

Redeeming The Time

Harmony M.B.C., December 29, 2007 (Morning)

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Eph 5:16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Col 4:5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

Redeeming: We usually remember that redeem means to buy back, but this Greek word also carries the idea of “To rescue from loss; to improve opportunity”

Everybody is in a rush nowadays. There’s not enough time for anything. Because we feel that way, quality of what we do has, in a lot of areas, degraded. We have faster automobiles, faster planes, faster communications, more streamlined processes for doing business, shorter delivery times on goods and services, yet we always seem to be in a hurry.

This lifestyle bleeds over into our spiritual lives. As a result there is always a danger that our interactions with God will be cheapened and degraded. We need to avoid that. This is what our text verses are about. The biblical admonitions in these verses warn us to make good use of our time and to make it obvious that we are doing so.

I want us to focus on 3 areas of redeeming the time that are the most worthwhile for believers. We may waste some time in earthly pursuits, but it is wise for us to truly seek how we may rescue our time from loss in the matter of spiritual things.

I believe that there is a potential danger that if our use of time in spiritual pursuits deteriorates, so will our spiritual productivity and well being. So, let’s look at some things where redeeming the time, or rescuing our time from loss, or improving opportunity is critically important and may the Holy Spirit really give us personal insight as we think on these things.

I. Redeeming the Time In Worship

■ Public Worship

- > By making it more than a rote set of processes to get through
- > Jesus was teaching his disciples how to pray in Mat 6:7 : in his teaching He admonished them about how they were NOT to pray. In that warning, He strikes on an essential principle related to all worship when He said, “But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*:...”
 - Have you ever noticed how **mechanical and robotic** certain production work is in factories, and how people who have done a certain task for years do it **without even having to think**...sometimes **without even having to look** at what they are doing? This is what our worship can begin to be like when we fail to give life to it and make efforts to avoid falling into a repetitious rut.
- > **By making it a dedicated time in which nothing else is pursued**
 - Sometimes when I am at work, I will be typing something on the computer and

- talking to somebody on the phone at the same time. I am multi-tasking...but there's something about multi-tasking that some people don't know...that is, when you do it one or more of the tasks you are doing gets only a small portion of your attention...your brain prioritizes without you really thinking too much about it... as a result you might listen to the person on the phone with half of your attention or less while you focus on getting those correct words typed in that e-mail message or something. When we multitask during worship, we do the same thing!
- Our law enforcement agencies tell us that lately, text messaging on cell phones by people while driving has become epidemic. Do you know why law enforcement knows this? Because a multitude of those people are crashing their cars because they are not focused on driving. When we worship while multitasking it's is like that...our focus and enjoyment of God and the resultant blessings we can get crash and burn!
 - So we need to dedicate all of the set time to worship only, and consecrate our thoughts and hearts to it
- > **By being faithful to every possible service our church conducts**
- We have things to do. We are busy people. We are also people who want to seize on opportunity. So, we sometimes get the notion that it is alright to skip out on church when there is something to be done that just will not wait, or that only offers itself this one time. I believe God deserves more than that. Here are some things that we should never put before attending church:
 - Some sporting event
 - Some recreational activity
 - Some piece of business
 - Some request or invitation from friends or family that is not urgent
- > The truth is, the proverbial ox in the ditch that has provided so many opportunities for people to miss church has been misidentified as an ox when it was not! The ox has become a ball game, a special event somewhere, a sniffle, a trivial bit of business, and a hundred other metamorphosed oxen.
- > I would like to remind us all that we don't have a record of an ox dying while in a ditch for a couple of hours while we go to church!
- The bible says in Heb 10:25 “ Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, **as the manner** of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” “As the manner of some is” says the scripture. This Greek term implies that those who forsook the assembling got “used” to doing so. I wonder how they “got used” to skipping church?
 - When I started driving to Nashville to work, it seemed to me like a really major operation which really required some adjustments. I had to make a conscious effort to prepare for it, to get in that car, and to sit in there during that long trip both to the office and back again. Nowadays, I have driven back and forth to Nashville so much that I **got used to it! I did it enough that it became pretty simple and routine. I got used to it. It became relatively easy to do it after a while! I go used to it!**
 - Habits all start with doing it once! After doing such things a while and getting

used to it, they become routine...they become the norm...they become the pattern of our behavior...all from getting used to doing it!

■ **(Rescuing our time of public worship of Christ from loss) By seeking ways to add something to the worship as part of the group**

- > When was the last time each of you thought about how others in your church benefitted from you being here, your attitude of worship, and what you brought to the worship service in the way of spiritual benefits?
- > Many times we just show up
 - I had a coupla guys who worked for me in roofing back in the 80s who sometimes showed up for work without any tools or without any lunch and no way to buy any. When they showed up without proper tools they were of no use to me at all until some was gotten for them. When they showed up without any lunch, somebody had to loan them money for lunch or buy it for them so they could be productive through the rest of the day. In both cases, those guys were a liability to the productivity that day.

> **(Rescuing our time of public worship of Christ from loss) By invoking the Holy Spirit's help in performing it**

- There are a lot of things in public worship to distract worshippers. Some people are distracted by just being in a group of people and they need the Holy Spirit's special blessing to be able to focus on worship in a crowd.
- Some people bring their worries with them and gnaw on them through the whole worship time...they need the Holy Spirit's calming and comforting influence to allow them to lay aside such things and focus.
- Back when I was a kid, my dad used to plough with a big chestnut horse we called Doc. (Story of the blinders on the side of the bridle that kept Doc from being distracted by things that came into his peripheral vision. The Holy Spirit can act like those blinders to keep our spiritual eyes focused ahead so that we don't get distracted by what goes on to the right or to the left).
- We all have something that can be a distraction...so we all can rescue our public worship time from loss by seeking the Holy Spirit's help to settle us on the great experience to be had in such a time.

> **Rescuing our time of Private Worship from loss; Improving Opportunity**

- What does private worship consist of? Reading scripture, praying, thinking on God; private praise to the Lord
- How to redeem the time doing it: The acts themselves are spiritual fruit. This by itself is redeeming the time we live here on earth. But there are specific considerations about how to improve opportunity:
 - **(Rescuing our time of private worship of Christ from loss) By properly assessing the duty of it**
 - **(Rescuing our time of private worship of Christ from loss) By properly appreciating the privilege of it**

- (Rescuing our time of private worship of Christ from loss) By maximizing the time spent doing it
- (Rescuing our time of private worship of Christ from loss) By invoking the Holy Spirit's help in performing it and in focusing on it

II. Redeeming the Time In Service (time exclusively set aside to pursue some work for Christ)

- **By Doing It** (a lot of folks do not contemplate nor participate in outside service to the Lord)
 - > How long has it been since you witnessed to someone about Christ
 - > How long has it been since you have done something for one of the brethren
 - In Mat. 25 Jesus was teaching His disciples a lesson about good works...about service. In that lesson He made a very significant statement about the facts surrounding such service. He gives them a future vision of the judgment of men's works when He returns to earth to reveal Himself as King and in it He had told them in vv. That they had seen Him naked and clothed Him, seen Him sick and in prison and they had helped Him, seen Him hungry and given Him food and so on. They answered Him and said, "when have we done that to You?" And He answered them this way: "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me."
 - What is He saying? We have a serious question to ask ourselves: What have we done for our brothers and sisters in Christ?
 - > (Rescuing our time of service to Christ from loss) By praying over the effort of it and the outcome of it
 - We need real spiritual strength to do real work for Christ, whatever it is
 - We need spiritual wisdom to exert energy in the right direction
 - We need divine intervention for anything to come of our efforts
 - We can only get those things from the Lord
 - Jesus gave us two companion axioms in His teaching which fit our situation so well.
 - John 15:5 "...Without me ye can do nothing."
 - Mat. 7:7 "Ask and it shall be given you..."
 - Psa 127:1 "Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh *but* in vain."
 - Prayer over our efforts at service and prayer for fruit to come forth is never out of order, nor ever wasted. This includes praying for all those others who do it. In approaching God to get our strength, our will, our zeal, our energy, our successes, we can see results.
 - Isaiah seized this concept when he wrote in Is. 64:4 "For since the beginning of the world *men* have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, *what* he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him."
 - > (Rescuing our time of service to Christ from loss and improving an opportunity) By keeping an eye out for the opportunity to do service
 - For those of you who have ever shot clay pigeons, you know that there is a very brief window of opportunity to draw on and knock them out of the air after they leave the

trap. If you don't take advantage of those few seconds just after the clay gets in the air, it is soon too far away to make a shot...so timing is everything. In the same way, improving the opportunity to serve the Lord out there in the world means being observant and sensitive to that opportunity. "Strike while the iron is hot" became an adage in America that people use to emphasize taking advantage of a situation. The cowboy does not make a brand on the cow unless he "strikes" that brand with a hot iron. Just so, we have to be on the alert for an opportunity to do service for our Lord, or it will not happen.

- > **(Rescuing our time of service to Christ from loss) By preparing yourself for it through proper study and prayer**
- > **(Rescuing our time of service to Christ from loss) By targeting specific people for prayer when your outside service has given you opportunity to affect them**

III. Redeeming the Time In Secular Pursuits (How to make time count for the Lord in your everyday world of business and other things)

■ By Looking At This Kind of Activity in the Right Light

- > A question: What are we doing out there in the world? What does our work, our hobbies, our pastimes, our leisure mean? What should it mean?
- > Without doubt, all of our life belongs to the Lord. So, all that we do should be appropriate to dedicate to the Lord. Paul wrote to us about the "then" and "now" of our lives and our activities and what he had to say speaks directly to this thought:
 - Eph 2:1-3 And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins 2 Wherein in **time past ye walked according to the course of this world**, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our **conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind**; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.
- > We should be conducting these pursuits just like they are being done for God **By Consecrating Those Pursuits to Him**

■ Redeeming the Time By Considering The Act and Outcome of Any Such Pursuits and Choosing or Rejecting Them Based on Your Personal Examination

- > Lately, I have gotten to the place that I can't see things clearly in dim light. When I am looking at some print, the Ts look like Is, the Rs look like Bs, etc. So, my judgment about what a sentence is saying is sometimes clouded by lack of light. But let me take the writing into bright light and I can see plainly what it says. We need to subject our activities...every type of activity...to the light of God's holiness and be ready to reject any activity when we see clearly that it says the wrong thing about our lives; we need to prove activities by the rule of God's holiness.

■ By Thanking and Praising Him For Successful Outcomes

■ By Praying to Him About Negative Aspects of Your Situation

- > We face a lot of negatives out there in the world every day. They have a knack for knocking us off track and costing us time. But what if we prayed to the Lord about those negatives when they occurred. What would we really be doing with that time that is normally lost by us doing too much thinking about or dealing with those negatives? That time would be rescued from loss through the simple act of praying because the bible tells us that EVERYTHING is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer.

IV. Conclusion

- The apostle Paul once wrote, “For to me to live is Christ...” (Phil. 1:21) - have you ever thought about the extent of that statement? He didn’t say, “for to me to preach is Christ...”, or “for to me to pray, or to heal, or to baptize, or to evangelize is Christ,” (which are all true)...but he said, “for **to me** to **live** is Christ...” Isn’t there a message in that for us about our own living? Two things:
 - > To me: shows an attitude about what he is living for (attitude can be everything)
 - Big question: What does your life mean to you?
 - > To live is Christ:
 - people can’t say that if there is no Christ showing forth in their lives
 - It will not matter what other people think of you if YOU feel that your continuing in this life is a presentation of Christ to the world. Paul was hated by many, loved by some, ignored by others...but...the important thing is that he looked at his life as Christ being upon earth.
 - Jesus said something very profound in His prayer to God in John 17:23 “I in them and Thou in me...” This statement allows us to have a deep insight into the relationship between us and Christ. This is the true state of things and this (I believe) is what Paul understood when he said that to him to live was Christ.
 - Paul confirms this idea and expands it to include the fact that Christ in us is the “riches of the glory” of the mystery of God’s redeeming grace.