**A Heart of Wisdom**

Psalm 90

***Wisdom is in short supply these days***. I don’t understand ***Tik Tok*** and don’t intend to learn about it - but what I hear is that it is super short videos, most of them highly questionable. Our attention span just keeps shrinking. 142 characters on ***Twitter*** seemed awfully minimal. But now kids don’t even want those cumbersome things called WORDS, they just want 6 seconds of weird dancing. Or the ultimate form of modern communication - the ***Meme***.



Yes. If you google Wisdom Meme that is the first one. About hot dogs. Quite a reveal on the sad state of our culture. We look for wisdom from a cartoon dog on a marshmallow cloud. 

One more - I can’t resist. This one is less about wisdom and more about being a good roommate. Don’t leave your unliftable hammer on the toilet seat in your one-bathroom apartment.

Let’s get back to the Bible ASAP:

“So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.” Psalm 90:12

* A prayer of Moses, the man of God

Clearly, we are not going to develop a heart of wisdom through social media. We need God’s Word. What we have in Psalm 90 is **a prayer of Moses**, the man of God. This is the only Psalm attributed to Moses, which makes this the oldest and the first of all the Psalms written. And, significantly, it is called a PRAYER, from a godly man. So already we are on a path to actually learn and grow in wisdom.

If you want wisdom, you have to start with God, with His Word, with godly people, and with prayer. What we will see in this Psalm are **four principles for growing a heart of wisdom**. Let’s jump in.

**How to grow a heart of wisdom:**

1. **Rest** in the Lord, not in this world

“Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.” Psalm 90:1

Moses begins with the familiar name of God, **Adonai**. The translations signal that word since it is not in all capital letters, which is reserved for the more formal name Yahweh. This is how the Jews spoke to God in prayer, not pronouncing the holy name of Yahweh, but out loud expressing the common term for lord or ruler.

***Moses is bringing us into his prayer life here.*** And it begins with a comfortable relationship with God. Of course, Moses had a unique experience of God - especially in the Old Testament. He met with God face to face, talking with the Lord as we do with our friends. This is how Israel was given the first five books of the Bible - the Lord met with Moses in the tent of meeting and enabled him to write the Torah over the course of several months.

Under the Old covenant, as Moses expressed in the Torah, ***access to God was very limited*** and governed by a meticulously designed system of priests, sacrifices and rituals. But God invited Moses into a special, one of a kind relationship, that enabled Moses to be up on Mount Sinai for 40 days without food or water - to be close to the thunder and lightning and earth-shaking shekinah glory of God and not die. It went on for so long that the nation of Israel assumed he must have died up there; so they made a golden calf and threw a party. Not what you would expect when your miracle-working leader suddenly dies.

But that was **Israel’s struggle and their pattern**. They did not REST in the Lord - they did not trust God and Moses His appointed leader. ***They focused on earthly things*** like food, water, human wisdom, natural resources and even physical idols - like the golden calf. They wanted something they could see and touch and interact with. They wanted something PRACTICAL; something that would meet their needs NOW. I think we can relate to this struggle.

**Abraham, the patriarch of Israel**, went through this very thing. God promised he would be the father of a great nation but he was 75 years old and his wife was 65 years old and they had never had kids to that point. So after 13 years went by and no baby was forthcoming from Sarai, Abraham’s practical wife suggested he just sleep with the servant-girl, Hagar. Abraham, being a man, quickly agreed to this plan. And so we have the nation of Islam. Well done, Abraham and Sarai. Instead of trusting in and resting in the Lord, they went ahead on their own ideas, their own resources. They focused on the WORLD instead of resting in the Lord.

But we never do this, do we?

* With **illness** we always pray first and get medicine later.
* With **work** we always trust in God and do everything for His glory and in His strength with no thought to our own personal advancement or financial gain.
* With **family** we always prioritize Bible reading, worship and prayer and never skip church or devotions for sports or vacation or TV or just plain laziness…

No, we obviously get this point and are way better than Israel.

Did you see the last phrase there in verse 1? ***“In all generations.”*** Yep, this applies to us, right now in this generation. The Lord has been our refuge, our dwelling place - if we will just rest in Him. Jesus said, “Abide in me, and let my words abide in you.” He called his followers to rest in Him: to trust in Him, to dwell in Him. Look at verse 2.

1. **Rest** in the Lord, not in this world

“Before the mountains were brought forth or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.” Psalm 90:2

The world and everything in it - including you and me - are created things; finite things. ***We have a start date and an end date*** - and so do the mountains by the way, so do the oceans and the forests and the beaches and all the critters that fill those spaces.

But GOD is from everlasting to everlasting. **God alone is eternal.** He has no beginning and no end. Are you holding on to Him? Do you make your heart’s dwelling place the Lord, or something - anything - in this world? If what you love most is something in this world you will be sorely disappointed. Moth and rust destroy. Thieves break in and steal. We had a friend in Chicago who ran a thrift store and she always said, ***“Travel light. Everything you own will end up in my store.”***

That’s the first principle for a heart of wisdom - rest in the Lord. Trust in Him with all of your heart. Don’t entrust your heart to anything in this world. It is passing away and fast. Everything is breaking down, including us - which is point 2.

**How to grow a heart of wisdom:**

1. Remember that life is **Short**

“You return man to dust and say, ‘Return, O children of man!’” Psalm 90:3

Moses intentionally reminds us of **Genesis 3** and the fall of Adam - to whom God said, “You are dust and to dust you shall return” (Gen. 3:19). God formed Adam from the earth - the Hebrew word for earth is like our English word that can mean land or dirt. The command of God here, “Return, O children of man!” could also mean “children of Adam,” since Adam is the basic word for Man - another connection to Genesis 1-3.

***We are all descended from Adam*** and two things we inherit from him are our human weaknesses and our sinful nature. We are **DUST in both senses** - we are weak, finite, fragile beings that will literally decompose. And we are DIRTY - corrupted by sin in every part of our experience.

Notice **how ACTIVE this verse is**. It isn’t that God *allows us to die*, it is that he COMMANDS us to dissolve into dust. And by doing so, ***He calls us BACK to Himself!*** Death was a consequence of sin, but it also expresses the mercy of God to not leave us in these broken, sin-filled bodies forever.

In verse 13 Moses calls out to God - ***“Return, O Lord! How long?”*** This is our response to the God who will call us to return to Himself one day. We struggle with how long we must endure these days in broken bodies and this fallen world. A lot of what this Psalm wrestles with is time. ***God is giving us perspective on life through Moses.***

1. Remember that life is **Short**

“For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.” Psalm 90:4

***A thousand years, like YESTERDAY!*** Like a shift in the night watch on guard duty. It may feel like it goes on forever, but the next day you’re like - that wasn’t so bad. Time is funny, isn’t it? I can still remember days in elementary school when you look at the clock every 30 seconds and it’s like that seconds hand is just there to torment you with how slowly time goes by. I specifically remember being home sick and watching the clock slowly, relentlessly tick off the minutes. But that was probably just because daytime television was so bad in the ‘80s. There is only so much The Price is Right you can take before you have to switch over to Gunsmoke. Kids, those were difficult days - before the internet, before the cell phone, long before the smartphone. Might as well say, “before electricity and the motor car.”

But something changes in the teen years and time begins to move more quickly. Then you have kids and when they are small time again slows to a crawl. But then they get past the baby / toddler stage and again time accelerates and you blink your eyes and your little babies are off at college.

1. Remember that life is **Short**

“You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning… in the evening it fades and withers.” Psalm 90:5-6

What is it that God sweeps away with a flood? Does that refer to 1,000 years? I don’t think so. I think it goes back to verse 3 - ***“children of man.”*** God sweeps the children of Adam away, one generation after another. Our lives are like grass that springs up in the morning and then withers and dies in the evening. We are like fruit flies with a 24 hour life cycle.

Is **the FLOOD** mentioned here just in passing? Or is it meant to make us think of Noah? No accidents in the Bible! People lived a long time in the days of Noah - which made them proud and complacent. Noah only lived 777 years, but the generation before him lived over 900 years. So the 1,000 year referent here, in the days from Seth to Noah, was not figurative but literal! And even those people who lived a relatively long time got swept away in what to them felt shockingly sudden.

1. Remember that life is **Short**

“For all our days pass away under your wrath, we bring our years to an end like a sigh. The years of our life are seventy… eighty… they are soon gone, and we fly away.” Psalm 90:9-10

Verse 9 makes it clear that Moses had the flood in mind because he talks about ***God’s wrath***. Our days pass away in verse 9 and then in verse 10 WE fly away. Even the 70 or 80 years of our lives are but toil and trouble, and then they are over - ***like a sigh***. Huhhhh. Not like a chuckle or a smile - but like a SIGH. Moses is not in a super optimistic, cheerful mood, here. He is being reflective, being sober - helping give us a heart of WISDOM!

I know some people like to find the rapture everywhere in the Bible, but I can assure you that Psalm 90:10 - whatever Moses means by “we fly away” it does not mean the rapture. It’s just one more picture of how short life is. Look at the metaphors Moses has piled up here:

* We are all DUST v. 3
* 1,000 years are like yesterday; a watch in the night
* Swept away like a flood
* Like a dream
* Like grass that withers
* Our days pass away; ending like a sigh
* Our years are soon gone and we fly away.

At least **8 different metaphors** - poetic pictures - to convince us of the truth and help us feel the significance of the fact that LIFE IS SHORT.

If you want a heart of wisdom, rest in the LORD, not this world. And remember that life is short. It’s a breath. It’s a morning mist. You are a blade of grass, or a flower on a hilltop. You are a sparrow about to fly away. A fruit fly born today and dead tonight. So don’t forget to lay your eggs. The cute little baby maggots are counting on you. Third principle:

1. Respect the **Righteousness** of God

“For we are brought to an end by your anger… you have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.” Psalm 90:7-8

In other words: ***“the wages of sin is death,”*** which is an application of Genesis 2:17 - “in the day you eat of it you shall surely die.” Why does everyone die? Because everyone sins. God’s patience only goes so long. In the days of Noah God’s patience ran out. Guess what? We are again living in the days of Noah and it’s just a matter of time before God’s patience runs out and everyone on earth will be “brought to an end by your anger.” Why? Because of our sins.

The light of God’s glory will expose the darkness in our hearts. Now, judgment for the Christian will be totally different from judgment for the non-Christian. But there WILL still be a judgment day for believers. We will all give an account to the Lord Jesus. The light of ***His glory WILL expose all of the thoughts and intentions of our hearts***. Come back in a few weeks and we will study 1 Corinthians 3 - which describes the judgment of the believer.

1. Respect the **Righteousness** of God

“Who can comprehend the power of your anger? Your wrath is as awesome as the fear you deserve.” Psalm 90:11, NLT

We tend to focus on God’s love and mercy and grace. ***But God’s anger, judgment and wrath are important matters for us to consider from time to time***. Knowing and respecting the righteousness of God - the holiness and justice of God - is vital to gaining a heart of wisdom.

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” after all. This verse immediately precedes verse 12 and the central application of the Psalm: “So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.”

Do we realize how very short life is? Do we **slow down long enough** to think - to really think about - the just fury of God? As Hebrews says, “Our God is a consuming fire.”

* Do we remember Eden and the glorious angel with the flaming sword who guarded the entrance?
* Do we consider the Flood - that the anger of God finally overflowed and covered the earth, killing everyone?
* Do we remember the Exodus and the Red Sea - how the waters closed over Pharaoh’s army, consuming them all?
* Do we think of Mount Sinai and how the ground shook before Israel - and how the penalty for touching the mountain was death?
* Do we reflect on the conquest of the land - and the commission at certain times to wipe out every man, woman and child, and even the livestock?

As the beavers explained to the Pevensie children - **Aslan is not a TAME lion**. ***Our casual Christianity has largely tamed the Lion of Judah.*** But He will not be tamed. He cannot be tamed. The Lord Jesus Christ one day soon will be revealed on a white horse, leading the hosts of heaven. On that day he will not come in humility, riding on a donkey, announcing peace. On that day he will come to strike down the nations with the sword of his mouth.

Some Christians are embarrassed by the **Old Testament** - as if we need to apologize for God’s “angry phase.” Listen. It was not a phase. ***God does not change.*** God is not fickle. He has always been infinitely holy, righteous and glorious. He will always be perfectly just. And where God’s glory and justice meets human sin - there is judgment, wrath and fury.

And it could not be otherwise. If God ignored sin and there was never a reckoning He would not be a good and just God. ***There MUST be a consequence for sin.*** There must be. Justice MUST be given one day.

Only a FOOL - only a great fool - would ignore the warnings that run throughout the Bible.



I put this slide together last year for a sermon on the Flood. It came in handy when I met a ***Mormon who believed everyone would go to heaven***. I showed him this image and said, “Not according to the Bible.” Of course, Mormons don’t really believe the Bible so it didn’t do much for him. But for those of us who believe the Bible, we cannot escape **the theme of JUSTICE** that runs from Genesis to Revelation. God WILL punish sinners. He MUST punish sinners if only because He has said, over and over, that He will.

Look at these verses - from all over the Bible! And listen to Psalm 90:11-12.

“Who can comprehend the power of your anger? Your wrath is as awesome as the fear you deserve. So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.” Psalm 90:11-12

The truth is that none of us can really comprehend the power of God’s anger. We read stories of God’s judgment, we read in Matthew 25 and Revelation 19 about the return of Christ. We hear these verses about a day of reckoning and that each one will give an account. But then we file that information away into **a safe little file cabinet** in our minds so we don’t have to really think about it.

And that makes us fools.

It is foolishness to ignore how short life is. ***It is foolishness to not reflect on the reality of the coming judgment.*** It is foolishness to ignore warning after warning. It is foolishness to assume that these warnings are written for other people and not for us.

At 10:15 p.m. a few weeks ago **a horn started blaring** outside of our home. Kristin and I were out of town so the boys were in bed and heard this sound. At first they all figured it would just go by - some obnoxious driver going by just leaning on the horn like a fool. But then Caleb got up and opened the door to the garage and immediately knew - no, that’s coming from our driveway. He opened the garage door and said, “Yep, that’s my car.”

Turns out something failed in the airbag circuitry that triggered the horn. Thankfully our next door neighbor is handy and came right over to disconnect the battery. Warren lives behind us and he came running over too - that’s how loud the horn was.

The boys could have just turned up their noisemakers and hoped the sound would go away. But thankfully they heard the alarm and got up to see what it was - so they could deal with it.

***Do we hear the alarm God is sounding today?*** Do we feel the need for a heart of wisdom? Do we see the foolishness in our culture and in our own hearts? One more principle if we want a heart of wisdom:

How to grow a heart of wisdom:

1. Rejoice in the **Mercy** of God

“Return, O Lord! How long? Have pity on your servants!” Psalm 90:13

Before God calls you to return to the dust from which you are made, ***will you call on Him to return for you?*** Have you called on the Lord for mercy recently? The Psalm ends with a heartfelt petition - a desperate cry to the Lord.

How to grow a heart of wisdom:

1. Rejoice in the **Mercy** of God

“Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.” Psalm 90:14

Moses rightly identifies **the one thing that will satisfy us** - the thing in which we can rejoice and be glad all of our days - and into eternity: the steadfast love of the Lord; His unconditional, covenant love.

How to grow a heart of wisdom:

1. Rejoice in the **Mercy** of God

“Make us glad for as many years as you have afflicted us and for as many years as we have seen evil.” Psalm 90:15

Moses recognizes, as Job did, that **it is the Lord who gives and who takes away**. It is the Lord’s righteous and sovereign prerogative to give us the justice we deserve or the mercy we do not deserve.

How to grow a heart of wisdom:

1. Rejoice in the **Mercy** of God

“Let your work be shown to your servants, and your glorious power to your children.” Psalm 90:16

Our only hope for joy in this life and the next one is the work of God - His power and glory moving on our behalf. And so Moses concludes:

How to grow a heart of wisdom:

1. Rejoice in the **Mercy** of God

“Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands.” Psalm 90:17

Our lives, our happiness and **our eternity depend on the favor of the Lord** - His mercy and grace. Moses specifically applies that to WORK - asking the Lord to establish and bless and secure the work they were doing. Moses, better than anyone, knew how tenuous things were for the nation of Israel. God had threatened, at the giving of the 10 commandments, to wipe out all of Israel and start over with Moses. The people couldn’t make it 40 days without giving in to idolatry and pagan revelry.

Moses knew that apart from God’s grace and mercy ***the nation would not endure***. They would not be established. Their work in preparing the tabernacle; their work in preparing to invade the promised land; their work in building up a holy nation, devoted to the Lord. Only God’s mercy and grace - only God’s favor - would enable them to establish that work.

***And the same thing is true for Oakwood church.*** The same thing is true for your Community Group, your ministry team, your family, and your individual walk with the Lord. Brother, sister, REJOICE in the mercy of God. Your life, your fruitfulness, your long-term stability and your eternity rest entirely on His mercy and grace to you in Christ. Thankfully, to come back to the first point - that is where we can rest secure. Rest in the Lord, not this world. This world is passing away - it is broken and falling apart. But the Lord is reliable, faithful, glorious and present with us.

If you want a heart of wisdom - start there - ***resting your confidence and your JOY in the Lord alone***. Secondly, remember that life is short. The lie of the devil and of America is that LIFE IS GOOD - and you’ve got so much time! Don’t believe it. Don’t be a fool. **You will blink and find yourself in hospice**. Trust me, I’ve sat by dozens of people in hospice beds and they all say the same thing - it was all the blink of an eye.

Respect the righteousness of God. Be thankful that God is just and righteous and one day His holy wrath will be poured out in 7 world-consuming bowls. But rejoice - that the God of all justice is the God of all mercy. Justice and mercy met at the cross. Romans 3 said that in the cross of Jesus Christ God was able to be JUST and the JUSTIFIER of the one who has faith in Jesus. Without the justice of God falling on Jesus you and I would have to suffer and die in our sins. But because justice has been satisfied at the cross, God can JUSTIFY you and me - forgiving our sins and covering us with the righteousness of Jesus.

So we can rest in that gospel truth - the finished work of Jesus applied to us! Rejoice in the mercy of God for you!

Let’s pray.