

## **Introduction**

Some years ago, I talked to a young man who was working feverishly to finish his taxes. It was 6:00 p.m. on April 15<sup>th</sup> and he had to get them out by midnight. He looked up as we briefly spoke, shook his head, and declared, **"The clock is ticking."**

Psalm 90 is the only psalm in the Psalter that Moses wrote. In times past, it, in conjunction with 1 Corinthians 15, was an appointed reading at the burial of the dead. It was so because of the defining truth it rehearses. The clock is ticking. Time is running out - not because the tax deadline is near but because death is near. And Moses tells us in Psalm 90 what we should do because it is.

## **How Much Time We Have**

Let's start with verse 10. I was with a patient once when a physician informed him he had cancer. After composing himself, he asked, **"How much time do I have?"** That's a good question that all of us, actually, should ask and answer. How much time do I have? Moses tells us, generally, in verse 10. It's 70 years or, if things go well for us, maybe 80. According to life insurance actuarial tables, the average life span of a man is 74.7 years and that of a woman 80 years. Moses' generalization in verse 10, therefore, is an accurate one. Using those numbers, we can calculate roughly how much time we have by subtracting our age from either 74.7 or 80.

That's how much time we have and the clock is ticking. That's what the words **"declined"** and **"finished"** in verse 9 suggest. Consider, for instance, that you and I have less time now that we did when our worship service began. The clock is ticking and there's nothing we can do about it. Time is running out for us all.

*How Now Shall We Live?* That's the title of a book that Chuck Colson wrote. It's also the very question we should ask in the context of Psalm 90. The clock is ticking. How now shall we live because it is? Moses

tells us in verse 12, "**Number your days.**" According to commentator C.F. Keil, that clause in the Hebrew connotes "**hourly to contemplate the fleeting character of our lifetime.**" It connotes routinely keeping in mind and living as if time is running out. That's our call in verse 12, number our days, and we answer it by doing three things.

### Treasure Time

First, we treasure time.

An African from Liberia visited the United States for the first time. Someone asked her, "**What about the United States struck you the most?**" To which she replied, "**How much people throw away.**" She was shocked to see people throw away cans, jars, boxes, wrapping paper, ribbon, and so on. Those things are plentiful in America and trivialized. They're scarce in Liberia and treasured. The moral of the story is clear. What is plentiful, we value lightly and use wastefully. What is scarce, we value highly and use constructively.

But it isn't just property; it's time as well. We've all heard the expression, "**killing time.**" That's what a lot of people do with it. They think it's abundant and free. And because they do, they value it lightly. And because they value it lightly, they use it wastefully.

But believe me. We don't have enough of time to kill any of it. That's the primary emphasis of Moses in Psalm 90. In verses 5 and 6, for instance, he uses the simile that human beings, you and I, are like grass that sprouts in the morning and withers away in the evening. In verse 10, he declares about each of our lives, "**For soon it is gone and we fly away.**" And finally, in verse 4, he asserts, "**For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it passes by.**" Moses drives his point into the ground doesn't he? The time we have on earth is scarce.

Think of it in terms of verse 4. Men, if 1000 years is as a day to God, how much time is our 74.2 years on earth to Him? I figured it out. It's 106.8 minutes, less than 2 hours. In those terms, I personally have 17 minutes left. I don't about you but I get the point Moses is making.

Time isn't plentiful. It's scarce. It isn't something we have a lot of. It's something we have a little of.

So, treasure it. We should think of it as we do our money – as an asset – and value it just as highly. We won't waste it if we do.

In that regard, a book titled *The Time Trap* identifies the most common time wasters in people's lives: attempting too much at once, unrealistic time estimates, procrastinating, lack of specific priorities, failure to listen well, failure to delegate, unable to say "no", failure to write it down, focusing on needless details, lack of organization, reluctance to get started, absence of self-appointed deadlines, and not doing first things first. I can relate to at least three of those, one of which is a simple lack of organization. Several years ago, I was trying to find my car keys when it suddenly dawned on me: **"I waste at least 3 minutes a week, which is 2½ hours a year, looking for my keys."** So, I've organized, always putting them in the same place when I get home. It takes a rocket scientist to figure that out. Anyway, I now waste 0 minutes a year looking for keys.

The fact is that all of us have time wasters in our lives. But time is our most valuable asset. So let's treasure it and eliminate those.

A friend of Jesus named Dr. W.E. Sangster is our model for this. After Sangster died, his son wrote a book about him and the secrets of his success. One of those secrets was this: **"The difference between one minute and two was of considerable consequence to him. Time was never wasted."** Let's do what Sangster did. Treasure time and don't waste it. Benjamin Franklin said it well: **"Do you love life? Then don't squander time for that's the stuff that life is made of."**

### Use Time Wisely

There's a second thing we do to number our days. Use time wisely.

Have you ever heard someone say about something, **"I don't have the time."** Have you yourself ever said about something, **"I don't have the time."** The fact is that's never the case.

I learned that when I went to law school. I was an avid runner but didn't **"have the time"** to run as we say it. My daily schedule looked like this: 3 hours in class, 4 hours studying, 1 hour devotions, 1 hour travel time, 4 hours working, 1 hour eating, 2 hours being with my two sons, and 8 hours sleeping. That's a grand total of 24 hours, which meant I didn't have the time to run. So, I took it. I slept 7 hours instead of 8. Or I studied 3 hours instead of 4. Or I skipped a class.

I learned a critical lesson from that. We always have the time for the things that are most important to us. And if we don't have the time, we take it. So, when we say, **"I'm too busy"** for this or **"I don't have the time"** for that, what we really mean is, **"This isn't important enough to me to take the time for."**

That's a vital insight that underlies the last line in verse 12. Moses calls us to present a **"heart of wisdom"** to God. That means, in the context of chapter 90, use our time wisely. Doing so is a three-step process. First, determine the inherent value of things. We do that by getting a grasp of reality generally and the Bible specifically. Second, recognize the value of time, which I've already addressed. And third, give to things the time that their value deserves. Don't give to them more time than their value deserves – or less.

Consider entertainment and Bible reading for instance. Both of those activities are spiritual and psychological needs we have. Both have inherent value to God and us. So, we take the time for them. We give them the minutes and hours that their value deserves. I once counseled a Christian who estimated that he played video games 7 hours a week and read the Bible 2 hours a week. He realized, he said, that the numbers should be reversed. He was right, which illustrates what we should do. Use our time wisely. Take the time for valuable things. But make it the time their value deserves, no more or less.

### **Seize Time**

We number our days by doing a third thing. We seize time.

Look at verses 1 and 2. Moses claims that God existed before anything else did and that He always has existed. He always has existed, exists now, and always will exist. He's eternal in other words. That's a mind-numbing quality that implies this. He isn't bound by time. Think of it this way. Time did not exist. He created in Genesis 1:1. Time then existed. It's a divine creation in other words. God isn't a creature of time. He is the creator of it. Consequently, He transcends it. He isn't in it but apart from it. It doesn't govern Him. He governs it.

His life, therefore, doesn't come to Him moment-by-moment. There are no past and future for Him. There is only a never-ending present. There are no "**before**" and "**after**" for Him. There is only a never-ending "**now**." That means that He experiences the moment our worship service began, this moment, and the moment our worship service will end all at once. 10:45 a.m. is not the past to Him but the present. 11:45 a.m. is not the future to Him but the present. Yes, God is eternal.

Having presented God as the creator of time in verses 1 and 2, Moses goes on to contrast human beings as creatures of time in verses 3-12. We're in it not apart from it as He is. And because we are, we don't govern it. It governs us. We don't experience the past because it's gone or the future because it's not yet here. All we experience is the present.

But what is the present? Those high tech clocks that measure tenths of a second help us answer that. I saw a basketball team win a game on a less than last second shot - .6 of a second to be precise. My point is this. All that we have is the present and that present isn't a minute or even a second. It's a moment. Our lives come to us moment by moment and that's all we have – the one moment that's present to us.

It only makes sense then that we should seize it. To seize it means to be *in* the moment that we're living. We focus on it, involve ourselves with it, for an express purpose. That purpose is to engage God. We can read that between the lines in verses 7-9 and verse 11. As Moses states in the last line in verse 11, we give God the fear that is due Him. One way we do that is by seizing as many moments for Him as we can.

A 17<sup>th</sup> century French priest named Jean-Pierre de Causaude explained this in his classic little book title *The Sacrament of the Present Moment*. The central tenet of his life and book was this and it's profound. Engaging God in the present moment is a holy sacrament. It is so in two ways. First, engaging God in the present moment is the chief means of grace to us. It enables Him to consistently impart love, peace, and joy to us. And second, it's the chief means of glory to Him. It enables us to consistently honor and please Him.

Engaging God in the present moment is a definitive thing. We do one of the following: obey Him, surrender to Him, talk to Him, listen to Him, stand up for Him, suffer for Him, trust Him, partner with Him, laugh with Him, worship Him, thank Him, and more. We try to make each moment count. We do those things in as many of the moments that make up our days and lives as we can.

So, we brush our teeth and realize what a blessing toothbrushes and toothpaste are. We then brush each tooth with a mind and heart full of gratitude to God for them. Or we sit down to pay the bills and are reminded to ask God for our daily bread or to renew to Him our commitment to simplicity. Or we watch a Laurel and Hardy short and recognize that God's enjoying it with us. Or we're insulted and respond with kindness because we know that's what God wants.

Those samplings illustrate what it means to seize time. We live *in* the moment. We engage God in as many of the moments that make up our days and lives as we can.

## **Conclusion**

I close this morning with some calculations. 152 months, 4,635 days, 111,252 hours, 6,675,120 minutes, and 400,507,200 seconds. Based on a lifespan of 74.7 years, that's how much time I have on earth. Let me ask you, "**How much time do you have?**" Whatever the answer is, the clock is ticking. So, number your days. Treasure time, use time wisely, and seize time. You'll have enough of it if you do.