

The Omnipotence of God & The Frailty of Man

Psalm 90:3–6

Introduction

As we saw this morning, the Lord is the everlasting God who is eternally glorious. Describing the eternity of God is difficult for anyone because we are all bound by time, finite human beings trying to describe the Infinite. Now, as we come to these next verses you will see that the One who is from everlasting to everlasting is completely different from His creation. Moses, the author of this psalm, saw the glory of God on display on two specific occasions:

Exodus 3:2–6 ² And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush *was* not consumed. ³ Then Moses said, “I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn.” ⁴ So when the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” ⁵ Then He said, “Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand *is* holy ground.” ⁶ Moreover He said, “I *am* the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.

Exodus 33:18–23 ¹⁸ And he said, “Please, show me Your glory.” ¹⁹ Then He said, “I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” ²⁰ But He said, “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.” ²¹ And the Lord said, “Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. ²² So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. ²³ Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.”

It is to this glorious God that Moses now compares you as a mere human. This text teaches that *you must remember that you are sinful, frail, and finite in comparison with an omnipotent and eternal God; therefore, submit to Him now.*

Psalm 90:3–6 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.¹

Preview Outline:

1. Concerning Power (v. 3)
 - A. God is Omnipotent
 - B. Man is Frail
2. Concerning Existence (vv. 4–6)
 - A. God is Eternal
 - B. Man is Finite

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations taken from the New King James Version.

With each verse there is a contrast between the Lord and mankind. The first contrast is—

1. Concerning Power (v. 3)

Moses, the man of God (see superscription) writes concerning both the frailty of man and the might of God.

A. God is Omnipotent

“*You turn man to destruction*” — Moses describes the fact that it is God who turns man to destruction. The word here is different than the word in Genesis 3:19 but it hearkens back to that passage.²

Genesis 3:19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you *are*, and to dust you shall return.”

God attests to Adam and Eve that they would return back to the dust from which they were created. The all powerful God can both create life from the dust and return that life back to the dust. But why does God turn man back to dust? Remember that these words are spoken in the curse that God pronounces on Adam—in other words, God turns man back into dust as a judgment for his rebellion against Him.³ In order to best understand your sinfulness you must recognize and see the glory of God. Here, we see God’s glory on display through His omnipotence.

The fact that God is omnipotent saturates Scripture. God’s name as the Almighty is an example of how Scripture testifies His power. Consider several other passages:

Genesis 17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I *am* Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.

Genesis 18:13–14 ¹³ And the Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I surely bear *a child*, since I am old?’ ¹⁴ Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.”

Psalms 91:1 He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

Isaiah 40:12–17 ¹² Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, measured heaven with a span and calculated the dust of the earth in a measure? Weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? ¹³ Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or *as* His counselor has taught Him? ¹⁴ With whom did He take counsel, and *who* instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of justice? Who taught Him knowledge, and showed Him the way of understanding? ¹⁵ Behold, the nations *are* as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust on the scales; look, He lifts up the isles as a very little thing. ¹⁶ And Lebanon *is* not sufficient to burn, nor its beasts sufficient for a burnt offering. ¹⁷ All nations before Him *are* as nothing, and they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless.

Jeremiah 32:17 ‘Ah, Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You.

Revelation 1:8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

² The Hebrew word דָּבַח (which means “crushed”) is used two other times in the Old Testament to refer to a broken or contrite heart (Ps. 34:18; Is. 57:15).

³ Please see the GRACE acronym on our website (<https://www.cbcbfindlay.org/im-new/#about-calvary>) in which the rebellion of man is juxtaposed with the glory of God.

By no means is Scripture vague on this point. The Almighty, sovereign God reigns and does all things as He pleases in accordance with His nature.

So when you begin to question whether or not God is capable of doing what He says He will do, remember the words of Scripture: God can do what man deems impossible (Matt. 19:26). There is nothing too difficult for God. When God asserts that He will judge those who persist in their rebellion, He most certainly means it (Rom. 6:23; Rev. 20:15).

Against the backdrop of this omnipotent God is the frailty of man.

B. Man is Frail

“Return [to dust], O children of men” — Man was created by God from the dust of the ground (Gen. 2:7). God made him in His image (Gen. 1:26–27). You were originally created to have a pure relationship with God. Yet because of Adam’s sin death entered into the world (Rom. 5:12). The frailty of human life is clearly seen by the fact that with simply His word God can simply speaking (“You turn man to destruction, and say” — v. 3).

Illustration: Mankind came from the dust and will return to the dust. In fact, nothing could confirm this more than the fear in people which drives them to self-preservation. Why do people panic when there is not enough food in the stores or toilet paper in the paper-goods aisle? It is because not only do they want comfort, but also they know that without sufficient food and other basic needs, they will most likely die. Scripture confirms this: it is appointed to man to die (Heb. 9:27).

Remember God’s awesome power over your frail abilities. With His power God can (a) save your soul from eternal damnation to be in joyful bliss with Him in heaven, and (b) rightly condemn your soul to eternal judgment and torment in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:15).

The contrast that Moses talks about not only covers God’s power over and against man’s frailty, he also presents a contrast—

2. Concerning Existence (vv. 4–6)

No greater gulf could be fixed between the existence of God and man. Moses clearly lays out the difference in the existence of each with regards to time and lifespan.

A. God is Eternal

“For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past” — To us, a thousand years is a long time! Consider all the changes that have happened in the past thousand years. We have gone from horse and carriage to car and pickup. We have gone from quill and ink to iPad and smart tv. Man and his environment has changed significantly in a thousand years. Yet God has remained unchanging. Here are several verses that remind us about God’s unchanging character:

Malachi 3:6a “For I *am* the Lord, I do not change;

Psalms 102:27 But You *are* the same, and Your years will have no end.

James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

The idea here is that a long period of time like a thousand years are short and memorable. They are *short* because they are as if yesterday (a recent time) has just happened (and what is a thousand years to an eternal God?). They are *memorable* because you can better remember what has happened yesterday than what has happened years in the past. Peter spoke of God's relationship to time with similar language:

2 Peter 3:8–9 ⁸ But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

Unlike you and I who view the world and time as though a thousand years was such a long time, God views it as but a mere moment. He is the eternal God who on the one hand humbles man with the perspective of His eternity and on the other hand comforts believers with that same truth.

"...and like a watch in the night" — Moses says that a thousand years in God's sight is like a "watch in the night." A watch in the night was a four-hour period of time during which a guard would watch for the invasion of any enemies. This is a short period of time even considering the many hours it takes to get through the night to morning. As quickly as a 4 hour watch in the night goes by, so is a thousand years to the Lord.

All of these remind us that God is indeed an eternal, transcendent Being. In contrast to that, Moses reminds us that man is the very opposite of his Creator.

B. Man is Finite

Remember God's everlasting existence ("from everlasting to everlasting" — v. 2). Your finite existence pales in comparison to God's eternity.

"You carry them away like a flood" — This phrase, put simply, is a reference to how easy it is for a flood to carry away everything in its path. Man's life is as transient. God, who with His very words tells man to return back to dust, can carry man's life away as quickly as a flood. Isaiah gives us an illustration of this:

Isaiah 8:5–8 ⁵ The Lord also spoke to me again, saying: ⁶ "Inasmuch as these people refused the waters of Shiloah that flow softly, and rejoice in Rezin and in Remaliah's son; ⁷ Now therefore, behold, the Lord brings up over them the waters of the River, strong and mighty—the king of Assyria and all his glory; he will go up over all his channels and go over all his banks. ⁸ He will pass through Judah, he will overflow and pass over, he will reach up to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings will fill the breadth of Your land, O Immanuel.

To return man back to the dust is no problem for the eternal, omnipotent God.

"they are like a sleep" — Moses could be picturing two things: (1) He could be picturing the sleep of death (e.g. Jesus describing Lazarus as "asleep" when he was, in fact, dead; John 11:11); or, (2) Moses could be describing the way in which man goes through his brief life (i.e. just as when in a sleep mankind is unaware of his surroundings and his time through the night passes quickly, so does finite man walk through this short life as if in a sleep completely unaware of how truly brief his life is). Though both are fitting, I think the first option best describes the metaphor that Moses is using. With a word God is able to return man back to dust; He can sweep away man's life into the sleep of death in a moment. For those who are in Christ Jesus this description of God does not bring fear:

Romans 8:1 *There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Yet for those who are yet enemies of God, these truths should be a solemn warning of the seriousness of their sin and the brevity of their time to repent.

“In the morning they are like grass which grows up: ⁶In the morning it flourishes and grows up; in the evening it is cut down and withers.” — The final metaphor that Moses uses to describe the transience of man is that of grass: even as grass grows up in the morning, by evening it is cut down and burned. Day after day people die. Some die to everlasting joy and peace with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8); others die to eternal judgment in hell (Rom. 6:23; Rev. 20:21).

Jesus uses this same metaphor to encourage believers not to worry:

Matthew 6:25–30 ²⁵“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? ²⁸“So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; ²⁹and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, *will He* not much more *clothe* you, O you of little faith?

Jesus used the metaphor of grass to point out the value that God places on His image-bearers. Moses used the metaphor of grass to point out the brevity of life. Man is frail and will one day die. The important thing for all people to do is to submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ now, for if they do not do so now, rest assured they will do it when He is exalted (Phil. 2:9–11).

Conclusion

All of this to say: *You must remember that you are sinful, frail, and finite in comparison with an omnipotent and eternal God; therefore, submit to Him now.* God is not a little genie who is here to do your bidding. He is the omnipotent King to whom all must (and one day will) submit. It behooves us all to do so now. And one day, we who have done so in this life will hear these blessed words:

Matthew 25:21 ²¹ His lord said to him, ‘Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’