

"GOD IS ...Eternal"

Part 2 - Text: Psalm 90:1-17

~ Delivered at Central Baptist Church on April 15, 2018 by Pastor Barton Priebe

INTRODUCTION

- **(SHOW SLIDE 1)** The words of the bishop stunned the nation. They were spoken at the funeral of King Louis XIV, one of the greatest kings in European history. He reigned for 72 years, longer than any other ruler in Europe. Under his leadership France became a world power and a leader in the arts.
 - King Louis XIV was the definition of greatness. He identified himself with Apollo, the Greek god of the sun, and called himself **"the Sun King."**
- He is best remembered today for building the palace of Versailles. Heather and I have been there. The palace, the grounds, the fountains, and the gardens are staggering. Louis' court was considered to be the most magnificent in all of Europe. One biographer writes, **"Ten thousand people lived at the chateau of Versailles. The court revolved around Louis like planets around the sun. Every aspect of the king's life was conducted with pomp and ceremony."** It is no wonder the world simply called him, **"Louis the Great."**
 - Louis died in 1715. He gave strict orders for how his funeral was to be conducted. Those who gathered inside Notre Dam Cathedral found it completely darkened except for one candle that burned on top of Louis' solid gold coffin. This was his last attempt to dramatize his greatness.
 - Thousands waited in hushed silence as Bishop Massillon got up to speak. Reaching out his hand he snuffed out the candle in defiance of Louis' orders and raising his voice said, **"Only God is great!"**
- Last week we began a 7-part series on the attributes of God. God's attributes describe what he is like. The goal of this series is to reveal the greatness of God that we might worship Him, treasure Him, serve Him, and tell others about His greatness.
 - We are beginning the series by looking at three incommunicable attributes of God. You remember from last week that an incommunicable attribute is something about God's nature that is unique to himself – an attribute that He has but that we do not.
 - Remember Emily's prayer when she was five. After I taught her that God was never made and never born, she prayed, **"God I praise you that you were never made and never born."** And then she paused and said with deep reverence, **"We're not like that."** I've read many theologians, but that is the best definition of an incommunicable attribute I have ever heard. It is something about God's nature that causes us to respond with awestruck worship saying, **"We're not like that."**
- This morning we are going to look at a second incommunicable attribute of God; namely, that God is eternal. We will follow the same outline as last week. First we will define it. Second we will demonstrate it from scripture, specifically Psalm 90. Third, we will draw out some implications.
 - I am praying that as we look at God's eternal nature, we would declare like Bishop Massillon that **"Only God is great!"** and would, like Emily, worship Him saying, **"We're not like that."**

DEFINING GOD'S ETERNAL NATURE

- **(SHOW SLIDE 2)** In the first place, let's **define God's eternal nature**. Perhaps the simplest way to define it is to say that:
 - **(SHOW SLIDE 3) God is without beginning or end. He has always existed and will always exist.** We're not like that.
 - Last week we looked at the fact that God is self-existent. God has life in himself. This week we are looking at the fact that this self-existent God has always existed and will always exist.
- God's eternity is assumed, implied, and taken for granted on every page of the Bible. If you take away God's eternal nature then everything else collapses.
 - Think about this: if God is not eternal then he must have had a beginning. If he had a beginning then someone or something else made him, which means he is not really God at all but a created being.
 - If God is not eternal then he is also not all powerful for he cannot stop his own death. And if God cannot stop his own death then he can't save you from death either.
 - If God will one day cease to exist then all his promises to his people about eternal life cannot be trusted for how will we live forever if he does not?
- So you see, God's eternal nature is one of the shining jewels in the crown of His glory. Without his eternal nature everything else falls apart.
 - Is this not why Paul, after declaring the eternal life that Jesus has earned for us, burst forth in praise saying, **"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen."**
 - Throughout this sermon let your heart spontaneously burst out in praise to the King eternal. To recap then God's eternal nature refers to the fact that God is without beginning or end.

DEMONSTRATING GOD'S ETERNAL NATURE FROM SCRIPTURE

- **(SHOW SLIDE 4)** In the second place, let's **demonstrate God's eternal nature from scripture**. There is perhaps no better place to demonstrate God's eternal nature in scripture than Psalm 90. Psalm 90 contrasts God's eternal nature with humanity's temporary nature.
 - This whole Psalm is about time. This is obvious in that the word 'day' is used five times (verses 4, 9, 12, 14, 15). The word 'year' is used four times (verses 4, 9-10, 15). God's eternal nature is the theme of verses 1-6.
 - The psalmist begins in verses 1-2 by saying, **READ 1-2 - ¹Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. ²Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.**
- The psalmist traces God's existence back through the generations, then further back to the time when He formed the mountains, and then further back to before the universe existed? Before anything was, God was.
 - We have had many conversations with our kids about this topic. They go something like this: **"Daddy, who made God?"** I explain that no one made God but that He has always existed. One kid says, **"I know daddy but when was God born?"** **"He was never born."** Trying to comprehend just how old God is, our kids then ask, **"Did he exist before you were born, daddy?"** I laugh and say, **"Yes."** Now the kids know that

mommy is older than daddy by three whole weeks and so the next question is, ***“Did God exist before mommy was born?”*** ***“Yes.”*** Then they keep going back. ***“Did he exist before all the old people in the pictures?”*** I think they mean the black and white pictures, which are clearly just about as old as God himself. ***“Yes.”*** ***“Did God exist before Adam and Eve?”*** ***“Yes.”*** ***“But daddy when was God born?”*** And so I answer, ***“He was never born. He has always existed.”*** I remember Tyler then saying, ***“I just don’t get it.”*** Or another time I remember Emily rephrasing the question and asking, ***“So when was God made?”***

- You can understand their confusion. They know intuitively that everything that exists in this universe has a beginning and so they project this onto God. But God is the eternal uncaused being. He has no beginning. We’re not like that.
- In verses 3-6 the psalmist contrasts humanity with the everlasting God. ***READ 3-6 - ³You return man to dust and say, “Return, O children of man!” ⁴For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night. ⁵You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning: ⁶in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.***
 - What a contrast from verses 1-2. We’re not like that.
- Everywhere scripture exalts God because He has no beginning. Daniel 7 emphasizes how long he has existed in calling him ***“the Ancient of Days.”*** The first verse of the Bible declares God’s eternity for ***“in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”*** God, therefore, existed before the beginning.
 - Jesus is declared to be this eternal God in Colossians 1 when it says, ***“For by him all things were created...He is before all things.”*** That God has no beginning is declared in Genesis 21:33 when he is called ***“the eternal God,”*** in Isaiah 9:6 when He is called ***“the everlasting Father,”*** in Isaiah 26:4 when He is called ***“The Rock eternal.”***
 - Our little minds cannot even comprehend living since the beginning of the universe and yet God existed eternally before that. Like Elihu in Job 36:26 we simply say, ***“How great is God—beyond our understanding! The number of his years is past finding out.”***
- But scripture does not just exalt God because He has no beginning. It also exalts him because he has no end. He will always exist.
 - Hebrews 1:8 says of Jesus, ***“Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever.”*** Psalm 102 says of the heavens and the earth that ***“They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. ^[1]_{SEP} Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same, and your years will never end.”***
 - Revelation 1:8: ***“‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.’”*** Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet and Omega is the last letter. ***“I am the beginning of all things and the end of all things, the one who always has been, who is and who always will be.”***
 - In light of all this we join with the four living creatures who never stop worshiping God saying, ***“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.”***

GOD’S ETERNAL NATURE IS A DISTURBING REALITY

- We have defined God’s eternity. We have demonstrated it from scripture. **(SHOW SLIDE 5)** Finally, let’s **draw out three implications of God’s eternal nature.**

- I want to show you that God's eternal nature is a disturbing reality, a reassuring reality, and a life-changing reality.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 6) Implication #1: God's eternal nature is a disturbing reality.** You remember that in verses 1-6 the psalmist is talking about God's eternal nature. But now in verse 7 it seems as if he has changed subjects because in verses 7-11 he talks about God's wrath. But this is not a change of subject. It is God's eternal nature that has turned his thoughts to consider the disturbing reality of God's wrath.
 - The key is verse 3. **READ 3** - ***³ You return man to dust and say, "Return, O children of man!"*** This is an echo of Genesis 3. God had said that if Adam and Eve rebelled they would surely die and when they did rebel God declared in Genesis 3:19, ***"you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."***
 - So here is the point: since death is God's judgment for sin, the fact that all die means that all are under God's judgment. Our mortality points to the fact that the human race is under judgment. And so we read in verses 7-11, **READ 7-11** - ***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?***
- Jesus reveals to us that this reality is even more disturbing than we first thought. He declared that God's judgment on humanity for its sin does not end at death. Jesus, the most loving man who ever lived, declared that there is a place called hell where sinners will be punished for all eternity.
 - Hell is not a place where people party forever. Jesus described hell in the most horrific terms – as a place of inexpressible sorrow and pain.
- But the worst thing Jesus taught us about hell is that it will be eternal. Jesus declared in Matthew 25 that the wicked, ***"will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."***
 - Why would Jesus speak this way? Out of love for you. You see God did not create hell for people. Jesus says it was created for the devil and his angels. It is therefore not God's will that you perish. Jesus spoke all of these words out of great love to warn you to flee from the coming wrath.
 - It would be unloving to see your neighbour's house going up in flames in the middle of the night and not scream at the top of your lungs, ***"Get out of the house!"***
 - Jesus warns us about the disturbing reality of hell because we are sleeping in a burning house. When we wake up to this reality and realize we cannot get out of the house we cry out, ***"Jesus save us!"*** And it is right then that we see just how loving Jesus is. Jesus enters the house and pulls us out but it costs him his life in the process.
 - On the cross Jesus faced our judgement so that we do not have to. He died the death we deserve to die to we don't have to. He rose from the dead and is able and willing to rescue anyone who calls on him from such an eternity.

- The Bible declares that whoever believes in Jesus will not perish but have eternal life. Have you called on Jesus to rescue you?
 - The Bible says, ***“Today is the day of salvation.”*** Don’t wait for the house to collapse. In your heart say to God, ***“Almighty God, I deserve judgment for my sins. You have said Jesus can rescue me. This very moment I entrust myself to Jesus to rescue me from judgment.”***

GOD’S ETERNAL NATURE IS A REASSURING REALITY

- So God’s eternal nature is first of all a disturbing reality but once Jesus rescues you, God’s eternal nature takes on an entirely different reality. **(SHOW SLIDE 7) Implication #2: God’s eternal nature is a reassuring reality.**
 - This is the point of the psalm. In verse 15 we learn that the people of God are being afflicted. How do they get strength when life was hard? They focused on God’s eternity. Is that not what verse one is saying? ***READ 1 - Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.*** Our souls can find security in God precisely because he is eternal.
 - As Deuteronomy 33:27 says, ***“The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.”***
 - Dear Christian, no matter what you are facing you know it cannot destroy you for the arms of the eternal God uphold you. If God is for you who can be against you?
- God’s eternal nature is a reassuring reality in the face of sufferings. Thinking upon an eternity with God is what kept Paul going after he was beaten, stoned, and shipwrecked.
 - He writes in 2 Corinthians 4 ***“we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.”***
 - All the sufferings of this world will be but a drop compared to the glorious ocean of eternity.
- Also, for the Christian, God’s eternal nature is a reassuring reality in the face of death. We do not fear death for we believe that the eternal God awaits us with open arms on the other side of death.
 - My grandpa, Peter Penner, was a strong Christian and died in 2010. As he was lying on his deathbed he suddenly opened his eyes. A great smile spread across his face. He stuck his hand out to my grandmother and said, ***“Good-bye.”*** She said, ***“Oh, I’m not going anywhere Peter. I am here with you.”*** He said, ***“But I am leaving now. Good-bye.”***
 - In the face of death he had hope of eternal life. The God who carries us is the eternal God. Oh what joy as we consider an eternity with the eternal God who grants eternal life to all who believe.

GOD’S ETERNAL NATURE IS A LIFE-CHANGING REALITY

- **(SHOW SLIDE 8) Implication #3: God’s eternal nature is a life-changing reality.** Once the psalmist has considered God’s eternity, and God’s wrath, he appeals to God with some prayers in verses 13-17. I want to focus on just one of these requests. ***READ 12 - So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.***

- This becomes your cry when you grasp how short your life is and how long eternity is. You recognize how precious time is – that you are given very little of it, that you never know when it will end, and that time misspent is lost forever.
 - This prayer becomes your heart’s cry when you understand that you will give an account of every moment spent, and that God will reward each one according to how they have used their time.
- John Piper tells a story about his father who was an evangelist. At one service a very old man came forward. The church had prayed for this man for decades but he was very resistant to Jesus. This night he saw his sin, the promise of salvation in Jesus and he was converted. But this did not stop him from sobbing on the front pew as he considered his life.
 - Through tears he kept saying, **“I’ve wasted it, I’ve wasted it.”**¹
- This morning I want to end with a call for you to improve the time God has given you. This is for your eternal joy. I would suggest that you think of improving your time as it relates to the two greatest commandments.
- First, improve your time on loving the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. This is the first and greatest command.
 - We so easily spend hours watching T.V., movies, playing video games, reading magazines, playing on our phones, relaxing, and enjoying hobbies. But how about worshipping God? **“Seek the Lord while he may be found. Call on him while he is near.”**
 - How can you improve your private times of worship? Do you need a Bible reading plan? Do you need to set aside a time?
 - How can you improve your public worship? So many Christians today skip out on public worship for just about any reason at all. By all means, take your holidays but the public worship of God should be among your highest priorities.
 - How can you improve your family worship? Father’s and husbands how are you leading your wives and children in worship?
- Second, improve your time in loving other people.
 - How can you serve others? Maybe it is not more service but doing a better job. Are you praying for the salvation of family, friends, and colleagues? Good, then what you are doing to get to know them that God might open a door for the gospel. How can you improve your giving so that other people are blessed? How are you using your life to serve others?

CONCLUSION

- My brothers and sisters, listen to the words of the old hymn:
 - ***The sands of time are sinking, The dawn of heaven breaks;
The summer morn I’ve sighed for - The fair, sweet morn awakes:
Dark, dark has been the midnight But dayspring is at hand,
And glory, glory dwelleth In Immanuel’s land.***
- Your short life will soon be over. Eternity stretches out ever before you. How you use the short number of years in this life will make all the difference for eternity. So pray with the psalmist, **“Teach us to number our days aright.”** Do not waste your life. Love God. Love other people.
 - What are you going to do today to improve the time He has given you?

¹ John Piper, *Don’t Waste Your Life*, 12.