



Psalms 90-91

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Tape #7195
By Chuck Smith

Psalm ninety. This psalm is entitled a prayer of Moses, the man of God. We do know that Moses was a composer. He wrote songs for the children of Israel. We have one recorded for us in Deuteronomy thirty-two and then in heaven we read concerning the hundred and forty-four thousand that they sing the song of Moses and of the lamb. Here's another of the songs of Moses. In it we have, more or less, a classic example of Hebrew poetry.

Hebrew poetry varies a lot from our English poetry. With theirs it is not a rhyming of words. They don't look for a rhythm or a rhyme. In our poetry we have a meter or we have sort of a rhythm and there is the idea of the rhyming of the words that constitute English poetry. In the Hebrew poetry it is the thought that creates to them the beauty of poetry. The thoughts can be parallel thoughts. The same thing expressed in a different way or the same thing expressed with increased amplification or there can be contrasting thoughts. So they find the beauty in the contrasting of thoughts.

In psalm ninety, of course, there is a vivid contrast because the contrast is between God and between man; the eternal, infinite man and the temporal, finite man. It makes quite a contrast. He begins with declaring the eternal nature of God.

LORD, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God (90:1-2).

God has always existed. There was never a time when God did not exist. He is the eternal God who dwells outside of time continuum in that eternal realm. It is something that our minds cannot fathom. The word everlasting we have mentioned in the Hebrew literally is the vanishing point. For this particular word it goes a step further, beyond the vanishing point.

In other words if you allow your mind to go back as far as you possibly can see, let your mind drift back billions and trillions of years until it just sort of fades out and you can't think of anything, there's the vanishing point. It's beyond that vanishing point, everlasting. "From beyond the vanishing point, to beyond the vanishing point" (90:2). Let your mind go out into the future as far as your mind can stretch until your mind just sort of hits that vanishing point and then beyond that. Created before there was a universe, before the worlds were ever created, God existed. On the other side of coin, in contrast with that, man being so fragile, frail and temporal.

Thou turnest man to destruction; (90:3).

The word destruction is to grind to the finest particles or dust. "Thou turnest man to dust" (90:3). In the book of Genesis God declared to Adam after his sin that "Dust thou art and to dust you shall return". We are told that God took and formed man out of the dust of the earth. It is interesting that the same seventeen elements that make up the dust or the dirt are the same seventeen elements found in man's body. "Dust thou art and to dust you shall return". Spoken of the physical body of man you return him to dust.

And sayest, Return, ye children of men (90:3).

That is return back to the dust. We have just a limited time here upon the earth. But with God dwelling in the eternal, time is totally relative.

For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night (90:4).

Peter in talking to us about the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ encourages us actually to patience in a way because he said, “God has made the promise that Jesus is coming again and God is not slack concerning his promises but he is faithful. It is important” he said, “to understand that a thousand years is a day unto the Lord and a day is as a thousand years”. In other words, time is totally relative to where you are, as we pointed out here on the planet earth we measure time in days and years. Our days are twenty-four hours because that’s how long it takes the earth to rotate on its axis. Our years are three hundred and sixty-five and a quarter days because that’s how long it takes the earth to make its revolution around the sun. On Neptune a day is only fifteen hours long but the Neptune year is a hundred and sixty-five Earth years. So it’s all relative. If you were on Neptune you’d not even be celebrating a half birthday yet for many of you because it takes that long for Neptune to make its orbit around the sun.

Einstein theorized that if you could accelerate your body to the speed of light that time would actually stand still. Thus the talking of inter-galactic kind of exploration, should that day ever come, should man develop his engineering and technical capacities and skills to create a rocket that would begin to approach the speed of light. You decided to visit say one of our further stars of our Milky Way Galaxy, you’d get in your rocket and suit that thing up and you begin to travel at the speed of light. Let’s slow that down a bit. If you traveled at the speed of light you’d turn into energy so you’d have to have some way to de-energize yourself when you got to the other end. You’d spread out into a linear and time would stand still.

They say you shouldn’t go to the speed of light, stop somewhere short of that, let’s say a hundred and sixty-five thousand miles a second. It would take you in earth years to get out to one of the further stars in our galaxy a hundred thousand earth years to get there and a hundred thousand earth years to return. When you would return to the earth it would be some two hundred thousand years older. However, traveling at that speed you would only be something like twelve years older or something they theorize. You’d come back and you wouldn’t even find records in history in this era in which we are living. It would be totally gone and you would only be twelve years older, looking around for your friends you’d be disappointed.

The relativity of time, God dwelling outside of time.

For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep (90:4-5).

Man’s time upon earth is just so short, it’s like going to sleep in the morning and it’s over. When you wake up in the morning from a sleep, if you’ve had a good sleep it seems like you just went to bed and you can’t believe it is already light outside. Time seems to stand still while you are sleeping. When we were kids, when we would be traveling in the car and we would be asleep in the car they would say, “Wake up we are home”. We’d say “We can’t be home we just got in the car”. Yet how time seems to pass so quickly when asleep. Life passes by so quickly.

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 (90:5-6).

The cycle of life. So quickly over.

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. For all our days are passed away in the wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told (50:7-9).

Again, the frailty and the quickness of life. Death comes so surely and the result of sin, the wages of sin, we are reaping them in the brevity of time that we have to live. When God first placed man upon the earth the body that he gave him was in much better shape than our bodies today. A good average lifetime then was nine hundred years. Imagine Adam lived almost one sixth of human history. That’s one-sixth the time of human history. He lived to be over nine hundred years old and of course we only have about six thousand

years of recorded history. So he lived about one sixth of recorded history. Now seventy years, as will get to in a moment, is the average that we have here.

In the beginning, probably a lot less radiation and a better protection with the water canopy which was around the earth before the flood shielding out more of the cosmic radiation which bombards our earth. This causes the mutation of the cell, the ultimate breakdown of the cells and the aging processes. God cut down the average age of man after the flood and it corresponds with the flood.

For all our days are passed away in the wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told (90:9).

I like that. I think I would translate that as “We spend our life like a rerun” a tale that has been told. God knows the end from the beginning. God knows all about us. There isn’t a think that you have ever done that God does not know and has always known. I’ve often said that God is never disappointed in you. He knew how rotten you were to begin with. It’s only you that are disappointed in yourself because you didn’t realize that you were that rotten. You didn’t realize that you were capable of doing those things. Thus you’re very disappointed in yourself but not God; he knew it all the time. As far as God is concerned you spend your life like a re-run, like it’s already happened, God knowing the end from the beginning.

The days of our years are three-score years and then; (90:10).

Seventy years old.

and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years [eighty plus years], yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath. So teach us to number our days, (90:10-12).

Teach me Lord to realize that I only have a certain amount of time, I only have an allotted time and my allotment has almost run out.

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom (90:12).

That I might use the time that I have wisely. The Bible speaks of redeeming the time. I think of all of the wasted time. I look at my own life and I grieve over wasted time. We have only one life, it will soon be passed and only what we do for Christ is going to last. We should spend our time and invest our time in eternal things. Jesus said, “Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven”. Invest in the eternal kingdom of God our time and our energies.

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom. Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants. O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days (90:12-14).

This is called a prayer of Moses and we finally get to his prayer. These are the petitions of the prayer. The whole thing I guess is a prayer but in the prayer it follows a pattern of scriptural prayer. That is, in the scriptures in prayer they didn’t just rush right in with their petitions but they entered into prayer first of all in the acknowledgement of the one that they were praying to.

In this case, the Lord who has been dwelling place who is existed forever, from everlasting to everlasting. So I’m praying to God the psalmist is saying, “O god thou art God who has created the heavens and the earth”. Jesus said, “When you pray say Our Father which art in heaven, hallow it by thy name”. It isn’t just immediately presenting the petitions. So the psalmist doesn’t just immediately rush in and say Lord I need this and this and this and by Tuesday if you don’t mind. It was spending time in acknowledging the greatness of God, the powers of God and our own weakness and frailties. That’s one reason why we are praying because we are not capable and we do not have the capacity or the ability. So we come to God for his help.

O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil (90:14-15).

They have been for forty years wandering there in the wilderness. They were hard times, difficult times that wilderness wondering.

Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children (90:15-16).

Then I love this seventeenth verse. The prayer of my heart.

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 (90:17).

O that the beauty of the Lord might be upon our lives. God make it so.

Psalm ninety-one.

HE that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High (91:1).

Where is it?

shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty (90:1).

The secret place of the most High is where you make God your dwelling place. As Paul said, "In him we live, we move, we have our being". He that has that conscience life in Christ and is aware of that life in him will find that God will be your refuge, your place of comfort, rest and protection.

I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely (90:2-3).

If you're dwelling in that secret place of the most High,

he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, (91:3).

As we pointed out this morning, the fowler was a man who trapped birds, the birdman. In the days before riffles and all they had to trap birds. If you wanted to eat pigeon you had to trap them. Now, of course, people shoot doves and all but in those days they would trap them; the snare of the fowler. It's an allegory. Satan is the one who is seeking to trap you and to destroy you. Satan lays his traps for the child of God.

Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence [evil plague]. He shall cove thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust; (91:3-4).

Another beautiful allegory of the mother hen ruffling her feathers so that the little chicks that have been frightened may run to her and find shelter, find that place of comfort and protection under wings.

his truth shall be thy shield and buckler (91:4).

God's truth is the thing that is my shield against the attacks of the enemy. Jesus used the truth as a shield against Satan's attacks. The truth of God's word. When Satan would come to him he said, "It is written" and he used the word of God as a shield.

Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for thy pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday (91:5).

The Lord will watch over me, he will keep me, he will protect me, night and day he is watching over me. I don't need to fear. I don't need to be worried about what evil might befall me because the Lord is taking care of me; he's watching me.

There are people who have all kinds of phobias and of course we've heard a lot of these phobias. Claustrophobia, acrophobia, hydrophobia, they even have a phobophobia, that's the fear of being afraid. We can laugh at it but if you've got it, it's no laughing matter. How fear can get a hold of a person's life and how it can be totally debilitating. Fear can destroy but you don't need to be afraid when you're dwelling in the secret place of the most High because the Lord is your fortress, he is your refuge.

A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee (91:7).

That person who has made God his place of dwelling, his life is hid with Christ in God. What security is ours.

Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone (91:8-12).

God is in control of the circumstances of my life. All things that he allows to take place within my life are for my good. I can't always see that when I'm in the midst of a trial, when I'm in the midst of a problem I can't always see the end result. I can't see what God is working out or seeking to work out in my life. I am prone, at times, to sort of complain unto God because of my circumstances because I am judging before I see the final outcome but at this stage it looks bad. I am prone to make my judgement, at this particular point, not waiting for the full cycle, not waiting to see what will be the end result. That is, of course, a tragedy that befalls many of us. Prejudging before we have all the facts, before it's gone full cycle.

There are so many things, as I look back in life, that as I was going through the experience itself I thought that God had deserted me. I could not see any possible good that could come from the situation. It looked all bad to me. There were times when I would really express unto God my doubts. Then in time, as God worked the whole thing out, I say the wisdom, I saw the plan, and I saw the whole picture and said, "Wow, wasn't that wonderful what God did in my life?" "All things work together for good". God only allows that to come to my life. Even of the hardship and the trials only to work out a good purpose in me.

God never tests to destroy. Often, I believe, that God tests us to prove to us how much we have to rely upon him. If you think that you're strong and independent in a certain area, God will give you a real testing in that area where you realize you can't do it and cast your cares and trust upon him again. Shows me my weaknesses.

It is interesting that it declares he will give "his angels charge over thee" (91:11). In the New Testament in Hebrews it talks about angels and it says that "they are ministering spirits who have been set forth to minister to those that are heirs of salvation". Angels are a special creation of God. They are spirit beings, they dwell in the presence of God and they are of different ranks of authorities and powers. In the Bible I can think of two angels that are named. In the book of the Ezra we have seven angels that are named. Gabriel and Michael are two of the chief angels of God named in the Bible. God has sent them to watch over you that are children of God. They've been sent to minister the things of God to us.

There are times in the Bible where the angels appeared unto men and talked with men. In the New Testament an angel delivered Peter out of prison. The angel of the Lord stood by Paul and assured him when they had more or less given up hope of survival. An angel was the instrument to bring John the book of Revelation. God sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John. In Old Testament times angels often appeared to the servants of God.

I would not discount the possibility of an angel appearing to us. We are told in Hebrews that we should “be careful to entertain strangers. You never know but what you might be entertaining an angel without knowing it”. We’ve heard speak of guardian angels perhaps this scripture would be the basis for that.

For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone (91:11-12).

Satan knows the scripture and often times seeks to pervert the scripture. This is one scripture that Satan sought to pervert in the temptation of Christ. As he took Jesus up to the pinnacle of the temple and looked down some three hundred feet at the pavement below and said, “Why don’t you jump from here? For it is written he will give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways. Prove the scriptures”. Jesus said, “It is written again thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God”. The importance of comparing scripture with scripture, not taking just a half of the scripture or a passage and trying to build a doctrine on it.

It is important that we balance the scriptures and it is important that we not just put ourselves in jeopardy to prove God’s power. I don’t think that God wants us or intends that we should go out and live recklessly and carelessly saying the angels are going to take care of me. I don’t believe that God intends us to deliberately jeopardize ourselves just to prove a scripture. Surely Jesus indicated that when Satan suggested that he jump and just trust the word of God, “The angels to bear thee up”. That would be tempting or testing God and you are not to test God in that way.

Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet (91:13).

In this psalm beginning with verse fourteen, God responds and God speaks, more or less, in the first person here. The psalmist has been talking about that person who has determined to make God his dwelling place, determined to live in that fellowship with God living in the secret place of the most High. Thus God responds himself to that person.

Because he hath set his love upon me, (91:14).

Because you have loved God.

Therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him (91:14-15).

What glorious promises. God is speaking now to you who have set your love upon him. You who have come to the place where you really love God. The promise of deliverance, exaltation, the answers to prayers, the presence of God in trouble and the deliverance and honoring.

With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation (91:16).

The blessing of walking in fellowship with God and living in the secret place of the most High.

Father we thank You that You have been our dwelling place, that our lives are hid with Christ in God. Lord, it is our desire to set our hearts upon You that we might love you with all of our heart, soul mind and strength. Lord, we just pray that You’ll help us to remain steadfast, unmovable. Using the time that You have given us wisely in things that will count for eternity, in Jesus name Amen.