

## The Saint and His God – Psalm 90 1-17

### Introduction:

- A. I am currently reading a book which explains some of the differences between Islam and Christianity.
  - 1. It was written by a couple of converted Muslims, who travel across America, teaching about ways in which to witness to those who worship Allah.
  - 2. One of the things the authors point out is that Allah is not a “*personable God*” as is Jehovah.
  - 3. Muslims can’t “*know*” God the way in we can. They don’t speak of God as a friend or friendly.
  - 4. They aren’t “*loved*” by Allah, and they don’t love Him as we love our God.
  - 5. They write, “*No devout Muslim can call the God of Muhammad ‘Father,’ for this would compromise divine transcendence.*”
  - 6. I don’t know how Muslims explain **Ps. 90**, because Moses expresses a very personal relationship with God.
  - 7. And by the way, Islam accepts the **Psalms**, much of the **Old Testament** and even the **Gospels** as the Word of God, before, as they say, the Jews and Christians corrupted them with lies.
- B. **Psalm 90** reveals some of the relationship between God and mankind.
  - 1. Let’s have a simple Bible study this evening, before we go to prayer.
  - 2. There is no three point outline. There is no objective to which I am trying teach.
  - 3. This Psalm, with several important verses, is a blessing to me, and I hope that it will be to you.
  - 4. It expresses a very special connection – a bond – between God and us, through Moses and Israel.
- C. As I look at these verse and intellectually squint just a little, it appears to be like a hammock.
  - 1. Verses 1 and 17 appear to be hooked to eternity and the eternal God.
  - 2. But the rest of the fifteen verses hang down; some of them even scraping the ground.
  - 3. You and I hang in those verses – whether as saints of God or as children of Satan.

### II. First let’s consider those **TWO HOOKS** upon which this hammock hangs.

- A. “*Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.*”
  - 1. *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.*”
  - 2. “*And 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.*”
- B. Let’s not forget the context of these words.
  - 1. Moses, who died in the wilderness not long after putting down his pen, was leading Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land.
  - 2. They were dwelling in tents; they had no permanent home, moving from camp to camp – cemetery to cemetery.
  - 3. I picture this as coming near the end of those 40 years of wandering. Moses was an aged man.
  - 4. He was spiritual enough to see and declare, “*Our dwelling place is in thee.*”
  - 5. No matter where God’s people go in this world, and no matter what they endure, they are in their Saviour.
  - 6. “*For in him we live, and move, and have our being*” – **Acts 17:28**.
  - 7. Christians may spend time in courts, jails and prisons – hospitals and asylums – at work & in workhouses, but at the same time – “*Adonai, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.*”
- C. **Verse 2** supplies us with a double hitch from which to hang our hammock.
  - 1. It is one of the great scriptures of this Psalm – in fact, it is one of the greatest doctrinal statements about the eminence and omnipotence of God.
  - 2. “*Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.*”
  - 3. This Almighty God, who has always been, and who created the world out of nothing, is the cosy home in which the saint has always dwelt.

- D. At the end of his Psalm Moses says, *“Let the beauty of Jehovah, our Elohim, be upon us.”*
1. It’s interesting that Moses uses the Old Testament’s three most prominent names for God, and *“Allah”* is not one of them.
  2. It seems that he first looks back toward eternity past and then towards the future.
  3. At first there is nothing but God, and perhaps the saint is hidden in the eternal decree of the Lord, and then eventually there are those heavenly mansions basking in the sunshine of God’s love throughout eternity.
  4. Moses says, *“Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.”*
  5. Wouldn’t that be the beauty of holiness? *Psalm 29:2* and *Psalm 96:9*.
  6. All other kinds of beauty are vain. *Proverbs 31:30*.
  7. Moses sees his sinfulness, our sinfulness, and pleads with the Lord for the righteousness of the Saviour.

### III. Strung between those verses we see the **NECESSITY** and then the **APPLICATION** of God’s **GRACE**.

- A. *“Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.”*
1. The Hebrew word *“destruction”* is rooted in the idea of **crushed to powder** or **dust**.
  2. That takes me to *Genesis 3:19* and God’s promise to Adam – because of your sin, *“in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”*
  3. But when Moses says *“return”* does he speak about **returning to dust** or **repenting** toward God?
  4. It’s probably returning to God, but either one makes sense.
  5. We notice that Moses doesn’t actually define sin or describe man’s separation from God, or the death which sin caused, but he shouldn’t need to.
  6. As writing to God’s people, they should know, *“wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”* – *Romans 5:12*.
- B. And compared to the God who is *“from everlasting to everlasting,”* what is man that God should be mindful unto him?
1. *“For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.”*
  2. How much can you remember from the last 3 or 4 hours in your life? Since 4:00 today?
  3. A watch in the night lasted either 3 or 4 hours, and usually 3 hours of in the middle of night contain very little excitement.
  4. With the eternal God, a millennium of time is more easily remembered as your last 3 hours.
    - a. It is often said *“one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day”* – *II Peter 3:8*.
    - b. But here we are told that a single watch in the night is as a thousand years to God.
    - c. Essentially, these scriptures tell us that God is not limited by time – but we certainly are.
- C. *“Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.”*
1. The curse caused by sin is like a flood which sweeps away a village full of people.
  2. Bartlesville, Kentucky, just the other day was flooded with several feet of water by a rain storm.
  3. The curse is like the fall of Turtle Mountain above the town of Frank, Alberta, which during the night swept away a community full of miners and their families.
  4. We are like grass – here today and gone tomorrow.
  5. **Spurgeon** once wrote: *“Here is the history of the grass – sown, grown, blown, mown, gone; and the history of man is not much more.”*
- D. **Verse 9** – *“For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told.”*
1. Why don’t we live to be nearly a thousand like some of our earliest fathers?
  2. God’s wrath against us for our sin – the curse which God pronounced upon Adam and the creation.
  3. We end up as short obituaries, printed in 3 column inches in the paper and read in two minutes at our funerals – *“as a tale that is told.”*

- E. And why? *“For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.”*
1. Until God’s mercy falls upon us, we are dead men walking – consumed by God’s righteous anger.
  2. **The HOLY God** cannot ignore our sins and the **OMNISCIENT God** sees even the most secret of our sins.
  3. The light of God’s countenance is a flashlight which shines into every corner and crevice of our lives.
- F. **Verse 11** – *“Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.”*
1. Moses asks a rhetorical question? No one yet knows the power of God’s anger.
  2. Go on Youtube and watch the destruction of an avalanche, or watch Mt. St. Helens explode.
  3. You’ll catch a glimpse of what God’s power can do, but that is **not really** the power of **God’s anger**.
  4. Just as humans may never be as strong as when they are angry for a righteousness cause, God has yet to display the fierceness of His wrath.
- G. The last clause of **verse 11** is rather difficult, so I consulted my books. I’m not sure they helped.
1. *“Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.”*
  2. **Henry Melville** explained it this way – *“We know that if man’s fear of God be wrought up to the highest pitch, and the mind throb so vehemently that its framework threaten to give way and crumble, we know that the wrath of the Almighty keeps pace with this gigantic fear.”*
  3. **John Gill** offered two explanations of the verse – *“Who knows thy wrath, so as to fear thee? who considers it so, as that it has such an influence upon him to fear the Lord, and stand in awe of him, and fear to offend him, and seek to please him?”*
  4. *“Or rather the wrath of God is answerable to men’s fear of him;*
    - a. *and that, in some things and cases, men’s fears exceed the things feared;*
    - b. *as afflictions viewed beforehand, and death itself;*
    - c. *the fears of them are oftentimes greater, and more distressing, than they themselves, when they come;*
    - d. *but so it is not with the wrath of God; the greatest fears, and the most dreadful apprehensions of it, do not come up to it; it is full as great as they fear it is, and more so.”*
  5. **Matthew Henry** is often the easiest old commentator to understand, and he is in this case.
    - a. *“God’s wrath is equal to the apprehensions which the most thoughtful serious people have of it;*
    - b. *let men have ever so great a dread upon them of the wrath of God, it is not greater than there is cause for and than the nature of the thing deserves.*
    - c. *God has not in his word represented his wrath as more terrible than really it is;*
    - d. *nay, what is felt in the other world is infinitely worse than what is feared in this world.*
    - e. *Who among us can dwell with that devouring fire?”*
- H. Notice **verses 10** and **12** – *“The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.”*
1. *“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”*
  2. Human beings have a predetermined shelf-life.
    - a. And as is true of a lot of modern equipment, the built in obsolescence seems to be shorter and shorter.
    - b. Our forefathers may have lived to be 969 years old, but we are built for 70, 80 or 90.
  3. And then we are cut off, and fly away.
- I. **Fly away?** Moses, I thought you suggested that we return unto the dust from whence we came?
1. Now you are saying we fly away?
  2. As every Christian should know, he was at first talking about our physical bodies, and then about our eternal souls.
  3. Our physical stay in this world is short, sometimes painful, and always sinful.
  4. But our 70 or 80 years cannot be properly compared to eternity.
  5. Just as God’s 3 hours is nothing to earth’s thousand years, our earthly lives are but a second in the light of eternity – either in Heaven or in Hell.

- J. And since life is short and sinful, we need grace and mercy; we need forgiveness and peace.
1. And for these we can't make any demands; we are dependent upon the Lord our God.
  2. *"Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants.*
    - a. *O satisfy us early with thy **MERCY**; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.*
    - b. *Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil."*
  3. Notice that Moses begins the Psalm by calling God "*Adonai*" – the Lord.
  4. And his last reference is to "*Elohim*" – the Almighty God.
  5. But here, when he pleads for mercy, he addresses "*Jehovah*."
- K. When will you return with your blessings O Jehovah.
1. O satisfy us early – soon, quickly – with thy mercy, that we may rejoice for the rest of our very few days.
  2. May the days our rejoicing be greater than the days wherein thou hast afflicted us.
  3. Paul in faith declared that this is the way it is – *"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."*
  4. Then he says, *"our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."*

#### IV. And how does Moses conclude his thoughts?

- A. *"Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us."*
1. What sort of work do you think he means? The sunset? A double rainbow? A rare and beautiful bird?
  2. I think he was referring to the work of salvation; the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer.
- B. *"AND establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it."*
1. Let me pose an unrealistic hypothetical question.
  2. If the work of our hands, our hearts and our lips was the basis for God's salvation would we be saved?
  3. It is not by works of righteousness that we are saved, but by the mercy of God.
  4. More realistically, how much of our work will be established by God and recognized in glory?
  5. Moses pled for God's establishment of our works for Him.
  6. And Paul said, *"We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."*
- C. The Readers Digest verse of this Psalm would read like this:
1. *"Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.*
  2. *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.*
  3. *Thou turnest man to destruction; We are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled.*
  4. *The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.*
  5. *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.*
  6. *O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.*
  7. *Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children.*
  8. *And 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."*