

The Psalms: Infallible Inspiration For Living
Psalm 90
Inspiration to See Things Through His Perspective

Introduction: Perspective defines everything! A few months ago, while our girls were at youth camp, an alarm erupted in our house that Keri and I both initially thought was our burglar alarm. I was in that first phase of falling asleep when it sounded, so it was kind of a mental whiplash moment. The instant I heard it, I grabbed my gun and posted up by our bedroom door and our alarm panel, where I can see across the main part of our house.

Our alarm not only alerts you with a siren, but it also verbally tells you what's going on; it will say, "fire" or "back door," etc., so that you know what's happening and what to do. If it's a fire, get out; if it's an intruder, knowing where they entered is essential to how I will engage and try to eliminate the threat against my family. But in this instance, no words were being shouted out by the system at all, just the loud blaring of an alarm that then just cut off. A burglar alarm is not supposed to just cut off.

We were both totally confused. So, while I stayed posted up by the bedroom door with a gun, I got Keri to call our alarm company, who were equally confused because the alarm system had never been triggered. To our confusion, the alarm system was still set and unphased! Long story short, it turned out we had a faulty smoke detector!

Did you notice my actions, thoughts, and emotions were all being shaped by my perspective of what was happening—as is always the case? Our initial highly sleep-impacted perspective was that we were hearing our burglar alarm, which led me to be in full-on protection mode with a gun. However, once we realized it was likely a faulty smoke detector, I went into fire inspector mode to make sure it hadn't been triggered by something smoldering somewhere. I looked all over the house and attic and found no evidence that anything had ever been on fire. With that perspective, I could finally conclude what had happened and identify the specific smoke detector that caused all the commotion!

Needless to say, neither of us ever went back to sleep that night! My point is that we couldn't respond with any kind of accuracy until we had the right perspective; that is, the perspective of what was actually happening, rather than simply what we felt like was happening.

With that, Psalm 90 is given to us so that we can see our life and life itself the way God sees it, and respond accordingly; that is, so we can respond accurately and wisely given the fact that God's perspective is the only one that sees things as they actually are. But before we get into the content of the Psalm, let's take a quick look at what we read between the end of Psalm 89 and verse one of Psalm 90.

First, you'll notice it's the start of "**Book Four**" of the five books of Psalms. It's essentially universally accepted that the division of the Psalms into five books happened after they were originally compiled. Some believe it was a gradual editing process, and others point

to Ezra. However, no one can say anything certain except that the evidence strongly suggests the Psalms weren't originally organized this way, just as the Bible didn't originally have chapters and verse numbers as we know them. They are nothing more than reference tools to locate things quicker. It could have been as simple as what was done with the Book of Samuel. Samuel was divided into two books to make the scrolls easier to handle. With 150 Psalms, dividing them into five books would certainly make them much easier to store, access, and use while leading public worship.

However, the bigger point I need to make in this discussion is that, despite those who confidently assert their opinion about why the five-book organization of Psalms exists, the fact is that we have no internal explanation in the Bible or external historical documentation from whoever divided them up to defend any confident explanation of the division. In the end, it's conjecture that, at best, feeds the enjoyment of hypothetical academic conversation but should never serve as an authoritative interpretive tool for the purpose or meaning of a particular Psalm.

The next thing we see is the title and author:

“From Everlasting to Everlasting A Prayer Of Moses, The man Of God.”

The title immediately draws us to the perspective of God – “From Everlasting to Everlasting.” Given it's the title, we will talk more about this as we go through the Psalm.

Next, many people have been taught to assume David wrote all the Psalms. He didn't. He certainly wrote far more than anybody else, but the Psalms themselves identify different authors like Asaph, the Sons of Korah, Solomon, and here, in Psalm 90, Moses.

“... the occasion of his writing it is unknown. However, the period of the wilderness wanderings, when a generation of Israelites perished in the desert, readily suggests itself as the background for the psalm. ... this is the oldest of the 150 psalms.”¹

“The Hebrew text of Psalms is clear that this is a *prayer of Moses* and commentators who resist it are notably short of impressive reasons for doing so. No situation suits the psalm so well as that of Moses during the wearisome years of divine alienation (Nu. 14:34). It is a beautiful, moving and realistic psalm, facing our insecurities and offering us a remedy and a hope.”²

Finally, the term “The man of God” in the Old Testament is a very special term used only for a few individuals who stood between God and His people as God's official, authorized,

¹ Ross, A. P. (1985). [Psalms](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 859). Victor Books.

² Motyer, J. A. (1994). [The Psalms](#). In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 545). Inter-Varsity Press.

commissioned, and anointed representative to speak and lead on His behalf with a divine mandate. The fact that the word “man” is spelled with a lowercase “m” is significant. According to the book of Hebrews, as well as other New Testament passages, God used each of these men to point the Jewish people and the world to the ultimate and only true Man of God—Jesus! Jesus is the eternal Son of God who took upon Himself flesh in the womb of Mary to dwell among us as the God-Man who paid the debt of our sin, and now sits officially and justly on the throne over God’s people as the Man of God (Ephesians 1:20-21, Colossians 1:18, Hebrews 1:8).

Therefore, on this side of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, no single person carries Christ's authority over the church, and any attempt to assert such authority should be emphatically rebuked. From individual local churches run by a pastor who insists on being seen as Christ’s authoritative representative over the people in his local church to the Roman Catholic assertion that the Pope is the vicar of Christ over every Christian, all do so in absolute defiance of Scripture. The Roman Catholic church uses a convoluted system of justification reliant on taking one verse in the entire New Testament out of context and then merging it with less than a handful of random parts of a few different sentences written by a couple of different early church leaders over the course of a couple of centuries, where they gave direction to some (key word SOME, not even remotely all local churches) they appeared to have influence over.

The fact is, in the New Testament, no singular person other than Jesus Himself had authority over the totality of the church. Not even the Apostle Paul had total authority over the church. For instance, Paul and Barnabas traveled to Jerusalem to meet with the Apostles and elders of the church in Jerusalem, who were led not by Peter but by James, the brother of Jesus, to convince them to issue a statement that a person didn’t have to become Jewish to be saved (Acts 15). The Apostles and elders of the church in Jerusalem then worked with the church itself to select and send two men with Paul and Barnabas back to the Church in Antioch to testify with them that the people who had previously arrived in Antioch from the church in Jerusalem, claiming to have some kind of official endorsement of the church in Jerusalem, actually did not represent them, nor were they teaching sound doctrine in accord with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The point is, Paul, Peter, James the brother of Jesus, nor anybody else in the church had singular authority over the New Testament church. The Man of God is JESUS, and all of us answer and bow to HIM alone! The job of church leadership is never to be the vicar of Christ over the church but to POINT to Christ! (John 3:30, Acts 3:13-16, 2 Corinthians 4:5).

With that as the foundation for where we are headed, let’s dig into this psalm and see God's perspective on life and how we should respond in light of it.

Proposition: There are two parts to Psalm 90 concerning God’s perspective.

The first part of Psalm 90 clarifies God’s perspective.

Psalm 90:1-11 demonstrates that God’s perspective on the universe, life, and our individual lives ALWAYS flows from His eternal nature and holiness.

Specifically, Psalm 90:1-11 gives us insight into two realities of God's perspective on the universe, life, and our lives. The first reality is that:

(1) God always sees things from the perspective of being the ONLY ONE who has eternally existed and is eternally sovereign in all things. (90:1-6)

A. 1 Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. (90:1)

1. By saying God is their dwelling place in all generations, Moses begins this prayer by acknowledging the reason for their existence. One's dwelling place determines the protection and provisions available, and in this case Moses acknowledges that their dwelling place has always been God! From the time God first called Abram, through the 400 years of captivity in Egypt, to the moment Moses had this conversation with God, God had been their protector and provider; without Him, they literally wouldn't exist as a people!
2. Moses then reflects on God's eternal existence and eternal sovereignty, which gives God the authority and power to be that kind of dwelling place.

B. 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. (90:2-6)

1. We as human beings have a hard time coming to grips with our mortality. We feel like we have forever in this life, and then we blink, and years flash past us! It takes forty to fifty years of living to realize that feeling of having forever to accomplish all we desire and dream of doing isn't the case. We have a name for the moment we come to the realization Moses has in these verses—midlife crisis! After four or five decades of living, we realize how powerless we are against time and how little of it we have left in this world. It is at that age we start to cherish each day more and more, and we learn to value the opportunity today brings at an entirely new level.
2. But for God, that's not the case. God has always existed, and, if in nothing else but that context alone, there is no limit to what He can accomplish. God not only preexisted time, but He is also its author and creator! Time does not limit or govern His existence. He can not be measured or described by it. He is not ruled by it, but rather rules it Himself! He is eternal and eternally sovereign over all things, and that includes time itself.

3. Therefore, compared with God, our life in this world is like grass that sprouts in the morning dew but is gone by evening. Our life is fragile and short, the opposite of God's life. More importantly, however, is the fact that God governs how much time we are allotted in this life, and He does so with total authority (sovereignty) and power, so much so that His determination of the allotment of our days is complete and irrefutable. He simply says a man's life is finished, and it is so, with the same unrivaled, uncontestable power a flood has on a landscape.
4. The contrast should help us understand God and who we are in comparison. God sees time as nothing because He is eternal and eternally sovereign; we, however, are powerless against time because we have not eternally existed, nor are we even remotely eternal or sovereign!
5. The following is insightful commentary on these verses:
 - a. "These verses discuss the disparity between the everlasting God and finite humans."³
 - b. "... perhaps only Isaiah 40 matches its opening verses for their awe-inspiring contrast between the greatness of God and the littleness of man. From them comes one of the best-known of all English hymns, Isaac Watts's 'O God, our help in ages past'."⁴
 - c. "A watch in the night (cf. 63:6) was approximately four hours (Jud. 7:19 refers to a middle watch, suggesting three periods). Such a portion of the night, when man sleeps, is brief. Man is like the grass that withers (cf. Pss. 37:2; 102:4, 11; 103:15–16; Isa. 40:6–8) in the heat of the day—God sweeps them away to death (Ps. 90:5–6). Human life is thus frail and brief, in comparison with the everlasting God."⁵
 - d. "The psalmist's theme is the brevity, not of time itself, but of human life, ..."⁶

³ Ross, A. P. (1985). [Psalms](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 859). Victor Books.

⁴ Wilcock, M. (2001). [The Message of Psalms: Songs for the People of God](#) (J. A. Motyer, Ed.; Vol. 2, p. 74). InterVarsity Press.

⁵ Ross, A. P. (1985). [Psalms](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 859). Victor Books.

⁶ Wilcock, M. (2001). [The Message of Psalms: Songs for the People of God](#) (J. A. Motyer, Ed.; Vol. 2, p. 75). InterVarsity Press.

- e. "... following through into verse 6, is the grass of the Middle Eastern countryside, not the evergreen plant of temperate climates but one that can both spring up and wither in the space of a few hours."⁷
 - f. "The psalmist speaks considerably more about the frailty of man than about the eternity of God. We may say readily enough that we believe God is eternal, but we need to be reminded repeatedly that our life in this world is not. For every advance in medical or environmental technology helps to reinforce the illusion that it could be. ... Every death is a little undermining of humanity's pride in this respect."⁸
- C. The second part of the Psalm tells us what we should do in light of God's perspective as the only one who has eternally existed and is eternally sovereign, so let's move on to the second reality Moses gives us on God's perspective.

The second reality Psalm 90 gives us about God's perspective on the universe, life, and our lives is that:

(2) God always sees things from the perspective of His judgment on SIN. (90:7-11)

- A. **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? (90:7-11)**
- B. Again, from our perspective, we often see ourselves as fairly righteous people deserving of all the time on this earth that we think we should have and all the blessings we think we should have in those years. But the fact of the matter is that in ourselves we are no more righteous than anybody else and thus no more deserving of anything than anybody else!
- C. Now remember, this is MOSES, "the man of God" to Israel, saying this, and he's using the pronoun "we," meaning he's including himself! The we includes the man that God raised up to lead the Jewish people out of captivity, that God used to display His power in miraculous divine ways, that God used to make a covenant with the Jewish people that was so significant that it could only be fulfilled and replaced by Christ Himself! This pinnacle of human leadership and

⁷ Wilcock, M. (2001). [*The Message of Psalms: Songs for the People of God*](#) (J. A. Motyer, Ed.; Vol. 2, p. 75). Inter-Varsity Press.

⁸ Wilcock, M. (2001). [*The Message of Psalms: Songs for the People of God*](#) (J. A. Motyer, Ed.; Vol. 2, pp. 75-76). Inter-Varsity Press.

divine anointing knew he was under God's judgment for sin, just like everybody else!

1. **20 Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins. (Ecclesiastes 7:20)**
 2. **9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9)**
 3. **9 What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, 10 as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God. 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." 13 "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips." 14 "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." 15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 in their paths are ruin and misery, 17 and the way of peace they have not known." 18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes." (Romans 3:9-18)**
- D. We are not only born sinners; we are born under the curse of sin. As a result, the Bible states,
1. **27 And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, (Hebrews 9:27)**
 2. **50 I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ... 53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. (1 Corinthians 15:50, 53)**
- E. But this is also not to say there is no hope for us; rather, our only hope is CHRIST! It's why 1 Corinthians 15 didn't end at verse 53. Paul goes on to write,
- Note: 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:56-57)**
- F. The following is some insightful commentary from other scholars:
1. "There is a reason for the shortness of human life, ... Indeed, why do human beings die at all? The Bible's answer is summed up here in Psalm 90. We are mortal because God is angry, and God is angry because we are sinful. When we say that man is a creature of dust, we mean not simply that he was made of it but also that he returns to it (v. 3). Genesis 3:19, which recorded the pronouncement of this doom, is the background to that verse; and Genesis

3:17, which records the reason (Adam's disobedience), is the background to verse 8: *You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.*⁹

2. "Man's life is transitory because of God's wrath against sin. The psalmist said that man is consumed by God's anger, for He sees man's sins; even so-called secret sins are open to Him. Since man is a sinner, all his life is spent under God's wrath, and his life is greatly limited—to 70 years (or a few more years, for some people)—and life flies away in death like a fleeting bird (cf. Job 20:8). No one can understand God's powerful wrath (Ps. 90:11)."¹⁰
3. "For forty years Moses watched sadly as time, like an ever-rolling stream, bore all its sons away (3–6, Nu. 14:23, 29; Dt. 2:14–16) and recognized behind what he saw the dread reality of the anger of God against sin (7–11). But the truth he expressed is true of all humankind: threatened by impermanence (3–6), and blighted by wrath (7–11). It is by the agency of God that we suffer the insecurity of transience. It is by his decree (Gn. 3:19) that we return to dust—an inescapable fate, *for* (4) even those whose life-span was near-millennial (Gn. 5) came to death like all others and for all alike the fresh grass of the morning is the dry vegetation of the evening (5–6). Why should this be? Why should a species destined to eat of the Tree of Life and live for ever (Gn. 2:16; 3:22) crumble to dust and sleep in death? Restoring 'For' to the beginning of v 7 gives the answer—divine *anger ... indignation against iniquities ... secret sins* (8), *wrath* (9)! Is it simply the product of an incurably melancholy spirit to say that life ends with a *moan* (9) and that prolonged days only mean prolonged *sorrow* (10)? Of course there are other sides to life but when we stand back the common denominator of people worldwide is a sad tale of lives blighted by sin, inescapably answerable to the sin-hating God."¹¹

With God's perspective in mind, the second part of Psalm 90 clarifies how we should respond!

Psalm 90:12-17 gives us four WISE responses to seeing the universe, life, and our lives from God's perspective.

Michael Wilcock wrote, "**The psalmist has already accepted that he is a part of sinful humanity, as guilty as anyone else. Now he puts into the words ... the response that**

⁹ Wilcock, M. (2001). *The Message of Psalms: Songs for the People of God* (J. A. Motyer, Ed.; Vol. 2, p. 76). InterVarsity Press.

¹⁰ Ross, A. P. (1985). *Psalms*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 859). Victor Books.

¹¹ Motyer, J. A. (1994). *The Psalms*. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 545). InterVarsity Press.

every humble penitent should make to the God of eternity, once it is grasped that he is also a God of wrath."¹²

Specifically, Psalm 90:12-17 gives four wise responses derived from seeing the universe, life, and our lives from God's perspective. The first response is that we should:

(1) Ask God for the wisdom to properly understand and USE our limited days. (9:12)

A. 12 So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. (9:12)

B. This is not a prayer to know how many days we have left on this earth, but for God to help us overcome the human tendency to forget our days are numbered and short! It's a prayer to overcome our foolishness that so often fails to prioritize and live life in light of the reality of life's shortness on earth, as well as God and His judgment! It's a prayer for the wisdom never to stop loving and obeying God, loving our families, loving the people in our church and community, and living committed to accomplishing His mission wherever He places us!

The second response is that we should,

(2) Ask God for JESUS to come back! (9:13)

A. 13 Return, O LORD! How long? Have pity on your servants! (9:13)

B. Even as those who have been born again and redeemed, until Jesus comes back, we are all still living in a sin-sick, cursed world, and flesh that wars against our Spirit that longs to love and obey God. It's why we read this in the New Testament,

C. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. (Romans 8:22-23)

The third response is that we should,

(3) Ask God for the PEACE and JOY that only come through faith in the knowledge of His love! (9:14-15)

¹² Wilcock, M. (2001). *The Message of Psalms: Songs for the People of God* (J. A. Motyer, Ed.; Vol. 2, pp. 76-77). Inter-Varsity Press.

- A. **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. (9:14-15)**
- B. No matter if everything is going “great” in life or not, true peace and joy, true contentment, satisfaction, and gladness are only experienced when we are rightly experiencing what we were made to experience—God’s love!
- C. Elsewhere in the Psalms we read, **“3 Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.” (Psalm 63:3)**
- D. It’s why Paul prayed this for the church in Ephesus, **“17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” (Ephesians 3:17-19)**

The fourth response is that we should,

- (4) **Ask God to make our life and labor in this world productive and meaningful BEYOND this life! (9:16-17)**
 - A. **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! (9:16-17)**
 - B. Ecclesiastes is full of statements about the vanity of life under the curse of sin! For instance,
 - 1. **2 Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. 3 What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? (Ecclesiastes 1:2-3)**
 - 2. **22 What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? 23 For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity. (Ecclesiastes 2:22-23)**
 - C. **BUT, in Christ we have the FAVOR of the Lord and as such our labor in Him is productive, meaningful and eternally relevant!**

1. **58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:58)**
2. **10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)**

Challenge: Are you a saved child of God choosing to live like a FOOL? Are you chasing the wind or trusting and following God?

Foolishness is knowing the truth and yet living as if you don't; it is having the knowledge that gives you a proper perspective on things but then refusing to act on it.

Therefore, those who are just hearing that Christ's death gives you the right to have an eternal relationship with God and experience His life and love forever if you repent and surrender to Him: you were ignorant, but now you're not. What you do with the information that can save your life will declare if you're a fool or not! To gain the world and lose your own soul is the epitome of foolishness.

Likewise, to those of us who have heard and believed the truth and know the life that can be experienced when we live in glad submission to Jesus; when we stop the vain pursuits of this world, when we stop trying to find joy, peace, and value in what the world has to offer instead of loving and following Jesus; to those of us who know that, and then chase after the wind anyway—we are the most foolish people on the planet!

But here's the deal: the opportunity to repent is there for the sinner to be a saint, and for the saint to return to walking as a saint, because guess what - to the praise of God and His grace, His house is filled with nothing but repentant fools that He now calls His righteous, fully favored kids!