

Studies in the Psalms 04 Our Years - a Tale Told

by Neil Fraser

Neil Fraser's sermon explores the themes of mortality and redemption in Psalm 90, emphasizing the importance of living wisely and sacrificially for God.

Duration: 47:20

Topics: "Gods Anger", "Repentance Needed"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the pattern found in good stories and relates it to our lives. He emphasizes that our lives are like a tale that is told, with an idyllic beginning and a disturbing element introduced later on. The speaker also mentions the power of God's anger and the need for repentance. He then references Ecclesiastes chapter 9 and highlights the attempts at rescuing a family in the book, as well as the introduction of a humble but good person who aims to destroy the works of the wicked. Ultimately, it is revealed that the wicked person's plan does not succeed and the good person is not killed.

Transcript

We are speaking each morning on the psalms, and taking in the evening subjects suggested from one text in psalms number 78. Now today we are looking at psalms number 90, the 90th psalm, and I think we'll do what we did yesterday morning. We read responsibly.

Now read verse 1 please, in psalms 90, and we'll go right down to verse 70. Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, for ever thou hast formed the earth and the world.

Thou turnest man to destruction, and seest return ye children of men. Thou carryest them away as with a flower, they are as asleep. In the morning they are like grass which groweth up.

For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. Cast away in thy wrath we spend our years as a tale that is told. Even according to thy fear so is thy wrath.

O Lord, how long? And let it repent thee concerning thy servants. Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil. 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.

Now let's read a portion please in the Old Testament in Ecclesiastes. Two verses in Ecclesiastes chapter 9, and we'll read verse 14. Ecclesiastes 9 and 14 and 15, I'll read both verses.

There was a little city, and few men within it. And there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it. Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city.

Yet no man remembered that same poor man. May God bless to us his word. Now this psalm which is before us today, is the psalm of Moses.

It comes to us from the pen of Moses. He appears to have written it towards the end of the wilderness journey of the children of Israel. For you seem to see reflected in the psalms, the long and checkered Korea of the people of Israel.

He seems to be looking back upon that long journey through the wilderness. He knows too well that that path has been strewn with the carcasses of the children of Israel, who had refused to enter into the promised land. He's impressed with the subject of death, and he fills it, he fills his psalm with that subject.

This is a psalm of the everlastingness of God, and the neverlastingness of man. And it is rather gloomy, because in spite of the majesty of its language, it is rather dismal because it describes the disobedience, the sin and ultimate death of mankind. And that which is impressed upon us is the brevity of life.

If God is the everlasting, man and all his efforts are the neverlasting things of time. And the one is put over against the other, and the main object apparently of the psalm is to impress us with the brevity of our lives, and the necessity of numbering our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Now this psalm marks the beginning of the fourth section of the psalms.

I'm sure many of you are aware that the psalms are divided into five, and each of the divisions closes with Amen and Amen, a doxology. And from ancient times, the Jews rather divided the psalms according to the first five books of Moses. Psalms 1 to 41, they called the Genesis first, because in it God was revealed in his power as creator and in his covenant.

And then from 42 to 72, you have the Exodus portion, and it is to be noted that the word redemption, of which Exodus treats, is found about six times there. From Psalm 73 to 89, you have the Levitical portion. Much is said in these psalms about the sanctuary of God.

In this one beginning, the 90th psalm, is the numbers portion of the psalms, and goes on to Psalm 105. And 106 to the end gives us the Deuteronomy portion of the psalms. Now this begins the numbers portion.

Now in the book of Numbers, we have the sad record of the defection and rebellion of the children of Israel in their refusing to enter the land. And they were told that their carcasses would fall in the wilderness. And here is Moses in retrospect, going over their history, and we have his findings in the psalm which is before us.

The text I want you to think with me today, and I've been sort of singling out a text as you would notice each time, is in verse 9. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath, we spend our years as a tale that is told. Moses, who wrote in his earliest written communication that God made man out of the dust of the

earth, and later when sin came in, said, Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return. He says to us in verse 3 of the psalm, thou turnest man to destruction.

That word destruction means disillusion. You turn man back to the graves, you turn him back to the dust, and say return ye children of men. And from then on, he impresses us with the exceeding brevity of our lives.

We spend our lives as a tale that is told. Now while the translation is not the best in my text, it will suffice us for our subject today. I would like to impress us all with the necessity, especially as we are older, of numbering our days, and applying our hearts unto wisdom.

So we'll just take the words as they're found here. We spend our years as, our days, years as a tale that is told. Now all of us like to read good stories.

And all good stories form a pattern. They are more or less based on a certain pattern. And that pattern is, briefly stated, that you are introduced at the beginning to rather an idyllic scene, a pleasant one, where people are enjoying life, and enjoying home, and the environment in which they live.

They're very happy. But then you don't go very long in the book until there is introduced a disturbing element. There's a blot on the fair page.

There's a cloud in the sky. There's the introduction of an evil person with a wicked plot to disturb the complacency and the peace of that home. Because that person has his eye not only upon the utter ruin of the people, but his eye upon their inheritance, their lands, their possessions.

And the pattern of most stories is that for some time we follow the ramifications of the plot of the wicked one to disturb and desert. There are many attempts at rescue of this family, but they all seem in vain. But later on, in the body of the book, you are introduced to another person.

Another person who may be very, very humble, but he's good, and he's honest. And he makes it very, very plain that he has come to disturb and destroy the works of the wicked one. And at once, having so boldly declared his intention, he is the subject and object of the attack of this wicked person who summons all his helpers to accomplish the utter ruin of the plan of the good and honest man.

Indeed, to accomplish his death in order that he might not succeed. Now then, when it looks as though that he must succeed, and that that honest person must be killed, we learn that it doesn't really happen. The honest person is delivered.

He triumphs. And in so doing, he wins the affection of a beautiful, shall I say, a beautiful girl, a beautiful lady, whose heart has gone out to this hero because of what he suffered to deliver that family. She loves him, and the book finishes, as all good books finish, with the words, and they lived happily ever afterwards.

Now there may be difference in detail, but basically that is the pattern of a good story. My mother used to astonish us in the early days in her reading. She would begin to read what looked like quite a large book, but before the end of the day she declared that she had finished it.

And we said, now mother, you didn't read all that. Well, she said, no, I didn't read all, but I read the opening chapter or two, and I got the setting of the thing, and then I turned over a few pages, and I got the

bad one. And I turned over a few pages more, and I got the good one.

And I was so scared he wouldn't succeed, I rushed over to the back of the book, and I heaved a sigh of relief, for they lived happily ever after. He and his bride. Now that's a good story, dear friends.

Here's what I want to say, and here's why I tell it. Because the Bible, as all good stories, proceeds upon that same simple lesson. And all good stories have taken their pattern.

However, unwittingly, they have taken their pattern from the best of all stories. Because the Bible begins by showing a beautiful scene, an idyllic scene, where there is a family place. And it was the intention that this family should be in utter felicity and happiness, and enjoy their inheritance.

The father were made lord of that inheritance. Everything being put under their head. But as you read in the word of God, as you proceed, you're introduced almost at once to a villain.

A bad person. The devil. And he has come into this beautiful scene, and his avowed intention is to reduce the people to abject slavery, in order that he might become possessor of their inheritance, and become the prince of this world.

He comes in as we know, and he accomplishes the utter ruin of that first prince, and that first princess, who were placed over all that God had made. And from then on, in devilish design, that one set forth to accomplish not only the ruin of the first pair, but all their posterity, to have them as his sons, in abject poverty, and to secure the thing for himself, which indeed he did, becoming the prince of this world. He who had already been the prince of a pile of air, has now become the prince of this world, and has the entire world in absolute servitude to himself.

Now, that is why the Old Testament ends so disappointingly. The end of the very first book of the Bible ends in a coffin. The last four words, a coffin in Egypt.

The savior of the world, as he is called, lies in a coffin in Egypt. When the first book ends, and when the last book ends in that first section, it ends with the words, lest I smite the earth with a curse. The Old Testament ends with a curse.

The first book, a coffin. The last book, a curse. A coffin and a curse.

A disappointing end to any story. When you read the Old Testament, you'll find it is a book of unexplained ceremonies, of unfulfilled prophecies, of unsatisfied longings. The ceremonies in that Levitical system are so numerous, and so strange, and so meticulous, and yet so unexplained.

The prophecies are so numerous, but you have to close the book with the bulk of the prophecies still unfulfilled. And you close the book with the longings of prophet, priest, and king still unsatisfied. You're aware that there's a longing amongst the prophets for a greater prophet.

One of the greatest of them says, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up like unto me, and unto him shall you hearken. But you close that first section, and the prophet has not appeared. And there's a longing amongst the priests for a priest who will not be subject to death, who will remain in office.

And there's a promise of someone who will be a priest forever after the order of Milchester. And there's a longing amongst kings for a king who will reign unsubdued, who will reign forever and ever. And you close the book with the longings still unsatisfied, unfulfilled prophets, unexplained ceremonies, unsatisfied

longings.

A disappointing end to the first section. But then when you turn into the next section, you're introduced to the hero of the book. Amen? The hero of the book.

And you learn that it is his avowed intention to destroy him that had the power of death. That is the devil. He's declared it openly.

And because of that, he's the object of the attacks of Satan at every turn. But as you read about him, you discover he's the great explainer of the ceremonies. And he's the great fulfiller of the prophecies.

And he's the great satisfier of the longings. Because he's a prophet, he's the prophet that Moses longed for. Because he is a priest after the pattern of Aaron, but not after the order of Aaron.

He is not subject to death, he's a priest forever. And he's a king. And before you close that second section, he is hailed as king of kings and lord of lords.

And when you finish that first book, it doesn't end with a coffin. It ends with the savior of the world, alive from the dead, who says to his followers, Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. And when you close that last book, it doesn't close with a curse.

It closes with a blessing. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Because the first section is the book of the generations of Adam.

But the second book is the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David and the son of Abraham. And that hero, that poor but honest man, I speak reverently, he goes forward to deliver that family, that human race, at the total expenditure of his life, of his blood. Human stories must not say that the hero dies, or that the bride-to-be must remain in perpetual sorrow.

No, human stories can't end like that. But the Bible says that the hero died, and the devil gloated when he hung in a cross at the place called Calvary. But read on, and you'll discover that he rose from the dead, and he's won the heart of his bride.

She loved him because of the total expenditure of sweat, and blood, and death. And when you come to the end of the book, there's a marriage on the wedding bells are ringing. I was going to say.

There's a marriage supper of the Lamb. And when you close the book, they live happily ever after. Amen? And they live happily ever after.

And so you'll see that all human stories have unwittingly proceeded upon the path of the greatest story ever told. Now, Moses says here that you and I have a story to tell. We spend our lives as a tale that is told.

Now, if you have a good story to tell, or if somebody has a good story to tell about you, it will be patterned after the pattern of the greatest story ever told. It has to be to be a good story. Your story must be that you were brought up in a certain environment.

And a lot of us look back in a measure of joy and satisfaction for the upbringing we had. We shall always thank God, I am sure, of our fathers and mothers. Amen? I had a father and mother like that.

I had a father in the old country who would be sure to come home on a Sunday afternoon after the afternoon meeting with a friend that he had met by the road and bring him home to tea. We always had a high tea on Sunday. The man was lucky.

And father would invite him for tea just in the hope that after he invited him to tea he would invite him to the meeting and he would come and hear words whereby he might be saved. And they did get saved. And go on their weary joys.

I had a mother who never once did I hear say you can't bring those fellows in here. I had a father who when he saw ragged boys on the street would say to them come up to my house and tonight I'll make you a pair of trousers. And he'd go round somebody and get an old coat from them and he'd make that boy a pair of trousers.

He wasn't a tailor. I could tell his trousers anywhere. They were the same shape all the way down.

I used to be scared stiff he'd make me a pair. All dear friends with a heritage like that it was wonderful. For we all have a tale to tell about our early life.

And then we have to tell about disobedience. We have to tell about sin. We have to tell about sorrow and defeat.

And we have to tell about our servitude to the devil. But then we tell about a man who came into our lives. Amen.

And what a man. That's why I read to you Ecclesiastes chapter 9. There was a little city. And few men were there.

There weren't. And there came a great king against it, the devil. Who built great bulwarks against it, a planned attack.

Now there was found in it a poor wise man. Do you know who that was? Jesus. Blessed be his name.

Say was he poor? Very poor. Was he wise? Very wise. And he by his wisdom delivered the city.

Yet none remembered that saved one. And he despised his wisdom. And his words were not heard.

And we have to confess for a long long time we never heard his voice. And we despised his wisdom. And we never remembered it.

But then we go on with our good story and we tell how that he won our hearts. With the total expenditure of his life. And we're joined to him.

And as we sometimes sing and did sing today. There's nothing but glory on before. Right.

But you know we're still here. And your presence here this morning tells me that your story is not finished. But I'm wondering dear friends how much it has been counting for God.

Since the day you say you got saved. How much has your life been counting for God? Because your story is going to be told. It's going to be told at the judgment seat of Christ.

I wonder what kind of story you'll have. I wonder what kind of story I'll have. Well the story will be told truly.

There will be no exaggerations then. I wonder if your story will be like this. Oh that man.

He lived a life of kindness. And peace. And generosity.

He always seemed to have an eye for people's needs. And they had a generous heart. And a generous hand to give.

They were so like their master. They were rich. But for the sake of others they became poor.

The others through their poverty might be rich. Well I wonder dear friends when the story is told. If they'll have to say about you.

And me. Oh yes they were saved. They knew they were going to heaven.

They knew they had eternal life and would never perish. But they never really knew all their life what sacrifice meant. They always had a hand to grasp.

But never a hand to give. They seemed so concerned to pile up the world's goods. And had so little heart.

For laying up treasures in heaven. And now their life is ended. Is gone away like a tale that is told.

And of so little to lay. At the pierced feet of Christ. How much have you got? My sister.

How much have you got my brother? To lay at the feet of Christ. In consecrated. Sacrificial.

Service. Now for a little while I'd like to. Read you a number of stories.

Of people who counted. For most. Let's turn to 2nd Samuel chapter 23.

And we'll briefly look at this. 2nd Samuel 23. Briefly.

And let me assure you. That these are the things which will count for most. At the judgment seat of Christ.

2nd Samuel 23. And verse 8. A series of good stories. For our learning.

These be the names of the mighty men whom David had. The Takmanite. That sat.

In the seat. Chief among the captains. The same was Adonai of Aedonai.

He lift up his spear against 800. Whom he slew in one time. Now did you know.

That before it tells. About his remarkable achievement. In slaying 800.

People. At one time. Before that.

It says he was the man that sat in the seat. He said no. What good was that.

And why does the spirit of God put that in the Bible. And why are we reading about it 3000 years after. Anybody can sit in the seat.

He was the man said Holy Scripture. That before he lifted up his spear against 800. He sat.

In the seat. What does that mean. You know in 2nd Samuel chapter 7. I think it is.

You know what it says. And David went in. And sat.

Before the Lord. And in the next chapter. He got such a succession of victories.

As he hadn't had in many a day. Read the next chapter. And he did this and he overcame this.

And he was victorious here and there. The man that sat. Before the Lord.

Was successful. In his walk. And you know why you and I friends are not more successful in our service.

Because we don't take time to sit. We think the sum total of Christian service is activity. It's a great mistake.

It's a great mistake. God has been looking for people. For centuries.

Who will sit. In his presence. And enjoy him.

And his word. Amen. It's harder to sit sometimes.

In the Lord's presence. Than to go out. Doing things for him.

It's harder to sit and meditate and read and pray. Than it is to go out and serve. That's right.

Mary sat at his feet. And heard his word. Deuteronomy says they sat every man at thy feet.

And every man shall receive of thy word. Know anything about that? That counts much with God. Now then it says.

After him was Eliezer the son of Jodah the Abelite. One of the three mighty men with David. When they defied the Philistines.

That were there. Gathered together to battle. And the men of Israel were gone away.

He arose. And smote the Philistines until his hand was weary. And his hand clave unto the sword.

And the Lord wrought a great victory that day. And the people returned after him only to spy. What did this man do? He got a grip on his sword.

And he wouldn't let it go. And if the sword of the spirit is the word of God. That which counts much with God.

Is the man. Yes. And the woman.

Who will get such a grip. Of the word of God. That they will not let it go.

And you my sisters are all apt. Or too apt. To suppose.

That the study of the word of God belongs to men. And the study of cookbooks belongs to you. It's a great mistake.

Oh cookbooks are fine. My wife's got a shelf as big as that. I tell her she suffers from recipritis.

She's always looking for. I say my dear. You've got as many recipes as make me a different meal every day.

For the next 50 years. Slight exaggeration. But she also takes time out.

To enjoy the word. Do you? Do you take time out to enjoy the word? I'm thinking right now of a woman whom I met in North Dakota years ago. She's now an old woman about 12 to 19 I think.

But in the early days of my preaching going back to 1925. And that's a long time. I used to knock at that woman's door.

And she had a big house to play in. She had four children to look after. And a husband.

But I remember yet. Sometimes I go to that door 10 30 in the morning. And when she opened the door.

I used to wonder why her eyes were shining. And I mean literally shining. She had always opened doors shining eyes.

Come in she said to me. And when I went in. On the table was a Bible.

And a concordance. And a book about the Bible. And she would say well.

I was just taking time out. Just taking time out for the word. God wants women like that.

God wants men like that. Who will have a grip. On the sword of the strength.

Look at the next man briefly. And after him was Shammah the man of. The son of Agi the Herorite.

The Philistines were gathered together into a troop. There was a piece of ground full of lentils. And the people fled from the Philistines.

Notice the condition friends. At the end of verse 9. The men of Israel were gone away. Days of carelessness.

At the end of verse 10. The people returned after him only to spoil. Days of covetousness.

And the people fled from the Philistines. Days of cowardice. Days of carelessness.

Days of covetousness. Days of cowardice. And he.

Stood in the midst of the ground and defended it. And flew the Philistines and the Lord brought a great victory. What was he contending for? A patch of lentils.

People would say that man he knew what he was contending for. A hill of beans. A hill of beans.

Putting his life in it and contending for a hill of beans. You know dear friends. In spite of the fundamentalism.

All over the world. In which we rejoice. There's a great deal of giving up certain truths of the word of God.

And we have to contend for them. If they are the fruit of the people of God. If they are simply.

Customs and traditions are not worth contending for. But if those principles are the very fruit of the people of God. They are worth contending for.

Amen. Even though people accuse us that what you're contending for is not worth a hill of beans. If it's the fruit of God it's worth holding together.

In these last days. In which we live. Now you'll notice that the first three do things.

Individually. And one thing that counts big with God. Is a man.

Who can stand alone. Where he works. And where he lives.

For God. A woman. Who will stand for God.

Alone. Where she lives. And works.

Now the next three and I don't read it. The next three did things together. They united in effort.

And they risked their lives and they shed their blood. To bring David something. What do you think it was? A drink of water.

A drink of water. And they gave it to him. And the tears started at David's eyes.

When he said I wouldn't drink. It's the price of blood. And he poured it out to the Lord.

He never asked those men to do it. They just did it. Out of the love in their hearts.

And they broke through the ranks of the Philistines. And got the water from the well of Bethlehem. And they broke through again to bring it back.

And in the morning they said here it is. I never asked you to do it. No.

But we did it for you. The big thing friends it will count for God. Is the love that you have in your heart for Christ.

Your gift may not be very big. But the motive is good. The love of your heart.

Now I might go on in this but the time has gone. Read on and you'll find a number of very very precious other little stories. And you know who the last one is in the list here? Uriah.

Uriah. The Hittite. Amongst the mighty men of David.

Maybe even David himself might have said please don't put his name in. It'll bring up too many memories. And people will remember what I did to Uriah.

I just assume you've kept him out if you don't mind. But God says no we got to put him in. And that leads me to say this friends.

That however obscure your service. However despised your person. God will not forget your story.

He'll have it in the books. I assure you. Now.

How long are you going to be with us? How long am I going to be with you? You say well I don't know. And you don't know the truth. Well.

The Lord teach us in number of. It might be later than we think. We may not have done very much.

But there's still time. There's still time for sacrifice. There's still time for consecration.

There's still time to do something worthwhile. For the kingdom of God. May he grant it for Christ's sake.

Shall we pray. Gracious God our Father. We thank you for the greatest story ever told.

We thank you for that poor wise man who has won our hearts. And has kept us until now. And looking back on our own story.

We thank you for the good things about it. But oh God our Father. We're getting near the end of the journey some of us.

And we haven't counted for very much. Help us to number our days. And we may apply our hearts unto it.

Keep us from being more concerned. About leaving things to our children. Than we are about using it now for the kingdom of God.

Give us real sacrifice. Give us real devotion to Christ. And part us with the blessing of the triune God.

Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

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