

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS
Commentary by Michael Sigler
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God Is Forever

Psalm 90:1-12

Key verse: “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).

“What came before God?”

It was a pretty deep thought for a six-year-old, and my thoughts at that age usually centered on things like bikes, balls, and other forms of play. Yet, I can remember lying on my back in the grass that spring day, watching puffs of clouds roll across a bright blue sky and grappling with the idea of God’s eternal nature. How could anything or anyone always have existed?

Even for adults, a God who has never not existed is a tough idea for our finite, time-bound minds to grasp. Yet, the Biblical view is clear: “from everlasting to everlasting you are God” (v. 2). “For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, or like a watch in the night” (v. 4). We are called to put our trust in the *everlasting* God.

This psalm, however, is not only about God’s eternal nature. Psalm 90 gives a stark contrast between the everlasting nature of God and the frailty and brevity of human life. As humans, the psalmist reminds us, we soon are turned back “to dust” (v. 3). We are soon swept away (v. 5). Our lives are “like a dream” (v. 5). Human life is “like grass that is renewed in the morning; in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers” (vv. 5-6).

Not only are our lives frail and fleeting, but they are—the psalmist tells us—full of trouble and heartache. “The days of our lives are seventy years or perhaps eighty, if we are strong; even then their span is only toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away” (v. 10).

God is forever. Human life is brief, frail, and trouble-filled.

A third major theme is also expressed in these twelve verses, and it provides the *reason* why human life is so tenuous. For the psalmist, that reason is found in the Fall (Genesis 3) and the devastating results of sin having entered our world: “For we are consumed by your anger; by your wrath we are overwhelmed. You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your countenance. For all our days pass away under your wrath; our years come to an end like a sigh” (vv. 7-9).

The wrath of God is not a popular subject today, and it is an idea that is easily misunderstood. Yet, the New Testament writers also see the Fall and the effects of sin as key to understanding our human condition. The difference, though, is that Jesus has brought God's remedy for humanity's fallen condition.

More about that later, but what about the psalmist? What was his response to the condition he has so graphically described? God is forever. Human life, due to the effects of sin, is brief, frail, and trouble-filled. So, what ought we to do?

Here is the psalmist's answer. We should turn to God with this prayer: "So teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart" (v. 12). Knowing that our lives are brief and frail, we should seek God's wisdom for living lives of purpose and eternal significance! That is great advice for us today.

Today, we also have the benefit of living on *this* side of Christ's resurrection. So, for the Christian, these issues of eternity, mortality, and sin have a victorious resolution in Christ. Think about Psalm 90 and its truths in light of these New Testament passages:

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

"But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God" (Romans 5: 8-9).

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death" (Romans 8:1).

"Since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ... The last enemy to be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:21-22, 26).

Here is good news: Though human life is frail and brief, God can give us the wisdom we need to live lives of purpose and eternal significance.

Here is really good news: Through his death and resurrection, Jesus has conquered sin, death, and the grave! In this life, we still must share in the effects of the Fall—our bodies, for example, grow old and die. But if we are trusting Christ as our Savior, we look forward to sharing in the eternal nature of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!

Robert Louis Stevenson said it this way:

*The stars shine over the mountains,
the stars shine over the sea,
The stars look up to the mighty God,
the stars look down on me.
The stars shall last for a million years,*

*a million years and a day,
But God and I will live and love,
when the stars have passed away.*

Thanks be to God!
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