

The Wisdom To Which The Thought Of Time's Rapid Flight Should Move Our Hearts..

Text: Psa 90:12

Suggested Hymns:

631, 559, 538, 555, 22

- 1) The wisdom not to set our affections on the things of this world.
- 2) The wisdom to use our time here on earth to prepare for a blissful hereafter.
- 3) The wisdom to work while it is day.

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 90:12, ¹² *So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.* (NKJV)

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

Dear friends in Christ,

How rapid is the flight of time! Like an ever-rolling stream the days and the weeks and the months rush away, to be swallowed up by the sea of eternity. Year follows upon year with almost astonishing swiftness. We are born to the world, pass through the years of childhood and youth into the prime of manhood and womanhood, enter old age, and arrive at the portals of death seemingly before we are aware of it.

The Hymnist writes,¹

As the wingèd arrow flies
Speedily the mark to find;
As the lightning from the skies
Darts, and leaves no trace behind:
Swiftly thus our fleeting days
Bear us down life's rapid stream;

If ever the swiftness of time's flight forces itself upon our attention, it is when we come to the end of a year. The year 2018, with all its joys and sorrows, its weal and woe, its blessings and hardships, its successes and disappointments, is all but gone. Soon a new year will have been ushered in. And who knows, it may be the last for one for some of us, or even for all of us?

For the children of the world there is something baffling and disturbing in the thought of time's rapid flight. Even the world feels how time rushes constantly onward and all things are hurrying toward the end.

But not for long do the worldly minded people allow their thoughts to dwell on the fact that with each succeeding year their time on earth is becoming shorter. They bid farewell to the old year and greet the dawning of the new with rowdy clamour, as if they want to drown out every serious thought. They give the reins to their lusts and indulge their vices to excesses, as if to bid defiance to God, to whom they must one day give account for the manner in which they have spent their days on earth.

But is not so with the Christian. He is not unimpressed by the swiftness of time's flight. He is not insensible to the seriousness of time and eternity. This makes him all the more sober and thoughtful. For this reason he will, particularly at a time like this, when the old year wanes and a new year is about to dawn, pause and give serious thought to the lessons he is to learn from the rapid flight of time.

His prayer will be that of Moses, the man of God, who says in our text, *So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.* Let us therefore prayerfully consider — *The Wisdom to which the Thought of Time's Rapid Flight Should Move Our Hearts.* May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Wisdom

Not To Set Our Affections On The Things Of This World.

So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom. Moses is prompted to make this prayer by thinking of the swift passing of time and of the short span of the life of men on earth.² He prays that the thought of time's headlong flight may move his heart to wisdom, that he may use the few days allotted to him in this life wisely and well.

David utters a similar prayer in Psalm 39:4-5, ⁴ *“LORD, make me to know my end, And what is the measure of my days, That I may know how frail I am.* ⁵ *Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths, And my age is as nothing before You; Certainly every man at his best state is but vapor.* That is the prayer of all true Christians.

We cannot number our days in such a way as to ascertain just how many years we shall live on earth. Our life may be cut short at any time. When that will be is known to God alone. But we can and should number our days in the sense that we consider that the years of our life are few and that they fly rapidly away. The best that we can expect is the seventy or eighty years mentioned in our psalm, from the Old Testament Lesson for today.

People today have as much reason as did Jacob to say, *few and evil have been the days of the years of my life.*³ Moreover we are to pray with Moses that we may learn to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.

Worldly people do not like to think of the brevity of life here on earth. They shun the thought of death. It is said that the great financier Andrew Carnegie would not permit any one to speak of death in his presence. Most unbelievers live and act as though they were going to continue in this world forever. With their whole heart they cling to the things of this world — its riches and honour and pleasures. What folly!

How soon the riches and pleasures of this world become as ashes in the mouth. How short the time when even the richest person in the world comes to the bounds of life and must leave behind the world and all the things he held so dear.

Suppose a person journeying through the trackless desert would, instead of pitching a tent or making a temporary shelter, laboriously dig a deep foundation and carefully build a solid structure, as he would if he was building a permanent home, only to leave it behind after a short journey with never a regret. Such is the folly of the worldly minded person who sets his heart's affections on the things of this world.

In view of how brief our life on earth is, it is wisdom not to set our hearts' affections on the things of this world. That is wisdom which the Word of God teaches us in 1 John 2:15-17, ¹⁵ *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* ¹⁶ *For all that is in the world -- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life -- is not of the Father but is of the world.* ¹⁷ *And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.*

The Christian is to regard his life here on earth merely as a brief journey. We read in 1 Chronicles 29:15, ¹⁵ *For we are aliens and pilgrims before You, As were all our fathers; Our days on earth are as a shadow*, and in Hebrews 13:14, ¹⁴ *For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.*⁴

Therefore the Christian says,⁵

What is the world to me!
It rapidly must vanish;
With all its gorgeous pomp
Pale death it cannot banish;
Its riches pass away,
And all its joys must flee,
But Jesus doth abide,—
What is the world to me!

2. The Wisdom

To Use Our Time Here On Earth To Prepare For A Blissful Hereafter.

The worldly minded person does not like to think of the time when he will have to leave the world. Yet occasionally the thought of time's rapid flight will force itself upon him as when the old year passes away and the new year arrives.

The death of a relative or friend will compel him to consider that some day, and that only too soon, he also must die. Then he, too, will number his days. But how? His numbering his days will move his heart not to wisdom, but to folly.

The worldly minded person may hear the warnings of the Word of God. His conscience will tell him that he must one day give an account to God for his life on earth and that failure to stand in the Judgement will mean eternal damnation for him. But in his supreme folly he ignores the warnings of God's Word and throttles his conscience.

He seeks to lull himself into the belief that there is no existence after death, no life beyond the grave, and that death ends all. In order to bolster up this foolish belief, he will resort to scoffing at the Christians' belief in the coming of the Lord to Judgement, just as Scripture says in 2 Peter 3:3-5, ³ *knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own*

lusts, ⁴ and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.” ⁵ For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water.

Wrapped up in the delusion that death ends all, such a person is prompted by the thought of life’s brevity to use the short time he has on earth in the enjoyment of all that the world has to offer. His watchword is *“Let us eat, drink, and be merry; for tomorrow we shall die.”* Thus he will go through life consuming his days in a hectic chase after things with which to satisfy his fleshly appetites and lusts, utterly heedless of the future, until he is overtaken by death and meets the fate that befell the rich man in Luke 16:19-31.

Our text says, ***So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.*** Few and brief are the years that we have in this life before eternity is upon us. True wisdom dictates that we use them to prepare for a blissful hereafter.

Many a person thinks, *There are so many things that I want to do here on earth, so many things that I want to enjoy; I shall put off preparing for yonder world till I am tired of what this world has to offer; time enough to prepare for heaven when I am older.*

But do not the passing years show you what folly that is? The time is short, shorter perhaps than you expect. Wisdom tells you to prepare for eternity, for a blissful hereafter, now, now while you still have time.

Scripture says in Psalm 95:7-8, ***Today, if you will hear His voice: ⁸ “Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, As in the day of trial in the wilderness.*** And in 2 Corinthians 6:2, ***Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.***⁶

We know that, if death finds us in sin and unbelief, ours will not be a blissful hereafter.⁷

Many people are mindful of the nearness of eternity and strive to prepare for a blissful hereafter, but they try by their own efforts, through their own good works, to work out their own righteousness in which to stand in the Judgement of

God. This is folly, because it is futile. We read in Psalm 143:2, *For in [God's] sight no one living is righteous.*⁸

Only is a person prepared for a blissful hereafter who has found Christ as his Saviour and Redeemer. No one, and nothing else can help. We read in Acts 4:12,¹² *“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”*

Jesus is the true Saviour.⁹ Through His life and obedience and suffering and death He won pardon, peace, and grace for all people.¹⁰ He is still the Mediator between sinners and God.¹¹ The salvation which Christ won for all sinners is the gift of God to all who believe and trust in Him.¹²

¹² *So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.* It is wisdom to prepare for a blissful hereafter by using the brief time allotted to us here on earth to lay hold on Christ through faith and to become ever stronger in faith.¹³

By our own reason or strength we can neither believe in Jesus Christ, our Lord, or come to Him, nor can we abide in the faith.¹⁴ God, *who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*¹⁵ and is *not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance*¹⁶ would, however, through His Holy Spirit convert us, bring us to faith, and sanctify and keep us in the faith.

In order that this may be done, we must make diligent use of the means of grace, whereby the Holy Spirit accomplishes His saving work in us.¹⁷ This includes also that we, like Paul, make Christ our chief pursuit in life,¹⁸ and seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,¹⁹ that we fight against sin,²⁰ be on our guard against the temptations of the devil and the world,²¹ suppress the evil inclinations of our flesh,²² show forth our faith in a life of godliness and good works,²³ and that we constantly to pray God for the will and the strength to do all of this.²⁴

May the thought of time's rapid flight remind us constantly to pray, as the Hymnist writes²⁵

Teach me to live, that I may dread
The grave as little as my bed;

Teach me to die, that so I may
Rise glorious at the Judgment Day.

3. The Wisdom To Work While It Is Day.

Jesus came into the world to do the work which His heavenly Father had given Him to do.²⁶ Constantly He laboured to carry out His tasks, at times not even allowing Himself time for refreshment and rest.²⁷ Why this ceaseless activity?

Jesus says in John 9:4, ⁴ ***“I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.”*** God has placed us in this world not that we may pass our time in idleness or in pursuit of our own selfish interests. We have work to do for God; we are to serve Him by being of service to our fellow-men.

The fleeting years remind us that our time here on earth is limited, that our day of life and opportunity is rapidly drawing to a close, and that the night of death is drawing near, the night when no man can work. It is certainly wisdom to work while it is day, before the night comes when, no man can work.

We have work in the kingdom of God, the Church of Christ. We must labour to foster and maintain the Gospel ministry in our own midst as well as to extend the kingdom of Christ.²⁸ There is much to be done! The time is short! The night is coming. Let us work while it is day.

We also have duties toward our fellow-men. The Second table of the Ten Commandments instruct us on this matter. We read in Galatians 5:13, ¹³ ***“For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; ... through love serve one another.”***²⁹ Let us not neglect present opportunities. Now it is day, but the night is coming. Our fellow-men will not long be with us nor we with them.

Let us work while it is day, thus showing forth our faith in Christ, so that, when He summons us from this world, we may hear the welcome words, of Matthew 25:21 ***“Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.”***³⁰

4. The Wisdom

To Be Patient And To Rejoice Amid Tribulations.

That this world is indeed a vale of tears, particularly for the child of God, is stated in the Scriptures,³¹ and by borne out common experience. Not only is the Christian reduced to sorrow and suffering by the ills to which all flesh is heir, such as poverty, sickness, and death, but he must also with Christ bear affliction, tribulation, persecution, and shame that are heaped upon him by Satan and the ungodly world.³²

The rapid flight of time, however, teaches us that our life of tribulation and sorrow in this world is not for long. In only a little while³³ God will in mercy make an end of all suffering and sorrow by graciously taking us from this vale of tears through death. It is wisdom to be patient.³⁴

Not only is it wisdom to be patient in view of the brief duration of our life in this vale of tears, but it is wisdom also to rejoice also in the tribulations and sorrows of this present life.

That the unbelieving child of the world will not, and cannot, patiently endure the sufferings of this world, even though they be of a brief duration, and will often seek to end his misery by taking his own life is not to be wondered at, for he has no hope to sustain him.

But the Christian has a hope for the future so great and so blessed that he cannot only be patient, but will be able to rejoice in tribulation.³⁵ For after this brief life here on earth God will graciously take us from this vale of tears to Himself in heaven. There will be perfect rest and peace. Nothing that in this world gave us sorrow or pain, can reach us there.³⁶ There will be joy unadulterated and unending. We shall see Jesus face to face and shall forever be with Him in whose presence is fullness of joy and at whose right hand there are pleasures forevermore.³⁷

¹² *So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.* Make that your prayer tonight and every night of your lives. Let the thought of time's rapid flight keep you from setting your heart's affections on the things of this world; let it move you to prepare for a blissful hereafter; let it prompt you faithfully and diligently to do the work which God has given you to do here on earth while it is day, before the night comes when no man can work.

Just as an exile from home eagerly counts the days and months and years yet remaining before he can leave his prison and return to his home and loved ones and rejoices at the flight of time; so you also learn to number your days here on earth and rejoice that you are drawing ever nearer to the time when your journey through life will be done and you will at last be in your heavenly Father's home. Amen

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

¹ Hymn 555 v2

² Psa 90:9-10

³ Gen. 47:9

⁴ See also Gen. 23:4

⁵ Hymn 433 ALHB v 7

⁶ See also Isa 49:8a; Isa 55:6

⁷ Rom. 6:23a; John 3:36b; Mark 16:16b; Psa. 1:5

⁸ See also Rom. 3:20-23; Gal. 2:16b

⁹ Matt. 1:21; Luke 19:10

¹⁰ Gal. 4:4; Isa. 53:4, 5; Col. 1:14; 1 John 1:7; 1 John 2:2; Rom. 5:1-2

¹¹ 1 John 2:1; Heb. 7:25

¹² John 3:16; Acts 13:39

¹³ Acts 16:31; 2 Pet. 3:18

¹⁴ 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:1; Rom. 8: 7

¹⁵ 1 Timothy 2:4

¹⁶ 2 Peter 3:9

¹⁷ Rom. 1:16-17; Rom. 10:17; 1 Pet. 1: 5; Phil. 1:6

¹⁸ Phil. 3:7-11

¹⁹ Matt 6:33

²⁰ 1 Pet. 2:11

²¹ 1 Pet. 5:8-9; 1 John 2:15-17

²² Gal. 5:24

²³ John 15:5; 2 Pet. 1:10

²⁴ Phil. 2:13

²⁵ Hymn 538, ALHB 526

²⁶ John 6:38

²⁷ John 4:31-35; Mark 3:20-21; Mark 6:31

²⁸ John 20: 21-23; Luke 10:7; 1 Cor. 9:14; Gal. 6:6-7; 1 Tim. 5:17-18; Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15

²⁹ 1 Tim. 5:4; Prov. 19:17

-
- ³⁰ See also Matthew 25:34-36
- ³¹ Gen. 47: 9; Psa. 90:10; John 16: 20; Acts 14:22b
- ³² 2 Cor. 12:7b; John 15:18-21; 1 John 3:13; 1 Pet. 4:12-14
- ³³ John 16:16
- ³⁴ James 5:7-8
- ³⁵ Rom. 5:3-5a
- ³⁶ Rev. 21:4
- ³⁷ Psa. 16: 11b