

“IS TIME ON YOUR SIDE?”

TIME AND WISDOM

EPHESIANS 5:15-17

REV. CHARLES R. BIGGS

There was a popular song in the 60s that boasted: “Time is on my side- -yes, it is!” (We should ask the aging singer now if this is still true).

We are given a certain number of days to accomplish God’s will. In our passage from Ephesians 5, the Apostle Paul soberly reminds us to be carefully walking wise by making the most opportunity of the time we have been given. How do we do this? What should be our motivation?

In our culture, how easy it is for us to waste time, yet we are called as the dearly loved children of God to walk wisely making sure to use your time wisely.

We live in a time where time is greatly wasted. Perhaps technology and our ability to be “everywhere” in so many places at once- -mobile networks, handheld devices, iPads, iPods, iPhones, “i-need another one!” etc.

Our ear buds throb with the latest music; our ear buds are connected to the latest device.

We live in a world where time is not measured by age as much as by the next edition, the next operating system, the next generation of network, or iPod, or Play station, or whatever.

We await the “next, best thing!” The “next version”- -we long to be “upgraded” “rebooted” and “reconfigured”- -but time is ticking...

Not THE END as our goal- -but the “next best thing”.

We await the next model, next generation of iPod, next mp3 download, next television show, next computer, next movie release, next...

How can we be content? Hard to say (and that is another sermon!).

- How often do you think about the time that you have been given by God to accomplish your work for him?
- How does modern technology (technologies) created “technopolies” over you time?
- How specifically does your use of technology (technologies) rob you of your time?

- List your five greatest “time robbers” (those things that you do, then you think: “Wow! My time really got away from me...Did I accomplish anything?” Sometimes I say: “Now there goes 2 hours I’ll never get back after watching a terrible film!” When do you tend to say it?).
- How do you determine the difference between what is biblically important and what is merely urgent in your life? (What?! You’ve never asked this question?? Perhaps that’s why you’re exhausted and not resting in Jesus (Matt. 11:25-29).
- Paul says in Ephesians 5:15-17 that “the days are evil”- -what does he mean by this?
- Do you seek to keep the Lord’s Day as a holy day for you to rest and set the rhythm of your time for the week to follow? Not in a legalistic way, but do you seek to use the time set apart by God himself on the Lord’s Day to set your time by His? How could you improve in this?
- What do you need to UNPLUG in order to be wiser about your time?
- What if you had only one day left to live, how would you use your time? What if you had only one week left to live, how would you use your time? What makes you believe that you do have more time than this?
- Jesus has come to redeem his people; how does Jesus’ redemption also teach us to live redeeming the time?

My heart has been full on this subject for the last few weeks (perhaps this is partially because I’m working on a series on death and the afterlife for Sunday school?!).

Not sure, but I have been pondering my time since I turned 40, and since I have been to more funerals in the last few years than ever in my whole life!

There is a great need to understand the rhythms of life- -and our time:

People live longer...not as worried about “the day”.

When we’re young, we are not taught to think about it; rather, we are taught to use euphemistic language and not “dwell on it too much”!

“Too morbid” some say.

But our time is short.

We don’t have a lot of time.

We don’t think enough about our time.

We need to think about the use of our time.

We are **commanded** to be good stewards of our time (Re-read Ephesians 5:15-17).

But how can we rightly use wisdom about using our time wisely and in a godly manner as Christians?

This too, is part of getting discernment, and shining our lights before the dying world that is passing away (Ephesians 5:7-14).

Seeking to understand how we spend our time is getting wisdom:

ESV Ephesians 5:15 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise...

How are we to “walk”? Ephesians 4:1: “Walk in a manner worthy of the calling you have received...”

This is to walk wisely with regard to our time in this world.

We are to do this “carefully” (5:15): Peter O’ Brien writes: “The adverb rendered ‘carefully’ signifies something done accurately, precisely, or after close attention has been given.” (O Brien, *PNTC, Letter to the Ephesians*, 380).

If we do not concern ourselves with our time, then we are fools.

From Screwtape to Wormwood: “In modern Christian writings, though I see much (indeed more than I like) about Mammon, I see few of the old warnings about Worldly Vanities, the Choice of Friends, **and the Value of Time. All that, your patient would probably classify as ‘Puritanism’**—and may I remark in passing that the value we have given to that word is one of the really solid triumphs of the last hundred years?” (*Screwtape Letters*, pgs. 50-51).

Do you understand this? Fools do not think about their use of time; fools waste their time.

The wise in Christ seek to use their time wisely.

Richard Baxter wrote: “Time being man’s opportunity for all those works for which he lives, and which his Creator does expect from him, and on which his endless life depends, the redeeming or well improving of it must needs be of most high importance to him; and therefore it is well made by holy Paul the great mark to distinguish the wise from fools” (*Christian Directory*, Part I, Chapter V).

Are you wise or foolish with your time?

God is the Giver and Governor of All Time

What is time?

A gift from our God.

“In the beginning, God...” God created time.

God created man to live his time for the glory of God.

Man was tempted and fell and his time was now cursed:

“The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23) teaches.

Both his life (work and callings and pursuits) and his death (fear) were cursed.

When we speak of time we mean not only the moment-by-moment daily time; but there are also seasons in our life; times when we are called to serve in a special way: children, parents, labor, widow, widower, etc.

All of our time must be redeemed; we must make the best and wisest use of it.

ESV **Luke 1:74** ...that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, **might serve him without fear,** ⁷⁵ **in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.**

The purpose of our redemption of “being delivered from the hand of our enemies” is so that we “might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.”

God is Sovereign over our time:

ESV **Psalm 31:15** My times are in your hand...

God knows us intimately as His people- -God has given us a destiny- -and is sovereign over this time that he has given to us (a beautiful and familiar Psalm, 139:1-4, 13-16, 23-24):

O LORD, you have searched me and known me! ² You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. ³ You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. ⁴ Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether....

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. ¹ Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. ¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them.

The Psalmist in light of God’s goodness and sovereignty wanted to be **searched**; he wanted **to have God’s light shine in his heart so that he would grow wise under the teaching and discipline of God and His Holy Word:**

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!^{1 24} And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

The Psalmist wanted to be wise.

There are a certain number of days that God has granted to each of us:

^{ESV} Ecclesiastes 9:12 For man does not know his time. Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them.

A reminder of our short lives: Psalm 90:12

^{ESV} Psalm 90:5-6, 9-12: You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning: ⁶ in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.... For all our days pass away under your wrath; we bring our years to an end like a sigh. ¹⁰ The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away. ¹¹ Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of you? ¹² So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.

168 days?

5,475 days? (15 years old?)

9, 125 days? (25 years old?)

14,600 days? (40 years old?)

21,900 days? (60 years old?)

25,550 days? (70 years old?)

Or more...?

That's not really much when you think about it! Even at 70 years, you only have 70 birthdays (65 you can remember, the first two and the last two are blurred! ☺).

70 trips around the sun; 70 New Year's Eve celebrations (maybe 60 you remember because of age, and too much champagne! ☺)

You would hate and regret losing \$5,000 or \$25,000 perishable dollars to a robber in a mask. Why then do we allow 5,000 or 25,000 precious imperishable days to be so easily robbed without the slightest hate or regret?!

Do you think we might have been duped?

Have we been played as the fool?

Baxter says (paraphrased) that we see few mad-men and monsters run out of their minds and wits through the streets- -men would wonder at this and it would cause such a stir from the crowd.

Yet there are mad-men and monsters who waste their time every day! Yet no one gathers around in wonder and astonishment- -because no one notices.

No one says: “Come and see a mad man and monster that has but a few days to live and sports away his time as he is heading for eternity...Come and see a mad man and monster that has but a few days to win or lose his own precious soul forever and he is playing his time away at cards or dice, or wasting it and doing nothing!”

No one notices this mad man and monster running amok in the streets.

Because he is too much like us all.

God is the Giver and Governor of All Time- -in Jesus Christ, God entered time as a man to redeem us and reconcile us to Himself so that our time would be redeemed!

However long you are here; you have a purpose, a “redeemed purpose”.

God has redeemed you as Christians through the precious blood of Jesus Christ; that means that Jesus has redeemed your time.

Live in light of this redemption as wise people in Christ!

We are to live in light of our redemption as children of God, but doing what pleases God which is the reason for our redemption.

As our LORD said as he was leaving this world; may we be able to reflect in a similar and prayerful way before God:

ESV John 17:4-5: I glorified you on earth, **having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.**⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

ESV 2 Timothy 4:6-8: For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. **I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.**⁷ Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

Let us remember concerning our redeemed purpose:

- To consider each moment precious as a gift from God.
- To seek to make our calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:9-11); to seek to become more and more like Christ each day.
- To consider on how by God's grace to do our best, and the greatest good we can with our gifts and abilities, knowing the time is short:

ESV Galatians 6:10 So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

- To prayerfully watch for special opportunities and/or seasons that God has granted to us:
 - Example: cook out and fun on Memorial Day with the Clifford Family: Pastor Dan said- "One day they'll all be older; what a great moment this is!" I said: "One day, we'll be older saying: 'I wish they'd come around and see us more often...wonder what they're doing today?'," etc.
 - Cherish the time you have with aging parents; cherish the time you have left with aging spouses; cherish the time you have with all of your loved ones- **-you don't know when they will be called home.**
 - Perhaps NOW is your special time for something...what is it?
 - To consider how to stir up others to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24).
- Richard Baxter advised in his *Christian Directory* counseling manual: "That we part with all that we should part with, to save our time." He means what we would mean by UNPLUG! (More on this...)

God is to be served using our time wisely, but we can so easily waste time!

How do we waste time? What are our "time robbers"?

ESV Psalm 89:47 Remember how short my time is! For what vanity you have created all the children of man!

A film called "Time Bandits" to BIG Time Time-Robbers!

The Notorious BIG Time-Robbers of History

- Sloth and idleness
- Excess of sleep
- Inordinate adorning the body with clothes and health
- Possessions and entertainment
- Needless parties and feasting and gluttony
- Idle talk; “chatting”
- Bad company; “vain and sinful company”
- Excessive worry about earthly cares and business
- Ungoverned sinful thought-life

• ***The “Master-Robber”: An unsanctified, ungodly heart!***

Why is this **THE** master? The BIG ROBBER?!

We must remember that wasting time, acting foolishly in relation to our time reveals deeper problems of our heart.

Remember that behavior is merely the fruit; the heart is the actual root.

Too busy to pray; too busy to take time away to rest; too busy to meditate on the LORD?

Something deeper is wrong.

What you’re spending your time doing may be idolatrous –and probably is- -you are most likely doing it more for yourself than for others.

If you find yourself filled with anger, bitterness, envy, and self-pity- -these are the works of the flesh- -not results or fruits of time well-spent.

Wasted time will produce the works of the flesh; we are seeking and never finding what we’re truly looking for and need in Jesus alone.

As Richard Baxter in his *Christian Directory* wisely warned parents (and all in positions of authority): “Time must be redeemed from smaller duties, which in their season must be done, as being no duties, when they hinder greater duty which should then take place.

It is a duty in its time and place to show respect to neighbors and superiors, and to those about us, and to look to our family affairs; but not when we should be at prayer, to God, or when a minister should be preaching, or at his necessary studies! Private prayer and meditation, and visiting the sick, are duties; but not when we should be at worship, or about any greater duty which they hinder” (Part 1, Chapter V).

In other words, if we are not making time to worship God; to seek him in prayer and meditation each day; or whatever spiritual duty we must have, because we are busy and overly scheduled in other activities, then we are wasting time!

Your busy-ness- -your exhaustion is not from Christ! Christ promises rest for the weary; he encourages you to come to him and he will give you rest.

I have heard a wise man tell me, and I will try not to forget it:

“God could not and would not give you more in a day than you could do; if you do have more than you can do, then God could not nor would not have given to you.”

Others may have given it to you; you may have given it to you; but God has not given it to you.

In Jesus we find rest from all the other things we so desperately and foolishly pursue.

Like Martha, there is one thing that is needed or truly necessary for you to do.

ESV Luke 10:40-41: But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." ⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things...

Prayerfully ask each day: “What is the one thing needed, O Father? Grant me the wisdom to discern things that I don’t really have to accomplish; help me to serve you wholeheartedly in all I do while resting in Jesus Christ.”

Lest you be driven by something or some desire that is greater than your desire and love for God.

God will grant you wisdom to know the difference between what he has given to you and what you and others have given to you that will overwhelm and exhaust you (James 1:5ff).

Sluggishness and sin are the two great time robbers!

Those who waste time are described in the Proverbs as not only fools, but also “sluggards”:

ESV Proverbs 6:6 Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise.

ESV Proverbs 6:9 How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep?

ESV Proverbs 26:14 As a door turns on its hinges, so does a sluggard on his bed.

ESV Romans 13:11-14: Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

- Sleep-walking in the light (cf. Ephesians 5:14: “Arise, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”).
 - Taking for granted the light of the word; the privileges of worship, etc.
- Drunkenness with the world and self, even though the world is passing away as part of time:
 - Lust of the flesh
 - Lust of the eyes
 - Pride in possessions

ESV 1 John 2:15-17: Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world - the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions - is not from the Father but is from the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

- Not recognizing the need of the lost:

Illustration: Babies in front of cement trucks constantly being pulverized; we would yell, we would run, we would be constantly warning!

Every time someone dies, they face eternity in hell or heaven.

We use euphemisms such as “they passed” or “they’re in a better place” etc. But they are either in heaven’s bliss through faith in Jesus, or they are in hell’s hot furnace and everlasting torment, realizing that they are in huge and agonizing trouble!

Baxter again: “Our most wise, omnipotent Creator has been pleased to make this present life to be the trying preparation for another, resolving that it shall go with us all forever, according to our preparations here: and can we play and loiter away our time, that have such a work as this to do?”

O miserable, senseless souls! Do you believe indeed the life everlasting, and that all your lives are given you now, to resolve the question whether you must be in heaven or hell forever? Do you believe this?"

- Not recognizing that every chime of the bell- -every hour that is updated with NPR news; every "top of the hour"- -tick, tick, ticking away another hour, another moment of our time here.

Modern Time Robbers:

Biggest time wasters according to website 'Productivity 501':

Surfing the web. Maybe that doesn't count, though, since most folks actually do know they're wasting time. Biggest time waster without knowing it is being chatty. For real. Chattiness is a total time sink!

Top ways to waste time (not necessarily sins, but unwise and can be huge time-wasters): BIG 5 [TV, TEXTING, GAMES, INTERNET, and OVERSLEEPING].

Watching Television; texting; video games; internet; oversleeping; Not having specific plans for a day (organization- "Teachers without daily plans will not teach" is what I was told); procrastination; worry; being busy but not accomplishing anything (no agenda, etc); Not learning from mistakes.

Read more: <http://www.productivity501.com/interview-biggest-time-waster/257/#ixzz0pc3Zmilx>

Sociologist Christian Smith, Sociologist at the University of Notre Dame and director of its Center for the Study of Religion and Society: Two Books- ***Soul-Searching and Souls in Transition: Emerging Adults.***

What is "emerging adulthood?"

In 50s, someone would graduate from HS, marry sweetheart, get a job, settle down, have children, and would live their lives. My father and his generation stayed in his job most of his life. That was the norm of that time period.

Now, there a stretched-out long period of time that includes: exploration, trying different jobs, "finding oneself", maybe going to college, maybe going to graduate school; there is limbo, melodrama, self-obsession, etc that goes with it.

"Emerging adulthood" is a unique way of thinking for our time.

"Emerging adulthood" is about a 10 year period from 18-29 that is unique to our time.

“Young folks today enjoy more options for work, marriage, and location than perhaps any previous generation. They are also one of **the most self-focused, confused, and anxious age groups, led into an "adulthood" that prevents a majority from committing to people and institutions.**” – Christianity Today, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2009/october/21.34.html>

Factors that contribute to this: economic and social factors, as well as underlying assumptions and beliefs of our culture:

“Loss of ideal of maturity or adulthood”

No sense of responsibility; no sense of one’s neighbor, etc.

Most of these folks think that one day that they will settle down and find a maturity (and it always is a conception of “middle-class, mass-consumer, bourgeois lifestyle”).

No duty, but become responsible NOT for others, but for self.

A feel of strong materialism and self-fulfillment of “being happy”- -this is the extent of life- -the goal of life.

Absent (that is in other cultures and times) is cultural custodianship. To be a responsible citizen and person who can contribute using my gifts in society.

Their faith: “Moralistic, therapeutic, Deism”

Many of the teenagers and twenty-somethings answered the questions like they were imprisoned in their own subjective selves.

Their primary engagement with others was through texting, cell phone and Face Book. The teens interviewed were hardly involved in political and social face-to-face personal relationships.

Living the “liquid life” of non-commitment, non-tradition, non-confessional, avoiding putting down roots, and/or committing to one job or person.

Excerpt: "What is God like?" asks the interviewer.

" 'Um. Good. Powerful.' "

" 'Okay, anything else?' "

" 'Tall.' "

Later: " 'What good has God done in your life?' "

" 'I, well, I have a house, parents, I have the internet, I have a phone, I have cable.' "

A reviewer wrote of the book wrote: "This, in a snapshot, is the real American teenager the book depicts. He is neither on fire for God nor a drug addict. She is neither the avid spiritual seeker nor the secret Wiccan portrayed in popular culture. She turns out to be, on the whole, pretty conventional, following whatever religious practices her parents have introduced her to and not thinking too deeply about them. His sense of morality is not really rooted, and so is subject to whim. You shouldn't kill or steal from someone, one of them says, because it will "ruin their day."

Fundamentally, her philosophy is: "Who am I to judge?" or "If that's what they choose, whatever." He is, as the clearly exasperated researchers write, "incredibly inarticulate."

*As one teen who inspires a subchapter and possibly a generational motto declares: "I believe there is a God and stuff." – National Study of Youth and Religion:
<http://www.youthandreligion.org/>*

What is profoundly informative to this generation: confusion, fragmentation, lack of clear directives, procedures, etc.

One of the big problems that had not been taught:

How do I manage my time? How should I think about my time?

What are the traits of religious American teenagers who retain a high faith commitment as emerging adults?

"The most important factor is parents. For better or worse, parents are tremendously important in shaping their children's faith trajectories. That's the story that came out in *Soul Searching*. It's also the story that comes out here.

Another factor is youth **having established devotional lives**—that is, **praying, reading Scripture—during the teenage years**. Those who do so as teenagers are much more likely than those who don't to continue doing so into emerging adulthood. In some cases, **having other adults in a congregation who you have relationships with, and who are supportive and provide modeling**, also matters." -

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2009/october/21.34.html?start=2>

Where are all the adult Christians in emerging adults' lives? Might they be able to positively influence them as they face intense change and instability?

This is one concern of mine. **Teenagers, we argued in *Soul Searching*, are structurally disconnected from the adult world.** We think that emerging adults are also **structurally disconnected from older adults who could be their mentors.** The emerging adult

world is self-enclosed. Older adults tend to be bosses with whom you have limited interaction, or professors with whom you are on performance terms. Even in some of the best churches, if an emerging adult happens to stay for Sunday school, it's very likely to be in a post-college-age group. It's hard for them to meet somebody who is 39 or 62 to get to know them and say, "Here's what I've learned in life."

Again, we are sociologists, not church consultants. But in terms of the implications of our work for churches, **the two key words are engagement and relationships. It can't just be programs or classes or handing them over to the youth pastor.**

Real change happens in relationships, and that takes active engagement. - <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2009/october/21.34.html?start=2>

Yet youth: Children of the covenant hear this! You have a great advantage that others do not have in that you are being taught wisdom and the redemption in Jesus from your very earliest times.

“From youth” we are to learn these things; no wonder the evil one wants to point you to self-service and self-absorption in your youngest years!

*ESV 2 Timothy 2:22 **So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.***

*ESV 2 Timothy 3:15 and **how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.***

*ESV Ecclesiastes 12:1 **Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, "I have no pleasure in them";***

“The days are evil”- -what does the Apostle Paul mean by this?

God wants us to live with an urgency regarding our time; we must make the most use of it by his grace.

How do we “redeem” our time? How do we make the most use of the time?

The Apostle Peter says “The end is at hand”. Same sense here: Live as if it is your last day; it may just be!

*ESV 1 Peter 4:7-11: **The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.** ⁸ Above all, keep loving one another*

earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.⁹ Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies - in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:29-31: This is what I mean, brothers: **the appointed time has grown very short.** From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none,³⁰ and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods,³¹ and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

One translation of “make the most use of the time” (Eph. 5:16): “...Buying up the present opportunity.”

ESV Colossians 4:5 **Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.**

“Buying time”; we speak sometimes with those trying to get some more time; we say: “He or she’s just buying time” (this is the gist here and in Daniel 2:8).

The idea on “buying time” is based on the fact that we know we live on “borrowed time” as we also popularly say.

We use the term “buying time” to say that we would like to have more time to make decisions, respond, etc. (Incidentally, we also use the term “killing time” which means to waste it!).

“Buying time” has to do with using the time that God has given us - and using it wisely.

Wisely using our time is pleasing to the LORD (Eph. 5:10- “...And try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord”).

Let me say it this way: Jesus has bought us time. God’s grace has bought us or given us the time we call our life.

We can use it for Him and others, or we can waste it on ourselves.

“Buying time” means as ESV: “making the best use of time” or taking advantage of the time we have.

But how?

- Know God’s “dream” and goal for your life: Christ-likeness. Don’t waste the time he has graciously given you.
- Know that God has called you to serve him faithfully. Don’t waste the time he has graciously given you.
- Know the brevity of your existence and yet the great legacy you can leave behind.
- Know your end and destination.

*ESV 2 Corinthians 5:6-10: So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁰ **For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.***

*Acts 17:26-31: And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, ²⁷ that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, ²⁸ for "In him we live and move and have our being";¹ as even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring."² ²⁹ Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. ³⁰ The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because **he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.**"*

- We will all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ
- Heaven or hell?
- Know the comfort that will come from being wise about your time, especially in your time of death.
- Leave a legacy of Christ-centered love and service to your family and friends.

Since I was young, I have been haunted by the song “The Cat’s in the Cradle” by Harry Chapin.

It has always made me think about time, but worry about it as well. The song is an important reminder of how we live our lives will most likely be our heritage, our legacy left to our children:

*“My child arrived just the other day.
He came to the world in the usual way.
But there were planes to catch and bills to pay.
He learned to walk while I was away.
He was talking before I knew it, and as he grew
He said, “I’m going to be like you, Dad.
You know I’m going to be like you.”*

*My son turned ten just the other day.
He said, “Thanks for the ball, now come on let’s play.
Can you teach me to throw?” I said, “Not today,
I’ve got a lot to do.” He said, “That’s OK.”
And he walked away and he smiled and he said
“You know I’m going to be like you, Dad,
You know I’m going to be like you.”*

*The final verse says:
I’ve long since retired and my son’s moved away.
I called him up just the other day.
I said, “I’d like to see you, if you don’t mind.”
He said, “I’d love to, Dad, if I could find the time.
You see, my new job’s a hassle and the kids have the flu,
But it’s sure nice talking to you, Dad.
It’s been real nice talking to you.”
And as I hung up the phone it occurred to me,
He’d grown up just like me.
My boy was just like me.*

Did I show my children the importance of their time?

Did I pray for them and others in my congregation and family to know the importance of being wise with their time?

Did I keep show them the importance of wisdom with my time in both work and my rest?

“You know I’m going to be like you, Dad, You know I’m going to be like you.”

God set us a pattern of rhythm in His use of time at creation...

- **Keep the Sabbath Day Holy!**

This serves as the Day God has set apart to teach us the rhythms of our lives.

This day is the LORD's Day the first day of the week because of Christ's resurrection.

The Day beckons us to worship; to reorient our lives around the Gospel; to seek the Kingdom first and all His righteousness.

Consequences for breaking? Yes! Not legalism, but here it is: If God himself rested on this day, why would we think to do otherwise? Why is this the commandment that makes evangelicals functionally believe in only 9 commandments?

We may be too busy because we are not resting as we should; we may be overworked and pressured because we are not resting as we should; we may not be growing in grace if we are not resting as we should; we may not be able to be renewed through worship, Word and Sacrament on the Lord's Day because we have not rested as we should.

Jesus kept the Sabbath day showing that it was for healing and restoration and for seeking God- -but this was the preparation for the rest of the week!

If God kept the Sabbath Day at creation, and God Incarnate kept the Sabbath Day in the fullness of the times, should we not also see this as a sacred, holy and gracious means of reordering our lives and reorienting our time to be at pace with God's work in our lives?

Meditate prayerfully on this.

Sabbath is our day of rest. God rested. We rest.

To do what?

Worship and enjoy God and his creation.

In Isaiah 58, the LORD says that many prayers of the people were not being answered because they broke the Sabbath; God told the people that they were sacrificing before him with busy-ness, but not doing what he said.

He defined Sabbath-breaking as "going about your own pleasure or business" on His holy day.

Let us return to a healthy understanding of this important day.

Redeeming the time; making the best use of the time.

God has taught us the foundational way of using our time wisely: Keep the Sabbath!

God says more about the Sabbath than any other commandment!

Even if you do not believe in the LORD's Day- -you would surely agree that it is wise according to Ephesians 5:15-17 to keep one day out of seven set apart for God and for seeking him to help you rightly redeem the time.

We often come back from holidays or vacations and realize we need rest and reorientation to get back into the rhythm of our "normal life".

God has given us one holiday or holy-day each week whereby we can get the rest and reorientation we need- -a perfect holiday with him! A perfect foretaste of the Heavenly and Eternal Holy Day that awaits all who believe!!!

Don't feel guilty; we all have wasted time!

I could tell you of a young man who didn't finish college the first time; who made a lot of rejections of Jesus before He was regenerated by God's Spirit; who selected and took time to read many bad theological books in his early years; spent untold hours on himself to try and live for himself and a dream of his own making; who was deceived one time by a cult and wasted about a year in it; who had about 5 translations of the scriptures in his home and didn't study and memorize them as he should; who used to collect books so that people would think he smart rather than actually taking time to read them...

...He stands before you as a redeemed man whom God has shown mercy to in Jesus Christ, and whom Christ has taught these things, and will continue to teach them...

...But perhaps I've learned some of these things to share with you today!?

- Prayer and meditation on God's Word: What keeps you from it? What distracts you? UNPLUG to the best of your ability.
- Learn the difference between the needed and the "urgent": Do not become a slave to the urgent (You've heard of the "tyranny of the urgent"?). The urgent is usually a disguised demon who is yelling ☺ in your ear that you "MUST" do this or that (but it is because it means too much to you).
- The Holy Spirit calls you near, to share with you the gifts and grace of God deep within the quietness of your soul.
- We cannot be fully delivered from the busy-ness of our time; but we can be delivered from the awesome tiredness of our souls by resting in Christ!

- I think Paul would tell moderns to UNPLUG: quit your texting; turn off your cell phone and your PC; just sit quietly with bible open before God, allowing the peace that passes all understanding to come to you by God's Spirit.
- We live at the end of all things; let us live like Christ will return today.

Why should we redeem the time?

Because Jesus redeemed us in the fullness of the times, so that we would live for him:

ESV Galatians 4:4-7: But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

"No-Nonsense-ness" of Solomon:

He "had it all" - wisdom and riches and long life- -and it tempted him to be foolish. He realized that all of what we have is but additions to our burden of the brevity of life.

Oh, that we might get to the "No-nonsense" of Solomon and see clearly what truly matters:

ESV Ecclesiastes 12:1, 13-14: Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, "I have no pleasure in them"The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. ¹⁴ For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

Not for our sake, but for the sake of our Lord.

We have been redeemed from this present age to live for Christ.

He has redeemed us by His blood in order that we might make known the coming salvation and judgment of the world.

We are not our own; our time is not our own; time is not on our side; Jesus is!!

Fear of God should motivate us; but what should really motivate us is the love of Jesus Christ!

We should remember that our time is given to us NOT to live for ourselves, but ultimately by love, we are to live for Christ and others.

How can we best please him?

ESV 2 Corinthians 5:14-15: For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵ and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

Richard Baxter wrote: “However it be now, I can tell you, at death, it will be an unspeakable comfort, to look back on a well-spent life; and to be able to say in humble sincerity, My time was not cast away on worldliness, ambition, idleness, or fleshly vanities or pleasures; but spent in the sincere and laborious service of my God, and making my calling and election sure, and doing all the good to men’s souls and bodies that I could do in the world; it was entirely devoted to God and his church, and the good of others and my soul” (Part I. Chapter V).

What if you knew you only had one year to live?

How would you live?

What if you knew you only had one week to live?

How would you live?

What if you knew you only had one day to live?

How would you live?

What if within the next hour you were dead?

How would you live?

How would you live?

The end is at hand...Christ stands ready to receive, forgive; he will return.

He has redeemed you; now go in His grace and redeem the time you have left.

***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 hath been the midnight, but dayspring is at hand,
And glory, glory dwelleth in Immanuel’s land.***

CRB