

In Death Christ Is Our Dwelling Place

Psalm 90:1-17 Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. ² Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You *are* God. ³ You turn man to destruction, And say, "Return, O children of men." ⁴ For a thousand years in Your sight *Are* like yesterday when it is past, And *like* a watch in the night. ⁵ You carry them away *like* a flood; *They are* like a sleep. In the morning they are like grass *which* grows up: ⁶ In the morning it flourishes and grows up; In the evening it is cut down and withers. ⁷ For we have been consumed by Your anger, And by Your wrath we are terrified. ⁸ You have set our iniquities before You, Our secret *sins* in the light of Your countenance. ⁹ For all our days have passed away in Your wrath; We finish our years like a sigh. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ Who knows the power of Your anger? For as the fear of You, *so is* Your wrath. ¹² So teach *us* to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom. ¹³ Return, O LORD! How long? And have compassion on Your servants. ¹⁴ Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy, That we may rejoice and be glad all our days! ¹⁵ Make us glad according to the days *in which* You have afflicted us, The years *in which* we have seen evil. ¹⁶ Let Your work appear to Your servants, And Your glory to their children. ¹⁷ 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.

Psalm 90:1 Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations

How many of you like your job? Some people really like what they do, others hate it. Moses wasn't happy with the task God called him to. From the very beginning when God called him in the burning bush Moses argued with God until God finally had to rebuke him. Moses wasn't happy with being chosen to be the leader of God's people, but Moses also had another calling. It was his task to deliver the law.

John 1:17 the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Because he must he did what God commanded and taught to us the Law. He brought the ten commandments down from the mountain. And in this Psalm, he teaches the Law. In his introduction to Psalm 90 Luther says that this Psalm is "Moses being Moses." Here the law is plainly preached, and especially the result of our sin, which is death. But Moses has no desire to stand before that Law himself nor does he want us to either, therefore he begins by warning us to take refuge in Christ.

Christ alone is our “dwelling place.” Dwelling place obviously means home. But this isn’t the normal Hebrew word for home, that is BETH, this word is MOAN. This word doesn’t just mean house, but secret refuge, strong fortress.

Moses is like one of those speakers at a government testing facility. “Warning we are about to set off a nuclear bomb. Everyone clear the area. You need to take shelter in something quite strong and preferably far away.”

The bomb of God’s law is about to go off and the only refuge we have is Christ.

When Moses says, “Lord you have been our refuge” he is speaking of Christ. Moses is not speaking about God in general but specifically Christ.

Paul tells us in **Colossians 3:3** “your life is hidden with Christ.”

And Jesus tells us in **John 15:4** “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.”

Maybe you remember as a kid building a snow fort and throwing snow balls and then ducking behind the fort and taunting the older kids. “Ha ha you can’t get me.” But then of course the other kids just come around the fort and pelt you with snow balls anyway.

Christ is a much better refuge than that snow fort. He is from everlasting, a dwelling place stronger and older than the mountains. Repenting of our sins and hiding behind Christ we can indeed taunt even the Law of God. “Ha, ha, you can’t get me because I belong to Christ.”

Christ is the only refuge we have from the Law of God.

Psalm 90:3 ³ You turn man to destruction, And say, "Return, O children of men."

The wages of sin is death.

In the garden of Eden God tells Adam “from dust you are and to dust you shall return.” Many people assume that is what is meant in this verse as well. “Man returns to dust.” In fact, some of the English translations even translated it that way. But this is not the Hebrew word for dust. This is the Hebrew word for pulverize. The NKJ here says destruction.

God is not here talking about the grave at least not primarily, but about living on this earth.

As someone once said, “Dying is easy it’s living that is hard.”

As Paul says in **2 Corinthians 4:8-10** ⁸ *We are* hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; *we are* perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed-- ¹⁰ always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

Our days on this earth are short and full of suffering, affliction, sickness, loneliness. This is the condemnation of God's law and the result of our sin.

In Genesis 2 God told Adam and Eve that in the day they eat of the fruit "you shall die." A student of the Bible once correctly said that this should be translated, "dying you shall die." That is to say you will live each day with death, and every day that you live on this earth there will be more death.

In the midst of this death, God says "Return, O children of Men." That is to say return from the dead and live. Return from the dead to the dwelling place of God. In the midst of this death God is still our dwelling place.

In our Gospel reading Jesus tells the disciples that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. But then he goes on to explain that this does not mean it is easy for a poor man. Rather he says, "with man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

It is impossible for men to repent, to believe, to come to God. Yet at the command of Jesus what is impossible happens. Jesus commanded the lame to walk and at his command he walked. He commanded the blind to see and at his command he saw. He commanded the dead to rise and at this command they rose. The word of God commands that we who are dead in sin return to him and at his command we return from the dead.

God gives us over to death, that is to live with suffering, so that we might learn to know our sin. But learning our sin he gives the command "Return to me. Return to your home, the place that was always your dwelling place." And at his command we return.

Psalm 90:11 ¹¹ Who knows the power of Your anger?

What a wonderful thing it is that we do not know the power of God's anger. None of us have experienced God's anger. We see it in part in the flood, where God destroyed the whole earth because of our sin. We see it in part when the earth opened beneath the feet of the sons of Korath and swallowed them up because they rebelled against Moses. We see it in part in the account of Noah who was thrown to the waves and swallowed by the fish because he did not want to do what God said. We see it in part but we have never experienced it ourselves.

We do not know the power of His anger because we have made Christ our refuge. It is Christ who took the fullness of God's anger. It is Christ who knows the power of His anger, having received the punishment for our sins. As long as we repent and take refuge in Christ we will never know the power of his anger.

This is why Moses reminds us to count our days. When you count something the beginning and the middle don't matter, the only thing that matters is the last number. I have eight pieces of pizza and two

people. It's the last number that is important, the end result. We don't know when the last day of our life will be, but we do know what the result will be. When we stop and consider the result of our life, the last number, the last day, we learn wisdom. Considering the result of our life teaches us not to be so foolish as to stop hiding in Christ.

Wisdom is repentance and taking refuge in Christ now, so that we never learn to know the power of God's anger. Wisdom is learning that how much money, how many friends, or how fancy our cars are is not important. Wisdom is learning our sin, repenting, and trusting in Christ for his forgiveness.

Psalm 90:13 ¹³ Return, O LORD! How long?

It is such a painful thing when your leg, or your foot or your hand falls asleep, and then you stand up and wake it up. It is even more painful when God wakes us from death.

We are living in death. We are living in sin. God says to us "Return" and by the power of this word we are woken up from death to life. But God is still hidden from us. He wakes up our hearts to desire him, to desire to return to our true home with him, but then he says "not yet."

He teaches us to desire to walk with him in the garden but has not yet returned us to the garden.

Jesus says in **Matthew 5:6** "Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled."

We are hungry for him, but it's not supper time yet. Like kids when we smell mom's cooking but are told it's going to be another hour. The Ossbuco needs to braise for another three hours but we are hungry now.

This is why Moses and Paul and all the saints pray, "even so come quickly Lord Jesus." Now our heart is wakened, and it is painful as we feel our sin and as we must wait for his coming, yet when he appears what glory will be ours.

Psalm 90:16-17 ¹⁶ Let Your work appear to Your servants, And Your glory to their children. ¹⁷ And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us

Moses desired not to be a preacher of the Law but a hearer and searer of the Gospel. We have seen the work of God's hand and the beauty of the Lord does shine upon us, here in the cross of Jesus. He is our refuge in all the troubles of this life but especially from the condemnation of the law and the wrath of God.

Amen