

A BRIEF CONSIDERATION OF TIME

Introduction

With the passing of an old year and the arrival of a New Year, perhaps we are more conscious of the passing of time than at any other time.

On the one hand, we take time for granted because the fact is, we can't live outside of time. On the other hand, we are constantly thinking about time in terms of our schedules, our age, past and future events, etc.

For example, I'm very aware of what time it is right now; how much time I have to speak to you, and what time we all expect our services to end. And we feel somewhat bound by that time.

We can't stop time, reverse time, or save up time. But we can waste time, even "kill" time.

You cannot kill time without injuring eternity.

Henry David Thoreau

Time is what we want most, but what we use worst.

William Penn

Time = life; therefore, waste your time and waste your life, or master your time and master your life.

Alan Lakein

Lost wealth may be replaced by industry, lost knowledge by study, lost health by temperance or medicine, but lost time is gone forever.

Samuel Smiles

The key is in not spending time, but in investing it.

Stephen R. Covey

It's not enough to be busy, so are the ants. The question is, what are we busy about?

Henry David Thoreau

Take care of the minutes and the hours will take care of themselves. Lord Chesterfield

The bad news is time flies. The good news is you're the pilot. Michael Altshuler

And at the end of our time, we will have to give an account of how we used our time.

A good use of our time this morning is to consider what the Bible has to say about time. We don't have enough time to consider everything the Bible has to say, but we can consider at least three things. First . . .

1. Our Times Are In God's Hands

That's what the psalmist said in Psalm 31:15, *My times are in your hands . . .*

The implications of this are that God is the One who determines our beginning and our end, and He is the One who sustains us every minute in between.

Jesus said we can't add one minute to our lives through worrying about them.

I remember once ministering to someone whose loved one had died. Adding to their grief was a sense of guilt that they hadn't done enough to care for their loved one. They felt that if they had done more their loved one could have lived a little longer.

I was confident that they had done everything they could do—not only because I knew how hard they had worked, but because others had told them the same thing.

So what I told them was this: God is the one who determines when we are born, and He is the One who determines when we die. And nothing we can do—or not do—will thwart God's timing.

Now you might argue, but what about the crimes of murder, abortion, gross negligence, etc., don't these somehow interrupt God's "timing?"

The problem with this question is that we see death as a tragic end of one's time in this world, whereas to God it is a release from the constraints of time and the beginning of eternity.

The fact is, we were made for eternity! Indeed, that's why we feel the way we do about death; it's "unnatural!" And that's why we feel a sense of desperation about time. Because we were made for eternity, we're frustrated and fearful that we won't have enough time to be able to do all we want to do.

But Jesus Christ has provided for eternal life. As we look to Him and trust in Him, we realize the eternal life.

Two sisters were grieving over the death of their brother, Lazarus. The one sister, Martha, 21 . . . *said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."* 23 *Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."* 24 *Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."*

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; 26 and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (Jn. 11:21-26)

When we trust in Jesus Christ to be our Lord and Savior, our eternal life begins immediately!

And yet, such a view of our time in this world is no excuse for not using our time in this life wisely. And so the Bible says we're to *redeem* the time.

2. Redeeming Our Time

That's what Paul said in Ephesians 5:16, **[Redeem] the time, because the days are evil.** Another translation words it this way: **[make] the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.**

To *redeem* something is to buy something, or to exchange money or something of equal value for the thing redeemed. How can we *redeem time*, or what can we give in exchange for it? What is as valuable as time?

We all know we can't take anything of this world with us; not our possession or our accomplishments.

Jesus told an interesting parable which, if not properly understood, could even be a little misleading. But it helps us understand one way of *redeeming* out time.

1 Jesus told his disciples: "There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. 2 So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.' 3 "The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg-- 4 I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.' 5 "So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' 6 "'Eight hundred gallons of olive oil,' he replied. "The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred.' 7 "Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you owe?' "'A thousand bushels of wheat,' he replied. "He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eight hundred.' 8 "The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. 9 I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. 10 "Whoever can be trusted with very

little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. 11 So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? 12 And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? 13 "No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money." (Luke 16:1-13)

Everything God has given us—including especially our time—has been entrusted to us to be used wisely. And the way we use them will determine our eternity.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 says, ***There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven.*** But there are a few things the Bible says we're to do at all times.

3. Trusting God at all times

For example, Psalm 62:8 says, ***Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge. Selah***

In our study of the book of Exodus on Wednesday night, we saw in chapter 15 two contrasting responses of the Israelites to God. After God miraculously parted the Red Sea allowing the Israelites to escape and then destroying the pursuing Egyptian army in the same waters, the Israelites responded with a song of praise and faith.

But when they were desperate for water after traveling three days in the desert and when they finally came to some water, which was undrinkable, they grumbled and complained to Moses—rather than trusting God to provide for them as they had seen Him miraculously do several times before.

The point we made in our study on Wednesday was that we often do the same thing! We experience God's salvation, His healing and provision many times. But often when we come up against a trial or challenge, we grumble and complain, worry and fret.

And just as nothing the Israelites faced was as huge as the miracle of parting the Red Sea, nothing we face is as huge as God's salvation. And if God has provided for such a great need as salvation, how can we doubt that He will provide for anything else!?

The Bible says we're to ***trust God at all times***—when we face a seemingly unbeatable problem, an uncrossable challenge, or an intolerable circumstance.

Something else we're to do all the time is . . .

4. Pray all the time

That what Paul said to do in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 (*The Message*).

Here we must understand prayer to be more than closing our eyes, folding our hands, and speaking words to God. I like the expression *practicing the presence of God* as the way of understanding prayer here. Being aware that He is present, He is in control, and He is working out His purpose.

Our objective is to be alert to His presence and submitted to His control and purpose.

And when we are, we will see His hand in everything, and we will respond as the psalmist, ***I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.*** (Psalm 34:1)

Conclusion

We worry about so many things: money, health, relationships, politics, the economy, etc. But the thing that links everything together is time. And while we can't control time, we can manage it; we can be good—or bad—stewards of time. The adage “timing is everything” is so true.

So let's remember:

- Our times are in God's hands, and yet . . .
- We must manage our time as good stewards, because the way we use time determines our eternity.

And one of the best ways to use our time now is to . . .

- Trust God all the time—no matter what. And we can . . .
- Pray all the time, i.e. practice the presence of God all the time, everywhere.

And we can do that with confidence knowing that He has promised to be with us all the time, even to the end of time!