

## The Sands of Time are Sinking

Psalm 90:10-12; 1 John 3

It's early July, less than six months til Christmas and New Year. Some of us may be struggling with resolution made back in January, so I'll revisit the question...

HOW MANY OF YOU MAKE, OR HAVE EVER MADE, A NEW YEARS RESOLUTION? OR JUST a single or set of resolutions for your life?

I came across this list of [11 Resolutions For a Better You—Proven by Science](#)-

"It is, after all, our habits that determine the course of our lives." WRITTEN BY JOSHUA BECKER ·

<https://www.becomingminimalist.com/better-resolutions/>

So, if you want a BETTER YOU, then listen up...

1. Exercise
2. Less Television
3. Go outside
4. Read Fiction - reading results in **heightened connectivity** and brain activity—sometimes, even up to 5 days after the book has been completed
5. Give
6. Serve (2 hours / week)
7. Buy less stuff and more Experiences
8. Display Gratitude
9. Practice smiling – (thank you Aaron Burr -"Talk less, smile more") Cultivate positive thoughts to improve your mood
10. Stop and just play
11. Determine to be happy

Some simple minimalist advice for a better YOU – “proven by science”

Compare those with [the 70 Resolutions of Jonathan Edwards](#). He began the list as a late teenager (young man back in his day)

<https://verticallivingministries.com/tag/70-resolutions-of-jonathan-edwards-in-modern-language/>

Edwards' Resolutions tended to be more of the big picture type

#1. Resolved: I will DO whatever I think will be most to God's glory; and my own good, profit and pleasure, for as long as I live. I will do all these things without any consideration of the time they take. Resolved: to do whatever I understand to be my duty and will provide the most good and benefit to mankind in general. Resolved to do this, whatever difficulties I encounter, and no matter how many I experience or how severe those difficulties may be.

#4 Resolved: Never to do anything, whether physically or spiritually, except what glorifies God. In fact, I resolve not only to this commitment, but I resolve not to even grieve and gripe about these things, ...if I can avoid it.

7 of his 70 resolutions deal with keeping death in view (10%). Here are a few of them...

9. Resolved, to think much on all occasions of my own dying, and of the common circumstances which attend death.

17. Resolved: I will live in such a way, as I will wish I had done when I come to die. (Tim McGraw – Live Like You were Dying)

18. Resolved: To live, at all times, in those ways I think are best in me during my most spiritual moments and seasons – those times when I have clearest understanding of the gospel and awareness of the World that is to come.

50. Resolved: I will act in such a way as I think I will judge to have been best and most prudent, when I have come into the future world – Heaven.

These resolutions reflect the biblical wisdom and eternal perspective expressed in Psalm 90 and in 1 John 3.

#### PSALM 90

10 As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, Or if due to strength, eighty years, Yet their pride is but labor and sorrow; For soon it is gone and we fly away.

11 Who understands the power of Your anger  
And Your fury, according to the fear that is due You?

12 So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom.

1 JOHN 3:2-3 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

The Biblical perspective is that when we live in light of eternity, it leads to wisdom. And when we live with our hope fixed on God, there is a purifying effect in our lives.

These truths are expressed in numerous hymns, but the one for this morning is **THE SANDS OF TIME ARE SINKING** by Ann Cousin

Ann Cousin (1824-1906) was a Scottish poet and the wife of William Cousin, a Free Church of Scotland minister. She started writing hymns for use in her husband's church in Irvine, Scotland. Very soon, her hymns were being used and enjoyed throughout Scotland and England. In 1854 she wrote a poem, originally titled "The Last Words of Samuel Rutherford", based off of his Letters and deathbed sayings. The original version contained a whopping nineteen verses, but before long five of them circulated together as "The Sands of Time Are Sinking." The full version can be found in a link in the sermon notes to be posted this week.

[http://s3.amazonaws.com/ruf-hymnbook-prod/resources/1527/original/Sands\\_of\\_Time\\_full\\_original\\_poem.pdf?1381209109](http://s3.amazonaws.com/ruf-hymnbook-prod/resources/1527/original/Sands_of_Time_full_original_poem.pdf?1381209109)

Cousin does a great job distilling Rutherford's main pastoral themes into concise, accessible verse. The result is a beautiful Christian reflection on death and what comes after, and on the beauty of the Savior.

#### READ TOGETHER

1. 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 had been the midnight But Dayspring is at hand,  
And glory, glory dwelleth In Emmanuel's land

Luke 1:78 – Dayspring.....the dawn of the morning; daybreak. (Compare [Isaiah 60:1](#) [Isaiah 60:2](#) ; [Malachi 4:2](#) ; [Revelation 22:16](#) .) <http://www.icr.org/article/dayspring-from-high/>

There is another great sunrise coming, as promised in the last chapter of the Old Testament.

"But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings" (Malachi 4:2). He who is Himself "the light of the world" (John 8:12) will someday even replace the sun in the new Jerusalem. (Revelation 22:5) Henry Morris

5 And there will no longer be *any* night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.

16 "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

In a world that is passing away it is important to remember that Dayspring is at hand.

EX:–Has anyone ever heard this expression?

**“Like sands through the hourglass, \_\_\_\_\_**  
(so are the days of our lives.” )..

It may be familiar from a long running soap opera “The days of our Lives” or the hip hop group ...Binary Star SONG Honest Expression 2000, Masters of the Universe CD



This hymn/poem evokes the reminder that the days of our lives are like an hour glass. Our days are passing by, inevitably, just as sand through the hour-glass. It’s an abstract point which also directs us to the light of dawn – DAYSPRING – **Christ is the light of heaven who has dawned on this earth which is passing away.**

This life contains darkness, but the light has come, and will come back in full glory in eternity. When the final grain of sand has passed through the hourglass and those in Christ experience the reality of heaven, there will be no need for artificial light, because Christ himself will be our light – Rev 22

And as Cousin’s refrain says it, “heaven is the land of Emmanuel—God with us. Glory lives there.”

EX: compare this reflection on eternity with the “apocalyptic” language of our day- “Thousands all going to die because of the policies of this or that party, or country,” etc. There is an immediate jump to fear and alarm about WW III or mass deaths, etc. Yet in all that talk about death do we ever hear any of the speakers actually stop and reflect on what it means in light of eternity? Is there any sober discussion of the value and meaning of life? Is there any WISDOM for our hearts that is gained from this shallow view of life and death?

READ TOGETHER

**2. The king there in His beauty, Without a veil is seen:  
It were a well-spent journey, Though seven deaths lay between:  
The Lamb with His fair army, Doth on Mount Zion stand,  
And glory, glory dwelleth In Emmanuel’s land.**

Even the darkness of midnight, even the journey of life and death taken seven times over, is a happy exchange for this glory. That is not to minimize the sorrows we may face on Earth, but to maximize the joy of seeing—and sharing—Christ’s glory.

*C.S. Lewis. They say of some temporal suffering, “No future bliss can make up for it,” not knowing that Heaven, once attained, will work backwards and turn even that agony into a glory.*

“The Lamb with His fair army” is a reference to Revelation 14:1-5, which describes the saints as the Lamb’s attendants on Mount Zion. Participating in his triumph, and singing a new song of praise. Sharing in the glory of Emmanuel’s land. We get a taste of that when we gather for corporate worship!

READ TOGETHER

*3. O Christ, He is the fountain, The deep, sweet well of love!  
The streams on earth I’ve tasted, More deep I’ll drink above:  
There to an ocean fullness, His mercy doth expand,  
And glory, glory dwelleth In Emmanuel’s land.*

Christ is the fountain of love, the source of the living water of grace.

John 7

Now on the last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. 38He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" 39But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Perhaps Cousin means to use the same image as Cowper in “There is a Fountain,” where the fountain is specifically Christ’s wounds on Calvary. Perhaps, since she has already made one reference to Revelation, she has in mind the crystal stream from beneath the throne in the New Jerusalem. Rev 22:1

Either way, Jesus is the fountain of grace both in this life and the next. We taste this gift of the Spirit now, but that is only a foretaste. The full dose is yet to come. We’ll drink straight from the boundless ocean of His love.

The best is yet to come because there will be no end to the “drinking from that fountain of grace”

Eph 2:7 “in the ages to come He might show the surpassing rich of His grace in Kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

READ TOGETHER

*4. The bride eyes not her garment, But her dear Bridegroom's face;  
I will not gaze at glory But on my King of grace.  
Not at the crown He giveth But on His pierced hand;  
The Lamb is all the glory Of Emmanuel's land.*

EX: a bride at a wedding – as she walks down the aisle she’s not looking at her dress- it’s too late for that. I’ve walked three daughters down the aisle, and before those doors open, she’s focused on the dress and veil, etc. But once we start down the aisle she’s looking at her bridegroom’s face (I guess). He is definitely looking at her face.

Here is another powerful image. The Bride—us, collectively and singly—dressed in a glorious white robe as describe in Revelation. But even the Bride is upstaged- which is hard to do. She is upstaged by the very face of the Bridegroom. He holds out a lovely crown, but the scarred hand that holds it and places it on our head is what gets our attention. That hand is so lovely that we do not look at the crown, only the hand. Heaven is a realm of glory, but the Lamb who was slain is the center of all the glory.

Again, Cousin, leaning on Rutherford, points us to the all-surpassing beauty and worth of Christ. Do not long first for Heaven, for the New Jerusalem, the New Heaven and New Earth. The costly white robe is a glory, but Christ is greater. We will be given unimaginable glory of our own, but Christ's will still be preeminent.

What is the greatest glory of heaven?

EX: grandson thinking about the death of Alexander Hamilton – “he’ll get to see Philip (his son). And when I die I’ll get to see Hamilton, and Washington and Jefferson, etc”

Who we’ll see in heaven may be our concern now, but when we get there we’ll know that the GREAT GLORY OF HEAVEN is seeing the face of God-made-flesh, the presence of the Savior who gave his life to purchase us.

EX: Mount of Transfiguration gave a foretaste of this glory for Peter, James, and John. There, before them, was displayed the brilliance of the glory of Christ

The great promise of heaven is not streets of gold, or seeing our loved ones again, or in having every tear wiped from our eyes, but to enjoy the presence of the fairest of the sons of men, who once became stricken beyond human recognition to gain our admission into Emmanuel’s land. Isaiah 53

\*\*sideroad – men if you’re uncomfortable in the role of “bride of Christ”, get over it. If women can handle being referred to as “sons of God”, we can appreciate being the “bride of Christ.”

READ TOGETHER

5. O I am my Beloved's And my Beloved is mine!  
He brings a poor vile sinner Into His house of wine  
I stand upon His merit – I know no other stand,  
Not e'en where glory dwelleth In Emmanuel's land.

In this verse, Cousin continues with the bridal imager, through direct references to Song of Solomon. In particular, to Song of Solomon 2:4, “He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.” What most English translations put as “banqueting house” is literally “house of wine”

Kevin White - Cousin’s use of the “house of wine” maximizes the contrast between our poverty and the riches that Christ will provide us. We belong to Jesus, and He belongs to us. We look forward to the time when that will be fully realized. We who deserved death and hell are brought into the place of perfect intimacy and fellowship with God.

And, even in that land of glory, we have our standing purely on Jesus’ merit. We claim Jesus as Beloved, join the feast in the house of wine, and live forever, purely as a gift. Even in Heaven, we are wholly dependent on Christ. That is why we will be eternally secure in Emmanuel’s land, because He will never turn away or forsake us.

This hymn underscores the resolutions of Edwards regarding the consideration of our own death. But Edwards was not alone in this. Others in church history have echoed this practice as well. One being Thomas Watson, who proposed 8 practices for growing in godliness.

**PRACTICE #5 PONDER THE BREVITY OF LIFE**

<https://www.challies.com/series/8-rules-for-growing-in-godliness - Thomas Watson>

**Consider How Short Life Is**            **Like parenting, the days are long, but the years are short**  
Our days race by, each seeming to go faster than the one before. The long, leisurely summer days of youth are soon but a distant memory. The college years fade into the distance behind us. Our babies soon grow into adults and have babies of their own. Youthful vigor is replaced by the fear and feebleness of old age. We learn, to our surprise, just how short a dash separates the day of birth from the day of death.

When you look at a gravestone you often see the birthday and date of death separated by a dash- the length of the dash is the same no matter how long or short the life may have been, or how well known the person was in life.    The “dash” represents our lives.



Michael Jackson

**Psalm 39:**

Lord, make me to know my end And what is the extent of my days;  
Let me know how transient I am.  
5"Behold, You have made my days as handbreadths,  
And my lifetime as nothing in Your sight; Surely every man at his best is a mere breath.

**Conclusion**

This life is a race, a race against time, a race to become like Christ as we sprint toward Christ. Walking with Christ in repentant faith demands that we ponder the short time given to us, that we consider what we have done with it, that we commit to making the most of what remains. To grow in godliness, we must diligently ponder the brevity of life.

“ISN'T IT DANGEROUS TO BE SO HEAVENLY MINDED??”

C.S. Lewis wrote, "If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were those who thought most of the next ... Aim at Heaven and you will get earth thrown in."

ADDITIONAL VERSES not in the song, but are in the poem “The Last Words of Samuel Rutherford”

Deep Waters crossed life's pathway, The hedge of thorns was sharp;  
Now, these lie all behind me- Oh for a well tuned harp!  
Oh! To join Halleluiah, with yon triumphant band,  
Who sing, where glory dwelleth, In Immanuel's Land.

I love that line, “Oh for a well-tuned harp”

As a boy, Charles Haddon Spurgeon lived with his grandparents, who offered him a farthing for every hymn he memorized. He committed to memory almost all of Watts's hymns and many others. When he later became a gospel preacher, there wasn't an auditorium in England large enough for the crowds wanting to hear him, and his sermons were peppered with hymn quotations. He could punch home any truth with the rhythm and rhyme of a memorized hymn. But Spurgeon worked himself to exhaustion, and by age fifty-seven he was worn out.

On Sunday morning, June 7, 1891, he stood for what would be the final time in London's Metropolitan Tabernacle and gave out his last hymn. It was Anne Cousin's "The Sands of Time Are Sinking." Shortly afterward, Spurgeon collapsed and was taken to the French Riviera in hopes of a recovery. There he died on January 31, 1892, in the Hotel Beau Rivage. When his body was returned to London to lie in state at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, sixty thousand people filed past the olive-wood coffin. At his funeral, the vast congregation stood and opened the service by singing "The Sands of Time Are Sinking."

Teach us to number our days that we may present to you a heart of wisdom.

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