

Focusing on Christ

PSALM 90 — Revd Guy



90 Lord, you have been our dwelling place
in all generations.

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.

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?
 12 So teach us to number our days
 that we may get a heart of wisdom.
 13 Return, O Lord! How long?
 Have pity on your servants!
 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.
 16 Let your work be shown to your servants,
 and your glorious power to their children.
 17 Let the favour of the Lord our God be upon us,
 and establish the work of our hands upon us;
 yes, establish the work of our hands!

Psalm 90 (ESVUK)

Introduction

There are so many things in the world today that can cause us to worry. Whether our worry is caused by health concerns, financial difficulties, or relationships, there are very few people who have no worries - in fact, even if someone had everything they could possibly need they'll probably be worried about losing it all! It is the persistent threat of loss or lacking that leads to the behaviour we have seen recently in supermarkets with people stockpiling toilet paper, pasta, and eggs.

Unfortunately, no one can escape worrying about the things of this life because ultimately nothing we have lasts - not health, not wealth, even the best of relationships eventually end. Our lives and everything in them are finite - and that can be a pretty terrifying thought. Events like job losses or a global pandemic bring these ever present worries which are normally just lingering in the background, even closer to our daily lives. But where do these worries come from?

Our God-like Desire

Our worries come from a lack of control. If we could heal, feed, and provide for ourselves and those we love, if we were in complete control of those aspects of life, then we would have no need to worry about anything! We would be able to live forever with

“ultimately nothing we have lasts - not health, not wealth, even the best of relationships eventually end”

everything we could possibly want. We would be just like the description that the

psalmist gives in the first two verses of our reading today (Psalm 90:1-2), we would be around for 'all generations' and would become 'everlasting', we would be like gods.

It is ultimately our deepest desire to be god-like, to become like God himself. This is not something new, but rather is part of who we are as humans, it has always been this way. We see at the very beginning of the Bible, in the book of Genesis. In

Genesis 3 we read of the fall of humanity away from God as Eve and Adam desire to have the knowledge that, at that point, only God has - the knowledge of

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Good and Evil. We succumb to temptation and eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil and we become like God (Gen. 3:22a). Regardless of whether you think the creation story is an historical event or allegorical it still reveals to us that our deepest desire is to be like God - to have an answer to everything, to be in control. But we are not gods, we are ultimately not in control of every part of our lives, and so we worry.

Our Human Limitations

Instead of being gods we are limited human beings. The psalmist makes this very clear as he compares humanity to God in verses 3-6. We are people who will one day 'return to dust' rather than live so long that 'a thousand years are like a day' (Ps 90:3-4), we are those whom God will 'sweep away in the sleep of death' (Ps 90:5). It is a very clear picture - we cannot match up to God and ultimately he is the one who has the power over life and death.

But God does not want us to die, he wants to be in relationship with us - that is why we were created in the first place! In fact when we were first created we were intended to live forever, to dwell with God in Eden for eternity. There was no death in God's creation. It was only because of our desire to be gods, to replace the one who created us, that death came into the world. Our desire to be God is the ultimate form of idolatry, the origin of our sin, and the 'wages of sin is death' (Rom. 6:23), that is why the psalmist says 'all our days pass away under your wrath' (Ps 90:9). Because we

had rebelled against God we could no longer live forever (Gen. 3:22b). Sin is so repulsive to God

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that the psalmist describes God as being angry and indignant towards us because of it (Ps 90:7) and there is no way for us to hide our sin from him (Ps 90:8). We have broken our relationship with him and rejected him as the loving ruler of our

lives preferring instead to choose our own path, but as the psalmist says, even when live our own lives the best of our years 'are but trouble and sorrow' (Ps 90:10).

Freedom in Following God

You may think that choosing to go your own way leads to freedom, that to follow God is to have your life restricted. But it is not. Following God is the most freeing thing you could ever do! In

following God we live the life we were created for, we live knowing that what we are doing is right for us. We no longer have to worry about whether what we choose is right or wrong because God has clearly laid it out for us!

“We no longer have to worry about whether what we choose is right or wrong because God has clearly laid it out for us!”

To live your own way rather than God's is like trying to use a fork to eat soup rather than a spoon, you'll get some of what you're after but would be more satisfied if you used a spoon!

It is from the sin of following our own path rather than God's, that all our worries originate. In our striving to be like God (be it conscious or not) we realise that we cannot do everything, that we are not immortal, that we are not in control. If coronavirus and lockdowns have helped us to realise anything it is these two things - our mortality and our inability to control our own lives. Yet there is hope in the midst of all of this. There is hope in the midst of this psalm.

The Glory of God

The psalmist has shown us that we are nothing compared to God. That may seem like bad news but in reality it is fantastic! Who would want a God who was like us, a God who was bitter, petty, hateful, apathetic, ignorant, the list could go on and on! Instead we have a glorious God who is just, has the power to solve any problem, and loves us more than we could ever comprehend.

God loves us so much that even though we have rebelled against him and continue to sin, continue to choose our own path, he still wants to be with us. God wants things to go back to how they were in the Garden of Eden again, he wants to dwell with us, for us to live forever with him. That is why God became man.

The incarnation of Jesus Christ was the only way for the relationship between God and man to be restored. In Christ, God took on all that it meant to be human and perfected it and so Jesus showed us what it was to be human. Then through his conquering of death by his crucifixion and resurrection he destroyed the punishment for sin and brought about the gift of eternal life for those who trust

in him. God has done what the psalmist asks of him through the person of Jesus. God relents as he turns away his wrath as Jesus bore it for us; he has compassion as he sends Christ to restore our relationship with God; he satisfies us with his love, for in Christ we have need of nothing else for he gives us direction, purpose, and unfailing love (Ps 90:13-14).

A Worry-free Life

In spite of our glorious God and all that he has done for us and the way of life that he has made clear for us we will still worry. A life following God is not worry-free, but the worry is not all on you anymore. It is not a burden you carry by yourself because in the God that we have seen in Psalm 90 and in the person of Jesus Christ as described in the Gospels, we have a God that will carry our burdens and worries, that we can put our trust in and rely on. More than that we have a way of life to follow that will give us true freedom as we follow the teachings of Jesus Christ.

At this time of redundancies we may worry about our finances, but by following God we are reassured knowing

that he will provide for us all we need either through his intervention or by his presence here on earth - his Church - and has already provided what we truly need in Christ. At this time

“we have a God that will carry our burdens and worries, that we can put our trust in and rely on”

of coronavirus we may worry about our health, but our God is a God who heals, (as Jesus himself displayed in the gospels), and a God who has made a perfect dwelling place for us in paradise if the worst should ever befall us. At this time of isolation and lockdown we may worry about relationships, but in the unity of the body of Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we are never truly alone.

By trusting in Christ and following the ways of his kingdom all our worries are dealt with so today I implore you to do the following:

1. Acknowledge your own limitations and your sin.
2. Turn to our gracious God assured of his mercy and trust in him like the psalmist does.
3. Follow the way of life modelled by Christ.

Do these things and you will have a clearer perspective on life and the worries you once had will fade as you trust in God and start to lead the life you were always created for.

Amen.