



Topic: Redeeming the Time (Are You Using Your Most Valuable Asset Wisely?)

*See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,
Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.
~Ephesians 5:15-16 (KJV)~*

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INTRODUCTION

It can be often heard said by some how fast time seems to be passing by. It seems as though we have just entered a new year when we are about to celebrate the closing of that year and the beginning of yet another new year. Time...all of us are given a space of time in this life to live out of that time in the best possible way. The book shelves are lined with self-help books and guides to teach us how to manage time. The truth is...we don't really management time, we manage our use of time. Once spent, time can never be replaced; it can never be restored; it can never be made up. When time has past it is just that...time past.

Whether one realizes it or not, we were given the space in time we have as a gift from God. In bestowing upon us this gift, we have the responsibility of being good stewards over this awesome gift of time. Time is a strange commodity; we can't save it, we can't retrieve it, we can't relive it, we can't stretch it, we can't borrow it, we can't loan it, we can't store nor can we stop it. What we can do while we have it is use it wisely. One would regret looking at their spent time only to see how they had neglected or abuse it. The call upon our life is for us to redeem the precious time we have been gifted by God. When the years, months, weeks, days, minutes and seconds of our time is spent, we want to look back and say to ourselves...my time was well spent.

OUR STUDY

Our reference Scripture comes from the apostle Paul's epistle or letter written to the saints in the church of Ephesus. Here in chapter 5, the apostle sets out to encourage the believers in living godly lives with Christ Jesus as their example. Paul opens this chapter with an exhortation to Holy Living. From here, the apostle addresses the duties of the Christian life, the sanctification of the church and the conjugal duties and obligations in marriage. In a nutshell, what we have here in this chapter are instructions on how we are to spend the time of life we have been gifted.

After setting in order the course for Holy Living by those who name the name of Christ; those who embrace Christ as their Savior and Lord, the apostle tells the saints to see that they or be mindful to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, (*cf. Eph 5:15*). Use of the word "walk" in this text implies "living".

The apostle Paul goes on in Ephesians 5:16 to tell the saints to "Redeem the time, because the days are evil". What does this mean? How are we to do this? The words "redeem" and "redeeming" occur in at

least 59 places in the King James Bible, with the overwhelming majority of its use found in the Old Testament. Additionally, in the King James Bible, the English word “time” appears in at least 563 verses. The apostle Paul uses the phrase at least twice in Scripture. The Greek word “*exagorazo*” translated as “redeeming” in our text in Ephesians means to rescue something from loss or redeem it. In the New Living Translation, Ephesians 5:16 reads: “*Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days*”. When we look at this translation along with the meaning in Greek for redeeming, we see that we are instructed to rescue any time we are not making the most out of; we are set out on a course to begin using our time wisely.

People who use their time wisely spend it on activities that advance their overall purpose in life. These are people who plan how they plan to use their time; they don’t simply let time do what it plans to do. When we do this, we risk the chance of wasting precious time that could be spent on fulfilling our purpose; pursuing our dreams; achieving our goals. How often have you said to yourself, I’m going to start doing this and so; how many times have you made the commitment to yourself that you were going to pursue that passion that has been locked up within you; how many times have you said I will do this on tomorrow only to realize that tomorrow never comes? Instead of waiting until tomorrow, let’s start TODAY.

When we are referring to redeeming “time”, we are referring to the Greek word for time...*kairos*. Kairos isn’t about minutes and seconds and wristwatches and sundials. It’s not about the flow of time or a specific measurement of time. Instead, kairos carries with it the idea of the right time—the idea of a pre-determined time or an opportune time. “How much time before we go to dinner?” would not use the word kairos. “Is it time to go to dinner?” would. “How much time before we go to dinner?” is speaking of time in minutes and seconds, whereas “Is it time to go to dinner?” is speaking of a point in time. Furthermore, kairos doesn’t have to be an instant. It could be a short window of time, like *time to take a break*. Or it could be a longer window of time, as in *harvest time*. What are we saying? In a nutshell, redeeming “time” or “kairos” is the time where you better get moving. It is the appointed time, the proper time, the slice of time where you have an opportunity—but that kairos is going to eventually slip away. I shared during one Sunday morning message that I have a family member who as a young/small child had a dream of going into professional sports. This family member was so gifted that as a young child in his early teens, had sporting coaches taking notice of their athletic abilities. It was during this season of their life where the kairos was the opportunity for them to follow their dream and passion. Unfortunately, they failed to redeem the time and now the time has passed. Yes, they may still have dreams of doing big things in their life but the kairos for them realizing their dream of becoming a professional athlete has since passed. The window of opportunity has passed; they will never know the touch of that dream.

Redeeming the time, to exagorazo the kairos, you are purchasing out of slavery the fleeting opportunities that you are presented with. In other words, you “make the most of every opportunity” or “make the most of your time”. Why the word *redeem* Paul? Why didn’t Paul use the word utilize or seize or work when referring to kairos? Why the imagery of purchasing from slavery? The answer to this is found in our text...“*redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*” The fact that the days are evil, Paul says, should lead us to be redeeming the time. When Paul looked around at the world, he saw that he was living, like we are today, in evil times. Impurity, greed, idolatry, and disgusting sins of all types surrounded Paul, and they surround us. So pervasive is the evil of these days that our opportunities to do good (our *kairos*) will slip away and be consumed by darkness unless we act. It’s as if we have to rescue and redeem these opportunities from the clutches of an evil world.

Because the days are evil, the opportunities we have to do good and to bring glory to God are already on auto-pilot on a course to be swallowed up by busyness and our worldly mindsets. Because the days are evil, if we just “go with the flow” of our culture, we will lead wasted lives. Because the days are evil, our

sin nature is the default owner and decision-maker concerning these precious windows of time we have to make a difference on this earth. Because the days are evil, we mustn't; we can't sit by and let our time allotted on this earth to perform our God-ordained assignment go undone. It's high time we start **"Redeeming the Time"**.

4 Ways to Redeem Your God-Given; God-Gifted Time

1. Reflect on the Brevity (Shortness) of Life and the Length of Eternity

Life passes us by at a shockingly rapid pace. With each passing year, this pace seems to pick up speed. One day our children are born; the next day they graduate high school. One day we enter the workforce; the next day we retire.

Psalm 90:12 (KJV)

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

In psalm 90, Moses describes the brevity of life and prays that God might "teach us to number our days carefully so that we may develop wisdom in our hearts". Moses reminds us that life is so short and then we die. I believe one way to number our days is to realize if we don't plan our schedule, somebody else will. This means that we should set our priorities based on what is truly important. The brevity of life in the light of eternity creates an even starker contrast between the two, a contrast upon which we must regularly reflect and meditate.

2. Realize the Uncertainty of Tomorrow

Prudence (the ability to govern and discipline oneself by the use of reason) is a virtue. Presumption is not. We should save, work, plan and prepare for life's contingencies well into the future. At the same time, we cannot assume we will have a future. Consider what the author James has to say about this...

James 4:13-14 (NLT)

- 13. Look here, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we are going to a certain town and will stay there a year. We will do business there and make a profit."*
- 14. How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog—it's here a little while, then it's gone.*
- 15. What you ought to say is, "if the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that."*
- 16. Otherwise you are boasting about your own plans, and all such boasting is evil.*
- 17. Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it.*

James describes our lives as vapors that vanish quickly. We must recognize today that we are not promised tomorrow.

3. Remember, Time Is Your Most Precious Possession.

Time, not money, is your most precious possession. And we often throw away our time in alarming ways: social media, television, and idle chatter. Someone once remarked, "If people threw away their money as thoughtlessly as they throw away their time, we would think them insane. Yet time is infinitely more precious than money because money can't buy time." Remembering how precious a possession of our time is, not just for our own benefit; it is for that of Christ and his kingdom. Our allotment of time is a special gift from him, for us to use in light of our divine stewardship... Yes, how we use our blessing of time reflects or reveals our stewardship unto Christ as citizens of his kingdom.

4. Learn to Say “No”

For some of us, saying the word “no” doesn’t come naturally. While we may be equipped to say “no” over issues of doctrine, conviction, or morality, but we may be much less capable of saying “no” over ore subjective, less consequential issues—especially when asked to do something by someone we know and love, like family, friends or a fellow church member. The results of not saying “no” usually are not disastrous, but they often can bring about a downside—a dilution of our time and resources. The old adage holds true, when you say “yes” to something, you are saying “no” to something else. As such, you will not rightly steward your time until you learn to pronounce the word “no”.

Remember, it truly matters how we use our time, because ultimately, our time is a gospel issue. How are you using your time for the gospel? Are you cultivating your time, maximizing on the time allotted to further Christ’s kingdom? Are you using your time seeking and following God’s divine design for your life? Are you living out your passion consistently devoting your time to becoming the person you were born to be?

While we have briefly shared 4 ways of redeeming time, the best way we can learn to redeem time is by asking God to help us. We should start every morning by committing our day to the Lord and asking Him to help us do something that day that has eternal significance. By beginning our day with eternity in mind, we become more aware of spiritual nudges in our heart. We look for ways we can honor the Lord, help someone else, or utilize our time in productive ways. Bathing in the shower, we can pray for our family; cooking breakfast, we can worship in song; driving to work, we can pray for our neighbors. Going out to dinner, we can leave an extra big tip along with an inspirational message to encourage and uplift our server. We can evaluate our gifts and interests and find ways to invest them for God’s kingdom. Volunteering, serving at church, leading a ministry, studying God’s word to show ourselves “approved unto God” are all ways we can redeem time.

Ephesians 5:15 (KJV)

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.

Before the apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 5:16 to redeem the time, he tells us in Ephesians 5:15 to... **“See then that ye walk circumspectly”**. To be circumspect is to be wary; the word comes from a Latin word literally meaning “look around.” “Walk circumspectly” is Paul’s way of urging Christians to look very carefully at how they live and behave. Remember, we are living in evil, difficult times. Our fallen world is filled with dangers, deceptions, and temptation. If we aren’t cautious and attentive to what is happening around us and in us, we can easily be blindsided and fall headlong into any number of dangerous traps.

In the original Greek, the phrase translated as “walk circumspectly” means “to not only watch or look carefully at how we live, it also means to be vigilant and mindful of our behavior, to be on the lookout of any behavior trying to lure us into a place of waste of time; a place of evil intent if engaged in. The apostle Peter delivers a similar word about staying alert or being watchful.

1 Peter 5:8 (NLT)

Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.

With deliberate, vigilant determination, we must live rooted in God’s wisdom if we are to walk circumspectly. If we are to walk circumspectly, we must discern the will of God. How do we gain the wisdom to know God’s will? We start by asking for it as James encourages us to.

James 1:5 (NLT)

If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.

God is just waiting for His children to ask Him for the wisdom to know His will for their lives. He is standing with wisdom ready to be poured upon us the moment we seek Him for it.

Another sure way to gain wisdom is through reading God's Holy Word. The apostle Paul told Timothy ***“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work”*** (c.f., 2 Timothy 3:16-17). As we meditate on Scripture and diligently study God's Holy Word, it becomes a guiding, illuminating force to direct our footsteps.

So, in nutshell, living circumspectly cannot be done through our own knowledge nor through our own strength. Living circumspectly takes us, first submitting ourselves to God; second, seeking God's direction; and third, following God's instructions.

CONCLUSION

As we bring our lesson to a close, may I encourage you to, every now and again, pause in time for a moment of reflection of your time spent. What have you done with your time? Just think; you don't need to tell anyone, just think about it. You've heard now just how precious the time God has given you is. Remember, God created you; God gave you the blessing of life. Reflection...How have you live up to this point? You've already had a great deal of time that was given to you, what have you done with it? Have you spent it wisely or foolishly or have you wasted hours and days and months even years? If you look back and search your memory, do you find that in a large measure, you've wasted your time or used it well? Think of how much can be done in a day in which you gave absolutely everything to Jesus. Think of what that day would look like. You gave yourself fully, energetically, mentally, and physically, everything you had for Christ that day. That's how much you can do in one day. How many of your days have been like that? And what have you done with all the time you spend in spiritual pursuits? How many sermons have you heard? How many books have you read? How many things has God poured into your soul of the word of God; how much insight has He given you? As we seek to redeem the time by walking circumspectly, we will receive the fullness of all God has for us to experience during the time He has granted unto us. My brother and my sister, when it's all said and done; when this life is over, we will look back over our life and say...Lord, thank you for teaching me how to make the most of the lifetime I was blessed to live.

God's peace and blessing be upon you...

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