

BE WISE
Ps 90.

The psalm is attributed to Moses. There have been many attempts to deny this but there is no reason for us to doubt it.

The core of the psalm (v7-12) appears to have a definite historical background in the latter months of the 40 years wilderness wanderings, when the generation which was adult on leaving Egypt was rapidly dying off as a judgement for their unbelief, (Num14v21-23). This sense of Israel's mortality and unbelief leading to judgement lies at the heart of the psalm. It shows us God's greatness and his eternity. Moses is meditating on Gen 1-3. Isaac Watts paraphrased the psalm in the hymn 'O God our help in ages past'.

The psalm is a prayer and Moses involves himself in the petitions of his people for grace and mercy.

I want to take v12 as the key to the whole psalm. 'So teach us...apply our hearts unto wisdom'. Moses maintains that men live thoughtless lives never truly considering eternal things like the wrath or the fear of God. He urges them to apply themselves unto wisdom, to reflect seriously upon these things.

V1 The psalm opens with the glorious truth, The eternal God is our dwelling place. From Abraham's time, the people of God had no abiding place. But the Lord had always shown himself to be their refuge, Deut. 33v27. So we have a relationship of peace with God at the beginning of the psalm. It is not that he dwells with us (the presence of God), but we dwell with him = our privilege as a reconciled people. So this basic truth is stated at the very beginning of the psalm. This is the reality of the blessing we can know. He is going to go on from here to show God's wrath and the brevity of life, but he will bring us back to this relationship again at the end of the psalm.

There is the wisdom of remembering the ETERNITY of God.

In v2-6 The ETERNAL is contrasted with the mortal. God endures beyond even the most settled things in man's experience, the mountains, the earth and the very fabric of them. He was when nothing else was and he is the everlasting God.

As for man, by contrast, he returns to dust as a result of the fall and God's edict upon him. God resolves and man dissolves. A word created and a word destroys.

But God outlasts even the longest time measurements known to man; in fact he shames them into insignificance. A thousand years is but like a single watch. Man, however is swept away as a flood, is like a dream and for all his fine show, perishes as quickly as the grass. God however endures. We need to see that there is no escape from him. You must meet him.

You need also to have the wisdom to see the ACCOUNTABILITY of men.

In v7-11 we now are faced with the reality of the wrath of God. By that wrath we are consumed or finished and overwhelmed, a word used of an army facing disaster and of Joseph's brothers at the moment of truth, Gen45v3. Man is accountable and God knows his secret sins. It is this wrath which brings death. Life is an anticlimax and closes with a sigh. Even the extension of life is not an unmixed blessing. You are a creature and you need to see that you are accountable also to God. You need to have the wisdom to recognise the solemnity of your situation. Men do not consider the fact of the wrath of God. They neither recognize this, nor fear him. On the way to hell without any concern.

There is also to be considered the UNCERTAINTY of life In v12 He appeals to men to realise the uncertainty of life, to number their days and take these things to heart, applying our hearts unto wisdom.

You need to realise the GOD'S MERCY for sinners.

Instead of the wrath of God, we can know the peace of God and the grace of God.

V13-17 asks for a reversal of what has gone before.

V14 Whereas all our days are by what we have done under God's wrath, the plea is that by God's mercy all our days can be joyful.

We can experience the BEAUTY of a life lived in fellowship with God.

V15 speaks of joys to balance sorrows; v16-17 labour which is not in vain.