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Session 3 - Moses

Psalms 90:1-90:end

Brief Notes

Introduction

This prayer of Moses is beautiful and profound, full of sober realism and vibrant hope. Unlike some of the other prayers we look at this term, this one is tied to no particular situation, but rather simply the human situation we all find ourselves in, and it is a prayer we can readily make our own.

The Psalms give up their treasures, not so much with the help of commentaries, as through patient prayerful meditation: that perhaps is true of all Scripture, but I always feel is especially true of the psalms. Still, I hope the following comments are helpful.

Verse 1

"you have been our dwelling place" - that truth, and that longing that He should be our dwelling place, is the heart of this psalm. In many ways Pss.90 and 91 form a beautiful pair of complementary psalms about making God our dwelling place - ie the place we find refuge and protection and all that "home" ideally means for us. It cannot be found in this world, which is now a restless place, but is to be found only and truly in God Himself. The psalm explains our need of such a dwelling place, and expresses the faith of those who do seek their rest in Him.

Verses 1-6

These opening verses draw a stark contrast between human

transience and divine permanence, human weakness and divine power. We are but dust and as transient as grass; we are mortal. He is eternal, the creator and Lord of all. The passage switches between reflecting on God's eternity (vv.2 and 4) to man's mortality (vv.3 and 5,6).

Verses 7-11

The opening verses have reflected on our mortality; now the reason for our mortality is explained and reflected upon. It was implicit back in verse 3, which alludes to Genesis 3:19, when in response to Adam's sin God, ever true to his word, pronounces the judgment of death. We were made to eat of the Tree of Life, and our mortality and transience should remind us of our sin, which has aroused God's anger and indignation (vv.7,8). It's the wrath of God that explains our mortality. Our "secret sins" might include not just those sins we hide from others, but those we fail to see ourselves

Verse 9,10 might seem overly gloomy, there is plenty to enjoy in life still, it is not all "trouble and sorrow", and yet this is the reality of life in our fallen world. It's a bleak picture, but not hopeless as we'll see: it's realistic, the reality which death especially reminds us of.

Verses 12-17

The psalm finishes with 6 requests -

- **v.12.** This is not simply a prayer that we should remember **that** we will die (though some of course seem to live in denial); it is also a prayer that we should remember **why** we will die. The wisdom we should pray for is the wisdom that recognises both the truth of vv.1-6 and the explanation in vv.7-11.
- **v.13.** As creation waits in eager expectation of being liberated from its bondage to decay (Rom.8), so we should respond not in grim resignation but hopeful longing. This is a prayer for mercy and salvation, which was answered in the death of Christ, when God's wrath was turned aside, and will be answered fully when Christ returns and our fallen world is restored and renewed.
- **v.14.** Still in this mortal life there is joy to be found, even amidst the "trouble and sorrow"; it is found in the experience and enjoyment of his love. In our restless world, this is where satisfaction is found. "all our days" - cf. v.9.
- **v.15.** God's purpose stands that we should know his blessing, so even in the midst of trouble we can trust it is only for a time, he will surely lift us up. And as Christians the "as many days" is far surpassed - 2Cor.4:17.
- v.16.** Joy and gladness will come through knowing Him and seeing Him, so we pray that He would help us to see all He has done and all that He is.
- v.17.** We might feel the futility of our work in this fallen world, where all seems like the grass of

v.6, but as we make the Lord our dwelling place we can know his favour and trust that our labour in the Lord is not in vain.

Apart from God all is futility and sorrow and despair, but if we make Him our dwelling place then we will know hope and joy and meaning and satisfaction - even in this life and much much more in eternity.

Some possible questions

What ideas does the word "home" conjure up for you?

What does it mean for the Lord to be our dwelling place?

Taking the psalm as a whole, why must we look for a dwelling place not in this world but in God?

Verses 1-6

What do these verses help us reflect on about God?

What do these verses help us reflect on about ourselves?

Verses 7-11

What is the reason for our mortality?

"All our days pass away under your wrath" (v.9) - what are the evidences of that?

Is the Moses being overly gloomy?

Verses 12-17

v.12 - What is the wisdom we should be praying for? How in our world is that wisdom often obviously lacking?

v.13 - What is he asking for? How has that prayer been answered? How can we still pray it today?

v.14 - What marked all our days in v.9? But what can we pray we might also know? How is such joy to be found?

v.15 - Can we expect this? Why should we?

v.16 - What is he praying for? Why do you think he prays for this?

v.17 - In our fallen world, where all is like grass, how might we feel about our work? Can it be meaningful?

How do these 6 requests reflect the attitude of v.1? What then does it mean to make the Lord our dwelling place?

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