

Here You May Safely Dwell

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If you're taking notes tonight, you can title at the top of your page, the title that says "Here You May Safely Dwell." Here you may safely dwell. I cannot explain some of the emotions of my own mind, I can only describe them, and I do so briefly tonight in a particular fact only because it helps introduce our study from God's word. Charles Spurgeon died at the age of 57 years, 7 months and 12 days. Yesterday, I was 57 years, 7 months and 12 days old. Henceforth, every day of my life is one that was denied to a better man and a better preacher.

You know, Scripture reminds us of our mortality repeatedly. In Job 7:7 it says, "My days are but a breath." In Psalm 39:5 it says, "Every man at his best is a mere breath." Psalm 38:39 says, "we are but flesh, a wind that passes and does not return." Let me invite you to turn to the book of James for perhaps an even more familiar statement of the mortality of man. James 4:13, it says, "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit'; yet 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." Beloved, Scripture tells us repeatedly over and over again that our existence is a vapor that passes quickly and is just as quickly forgotten. The sense that we carry of longevity and security in life are illusions, they are not real, and it's not just you and I that our mortal, we could perhaps deal with that to some extent, but it's that our loved ones are mortal as well, our friends, our coworkers. Everyone around us is mortal. We are subject to death and it is quick and it is passing by this life in which we live.

One of Charles Spurgeon's many lasting works is called "The Treasury of David," his commentary on the entire Psalter. I have a nineteenth century version of it that is six volumes long, there are shorter versions and I'm sure it's available online for free, but it is a very precious contribution that he has made to the life of the church, and in this time where my life has just passed the end of his, so to speak, in the providence of God we are in Psalms 90 and 91 and 92 that deal with the mortality of life but deal with it in a way that is constructive, in a way that helps us to approach it realistically and yet brings us through to confident faith on the other side, and in some ways this gives us a whole philosophy of life in these three Psalms, and so what I want to do tonight is go through these three Psalms and fit them together for you in a way that perhaps, you know, I've talked about it a little bit over the past couple of weeks, I guess, but to bring all of this

together into one place, and tonight I'm going to do something a little bit different, I guess, in that I'm going to do my best to share the Truth Community pulpit with Charles Spurgeon tonight and quote from him extensively on his works in these three Psalms. These three Psalms, Psalms 90, 91 and 92, form a triad of sorts and should be studied together. Having preached many many times over the past 15 years from Psalm 90, I'll never preach it the same way again having seen the things that I'm going to share with you this evening.

Psalm 92, we've read for those of you that are joining us now on the audio, before I opened we read Psalms 90 and 91 in the service, now I'm going to read Psalm 92 to read all three of them in their entirety in the course of our evening together. Psalm 92, look at it with me, "A Psalm, a Song for the Sabbath day," the inscription says, and then in verse 1 it says,

1 It is good to give thanks to the LORD And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; 2 To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning And Your faithfulness by night, 3 With the ten-stringed lute and with the harp, With resounding music upon the lyre. 4 For You, O LORD, have made me glad by what You have done, I will sing for joy at the works of Your hands. 5 How great are Your works, O LORD! Your thoughts are very deep. 6 A senseless man has no knowledge, Nor does a stupid man understand this: 7 That when the wicked sprouted up like grass And all who did iniquity flourished, It was only that they might be destroyed forevermore. 8 But You, O LORD, are on high forever. 9 For, behold, Your enemies, O LORD, For, behold, Your enemies will perish; All who do iniquity will be scattered. 10 But You have exalted my horn like that of the wild ox; I have been anointed with fresh oil. 11 And my eye has looked exultantly upon my foes, My ears hear of the evildoers who rise up against me. 12 The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree, He will grow like a cedar in Lebanon. 13 Planted in the house of the LORD, They will flourish in the courts of our God. 14 They will still yield fruit in old age; They shall be full of sap and very green, 15 To declare that the LORD is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

Now the overarching theme of Psalms 90 through 92 is that the Lord Most High is the dwelling place of his people, and it is so critical for us to see these connections. There are verbal links that join these three Psalms together like a tightly constructed puzzle or like links in a chain that bind them together and to help us see that their placement means that we are to understand them together and let them give us a fullness of interpretation rather than viewing them in isolation as is so easy to do.

The overarching theme of these Psalms, I said, is that the Lord Most High is the dwelling place of his people. Let's see that, Psalm 90:1, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations." Notice the word "dwelling" there as being key. Look at the opening of Psalm 91:1, "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty." Then in verse 9, "you have made the LORD, my refuge, Even the Most

High, your dwelling place." And in Psalm 92:1, the connection continues when it says, "It is good to give thanks to the LORD And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High," addressing God at the start of the Psalm by the same title that had been used in two different places in Psalms 91, and so we look at these Psalms and we see that it is declaring an overarching theme that is to define the worldview of the believing person, is that the Lord God, Yahweh, and in New Testament times, the Lord Jesus Christ, is our dwelling place. He is where we live and move and exist and have our being. He is where we find our comfort, our safety, and our refuge. That is the spirit and the context of these three Psalms.

Now here is the key to seeing these three Psalms and letting them inform and answer something very very critical for us. In what I introduced earlier, we saw the mortality of man and how Scripture repeatedly says that our lives are brief and subject to death at any time; that we grow like grass and then we wither like grass and we're gone, and that is the reality of the life of man on earth. We live in this world under a curse and there is a curse of death on this world ever since the sin of Adam and in our mortality and in our humanness, we cannot break out of that curse. We cannot escape it and no one can. No one can escape that curse of mortality and here's what Psalms 90, 91 and 92 taken together do for us, is the truth that the Lord Most High is the dwelling place of his people, that truth is the answer to the suffocating reality of mortality. Mortality will suffocate a man who thinks about it rightly and properly. A man who sees the temporary nature of existence and how quickly we live and die and are quickly forgotten in the big scheme of things, a man who understands that and understands that his own life is a wisp of smoke that is scattered in the wind, a man who seriously thinks about that is a man that is going to come to the point where life starts to seem really futile and, "How do I get out from under this?" And Psalms 90, 91 and 92 deal with that problem of mortality in very honest ways.

There are five points for tonight. Points 1 tonight is the problem of mortality. The problem of mortality, and remember that everything that we see tonight is going to be under that broad umbrella of the Lord Most High is the dwelling place of his people. The Lord Most High himself is where people find shelter, and what is it that they are finding shelter from preeminently? They are finding shelter from this suffocating reality of the mortality of man and that's what we want to look at.

First of all, the problem of mortality that these Psalms raise and answer for us, and here's what we see as we go through these Psalms, is that men, especially the wicked, the unsaved, they are only temporary grass in their existence. They are passing. They flourish for a short period of time but then they are quickly gone. Psalm 90:3 as this triad of Psalms opens up, Psalm 90:3 says, "You turn man back into dust And say, 'Return, O children of men.' For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it passes by, Or as a watch in the night." God is eternal and he lives beyond time, but as for man, it's something completely different. Verse 5, "You have swept them away like a flood, they fall asleep; In the morning they are like grass which sprouts anew. In the morning it flourishes and sprouts anew; Toward evening it fades and withers away." The life of man, your life, my life, is like grass that's green in the morning, that suffers under the noonday

sun, and is withered up by evening time. That is the perspective of mortality that Scripture teaches us, a breath, a fleeting vapor, a dust in the wind.

Look at verse 10 of Psalm 90, "As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, Or if due to strength, eighty years, Yet their pride is but labor and sorrow; For soon it is gone and we fly away." In Psalm 92:6-7, you see this theme repeated and these interlocking themes are so important for you to see, to understand that these three Psalms collectively teach us. Psalm 92:6 says, "A senseless man has no knowledge, Nor does a stupid man understand this: That when the wicked sprouted up like grass And all who did iniquity flourished, It was only that they might be destroyed forevermore." Man flourishes and quickly fades away. Just like the springtime flowers that we were enjoying a week or two or three weeks ago, where are they now? In their beauty we enjoyed them, but they are withered and they are shriveled up and they're already gone, the early daffodils of spring here in our region.

Now beloved, I want to tell you something really critical, something that has pressed on my mind for the past 30 years in a way that makes all of this that I have to say tonight very refreshing to my own soul. Mortality is not just a problem, mortality, your mortality is a problem. It is a problem. In light of mortality, in light of your mortality, what is the purpose of life? Why do we even bother struggling with it all if it's just going to pass so quickly and we'll be quickly forgotten in the end? What is the point of that? What was the point of the people that were living in 1850, to just pick a year at random, and the millions of people that were living then? We know the names of maybe a handful of them if we read some pre-Civil War history, the rest of them are forgotten even in our own family lines, for most of us. This is a very big problem. What, then, is the purpose of life if it is over so quickly and we go and we're forgotten?

Charles Spurgeon said this, he says, "As grass is green in the morning and turns to hay at night, so men are changed from health to corruption in a few hours. We are not cedars or oaks, but only poor grass which is vigorous in the spring but lasts not a summer through. What is there upon earth more frail than we?" As I said earlier, our existence is a vapor that passes and is quickly forgotten, and to just repeat myself without apology here this evening, it's not just you and me that's like that, it's our loved ones as well. For those that are closest to us, there is no lasting security, there is no lasting permanence to those relationships, and the more tightly we cling to them, the sooner we will find out that we can't keep them in the end.

Now no one, I understand that no one likes to talk this way but this is life, beloved, and this is the problem of mortality, and if that was all that we had to go on, if that was all that Scripture taught us about mortality, it would be very discouraging, it would be a very heavy thought, but and here's the thing that I maybe have missed from time to time more than I care to admit over these past 30 years, is that the grasp of that mortality is the start of some spiritual maturity for you. It is the start of growing in Christ. It is the start of developing a philosophy of life that can actually stand the test and the winds of time, but it is only a start. The problem of mortality is not meant to be the place that you go to and you sit down and stop and you live and let that dominate your thinking, you must come to

grips with it and comes to grips with it earnestly if for no other reason than the fact that Scripture tells us this repeatedly and would have us contemplate our mortality in such terms. But it is not an end in and of itself. If all that you did with mortality was to contemplate the brevity of life, you would soon become a morbid introspective person who would be quite the pain in the neck to be around, and my friends could probably testify to that if they felt the freedom to be honest from time to time about me. That's all right. We all have to grow.

What is mortality supposed to do for you? Mortality and the reality of mortality, the problem of mortality, beloved, becomes an instructor for you, it becomes your teacher. It has something to teach you that you are to learn from. It is something of a biblical taskmaster, a biblical tutor to lead you to something else. You can't really start to live life properly, and you certainly don't have a proper worldview, if you haven't recognized and somehow come to grips with the problem of mortality, however, these Psalms, oh, they are so precious, they are so precious, these Psalms come and take the trembling hand of the one who has been confronted with mortality and says, "Come and follow me. Let me lead you out of the despair that mortality would naturally cause you. Let me bring you to a different place."

That's what these Psalms do and what does the problem of mortality lead us to? Point 2 here this evening in these Psalms, what does mortality do? 2. It brings us to the prayer in mortality. The prayer in mortality. A sober reflection on the brevity of life should lead any thinking person to flee to the God of the Bible. A sober reflection on the brevity of life should cause any thinking person to flee to the Lord Jesus Christ who is actually resurrected from the dead and say, "Somewhere in Christ, somewhere in the resurrection is the answer to this mortality, this One who has been raised from the dead has the answer to my mortality if only He will share it with me." And a sober reflection on the brevity of life should cause you to flee to God in earnest prayer.

We pointed this out two weeks ago, look at Psalm 90:12. We won't spend much time here. Psalm 90:12 says in a prayer to God, Moses prays, "So teach us to number our days, That we may present to You a heart of wisdom." Here's the sense, the essence of the prayer of the person that has realized the biblical reality of mortality. "Lord, I see that I am under a curse, I see that this life is under a curse from which I cannot escape. I do not have the power to burst out beyond the bonds of what this mortality places upon me. Lord, Your own words says that I am destined to die once and after this comes judgment. I am destined for the grave. This is what lies ahead of me, O God, and I don't have the power to overcome that on my own. I don't even have the power to process such a weighty burden of life in my own mortal flesh and in my own mortal mind. Who can bear up under such an existence, an existence that is short, an existence that is difficult, and an existence that will soon enough be forgotten by those who come after me?"

Now I'll say it one more time and then I'm done saying it. I realize that a lot of people including perhaps many of you, don't like to think this way and you'd just as soon like to just get up and walk out. I get that, but to run away from it doesn't change the fact. If the doctor tells you you have cancer, it doesn't do any good to run out of his office with your

finger stuck in your ears saying, "Blah, blah, blah, I'm not going to listen." This is the diagnosis of the Bible on life and so we have to listen, we have to deal with this earnestly, and the prayer of Psalm 90:12 comes on bended knee, on humbled spirit that says, "Lord, I am mortal and I don't have the ability to solve this on my own. O God, O God Who has been the dwelling place of Your people, teach me. Teach me what to do with this mortal life so that I might have something to give back to You to show for it in the end." In Psalm 91:2, you see a spirit of prayer as well, here from a more trusting, a more positive perspective, you might say, but the spirit of prayer flowing on "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High," verse 2 says, "I will say to the LORD, 'My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!'" "God, teach me. God, I come to You as my refuge in the midst of this mortal life. I flee to You for safety because I can't find it and keep it on my own."

Charles Spurgeon says this and I quote, "Men are led by reflections upon the brevity of time to give their earnest attention to eternal things. They become humble as they look into the grave which is so soon to be their bed. Their passions cool in the presence of mortality. They yield themselves up to the dictates of unerring wisdom." In other words, the reality of the grave teaches a man and humbles a man; it extinguishes his pride, "How can I be proud of anything in life? How can I be boastful? How can I be arrogant when I know 100 years from now no one is going to remember my name, and probably in less time than that? What is there about my life that endures? What is there about my life that will continue?" People say, "Well, I'll live on in my friends and in the hearts of those who survive me." Okay, great, you can gag on that kind of sentimentality. Fine enough, you know, and we've all seen movies like that and shows like that that talk in those sentimental terms. Okay, you're going to live on in the memories of your people. Let's assume that for argument sake. Okay, what's going to happen to them? They're also mortal, right? They're going to die also, right? And sooner or later the ripples of the pond reach the shore and they stop going out and we're left with the fact that there's a sense in which our lives was like sticking a finger in a cup of water and you pull it out and there's no evidence it was there at the end.

Now let me just remind you so that you don't check out and give up on me here, I said that these Psalms are taking us by the hand and leading us to a better place but we want to look at this, stare it directly in the face and answer it and to come to an answer with this forbidding prospect of mortality in a way that settles it for us and helps us going forward so that its chains are left behind and its fearful stony, bony fingers can no longer grab us and concern us and occupy our minds. There is an answer to this but the answer is only meaningful if we take it seriously.

Now so the problem of mortality and we see this prayer in mortality and here's the question: why is prayer so essential in this meditation? Why is prayer so essential in the contemplation of the brutality of mortality? There's a reality to it and there is a brutality to it. Well, Charles Spurgeon says again, he says that, "This meditation is only meaningful when the Lord Himself is the teacher. He alone can teach to real and lasting profit. A short life should be wisely spent." In other words, we come to the Lord and we humble ourselves before him. We come, as it were, to the Holy Spirit and we say, "Please

be my Teacher here. Please give me understanding that transcends what I'm capable of in my natural man and in my natural mind. Please help me to overcome the blinders that are on my eyes. I live by sight not by faith. I go by what I see. I live by my passing feelings. I live by desire rather than by truth when I'm left to myself." So the prayer comes to God and says, "God, help me! I am desperate here! This mortality would drive me to insanity but for Your help in the midst of it."

So Psalm 90 closes as we've seen, in a prayer. Look at Psalm 90:13 where he says, "Do return, O LORD; how long will it be? And be sorry for Your servants." "O God, would You please have mercy on us, look on us in our pitiable miserable condition? We need Your help. We cannot escape this circle of mortality on our own so be sorry for us and help us." Verse 14, "O satisfy us in the morning with Your lovingkindness, That we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days You have afflicted us, And the years we have seen evil. Let Your work appear to Your servants And Your majesty to their children. Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us; And confirm for us the work of our hands; Yes, confirm the work of our hands." Now I'm speaking metaphorically here and in a word picture that may or may not be helpful, but here we go, the psalmist here is praying from within the realm of mortality and, as it were, his hand reaches out and pierces through the bubble of mortality to grab hold of God and to bring him, as it were, into it and say, "God, I invite You to come into my mortality and sort it out and make something useful out of this mess that I can't possibly do on my own." We humbly praise God, "I am desperate here! I am appealing to You for grace, for mercy, for help that I do not deserve. I'm asking You to be gracious to me in this condition of mortality in which I find myself."

Now all of that sobers us. None of us, I suppose, really like to be brought to a face-to-face confrontation with our utter dependence and our utter spiritual bankruptcy. To one degree or another, we like to be in charge. We like to have control of things and yet what Scripture is teaching us in this brutal reality of mortality is that that's not the way that things really are, and the sooner that we see through that, the quicker that we can get to an answer to that mortality, but as long as we're clinging to this sense of autonomy and self-sufficiency by which we are all naturally partakers, the longer that we cling to that, the longer it is for us to get to an answer to it, and you cling to it until the phone call comes in the night, there's been an accident; you cling to it until the doctor comes in and says, "There's nothing more that I can do here," and then under the press of the circumstances, you may not have the time to think through it in the way that you want to. So that's why, that's why we come to God in prayer and we say, "God, teach me now while I have strength, while I have vitality, while I have a clear mind, teach me now so that I can live in a proper way with the rest of the days that I have which are going to be brief but let them be found for Your glory."

Now we see the problem of mortality and we cry out in prayer in a spiritually bankrupt way that says, "God, I need Your help here in the midst of my mortality." If we are willing to go down the path that far, then we come over the hill and we look out on a beautiful valley with a broad view, a vista that is a valley of grace with bright blooming colors that invite us to come and to smell and to sniff of the wonder of the glory of the

grace and the mercy and the kindness of God. As you read Psalms 90, 91 and 92 together, these Psalms inject bright hope into the mortality that you would never find on your own. So point 3 here this evening, we've seen the problem and the prayer in mortality, point 3 comes the promise in mortality. The promise in mortality. There is promise for the believing heart in the midst of our mortal lives. Now remember that at the end of Psalm 90 there has been this prayer, "O God, be gracious to me in light of my mortality." What Psalm 91 does is this, Psalm 91 meets that prayer with an answer and the answer is found in Yahweh himself, in God himself.

Look at Psalm 91:1. Remember, Psalm 90 ended on this prayer, "God, be sorry for Your servants. Make us glad because we are not in our own weakness here." Now there is such a contrast as you go to Psalm 91:1, it says, "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty." Oh, finally words of relief, words of hope, words of promise; to come to God for shelter in the midst of this mortality is to find shadow from the oppressive heat, to find shelter, to find rest, to find protection in the midst of it.

Verse 2, "I will say to the LORD, 'My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!' For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper And from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with His pinions, And under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark." Oh, beloved, do you see how Psalm 91 answers the question, the problem of mortality with promise? God invites the one who comes to him by faith with promise that says God in his grace and his mercy says, "I will protect you. I will be the answer to mortality for you. I will care for you. I will love you. In Me your soul can find permanent everlasting rest and peace." Mortality meets its match in the love and the faithfulness of the God of the Bible. Mortality meets its match, mortality is defeated in the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and this is the only place, beloved, where there is an answer to your mortality. Everything else is an illusion. Everything else is a dead-end. But in Christ those who put their faith in Christ have a promise from beyond the curse, from outside the curse, from beyond the grave, that infuses hope into our mortality.

And look at what God himself says at the end of Psalm 91 to the man who humbly puts his faith in him, in New Testament terms, the one who humbly puts his faith in Christ and surrenders all love and allegiance to the resurrected Lord. Look at it, Psalm 91:14, "Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him." Look at all these "I wills." I think there are eight of them in these three verses. These are the promises of God to the man who puts his faith in him. "Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him securely on high, because he has known My name." "He has known Me in all My character, all that I am, all that I've revealed Myself to be. He's known Me, therefore he's Mine. He belongs to Me. I'll protect him and keep him." Verse 15, "He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. With a long life I will satisfy him And let him see My salvation." Beloved, in the midst of this transient, passing, subject to death life, here is the God of the Bible graciously promising refuge to all who will come and believe.

Look at Isaiah 55:1. Isaiah 55:1. We'll step outside of these Psalms for just a moment. Isaiah 55:1, "Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost." "Everything that is necessary for your nourishment is available to you without cost, just come and find it in Me."

Verse 2, "Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And delight yourself in abundance. Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, According to the faithful mercies shown to David." God invites mortal man to come to him by faith, to step out from the realm of the curse, to step into, as it were, the realm of Christ where full deliverance is made, where life is given, eternal life is promised and generously shared with all who come to Christ in such humble faith and so what we find is this, is that even in the midst of this transient passing life, there is refuge to be found in Christ.

Charles Spurgeon again, speaking about Psalm 91 in an overview sense says this, "In the whole collection, there is not a more cheering Psalm. Its tone is elevated and sustained throughout. Faith is at its best and speaks nobly. He who can live in the spirit of Psalm 91 will be fearless even if the grave is engorged with corpses." To understand the promises, the grace that is offered to us in Christ, to understand what God does for his children and the "I wills" that are promised here at the end of Psalm 91, is to find the answer to mortality. All of a sudden, all of a sudden you can look at the grave and say, "Yes, that will soon enough be my bed, but do you know what? I know my God and He says He will deliver me. I look at the grave but I look beyond the grave and My Christ says that He will set me securely on high because I've known Him. I can look at the passing of my loved ones, I can be in the midst of trouble that would overwhelm and drown me, and call upon my Christ and know that He will answer me. He will be with me in trouble. He will rescue me. He will honor me. He will satisfy me. He will let me see His salvation." And all of a sudden from this context the grave has utterly lost its power now because there is a promise from beyond the grave, from outside the realm of the curse in mortality, that a gracious God has given to those who come to him in humble repentant faith.

So, yes, Spurgeon was exactly right when he said over a century ago, here in Psalm 91 faith is at its best and it speaks nobly, the one who understands these things can be fearless, and I would venture to say that the one who projects confidence without faith in Christ is simply wearing a mask that will be stripped away when mortality comes to his own home. But for us, beloved, for us in Christ, we are not heirs of death and wrath, we are not heirs of the labor and sorrow of which Psalm 90 speaks. That is not our lot. That is not our final destiny. In Christ we are heirs of life and grace and we know that because he has said so, because he has promised, and he never breaks a promise. God cannot lie. The things of which are spoken here at the end of Psalm 91 we can base our lives on them without fear that our trust has been misplaced, without fear that our trust will be broken. And those promises bring flaming light to the otherwise overwhelmed soul. To the parched and thirsty one who has been crawling along in the desert looking for hope in the midst of the mortality, suddenly a fresh clear stream, an oasis, is flowing from which

he can freely drink that satisfies him so that he can get up and walk like a man again. That's what these Psalms do. There are no greater themes to bring to a man who has been dwarfed by the reality of mortality.

What does that do for us, then? You've walked through the problem, we pray in our mortality for help and it's met with this gracious promise from God, what, then, do we do? That's not the end point either. You know, the promise is wonderful but that's not the end point. A promise like that from a great and gracious God like that compels a response from you and me. This compels, requires, invites, a response from the one who finds the thirst of mortality answered in the flowing water of grace found in the promise of Christ, and that brings us to point 4 this evening: the praise in mortality. The praise in mortality. Beloved, I want to tell you, once again we come to the walls of vocabulary and we find and we stretch our vocabulary to the uttermost outer limits of it and we find it inadequate to express what needs to be said in response to such great realities of which we have spoken here this evening, but we have to try. Beloved, to have such a promise like that from the eternal God, from the greatness of Christ in the midst of this cursed mortality, in the midst of a wrath that our own sin invites to call down upon us, to have promise where judgment is due, oh, beloved, that's a great grace, a great treasure that calls forth praise from the depths, the innermost depths of your being.

Look at Psalm 92:1 now, "It is good to give thanks to the LORD And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning And Your faithfulness by night, With the ten-stringed lute and with the harp, With resounding music upon the lyre." Fire up the music, fire up the praise, an answer to mortality has been given to us and we must lift our voices in thanksgiving to this great God who has done so much for us, who has rescued us from that from which we could not save ourselves.

Why do we praise? Verse 4, "For," an explanatory introduction, an explanatory "For," "For You, O LORD, have made me glad by what You have done, I will sing for joy at the works of Your hands." "God, I am so thrilled, I am so joyful, I am so glad that You in Your kindness and grace have delivered me from this hopeless mortality that draped over me, that You in Your goodness and kindness and promise, have delivered me, have taken me out from under the stormy black clouds and You have brought me into the sunshine of Your grace where I can see things clearly, where I have beautiful vistas in front of me that are unhindered by mortality, and my sight is made clear, it is made clean, it is made perceptive by the wonders of grace that You have given to me in Christ."

So I go back to what I said earlier, beloved, yes, a biblical mindset, a biblical worldview calculates in mortality, it takes mortality into account, and our strength of position in Christ is such that we can stare it straight into the face, we can go and stand over the grave that had been dug for our own corpse and we can mock the grave, we can stare it straight in the face and say, "I have conquered you in Christ. You hold no power over me. My heart is aflame with hope and the grave will not extinguish it. Oh, it might extinguish my mortal earthly life, they might put this shell of a body in there, but my soul will live on in triumph in Christ and I will depart and be with Christ and I'll find that to be very

much better, not out of any deserving of my own, not out of any righteousness of my own do I deserve anything like this, but I belong to a Christ who has promised me and He will not break His promise and His promise will not stutter, it will not stagger at the reality of the grave, it will take me by the hand and take me straight through that grave out safe on the other side and I will be with Him in glory." And I'll look back, as it were, and rather than the grave mocking me, with Scripture informed words we'll mock the grave, "Where is your victory, O death? Where is your sting? Where is your victory, O grave. I'm on the other side and I'm safe and my God did exactly what He promised me to do, He delivered me from you." And we are intended to live in that victory by faith now. That is our position now. We are meant to appropriate the wonder of this now and no longer being intimidated by that mortality, no longer to be afraid of what happens to our loved ones, but with a confident humble trust in the one who said, "I will be with you in trouble," to go forward like a man confident, trusting, joyful, glad, giving praise to the one who made such a reaction possible. That's the praise in mortality. Beloved, if you are in Christ, you have a context in which to overcome your mortality and in this life, we don't have to wait for the victory on the other side of the grave. That'll be great, that'll be victory upon victory, but we have hope now, we have comfort now. This great God, this gracious Christ who loved us and gave himself up for us, right now as we speak, this great God is with us and he is with us forever.

Let me just call to your attention briefly some passages that emphasize this aspect of it, God with us. Psalm 16:8 says, "He is at my right hand." Psalm 23:4, "I fear no evil for You are with me." Psalm 73:23, "I am continually with you." Psalm 91:15, "I will be with him in trouble." Colossians 1:27, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Matthew 28:20, "Lo, I am with you always even to the end of the age." We're lost in wonder, love and praise at this point. This God who planned our salvation and appointed it for us, this Christ who suffered and bled and gave his blessed righteous life blood for our sins, this blessed Brother who intercedes for us at the right hand of the Father in heaven, this blessed Holy Spirit who indwells us as a promise of our future inheritance, that great God is with us and he is with us forever. You see, beloved, you don't look, you cannot find within this earthly realm the answer to your mortality. You can't find that which overturns the curse within the realm that expresses it. There are no answers there. We look to a realm that is beyond our earthly life that we see. You look above it, you look beyond it, you look to Christ and you find it, and when you do, that leads you to praise. Charles Spurgeon said this, and I quote, "When God reveals His work to a man and performs a work in his soul, He makes his heart glad." The natural consequence is continual praise.

What can we do, beloved, except to offer our most heartfelt, our deepest worship and praise and honor to the God who has treated us so magnificently as this? How can we render adequate thanks to have been delivered from sin and mortality into a realm of eternal life and grace and promise that can never be broken? Tell me how we can adequately praise him. Tell me how we can keep our sour dispositions in light of such wonderful news. Yeah, life's hard but God has provided the answer to it and there's a point at which you are just overwhelmed by the majesty of it; rightly informed your heart says, "I don't deserve any of this. Why am I on the receiving end of such magnificent grace as this? Why such kindness and goodness to a rebel, to an ingrate, to one who

flaunted immorality in the face of an immortal God? Why such grace?" You bet we're grateful.

Last point: the provision in mortality. The provision in mortality. The provision in mortality. The one who responds to mortality in the kind of faith of which we've been speaking here tonight, finds out this, he finds that it's well with his soul. Look at verse 12 of Psalm 92. Here is a man who has truly overcome it all, who has overcome and conquered mortality, this righteous man, this righteous man who lives by faith as Habakkuk 2 says. Psalm 92:12, "The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree, He will grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Planted in the house of the LORD, They will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still yield fruit in old age; They shall be full of sap and very green."

Beloved, can I point something out to you that's really really cool? I mean, this is really cool. Psalm 90 spoke of man in his temporary transient nature and pointed to a plant, grass, here today, gone by nighttime. Well, by the time you walk through Psalms 90, 91 and 92, the man of faith has been transformed into a different kind of plant, if you will, to a towering palm tree, to a towering oak. These stately trees symbolize permanence and strength. You have been delivered from the realm of grass into a realm of lasting stately stability in ways that Psalm 1 even spoke of.

Look at Psalm 1 for just a moment. I should go back and re-preach Psalm 1 for those of you who weren't here five years ago when I first preached it, but I probably won't. Psalm 1:2, "his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers." The man of faith looking to Christ for eternal life, informed by the eternal, inerrant, infallible, enduring word of God, finds his life filled with such energy, such vitality, such life that his life is actually fruitful, and mortality and the grave no longer define the outcome of his earthly existence. That's what the word of God does for us. That's what Christ gives to us. That's why we praise him. This is the provision in our our mortality is that God gives us a strength that towers over the transient mortality of the wicked. Do you know what that means, beloved, speaking to some of you especially with gray hairs on your head? Nothing personal. God so blesses the righteous who live by faith that old age is no cause for fear. Even for you younger ones, we can say this, God so blesses you that sudden illness or even sudden death is no cause for fear for you either. Beloved, the promise of God means this, and the sovereignty of God means this, it means that you will without doubt, you will certainly have all the days that the Lord has appointed for you, you won't miss out on a single one of them and through faith, what our God does is he will bless those days he has given to you for your well-being.

Think with me, beloved, was it not so with our Christ? His days were brief, a brief 33 years, and yet no one has ever dwelt more under the shadow of the Almighty. His Father's blessing was upon him every day of his life and his earthly affliction, from the tumult of the cross he cried out, "Father, into Thy hand I commit My spirit." And what did God do? He delivered him. He resurrected him. He brought him out from the grave.

And, beloved, what I want you to see is that for you who are in Christ, you inherit that same protection, you are in the same position before God as Christ himself was because we are united with him, we are united in him by faith, and so the protection that God gave to Christ to bring him through the grave and to resurrect him on the other side, is ours in Christ. We will pass through the grave and be with him in the end. He said in John 14, it's why he went away, he went away to prepare a place for us so that we would be with him. We who die in Christ will rise with Christ over our own mortality.

Beloved, the blessing of God is not measured to you by counting earthly days, as if the one who lives the longest on earth wins the race. It's not measured in terms of health. It's not measured in prosperity. It's measured by something better. It's measured by something lasting. It's measured by something of eternal value. Again, our brother Spurgeon says this, and I quote, he says, "Aged believers possess a ripe experience and by their mellow tempers and sweet testimonies, they feed many. Even if bedridden, they bear the fruit of patience. If poor and obscure, their lonely and contented spirit becomes the admiration of those who know how to appreciate modest worth. Grace does not leave the saint." Oh, this is so sweet, "The promise is still sure when the eyes can no longer read it, and the voice of the Spirit in the soul is still melodious when the daughters of music are brought low." Beloved, you and I are not to fear our mortality in light of these things but rather to have it lead us to a mature and robust faith, and then with trust in Christ, we can rest unshaken. In light of these things, we have no fear of the future.

Spurgeon one final time says, "Whatever He may do with us, He is always in the right." Beloved, here in Christ, the Lord Most High, you can dwell safely. Psalm 92:15. What do we do as we dwell there? We "declare that the LORD is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him." Beloved, we take these three Psalms and what they have taught us and we weave them into a crown which we gladly place on the head of our Beloved who loved us and gave himself up for us.

O Christ, you not only conquered the grave, You conquered mortality itself, and You have conquered the fear and the dominating oppression of mortality for all who know You. I pray for each one here, O God. And for those who are living in sin and indifferent to the brevity of life, O God, that You would wake them up while there's time that they might flee to Christ and be saved, for He is ever willing and extends His hand to everyone who would hear and believe. How great, how wonderful You are, our Savior. For those of us in You, Father, for those of us in Christ, may we find our rest and our satisfaction in Him and, indeed, O God, we offer up to You our most inadequate but most sincere crown of praise to our Beloved, the One Who has loved us and gave Himself up for us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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