

# The Lord Must Teach Us To Number Our Days

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Sodimejo lived in Indonesia. In 1992 he figured he didn't have much time left to live and he bought his tombstone. He had a good reason. According to his own claim and his identification records from the authorities he was born in 1870. At 122 years old he didn't expect to live much longer. Nonetheless, he ended up living until just three years ago. He lived a full life and remained sharp witted and able to recount memories from the late 1800s. Even as recently as five years ago he was still doing household chores. His age claims were never verified by outside sources. He reportedly died at the age of 146. Others have lived long in modern times with verified ages up to 122 years old. The oldest person alive today is a woman in Japan at the age of 117. Of course, we also have ancient records from Scripture of people living even longer. Long life is possible. Scientists today say that there is no biological reason why a human being couldn't live for 200 years or perhaps longer. Our genes, however, often have a clock set to a shorter time span.

Does it matter how long you live? Today we look at a Psalm by Moses and find a powerful reminder that it doesn't matter how long you live. What matters more is the heart you have. Moses was a man who understood what a long life was like. He lived to the age of 120. And he knew very well what really mattered most in life. It isn't living long. What matters is numbering your days with a heart of wisdom. As we look at Moses' Psalm, we will learn to number our days in such a way that we gain a heart of wisdom.

Human generations will come and go rather quickly. And the brevity of our lifespan can cause you to feel so powerless to influence this world. You might be around for today, but many generations came before and others will come after. What difference can we make in so many countless generations of humans on earth? But for a Christian there is one constant which holds all people and time together. Moses knew the people of Israel had suffered for hundreds of years, generation after generation. But even with the passing of each generation there was a constant comfort. *"Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations."*

Before time began and before God brought shape to the mountains and the sea and all the universe, he existed. And he continues to exist from everlasting to everlasting. God has no number of years. He is beyond the scope of time. Isn't it comforting to know that God remains constant and he is eternal? It is if you see him as our dwelling place!

But that same God who is our everlasting dwelling place is also the one who pronounces death. Death is not merely some fault in our genes. Nor is it the natural course of events which randomly afflicts us and eventually catches up to us. It is ordained by God for sinners. Make no mistake: God is not inactive or uninvolved in the death of people. Moses acknowledges that, *"You grind people to dust. You say, 'Return to dust, sons of Adam.'"* Death is the pronouncement of God on every son and daughter of Adam. We follow in the footsteps of Adam. He was created to be holy and like God. But he disobeyed God. So, he had to return to dust. All the offspring of Adam are under that same curse of death. Whenever someone dies it is as if we hear the echoed pronouncement of God to Adam saying, *"Your years and days are now over. You will return to the dust from which you came."*

That is a humbling thought which reminds us of how high above us our God really is. He, of course, is not like us. He does not die. Time does not affect him at all. God is eternal and exists outside the bounds of time. To him a thousand years are like a day that has just passed. But we humans are mortal. For us time drags on day by day, but then it all seems so short when it is all over. We are much like the grass that quickly springs up and then quickly fades and dies. And we all will die because of God's command.

God rightly gives us a short life and pronounces our tragic death. He is wrathful against sin. His wrath brings terror to all of those who know God is a holy God. Often, we like to think that we don't deserve his wrath. That's because we are apt to downplay the value of the God who we sin against. God is not your friend who you can lie to when you let them down. He knows what you have done. God is not the person you hurt who is unaware of your crimes. Nor is he unaware of the thoughts you have harbored against him. You can't hide from his wrath against sin. *"You have laid out our guilty deeds in front of you. Our hidden sins are revealed in the light of your face."* It's been said that death and taxes are two inescapable things. Well, you can in fact hide from the government and avoid some taxes. But you can never hide from God and avoid his fury. Picture all of your faults and offenses exposed openly under God's bright microscope. He sees them all and he finds them so offensive he cannot tolerate you. He must deal with the sinner.

It is hard for us to picture the gravity of our sin because we fail to picture God as holy as he is. The punishment we face for sin is real. It brings us trouble now and it brings us everlasting trouble in hell. *"Who can understand the power of your anger? But your fury is consistent with the fear that is owed to you."* God's fury matches what he is owed. And we owe him everything!

Do we have the proper mindset towards the everlasting God and towards his wrath over our sin? Many are so busy today counting their possessions or adding to their little piles of wealth. Does that matter before God? Are you

tempted to number your days based on how much fun you can have or wealth you can attain? We are truly grass which withers and dies in a short time. Most of us will reach only the average life expectancy of the human race - seventy or eighty years. Then we face the judgment of God. Sodimejo reportedly waited until he was apparently 122 years old before buying his own tombstone. Are you ready to buy yours? We ought to be terrified because of the wrath of God as he says, "return to dust!" We ought to tremble at knowing the sorrow and pains of this life are mere foreshadows of the pains that await us under the fury of a holy God who judges each one of us.

There is only one way we can properly respond to our mortality and God's furious anger. It isn't found in numbering our wealth or our achievements. *"Teach us to number our days in such a way that we bring a heart of wisdom."* Moses's prayer asks God for wisdom and for God to teach us to rightly number our days. A heart of wisdom is obtained as God himself teaches us in his Word about our sin and our mortal lot. We learn how it is foolish to think we can hide our sins from our God. They stand in the light of his presence. It is foolish to think we ourselves can evade his command that we return back to dust. It is foolish to think that we are the exception to all the sons of Adam in facing God's fury. God helps us to number our days so that we see his wrath.

God also teaches us to call on him for mercy and to turn from our sins. *"Turn, O Lord!"* A heart of wisdom is wise for salvation. It knows that salvation must come from God. We turn to him for his great mercy on us. So with Moses we plead, *"Satisfy us with your mercy."*

Even the best of our life will be filled with troubles and sorrow. But with God's mercy we are filled with something more. We find full satisfaction in his unailing mercy and his faithful love. That brings us gladness and causes us to sing! Once we come to faith and realize how great his wrath is, we fully rejoice in how great his mercy is! Then the days of our affliction are replaced with days of gladness and joy. We know that the God of mercy has turned aside his wrath and supplied us with his love.

God's mercy and love is revealed in his deeds for us. Moses prays to the Lord, *"May your deeds be seen by your servants and your majesty by their children."* Generation after generation is given the wonderful gift of witnessing the deeds of the Lord. This prayer of Moses was answered in many times and ways in the past as God rescued his people from troubles. But the majestic deeds of the Lord became known in the greatest way when the everlasting Son of God came to be seen. Generations of believers had waited for the time. For them it was thousands of years of waiting. But not so for the Lord. For him it was like a watch in the night. Then when the time had fully come God sent his Son to step into the sphere of time. He was born into the world and took on human flesh. The immortal God was clothed in human flesh and became fully human.

The eternal Son of God made known the deeds of the Lord as he healed the sick. He drove out demons. And he even raised the dead. He brought joy to those under the curse of sin and facing certain death. But the greatest deed of the Lord was his act of redeeming the sinner. So that we would not remain terrified at his wrath the Lord came to take the price of our sin upon himself. Jesus, the everlasting Son of God died to take the place of every sinner. He died for you. After suffering the fury over sin which we all deserved he died the death we deserved. Only he would not return to dust. His body did not see decay. He rose from death because from everlasting to everlasting Jesus is God. In the morning he rose to satisfy this world with his great mercy!

We are satisfied with his great love as he promises us joy and gladness for far more days than we faced affliction. Moses prays, *"May the kindness of the Lord rest upon us."* God looks at the world full of the sons of Adam. But to those who look to him for kindness he grants it. The Lord gives us forgiveness of sins and the promise of living with him forever. He is our God throughout every generation. And he will remain our God for all eternity. Someday the same God who said, "return to dust, sons of Adam." Will come in glory. He will appear in glory with all his angels. At his command, all the sons of Adam will rise back to life from the dust. And all generations will see the majestic deeds of the Lord. And he will satisfy all who trusted in him with joy and gladness for the rest of time.

The thought of the brevity of life can indeed cause you to feel like you can do little to influence this world. But through us God brings an influence that is eternal. Moses began by speaking of the Lord being God throughout all generations. He concludes with the prayer that God will be the Lord of generations to come. His prayer is that the Lord would establish the work of our hands. The Christian who knows that they will return to dust doesn't work for themselves anymore. They are a servant of God. He provides the strength needed each day to serve him. He blesses the work we do to bring the next generation to number their days. And those who come after us marvel at the deeds of the Lord and gain a heart of wisdom. They are wise for salvation through faith in Jesus.

It didn't matter if Sodimejo could verify his age to be 146 or 120 something. He died numbering his days as a Christian. He was wise for salvation through faith in Jesus. A heart of wisdom is what we all really need. You will see people chasing after many things in life. You will see many people trying to avoid the Lord's judgment and fury over sin. But we must turn to the everlasting God. He is our dwelling place. He teaches us to number our days and to have a heart of wisdom. We see his marvelous deeds and his favor rests on us today and forevermore.