

## Our New Year's Hope And Prayer.

Text: Psa 90

Suggested Hymns:

557, 35, 551, 556, 554

1) A prayer of Moses, the man of God

2) Our hope for the New Year

3) Our New Year's Prayer

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Psalm 90:1-17, <sup>1</sup> *A Prayer of Moses the man of God.*

*LORD, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. <sup>2</sup> Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.*

<sup>3</sup> *You turn man to destruction, And say, "Return, O children of men." <sup>4</sup> For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it is past, And like a watch in the night. <sup>5</sup> You carry them away like a flood; They are like a sleep. In the morning they are like grass which grows up: <sup>6</sup> In the morning it flourishes and grows up; In the evening it is cut down and withers.*

<sup>7</sup> *For we have been consumed by Your anger, And by Your wrath we are terrified. <sup>8</sup> You have set our iniquities before You, Our secret sins in the light of Your countenance. <sup>9</sup> For all our days have passed away in Your wrath; We finish our years like a sigh.*

<sup>10</sup> *The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away. <sup>11</sup> Who knows the power of Your anger? For as the fear of You, so is Your wrath. <sup>12</sup> So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.*

<sup>13</sup> *Return, O LORD! How long? And have compassion on Your servants. <sup>14</sup> Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy, That we may rejoice and be glad all our days! <sup>15</sup> Make us glad according to the days in which You have afflicted us, The years in which we have seen evil. <sup>16</sup> Let Your work appear to Your servants, And Your glory to their children. <sup>17</sup> And let the beauty of the LORD*

***our God be upon us, And establish the work of our hands for us; Yes, establish the work of our hands. (NKJV)***

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Another year has nearly closed and we will be one year closer to our eternal future. We “spend our years” in the presence of God in whose sight a thousand years are but as yesterday. Our hope for all our years lies in Jesus Christ who said while He was on earth, ***“Before Abraham was, I am.”***<sup>1</sup> The issues of time and eternity engage our thoughts at this time of the year

Almost everyone is thinking at this time: What has the new year in store for me? Success or defeat? Prosperity or reverses? Good health or sickness? Sorrow, and perhaps death? Can I do anything about it, or do I simply shrug it off by thinking, *“What does it matter? What will be, will be”*?

Our text answers all these sombre New Year reflections, for it contains *Our New Year’s Hope and Prayer*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. “A Prayer Of Moses, The Man Of God”**

No man was ever in closer communion with God than Moses, with whom God spoke, not in visions, but *“mouth to mouth.”* Moses was permitted to see God’s glory; twice he was in the cloud with God on Mount Sinai for 40 days and 40 nights without eating or drinking. After Moses’ death God raised him up, took him into heaven, and let him appear with Elijah in glory at the Saviour’s transfiguration; and St. John in one of his revelations heard the angels sing the Song of Moses together with the Song of the Lamb. (Rev. 15:3)

But although Moses was so highly favoured by God, he was also troubled with the same thoughts that come to us today — the frailty, the burdens, and the decline of our life.

### **2. Our Hope For The New Year**

Let us, first consider the hope of Moses and make it our hope for the New Year. Moses approaches God with hope and trust in God’s eternity, unchangeableness, and mercy, and contrasts them with our life’s frailty, changeableness, and sinfulness.

## God Is Our Eternal Refuge

Our text says in verses 1, 2, and 4, *LORD, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. <sup>2</sup> Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. ... <sup>4</sup> For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it is past, And like a watch in the night.*

Our hope, then, rests in God's eternity. He has always been the almighty, ever-present, holy, and glorious God, and always will be. His might and His love, His holiness and His mercy will never change, and our hope is that He will be our Dwelling Place, as Moses said when he spoke the blessings to the twelve tribes of Israel: *"The eternal God is your Refuge."*<sup>2</sup>

The Jews as a nation had no dwelling place at the time Moses wrote this prayer. For 430 years they had been slaves in Egypt and were moved from one place to another to build cities for the Pharaohs, and now they had been wandering in deserts and wildernesses for 40 years. But the eternal God was their Dwelling Place.

Thus we should say with Moses at the beginning of this year of our Lord 2015: *"No matter where I will be this year — whether in my home or deprived of it, whether with my friends and loved ones or in a hospital, whether overseas or in Australia, — no matter where I will be — the eternal God will be my Dwelling Place."*

## God In Us And We In Him

What does it mean: God is our Dwelling Place? It means that God dwells in us and we in Him. The prophet Isaiah declares, <sup>15</sup> *For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit."*<sup>3</sup>

The Christ of Christmas, who came to restore us sinners to fellowship with our eternal heavenly Father, said, *"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. ... And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper [the Holy Spirit], that He may abide with you forever."*<sup>4</sup>

The Apostle John declares in 1 John 3:23-24, <sup>23</sup> *And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.* <sup>24</sup> *Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him.*

And the apostle Paul writes, *“Your life is hid with Christ in God.”*<sup>5</sup>

### **Otherwise, How Frail Our Life Is!**

Moses, the man of God, urges us to ponder the frailty and misery of our earthly existence. Our text says, <sup>5</sup> *You carry them away like a flood; They are like a sleep. In the morning they are like grass which grows up: <sup>6</sup> In the morning it flourishes and grows up; In the evening it is cut down and withers. For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.*

The story of our life is like the story of the grass, sown, grown, blown, mown, gone. Our life is *“carried away like a flood,” “it is soon cut off, and we fly away.”* The days of our years are 70, and if by reason of strength they be 80, *Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow.*

Although God made Moses himself an exception to this rule, Moses here by divine inspiration describes facts of life which 35 centuries of progress in medical science could not change.

Truly, Moses' life was full of labour and sorrow. He was the leader, the judge, the lawgiver, the pastor, the prophet, and the mediator of millions of people on the move. He had seen the wilderness become a huge cemetery during the exodus, with over 1 million graves of his people. ... And the labour and sorrow, the brevity and frailty of man's life today is the same as it was in the days of Moses.

### **The Reason for the Frailty of Our Life — Our Sins**

The reason for the frailty of our life is the same as at the time of Moses. <sup>8</sup> *You have set our iniquities before You, Our secret sins in the light of Your countenance.* In the words of the prophet Isaiah, <sup>6</sup> *But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.”*<sup>6</sup>

In all eternity we can never thank God enough that, although *“the wages of sin is death, ... the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord!”*<sup>7</sup>

Through faith in Christ, our Saviour, we are delivered from the punishment of sin. But at the beginning of another year of our earthly pilgrimage the sacred record of Moses and his people earnestly warns us against bringing upon ourselves the consequences of our own sinful folly.

We must expect misery and heartache if, by open or secret sins, we belie our love for our heavenly Father by wandering on unholy pathways.

### **Dwell In God**

For the coming year and all our years we, with Moses, must make the eternal God our Dwelling Place and rest on His everlasting arms! We must *“live to the Lord”*<sup>8</sup> and *“walk before Him all the days of our life.”*<sup>9</sup> His mercy to us in Jesus must never get out of our sight or mind. In our text Moses’ solemn reflections on human sin and weakness lead him to prayer, and we, too, shall make his petitions our New Year’s prayer. let us consider these in turn.

### **2. Our New Year’s Prayer**

This prayer of Moses in the closing verses of Psalm 90 has several pleas that are especially appropriate for Christians at the turn of a New Year.

#### **Verse 12, “Teach Us To Number Our Days”**

What can be more fitting on this day when we look back into the old year and forward into the new, than Moses’ first request, <sup>12</sup> *So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.* The meaning of *“Teach us to number our days”* is explained well by another man of God, the prophet David, when he prayed in Psalm 39:4, <sup>4</sup> *“LORD, make me to know my end, And what is the measure of my days, That I may know how frail I am.*

Let us in this new year often think of the end of our journey and heed the prophet’s call, as we read in Amos 4:12-13, *Prepare to meet your God ... For behold, He who forms mountains, And creates the wind, Who declares to man what his thought is, And makes the morning darkness, Who treads the high places of the earth -- The LORD God of hosts is His name.*

#### **Verse 13, Return, O LORD! ... And Have Compassion On Your Servants.**

After pleading for humility and wisdom, Moses pleads for forgiveness. After admitting that his and his people’s iniquities and secret sins are the cause of their life’s frailty, brevity, and sorrow, he says: <sup>13</sup> *Return, O LORD! How long?*

***And have compassion on Your servants.*** Moses feels that God has turned His face away from His people because of their sins, and begs God to turn His gracious countenance upon them.

Moses had on several occasions struggled with God to win His mercy and forgiveness, and God had relented. This prayer, however, was not written after such an event as that of the Golden Calf, but is the general prayer of a child of God sorrowing over his sins and seeking forgiveness. This great man of God, just like the tax-collector in the temple,<sup>10</sup> craves only God's mercy. Moses prays, ***Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy.***

Let us join Moses in this prayer for God's mercy, imploring His forgiveness for our many sins in the past year, especially for those sins that still haunt our memory.

#### **Verse 15, "Make Us Glad!"**

This time of the year friends are wishing us a happy new year, and that is the next petition in the prayer of Moses, except that he is begging God for it. He says, <sup>15</sup> ***Make us glad according to the days in which You have afflicted us, The years in which we have seen evil.***

Like Moses, we may say to God, ***Lord, You have sent us affliction and sickness, sorrow and trials, and we admit You did it for our soul's welfare; but now, dear Lord, send us also a measure of happiness, comfort, and consolation in this new year, so that, as David says, 'the bones which You have broken may rejoice.'***<sup>11</sup> Instead of ushering in the new year with self-created merriment and hollow good cheer, or even boisterous frivolity, let us, like Moses, turn our hearts to our eternal Refuge and pray, ***"Make us glad!"***

#### **Verse 16 , Let Your Glory Appear To Our Children!**

In his next request Moses prays for the children, ***Let Your work appear to Your servants, And Your glory to their children.*** The prayer is that God will help His people bring their children to learn and appreciate the glory of their God. Yes, it was a great record of God's glory that the Israelites could teach their children: the great plagues of Egypt, the passing through the Red Sea, the revelations on Mount Sinai, the manna from heaven, and the many miracles in the wilderness.

But far greater than these shines the glory of God for our children, if they can but be brought to see it — not only God’s glory in His power, but also the great glory of His grace in the life and work of our Saviour.

As John the Baptist said: ***“The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”***<sup>12</sup> Let us pray that God’s Holy Spirit will bring our children to know and believe in our glorious God of grace, that they may treasure His glorious work of redemption and learn to walk in the way of salvation!

**Verse 17, “Let the Beauty of the Lord, Our God, Be upon Us!”**

The final request in the prayer of Moses is particularly appropriate as a New Year’s prayer. Most greeting cards for this season wish the recipient a prosperous new year. Let us see how Moses prays for this.

He does not pray for better or easier work, not for more money or possessions, not for more luxuries, nor for more appreciation and distinction. This is his humble petition,<sup>17</sup> ***And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us, And establish the work of our hands for us; Yes, establish the work of our hands.*** Let us consider these in turn.

Firstly, ***“Let the beauty of the Lord, our God, be upon us”*** is a beautiful parallel to the words of the benediction: ***“The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you.”*** When does a father’s face shine upon his children? When he feels especially loving and kind toward them. Moses says, in effect: ***“Dear Lord, our God, look down with loving-kindness upon us, Your children.”***

Secondly, ***“and establish the work of our hands for us!”*** If the Lord has been good to you in the past year, then pray with the psalmist, ***Oh, continue Your lovingkindness to those who know You,***<sup>13</sup> and make this final request of Moses your plea, ***establish the work of our hands for us; Yes, establish the work of our hands.***

That is: ***“Dear Lord, put Your blessing upon our work, that it may prosper.”*** Moses here means the secular work as well as the spiritual. He and his elders had plenty of both. The care and protection of several million people moving from one wilderness to another, policing and judging such a multitude, establishing and conducting their ritualistic worship under primitive conditions —

and all this with a “*stiff-necked*” and “*rebellious people*” — was indeed a great and difficult task.

And yet, after many years of this gruelling task and all its heartbreaks, he does not pray to be relieved of it, he does not murmur, he does not ask for a reward; he merely asks God to bless and prosper his work.

May we learn from this man of God how to form our New Year’s prayer for prosperity, just asking God to bless and prosper the work of our hands; and let our only concern be that the favour of the Lord, our God, be upon us! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> John 8:58

<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 33:27

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 57:15

<sup>4</sup> John 14:23, 16

<sup>5</sup> Col. 3:3

<sup>6</sup> Isaiah 64:6

<sup>7</sup> Romans 6:23

<sup>8</sup> Romans 14:8

<sup>9</sup> cf Luke 1:75

<sup>10</sup> Luke 18:9-14

<sup>11</sup> Psalm 51:8

<sup>12</sup> John 1:17

<sup>13</sup> Psalm 36:10