

Knowing God

Psalm 90 | 1.07.2018

Eternal God & Mortal Man

Alright, if you have your bible get to Psalm 90. We've got work to do. If you are new to Mercy Church, welcome! What a great time to jump in with us. We are taking the month of January to look at what it means to know God. And we will be looking at different Psalms over the course of this series because the Psalms are like a collection of poetic prayers that show us an active relationship between God and the writers. These authors praise God, they yell at him, they question him, they cry to him, they celebrate, and they sit in silent awe before him. God is not some abstract force, he's not distant...he is a close personal God that they walk through each day with. That's what I want for you by the end of this series. Not just a God you know ABOUT, but a God you personally know.

Psalm 90 is the only Psalm written by Moses. This guy is a GIANT in the bible ok. You want to talk about knowing God? This guy met God in a burning bush, God talked to him. A lot. Moses trusted God. Moses saw the glory of God. God gave *him* the 10 commandments! God listened to Moses. At one point Israel was acting a fool and God was about to destroy them and MOSES said God...don't do it. You promised you wouldn't. And the bible says God listened to Moses and withheld his anger. This guy is one of the great bible heroes and he knew God. The Psalm is even attributed to "Moses, the Man of God." And we get this one Psalm to crack open the door and be a fly on the wall to see him talk with God. It's awesome. Imagine if the Beatles had only produced ONE song.

Or Beyonce. Or Cardi B. Ok maybe that would be for the best. My point is it's enough to pay attention just because of who wrote it. And the message? Here's the message in short. We are going to unpack it today but here is the secret that drew Moses so close to God:

God is greater than me, and that is good for me.

Psalm 90 reveals this AWE as Moses explores the character of God and why God being who he is, is so good for Moses. And as you see the different ways God is so much greater than you today I want you to stand in awe of it. I think that's probably my toughest challenge today. To show you the greatness of God. But we can't stop there. That's seeing God. Then we have to move to how that helps us relate to him. To know him. I'm going to show you 5 ways God is greater than us and how that is good for us. How his otherness actually helps us draw nearer to him and not further away.

[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.

This is a prayer. He's talking to God, not us. And God gave it to us because it shows us a critical truth about knowing him. I want to put Moses' prayer into our language and make this into a prayer you can pray as you draw closer to God. This prayer has 5 parts. Here's the first one:

"God you are eternal, I am temporary"

In 6 verses he emphasizes the forever-ness, the permanence of God in so many eloquent ways.

- Verse 1 – This one God has been the safe harbor, the home, for ALL generations. Men come and go, but their home stays the same. He says 1k years are like a day. God is outside of time. Eternal.
- Verse 2- probably clearest statement – From everlasting to everlasting. Get your mind around this church there is NO TIME when God wasn't. And there is no time when God will not be. There was a time when the earth itself wasn't. But God was still there. That's genesis 1. God spoke the mountains into existence. He was there.
- Verse 3 – there is a time when we were not here and a time when we will not be here. Moses reminds us that

God has numbered our days. We will not live forever!
We haven't gotten there yet but that's verse 10

[10] The years of our life are seventy,
or even by reason of strength eighty;

And even this we know is only an average. Moses is reminding himself how temporary he actually is and how permanent God is. God is not bound by time. He exists outside of it. He is the God of the past, present, and future. And get this: he never misses in his timing. He's never late. Everything he does he always does at the absolute perfectly right time. BUT we can't always see that can we? Absolutely not. We try to understand God's timing but it frustrates us.

Writer of Ecclesiastes explains it this way

[11] He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

Ecclesiastes 3:11

Jen Wilkin, who wrote a great book on the character of God that really helped me this week in preparing, she said of this verse "God has given time-bound humans a longing for timeless-ness."

Why? To torture us? Why would God create a longing in us that will not be fully fulfilled? He does it to give us the opportunity to trust him in very personal ways.

If you trust God with your past, it doesn't have to define you
– You don't have to re-live past hurts because you can find the power to forgive in the one who has forgiven you. Living in the

present hope of the gospel can heal you from the pain of the past. Here's one that has done a number on me: If you trust God with your past, you can grieve the 'good ole days' without coveting them. Like many people in my stage of life or later I miss friends from prior times that I don't see anymore and it's easy for that to become resentment of the present. But the God who was with me then is still with me now and I can trust this eternal God is not withholding from me now just as he wasn't then. And I can be free.

If you trust God with your future, you can let it go. For me, this means freedom from the fear of what will come. I told you – glass half empty guy. I need to control all the variables because I'm certain the future is going to be a disaster. And God says whoa whoa whoa. Spence your whole life span is a really tiny blip. CHILL OUT MAN. I'm way more powerful I have way more experience and I will be here long after you are gone. So chill.

God is GREAT... and as Moses bows his head and prays this truth to God it reminds his hard heart that this Great God is his dwelling place. This mighty God...he has made a home for us. And if you trust his control of time you can walk with him each day with a true sense of resolved purpose in the present. We are going to come back to that in a second.

First we gotta go to a second aspect of God's greatness. One that is the most invasive of all things that are true about him. We'll come back to verse 7 in a second but look at verse 8.

[8] You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.

Not only is God Eternal. Which means he always exists. Moses here says he sees everything.

To say God is all present is to say there is no place or time where God is not. He is everywhere. Quick 30 second aside: Now let me say right now that God is not "THE FORCE." He's not a power that radiates in all living beings. And I need to say that because there is a very pop-culture friendly brand of Christianity circulating right now that talks about God as a power you need to come and experience and so we get in a room and get crazy hyped and try to feel his power pulsing in us or something. And while God HAS power, God presents himself to us as a person. A Father. And we are to relate to him as an ever-present father.

But this means something big that Moses acknowledges in verse 8 (put back up). He even sees, especially sees our secret sins. Our secret sin isn't secret. Here's the second part of this prayer we are building today.

"God you are all-present, so my sin is fully known"

And this is invasive because it means we can't craft our image of ourselves for God to see. He sees what really is. No screen to hide behind. After you take that pic and then go back to your boring life...he's there. After you walk the last people out of your house from that gathering then turn around and make a sarcastic remark to your spouse...he's there! When you are passive aggressive with your roommate...HES THERE! When you are indulging in whatever sin you think nobody else will

ever see...he's there. Even the thoughts you've had about others...that are so messed up...he sees all that too. He sees it all.

Question: why is this good for you? I mean, at first at least it seems pretty bad. God knows all my junk. How is that good? When we sin, our instinct is to hide from God. Adam & Eve – they sinned against God and they ran and hid. And God in his kindness went into the garden and said “adam, eve,...where are you?” Like a father playing hide & seek with a 2 year old that hides behind a solo cup. Our grown up attempts to hide our sin aren't much better. We, especially in the south, we put on our “I'm fine” face don't we? We come to church and act like all is well. Like God only sees you in the light of day. No Moses says your darkness is exposed by the light of his presence. Which is everywhere. nobody does this better than pastors. Shocking revelation: your pastor is a sinner. And ya'll its easy to try and do the work of ministry without acknowledging to God that I TOO am a sinner. God is all present, so SPENCE SHELTON's SIN IS FULLY KNOWN by him. I need these sermons more than anybody else here. I promise. Courtney is tryin to hold back a big ole “AMEN!”

When we try to hide our sin from God...we aren't actually hiding it...what we are doing is holding onto it. And Moses is reminding himself of this. God sees us in all our ugly sin & rebellion against him. So why is this good? Well that actually gets to the next part of Moses' prayer. And it gets worse before it gets better

[7] For we are brought to an end by your anger; by your wrath we are dismayed....

[11] Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of you?

Not only does God see all of our sin, but God's anger or wrath is directly pointed at that sin. Why? Because listen this sin is what separates you from God. It is our rebellion against God. When we sin we reject God as God and we say “I know better.” And in doing so we cast ourselves away from God. And God loves us and because he loves us his anger burns against the thing that hurts us. This is the consequence of sin Moses is acknowledging and its part 3 of his prayer.

“God you are holy, so my sin has made me guilty before you”

People the best illustration on earth for this is how a parent feels about their child. When my child is sick...I HATE the sickness because of what it does to my child. But listen, that goes to another level when I see bad character traits developing in one of my kids. When they talk back, when they lie...I hate it not because I'm offended but because of what the person that will make them. So my anger burns not against them but against their sin. But the illustration breaks down because I too am a sinner like them. God? God is not a sinner. God is holy. He cannot be in the presence of sin. So now this sin has separated us from God and because he is a holy & righteous judge it has also put us under the penalty of sin.

And lets be clear ya'll. Everyone has sinned. Moses uses WE language and that's a good thing. I'm switching the pronouns some in here to the first person to teach you how to pray back through this, but it's a corporate situation we are in. WE means WE. So if you can hear my voice, you are included. God sees all our sin. And all of us are guilty before him.

But listen, only those who admit it can be saved from it. Sin is the underlying problem in our lives and the GOOD of acknowledging God sees it, the GOOD of acknowledging what it is and what it is doing... is that now you can be saved from it. It's the underlying problem. the addiction underneath all addictions. And the first step to deliverance is admitting you have a problem. So a question I have for you is: does the wrath of God toward your sin dismay you? Does the wrath of God toward your sin terrify you? If it doesn't, your view of God AND your view of sin are both dangerously small. Moses met God on the mountain. He had a real understanding of the holiness of God and it made him terrified of his sin. I think the greatest problem we have is not a sin problem it's a God problem. A.W. Tozer said always the most revealing thing about a church is her idea of God. God is Great means he is HOLY!

And when we finally confess, like moses does here, don't worry God isn't going to be shocked or surprised. "WHAT!?!? YOU?" No he's a loving father saying "I know. and I still love you. And I want to save you from this sin and what it is doing to you." Let me say it this way.

We cannot receive the forgiveness God has already offered until we confess the sin he already sees.

Confession is the admission of guilt required to receive God's saving grace that we so desperately need. It's the act, like Moses does here in our Psalm, of saying God...I admit that every time I've chosen to do things my way and not yours...its sin. And you see it all and because I've sinned, just like adam and eve I've separated myself from you. I can't have you and my sin. And this prayer of Moses is basically saying "GOD, I KNOW THAT YOU KNOW." I'm calling sin what it is. And Moses should be a mess right here and all of us should be a complete wreck because we are guilty and we have no way to redeem ourselves. No way to do enough good to outweigh the bad we've done. In fact we are so guilty Moses says in verse 12

[12] Return, O LORD! How long? Have pity on your servants!

Basically: God relent. Turn away from your anger. Please God have pity on us your servants. Yes we have sinned. We confess. And we are at your mercy. Oh God instead of giving us what we deserve have pity on us. And then Moses' prayer shifts. And ours should too. watch

[14] Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

Satisfy us with your steadfast love. Man this right here. This is the part of the prayer you need to spend time in. Moses knows he deserves wrath but he also knows the STEADFAST LOVE OF THE LORD NEVER CEASES. AND he KNOWS...he knows

God offers him forgiveness and he knows that when he turns back from his sin God will forgive him. And he will receive the LOVE of God instead of the WRATH of God. And that is true for us today.

[9] If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

See that's what Christ's death on the cross does. God doesn't just decide to ignore our sin. No he takes the punishment you owe for your sin and gives it to Christ. That's love. But that love isn't just a one time act. Jesus says in John 15.9 – abide in my love. Make your home in my steadfast love. Be satisfied by his love. And that love...it never wavers it never runs out. Smack in the middle of the book of laments, a book written really about how to cry out and grieve to God. When things are awful. Right in the middle the author says

[22] The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; [23] they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. [24] "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him." Lamentations 3:22–24

So let me ask you: What do you go to when you crave satisfaction? When you crave comfort? Pleasure? Peace? Security? Rest? Too often we go to things that pretend to satisfy. But they really don't. How many of you found yourself at the end of a pint of ice cream because you thought this will make me feel better? How many of you found yourself at the end of other kinds of pints thinking that will make you feel

better? How many of you woke up the next morning satisfied? NO. you wake up hurting and still empty.

Moses is going to God and he's grabbing hold of him and saying Lord, I know my soul needs to be satisfied by your love. I want to want it. So I am here asking for it. He is boldly praying for God's love to be enough for him. Is this your prayer? You see what's developed in this prayer?

He sees God's greatness. He's eternal, he all present, he's all holy and It makes him see how unworthy he is. When we see God rightly we will then see ourselves rightly. And in that moment where Moses sees how desperately lost he left on his own in his sin...he says ok God...not because I deserve it but because you are faithful to your promise to love and forgive those who call on you...Because the steadfast LOVE of the LORD never ceases...satisfy me in that love this morning.

"God you are faithful, so satisfy me with your steadfast love."

Here's my challenge to you for the next week. Pray this prayer every morning. To do so will require an active choosing of the will to sit before God and say I am not getting up from this table, this chair, until I am satisfied in my soul with the love of Christ. DO YOU WANT TO KNOW GOD? HE WANTS TO KNOW YOU. HE'S HERE OFFERING HIS STEADFAST LOVE! And his love is the only thing that will ever satisfy your soul. And I want to spare you any more time trying to be satisfied by other things.

God gives great gifts to us. Jobs, money, food, friends, romance, nature, art...these are good things. But they were never meant to satisfy your soul. And these gifts will come and go. When they leave, will your soul still be satisfied? Will you be able to grieve their loss, which is completely ok. But can you grieve with hope? Hope because down at the core you are more satisfied by the Love of the LORD than you are by the gifts he gives you?

Pray this prayer ya'll. God SATISFY ME WITH YOUR STEADFAST LOVE. God I want to know YOU. I want to be satisfied in YOU. God a lot of things are going to come at me today but I know the only thing that will satisfy me IS YOU! AND YOU ARE FAITHFUL SO I KNOW YOU WILL ANSWER THIS PRAYER. And you don't wait for some tingly feeling. You can't pray this without the first 3 parts of this prayer. By the time you get here you are desperate! That's what is going to keep you coming back to God each day. It's not your discipline that's going to help you draw closer to God. It's your desperation that will do it.

And then. When you have once again today made your home in the steadfast love of God, then you are ready to pray the last part of Moses' prayer.

[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!

Moses knew God had give him a mission. He had to get Israel and get them out of Egypt and then lead them through the

wilderness. And lead them meant encourage them, support them, keep them faithful to God's commands. He had a big task and knew he needed God to establish it, to make it happen, or it wasn't gonna happen. God had called him to something greater than he had the ability on his own to accomplish. That's what God does with everyone. He does that so you will depend on him and so that he will get glory when its done. We can pray it this way:

"God you have a purpose for me, so get the glory through me today."

That's why you see a pattern throughout church history of nobodies changing the world. It's so he can get the glory when we step into callings that are significantly beyond our ability to accomplish. This prayer right here – this is the prayer of Mercy Church in 2018. We've got some things coming up that lets just say seem to be beyond our reach. Facilities and ministry opportunities that are going to require us together to say "Yes God, establish the work of our hands." God there is no way we can do it unless you do it so God...DO IT! YOU DO IT LORD! We thought that when we prayed about the Christmas Missions Offering and the Lord surprised us in a big way.

But theres more to it than just BIG dreams. It's acknowledging our real purpose is to give God glory. And unless God works through us, for his glory all of our work is in vain anyways. Will you look at the meetings, the to-do list, the parenting, the friendships, the job hunt...will you look at all of that and say God – I need you today to get through this. I know you have a

purpose for me in it and my great goal is that you get the glory through me today.

God is eternal, he is all present, he is holy, he is faithful, and he has a purpose for you.