



*Worldwide Church of God
Camberwell*

Living and sharing the Gospel

December 2009

Dear Church Family,

As we move from 2009 into 2010 I thought it would be good for us to reflect on Psalm 90:

'Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. You turn men back to dust, saying, "Return to dust, O sons of men." For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night. You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the morning—though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered. We are consumed by your anger and terrified by your indignation. You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence. All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan. The length of our days is seventy years—or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away. Who knows the power of your anger? For your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you. Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Relent, O LORD! How long will it be? Have compassion on your servants. Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, for as many years as we have seen trouble. May your deeds be shown to your servants, your splendour to their children'. (Psalm 90:1-16)

This lament is set against the background of human mortality and the brevity of life. Even a thousand years is a mere nothing in God's sight, so how much more insignificant is man's 'threescore and ten' years?

As James says, '...What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes'. (James 4:14)

No wonder the psalmist asks God to 'teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom'.

I have numbered my days. If I live until I'm 70 that would give me around 25,550 days. I've just turned 51 so I have some 6,935 left. Now what does all this tell you? Simply that the greater portion of my life is behind me.

Starting with 2010 I want to live my last 27% better than I lived the first 73% that I may 'gain a heart of wisdom'.

In Proverbs 24:3 it says, 'By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established'. Or we could say, 'By wisdom a life is built, and through understanding it is established:'

So many people think they will be better off the next year than the past year but have not established concrete plans on how to do it. For us, as Christians, the turn of the year is a fitting time to take a spiritual inventory; to sit down, take a serious look at our strengths and weaknesses, and then plan a course of action to correct that which is lacking and strengthen that which is good.

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Here are a few questions to stimulate our thinking:

- Are you a more spiritually mature person having lived this past year?
- When facing obstacles, did you run from them? Seek to go around them? Simply pretend they did not exist? Or did you stand in faith, speaking to the mountain?
- Will your marriage be stronger, your love for your mate more fervent?
- How is your spiritual temperature in your walk with the Lord? Hot, lukewarm, cool or cold?

Take some time to evaluate your time alone with the Lord. Circle the quality that you most lean toward lately:

Unhurried.....hurried
Satisfactory.....unsatisfactory
Fresh.....stale
much time in confession.....little time
renewed spirit.....troubled spirit

The following questions are categorised and are intended to help you identify sins of commission and omission. Every “yes” answer indicates a sin to be confessed for cleansing. Ask the Lord each self-examining question. Listen for His response. If there is silence or peace in your spirit, proceed slowly to the next question. If there is conviction, confess it immediately to the Lord, ask for His forgiveness and help to rectify the issue.

Relationships:

- Is there anyone against whom you hold a grudge?
- Anyone you haven’t forgiven?
- Are there any relationships that need to be reconciled?
- Are you secretly pleased over the misfortune of another?
- Are you secretly annoyed over the accomplishments or advancement of another?
- Do you quarrel, argue or engage in heated discussions?
- Do you complain or find fault?
- Do you ever carry hidden anger?
- Do you have outbursts of anger?
- Do you become impatient with others?
- Are you harsh, unkind, or sarcastic?
- Do you grumble or gossip?
- Do you speak unkindly concerning people when they are not present?
- Do you lie or stretch the truth?

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Personal Life:

- Is there anything in which you have failed to put God first?
- Are you careless with your body?
- Do you fail to care for it as the temple of the Holy Spirit?
- Are you guilty of overindulgence in eating or drinking?
- Do you have any habits that are defiling to the body?
- Have you been careless in the payment of your debts?
- Do you watch un-edifying TV programs?
- Do you read unworthy magazines?
- Do you worry?
- Do you allow impure thoughts about the opposite sex to stay in your mind?
- Have you allowed yourself to become “spotted” by the world?
- Is your manner of dress pleasing to God?

Christian Service:

- Is your life failing to reveal Jesus to your friends and neighbours?
- Have you robbed God by withholding your time, talents, worship and money?
- Are you unreliable so you cannot be trusted with responsibilities in the Lord’s work?
- Do you whisper or think about other things during the preaching?
- Are you irregular in attending Church services?
- Have you neglected or slighted your daily private prayer time?
- Do you have a stubborn or un-teachable spirit?
- Are you lazy or irresponsible?
- Have you failed to pray regularly for your fellow church members and spiritual leaders?
- Do you find it hard to be corrected?

Quite a list to be getting on with isn’t it?

Here’s a further question. ‘Have you really considered the seriousness and brevity of life’? Our days are steadily and relentlessly ticking away. Isn’t 2010 a good time to ask and ponder on these questions before 2010 turns into 2011?

Perhaps at this point we should all pause for reflection. Many of the Psalms include the word ‘Selah’. It’s a difficult concept to translate, but is probably a musical notation meaning something like ‘pause and reflect’, ‘stop and listen’, to ‘weigh up’. Let’s take some time at the beginning of the New Year to do that; to ‘Selah’ on these questions.

The eagle eyed among you will have noticed that I didn’t quote all of Psalm 90 at the beginning. I left verse 17 to the end because if we undertake to ‘number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom’ then, ‘May the favour of the Lord our God rest upon us [for 2010]; establish the work of our hands for us— yes, establish the work of our hands [throughout the coming year]’. (V.17)

Have a happy and reflective New Year.

With love in Jesus’ name,

Barry

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