

Moses, to whom Psalm 90 is ascribed, knew what it meant to be a stranger in a foreign land; so did the people of Israel after 400 years in Egypt and another 40 years wandering in the wilderness; so did the exiled Jews of the Babylonian captivity for whom this set of Psalms (90–106) was collected. Psalm 90 is a message from a foreigner speaking for foreigners presented to foreigners so that they would get true wisdom for their journey through life.

Verse 12 teaches an important principle: the shortness of life should motivate us to seek true wisdom in living life in a God-pleasing, productive manner. Whether socially, culturally, but especially spiritually foreign in this world, we are instructed by this Psalm how to get true wisdom for the journey through life to a heavenly home.

I. Affirm God's sovereign rule (90:1–2).

1. *By having the right perspective about God:* He is Lord, Creator, and eternal.
2. *By having the right perspective about our relationship to God:* He is a faithful dwelling place where you are at home, cared for, and welcomed.

To get wisdom affirm that your life is in God's hands. Whatever your circumstances, God provides for His children and shelters them.

II. Acknowledge human frailty and sinfulness (90:3–10).

Death as a judgment on sin (compare v. 3 with Genesis 3:19) and judgment after death (Hebrews 9:27) are certain. To get wisdom you need to acknowledge that human life is short because of sin.

1. *Reckon with life being short (vv. 4–6, 10).*
 - a. The longest you can imagine a person living (like Methuselah) is no more time to God than the day that is already being forgotten or a few hours of the night, when you are unaware of what is happening (v. 4).
 - b. As a downpour of rain or flash flood would overwhelm and wash things away, so also God overwhelms and washes people away in death (v. 5a).
 - c. Mankind is like grass which sprouts fresh and vibrant but soon is cut down or withers (v. 5b–6).
 - d. A person may live 70 or even 80 years, but even the best part of their lives, or the added years of a stronger person, is still full of toil (v. 10).
2. *Know that life is cut off because of God's judgment on sin (vv. 7–9).*
 - a. God's anger against sin is irresistible, a fact which Israel experienced in the wilderness and which was given for us as an example (v. 7; cf. 1 Corinthians 10:6).
 - b. God has all our sins to view, examine, and judge, even those which we have tried to hide or are hidden from us (v. 8).
 - c. The anger of God at sin overshadows all our lives till the very end (v. 9).

Sin which entered the world through Adam affects everyone, although not everyone sins in the same manner. Few recognize that life is short, and full of toil and struggle, because of sin. But knowing this is part of developing wisdom.

III. Desire wisdom from God (90:11–12).

1. The rhetorical questions of verse 11 anticipate that people do not really understand how violently opposed God is to sin. God's anger against sin is directly proportional to the fear which we should have toward God. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10).
2. The heart of Psalm 90 is found in verse 12, toward which the first 11 verses move. We need God to teach us to reckon with the shortness of life, especially in comparison with His eternal existence, so that we may gain the skill (wisdom) of living disciplined, productive, God-honoring lives.

IV. Plead for mercy and grace (90:13–17).

1. *We need God's mercy in light of our sinfulness (vv. 13–15).*
 - a. The LORD (Jehovah) is Israel's covenant God whom Moses asked to turn from His anger to mercy on those who were still His servants (v. 13).
 - b. Moses's plea was for the LORD to fill them with His gracious, covenant love, thus giving them joy for all the lives and beyond (vv. 14–15). The wise of heart turn to God to receive what only God can give in the context of lives full of struggle.
2. *We need God's grace for the sake of His glory (vv. 16–17).*
 - a. The saving work of God displays His glory, a glory which Moses desires to be revealed both to the present and to future generations (v. 16).
 - b. It is specially blessed when God's "delight" rests on His people and assures that their efforts are productive and have eternal value (v. 17).

Those who recognize their need, rely upon God in His mercy and grace to make of their lives that which is pleasing to Him.

Having a "permanent residence" in God from which to view our transient lives on earth, will help believers gain the wisdom needed to live God-honoring lives. God's anger against sin was fully revealed in the sacrifice of His Son on the cross, by which also the glory of His grace and mercy is shown. Ignoring eternal needs for the sake of temporary success is disastrous. Be thankful for every reminder that this world is neither our ultimate home nor the defining standard for our lives.