

It's already 2015! Was it already 8 years ago that happened? I can't believe how fast he's grown up! Wow, how time flies! Since when did you get all those gray hairs? These are just a few of the ways in which we express the brevity(短暂) of life. **Life is short, and then we die.** If you are 18 years old, you think you've got forever in front of you, but *soon and very soon* you will be facing high blood pressure and taking heart medication. That's not a threat; it's a promise!

In Psalm 90, *a Prayer of Moses the Man of God*, two important truths meet: First, that **life is short**; second, that **God is eternal**. Wisdom is knowing how to bring these two truths together! A wise man is one who figures out that life is very short, and then runs to the eternal God to make Him our dwelling place. In this sermon we will, with God's help, look first at God's eternal nature and secondly at God's call to mortal man to take refuge in the eternal God.

1. The one true God is our Eternal God

Psalm 90:1 – **LORD, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.** (主啊, 你世世代代作我们的居所。) Many generations, but only one Dwelling Place!

Psalm 90:2 – **Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.** (诸山未曾生出, 地与世界你未曾造成, 从亘古到永远, 你是神。) God is eternal; there is no beginning and no end with God. We come and go; God remains.

Moses was a man who witnessed a lot of major changes in his life. He moved from one home to another. In a culture where baby boys were required to be killed, he moved from his parents' covenant (圣约) home to Pharaoh's pagan (异教) home, adopted by Pharaoh's daughter. When he became an adult, he had to move from the palace of Pharaoh into the wilderness of Sinai where he took care of Jethro's flocks. Then he moved back to Egypt to lead Israel out. Then, for the rest of his life, he moved in a tent from the place to place until he was 120 years old. His eyes saw a lot of misery, a lot of death, a lot of God's anger toward rebellious people, a lot of change, and a lot of transition from one generation to the next in the harsh wilderness.

Yet in all the change, all the sorrow, all the moving, and all the death, there was one constant, one things that held the fabric of life together: **the eternal God is our dwelling place in all generations.** Psalm 90 is Moses' prayer celebrating this fact. It is filled with the pain of *time* as well as the power of God's *timelessness*. God is eternal and that is our hope.

What do we mean when we say that God is eternal? Eternity is essential to who God is. if He is not eternal, He is not God. To be God means to be absolute, to be over all. And that means also to be over time, the Lord and Maker of time, not bound to time.

There are at least three aspects to the truth that God is eternal.

a) God's eternity (永恒) means that He is outside of time.

Since God is the Maker of time, then He must be above and outside of time. It means that God goes all the way to the beginning of the world, and yes, before the beginning of the world: **Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting You are God.** That means more than just that God is older than the world; it means He is outside of time, because time began when the world began. Matter, time and space belong together and cannot exist without each other.

Thus, to be the Creator is to be outside of time. It means God has no age at all. He is age-less. He is forever old and forever young at the same time, and never growing older. (Commentary by Keil and Delitzsch): *The Lord was God before the world was; His divine existence reaches out of the unlimited past into the unlimited future.* (VanGenderen/Velema): *He did not become what He is, and will never cease to be what He is. He is the God who is, and who was, and who is to come.* (Revelation 1:4)

Eternity for God does not mean that He is on the timeline (时间表) forever. He created the timeline and therefore is above it, not controlled by it. Job 36:26 says: ***Behold, God is great, and we know Him not; the number of His years is unsearchable.***

b) Eternal also means that He relates to time in such a way He is not affected or changed by the passing of time

He relates to time and to generations as One who is rules over it. Psalm 90:4 says: **For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night.** For us, 1000 years is almost endless. 40 generations. For God it's just like it all happened yesterday, or less, it all took just 1/3 of the night shift of a security guard – 4 hours long! This means that God is equally close to all time. Nothing is far back in the past for Him; nothing is far ahead in the future for Him.

Later, the Bible turns that statement around and says it both ways: **But beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day** (2 Peter 3:8). One day is as a thousand years: that one day never

gets old for God, He never forgets it, never loses track of it. It's always immediate and present to Him. God is not bound to time; He is not tied to the passage of time. Everything is always immediate to God, everything is right now to God all the time. Whereas as we can't escape time because we are creatures of time – like the grass, here today, gone tomorrow, God relates to time as Someone who is an outsider to it.

What this also means is this: *God's thoughts, emotions, purposes, and acts are, without succession (连续), one and inseparable, the same forever.* (A. A. Hodge) We think our thoughts one at a time, one thought after another. If we try to do more, we become confused and overwhelmed! But God thinks all His thoughts all at once, all the time. This is why He can hear many prayers at one time, and do many works at the same time. This is because He is eternal and not restricted to time.

c) God's eternity also means that time always depends on Him and He rules it.

As the Creator of time, God's eternity also mean that time depends on Him for its existence, just like all the rest of creation depends on God moment by moment for its existence. Every breath is created by God, every second is created by God. God gives the clock its every tick and every tock. And He directs and rules it. He works in time, and uses time for His own glory.

- He set the time for Jesus to come the first time: **When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son** (Gal. 4:4)
- and has set the time for Jesus to return: **He has fixed the day when he will judge the world in righteousness** (Acts 17:31)
- He has also recorded in his book the number of days each person is going to live: **in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.** (Psalm 139:16) (我未成形的体质，你的眼早已看见了。你所定的日子，我尚未度一日，你都写在你的册上了。)

As creatures of time, we can't control it. We try to, and get upset when things don't go according to plan. But God rules time. The Bible says that **He knows the end from the beginning.** (Isaiah 46:10). All that He says, He will do. It will come to pass, because He is not subject to time; time is subject to Him. That's why you can trust His promises, and always count on Him, because His word is not subject to time and chance. Time will not change God's will or promises or commandments. **The Word of the Lord endures forever** (I Peter 1:24) because the LORD Himself endures forever.

I may say I am going to do this or that, but time and chance may change my plans and promises. **Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all.** (Ecclesiastes 9:11) 我又转念，见日光之下，快跑的未必能赢，力战的未必得胜，智慧的未必得粮食，明哲的未必得钱财，灵巧的未必得喜悦。所临到众人的，是在乎当时的机会。 But time and chance do not happen to God!

Even though God's eternity is a mystery we cannot comprehend, it is the glory of God. Let us exalt and worship Him who is eternal, the great **I Am Who I Am!** And let us take refuge in Him whose will, word, kingdom, love, and power are eternal:

--But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King. (Jeremiah 10:10)

--Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. (Psalms 145:13)

--But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children. (Psalms 103:17)

--Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. (Hebrews 13:8)

--Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God alone who is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (1 Tim. 1:17)

2. The one true God is our Eternal Home

Moses, the Man of God, found this doctrine of God's eternity to be a great comfort in the midst of the sorrows and troubles of this life. Yes, God *created* man to live with Him forever, but **the wages of sin is death**(罪的工价乃是死). Because of sin, sorrow, trouble and death entered the world. *God cuts life short*. God says: **Return to dust**. Moses saw that in the wilderness where a whole rebellious generation perished under the wrath of God.

Psalm 90 says: (5) **You carry them away like a flood; they are like a sleep. In the morning they are like grass which grows up; (6) in the morning it flourishes and grows up; in the evening it is cut down and withers. (7) For we have been consumed by Your anger, and by Your wrath we are terrified....(9) For all our days have passed away in Your wrath; we finish our years like a sigh. (10) The days of our lives is 70 years, and if by reason of strength they are 80 years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.** (我们一生的年日是七十岁。若是强壮可到八十岁。但其中所矜夸的，不过是劳苦愁烦。转眼成空，我们便如飞而去。)

This may sound gloomy and sad, but far sadder is a secular world like ours that refuses to live with death, refuses to count days, and refuses to face our mortality and the brevity of life. We live as if life will never come to an end, as if we will never have to meet our Maker, as if we are in control of time, and Masters of our own destiny. Life is a game that never stops. We live in a dream-world of eternity. We willingly fool ourselves. We look for ways to convince ourselves that we are not aging (衰老)!

But *wisdom* says: My days are short! My life is fragile (脆弱的)! My years will soon be over! Psalm 90.12 – **So teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom.** (求你指教我们怎样数算自己的日子, 好叫我们得着智慧的心。) I must find a safe place for my short, fragile, little life. Where can I go? Where can I hide? I can't hide in my own strength because my strength will fade. There's only one place to go with our short life: to the eternal God, and make Him our dwelling place. **LORD, You have been our dwelling place in all generations!**

If you want your life to count, if you want your life to last forever, if you want your *works* to count forever, then come to this God, and ask Him **to take up Your life in His own.** Ask Him to take you into fellowship with Him so that you may have in Him *eternal security*. No, you can't become eternal in the sense that God is eternal (outside of time, in control of time), but He will give you what He created you for: **endless succession** of days with Him! He will remove His wrath(忿怒) from you, and show you His favour. He will take away your fear of death, and give you gladness all your days instead!

Psalm 90:15,17 – **Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy that we may rejoice and be glad all our days! Make us glad according to the days in which You have afflicted us, the years in which we have seen evil...and let the beauty [delight, pleasure] of the LORD our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands.** Moses is saying: *Life is short and full of troubles, but take delight in us, O LORD, and establish our works. Then we will be glad and satisfied with our short lives here.*

And the next Psalm carries on this theme to say that though Your life with God is short here, it will not end if You make the eternal God your refuge: **If you make the Most High Your dwelling – even the LORD, who is my refuge – then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent.** Then the LORD says to the one who trusts in Him: **Because he has set his love on Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name...With long life I will satisfy him and show him My salvation.** (Psalm 91:9-10,14,16) That means, whatever trouble you face, He will rescue you, be with you, and satisfy you with long life so that even if you die, yet shall you live, because He is your home, your eternal dwelling place!

But how? How do we enter fellowship with God and make Him our eternal home? Jesus said that He is the way and the door to God. If you know Him, You know the one true God. If you believe in Him, you are in fellowship with God. He is the only Mediator (中保) between God and man. On the cross, Jesus took away from us the sin that separates us from God, our true Home, so that through Him we can return to God, our true Home.

Jesus took our sin, your death, and God's anger toward us upon Himself – His life was cut short under God's wrath – so that we could be set free from the curse of God's anger toward sin. Then He rose again to give us eternal life with God. He said: **I am the resurrection (复活) and the life. He who believes in Me though he may die, yet shall he live. I tell you the truth, whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.** (John 11:25-26) Jesus said: **For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.**" (John 6:40)

If we believe in this God, then we live in Him. He becomes our home, our Dwelling Place – already now, everyday, we have eternal life! Then we can live with God's favor every day, and know our labor is not in vain. We may ask the LORD to establish the works of our hands, and, because of Jesus Christ, God will take our works and use them to build His eternal kingdom! We have His promise through Jesus who died for sin and rose again: **Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.** 所以我亲爱的弟兄们, 你们务要坚固不可摇动, 常常竭力多作主工, 因为知道你们的劳苦, 在主里面不是徒然的。(I Corinthians 15:58) Jesus replaces our mortality with immortality! Knowing this by faith helps us get up in the morning to go about our tasks; it allows us to be glad all our days and sing our way through our few days here on earth.

One Christian historian wrote just before he died a few years ago: *If Christ is raised, nothing else matters. If Christ is not raised, nothing matters.*

When your years on earth are up and you die, God will remain your home, and you will live in His presence forever, serving Him day and night! Jesus said: **In My Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go there to prepare a place for you. And if I go there and prepare a place for you, I will come again to take you to be with me where I am.** (John 14:2-3)

What a hope and what a future we have with God in Christ! It may not add years to our life here on earth, but it will certainly add life to our years, and when we die, we live in the Father's house in heaven, and then in the new creation forever! The eternal God is the one who gives permanence to our life and labors. **So make Him your dwelling place during your short life here on this earth.** We tend to place too much emphasis on our earthly homes, and not nearly enough emphasis on our Eternal Home. We think that satisfaction and security depend on the beauty and glory of our earthly homes, and forget that the only Home that gives true meaning to life is the everlasting God!

The last words of Moses, the man of God, to Israel, were these: **The eternal God is Your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.** 永生的神是你的居所。他永久的膀臂在你以下。(Deuteronomy 33:27) He called the people of God to place their weak lives in the safety of the everlasting arms of God. When you trust in Him, everlasting arms hold up your weak and fragile life so that even when you are weak you are strong in the Lord.

Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock. (Isaiah 26:4)

To the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only-wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (1 Timothy 1:17)