

How Then Shall We Live?

Psalm 90

Introduction

Charles Whelan was the faculty speaker at Dartmouth College's commencement address in 2011

He sought to give some life principles to the students – who were heading out into the wider world of life / career / relationships / the future

His speech included such principles as:

- Don't Make the World Worse
- Read Obituaries
- It's All Borrowed Time

Charles Whelan: 'I know that commencement is a happy time, but that does not preclude some deeper reflection. One of life's realities that becomes very clear after you leave college, and sometimes even before, is that you shouldn't take anything for granted - not this afternoon, not tomorrow, and certainly not twenty years from now.'

He referred back to his own graduating class - - - and one of the women who graduated with him – was Karen Avenoso – A Rhodes Scholar, writer, kind and thoughtful human being.

He said – if you could've picked someone out most likely to impact the world in a positive way - - it would be her. Sadly – she died of a rare form of cancer shortly before their tenth reunion.

That led him to his principle: 'It's all borrowed time'

When looking out on life and making your life choices – ask yourself this question:

Charles Whelan: 'Would I regret doing this, spending my life this way, if I were to get hit by a bus next week, or next year?'

Is this a worthwhile way to spend my time / use my life given the reality of life's brevity and fragility?

His principle aligns with biblical truth

The Psalmist expresses it this way

Psalm 90:10 - 'As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, or if due to strength, eighty years . . . soon it is gone and we fly away.'

Psalm 90:12 - 'So teach us to number our days, that we may present to Thee a heart of wisdom.'

Life is a gift from God – we are living on borrowed time
We are just vapors that appear for a while – says James

How then should we live in light of such truths?

That is the focus of Psalm 90

I. The Eternal God - vv. 1-6

Psalm 90 – is a wisdom psalm - - - a prayer for wisdom – asking God how we should live in this world

Our walk across life's stage is brief and transient – How then should we live?

This is a psalm of Moses – the only Psalm written by him in the book of Psalms

Many think the Psalm - - - appears to have been written during the Wilderness period -- - For 40 years – God's people wandered in the wilderness - - - had no place to call home – God met their needs one day at a time as they looked to Him

They may have lacked a home - - - but God was their dwelling place – v. 1

This causes him to reflect upon the nature of God

Who is God?

He is the Creator - - - the one who exists outside of time

Psalm 90:2 - 'Before the mountains were born, or Thou didst give birth to the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God.'

God exists eternally – He is the Great 'I am'

R. C. Sproul: 'The grand difference between a human being and a supreme being is precisely this: Apart from God I cannot exist. Apart from me, God does exist. God does not need me in order for Him to be; I do need God in order for me to be.'

The singer – Bon Jovi – once wrote a song titled: 'It's My Life'

But – the truth is - - - our lives are on loan to us from God

We did not make ourselves
We do not have the power of existence within ourselves

We are dependent creatures – from beginning to end

Only God has the power of self-existence

From everlasting to everlasting He is God

Wisdom begins here - acknowledging life as a gift from our Creator- on loan from God

Moses brings up our mortality in v. 3 – in contrast to God

We are made from dust – referring back to Genesis 2

Genesis 2:7 - 'Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.'

After the Fall into sin took place – we read these words

Genesis 3:19 - 'By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust and to dust you shall return.'

Man is a creature of dust –

If we were to break the human body down to its elements on the periodic table

Oxygen / carbon / hydrogen / nitrogen / calcium / phosphorous – make up 99% of the human body

Sully Community Church celebrated its 100 year anniversary last year - - - we invited some previous church members and pastors / missionaries to come back - - - but one thing we did not have were any of the original members of the 1923 congregation

Why? Because they are with the Lord

In another 100 years - - - it will be the same with this body of believers

Man is powerless to hold off the forces which lead ultimately to death and decay

James 4:14 - 'you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.'

Our family once visited a 'Mummies of the World' exhibit in Kansas City – Union Station

Several cultures in history – have at times practiced some form of mummification – a process of preserving the soft tissue and organs of a person or animal from complete decay – [Egyptians are the most common]

The Egyptians even mummified cats for some reason

You see these mummies that have been preserved for thousands of years – and you think – wow - that is the actual body of a person who lived 3000 years ago

It reminded me: A tombstone epitaph reads: **"Pause stranger, when you pass me by. As you are now, so once was I. As I am now, so you will be. So prepare for death and follow me!"**

Even with all the processes / attempts to preserve the body of a mummy - - - there is no life there - - - there is still decay - - - nobody looks better after 3000 years - - - in fact we look absolutely horrible

We don't have the power of life within ourselves

The passing of time is no friend to the body

But for God - - - 1000 years is like yesterday - - - no decay / no change / no corruption

Why are we such transient beings? [that we die / etc.]

Scripture points us to the reality of sin / the Fall

Romans 5:12 - 'Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.'

Death came with sin

Jesus overturned the reign of death – by dying on the cross and rising again

I Corinthians 15:22 - 'For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.'

All referring to all the redeemed who trust in Him

John 11:25 - "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies."

II. Our Brief Life - vv. 7-12

So – this life is brief / it's temporary / fragile - - - and we will someday hear our number is up

Moses refers to seventy or eighty years – v. 10

Some live longer – some shorter lives

Life at its best in this world – is brief

Can someone teach us how to live? / Moses prays to that end

Psalm 90:12 - 'So teach us to number our days, that we may present to Thee a heart of wisdom.'

We should pray for wisdom – the wisdom to know how to live our lives in light of eternity

The first thing we should do is put our trust in Christ - - - so that we can be part of the resurrection of the righteous – be ready when Christ returns

As Christians – we have insight into what God is doing - - we know that not everybody has to die - - - if you are alive when Christ returns

I Corinthians 15:51, 52 - 'Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.'

Some will skip the corruption of death and decay altogether – maybe you and I

Wisdom is making sure we are ready for Christ to return – we will be given our glorified bodies

But – even if we die - - we simply await the resurrection of the body in God's time

What should we do with this life now?

I Timothy 6:17 - 'Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.'

I Timothy 6:18-19 - 'Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.'

Wisdom is being rich in good works

John Piper: 'Get up in the morning and say, "I want to do good for somebody today. I'm not content to sit around and watch tv or play games. There is in me this Holy Spirit given energy. I want to do some good in the world.'

*** Wisdom is distinguishing between the trivial and the eternal – and choosing things of eternal value

John Wesley:

"Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can."

Serve God / pray / share your faith / encourage / bless / give / support missionaries / help the poor and needy / use your resources to alleviate the suffering of another / give a cup of cold water in Jesus' name

Tell someone about the gospel of Christ crucified and risen again

'It's a short life and will soon be past - only what's done for Christ will last.'

That is the message of wisdom

This reminds us that every Christian should have a ministry

We should all be seeking to invest our lives – in some way in things that have lasting and eternal significance

The options are legion

We should strive to do something for the sake of the gospel / the church / missions / loving God / loving others

If we ask God to give us a ministry - - He will answer that request

I Corinthians 15:58 - 'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.'

People who live in light of eternity have several traits about them:

1) They will not view this world as their home - - - but a temporary stop along the way

Phil. 3:20-21 - 'For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.'

We are citizens of heaven - - - this is all temporary

C.S. Lewis: "Our Father refreshes us on the journey with some pleasant inns, but will not encourage us to mistake them for home."

Our real possessions are above

We can't take any of this with us!

There is a kid who is a junior in college – and his grandmother just died and left him \$700,000 in her will. He took the money and invested it all in Intel stock – the day before a huge market drop - - - and lost over \$200,000 virtually over night

Sooner or later - - - all our possessions end up at 'Many Treasures' - - - Shelly Vander Molen's

Jesus told us to lay up treasure in heaven

Matthew 6:19-21 - 'Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.'

2) People living in light of eternity – have a better perspective on trials / difficulties in this life - - - they tend to say – 'What will this matter 100 years from now?' / 1000 years from now?

The Apostle Paul said these words

Rom. 8:18 - 'For I consider the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that is to be revealed to us.'

Paul: 'Persecutions / beatings – meh!'

A famous cathedral in Europe has 3 archways thru which to enter the sanctuary
Over each archway is a phrase:

- 1) All the pleasures is but for a moment
- 2) All that troubles is but for a moment
- 3) All that is important is eternal

Sydney Mclaughlin - - - USA runner – won gold in the 400m hurdles and 4x400

She said these words – putting things in perspective

Sydney Mclaughlin: 'I would take my relationship with Christ over a gold medal any day.'

Our relationship with Christ is eternal - - - earthly pleasures / treasures / accolades are temporary

All that troubles is but for a moment - - -

Perhaps you need to be reminded today that – that thing you are stewing over – anxious or bothered over is insignificant in light of eternity?

Christians of all people – should be those who refuse to make mountains out of mole hills

- 3) Those living in light of eternity fight against sin

Matthew 5:29 - 'And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for the whole body to be thrown into hell.'

Matthew 5:30 - 'And if your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, and throw it from you, for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to go into hell.'

Jesus said if we see things properly - - - we will arm ourselves against sin!

We will go to battle against it – we will memorize Scripture

We will feed on God's Word

We will discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness - - - that we might let our lights shine in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation

Conclusion

Ron Howard – as the child actor who played Opie on the Andy Griffith show - - - had a private tutor for some of his school years

There was one time when Mrs. Barton got angry with him when he was nine years old - - - and it was the week in which JFK got shot – which happened on a Friday

When they returned to work on Monday - - - Young Ron complained that he hadn't been able to watch his Saturday morning cartoons [like Heckle and Jeckle] because the networks were showing nothing but news, news, news

She upbraided him and said - 'this is a terrible time in our country – the president was shot – and that is much more important than cartoons!'

Young Ron lacked the maturity to grasp the more important things in life

As we mature in the faith - - - we should be growing in discernment to grasp the more important things for a life of faith – systematically laying aside the trivial in favor of the eternal

We will be living for Jesus and His gospel

Psalm 90:12 - 'So teach us to number our days, that we may present to Thee a heart of wisdom.'