

## Mill Springs Baptist Church Wednesday Adult Elective series

THAT the WORLD MAY KNOW (Sort of)

November 2008 – April 2012 (including VBS)

Volume 3 Psalms of Israel

Section 1 Psalm 54 and review of David

In writing about issues of faith, it is quite beneficial to consider the OT examples. Are they good stories? Yes, of course. Do they deal with problems that are easy to identify with? Yes. Are they easy to remember? Yes.

But more important than all these is the fact that *all of the OT points to* Jesus the Christ, and as a result, when we see faith in God, exhibited by patriarchs who must look forward to a redemptive Savior, and yet still exemplify His traits ... well it's remarkable and can only be attributed to the temporary indwelling of the Holy Spirit!

1 Samuel 23

**14**David stayed in the desert strongholds and in the hills of the Desert of Ziph. Day after day Saul searched for him, but God did not give David into his hands. **15**While David was at Horesh in the Desert of Ziph, he learned that Saul had come out to take his life. **16**And Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God. **17**"Don't be afraid," he said. "My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this." **18**The two of them made a covenant before the Lord. Then Jonathan went home, but David remained at Horesh. **19**The Ziphites went up to Saul at Gibeah and said, "Is not David hiding among us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hakilah, south of Jeshimon? **20**Now, O king, come down whenever it pleases you to do so, and we will be responsible for handing him over to the king." **21**Saul replied, "The Lord bless you for your concern for me. **22**Go and make further preparation. Find out where David usually goes and who has seen him there. They tell me he is very crafty. **23**Find out about all the hiding places he uses and come back to me with definite information. Then I will go with you;

if he is in the area, I will track him down among all the clans of Judah." **24**So they set out and went to Ziph ahead of Saul. Now David and his men were in the Desert of Maon, in the Arabah south of Jeshimon.

**25**Saul and his men began the search, and when David was told about it, he went down to the rock and stayed in the Desert of Maon. When Saul heard this, he went into the Desert of Maon in pursuit of David. **26**Saul was going along one side of the mountain, and David and his men were on the other side, hurrying to get away from Saul. As Saul and his forces were closing in on David and his men to capture them, **27**a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Come quickly! The Philistines are raiding the land." **28**Then Saul broke off his pursuit of David and went to meet the Philistines. That is why they call this place Sela Hammahlekoth. **29**And David went up from there and lived in the strongholds of En Gedi.

### This guy David

Let's face it. David was a person who was good in so many ways. If we were to just read about him without the Holy Spirit, I think we would all agree that he, although having the occasional downfall, was generally upright and just. But understanding the life and times and spiritual standing of this Biblical writer **REQUIRES** the Holy Spirit. So let's look into the travails of David.

This event takes place ca. 1011 BC (according to the reign of David over Judah and Israel). To this point David has been:

1. Chosen by God to lead his country (Samuel),
2. Defeated Goliath,
3. Served in Saul's court
4. Become great friends with Jonathan, who has also confirmed his calling
5. Fled from Saul (for some time).

With regard to #5, his hegira has been essentially all over the southern part of Saul's kingdom. And he now finds himself hiding in the south part of his OWN tribal territory at a place called Ziph.

## Ziph

Ziph is a little town (pop. 913 in 2006) south of Hebron on the central Palestinian ridge. It is today occupied by Palestinians. It is about on line latitudinally with Savannah, GA. In 1011 BC it was a Judaic village whose inhabitants were rigidly loyal to Saul ... a Benjamite. Why? That's a good question ... especially since by this point the kingship of Saul had been demonstrated to be faulty. Whether these folks were ignorant, or just plain mean we do not know. But loyalty in this instance is surely not commendable.

Why David seemed to encounter such EVIL people constantly is beyond understanding, but certainly pedagogical. Just after this, he had to deal with [Nabal ... another badly behaved son of Judah.](#) And yet, before doing what most any man would do, he is Divinely prevented from such an act by Abigail ... who then becomes his wife.

But here he is “ratted” out by a sniveling group of bumpkins. And what's more when this fails, they try to do it again a couple of chapters (few months) later!?!

## Psalm 54

**1** Save me, O God, by your name; vindicate me by your might. **2** Hear my prayer, O God; listen to the words of my mouth. **3** Strangers are attacking me; ruthless men seek my life-- men without regard for God. Selah

Why are they “strangers”? And more importantly, why do they have no regard for God? I ask this because these are his own people ... who ought to have some regard for God. This makes their sin even more egregious. Sometimes the hardest transgressions against us are from those closest to us. Consider that Jesus was “ratted” out by one of His own disciples (or so it appeared), and condemned by His own people. Selah

So David's reaction is nearly identical to that of the Savior ... he cries out to God. What could he have done? He could have (Will Ferrell) “burned their houses down” ... literally!

What could Christ have done? What do you do when you have power over someone who has wronged you? Selah

## Psalm 54

**4** Surely God is my help; the Lord is the one who sustains me. **5** Let evil recoil on those who slander me; in your faithfulness destroy them.

Notice here that David's reaction is to claim glory ONLY on God. Who else said something like that?

1 Corinthians 1

**3**Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

David's request is to God alone. More importantly, he recognizes that his success can only come from God. And then, to recognize God's Sovereignty ...

Psalms 54

**6**I will sacrifice a freewill offering to you; I will praise your name, O Lord, for it is good. **7**For he has delivered me from all my troubles, and my eyes have looked in triumph on my foes.

God, in fact, did provide safety for David at Sela Hammahlekoth ... or the "rock of parting" where Saul was diverted ... and later at En Gedi (picture below). The Lord will supply all of our need ... even in the face of failed humanity.

All of the OT points to Jesus Christ. That David would know that ... and even write about it is glorifying to God.

Section 1 Quiz

1. What tribe were the Ziphites from?
  - a) Benjamin
  - b) Ephraim
  - c) **Judah**
  - d) Sheol
  - e) Eden
2. What should be your revenge when you are wronged?
  - a) Burn houses down
  - b) Show your manhood
  - c) Teach those cats a lesson
  - d) Mull it over
  - e) **Appeal to God**



3. David got away from Saul when?
  - a) **God diverted Saul by the Philistines**
  - b) God changed Saul's outlook
  - c) The Ziphites gave incorrect information
  - d) David cut off Saul's robe
  - e) He said the right words in a prayer
4. David's strength came from ... ?
  - a) His musical ability
  - b) En Gedi
  - c) Abigail
  - d) **God**
  - e) Samuel and Jonathan putting their fists together
5. David lived from ca ... ?
  - a) **1030 – 950 BC**
  - b) 1500 – 1400 BC
  - c) 650 – 586 BC
  - d) 100 – 170 AD
  - e) 1400 – 1492 AD
6. David's ultimate goal was to ... ?
  - a) get better at playing the harp for God
  - b) escape from Saul
  - c) **glorify God**
  - d) write music for the Lord
  - e) Give Jonathan the fist again
7. David's time in hiding and ascendance to king of Israel is a foreshadowing of
  - a) **Christ's death and resurrection to the right hand of God**
  - b) Solomon's wisdom
  - c) the value of patience
  - d) witnessing
  - e) Israel's flag
8. “Nabal” means ...
  - a) a sport played with horses
  - b) Abigail's husband
  - c) hot wife
  - d) **fool**
  - e) raisin cake

## Section 2 Psalm 56

In our second study we want to look at an earlier Psalm written by David ca. 1015 BC in, perhaps, Philistia ... or southern Judah. The setting is given below.

David made a pact with Jonathan, in spite of the Saul's hatred for him. Jonathan notified David through the “arrow signal” (1 Samuel 20) that he needed to get out of Dodge ... or at least Gibeah. So after some hegira he ends up at Nob and the tabernacle where he obtained bread for the company and coincidentally the sword of Goliath (at which he exclaimed “there is none like it”). At this point David fled to Achis, the king of Gat of the Philistines, but soon realizes, like Abraham, that sleeping with the enemy is not wise. Achis is surprised and delighted to have David with him and apparently planned to keep him there.

1 Samuel 21

**10**That day David fled from Saul and went to Achish king of Gath. **11**But the servants of Achish said to him, "Isn't this David, the king of the land? Isn't he the one they sing about in their dances: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands'?" **12**David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish king of Gath.

It is at this point that David needed an escape plan and penned Psalm 56.

Psalm 56

**1**Be merciful to me, O God, for men hotly pursue me; all day long they press their attack. **2**My slanderers pursue me all day long; many are attacking me in their pride.

We can guess that the “conspirators” are possibly Saul's informants, but more likely, the Philistine warriors in the city who are rightfully suspicious of David's presence. David feared for his life because Achis could have probably taken it at any time.

Psalm 56

**3**When I am afraid, I will trust in you. **4**In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me? **5**All day long they twist my words; they are always plotting to harm me. **6**They conspire, they lurk, they watch my steps, eager to take my life. **7**On no account let them escape; in your anger, O God, bring down the nations.

The statement “**what can mortal man do to me?**” leads us to believe that at least this section of the Psalm is written in faithful defiance. Here David is talking to his “old man”, and reminding him of the sovereignty of God in the face of the reasonably libelous claims of the soldiers of Gat (Winepress, below). And once again, he appeals to God for his safety. Sometimes we, too, must address our “old man” in much the same way and remind ourselves of God's care for us.



Perhaps David remembered that Gat was the hometown of Goliath. So in one sense, that may have brought fear. But in another sense reminded him of the great victory God had given

him. Since experience precedes faith which precedes obedience, it is important for Christians to record the experiences in which God has demonstrated faithfulness and kindness to us, and to bring these up often in our thoughts and conversations.

Psalm 56

**8**Record my lament; list my tears on your scroll-- are they not in your record?  
**9**Then my enemies will turn back when I call for help. By this I will know that God is for me. **10**In God, whose word I praise, in the Lord, whose word I praise-- **11**in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? **12**I am under vows to you, O God; I will present my thank offerings to you. **13**For you have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of life.

Notice also that David's plea is OT in that he wishes for the “**light of life**” (to be kept alive). And AGAIN, he defies his old man with “**what can man do to me?**” Although this too is meant in the OT sense, the faith that brings it about is commendable and applicable to us. Jesus brings new light to the statement in the NT.

## Matthew 10

**28** Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

This would tend to refute Bell's notion that all will be saved. It appears that Jesus is making a statement on the finality of hell and the value of this earthly life. Many Christians in foreign lands face persecution, and live in the shadow of death daily. Perhaps they have internalized this concept in an exemplary fashion.

Finally notice that David prays for safety for the purpose of glorifying God (v. 13). Here is an exchange that we can all learn from. It is not out of selfishness, but in order to glorify God.

Interestingly, the plan was for him to feign a mental condition. The ruse worked and Achis expelled David from the city, and he wound up at the cave of Adullam. David's relationship with Achis was positive and was far from over though.

Later he stayed with Achis in Gat and even prepared to fight against Saul and Israel, but was withheld from doing so by the rightful distrust of the other Philistine leaders.

## 1 Samuel 21

**13** So he pretended to be insane in their presence; and while he was in their hands he acted like a madman, making marks on the doors of the gate and letting saliva run down his beard. **14** Achish said to his servants, "Look at the man! He is insane! Why bring him to me? **15** Am I so short of madmen that you have to bring this fellow here to carry on like this in front of me? Must this man come into my house?"

Remarkably, this ruse works. Was David a good actor? Possibly. And maybe his men were too. But ultimately we know that God characteristically provided the escape (likely through the timely peace) to the Cave of Adullam.

## Section 2 Quiz

1. David initially fled from Saul and went to the Philistine city state of ... ?
  - a) Askelon
  - b) En Gedi
  - c) Akron
  - d) Gat
  - e) Asdod



2. David's ultimate goal was to ... ?
  - a) get better at playing the harp for God
  - b) escape from Saul
  - c) glorify God
  - d) write music for the Lord
  - e) Give Jonathan the fist again
3. Israeli cheerleaders chanted that David had slain at least a multiple of  $10^{\wedge}$  ...
  - a) 1
  - b) 2
  - c) 3
  - d) 4
  - e) 5
4. Which of the following gives the proper order for the Christian life?
  - a) FOE
  - b) OFE
  - c) FEO
  - d) EOF
  - e) EFO



### Section 3 Psalm 34 Life in the Man Cave

So why does the preamble to Psalm 34 say “when he fled from Abimelech” when it was actually Achis that he escaped from??? The answer, once again, is found on Wikipedia.org where we find that the name “Abimelech” is a common title for Philistine kings ... much like “Pharaoh” for Egyptian kings. Although there are alternate possibilities, it is likely to mean “my father is Molech”.

At any rate in [the cave of Adullam](#), David penned these words of praise to the Lord for his escape from Gath. I believe that the Psalm can be broken up into the following sections.

#### Psalm 34

**1**I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. **2**My soul will boast in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. **3**Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together. **4**I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. **5**Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.

I see David writing this Psalm out of a combination of relief, angst and exhaustion ... relief because of escaping Gat, angst because of fleeing two pursuers, and exhaustion from the trip. When conflicting emotions overcame him, he recognized that glorifying God is (as in all instances) the ONLY thing to do.

Psalm 34

**6**This poor man called, and the Lord heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles. **7**The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them. **8**Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.

I love the way this section starts with “this poor man ... “ And I think this is a section of praise out of relief. David recognizes that God has lifted him out of a precarious situation. And by noting the “encampment” of the angel of the Lord, David noted God's omnipresence.

Psalm 34

**9**Fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing. **10**The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing. **11**Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. **12**Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days, **13**keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies. **14**Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

This section is an admonition to the readers. Note the terms “lack nothing” and “lack no good thing.” David didn't say that those who fear the Lord would have everything that they wanted. Second, being the warrior was exhausting and David wanted peace but could not attain it on his own. But this did not keep him from pursuing it.

Psalm 34

**15**The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry; **16**the face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. **17**The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. **18**The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Wow! These are powerful words in verse 18. This is a progressive revelation from OT times. David noted that God was “close” to those who are downtrodden ... those who are going through tough times. Obviously, we can say a little more. In particular, we (Christians) know that it is specifically the Lord, through the Holy Spirit, that attends us as we experience God's working in our lives. AND that God, in His Sovereignty, uses such experiences to make us trust in Him, rather than ourselves (Romans 8:28 – 30). David's perspective was limited by the knowledge of God at that time. We know that God is doing a redemptive work in his people, and that at times it may hurt. But, according to Brother Pastor, God may hurt us (much as a surgeon), but He will never harm us. Does He put on us more than we can bear? Yes, so that He can show us what HE can bear!

Psalm 34

**19**A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all; **20**he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken. **21**Evil will slay the wicked; the foes of the righteous will be condemned. **22**The Lord redeems his servants; no one will be condemned who takes refuge in him.

So we see here a prediction concerning the Christ ... particularly that none of his bones would be broken. Also note that the evil would be swallowed up in their own evil. And finally note the statement that none would be turned away who sought the Lord. Compare this to ...

John 6

**All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.**

How true! And many of us know this by experience ... much like David.

Section 3 Quiz

1. David wrote Psalm 34 in ... ?

- a) Saul's court
- b) En Gedi
- c) Ziph
- d) Gat
- e) the cave of Adullam

2. As Christians, God may \_\_\_\_\_ us, but He'll never \_\_\_\_\_ us ?
- a) harm, hurt
  - b) provide for, hurt
  - c) hurt, harm
  - d) harm, forget
  - e) hurt, humiliate

### Section 4 Psalm 146

In our third study we want to look at one of the last great, but often hidden, Psalms that, because of my grandfather, Bert Starnes, I memorized at a very early age. Now, at the age of 50, I see it as a passage that wraps up the Old Testament in a nutshell. Here's why!

Psalm 146

***1 Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul. 2 I will praise the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.***

It is assumed that this Psalm is *not* written by David, but, rather by a post-exilic writer (ca. 400 BC). It is clear that it is a Psalm of joy.

What is literally being said here? The reader will find it interesting that the Hebrew is “Allelu Yah”, from which we get the word Hallelujah. This is often uttered as an exclamation of joy by Christian and non-Christian alike. How wonderful it is that it means “praise the Lord”!

In fact, it is even used as the root word for a young girl in our Church named Haley! The interesting thing here is that this Psalm actually begins the final 5 Psalms, and they are known as the “Hallelujah Psalms”.

Notice the directive here as well. The writer is demanding that his soul praise the Lord. Why? Because that is the chief end of man ... to bring glory to God! It is tempting to cease glorifying God when things don't go well ... *or perhaps when things do go very well*. But the exhortation here is to continue to glorify God throughout one's life. Consider the following NT verse from Paul.

Galatians 6

***14 May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.***

The transformation of our affections from ourselves to Christ is also one of the greatest works of the Holy Spirit. Consider the following example.

A and K are talking about a recent football game in which A was on the winning team. K says to A “congratulations, your team really got 'er done! And you taught those cats a lesson.” A replies, “we had to overcome some bad plays, but, in the end, we wanted it more. That's how we roll!”

Now to the carnal person this would seem much like a harmless conversation involving sports. But let's look more closely at what's involved. In particular, the conversants are wholly centered on human accomplishment. This is not to say that they are worshipping these accomplishments, but rather that the whole victory is being credited to human endeavor. It is as if A's team won simply by sheer effort, and there was no randomness involved whatsoever. A and K are speaking as if the entire outcome is simply up to who “wants it more”. So here is a shocking statement to many ... God is in control! Random is a relative term. What is random to us is deterministic to God, and He is actually in control of the outcomes we observe.

In addition, much of this translates into A's glory. A is now being tacitly credited by K as a) being more skilled than players on the other team; b) being more intelligent than players on the other team; and c) being wiser than players on the other team. Note that all of these attributes are gifts from God ... not things that A has developed himself. God is not credited at all in this conversation. May we guard our hearts against such thinking. []

Finally, note that the psalm writer is encouraging something for a lifetime. And yet we know that as Christians, this praising and glorifying God will continue for an eternity. Remember that the writer has little concept of heaven or eternity ... and yet the admonition is perfect, in God's Providence, for the NT. Praise God in all things. This is summed up beautifully in what we Southern Baptists call “the Doxology”.

*Praise God from Whom all blessings flow!*

*Praise Him all creatures here below (see Romans 1:20)!*

*Praise Him above ye heavenly host!*

*Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost! Amen.*

We shall next look at the improper glorification and trust in/of man.

Psalm 146

**3 Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save. 4 When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing.**

Much can be made of the fallacy of this strategy. By “princes”, we can assume that the writer is referring to famous people. There are many many instances of this. As humans living in our seemingly finite 3D world, we are often enticed to put our faith in “princes” (and “princesses” for those inclined to be politically correct). Here are some rather obvious examples.

Politics, and related leadership issues, provide not only this country but many countries opportunities for a form of idol worship. In fact, the point can be made that this is why elections are often so contentious.

In our human condition, most of us are put into situations in which we depend on others for so much of our livelihood. We depend upon our “bosses” for good evaluations so that we can keep our jobs at institutions which are run by leaders who must provide good leadership in order that the institution doesn't fail.

The institutions are now beholden largely to the government, so that our governmental leaders become more important. The ladder keeps going up and up ... there's always someone higher up who is given greater and greater power. In this case, idol worshiping is considered a necessary evil in order to pacify those who are in positions of institutional power. And that's why elections or other related decisions become so important.

Now the same thing can be said to a lesser extent of athletes, spouses, and institutions. We may not admit it, but we often misplace faith in a certain player to deliver victory for a certain team on a regular basis. We also may place our faith in a team to fare well with regularity. This, of course, is the reason great matchups sell well on TV. Of course, it really gets interesting when we get married and put faith in our spouse to deliver on all sorts of goods. As Deacon Dodson has said, marriage is a strange adventure where “two completely different people try to live together and take advantage of each other for life”.

It is here that we must ask ... particularly when we “know” that men or institutions represent potential idols ... why do we put our trust in princes of mankind? The answer can be found in the words of Jesus.

## Matthew 10

**28** Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. **29** Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. **30** And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

Faith is all too often misplaced in what we can see and touch ... the things of this world. God, through Christ, has pointed us to a larger reality, and has asked us to trust HIM. That transfer of faith comes from experience (as we have discussed earlier). At earlier ages, that experience is in the people and things around us. But as we grow in Christ as Christians, we learn to transfer that trust to God.

Note that the writer labels these princes as those “who cannot save”. I believe this is the part of the experience that we gain in this world that God gives us in order to transfer our trust. When I was a lad of about 10, I can remember feeling deep disappointment when a friend of mine decided not to attend Church with me one evening. I can still remember thinking how people ought not to be allowed to “back out” like that, and that there must be something more solid to depend on. Of course, this type of offense is minor at best to me today. But I look back at it as a turning point of faith. And I would have to believe that a common experience like that results in many different responses from folks according to God's sovereign grace. I can only thank God that mine turned me toward HIM.

The writer then pens an interesting phrase, “**when their spirit departs, they return to the ground**”. What shall we make of this?

We have had a large study of [Sheol](#) earlier. This is surely consistent with that. The Jews did believe that there was separation of the soul from the body at death, and, perhaps by that time, also believed that Sheol was divided into a good (Abraham's Bosom) and bad section.

So we can assert that the soul was headed for Sheol. But, the main point is that all we do here on earth must come to an end. Even the greatest “prince” must have an end to their time. I think about the athletic obituaries that come up from time to time on [sports sites](#). Reading them makes me consider what the athlete was like in his prime ... probably dominating the competition in some way or another.

## Ecclesiastes 2

**16** For the wise man, like the fool, will not be long remembered; in days to come both will be forgotten. Like the fool, the wise man too must die!

On that day their plans end. So that whatever they could do is finished ... they can contend no more. Consider the great pyramids of Egypt representing the great Hamitic kingdoms of circa 2K BC. They are imposing and impressive, but little more. Today they could have very little, if any, function in society. Egypt is, in some ways, a third world country. And here, who can forget the words of Percy Shelley's "Ozymandias" written about Rameses II, ruler of Egypt ca. 1250 BC, the time of the Judges of Israel?

*I met a traveller from an antique land Who said:*

*Two vast and trunkless legs of stone Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,  
Half sunk, a shatter'd visage lies, whose frown And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold  
command Tell that its sculptor well those passions read Which yet survive, stamp'd  
on these lifeless things, The hand that mock'd them and the heart that fed.*

*And on the pedestal these words appear: "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:  
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"*

*Nothing beside remains: round the decay Of that colossal wreck, boundless and  
bare, The lone and level sands stretch far away.*

And, lest ye think that such words are only for the "princes" of the earth. Keep in mind that so too are the things that we strive so hard to obtain. We cannot produce things in this world that will last forever. Many would be hard pressed to name the previous owner of their land, much less the owner of a 100 years ago. So, as Jesus says ...

Matthew 6

**19**Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. **20**But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. **21**For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

This is both good news and bad news. Our lives are limited, so whatever we suffer will be over, but our impact on this world for Christ is limited too.

Psalms 146

**5** Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, **6** the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—the LORD, who remains faithful forever.



“Blessed” is the one who trusts in the Lord. And by that, the writer indicates that that person is blessed by God. But in what way(s)? To the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC reader this meant physical blessings ... good crops, peace, safety from thieves, etc. This is corroborated by the ensuing statement that the Lord made everything ... so He can surely provide these physical goodies. But there is more to it in light of the NT.

Good earthly things are to be enjoyed and appreciated ... and the result should be glory to God. But the writer of Ecclesiastes (right) aptly notes that these cannot ultimately satisfy the deeper longings of the soul. *There must be something more.*



And for the soul that a) discovers this, and b) seeks after God, that soul moves from appreciation of God, to “hoping” in God ... the *transfer of trust*. God becomes the desire of that one's heart. So that even in the OT sense, a person is considered “blessed” when they come to the point of transferring their faith from self to God ... and not just at the point of death.

Our trust is largely in ourselves, and this is a HARD pattern to break out of. In large part because we learn to attribute “God things” (like weather, disasters and elections and foreign affairs) to be in His control, and everything else to be in our control. If this is the case, then we largely believe in ourselves to “get 'er done”.



Luke 12

6Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? 7But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

Romans 1

18For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; 19Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. 20For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

On the other hand, as a person gradually transfers life to God's control, he also transfers the various aspects of his life to God's care and begins to transfer his hope and trust to God. Notice that there are two ... even three states of belief.

1. A person may never see God as being involved. These are they who either deny the existence of God blatantly or in action or both. They believe, among other things, that everything exists through accident and that we are simply lucky animals. They believe that **THEY** rule their future. Romans 1 means nothing to these folk, and, if they are not changed, are **doomed to eternal destruction**.



2. A person may see God as sovereign but capricious. Now this covers a large category of folk. This category contains **both saved and unsaved persons**. These people may seek to please God, or may seek to rebel ... like Satan and the demon horde. All muslims would fall into this category, as well as many Christians. Popular praise songs today praise God for His power and might, and then posit “*that's just the way it is*” or “*He gives and takes away.*” This is a good description of how these folks might feel!
3. Finally, a person may see God as sovereign AND good. And once this understanding has taken place, the general result is a seeking after God. **All persons in this category are saved.**

I think that we are all born into category 1, and that some folks can never get out of it even though they may be very bright. Why? Because they are wrapped up in a world with  $d = 3$ . They cannot see beyond what they behold and conceive. In many cases, the person in this category will always tend to see things very differently than those of categories 2 and 3.

To illustrate this consider the following state vectors representing the possible corresponding proportions of people currently in these categories for various countries.

Iraq:  $\mathbf{g}^T =$

.09	.90	.01
-----	-----	-----

USA:  $\mathbf{g}^T =$

.20	.60	.20
-----	-----	-----

China:  $\mathbf{g}^T =$

.70	.20	.10
-----	-----	-----

And all of this is from the OT. []

Note that the third state is that of the Ecclesiastical writer, and of Moses, and of Ezekiel, and of ... Of course, the end result is Jesus Christ. There is truly good news in the advent of Jesus the Christ, because as we see in Hebrews ...

Hebrews 11

**6**And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

This verse is RICH with good theology. God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Note the parallels with “blessed” and “hope” in our Psalm.

He rewards or *blesses* them with Himself. And the blessed one must earnestly seek or *hope* in Him. This of course is tied to faith and the category of the person. A category 3 person has, through *experience* (from a previous study) and the blessing of God, come to recognize God's faithfulness and goodness.

And this is not necessarily just in the OT sense, but rather the person has come to an understanding of Romans 8:28. This faith then leads to a hungering after God, which many in the OT had ... including, we can guess, the writer of Psalm 146.

But now, God has revealed Himself to a greater extent through His Son Jesus, and we can experience God through Jesus.

That is GREAT news. We may wonder who is “called”, but we need NOT worry. If you SEEK Him, you ARE called.

Psalm 146

**7** He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. **The LORD sets prisoners free, 8 the LORD gives sight to the blind, the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down, the LORD loves the righteous. 9 The LORD watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.**

Here we have a trio of verses speaking of the compassion of God. Now the OT writer here mentions the various ways in which the downtrodden are lifted up. And we know that he means in the literal sense in each case of people: oppressed, hungry, imprisoned, blind, bowed down, alien, orphaned, and widowed. Notice the severity of the circumstances given here. Who isn't touched by people in these conditions?



We have seen famous film presentations about people in these conditions: oppressed - *Roots*, hungry – *CCF commercials* , imprisoned – *Prison Break*, blind – *the Helen Keller Story*, bowed down – *Ben Hur*, alien – *West Side Story*, orphaned – *Joe Dirt*, and widowed – *Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street*. And who has not been subjected to at least one of these conditions? Surely God is the essence of goodness and the only antidote for them.

Look again at a similar passage in the NT. Again, with the advent of the Christ, these words (as is often the case in the OT) take on new meaning. And in these cases the meaning is having to do with 8 spiritual problems.

Matthew 5

**3**Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **4**Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. **5**Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. **6**Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. **7**Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. **8**Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. **9**Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. **10**Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **11**Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.



And here they are again, in a new light: poor in spirit (oppressed) , mourner (orphan), meek (widowed), hungry for righteousness (hungry), merciful (alien), pure in heart (bowed down), peacemakers (blind), and those who are persecuted for righteousness (imprisoned).

Notice some of the more direct parallels. Jesus is giving us insight into the mind of God ... the things God notices and cares about.

This is related to the sovereignty of God too. Is God sovereign over the events of man? Yes! Does He then feel emotions? Yes, again! His sovereignty is not diminished at all! His plan is perfect, and yet we know that God grieves over things like ... making Saul king over Israel.

His plan may involve temporary suffering for His own people, and yet He understands what we are going through by Christ's own sufferings among other things. So both the Psalmist and the Lord show us this in these passages.

The Psalmist tells of God's power in being able to turn these situations around, and Jesus tells us that God uses these things for His glory ... and our good.

That's why we should as Peter said, rejoice when we encounter obstacles, simply because of what God can do. Here's a personal testimonial.

I shan't forget a cold winter night in Blacksburg, VA in late February of 1999. I was a visiting Asst. Professor at VT and a grand snowstorm caught many of us by surprise that evening by dumping 8" of snow in a matter of a few hours.

As I headed out and got onto US 460 heading northwest out of town, I shortly encountered a traffic jam due to a jackknifed tractor trailer at the top of Brush Mountain. While waiting, I contacted my Dad me on the car phone (cell phones were not quite in vogue at the time) and he told me to turn around and go back since the .5 mile driveway to my parents's house was impassable. So I reluctantly made my way back to the university to spend the night in my cubicle. I had resigned myself to rest uncomfortably there. Within an hour of "settling in" my third cousin, Brent Williams, who lived in Christiansburg (about 5 miles away) called on the warren phone. I went out and picked up the phone and was surprised to hear his voice. He asked what I was doing there and for me to get in the car and drive over to spend the night. I did and experienced a wonderful evening with Brent and his wife Sharon. It is almost as if God is "on the lookout" for these situations so that He may turn them on their heads. In fact verse 9 reads

**... but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.**

God is looking for reversal in certain situations. What's your testimonial?

One of the remarkable features of God is of His being infinite. Now you may say, "okay, that's nice, but what's the big dealio?" Consider the following final verse of our Psalm.

Psalm 146

***10 The LORD reigns forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the LORD.***

The notion of infinity is something that we really can't get our minds around. Oh, sure, we can do things with it, and have a symbol for it ( $\infty$ ), and even have different levels of it (based to some extent on "countability"). But no human has ever seen, been to, or done infinity (although [Napoleon Dynamite thinks he did](#)).

In this famous video "[Look Around You: Maths](#)", the instructor tells us that infinity is really 45,000,000,000. And to simulate infinity computationally, we usually substitute a really large (whatever that means) number.

Janice Holt Giles, in the book *40 Acres and no Mule*, has the following quote:

“Have you ever, suddenly, and without warning, known a moment in which you knew, beyond any question, that this moment, this present now, was all of living distilled and drained, stopped timeless and still? Full, rich, heavy with goodness, fleeting, yet eternal? It's as if the earth stopped for a second, to let you, for the space of a heartbeat, savor life to see just how good it is. It is perhaps that moment when you become real, when you know yourself in your environment and know that you are forever. It is perhaps then that you really discover yourself. You may say, I ... I ... I am ... here and now, alive and beating with blood and flesh and spirit. Here in this separate, distinct moment of time and tide, I am all and whole and complete.”

Naturally, we are made whole and complete in Jesus Christ, but the points being made here are that we are a) eternal beings, b) living on an earth that God made specifically for us to enjoy, and c) occasionally understand the intersection of these two truths. Paul makes a similar point about heaven.

1 Corinthians 13

**12** Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

I believe that these two statements are related and that heaven and eternal life is knowing God according to the very words of our Lord.

John 17

**3** Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Now it should be making sense! God is eternal, and He can and did make eternal beings. We are some of those beings, but our time on the earth is limited. Notwithstanding, we encounter times in which we yearn for permanence (selah) ... I have often thought that I would like to revisit many experiences many times where God has blessed me. The state 1 person realizes that there is no permanence and adopts the creed of living for the now (Stephen Hawking). Christians (of states 2 und 3) recognize that we are eternal and seek the eternal God (Hebrews 11). Seeking God, we realize that He is creator and that we live in His world. He is our provider, not only of food, breath and life, but also eternal provider too.

To survive for eternity, we recognize that we will need to move to a right relationship with God which we had at creation, but is now destroyed because of sin. We understand that this state is impossible to attain without the sacrifice for sin made by our Lord. And so, we have come full circle to the meaning of the previous, and this verse!

Ecclesiastes 3

*//He has also put eternity in their hearts, but man cannot discover the work God has done from beginning to end.*

Now let's continue to look at a picture of the eternal condition of a state 1 person. *The Others* is a 2001 film that gives us a great glimpse into the importance of infinity or the lack thereof. Written by Alejandro Amenabar, the film is a chilling reminder of the real hell. The story involves a young woman and her two children who live in a beautiful home on the isle of Jersey in WWII. The husband (and father) has just been killed in the war, and the arrival of three new servants initiates a series of strange and eerie events in and around the home. The family believes the house to be haunted, and seeks outside help. However, an intended trip to the village reveals that there is no escaping the grounds of the home. As it turns out all of the main characters are dead and are “haunting” the house, and the “ghosts” are actually living people who eventually move out of the abode. Here's [the ending](#) that illustrates it. It's a scary and well devised twist for the viewer. The caveat, though, is that the inhabitants are stuck in a finite space ... forever! Is it not far better to serve an infinite God for eternity! HalleluJah!

#### Section 4 Quiz

1. HalleluJah is Hebrew for \_\_\_\_\_?
  - a) I've fallen and I can't get up
  - b) Please pass the unleavened bread
  - c) Selah
  - d) Praise the Lord
  - e) My name is Haley Dodson
  - f) Water from the Rock
  - g) Rejoice and be Gladden

2. What is/are the “absorbing state(s)” for the 3-state vectors given above?
  - a) State of confusion
  - b) State 1
  - c) State 2
  - d) State 3
  - e) All 3
  - f) States 2 and/or 3
3. Who the heck is Percy Shelley's “Ozymandias”?
  - a) Rameses I
  - b) Rameses II
  - c) Rameses III
  - d) Rameses “the Ocho”
  - e) Dodge Rameses
4. What quality of hell makes it hell?
  - a) It is finite for an infinite amount of time
  - b) It is infinite for a finite amount of time
  - c) It is finite for a finite amount of time
  - d) It is infinite for an infinite amount of time
  - e) It's one big drinking binge
5. About when was Psalm 146 written?
  - a) 1000 BC
  - b) 800 BC
  - c) 400 BC
  - d) 1970 AD
  - e) 2001 AD
6. When does a person go from state 2 to state 3?
  - a) When they go from non-cognizance of God to cognizance of Him
  - b) When they go from seeking God to a cognizance of Him
  - c) When they go from cognizance of God to seeking Him
  - d) They can never go from state 2 to state 3
  - e) Say again the states ... is Tennessee state 3?
7. God is sovereign, and He is also ...
  - a) Good
  - b) capricious
  - c) only concerned with the big things
  - d) interested in doing acts for insurance companies
  - e) only available on Sunday morning



8. The following state of belief vector

$g^T =$

0.6	0.3	0.1
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is indicative of ...

- a) a western European country
- b) an Islamic country
- c) a South American country
- d) No country for Old Men
- e) Classic Country 97.3FM
- f) a third world country

### Section 5 Psalm 90

In our fourth study we want to look at a Psalm of Moses, as it says, “the man of God”. This is a Psalm with an Ecclesiastical approach. It is laden with the despair of that book, but interlaced with a Hope that is to come. It is a perfect Psalm to study at the season of Advent.

Psalm 90

***1 Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. 2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.***

Moses begins with a statement about seeking God. Remember the relationship between the OT and NT. Here we have an example of progressive revelation and this is a clear example of recognizing God's refuge in a dry and barren land.

We might suspect that Moses, whose name means, effectively, “to rescue”, writes this sometime around the age of 110 to 115 yr. Perhaps he is nearing the end of an amazing life, and the new generation of Israel is preparing to move north and east to stage their grand entrance into the promised land. It is a time of excitement as the nation nears the end of the 40 yr exodus in the Arabah and points south. It is also a time for them to reflect upon the fact that God is **Sovereign, Eternal, Good, Just, Holy and Righteous.**

For Moses, it's even more personal. Here we have a man who essentially started life depending on God's Providence as he was set afloat in the Nile River for better or worse. Here is a man who eschewed the comfort and care of Pharaoh and traveled about 250 mile individually to set up shop in Midian.

Here is a man whose faith in God caused him to return to Egypt to take on the Pharaoh face to face and demand the release of a slave nation. Here is a man who led perhaps a million people into the barren wilderness of Sinai with limited provisions to “worship” God! Here is a man who led this same slave nation into battle time and again against better organized and equipped home-standing armies. Here is a man who had literally seen God's Providence in multiple generations!

It is little wonder that Moses began the passage with an exclamation of God's eternal refuge. Come to think of it, in his entire 120 yr life, Moses never really settled and personally had to rely on God's supply. The reader should also keep in mind that this is the same author who wrote the book of Genesis.

There is a second aspect to think of here too. The term “all generations” says a lot about Moses's perspective of God's love and faithfulness. It is a nice segue into verse 2 where Moses notes God's eternal nature that we have discussed earlier in this study. So there is a combination of two of God's attributes ... Eternal and Just. God is from “**everlasting to everlasting**”.

But He is also unchanging in the sense that His love is not removed from His people ... in this case Israel. It would be incongruous to conceive of a God who is in some way dependent on the actions of His people to love them. Recall that God said through Samuel ...

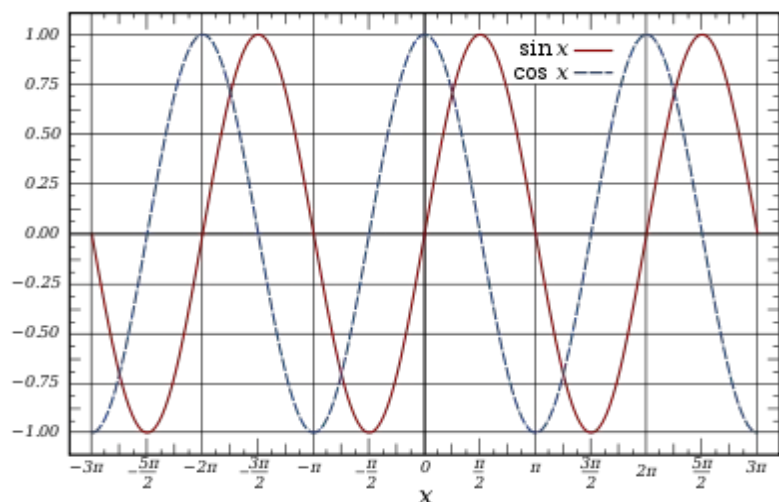
1 Samuel 15

**He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind."**

Ecclesiastes 3

**14 I know that whatever God does, It shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, And nothing taken from it.**

Another important question is this ... if God is eternal, is He constant? Well something or someone who is eternal **COULD** be random or cyclical. There are many [mathematical functions](#) that illustrate this.



But we are given instruction to the contrary in this verse. And this gives us another support for God's goodness, because being an eternal being Who is constantly cycling through changes would be unbearable for mankind. This type of existence would be painful at best. This speaks to the consistency of God in creation as well. And because of His great love, there are no orphans of God.

We may not see a scientific answer to a question, BUT that does not mean that a) the answer implies inconsistency on God's part, nor b) that an answer does not exist.

How can God be everywhere and yet not in hell at the same time??? Perhaps because

$$d(\text{hell}) < d(\text{God})$$

so that hell occupies 0 volume in heaven. []

How did Moses know that God was eternal?

So let's review the characteristics of God. He is good, just, sovereign, righteous/constant, eternal and holy!

Psalm 90

*3Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.*

*4For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.*

Time ... and Death. The author of Ecclesiastes tells us that they happen to all of us. And a watch in the night is very quick if you're sleeping.

Ecclesiastes 3

*1 To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven:*

*2 A time to be born, And a time to die;*

What do we make of this? Well first, we know that the dying part is the result of original sin. And with a handful of exceptions (that we have already studied), this has been true. So unless the rapture occurs, it will be true for each of us. Charles Spurgeon wrote:

*A moment yet to come is longer than "yesterday when it is past", for that no longer exists at all, yet such is a chiliad to the eternal.*

I have to believe that the death of a person is painful and joyful to God. It is a painful reminder of the fall of man because of sin ... which again, is lack of faith in Him. That's precisely what Jesus was sent to conquer in fact.

Death is an exclamation of futility for mankind. The author of Ecclesiastes captures this so well. This is also played out in the Sims 2 where people grow old and die. In short, it is a frustration that God ended with the sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ.

Ecclesiastes 2

*17 Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for all is vanity and grasping for the wind. 18 Then I hated all my labor in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me. 19 And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labor in which I toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity.*

This is at the heart of the matter ... man cannot keep what he earns! It is all vanity when you consider it from an earthly viewpoint. The author comes to the conclusion that the best one can do is enjoy his labor under the sun. And that's pretty good advice for a world without Christ.

It is evident then, who values Christ, and who values the world ... especially in times of financial crisis. The Lord Himself said ...

Matthew 6

*24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*

This tells us how to live for Christ, and separates the heavenly from the earthly. For here we find truth in Christ and the natural extension of the Old Testament. In times past, man was perplexed with perpetuity ... especially as he grew old and recognized that life must end. The Lord then gives the answer in conquering death. That answer is to love the Lord with all of your heart, soul and mind.

Psalms 90

*5Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. 6In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.*

Spurgeon wrote:

Here is the history of the grass—sown, grown, blown, mown, gone; and the history of man is not much more.

Now in these verses we see the brevity of life. Okay, so who is “them”? Well for that we need to go back to verse 3. “Them” is mankind. This is a statement of man's relationship with time ... a fourth dimension which he cannot assimilate (think of field hockey as opposed to lacrosse).

And, again, it is because of sin, that this battle rages.

Ecclesiastes 3

**11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.**

“Eternity” in the heart of man. Oh, yes! Here's precisely what sin did! We are surely aware of it ... we use  $\infty$  constantly in mathematics, and yet, we really don't “get” the concept. 45B is still finite. So we can't quite “get” spending eternity somewhere. And no one can find out the work of God from beginning to end, because we can't conceptualize Something or Someone not beginning nor ending. How would your mind contain all of the memories of 10K yr???

1 Peter 1

**23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, 24 because**

*“All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass.*

*The grass withers, And its flower falls away,*

**25 But the word of the LORD endures forever.”**

**Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.**

Here Peter is quoting Isaiah 40. The words of Solomon, and Moses are indeed powerful and true for they are ultimately of God! We are stuck in a finite life span ... with no control over what happens before or after us. We desperately want to control that, and yet age creeps up on us and we are forced to come to grips with that grim reality. Our lives are blips on a timeline, and together we form the “flood” that is swept away. We continue to learn and learn and at the same time our bodies reach peak performance at around 32 yr and then slowly decline to the extent that in some cases we even lose our memory. I recently heard an a capella song from Ben Folds entitled “[Mr. Jones](#)”. It is known for the solemn line, “I'm sorry Mr. Jones, it's time.” This is a double entendre. Think about it. Additionally, the “flood” is referred to in “Fred Jones” as a train that people board and from which they disembark. *It's always moving on ... full of people ... but only the people change.*

There is an interesting change that takes place in human perspective too. It happens in different times for different folks. But for those who live past 50 yr or so, it does happen. In our younger years we spend time *striving* for the future. Get 'er done ... things will get better ... the memory will soften in time. The future will be better.

And then as the years before us appear significantly smaller than those behind us, we become agonizingly cognizant of just how precious time is ... not just any time ... our time. And then all of our losses and failures, gains and accomplishments become less meaningful, less joyful, less painful as we look back. Now if all of the OT points to Jesus Christ, how does that happen here? In these scriptures it's obvious. For Jesus Christ teaches us how to live for, and in eternity. Jesus Christ shows us the Way to the Father. Jesus Christ conquers death! His coming was important in that He is the answer to Ecclesiastes 3. As Andrae Crouch wrote, "[Jesus is the Answer for the world today.](#)"  
John 8

**14 Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from and where I am going.**

In Christ, we have a greater hope, a permanent and non-perishing hope of true life. Our problem is that we are stuck in our current 3D state. We can only imagine life beyond this earth, and that's why it's still a little uncomfortable. Each of us can probably recall a time in which we were filled with trepidation as we encountered a new school or job. Julie Andrews said it well in Rogers and Hammerstein's "the Sound of Music." "What will this day be like ... I wonder. What will my future be ... I wonder. It could be so exciting to be out in the world to be free. My heart should be wildly rejoicing. Oh what's the matter with me!!!" We probably had many folks at that time reassuring us, but we were still a little apprehensive. I say that's okay. It's okay to have some fear of death. If we didn't, then we wouldn't need faith. And in my case, Jesus has given me a lifetime of experiences in which He held me in His omnipotent hand. And through and by those experiences, my faith in Him has grown substantially.

Psalm 90 (HCSB)

**7 For we are consumed by Your anger; we are terrified by Your wrath.**

Why would Moses write about the anger and wrath of God? Where would he have seen such things? Depending on his age at the time of writing, he may be referring to the plagues in Egypt; he may have been referring to the miraculous passing through the Red Sea at the Gulf of Aqaba (see below); or perhaps he was alluding to the Fire on the Mountain; or maybe the fire that consumed the wayward sons of Korah.

Whatever the case, Moses was aware of and believed in the both the Omnipotence and Size of God.

Could that be said of his companions in the desert? Maybe ... and maybe not. Think about this, all of the Israelites were privy to the same experiences. All of the adults in the band would've had the capabilities to interpret the events. But, likely only a handful had the faith and fear that Moses did in God. Why did the others not believe in God's Providence and rebel so often? We cannot say definitively, but we can be quite sure that Moses had experienced God.

His experience was so profound that he left Midian and ventured back to Egypt at the age of 40 ... with his family. Moses sought after God in a way that was essentially unknown to the Hebrews of his time. Because of their suffering, many had probably forgotten about God's promise to Abraham.

But God had captured Moses's heart and when He brought disaster on the land of Egypt, it wasn't lost on Moses. His experiences led him to a greater faith in the person of God. We can still see this today, for this concept is reckoned in Paul's letter to the Romans too.



## Romans 1(HCSB)

17 For in it God's righteousness is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith. 18 For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth, 19 since what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them.



View of Nabq ... possible Red Sea crossing site for the Israelites

We cannot understand the work of the Holy Spirit, but we can see its evidence ... even in our own lives. In Moses's case, even though the indwelling of the Spirit was not permanent, it still had a profound effect. When Moses reached Egypt he was prepared to follow God.

And by faith, he recognized the power of God's wrath in the plagues, the crossing of the Red Sea, etc. He knew that it was God's power at work, and that is the work of the Holy Spirit. What could his unbelieving colleagues have been thinking? Well, that's the work of the Holy Spirit<sup>c</sup>.

There is also the possibility that many of the Israelites had placed their faith in Moses rather than in God. Many people today tend to place their faith in persons, and are ultimately disappointed and become angry.



Psalm 90 (HCSB)

8 You have set our unjust ways before You, our secret sins in the light of Your presence. 9 For all our days ebb away under Your wrath; we end our years like a sigh. 10 Our lives last seventy years or, if we are strong, eighty years. Even the best of them are struggle and sorrow; indeed, they pass quickly and we fly away.

Is God a judge? Ummm, yes! Does He know all? Of course! Does He even know secret things? Yep! What do we look like to Him? Ants perhaps ... except in a space of lower dimension.

What is the outcome of rebellion in the light of God's goodness? Righteous judgment. We can guess that Moses is alluding to the rebellion of the 10 spies. For 40 yr (approximately), God had judged the nation, and now it was the time of returning to Him.

Spurgeon wrote:

Sunlight can never be compared with the light of him who made the sun, of whom it is written, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." If by his countenance is here meant his love and favour, it is not possible for the heinousness of sin to be more clearly manifested than when it is seen to involve ingratitude to one so infinitely good and kind.

What are we to make of the statement on lifespan. If X represents human life in yrs, does

$$X \sim \chi^2(70)\text{yr} \text{ (sd} \approx 12\text{yr)}?$$

Can it be approximated by

$$N(70, 10)\text{yr}?$$

Where did Moses come up with the 70 or 80 yr comment? The answer is that God gave it to him. Perhaps it was to show how blessed Moses was to live to 120yr. Perhaps it was to illustrate the fragility and, at the same time, remarkable sturdiness of mankind. Why is this? The answer is the onslaught of sin! And God shortened the lifespan!

Genesis 6

3And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.

Plato had a good analogy too in the excerpt from the Republic entitled “the Cave.” In this story the characters are all living in a cave except for one who is whisked away to the daylight outside. Once that person returns, he tries to alert the others that they are only shadow boxing ... only responding to things that aren't significant. Of course, in the cave, this person is viewed as a lunatic and rejected, even though he has a glimpse of the truth.

Using this, how can we even expect to know God and His capabilities? We don't even understand everything there is to know about our own planet earth.

What types of creatures are roaming the forested mountains? Who would win between a sasquatch and a grizzly bear? What is the age of the earth? What types of creatures live in the deepest parts of the seas? What constitutes the smallest particle? What's really in the middle of the earth?



James marveled at the fact that so many wild animals were being tamed in his day (James 3:7,8, ca. AD55). We still marvel today in AD2012 (2018). The fact is, God knows us better than we can even know ourselves (Matthew 10:30), and we can never know Him completely ... which is a good thing (*why?*).

Our problem is that our days do ebb away under His wrath for the penalty of sin. At least that was the OT perspective. They could only look forward to the coming of the Messiah. At that stage (ca. 1500BC) in the *progressive revelation of God*, man knew only a finite lifespan and then ... Sheol! Moses, himself, had written about the fall of man and the resulting consequences. He knew that man's days were limited and were filled with toil and trouble.

“Even the best of them are struggle and sorrow.” An entire book of the OT is devoted to addressing this futility (Ecclesiastes). Even today, the people who walk in darkness have the same fears, and their lives still end with a sigh and they fly away quickly. Think of aging and dying (or not aging and dying) without the hope of heaven, and see the melancholy wrapped up in these verses. Think of the sadness wrapped up in the verbiage of so many famous secular songs (*The Way We Were, Those Were the Days, Daniel, The Last Song, Ships, Tomorrow*).

Then think of the marvelous gift of love that came down in Jesus Christ. He was more than what Israel expected, and they knew Him not.

Psalm 90 (HCSB)

**11 Who understands the power of Your anger? Your wrath matches the fear that is due You. 12 Teach us to number our days carefully so that we may develop wisdom in our hearts.**

Clearly this is a reference to the magnitude of God witnessed by Moses on the mount, and at other times. The question in v. 11 match those of God to Job. Who are we to even think that we could know the power of God's anger. Recall Sodom and Gomorrah, Achan, the sons of Korah, the flood, and the blight of Miriam.

John Calvin wrote:

The minds of the godly alone are wounded with the wrath of God; nor do they wait for his thunder bolts, to which the reprobate hold out their hard and iron necks, but they tremble the very moment when God moves only his little finger.

But, more importantly, it is a reference to the *infinitude* of God. His same quality that makes heaven heaven, also makes hell hell. A soul can be tormented forever. As Brother Pastor says, you “can't even make a grape!!!” Although we can put a man on the moon, what is that in light of the space of the universe? Or forever? So this leads to the meaning of the numbering of days carefully.

This jumps into the meaning of time. Of course, let's start with Spurgeon.

Spurgeon wrote:

We are more anxious to count the stars than our days, and yet the latter is by far more practical. That we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

How true! How much time is wasted in worthless endeavor? And what should followers of Christ be doing? Jerry Falwell once remarked, “did you ever notice that God gives you what you want after you don't care about it anymore?” This is absolutely true. Here are two of Paul's remarks.

Ephesians 5

**15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, 16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.**



## Romans 12

**2**And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

And what is the will of God?

## James 1

**27**Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Whoa! Where did that last part come from? As it turns out, as we continue to seek God and walk with Him, the world will hold less and less appeal to the pilgrim.

It comes down to this. We have a limited amount of time on earth. God has put us here to fulfill His purposes. We can't lose, ... and must win. So ...

1. Seek God through Christ always!
2. Be cognizant of your limited time. Listen to [this song](#) from 5 For Fighting
3. Appreciate *your* past and what God has done for you.
4. Enjoy the present. I actually enjoy living in the 2000's! There are [flash mobs](#), [fantasy football](#), wikipedia, cell phones, and the Dish! HA!
5. Do your best at everything. Work as unto the Lord.
6. Know that God is good, and is in control, and will be always.

## Psalms 90 (KJV)

**13**Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants.  
**14**O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.  
**15**Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.

Almost as if speaking on a phone with God, Moses asks “how long?” To me, it's a valid question. Almost 40 years in the desert with no homeland. That's the problem with the desert. It's beautiful, but if you don't have a constant source of water, you've gotta keep moving. So the Israelites led a bedouin type existence for 40 yr. And not only were they longing for a homeland, but getting restless as well. The call of leadership is serious to say the least.

What does Paul instruct Timothy?

## 1 Timothy 3

*1*This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. *2*A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; *3*Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; *4*One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; *5*(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

Note that Moses continues to implore God on account of His “servants”. Once again we see Moses standing in the gap for his people. He knows here that God has not forsaken them. Perhaps Moses knows the victory and glory that lies ahead. Perhaps it's a reminder to God that the 40 yr are almost up. Whatever the case, Moses will continue to serve until God calls him home.

How soon our days are over. And only God can reconcile us to our time on earth.

Spurgeon wrote:

The only satisfying food for the Lord's people is the favour of God; this Moses earnestly seeks for, and as the manna fell in the morning he beseeches the Lord to send at once his satisfying favour, that all through the little day of life they might be filled therewith.

If our life is limited, then why not beseech the Lord for His favor? Why not ask God for the blessings only He can give? And what are the blessings that only He can give? Everything!

Moses finishes this section with a specific yet simple request; that God would simply balance out the number of days of bad with the number of days of good. At this point in time, that would represent a LOT of good days! But then again, the one who truly experiences God knows that the greater the trial, the greater the miracle. I can't help but think of the Kenny Rogers song [\*The Gambler\*](#). The fact is, we're all gamblers! We're not guaranteed the next day or even the next breath. It's all in God's hands. So there's one sure play in life, know God through His Son Jesus Christ.

## Psalm 90 (KJV)

*16*Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children.

*17*And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

The question in v. 11 match those of God to Job. Who are we to even think that we could know the power of God's anger. As Brother Pastor says, we “can't even make a grape!!!” Although we can put a man on the moon, what is that in light of the space of the universe?

Why does Moses want the Lord to establish the work of their hands? Likely because he knows that the people are headed into the conquest of the promised land and will need the faith in God that has been established over the 40 yr period of wandering and manna!

## TTWМКvol3 Final Exam (the Big One)

1. According to Moses in Psalm 90, our years and lives pass by and end ...
  - a) quickly, like a shout
  - b) slowly, with great turmoil
  - c) quickly, like a sigh
  - d) evenly, like a sigh
  - e) quickly, like a breath of fresh air
2. Probably the greatest Christian singing group of our day is ...
  - a) Four Him
  - b) Avalon
  - c) Mercy's Rain
  - d) Jars of Crowns
  - e) Crowns of Clay Crosse
3. What is the mean life span for a humans according to Moses?
  - a) 120yr
  - b) 80yr
  - c) 70yr
  - d) 12yr
  - e) 10yr

4. What is the standard deviation of said (#3) lifetime?
  - a) 120yr
  - b) 80yr
  - c) 70yr
  - d) 12yr
  - e) 10yr
5. There are orphans of God.
  - a) True
  - b) False
6. Why is it a good thing that we cannot know all there is to know about God?
  - a) too much homework
  - b) We don't wanna know anything bad about Him
  - c) It would get old
  - d) We now have infinite space for an infinite time
7. Which of the following experienced the wrath of God and lived to tell?
  - a) Enoch
  - b) Miriam
  - c) Achan
  - d) Elijah
  - e) Noah
  - f) Jezebel
8. Of the three states we talked about (infidel, begrudging acknowledgment, friend of God) which is the only non-absorbing state?
  - a) State 1
  - b) State 2
  - c) State 3
  - d) the city-state
  - e) Allstate
  - f) interstate 40
9. What ecclesiastical Kenny Rogers song tells us about the true state of our life?
  - a) Lady
  - b) Through the Years
  - c) Coward of the County
  - d) Islands in the Stream
  - e) The Gambler

10. God may hurt us, but He'll never harm us.
- a) True
  - b) False
11. Spurgeon said that the history of grass is:
- a) sown, grown, mown, blown and gone.
  - b) sown, fertilized, mown and smoked.
  - c) flown, sown, grown, smoked and stoned.
  - d) blown, known, flown, and gone.
12. Name various Attributes of God we've discussed.
- a) Holy
  - b) Righteous
  - c) Sovereign
  - d) Eternal
  - e) Good
  - f) Just
13. It's scary to know that hell means a finite space over a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ time.
- a) party
  - b) good
  - c) hot
  - d) cold
  - e) infinite
  - f) finite
14. How long did Moses live?
- a) 70 yr
  - b) 123 yr
  - c) 120 yr
  - d) 117 yr
  - e) at least as long as Deacon Thomas
  - f) 40 yr
15. What caused man to start keeping time?
- a) long boring lessons
  - b) Days of Thunder
  - c) drums
  - d) decay
  - e) Southern Nights



16. Who was Ozymandias?
  - a) Rameses I
  - b) Rameses II
  - c) Rameses III
  - d) Rameses is number 1
  - e) His legs are number 1
17. What does Ecclesiastes say is in the heart of man?
  - a) Lust
  - b) greatness
  - c) deception
  - d) hunger
  - e) eternity
18. What does Hebrews 11 say that pleases God?
  - a) Church attendance
  - b) a forgiving heart
  - c) knowledge of the Bible
  - d) faith in Him
  - e) the number of converts we get
19. What 2001 movie graphically illustrates the concept of Hell?
  - a) The Other Guys
  - b) The Others
  - c) One Way or Another
  - d) The Other Side of Heaven
20. What helps us transfer our faith from ourselves to God?
  - a) Experience
  - b) Bible Study
  - c) Singing Psalms of Joy
  - d) Mission work
  - e) Failure
21. Where did David pen Psalm 34?
  - a) the Cave at Starnes Spur
  - b) the Cave at Adullam
  - c) Gat
  - d) Abimilech
  - e) Asdod

22. David played the harp and wrote songs to ... ?
- a) hopefully get a #1 single
  - b) try to outdo the temple musicians
  - c) work on developing a style of Hebrew music
  - d) glorify God
  - e) impress Michal
23. David's experiences foreshadow those of Whom?
- a) Solomon
  - b) Jesus Christ
  - c) Isaiah
  - d) John the Baptist
24. When David was in Gat he penned ?
- a) Psalm 56
  - b) Psalm 34
  - c) Psalm 90
  - d) Psalm 146
25. Which of the following were David's wives?
- a) Michal
  - b) Bat-Seba
  - c) Abigail
  - d) Jennifer
  - e) Jan
26. What does Nabal mean?
- a) Jewish cheerleader
  - b) Judean farmer
  - c) Fool
  - d) child predator
  - e) a Jewish game
27. What is the purpose of the OT?
- a) to make the Bible long enough so that people wouldn't memorize the entire thing
  - b) to point to Moses
  - c) to point us to Jesus Christ
  - d) to give us a law to abide by
  - e) for the purpose of history

28. Where did OT people go when they died?
- a) Abraham's bosom
  - b) the tower of Babel
  - c) Heaven or hell
  - d) Sheol
  - e) the Barbeque Pit

Credits

Brother Pastor

Rusty Webster

Sister Wardrobe Assistant

Mary Moler Starnes

Software

Ubuntu version of Linux by Debian

OpenOffice.org

Gimp.org

MSBC Men's Luncheon Creative Think Tank

Kenneth "BASF" Massey

Joseph El Norte

Manuscript Supporting

Cave ECG Staff

Theological Bouncer

Deacon Jimmy "D D D" Dodson

Quiz prizes provided by

The Limfinity Matrix Group

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