

Numbering our days unto wisdom (ii)(Quality: Very good)

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Preacher: Collier, Gilbert (1900-1984)

[0 : 00] It was found in the 90th Psalm, Psalm 90, and the 12th verse.

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

We notice that Moses, who is the writer, of course, of this very striking and wonderful psalm, and it is the opening psalm of the fifth book of Psalms, and therefore it stands in a very prominent place and position in the Word of God, I think we ought to take note of these details, respecting the structure of God's Holy Word.

And this begins a section of the psalms, which indicates, to my mind at least, that God had a very special interest in this psalm for his people.

And when you come to analyze it and weigh it all up, it's a very striking and wonderful psalm. Indeed, it speaks about the everlasting character of God, the God that is from everlasting to everlasting, the Almighty One that filleth eternity.

[1 : 49] And yet, we have him condescending to direct his servant Moses to speak about days, people's days, our days.

You may think, well, my days are very insignificant. Perhaps they are. But I hope you will find this, that they are, if God is blessing you, if he has a purpose of his grace toward you, he will make days in your life to be of immense consequence and wonder of wonders indeed.

And it is these sort of days that I want to speak about this evening. We see the purpose that Moses had in his mind when he speaks like this.

So teach us to number our days. There was a purpose in it. It wasn't merely to calculate or to sum up or to be proud about longevity or anything like that.

The great purpose of Moses was this, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom. And that is the real evaluation of the days in which we live and pass through.

[3 : 19] We have to ask ourselves this question. Do they, in the course of their running, do they bring us to apply our hearts unto wisdom?

Now that's the theme tonight that I would attempt to bring before you. Now you look at the psalm for a moment. You see, Moses says here, he speaks about days, several places in the psalm.

He says the days of our years are threescore years and ten. Now, when Moses wrote this psalm, he'd already passed that allotted time of life, we believe.

He was older than seventy. He'd seen seventy years pass over him. And yet, you see, the word of God, the inspiration of God in causing him to write this word was that he wrote the truth.

It has been an undoubted truth, an undeniable fact, that generally speaking, man's life, man's days, are threescore years and ten.

[4 : 41] And then he says, if they, by reason of strength, they be more than that, then their strength is labor and sorrow. But he speaks of the days, natural days, the length of days, allotted to man by God.

And in these days, we may either come to a true knowledge, an application of ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, or we may pass through the whole time of our lives without any acquaintance with God and with Christ and with salvation.

Now, that's a very solemn fact. And that is why I believe Moses, having said that it's three score years and ten, is the allotted span of man's life, he says, so teach us to number our days.

So teach us, Lord, to remember that we're not here forever. people think they are immortal at times, that everyone else is liable to be struck down around them by disease or death or accident or so, such like things, but they themselves will escape.

They think they are immortal. But Moses says, God says, the days of our life are three score years and ten.

[6 : 12] So let us, so teach us to apply our hearts unto wisdom. Then again, you'll find this.

He refers to those days in which he was afflicted and Moses had a great deal of affliction. He was afflicted. I was speaking about his time in Egypt this morning and although that was a very favored and wonderful time, there were opportunities of immense importance to him, it was no doubt a time of affliction because how could a man like Moses be content in his own mind?

How could he be at peace in his own conscience while he could see his own people being trampled underfoot of a foreign power?

How could he endure and have peace and contentment in his own heart whilst there in Egypt his people were being persecuted, decimated and destroyed by their captors and their powers that ruled over them?

I say it was a long period of affliction for this man of God. It must have been. We have recently in this early part of this last year raised up our forces to go to the deliverance of a few of our own people and there's nothing that deplores me more than the deprecation of that mighty effort by some that we hear of or we read of in high places in our land and nation.

[8 : 11] How could we ever have a moment's peace if our people, our kith and kin in that far off distant land had been subjected to vile and infernal persecution and opposition?

That in itself will justify every effort that we made and we have to acknowledge God's great goodness in giving us as a nation victory and deliverance.

Now here was Moses, you see, very much the same position and he was afflicted and now in this psalm he says, O make us glad according to the days wherein we thou hast afflicted us and the years wherein we have seen evil.

You see, Moses was able to evaluate the measure of his days and the real nature of these days and times.

He didn't brush them on one side and said, well that's something that we couldn't possibly have avoided. No, he says, Lord make us glad now. Thou hast afflicted us, thou hast laid a heavy burden upon our hearts.

[9 : 43] We couldn't move for one moment in the direction that we would have desired to do. we've been greatly afflicted by the troubles of our people, their pains and their sufferings.

Now he says, make us glad according to the times in which thou hast afflicted us. Now you see, this is the right evaluation of days.

When you get into trouble or into affliction and the Lord brings you out, it's a great thing if you feel this, feel this spirit animating your heart and mind.

The Lord has brought me out. He's raised me up. He's not allowed my fears to overcome me. Now what can I do?

Let me by his grace seek to glorify his name and be made glad according to the days in which I have been afflicted.

[10 : 52] In other words, help me, Lord, to repay with gratitude in a hearty, earnest, sincere attempt to praise thy name for all those things that thou hast done for me whilst I have been in trouble or in affliction.

Now that's the right way for the Christian to serve or seek to serve God. Now, having said that, and we find in other parts of this wonderful psalm, he speaks about days, but let us go on to the latter part of our text that I want especially to deal with tonight, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

Now, what is the man of God speaking about here? Applying our hearts unto wisdom.

wisdom. How can the heart attain unto wisdom? We must find out from the word of God what is intended by God for us to understand what is this wisdom.

If you put a task like this upon a person and say to that person, the only thing for you is to obtain wisdom, that person might well say, then there's no hope for me because I lack wisdom and I'm mightily conscious of lacking wisdom.

[12 : 49] It doesn't need people to tell me that I am devoid in many instances of wisdom.

So then, how can I apply my heart unto wisdom? I think perhaps I read to you tonight a portion of God's word which will give you an inkling.

I'm sure you already know full well the wonderful purport of that chapter, the eighth chapter of Proverbs, where the whole of that chapter is on wisdom.

We have the wisdom speaking in the beginning of it and speaking from the top of high places, meaning to say, the one who is wisdom is speaking from the highest position of all, there being none higher than him.

And who does he speak to? The very lowest, the fools and the simple folk in the earth. People who have no wisdom of their own.

[14 : 10] He calls to them and he tells them plainly that he is wisdom and that he gives wisdom to those that seek him.

And so Moses says that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. There's no doubt in my mind whatever that the eighth chapter of Proverbs is a glorious setting forth of Christ under the title of wisdom.

If you go patiently through that wonderful chapter, you can see, you can feel the very presence of the Lord Jesus there in all his glory and beauty.

He goes on, we couldn't read it because of our time this evening, he goes on to say, when he made the heavens, I was there, when he made the lowest dust of the earth, then I was by him as one brought up with him and was daily his delight.

He was ever before the maker of all things, and his delight, he says, my delight was with the sons of men.

[15 : 32] What a beautiful setting forth we have in that chapter of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it is he that Moses directs us to.

If we would really value, put a value on our days, it will have to be in this direction. How much we know of him, what we know of him, whether there has been an application of our hearts and our lives to him and to his grace.

You may say to me tonight, well, how can a person apply themselves to wisdom? Well, how does a person apply themselves to anything?

One of my grandsons here had been abroad only the last week, and he found it was necessary to obtain a British passport.

He couldn't just go away and go to the port, travel by air and expect to be taken aboard and landed in a destination in the distant part of the earth.

[16 : 57] He had to apply for a passport. had to enter into the common necessities of travelling. And that meant, of course, he had to apply to the right place and the right authority and do the right thing about it.

You can't avoid this. You can't shortcut these sort of things. And you know full well, you young people know, how if you would get on in the world, you got to apply yourselves.

things do not come automatically. They don't just come along like snow from heaven and fall upon you. You've got to apply yourselves.

Well, now in the case, if it's a wonderful mercy of God, it's one of his richest mercies when he impresses upon a poor sinner, that the great need of that sinner is to apply to the Lord for help, for grace, for strength, for life, for salvation, you may say, what hope have I?

What hope have I of ever obtaining that blessing that I need? Well, the Lord will not bar you from applying.

[18 : 27] This is one of the rich veins of the truth of the gospel. He never turns away any that come to him and seek him.

They that seek me early shall find me. We were reading just now. That's the tenet of truth that comes from the dear Lord himself.

God so if there is one then here tonight who feels their need and longs to have something real about their own case, something that is undoubtedly of the Lord and of his saving mercy, then I say this, do what Moses said he must do and will do and we ought to do, apply our hearts unto wisdom.

And again the Lord Jesus Christ is the very embodiment of all wisdom. He is wisdom. You know what he said when he was here on earth, when they said to him about, speaking to him about Solomon, he said Solomon in all his glory.

And you know the glory of Solomon was not so much in his wealth, and that was very, very great. It was not so much in all his royal dignity and majesty.

[20 : 02] The greatness of Solomon was his wisdom, and God gave him that wisdom. And Christ said about him this, he said, Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these, and behold, are greater than Solomon is here.

He then greater than Solomon. The Lord of life and glory, my dear friends, is the essence of all wisdom.

And that is why James puts it in this way, the wisdom that is from above. and did you notice how he compares it to the wisdom that is from beneath.

He puts the two things side by side in the word of God, and he says that one, that wisdom that man thinks he can control, and thinks that he can command, and thinks that it is resident in himself as a creature, is devilish, it's sensual, it's totally insufficient, it hasn't any power or any merit, whatever in it.

The only thing is for man to discard it, and to forsake it. But then he says the wisdom that is from above is first pure, and oh, that's the kind of wisdom that you and I want.

[21 : 40] And that we need, if we have any knowledge of ourselves, we need a purifying influence of God's grace.

We need Christ to come and take away our sin, and cleanse us from all iniquity, and to purify us unto himself, a people zealous of all good works, and none but he can do it, but that he does it in his infinite wisdom is a most wonderful and glorious reality.

Now, Christ is made, according to the first chapter, the first of Corinthians, the first chapter, 31st verse, who is made unto us, says Paul, wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption, but he puts wisdom first.

He's made unto us, that is to the believer, he's made unto us wisdom. Oh, it's a wonderful thing then to have a right understanding of the source of wisdom, and it is a wonderful thing, an important thing, that we should know and we should look at our days in this light.

We look back today over 12 months almost, and we know as we can scan, as it were, our minds over these months and weeks and days that have made up our year that is nearly gone, how much has been devoted to a pursuit after God and after Christ and after wisdom.

[23 : 46] have we come to a point when we've had to say this, Lord, I haven't any wisdom, but it says in thy word, if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and abradeth not.

Have you come into those places? have you and have you looked to him and begged from him the gift of heavenly wisdom to direct your way and to guide your feet into the path of peace?

peace. You notice also when James was writing that epistle, when he was beginning that third chapter, he uses three striking figures, very important.

First of all, he uses the figure of a bridle, a bridle. Well, you know what that is? It's something that controls, keeps command of something.

Very necessary. If you're dealing with horses, you need a bridle. And you can apply that in many other fields and experiences of life.

[25 : 07] We need it in our own hearts, we need it in our own cases. We often find an unruly spirit. We need also, we find ourselves going at a tangent from the way of truth, departing.

Oh, we have to acknowledge this, we are capable of turning aside and forgetting our best interests and also the Lord's mercies and the Lord's favours.

We need a bridle, something to control ourselves. And one of the great bridles that has used so successfully and efficiently by the people of God is the bridle of prayer to keep ourselves in the narrow way and on that path that leads to life.

We need prayer as a bridle to hold us up and to keep us steadfast. the second thing he uses is a bit, very small article, but a most telling and striking in the use of it, a bit.

A person, I suppose, couldn't ride a horse and horses were the means, the main means, chief means of transport in the days when James the Apostle wrote his epistle and he knew full well that no man could really drive or ride a horse without a bit.

[26 : 44] There could be no control, no direction, no command, no appointment. And so they put a bit in the horse's mouth.

You may find sometimes you find yourself as like a horse, unbridled without a bit and you are racing hither and thither in all directions.

If some trouble comes suddenly upon you and it seems to so overwhelm you, you are ready to fly off in all directions.

everywhere and anywhere but in the right direction. And what you need is a bit to guide and keep you in the proper way and in the right path and the right direction.

And you want above all the Lord to hold the reins and to keep you in the right path. The Lord knows well how to put a bit in the mouths of his own people.

[27 : 50] when they get a little bit obstreperous and difficult he sometimes lays something upon them that they cannot escape from and they have to go along the way.

The Lord intends them to go. Well that is a bit which the Lord uses to keep his people in the narrow way that leads to life eternal.

and then the third thing is the rudder. Well you know full well what a rudder is to a ship.

It's not very conspicuous. Indeed on the contrary it's very inconspicuous and some ships have a very small rudder but no ship could go really safely to sea without one.

Small that it may be it's one of the most vital necessary components of a ship that goes to sea.

[28 : 59] A rudder because that will keep the ship in its right course. It will cause the master to have control over the direction of the vessel.

It can turn it about, it can guide it in all kinds of places and direction. The rudder and James likens these three things to the necessities of a believer in applying their hearts unto wisdom.

Sometimes very little things are all important in this great and important matter. Well now, I want just then concluding tonight to look at this great object of Moses that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

We are facing another year presently. What a wonderful thing if we are resolved in our own hearts to more devotedly and dedicatedly to apply our hearts unto wisdom.

And in doing so, we have first one or two things to consider of great importance. We have to apply ourselves to the word of wisdom.

[30 : 39] God's word is a word of wisdom. There's nothing to be compared with it. It is outstanding, all important and essential to the believer who is traveling towards the celestial city.

The word of wisdom. And what a precious and wonderful word that is. Let us apply ourselves more to it.

not just reading here and there a page or chapter and two and thinking well that's that today but going into it praying about it.

Mr. Hart says in one of his hymns let us pray with each inspection and I often think that is great wisdom to pray before we read and to pray while we are reading and to pray after we have read that the Lord might bless the word to ourselves.

The word of wisdom. Now if you want to know what it means to apply as Moses exhorts us to do here to apply our souls unto wisdom to apply our hearts unto wisdom the one great essential thing is to apply to the word of wisdom.

[32 : 12] Then again there's the way of wisdom. Yes wisdom has a way very clearly defined way.

It's lined out by those marks that God has placed upon that way by his holy word.

And we see the great characters of the Bible that have traveled along this way. They have been guided by God and they have been directed in the way by the marks that have clearly defined the way of wisdom and salvation.

we need to apply our hearts to that way then. There is a way. I've said this quite a bit of late that there are those who seem to be quite content to be as it were nominal or neutral believers.

They hope that they are in the way. They hope that they will come into that way eventually and finally but they do not seem to wish or desire or pray to be found in that way, walking manifestly, determinately in the way of life and truth and peace.

[33 : 52] It's the way of wisdom. We love our own way and solemnly so. We love it so much that we do not want any other kind of way, at least the way of the Lord.

But it's God's mercy, God's goodness that stops such a soul in their mad career and changes their heart and guides them and directs them into wisdom's way.

way and then they know what a way it is, what a glorious way, whose ways are ways of pleasantness and all his paths of peace.

So let us number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

and oh may the Lord enable us to follow this instruction and exhortation from the word of the Lord and may he enable us to prove the wisdom of it and also to know the experience of peace and joy satisfaction that comes through it.

[35 : 16] Amen. Amen. Amen.