

The Christian Mind and Wisdom

Building a Christian Mind

By Don Green

sermonaudio.com

Bible Verse: Psalm 90

Preached on: Tuesday, December 19, 2023

Truth Community Church

4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road

Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

I would invite you to turn to Psalm 90 for our text for this evening. I will read it as we begin. For all practical purposes, this is the final message in the "Building a Christian Mind" series. I am going to do a summary message on Sunday that I'm very much looking forward to, somehow compressing the past 70 hours of teaching into some 60 minutes or so. That will be interesting. But for tonight, we kind of bring everything together and answer the question, what do we do with a Christian mind, and the title that I've assigned to the text for this evening is "The Christian Mind and Wisdom." And let's read Psalm 90 together, and then we'll go into the exposition. The inscription says that it is "A Prayer of Moses, the man of God," and so it's immediately located in the more distant recesses of biblical history, some several centuries prior to the time of David even, who wrote some 73 of the 150 Psalms. Psalm 90 beginning in verse 1,

1 Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. 2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. 3 You return man to dust and say, "Return, O children of man!" 4 For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night. 5 You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning: 6 in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers. 7 For we are brought to an end by your anger; by your wrath we are dismayed. 8 You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence. 9 For all our days pass away under your wrath; we bring our years to an end like a sigh. 10 The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away. 11 Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of you? 12 So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. 13 Return, O LORD! How long? Have pity on your servants! 14 Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. 15 Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, and for as many years as we have seen evil. 16 Let your work be shown to your servants, and your glorious power to their children. 17

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!

What does a Christian mind do with the reality of the existence of God and the authority of Scripture and the Lordship of Christ, and the sovereignty of God, and the existence of truth, and the singularity of Christianity, and with true salvation? What do we do in response to all of those seven different themes that we've covered over time? Well, you have to meditate on it and turn it into wisdom by the help and grace of the Holy Spirit. You see, these biblical truths, these foundational, central, fundamental truths are not given to us just for an academic exercise so that we can acquire information and store it away in our memory. That's not the point of biblical truth at all. We're meant to internalize it, to embrace it, to think on it, to go over it again and again so that it becomes embedded in the very woof and fabric of the way that we think, so that the way that we respond to life is governed by these fundamental principles that we've been studying over the past year or so and I believe that in Psalm 90 we see a good example of this. Moses, of course, writing before the cross, we're on the other side of the cross, but there's a continuity in spiritual life, in Psalm 90, Moses is meditating on the eternity of God, his eternal essence, and he contrasts that with the mortality of man. You have this eternal, unchanging, uncreated God set over against the passing nature of man who lives for 70 years if he's strong, maybe for 80, but then he withers and he passes away and pretty soon the vapor of his life is forgotten in coming generations. And so there's this colossal collision of eternal God with transient man, and in the end, this all leads Moses to prayer, as we'll see at the end of this Psalm.

Over the course of my ministry, since I first preached on this Psalm back, I believe, in 2006, I'm guessing, as my memory either serves me or fails me, the pattern has been that I preach on this Psalm it seems like every three or four years, and I don't mind that. I don't mind rehearsing these things. This is a deeply personal Psalm to me. It's easy to manifest that. It's been critical to me for decades in some of the things that it teaches. If you ever were in my study at home, you would find two pieces of etched glass, one that has Psalm 90:12 on one side of the bookshelf and Psalm 90:17 on the other side of the bookshelf, and so my study reflects the influence of this Psalm on my own life and so I don't mind bringing these things to your attention repeatedly because it's just been so foundational and formative in my life; my entire course of life really has been changed by verse 12 of this Psalm, looking back over 40 years or so. And so there's a lot here, there's a lot of theology, there's a lot of wisdom in this Psalm, there's a lot of personal history for me, and I'm just asking and hoping and trusting the Spirit of God to make it effective in your hearts in some way during the hour that we have together here.

Moses is dealing with mortality in this Psalm,. To be mortal is to be subject to death. We're not going to live forever in this flesh on this planet. Hebrews 9:27 says it is appointed for man to die once and after this comes judgment, and so in the very nature of things, even as we gather together to do a very necessary and good thing, as we come together to look at God's word together, we're in the midst of, even tonight, of doing something that's transient in nature. You know, the time will come when one by one we'll pass away and eventually there won't be any one of us left to remember the evening

that we spent here together. It's just, it's kind of, you know, it's kind of a little bit unsettling to think about it. But here's the thing, beloved, even though that may be unsettling and it makes some people uncomfortable and they don't even like to hear these kinds of things, here's what we need to keep in mind: that is reality. That is the fundamental reality of life for everyone that walks on this planet, that it's transient and it's passing, and soon we pass along, we fly away, and we move on into eternity. And so the Christian mind, the beauty of the Christian mind is the Christian mind can look that fact, that reality, straight in the face and be completely unintimidated by it. The Christian mind can look at that and overcome it as it considers the existence of God, the existence of truth, the nature of true salvation, the sovereignty of God, and the authority of Scripture, and all of those things that we've been considering. We have, from Scripture, the Scripture has established in our minds that which is necessary for us to overcome and live triumphantly in the midst of the mortality of man but it's still fitting for us and necessary for us to contemplate our own mortality so that we can take life and put life in the proper perspective, and the nature of putting life in its proper perspective, the effect of that, is that it lets us set our priorities in a proper way, it lets us recognize our dependence on God in a proper way so that we make the most of the life that the Lord has given to us. And that's what every one of us should want. Whether the Lord gives us 30 years or gives us 80 years or something in between, something less even, that we would make the most of the years that the Lord has given to us. That requires wisdom, that requires dependence on God, that requires a prayerful spirit and approach to life and so that's what we're going to see rising up out of the text as we consider it here this evening.

Now just by way of briefest of context, we saw that this was a prayer of Moses, it seems likely when you get into the background of this Psalm, that Moses was writing this toward the end of the 40-year experience in the wilderness that the children of Israel went through. You remember how God delivered them with great power out of Egypt, out of slavery, brought them apart so that he would establish them as a nation, but the children of Israel rebelled against him early on. God disciplined them. They scouted out the Promised Land. The spies came back. Ten of them gave a bad report. The nation followed after that, and they wanted nothing to do with the land that God had given to them. Only Joshua and Caleb said, "It's a good land, let's go up and conquer it." People rejected their counsel, went with the majority. Look, majority rule, popular opinion is never a safe guide to truth and we see that illustrated in the history of the children of Israel. And so God disciplined them, punished them for their unbelief, and what God did was that he said, "You're going to spend 40 years in the wilderness, this generation will die in the wilderness," and it's the next generation that will enter into the Promised Land and enjoy the blessings that he had promised to those who would simply believe. And so Moses had the privilege, the responsibility of leadership of a disobedient people in a wilderness land and trying to mediate between God and them in the course of his leadership. It was somewhat a thankless task. Even Moses himself sinned against God. He struck the rock when God said to speak to it, in anger. He sacrificed it and God said, "Even you are not going to enter the Promised Land now." And you can read at the end of Deuteronomy in the final days of Moses, how even in that context, God reminds him of that prior act of disobedience, and God allowed him to see the Promised Land but not to set foot on it. And so Moses was dealing with some pretty hard issues in life here and

some very difficult aspects of spiritual leadership when he didn't have much Scripture and didn't have much by way of prior example to look after and to model after, and so we respect Moses even though we realize that Christ is infinitely greater than him. And all of that just to give us a sense of the spirit and the circumstances under which Moses wrote. And so as he writes this, probably near the end of those 40 years, which are also near the end of his own life, that's significant; maybe he's only got another year or two of life left ahead of him as he writes here. And so what does a man like that, a man of God, a humble man, you know, Scripture says in Numbers 12, he was the most humble man that had ever walked on the face of the earth, what does a man like that at the end of his life, at the end of his leadership and ministry, what's on his mind. God has given us Psalm 90 to help us understand that and to draw principles from it that will benefit us and help us to live with the right priorities going forward.

Now as you start, in the first two verses we see that Moses starts, and this is the first point if you're taking notes here this evening, he starts with the eternity of God. The eternity of God. In verses 1 and 2, We read this, he says,

1 Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. 2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

Now, in some of our prior messages, we made the point that when it comes to knowing truth, and in the context of tonight's message, in knowing wisdom, we see once again that we must start with the person of God. We start with the existence of God, the character of God, the nature of God. That is the starting point for all wisdom. If you start anywhere else in your thinking, you are off track and you're not going to be a wise person. You're not going to live in a proper way. If you think that the accumulation of wealth is the goal of life, and this needs to be said and it needs to be heard and heeded far more than it is said and heeded, if you think that simply having your little family and that your family is the focus and that's the starting point and the sum of existence, you're off track. You're off track. Our family is given to us in a greater context of our service to God. It's an aspect of serving God, of loving God and all of that, but it is not an end in and of itself and it's important for people to realize this. And, you know, I worry about families that it's just obvious that their priorities are mixed up and I'll just leave it there. The point here for tonight is the fact that Moses, as he is expressing wisdom, he starts with the person and the character of the God of the Bible. He draws on the eternity of God as he begins his meditation.

Look at it there again in verse 1 where he says, "Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations." What he's saying here is and what he's doing here is he's connecting the people of Israel, he's connecting the people of God and his contemporaries in his day, he's connecting them with the men of faith who went before them. He's speaking on behalf of the people of God and he says, "God, you have been our dwelling place in all generations," and if you think about it, you can see what he what he means. If you go back, you go back to the book of Genesis, you can read how God called Abraham in Genesis 12, and he called Abraham out, and then Isaac and Jacob and Joseph and the

people that came after them. God called Abraham more than 2,000 years before the time of Christ, two millennia God called Abraham, and here now Moses is writing some 600 years later, say around 1400, just speaking in round numbers. You know, and you have those 15 generations of 40 years each speaking. Moses says, "God, here we are as your people. Here I am as a man of God. I'm not doing this, I'm not walking with you in isolation. You've been the dwelling place of your people throughout all of time." And so through all of the ups and downs of Abraham's life, of Isaac's life, of Jacob's life, the trials that Joseph went through, and then the tribes as they entered into the Promised Land, all of this indicating that throughout all of that, throughout all of that change, through all of the rise and fall of men and the rise and fall of generations, the constant in all of that is the unchanging, immutable God who called these people to himself to begin with.

And so Moses is putting their present experience in the wilderness and putting his life into the greater context, the transcendent context of God and his people and he is making a point here, as we look at verse 2, he's making a point that we emphasized as we talked about the sovereignty of God. In verse 2, look at it there with me, Moses says, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God." What he's saying is that, "God, you have been accomplishing your purpose since the time of creation and you established your purpose even before time began; even before you created the world, you had established your purpose." And ever since that time, ever since creation, when God implemented the start of his plan, he has been, watch this, he has been accomplishing his purpose which he established before the foundation of the world, he has been establishing and accomplishing his purpose even though at times there was little external evidence to show that. There was little external evidence of it. God was working it out, and as the people of Israel fell and died in the wilderness one by one, some 50 people, 50-75 people a day, if you do the math on it, as people were falling like flies in the wilderness, and the stench of death functioned as the aroma of their existence, God, despite the outward appearances, God was progressing and advancing the purpose that he established before the beginning of time. It's remarkable to think about, and that's still true today. Nothing in the subsequent 3,500 years of human history has changed anything to the slightest extent of the fact that God is accomplishing his purpose, which he decreed before the beginning of time, and he has providentially been working out everything ever since.

And so, in eternity, God established his purpose, in time, he's working it out to accomplish his will, and when we get to the end of time, we will look back over the course of it all and we will see that God worked out in perfect detail everything that he intended to do when he established his purpose in creation. That's what Moses is saying. He's saying that there is a certain progression of the purpose of God that is always happening, which is always being carried forth, no matter what the vicissitudes of the existence of man and the passing of history may turn out, you know, may seem to be. What does that have to do with the Christian mind? Beloved, it's this: your Christian mind and the Christian mind never forgets that. Never forgets that. As the flower of our life flourishes in our youth and strength, we don't forget that there's a purpose of God that's being worked out. As life moves on and health begins to decline and relationships

begin to fail and all of the sorrows of life start to have an accumulated weight on your mind, you step back from all of that and rather than collapsing under the weight of it, you remember that this most important principle, you are living, beloved, you are living out your years in a broader context. It's not just about what's happening within your sphere of knowledge and your sphere of relationships. There is an eternal context. There is a broad purpose of God within which your individual lives are being lived out, so that everything that happens to you, everything that you do, everything that you plan, everything that takes place, is happening within the context of the eternal, certain, progressing, unconquerable purpose of God.

It's a wonderful thing to contemplate, so that, to remind you of things that we said earlier, you know, months ago, the hand of God is in everything that happens. In one way or another, the hand of God is in everything that happens and I don't say that lightly. I don't say that lightly. I'd like to keep in mind as I preach and to help you remember, you know, I'm mindful of some of the sorrows that you are walking through and so to say that God has sent those sorrows to you is a pretty bold statement, and it's not something that I say lightly, but beloved, it is the biblical truth that God is accomplishing his purpose in everything that happens, that all things work out according to the counsel of his will, Ephesians 1. And so if we are going to have a Christian mind, we have to give up the sense of being a victim, we have to give up a complaining spirit, and embrace the providence of God, embrace the purpose of God that he has given to us, and accept that, you know, and realize that sometimes we're saying what I'm about to say with tears in our heart, if not tears on our cheeks, but we realize we are so grounded in the truth of the word of God that we realize that there is an unconquerable purpose that God established before the beginning of time that he is certainly working out and even when that brings us heartache and sorrow, our prayer is modeled after the prayer of our Lord, "Father, not my will but thine be done." Or if you like it to rhyme, "Not mine but thine." So that the recognition of the eternal purpose of God, the eternity of God, brings us into a spirit of living and a spirit of life where we are consciously aware of God working out a purpose even when we don't understand it, and of consciously submitting to that and consciously depending upon it as that which is the very bread of our existence.

That's the eternity of God and so the Christian mind never forgets that. The Christian mind keeps eternity, both eternity past, eternity future, and all of this stuff of time in between, keeps all of that firmly in hand as it responds to life. What does that help you do? Well, one thing, it helps you not to panic. It helps you not to panic when things seem to be spinning out of control. You step back from that and say, "Yeah, it seems like it's out of control. It seems like so many things are happening and I don't know what the outcome of them are going to be," but the Christian mind is always looking to say, "but even though it seems this way, but I know that there is a purpose of God that is secure, that is sure, that is certain, that I can rely on even when I don't understand."

Now beloved, that is a position of great power in which to live your life and precious few people know that to live by it and even those that know it don't always rely on it, do they? But this is why we can look at a passage like Proverbs 3:5-6, and make some sense of it when it says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own

understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." Trust in the Lord with all your heart. "Lord, I have seen in Scripture that you decreed everything that would happen before time began. I have seen in Scripture the doctrine of divine providence that you direct all your creatures and all events to accomplish your purposes without fail and that there is not a hair on my head that is out of place in the purposes of God. There is not a sparrow that falls to the earth apart from the direct purpose of God. That you cause all things to work together for good to those who love you and are called according to your purpose. That even when men mean evil against me, you mean it for good." And this is the rich, fertile soil from which a fruitful Christian life comes forth and bears fruit.

The Christian mind never forgets these things and the reality is that these are things that we should be reminding ourselves of multiple times a day. Multiple times a day. When the doctor gives a bad report, when relationships fail us as they inevitably do, as finances come and go, as people come and go within the life of a local church, we as Christians always remember and always come back to this fortress from which defends us against all of the changing tides of life. God has a purpose, God is working out a purpose, that purpose is good, that purpose is sure, and God will, by his purpose, bless me in the end because I am adopted into his family, he has set his love on me in Christ, and it couldn't be any other way. You see, beloved, as I say those things, we're meant to be strong. We're meant to be strong in the Lord. That's what Ephesians 6 says, "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might." We are not meant to be whimpering, fearful people. No matter what comes, we're not meant to respond to life in a whimpering, fearful, self-centered, self-pitying way. We look at life and say, "This is what God has sent to me." And so for every one of you, I say this with all the tenderness that I can muster in my fallen heart, you have the life that God has given to you. This is what God has ordained for you. This is what God has purposed. God has given you the life that you have with the intention of blessing you in it, of conforming you to the image of Christ in it, so that he can do good to you in the end and that you will be fully equipped to enjoy him now and forever as he increasingly becomes the sole object of your highest affections and you love and worship him in response.

What we are seeing from the word of God, what we've seen in calendar year 2023, is a different kind of Christianity than what most people understand Christianity to be. Most people want to use Christianity in a way, as a means to get what they want out of life. "God, bless me. Lord, bless me, Lord," as Keith Green said, it's all I ever hear. No one aches, no one cries, no one ever sheds a tear. It's just, "Bless me, bless me, bless me," in other places. That's not what we do here but what I want you to see is that what we're setting forth here is a view of the Christian life that realizes, that recognizes that it can be sorrowful, it may be difficult, there may not be answers to our prayers, we may not get the deepest desires of our heart granted to us in this life, but we're not afraid of that, we don't melt under the heat of that, we don't collapse under the weight of that, because we are rooted in the soil of the eternal purpose of God that can never fail and if Christ has loved me and set his affection on me and adopted me into the family of God, then I say this reverently as an expression of dependence, if Christ has done all of this, then by God, I say it reverently, then by God, I'm going to live a life that reflects my confidence in

him. I'm going to live a life that's worthy of his glory. Even if it hurts, even if it makes me weep, I am going to trust God and honor him and worship and praise him and look forward to being with him throughout all of eternity, no matter what comes. The eternality of God helps us see that and to understand it.

Now, there's a second point that Moses gets into, you know, that first point is really just the first two verses. The main body of this Psalm, you might say, is a meditation on point number two, the mortality of man. The mortality of man. Moses continues to pray. I just want to remind you in the inscription, here in Psalm 90, Moses is praying. This is a prayer of Moses and in verse 1, the first word out of his mouth is, "Lord." So he uses the vocative of address, and he addresses God as Lord, and then he recites these things in the first two verses. Now as we move into verse 3, he is continuing to pray as shown by the use of the second person pronoun "you." Who's the "you"? Who's the prior reference? Who's he been talking to? He's been talking to the Lord. He's been talking to his Master, and now he continues on praying this way, "You return man to dust." And let's read on down through verse 6,

3 You return man to dust and say, "Return, O children of man!" 4 For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night. 5 You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning: 6 in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.

What's he saying here? Moses here is reflecting on the brevity of life and it's a most remarkable contrast. It's one of the sharpest contrasts that you could ever contemplate with your human mind. In the first two verses, he's been talking about the eternal nature of God, he is unchanging, and he spoke the world into existence as the Creator, and on it goes. "You are unchanging. From everlasting to everlasting you are God," he says there at the end of verse 2. Now he pivots and he looks at the nature of man and there you see a completely different perspective. God is eternal and unchanging, we are transient and passing away. We are temporary. We are not here forever. We're not even here for a very long time at all and our time span of our life is insignificant from the perspective of God. God dwells in eternity. God dwells outside of time. Somehow God created time and established the cycles of morning and evening and the circle of the planets and the circle of the moon to establish days and months and years and God established all of that, and here we are just in our passing nature so that, verse 4, "a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past." He's not saying that a thousand years are a day. He's not confusing the nature of chronology here. He's giving a perspective on the nature of God dwelling outside of time. So he says that a thousand years to you, it's just like a nighttime that passed by or like a four-hour watch of the night. He said, when time is like that to you, when a thousand years is just like that to you, then God, how much more, 70 or 80 years, how much less is that a matter of significance in your sight? This is really central to understanding the whole genius and the whole message of Psalm 90.

Moses is saying that life is rushing past. Life is like a waterfall cascading over the cliffs of time. I assume that most of you, if not all of you in one place or another, have stood at the edge of a waterfall. You just see it rushing by. It's just pouring over the cliff and just going and you see it coming and it's gone. That's the idea. You walk in a cemetery. I love the unchanging nature of cemeteries. For the most part, you go to a cemetery, you can go to certain sections of it, and it's the same whether you were there 40 years ago or you were there four days ago. I like that and I like being amidst the headstones in a cemetery giving silent testimony to what I know the Bible teaches to be true. That's why I like it. Cemetery teaching us of the transient nature of man, the passing nature of life. Cemetery teaching us it's appointed for man to die once and after this comes judgment. Whether you're visiting a family cemetery where you know some of the people or at least have a genealogical connection to them or you're in a foreign place, you see a name etched in stone, born 1919, died 2000, 81 years, and you just think, if you just step back and think about it, you don't even have to know the person to understand the sense of this. 81 years is a long time, and in the day-to-day nature of the existence of that, it seems like life is just going to go on forever. Yesterday was like today and tomorrow will be like today and we get kind of swept up into the sameness of existence which does this, it lulls us into a false sense of security into thinking that life has been like this in the past therefore it'll probably be like that going forward, and we're brought into a false sense of security that leaves us not thinking about eternal things. A proper time in a cemetery will shake us out of that if we just think about it from this perspective, however long you live, beloved, however long you live, one day it's going to be your name in stone. I'm assuming burial as opposed to cremation, just to make the point. One day it'll be your name there. That is inevitable. There will be no other outcome unless the Lord comes first. Your life will come to an end and then what? Life is passing, it's transient, and here's the thing to understand: Moses, in this Psalm,, and we here tonight, we're not being morbid, we are being realistic. This is the way life is and a Christian mind, remember the whole context of this, is that we're building a Christian mind, and the question is, what does a Christian mind do with the transient nature of life? That's the question that we're trying to come to grips with and it starts by simply recognizing this is the way it is.

And why is our time short? Why is there death in the world? Why is it universal? Why aren't there some exceptions? Why don't we see somebody living for 250 years as being an exception to this rule? Well, Moses answers that as we continue on in verses 7 through 11. The reason is that God has judged the human race for its sin. Look at verse 7. Remember he just said, he's speaking about human life, verse 6, it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers. He's speaking in metaphors there. You know, human life starts, it flourishes like a flower, it withers at the end of the day under the heat, and then it's gone. Why is that? Verse 7.

7 For we are brought to an end by your anger; by your wrath we are dismayed. 8 You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence. 9 For all our days pass away under your wrath; we bring our years to an end like a sigh. 10 The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble;

they are soon gone, and we fly away. 11 Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of you?

Moses, writing in the wilderness experience, saw this. A generation of Israelites died in the wilderness over 40 years and every burial that took place was a reminder to them about their disobedience when they wanted to return to Egypt instead of take possession of the Promised Land. God judged them for this and the whole generation died, and as you live on and you're just burying people all the time, just a continual reminder of the anger of God, the discipline of God upon his disobedient people. This would be a great text to preach in a health, wealth, gospel church. I do not expect to ever have that opportunity, but if it ever happened, this is the text I would go to, to tell these misled people and to rebuke their teaching pastors that Scripture says that the years of our life are 70 or 80 and their span is toil and trouble. Not health and prosperity, it's toil and trouble. Life is difficult and we have to get beyond the fantasy that it's going to be something different for us. Life brings sorrow. We get started and death takes it away. And those of you with gray hair on your head, that have buried a spouse, some of you buried children, you know that life often gets more difficult the older that you get.

Well, that has consequences for the way that we think about life with a Christian mind. Death is certain, life gets more difficult, there's toil and there's trouble in it. Life is brief and it's quick and passing, even to those who live the longest length of time. This is a tangent, it's unnecessary, but I'm going to say it anyway. Some of you may have heard me say, you know, the longer I go, I used to think that the years go by fast. When I was a young man, I thought the years go by fast. Now I realize as I'm approaching being an older man, I am an older man, I'm approaching being an old man, but let's not press that point right now tonight, now I routinely say the decades go by fast. The years go by fast, yes, but now I'm realizing the decades go by fast. It's that rushing water over Niagara Falls all over again. It's just in a hurry to get over with. And here's the thing for a Christian mind, beloved, is that this reality of the brevity of life and the reality of death, that is an unseen dynamic that governs all of life. This is embedded into everything that we do. It is passing, it is difficult, it is sorrowful, and it is over before you know it, and our challenge, our problem as men and women on this earth is we don't think that way. We don't even want people to tell us this. We don't want to think that way. We want to hold on to what we've got and we cannot grasp it in our natural ability, so much so that the truth of the matter is that even when someone dies, and again, I speak these kinds of things sympathetically, even when someone dies, our initial reaction is one of denial. "No, that can't be. No, I just talked to him." We immediately distance ourselves from it. We think, no, that couldn't be the case, and in that response, we just show that if we're surprised by death, it's because we haven't taken all of this fully to heart.

It's difficult and what Moses is doing here, having recognized this, you know, look at it there, he says, who considers, verse 11, "Who considers the power of your anger and your wrath according to the fear of you?" Who thinks about these things? What Moses does and what the Christian mind does in response to that is found in verse 12. Because God is eternal, because we are transient, we are mortal, because the years go by so quickly, they pass and we don't even recognize what's happening as it happens, and

suddenly we're stunned to realize that we're at the end of our life, the doctor's told us we've got six months to live and you wonder where all the time went. Because it's like that, Moses continuing to pray, look at verse 12. He says,

12 So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.

Moses says, "God, we need your help in order to effectively grasp and understand this and set our life priorities accordingly. Lord, you have to help us because we are naturally blind to this. We ignore it. We don't want to think about it. We get swept up in the day-to-day things of life so that we miss the fundamental governing dynamic of everything about life that it's passing, it's brief, and it's short." We miss it and as a result of that, because we're not thinking this way, because we're not thinking about the transient passing nature of life, we get our priorities all messed up and we live by wrong priorities. Trying to climb the corporate ladder. Not stopping to think, is the ladder even up against the right wall or not? "I've got to climb this ladder." Where is it leading? What wall is it against? And on you go. And to just get sucked into the flow of the expectations of other people, to get sucked into the expectations of bosses or spouses or whatever, pursuing life priorities that won't stand the test of time. It's tragic. It's tragic to think about and beloved, here's the thing, here's the thing: we only get one chance, we only get one opportunity to get life right and if we blow it, the sorrowful things of people getting into various addictions of drugs and alcohol and all of that, and they blow it, they don't get to do it over. We pursue a life of sin, and squander all of our opportunities to serve Christ and to build an eternal reward, you don't get a second chance. You hear the gospel again and again and again, and you harden your heart against it, and then suddenly you're gone, you don't get a second chance.

See, if we rightly understood these things and rightly appropriated them, the whole reality of it would just shatter us with fear of, "O God, what's going to happen here? What's going to happen to me? What am I doing with my life?" In times past, I've used the illustration from golf. I don't play golf anymore. I will never play golf again. I hate golf for many reasons that aren't important here but it's useful for this illustration. I played enough golf to get one sermon illustration out of it. Sometimes, some people that play golf will play with a thing called a mulligan, right? If you know what a mulligan is, if you're playing with a mulligan, if you hit a bad shot, you can take a mulligan and you can hit the shot over again, try to make a better shot and it won't count against your score. You get a second chance with a mulligan and if your second shot is better, then that's great. And so that's golf. That's one aspect of golf when it's played in non-professional settings. That's fine as far as it goes but you know what? In life, you don't get a mulligan. You don't get a do-over with your life. You get one chance, you get one swing at life, and what you do with it is what the outcome is going to be.

Now, that kind of illustration is really helpful to think rightly about it, because every one of you, remember, Moses is writing this as an old man. He's over a hundred years old as he's writing this and he doesn't have much time left. Or if you're young, you know, and you're in your teens or 20s or early 30s, you're still kind of on the front end of life and you've got an opportunity to set a course that you're going to follow, but it is essential for

us tonight to decide, what am I going to do with the rest of the life that the Lord has given me because I don't get a do-over. I don't get to hit a mulligan on life. I've got one shot and I need to take my best swing at it. And so you have to ask yourself, what's important? What does God say is important? What do you want the rest of your days to be shown for? Do you want to have a legacy of video games being what you've got to show for your life? Do you want a legacy of broken relationships because you lived selfishly? Do you want a legacy of not even pursuing the priorities of God? Do you want to come to the end of your life and never once having read the Bible cover to cover? Here's the thing, beloved, you have to think about those things in advance and pursue them as a conscious priority of your life.

Another way that I've illustrated this periodically, young people especially face decisions that will alter the course of your life. What school you're going to go to, who you're going to marry, what job you're going to take, where are you going to live, those kinds of things. And when I was a young man, something came to my mind that shaped my decisions, helped me, and I've repeated it in a number of settings because I think others have found it helpful also. When you're in that position, when you're a young man saying, what course am I going to set for my life, some of us are old men, we don't get a mulligan on this, some of you are young men, and you've got an opportunity to set the course on these kinds of decisions right now. Here's the illustration that I think is helpful. Here's the approach that I think is helpful. When you're on that front end, you think ahead to the end of your life. Don't start by thinking about what you want right now, because your immediate desires aren't a reliable guide to what is best in the long term. You know, especially in your youth, things are immature and you're influenced by transient things more than you need to be. Here's how I think you can get beyond that. Think ahead to your end of your life and picture yourself as a 75 and 80 year old man and you're sitting on a rocking chair on a porch someplace and your life is over for the most part and you don't have a chance to do it over again. You don't get a mulligan and you're on that rocking chair, and you're an old man, you're an old woman, and you're looking back on life, and you realize you don't get to do it over again. Here's what you ask yourself now as you think about putting yourself into the future. What is going to be important to you when you're sitting in that rocking chair? What's going to matter at the end of your life? What are you going to wish that you had done if you had only done it? When you are at death's door and about to give an account to God for your life, what do you want to have to show for yourself? My friend, you do not want to be in that rocking chair having neglected biblical priorities in life. You do not want to be in that rocking chair having squandered years of your life in drug and drink. You do not want to be in that rocking chair having shredded your family with sinful choices, with sinful actions. You do not want to be in that rocking chair having shredded your family with excessive devotion to business or even to ministry for that matter. My friend, and I plead with you to realize that you do not want to be at the end of your life sitting in that rocking chair 75, 80 years old, just a short time left to live, not time to correct any mistakes, you don't want to reach the end, and again I say it reverently, and just be sitting in that rocking chair with a burden on your heart that says, "O my God, I have wasted it all. I've wasted it all and I can't do anything about it."

You don't want to be in that position and so what you do as someone with a Christian mind is you look at life now, you look at the opportunities now, and you say, "That day of reckoning is coming. I'm going to shape my life by biblical priorities and trust God for the outcome. I can't control what the outcome is. I can't control whether I have a family or not. I can't control whether my family loves me or not in the end. I can't control any of the outcome, but I can control and sort out the decisions that I make and make decisions that are in accordance with Scripture, that are in accordance with the principles of a biblical mind, and live that way and trust God for the consequences of that." But I don't want to head toward that rocking chair and not have an even ask the question. That day of reckoning is coming, my friends, and so I invite you, I plead with you to consider Christ in the midst of all of it and you start that with the prayer that Moses made in verse 12. "God, in light of everything that goes into forming a Christian mind, teach me to number my days so that I may get a heart of wisdom. Help me to think rightly about life and the brevity of the number of my days so that I will live in accordance with biblical priorities, I will have a biblical worldview, and my life will reflect the wisdom that that should bring."

I can't make anyone do this, but at least I can say it, and then just leave it to the Lord between you and the Lord for how you sort all those things out. And again, I say this with a supportive, sympathetic heart. You know, taking vacations and all that, that's fine. I'm glad people can take vacations. I take vacations. I was away last week, myself. But beloved, if you're living for vacations, and if you're just living for enjoyment of an RV or just living for, you know, seeing the country or whatever, apart from a fundamental core commitment to know Christ, to know his word, to live in obedience, to proclaim him in some way, to be a contributing factor to the body of Christ, which is the one institution that Christ said he would build, you're wasting your life. You are wasting your life if the priorities of God are not your own priorities.

Now, point number three, the humility of prayer. The humility of prayer. Moses, having contemplated the eternity of God and the mortality of man, and having asked God to give him wisdom, he now offers a humble prayer in the final five verses of this Psalm. All of this, in one sense, there's a lot to take in as we meditate on these things. We realize, you know, we're mindful of our own failures, and the longer you go, the more failures you have to remember. That's another thing you find out as you get older, "Man, I've got more things to remember that I've failed at." You realize the weakness of your flesh. You realize the opposition of the world. You realize that there's a devil aligned against you in the pursuit of these things. And so what do you do? Well, it brings you to a position of dependence and of humility. Understanding the brevity of life humbles us. It shakes us from complacency. We realize our inadequacy in it all. We realize that we need help. And so what Moses is doing in this final section of this Psalm, is he is praying as a man who does not have much time, how does a Christian mind respond as it sees the window of life closing.

Now, I have things to encourage you. I know I've challenged a lot here tonight. There's a closing aspect to this that is very rich and refreshing. There's two aspects to Moses' prayer here. First of all, he makes a prayer for mercy and for joy. A prayer for mercy and

joy. In light of everything that we've seen in the first 12 verses, there is a tendency toward this could be depressing as our weakness and our failures are brought to the front of our thinking, as the transient nature of our life is impressed upon us and you could say, you could throw up your hands and say, "Well, what's the use?" Well, we don't give up here. The Christian mind doesn't give up. Moses prays in verses 13 through 15. In light of everything that he said, he says in verse 13,

13 Return, O LORD! How long? Have pity on your servants!

"God, show compassion to me. Here I am, an old man, and I've squandered so much. I have wrecked my family. I have failed in so many ways, and yet here I am. God, have mercy on me. Look on me with compassion. Help me here. I embrace everything about your eternity and the mortality of my own life, but God, there's not much I can do in my strength. Help me! Show compassion to me." Have pity on us. Help our hearts. Look at verse 14. Rather than falling into discouragement and despair, "Father, remind us of the riches that we have in Christ, that you've loved us, that you've adopted us into your family, that you have an eternal plan for us and let us draw our satisfaction from that and from who you are and from what you have done." Verse 14,

14 Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. 15 Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, and for as many years as we have seen evil.

"Lord, we know what affliction is like. We know what sin is like. We know the brevity of life. And so what we're asking, God, is that you by an act of your grace to us in Christ, as deep as the discouraging things might be, that in even greater measure you would give us a joy and satisfaction in Christ, that in Christ we would find our joy and satisfaction, that we would be glad in him, that we would find our sufficiency in him, that we would see that in Christ all things come together, all things work together for good, and to find our joy and satisfaction therein. Show us mercy that would transcend the despair that would otherwise mark our lives." And so he's asking God for mercy and for joy, which is different from saying, "God, give me what I want." This is a prayer that says, "God, I see the reality. I see the weakness of my flesh. I see how brief the time is. God, be mercy. Show us mercy here. Be merciful. Grant us joy where despair would otherwise take root."

Then there's a second prayer in verses 16 and 17. It's a prayer for lasting impact, you could say. Moses wanted what he did in the remainder of the time that he had to have lasting value. Verses 16 and 17. He says, God,

16 Let your work be shown to your servants, and your glorious power to their children. 17 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!

Those of you that are older in life, here is the bright ray of hope in the midst of everything; even if you have many regrets, many sorrows, there is a path forward even

for you in the midst of that. This is wonderful and is just a testimony to the grace and goodness and kindness of God. Maybe, maybe you have failed in so many ways that you lose count of it all. Maybe you have a lot of regrets about the past. Maybe that's true. Maybe there's guilt and blood on your hands for things that you have done. But beloved, in Christ, in the Lord Jesus Christ, by grace you can finish well. In Christ, there is forgiveness, complete forgiveness for all of your sins. "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." There's forgiveness, there's rest, there's the promise of eternal life. It is not without purpose that Scripture records the salvation of the thief on the cross. That vile man who earlier in the day had been cursing Christ himself cries out to him, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom," and Jesus graciously looks at him and says, what? "Today you will be with me in paradise." It is the astonishing, overwhelming grace of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ that he forgives sinners just like you. It is the astonishing, glorious grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that he has a way of wiping away the past and giving joy and meaning and purpose even in the last hour. And it is the wondrous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that he extends that to everyone under the sound of my voice here this evening. You may have past regrets. You may have sin that you need to confess and repent of. But beloved, the promise, the prayer here that God delights in answering is that by grace, you can finish well no matter at what point you're entering into the race. You can finish this race well. It is the delight, it is the promise of God that those who repent and come to him and pour their hearts out, that he will help you finish well even if you have squandered so much up until now.

You know what the surest guarantee is, is that God is not finished yet, the surest guarantee that there is still grace for you, even no matter what kind of life you've lived up to this point? You can reason this way, think about it this way. You know, I kind of addressed the younger people, now I'm addressing people toward at the end of their lives. Here's the way that you should think if you find yourself with regret toward the end of your life, you say, "All that's true. I make no defense for it. I don't justify myself. But I do do this, Lord, I'm still here. I'm still here. I'm still breathing. I'm still thinking. And I detect by that reality that you still have something for me here. There's still a work for me to do. There's still grace for me to know. There is purpose even at this late hour for my life and I detect by the fact that I'm still living that there's a purpose yet to be fulfilled. God, give me that purpose. God, establish the work of my hands upon me. Let your favor be upon us and establish the work of our hands upon us. Here I am at the end of life. Here I am without much to show for it. And God, I haven't even asked before now, but God, I am asking now. I am urgently pleading with you now. Bless me. Won't you bless me? Won't you help me? You can restore the years that the locusts have eaten. Won't you restore the years that the locusts have eaten from my life? God, show me that grace that you promise. Let your favor be upon me going forward. Establish the work of my hands."

If it sounds like a desperate, dependent prayer, embrace it. Embrace it. But as we kind of draw this to a close, I've drawn out this last message because I'm not eager for this series to end. There comes a point where it has to. All of this here tonight, beloved, if you're a Christian, understand that God does not intend for you to cling to this life. You're to recognize the reality, the transient nature of this life, and respond accordingly, but not to cling to it. Your priority is not what happens in this window of time on earth. Your

priority is God's eternal purpose and obeying him according as he's revealed in his word. The promise is not satisfying relationships, men so often bring sorrow to our hearts. But what the Christian mind does, what the Christian mind seeks, is not what this world has to offer, not even so much the relationships that we have, though they have their place, what the Christian mind seeks is the stability and the sufficiency that we have in our Lord Jesus Christ because in Christ, we have a sufficiency that is more than enough for this life, come what may. In Christ we have a sufficiency, our mind tells us, in Christ we have a sufficiency that meets the deathbed with courage, confidence, and without fear. In Christ we have a sufficiency that goes beyond this life, that enters into the grave and comes out victoriously resurrected on the other side of that grave in the place in heaven that he has gone to prepare for us, that he died to secure for us, to seat us, as it were, at the great banquet table of Christ, and sup with him throughout all of eternity.

See, beloved, Christ redeemed you to be with him in heaven, and that's the focus. We'll end this whole series in Philippians 1. Listen as I read it. Here's the triumph. Paul writing from prison could say in Philippians 1:21, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell." Should I live or should I die? I don't know. Said, "I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account." Paul's saying, "I realize that there's a window of time and I still have some work to do, so I'm glad to postpone heaven so that I can do that work," for the benefit of those under his apostolic care. "When the work is done and the time comes, I can leave it behind. I can mount up on wings of angels, having fulfilled the work that God had given me to do," you say, "and on wings of angels enter into the presence of the one who loved me and gave himself up for me." That's what a Christian mind does. Do you have a Christian mind?

Let's pray.

Father, may you bless each one according to the need of their heart, according to the need of the hour, according to the purpose that you would have them fulfill in the days that you give to them. Build in each one of us the fullness of a Christian mind according to these biblical principles that we've considered for so long. And Father, may you bring in the days and months and years and decades that lie ahead, we ask you to bring forth fruit from each one of us that would glorify you and help us to manifest that you've given us wisdom to number our days. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Thanks for listening to Pastor Don Green from Truth Community Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. You can find more church information, Don's complete sermon library and other helpful materials at thetruthpulpit.com teaching God's people God's word. This message is copyrighted by Don Green. All rights reserved.