do not hold to this life, but hold on to eternal life through faith alone in Jesus. In addition, share that same eternal life with others.

Recall Moses asking for God to "establish the work of our hands for us—yes, establish the work of our hands"? (90:17). Your work in and for this world will not long be remembered. Your accomplishments, no matter how great during this time, will be forgotten. But the work you do in the Kingdom of God will have lasting effects.

The work you do for the Kingdom of God has lasting effects. That does not mean that you should all now want to be pastors and teachers or elders or church council members. No. But through father's mouth and at mother's knee, there are little ones to teach about Jesus their Savior. Grandma and grandpa can tell succeeding generations of their

offspring of the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD – especially about the Savior Jesus. Here is where wisdom is imparted to the next generation – the wisdom of God's Word and grace and salvation in Jesus. Through this wisdom of God's Word, this Gospel, you and your offspring have God the Lord as your eternal dwelling place.

CONCLUSION

The Lord is our eternal dwelling place. We do not dwell with the Lord in our sinful condition. We pass away to dust; we pass into oblivion regarding our earthly existence. On this earth, everything is meaningless – except the Gospel – the Wisdom of God.

Through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the true Wisdom of God, you have a place in heaven – you dwell with the Lord forever. This is all yours by faith in Jesus. A faith that you will also be eager to share with others. Amen.