



[Pastor Steven Billings](#)

Sermon for New Year's Eve
December 31, 2022

Everlasting to Everlasting

Psalm 90

¹ 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, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

³ You return man to dust and say, "Return, O children of man!" ⁴ For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.

⁵ You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning: ⁶ in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.

⁷ For we are brought to an end by your anger; by your wrath we are dismayed. ⁸ You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.

⁹ For all our days pass away under your wrath; we bring our years to an end like a sigh. ¹⁰ The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away. ¹¹ Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of you?

¹² So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. ¹³ Return, O LORD! How long? Have pity on your servants! ¹⁴ Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. ¹⁵ Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, and for as many years as we have seen evil. ¹⁶ Let your work be shown to your servants, and your glorious power to their children. ¹⁷ Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!

As we sit here this evening we prepare to move one year closer to our eternal future. Year after year we celebrate this passage, and we spend these years in the presence of Him to whom a thousand years are like a day. Our hope through all this time has been, and continues to be, in Him who said: "Before Abraham was, I am." Though the questions of time and eternity may plague us throughout the year, they certainly touch us most on nights like tonight.

Many people, if not most, are asking themselves tonight, "What does the new year have in store for me? Success or defeat? Prosperity or set-back? Good health or sickness? Sorrow or death? And can I do anything about it, or do I simply shrug it off, thinking, "What does it matter? Whatever will be, will be." Let's turn now to our text – this prayer of Moses – to find the answers to these and other questions.

No man, besides the God/Man Jesus Christ, was ever in closer communion with



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God than Moses. Moses was permitted to see God's glory, to speak with Him face to face. After his death, the Bible says that God Himself buried Moses in the land of Moab. But even a man as great as Moses, one so highly favored by God, was troubled by thoughts such as ours – the frailty, burdens, and decadence of life. What was his hope? He approached God, trusting in His eternity, immutability, and mercy, contrasting them with our frailty, changeableness, and sinfulness.

You see, for us there is the passage of time, but for God there is no time; He is eternal, and there we find great hope. He has always been the Almighty, ever-present, holy, and glorious God, and always will be; His power and love, His holiness and mercy, will never change, and it's this kind of God that our text calls "our dwelling place." Moses knew this when he said in Deuteronomy 33(:27): "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are His everlasting arms."

We do well to remember that at the time he said this, the Jews had no dwelling place. They'd been wandering around in the desert for forty years. Before this they'd been slaves in Egypt for 430 years. None of them had ever known what it meant to own property, a piece of land to call their own. But in spite of this, the eternal God had been their Dwelling Place. You and I can join with Moses and say with all certainty that in 2023, "No matter where I will live this year, whether in my own home or not, whether with friends or family or even in a hospital, whether in a strange city or in my own home town, wherever I find myself this year, the eternal God will be my Dwelling Place."

What we mean by this is that God lives in us and we in Him. Isaiah writes: "This is what the High and Lofty One says – He who lives forever, whose name is holy: 'I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit'" (57:15). Jesus Himself said: "If anyone loves Me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make our home with him" (John 14:23). The apostle John says: "Those who obey His commands live in Him, and He in them. And this is how we know that He lives in us: We know it by the Spirit He gave us" (1 John 3:24). And St. Paul says in Colossians 3(:3): "For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God."

Moses here in our text bids us to ponder the frailty and misery of our earthly existence. The story of our life is like that of the grass – it's sown, grown, cut down, and blown away. Our life is "swept away in the sleep of death"; it "quickly passes, and we fly away." "The length of our days is seventy years – or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow." Though Moses himself lived longer than this by the grace of God, he here, by divine inspiration describes facts of life which nearly 35 centuries of progress in medical science still haven't changed. Even though God has blessed many with longer lives, the fact remains that most people don't live much past three score and ten.

Thank God for the life He's given you, but even if you live to be 100, your life is still bound to be characterized in the same way as that of Moses – full of labor and sorrow. Moses was the leader of his people, the judge, the lawgiver, the pastor, the prophet, and the mediator of millions of people on the move. Though some would look upon this as a



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great honor (as, of course, it was), Moses had the responsibility of seeing the wilderness become a huge cemetery during the exodus. More than a million of his people died during those forty years. Labor and sorrow – the brevity of our lives today is no different than it was in the days of Moses.

Equally unchanged is the reason for the frailty of our lives. Moses says: “You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your presence.” As Isaiah said: “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away” (64:6). You know, eternity won’t be long enough for us to thank God that, though “the wages of sin is death, the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). Oh, that we might always remember what God in sending His Son has done for us! How we love to pump ourselves up and lift up our own reputation as justification before God and men. We love to point to our good deeds and seek to find there some consolation and peace for our lives, but my friends, we need to remember that in the eyes of a holy God, this is all filth. Sinful pride clings to our flesh like the spray of a skunk. Try as we might to cleanse ourselves of it, we can’t. We only come clean when we allow ourselves to be washed in the blood of the Lamb. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, came to this world to die for your sins, cleansing you from the stink of this filthy flesh, covering you with His own robe of righteousness, so that when the Father casts His eyes upon you, He sees only the righteousness of His Son. Oh, let us never forget one of the great *solas* of the Reformation, one of the great banners waved by Martin Luther, found in Ephesians 2(:8-9): “For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

What could be more fitting this evening when we look back over the old year and ahead into the new one, than to pray along with Moses that God would “teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” By this, Moses is asking God, as did David, to “Show me my life’s end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting my life is.” Beloved, as we stand at the brink of the next year in our lives, let us heed the prophet Amos, who said, “Prepare to meet your God, for He who forms the mountains, creates the wind, and reveals His thoughts to man, He who turns dawn to darkness, and treads the high places of the earth – the LORD God Almighty is His name.” Whether the end of our lives will come in what’s left of 2022, or during 2023, or in some distant year, we know that the One who waits for us at the end is the Almighty Creator, the Eternal Judge, the Gracious Savior of all mankind.

With this in mind, we pray along with Moses for humility, wisdom, and forgiveness. Realizing that his and his people’s sins were the cause of their life’s frailty, brevity, and sorrow, Moses then prays: “Relent, O LORD! How long will it be? Have compassion on Your servants.” He understands that God has turned His face away from His people because of their sins, and begs God to turn back to them. He, like all who have been confronted with the reality and enormity of their sins, craves God’s mercy, begging God: “Oh, satisfy us in the morning with Your unfailing love.” May God bring us all to the



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realization of our sin and cause us to fall on our faces before Him in sincere repentance.

But God forbid that I should leave you with your faces to the ground. Tonight, many of us are greeting each other with “happy new year!” This is precisely the thing that Moses prays for next. He says to the Lord: “Make us glad for as many days as You have afflicted us, for as many years as we have seen trouble.” Like Moses, we may be saying to God: “Lord, You have sent us affliction and sickness, sorrow and trouble, during the past year, and we know that You have done so for our soul’s welfare, but now, Lord, please send us also a measure of happiness, comfort, and consolation in the new year, so that we may also say along with David: “Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones You have crushed rejoice.” Instead of ushering in the new year by manufacturing some sort of artificial merriment or generic good cheer, let us, like Moses, turn our hearts to our eternal Refuge and ask Him to make us truly glad.

And how does He do this? Moses goes on to say: “May Your deeds be shown to Your servants, Your splendor to their children.” God makes us glad by showing us all that He has done for us, not just in saving our souls from the scourge of eternal death by His suffering and death on the cross, but also in what He continues to do for us on a daily basis. He feeds us and nourishes us, though we sometimes fantasize that we ourselves are doing this through our own strength, forgetting that God even supplies the strength whereby we are able to work and to earn a living. He also continues to feed us spiritually through His Word and sacraments, sustaining the very faith which He through that same Word and those same sacraments implanted in our hearts. After all, look around – He has brought you through another year. Whatever trial, temptation, or suffering you endured in 2022, God brought you through it! He was there for you every step along the way, giving you the strength you needed to make it through.

In the final verse of this Psalm, Moses prays that God will continue to sustain us as he prays, “May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands for us – yes, establish the work of our hands.” God promises to continue to provide all that we will ever need. In this life, He will always supply the necessary things for the support of our bodies, but He goes beyond even that. He here and now feeds us spiritually, promising to sustain our faith clear to the end and beyond, for we one day too will step beyond the bounds of time to join God in eternity. Is this what waits for you at the end of your life? It is if you want it to be. Jesus has done and continues to do all that is necessary to make it so. As you look ahead into the new year, remember that you will walk not even one day of it alone. Your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is walking with you, seeing you through until your journey takes you home to be with Him. May your trust always be in Him. In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen