

## “How Terribly Strange to be Seventy”

### Psalm 90: 1-6 & 10 & 12

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**Text: Psalm 90:1-6 (NIV) Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. <sup>2</sup> Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. <sup>3</sup> You turn men back to dust, saying, "Return to dust, O sons of men." <sup>4</sup> For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night. <sup>5</sup> You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the morning--<sup>6</sup> though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered. <sup>10</sup> The length of our days is seventy years-- or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away.<sup>12</sup> Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.**

By the grace of God, I am seventy today. In 1968, Simon and Garfunkel sang “Old friends... sat on their park bench like bookends... how terribly strange to be seventy!” I don’t feel strange; I feel blessed! So... we begin this morning with a moment of laughing together. This will be my offering of a few thoughts after seventy years of life!

1. Never ride a motorcycle of any kind to impress your grandchildren. Never!
2. Never challenge an eight-year-old to a game of “Sorry!”
3. Never have closed captions on the TV when the kids visit. They will begin planning your funeral immediately!
4. Never say to any of your kids “Do I look stupid?”
5. Never say to your wife of 48 years “I’m trying.” She will say “That’s true. You are.”
6. Never have less than two sets of spare keys for old cars.
7. Never believe ads that say “ You can lose 15 pounds in one week!”
8. Never believe ads for a pillow that will change your life!
9. Never leave home without your address written down.
10. Never accidentally take your thyroid medicine three times instead of once unless you’re planning to run to the UP!

Just a few silly pointers on survival as we get older. Now... to the Word of God and today’s message.

Psalm 90 is packed with life wisdom and worship and guidance from Moses for people of all ages. Consider the text:

**Psalm 90:1-6 (NIV) Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.  
2 Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.**

He begins with a marvelous burst of worship. All believers in all generations know that our hearts and lives actually dwell in God's care. Paul said, **"Our lives are hidden with Christ" (Colossians 3:3)**. He is where we live and as Christians we have His Holy Spirit living within us! And Moses goes on to say that God has been there for all generations because He is the eternal God. He created the earth and all that exists. He is the great eternal God and Moses says correctly "You are God!" He does not say "You have been" or "you will be" but "You are God!" God told Moses to refer to Him as the right now God who simply is and always has been. Only created beings have names; God was not created therefore God calls Himself the great I am! The only being who does not age and has always existed. Next, Moses writes....

**3 You turn men back to dust, saying, "Return to dust, O sons of men." 4 For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night. 5 You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the morning--6 though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered.**

Now...here is the point: in contrast to God's eternal existence, we humans live like a watch in the night! In the measurement of eternal time, we are like fruit flies that live a few minutes! A "watch in the night" in the ancient world was considered to be four hours. God considers a thousand years like a day. In other words, the length of our lives in the sight of God is like a few minutes. We prosper and grow in strength and then we are quickly gone. How good it would be if kids growing up would realize they are not immortal. They will only live briefly even if they live long. All of us. We are here on a very temporary basis. And God is sovereign over everyone and over everyone's life span.

And yet we are infinitely valuable to God. That is why Jesus said:

**Matthew 10:29-31 (NIV) 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. 30 And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.**

If we think we are not valuable to God because He only gives us a few minutes of life in His eternal time... we are mistaken! We are beyond important to Him, even though we live here briefly. So, that leaves us wondering “Why are we even here? If we are made in His image and we are priceless why do we not live forever?” And, of course, the answer is that we were supposed to live forever! But when sin entered the world so did death. Sin made us mortal! And as we get older, we ponder just how mortal we are. That is why Moses goes on to say:

**<sup>10</sup> The length of our days is seventy years-- or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away.**

Moses was realistic. He overstates this truth that life can be about much sorrow and trouble. Even the most blessed life has problems. Even the strongest grow weak. Seventy years. Maybe eighty. Many people thru the ages lived far shorter lives. In the year 1500, the average lifespan was 39 years. In 1900, the average for women was 49 and 47 for men. Today, in America it is 79. But that is still nothing compared to eternity. So, Moses was talking about us. Some scientists say that in the future people will live to be a 150 years old but even then that would be just a blink in God’s time and we will, as Moses said... **“We will fly away.”** With all of this in mind, what advice did God’s servant Moses give to all who would listen?

**<sup>12</sup> Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.**

That’s a great passage. He just said, “Teach us to keep in mind that life is very short here on planet Earth... so we should strive to live it wisely.” That is wonderful advice for every person alive. But for the Christian, we have a far greater life to come. A life in the presence of God! That is, after all, what Heaven is. It is literally living in the presence of God and looking upon His Glory! We were made to see Him and fellowship with him and be totally satisfied with just seeing His Glory and living in its glow. That is what every human soul was made to do and that is why Hell will be Hell for those who refuse God’s love.

Hell will be for the person who denied the Son of God Jesus... the only provision for eternal life... Hell will be when that soul all in moment realizes that it was knowing God all long that they longed for... but they tried to satisfy that longing with possessions and excitement and achievement and they made those things into idols! Hell will be that unthinkably horrible moment when a human spirit is released from the physical body and travels on a path to a gate in another dimension. And at the gate there will be spiritual beings of indescribable power who will direct that spirit to another place where God cannot be known. And that spirit will realize they will never ever be allowed into the presence of God. And their souls will break. But let us speak of the things of salvation as it comes ever closer as we age in the flesh.

Let me offer some thoughts to encourage those of us who are “older.” I will not define “older” but you are feeling old age coming on and even if you are not you can look at the calendar. One thing is certain. No one in this sanctuary is getting younger.

**FIRST: PRAISE GOD IF HE HAS GIVEN YOU LONG LIFE UP TO THIS POINT.** As we said earlier, we live in a time when we can enjoy life on Earth longer than the majority of people have through the ages. We should consider the words of the Psalmist:

**Psalm 128:6 (NIV) “May you live to see your children’s children.”**

If you are elderly, consider what you have seen in life. More scientific and medical progress has occurred in the last eighty years than in all of known history up to that point. If you were born in the first half of the nineteenth century, you have seen the development of worldwide travel... supersonic aircraft. You’ve seen medical advances from penicillin to the most modern cancer drugs. You’ve seen advances in worldwide communications. You’ve seen men walk on the Moon. We have handheld phones today that are more advanced than computers of forty years ago. Everything about our modern lives would astound people from the Middle Ages. Yet, research shows an increasing level of discontent. There is more violence worldwide right now in American cities and from worldwide terrorism than at any time in the past. The world needs Christ! But you have lived in an amazing age and you have Christ!

For us as Christians, we have also seen a spread of the Gospel that has led more people to eternal life in Christ than ever before. Mission specialists have said there are more Christians on the earth at this moment than in all the ages combined since the Ascension of our Lord. You’ve seen more progress in the spread of the Gospel in your lifetime than the early Christians could have ever imagined. So, we who are older should Praise God for giving us long life up to this point.

**SECOND: WE WHO ARE OLDER SHOULD PRAISE GOD FOR WHERE WE HAVE LIVED.** Are we not blessed in this place and this nation? This is not excessive flag waving but let me share a story... a true story. When we were last in Siberia a couple of years ago, we were invited to dinner at the home of a Christian woman whom we met. Her mother was there... the family grandma. She was well into her eighties and spoke no English but of course Donna made friends with her. A very interesting old lady who had worked forty-five years in a factory. I asked through the translator if she was a Christian? “Yes.” Did she have many Christian friends at her work? The question stunned her. She explained that in all of those years she never knew the last name of any of her co-workers or where they lived much less if they were Christians. They were never in each other’s homes. She explained that she only could go to church about twice a year because they took down her name and reminded her that they were “watching.”

That is a country where the police can still stop you for no clear reason and wait to be bribed. Everyone has gates on their doors and you never, ever go to someone’s home uninvited especially with a stranger. In her era, they assigned your career and work and you did as you were told. Little wonder she never grew in Christ. I will tell you that I left there praising God that we live in America. No country is perfect including our country but for the first time I understood why so many people want to live here and what freedom, especially religious freedom, really means. The Word of God tells us:

**Acts 17:26 (NIV) <sup>26</sup> From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.**

That is a reference to God's people Israel but we can certainly include the elect in Christ. **We who are older should praise God for our long lives and for where we have lived!**

**THIRD: WE WHO ARE OLDER CAN STILL SERVE God AND BE EXTREMELY USEFUL IN THE KINGDOM AND THE CHURCH!** We need to remember that Abraham and Moses were older guys when God called them. Sarah was given a child by God at the age of ninety; that was Isaac. When the child Jesus was brought to the Temple for dedication there were two old people. Simeon and Anna who had been praying for years that the Messiah would come and that they would see him. And they did!

Older Saints help with children. They tend to the needy and support each other. They write to missionaries and pastors too. I've gotten more encouraging notes from older Saints than you would ever know. I have a box of them. That's a great ministry. And older Saints...you can always pray.

Years ago, I had a professor named Lit Sing Chang. A Chinese man who had been saved out of Buddhism. At about ninety years old he was totally laid up and could barely move from his bed. But he was filled with joy. He told us how he spent at least ten hours a day praying for people worldwide. He had a massive book of names and correspondence. He was determined to serve the Lord. **THIRD: WE WHO ARE OLDER CAN STILL SERVE GOD AND BE EXTREMELY USEFUL IN THE KINGDOM AND THE CHURCH!**

**FOURTH and FINALLY: WE WHO ARE OLDER ARE CLOSER TO GLORY THAN THE YOUNGER FOLKS ARE!** We are in the lobby getting ready to go into the presence of Christ! Think of it. Jesus told Martha and Mary:

**John 11: 25-26 (NIV) <sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; <sup>26</sup> and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."**

Let me speak passionately to our older Saints. If you belong to Christ, the Holy Spirit is living inside of you and He is linked into your spirit. The Holy Spirit has given your spirit eternal life. Not your physical body but your spirit. Because He is in you and He cannot die, you cannot die! That is why Jesus said: **"Because I live, you also will live!" (John 14:19).** So, there should be no fear of death because your spirit cannot die. It's impossible. At the moment your body fails your spirit will be released and you will be escorted into the presence of God by Jesus himself. That is why Jesus said: **"I will come back for you!" (John 14:3)** Please listen closely. The word "you" in that sentence is the singular form! Jesus was not making some vague blanket statement meaning "I'll come back for all of you." Rather, he was saying that each individual Christian will be gathered up at the moment of physical death and taken to paradise! Why it's enough to make you look forward to dying to this life! That is why Paul said:

**Philippians 1:21-23 (NIV) <sup>21</sup> For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.  
<sup>22</sup> If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! <sup>23</sup> I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far!**

Actually, the older a Christian lives on the earth the happier they should be because their ticket is purchased and they are scheduled to depart to meet the King! To see the saints they've missed in this place and finally be satisfied with real abundant life. And there will be no looking down at what the kids are doing and how crazy the world has become! And if you're really blessed, you'll miss the next election! God be praised! For the Word of God says this:

**“Gray hair is a crown of splendor!” Proverbs 16:31 and**

**“Psalm 116:15 (NIV) “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.”**

And one last thought as we age... God always has one assignment for all Christians young and old. It's found in Psalm 34 verse one where we read:

**Psalm 34:1 (NIV) I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips.**

Let us pray.

<sup>12</sup> **Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.**

<sup>3</sup> You turn men back to dust, saying, "Return to dust, O sons of men." <sup>4</sup> For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night. <sup>5</sup> You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the morning--<sup>6</sup> though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered. <sup>10</sup> The length of our days is seventy years-- or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away.<sup>12</sup> Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.