

# WHITE MEMORIAL

## PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### WMPC – Men’s Bible Study

Psalm 90 – Spring 2017

Lesson 2

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#### Read Psalm 90

#### 3 Questions:

**Q1:** How often do you think about dying? Psalm 90 is typically read at funerals and it reminds us of our own condition and our own destiny? What is Moses (Moses is acknowledged by tradition to be the writer) trying to convey to us about ourselves and about God?

**Q2:** Psalm 90 is also about time. How do you see time? Do you see time as a burden when we have to wait or is life so busy you see it as scarcity? Has time ever been a source of anxiety, illusion or remorse? In reading Psalm 90, what is the true hope of time? What is time supposed to bring you?

**Q3:** Have you ever felt like a man without a country? Moses was a fugitive from Egypt and yet he died before he got to the promise land, Canaan. How did Moses realize his dwelling place was not a location but God? How do you realize that same dwelling place in your own life?

#### 3 Insights:

**I1:** Psalm 90 is the only Psalm that is attributed to Moses. There are 150 Psalms divided into 5 books of themes, very similar in thought to the Five Books of the Torah (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). In the first 89 Psalms, the theme “refuge” comes up 30 times. Psalm 90 is a transition from lament to praise. In it, we see Moses discussing several different perspectives on the human experience – human frailty, divine anger, experience in exile, petition for wisdom, praise of the creator, reflection on the permanence of God, reflection on the brevity of life, and focus on the creator not on the brief human life.

**I2:** AF Kirkpatrick in the *Books of Psalms* writes the following:

“Life, both in the days of Moses and in the present, is marked by a certain frustration and futility. The Book of Job presents the same dismal picture of life: “For a man is born for trouble, as sparks fly upward” (Job 5:7). The message of Psalm 90, while it is a somber theme, is one that is both true to reality and foundational to a healthy perspective on life. Those who wish only to think positively will not want to ponder this psalm long, but are the very people who need most to grasp its message. We have all heard the saying “Where there’s life, there’s hope.” Although there is a measure of truth to this statement, Moses informs us in Psalm 90, “In this life there is sadness and shortness, there is frustration and failure.” From a biblical and theological point of view this is not the purpose for which life was first created (Gen. 1–2), nor is it the way life will always be (Rev. 21–22), but in the days between paradise lost (Gen. 3) and paradise regained (Rev. 4–20), this is the way it is. Noah, who was spared from the destruction of the flood, nevertheless was seen in a drunk and disgusting state afterwards (Gen. 9:18–29). Man’s effort to find security and significance through the building of a city and tower were futile (Gen. 11:1–9). Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, while trusting in the promises of God to give them a land and a

great nation (Gen. 12:1-3), did not see it fulfilled in their lifetime.”

**I3:** Walter Brueggemann in *Psalms* does a great job articulating Ancient Israel:

“In times of crisis, the community of Ancient Israel would gather at a sacred place. Led by the priests, the community would fervently articulate their crisis in prayer to Yahweh in order for intervention and deliverance. The two major sections (Verses 1-10 and then 11-17) focus first on man’s plight and then on man’s petition. This psalm makes it very clear that the only hope Israel has is with God. God is the dwelling place. He is the help and refuge needed. God is reliable and human beings are frail.”

### **3 Links to further study:**

**L1:** Isaac Watts, a famous Christian poet and hymn writer, wrote **Our God, Our Help in Ages Past** paraphrasing the 90th Psalm. It originally consisted of nine stanzas. In present usage, however, the hymn is usually limited to section one, two and three. The lines you might remember are:

O God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Our shelter from the stormy blast  
And our eternal home.  
Be though our guard while life shall last  
And our eternal home.

**L2:** In this heart wrenching interpretation of Psalm 90, Rachel Lopez Rosenberg reflects on losing her hair due to cancer treatments in this spoken poem.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EwfFuT9CdZY>

**L3:** The Cathedral Church of St. Peter & St. Paul in the City & Episcopal Diocese of Washington performing Psalm 90:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AFZRx8hoQI8>