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Living a life that counts

A nineteenth century poet tells us,

A wasted life! This sad refrain
Comes surging through my ears again;
There's no escape from thee, [thou] fiend,
Thou art borne to me on every wind—
A wasted life! A wasted life!



I don't know about you, but I have never talked with or heard about anyone who wants to waste their life. Yet that is exactly what many people fear—that his or her life doesn't really count, that all their time and efforts are wasted.

Even after intense searching these thoughts and feelings cry out as people look at themselves, their relationships, their work, at what they have accomplished and think, "All that I've done really doesn't amount to anything. It doesn't count. I don't really count. I've wasted my life." And it is not limited to people in mid-life crisis or their senior years. A 14 year-old describes his anxiety, losing joy and friends, not being able to talk with or be understood by family, and says "now I feel like I've wasted my life." At fourteen.

God gave us Psalm 90 through Moses. In it we find a key, a lynchpin statement to living a life that counts. Verse 12, "So [God] teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom." An obvious question is "What does it mean to count my days and so live wisely? How do I do that? How do I make my life count?" Let's think about that for a few moments.

The first step is to look beyond ourselves and recognize that God really exists. This fact is the bedrock and background of what Moses tells us in his words, his prayer in this Psalm. God is the Creator, our Creator. God created us to know and rely on Him. In verse 2 Moses states that God is everlasting and gave birth to the world. Back in verse 1 He declares, "You have been our dwelling place in all generations." After all the ups and downs of his long life, Moses knew the reality of the personal loving God. More than that, he knew Him personally, and trusted Him. We must follow that example to avoid wasting our life, to make our life count.

The second step is to look within ourselves and realize our limitations. In verse 6 he tells us we are like grass which sprouts, flourishes, and then wilts and withers away. The older we get the more we too realize this. Looking within also leads us to see our sinfulness. Verse 8, “You have placed our guilty deeds before You, our hidden sins in the light of Your presence.” Knowing this Moses asked God, “Teach us to number our days that we may present to You a heart of wisdom” (12). Take stock, reflect and analyze both the brevity of your life and how you are living it.

The third step of counting our days so that our lives will count is looking to God to seek His presence, to receive His grace. In verse 13 Moses cries out to God, “Do return, LORD; how long will it be? And be sorry for Your servants.” We don’t know the time or circumstances of this prayer, but we can see he was praying for himself and the people he led. He goes on to ask God to satisfy them with His lovingkindness, to give them joy, and to confirm the work they were doing for Him (14-17). Moses longed for the satisfaction that comes from God’s love being poured out on him, and from knowing his faithful service was accepted, confirmed by God. All of this by God’s grace, not his own merit.

Our short lives will not really count unless we receive and live in God’s grace. As believers, we can become comfortable knowing Christ is our Savior, but not step out to live in God’s grace by letting Him change us, lead us in new, in different directions.

When the Berlin wall came down, some people walked into the western section quickly seeing how much better it was, but went back to what they knew in the east. They weren’t that happy there in the east. They didn’t have hope for a better life in the future there, but they were afraid of change. They didn’t trust this different way. So they sacrificed what was now available to them because of their fear.

Don’t do that, never do that in your spiritual life. We can get used to routines, to where we are spiritually, to measure our spiritual life by lists of things we do and don’t do. Trust God and step out, go forward with Him by and in His grace. He will bless you and enable you to live a life that really counts.

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