

20. Psalm 90-91

July 16, 2015

We now are starting the fourth book of the Book of Psalms. This division consists from chapter 90 to 106. The main theme of this portion is about God's righteous reign over all the earth as we learned before. It coincides with the Book of Numbers in many ways.

The power of the everlasting God is celebrated in the context of all the experiences of humanity – a power demonstrated in God's anger as well as in His unfailing love. His reign is eternal, universal and invincible.

Psalm 90

This psalm is the oldest psalm in the Book of Psalms because it was written by Moses.

Here is a portion that we all have to think hard, because it will apply to us unless the Lord does something spectacular – death.

This morning I read the commencement speech by Steve Jobs at Stanford University in 2005. It was short and to the point. He said this, "No one wants to die. Even people who want to go to heaven don't want to die to get there. And yet death is the destination we all share. No one has ever escaped it." A year before he made the speech, he was diagnosed for a pancreatic cancer. So his speech was very personal. He told the graduates with this question that he asked himself every morning, "If today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I am about to do today?"

But later I found out that Jobs was dabbling into reincarnation at the end of his life. If that is the case, I doubt that we will see him in heaven.

Psalm 90:10-12 The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away. 11 Who knows the power of Your anger? For as the fear of You, so is Your wrath. 12 So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.

According to a survey, 84% of Americans believe in some kind of afterlife, mostly wrong kinds; and 82% believe in heaven, again, not the biblical heaven; and 70% believe that there is a hell. Whether people want to believe it or not, heaven is real and hell is real.

According to a statistic, 3 people die every second around the world. 180 people in a minute, 10,800 people in an hour. Death is the great equalizer. It is no respecter of persons. It comes to everyone, but for the current living born-again Christians may never taste the death in case of the rapture.

A couple of verses from the Bible that would give us a clear concept of the end of our life that will come for sure:

Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven: 2 A time to be born, And a time to die; A time to plant, And a time to pluck what is planted;

Hebrews 9:27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment

There have been many movies, books, and actual attempts to clone humans. Of course, the science is not there yet. But those DNA specialists insist that they were able to clone a sheep “Dolly” in 2003. Even if scientists are able to clone a human, can you imagine what kind of a person he or she would be? Men might be able to duplicate a human body, but creating a spirit within is totally God’s work. Think about it, a human body without a spirit and conscience. We already have so many problems with so many bad people who practically have no conscience, can you imagine what kind of world we would live in where humans are completely driven by fleshly instincts? They would be pure animals with human intelligence and capabilities.

What Steve Jobs told to the graduates was very nice, commendable, memorable, and inspiring. But being an unbeliever, he completely missed out the most important purpose of life for a human: “We were created for God’s pleasure.”

Colossians 1:16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

Being faithful and dedicated to our work is commendable. But there is a point where we no longer enjoy ourselves. We can go to strange extremes – extremes that create inner functional disorders which turn us into slaves. “Redeeming the time” is biblical. But what does it mean “redeeming the time” and where does this phrase come from?

Ephesians 5:15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

To grow in wisdom in Christ means making the most of every opportunity that time provides. The Greek phrase “redeeming the time” includes the idea of rescuing it from waste or abuse. Just as Christ redeemed us, rescuing us from a futile existence and giving us new life empowered by His Spirit, so we now have the privilege of using our time for the Lord’s purposes while the world wastes their limited time in sins. In other words, God wants us to reclaim time for Him.

You see, if you lose money in your business or stock market, you might be able to gain it back and even more. But once you waste your time, you will never gain it back again, ever. But if we learn to redeem our time by using our time on this earth for God’s glory, not on wasteful and ungodly things, that is a wise thing to do.

Of course, I am not saying that we have to work for God every single waking moment. He doesn’t expect us to do that.

We humans are prone to extremes: we tend to either:

1) Waste away our time in procrastination, poor choices, and idleness or
2) Drive ourselves and others mercilessly and never relax, rest, and play.
Interestingly, both of these extremes leave out God. The first resists His purposes for us, and the second disregards the joy of His love.

We can overcome the first extreme with “DISCIPLINE” – prioritizing our time and directing our energies into what matters. Discipline involves sacrifice, but it’s also a form of taking care of ourselves. It helps us accomplish the dreams God gives us and protects the things our hearts value most, like our God and our family. Through discipline, we keep sight of how important and useful our lives are to God.

The second extreme can be countered with “DISCERNMENT” – recognizing that we’re not engines, but human beings created for relationships with God and family and

friends. God has fashioned us to find refreshment in beauty, restoration in sleep, and renewal in laughter. Even working in ministry can be too much unless we learn to take time off properly.

When we go to bed each night, we normally expect to wake up the next morning and go on with business as usual. How do we know that it might be the last night on earth? Are we ready to meet our Creator and the Savior and Lord in less than 24 hours from now? If we know how much time we have left on this earth, the priority in our life will change drastically, don't you think?

Whatever the amount of time we have on this earth, let's serve and love our Lord and His people with all of our hearts and bodies in humility.

Psalm 91

Psalm 90 taught us about handling the limited time we have on this earth wisely, but the emphasis in this Psalm 91 is on the dangers of life that brings fear to our hearts.

I've seen and met many brave people. Because of my tent-making job, drawing the Special Operation folks in the military and law enforcement community, I get to meet the guys whom I cannot introduce to you with their real names and what they do because they supposedly don't exist. Even these brave soldiers have fear. It is normal and if they don't have fear, they can get other people killed.

The believers who abide in Christ cannot avoid confronting unknown difficulties in their lives, but they can escape the evil consequences if they stay close to Jesus. Generally speaking, staying close to Jesus does help us to detect and avoid a great deal of trouble, and it is much better to suffer in the will of God than to invite suffering by disobeying God's will and trying get our will done.

Psalm 91:1-8 He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. 2 I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust." 3 Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler And from the perilous pestilence. 4 He shall cover you with His feathers, And under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler. 5 You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, Nor of the arrow that flies by day, 6 Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, Nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. 7 A thousand may fall at your side, And ten thousand at your right hand; But it shall not come near you. 8 Only with your eyes shall you look, And see the reward of the wicked.

The fear is real and it can cripple a person horribly in many different ways. I am sure that you have heard many different types of phobias:

- Claustrophobia – The fear of small spaces like elevators, small rooms and other enclosed spaces.
- Germophobia – The fear of germs. People with this don't want any physical contact with others.
- Arachnophobia – The fear of spiders affects women four times more (48% women and 12% men).
- Acrophobia – The fear of heights. 5% of the general population suffer from this phobia.
- Agoraphobia – The fear of open or crowded spaces. People with this fear often won't leave home.

- Aerophobia – The fear of flying. 25 million Americans share a fear of flying.
- Thanatophobia – The fear of death. Even talking about death can be hard.
- Glossophobia – The fear of public speaking. Not being able to make speeches.

Even though there are many types of fears people can have, if they are in the opposite situations that would relieve them from these fears, they don't have any problem. They feel secure because of those different situations. For the believers of Jesus Christ, He is our Stronghold, He is our Strength, and He is our Security.

This Psalm shows us that Jesus is our victory over fear. To convince us, the unknown author of this Psalm shows us 4 different titles of our God in v1 and 2:

- The Most High in v1: Elyon – A name found first in Genesis 14:18-20. He is higher than the kings of the earth and the false gods of the nations.
- The Almighty in v1: Shaddai – The all-sufficient God who is adequate for every situation. Genesis 17:1, 28:3
- The Lord in v2: Jehovah – The covenant-making God who is faithful to His promises.
- God in v2: Elohim – The powerful God whose greatness and glory surpass anything we can imagine.

This is the God who invites our faith in Him and have fellowship with Him in the Holy of Holies. That should remove all of our fears, don't you think???

If you noticed, this encouraging Psalm was not written for anyone and everyone. This was written to the believers of God Almighty. But not just any believers of God, rather those who meet the requirements that were mentioned in v1 and v9:

Psalm 91:1 He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

Psalm 91:9 Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, Even the Most High, your dwelling place,

In other words, to have our God as our Refuge and Fortress and to be protected by Him, we have to dwell in the secret place of the Most High God. It is a conditional promise.

What does it mean to "dwell in the secret place of the Most High" or "Abide in Him"? To "dwell" means we live there spiritually. It becomes our spiritual address. God invites us to pack up and move to His secret place. To do so, we must walk away from the influences and enticements of the world. We must be willing to quiet our hearts before Him and allow Him to open up those inner recesses we reveal to no one else. Secret places imply honesty and trust. We cannot join God in His secret place unless we are willing to be transparent and honest with Him in our lives.

The door to the secret place of the Most High has double doors – prayers and reading the Word of God. Step right in, He has been waiting for you.