

Redeeming the Time

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[0 : 01] Well, if we could, for a short while this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read in Paul's letter to the Ephesians and chapter 5. Ephesians chapter 5, and if we consider the words of verse 15 down to the verse Mark 17.

Ephesians 5 and verse 15, where Paul says, Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.

Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. But particularly the words of verse 16, where it says, Make the best use of the time, or redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Well, over the past few weeks, as we've been living in lockdown and coping with COVID-19 and even dealing with distancing, many of us have been unable to go to work or even leave our home, and it's left us with time on our hands.

Which, in many ways, it hasn't been a bad thing, because time is probably one thing we were all struggling to find. Because prior to this crisis, our lives were non-stop.

[1 : 26] They were 24-7. They were just going super fast. And the result was that we were so busy that we didn't have time for anything or even anyone. And, you know, it's so sad, because we were all rushing around.

We were all busying ourselves, filling our lives with everything else. But, you know, whether we want to admit it or not, the Lord has slowed us right down.

And the Lord has given us this opportunity to consider how we've been using our time. Because this God-given period of lockdown, it has given us time.

It's given us time to do things that we maybe didn't do before. Time to spend with our family. Time to eat together. It's given us time to spend with one another.

It's given us time to maybe contact friends that we haven't spoken to in a while. Time to relax. Time to read. Time to rest. But more than that, God has given us this period of time to stop.

[2 : 30] Time to think. Time to take stock. Time to reflect. Time to pray. And even time to consider what the Lord is saying to us.

And, you know, my friend, what the Lord is saying to us is what we've just read in his word this morning. Because the Lord is speaking to us through his word this morning.

And he's reminding us that our most precious commodity in life is time. Our most precious commodity in life is time. And this coronavirus pandemic, it has repeatedly reaffirmed that message to us.

Not only in the fact that our lives have slowed right down. But also in the reality that lives have been lost. Because, you know, while homes and families in our nation, many of them have been reminded of the preciousness of time.

But there are other homes and families that have been reminded of the shortness of time. My friend, at this time in our lives, the Lord is speaking to us. The Lord is speaking to us.

[3 : 38] And he's speaking to us loudly and clearly. But the question is, are we listening? Are we listening to what the Lord is saying? Because this morning, the Lord is reminding us through his servant Paul that we need to be wise with our time.

And we need to make the best use of our time. Because time is precious. And time is short. Time is precious. And time is short.

And, you know, with that, I just want us to see that Paul draws our attention to three things about time. The boundaries of time. The barriers of time.

And the buying of time. The boundaries of time. The barriers of time. And the buying of time. So we look first of all at the boundaries of time.

The boundaries of time. Paul says in verse 15. Look carefully then how you walk. Not as unwise, but as wise. Making the best use of the time.

[4 : 39] Because the days are evil. Dear, when Paul wrote this letter to the church in Ephesus, He wrote it not to challenge or confront any particular heresy or division within the church.

But rather, Paul wrote this letter in order to encourage and exhort the church to live like Jesus. And to love like Jesus in the time that they've been given in this world.

And in these verses, Paul calls us to be wise with our time. And to make the best use of our time. Because the days are evil. The days are evil, he says.

Of course, that doesn't mean that the first century in which Paul lived was more evil than any other period in history. Rather, Paul was affirming that the days are evil.

And they've been evil since the day Adam and Eve fell in the Garden of Eden. Because since the fall, since that first moment when sin entered into our world and into the heart of mankind.

[5 : 45] Since then, we've had to be wise with our time. And make the best use of our time. Because there are boundaries now on our time.

Dear Lord, it was after the fall that God said to Adam and all his descendants after him, That from the dust you came, and to the dust you shall return.

My friend, it was because of that evil day when sin entered in, that the wages of sin became death. And in that moment, there were boundaries of time put upon all of us.

And because of the wages of sin, Adam was told there and then in the garden, It is appointed unto man once to die. And after that, the judgment.

And since then, time has become precious. Because time is short. Time is limited. And the Bible calls us to be wise with our time.

[6 : 48] And to make the best use of our time. Because of the boundaries. The boundaries of time. And you know, that's what Solomon taught in his sermon called Ecclesiastes.

The book of Ecclesiastes is Solomon's sermon. And in that sermon, Solomon is emphasizing that because of the wages of sin, We are all going to our long home.

Which is the grave. And Solomon says that there are many things which will take place in our lifetime. But they will all take place within the boundaries of our time to be born.

And our time to die. Solomon says in those well-known words, To everything there is a season. A time for every purpose under heaven.

A time to be born. And a time to die. But you know, this is something we're prone to forgetting, isn't it? And yet, our circumstances of late, And even the scripture's relevance for us in our lives, Is that these things have been repeatedly emphasized to us.

[7 : 57] That we're only going to live within the boundaries of our appointed time. We're only going to live within the boundaries of our appointed time.

That's what Job confessed in Job 14. That his days are determined. And the number of his months, It is with God. Because God has set his time limit.

And he cannot pass them. Despite all the sicknesses, the sufferings, and the sorrows, Which Job experienced in his life. Job acknowledged that God has determined the boundaries of his time.

And that he would not live one day more, Or one day less, Than his appointed time in this world. And you know, you see David expressing the same sentiments.

In Psalm 139. A beautiful psalm in which David acknowledges that before he was even formed in his mother's womb. Before he had even taken his first breath in this world.

[9 : 02] Every single day of his life had been written and accounted for in God's book. You know, my friend, it's no wonder David confessed in Psalm 31.

My times are in your hands. My times are in your hands. But you know, I think there was no one who witnessed the boundaries of time more than Moses.

Because the disobedience of the children of Israel, It meant that a generation of Israelites were going to die in the wilderness. Therefore, over that 40 year period of going from Egypt to the promised land.

Out of the 2.2 million Israelites who came out of Egypt, You could say that at least 1 million of them never made it to the promised land.

They had to be buried in the wilderness. And you know, that's why Moses wrote those words in Psalm 90. When he said, Our life is like a tale that is told.

[10:11] Our life is so short. And it passes so quickly. It doesn't take us long to reach 70. Or 80. Or even the allotted barrier of our time.

And you know, that's why Moses prayed over 3,500 years ago. He prayed the most relevant prayer in every generation. Teach us to number our days.

That we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Teach us to number our days. That we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. And you know, that's what Paul is saying here.

Be wise with your time. Make the best use of your time. Because time is short. And time is precious. My friend, this morning your days are numbered.

And God has set a determined boundary on your life. God has set a limit to your time in this world. And the clock is ticking.

[11:12] I need not remind you of that fact. The clock is ticking. And the time is coming when you'll have no more time. And you'll one day step out of the scene of time.

Into the great eternity. And you'll either be in heaven or in hell forever. You know, that's why the gospel message is so urgent. Because every moment in time is precious.

Every day of your life, my friend, is a gift from God. Where his mercies, they are new each morning. Because great is his faithfulness. My friend, this is the day.

This day. This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. And you know, I hope and pray that there will be rejoicing in heaven today.

Over the fact that you have come to faith and repentance in Jesus Christ. Because you know, the 3rd of May 2020. It will never happen again.

[12:14] So don't waste it. Don't waste your time. Don't waste your gospel opportunities. Don't waste your life. No, seek the Lord while you have time.

Call upon him while you have time. Come to him while you have time. Because now is the accepted time. Today is the day of salvation.

Now is the accepted time. Today is the day of salvation. And so Paul is drawing our attention to three things about time.

The first thing is the boundaries of time. And then secondly, he speaks about the barriers of time.

The barriers of time. He says, look carefully then how you walk.

Not as unwise, but as wise. Making the best use of time. Making the best use of the time. Because the days are evil. You know, we don't need to go far to be reminded of the barriers of time.

[13:19] Because we're reminded of them almost every day. We have daily news reports giving us an account of how many people in our nation have died of the coronavirus in the past 24 hours.

And with that, there's no way of us escaping this reminder that there are boundaries to our time in this world. But you know, when it comes to the barriers of time, these things are a little more subtle.

Because as you know, there are many barriers which cause us to waste our precious time and to squander our short time in this world. And that's why Paul calls us to look carefully how we walk.

Because we're to be wise in the way that we live. And we're to be wise with our time. He says, look carefully then how you walk. Not as unwise, but as wise.

Then he goes on in verse 17. Do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And you know, Paul's challenge to us as to how we use our time and how we spend our time.

[14:27] He said, this is relevant for us. This is relevant for us. And you know, it's actually relevant for us this particular time in our lives. Because as we said, some of us have more time on our hands than others.

But the question that arises is, how are we spending our time? Are we making the best use of our time? Are we being wise with our time?

Or are we being foolish with our time? And if we're being foolish with our time, then we're wasting our time. And if we're wasting our time, we're wasting our life. Because my friend, our life, our chief end is not to gratify and enjoy ourselves for our short lives and fritter away our time.

No, my friend, our life. Your precious life. Your precious life. Your chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

We're to live life, my friend, with an eternal perspective. Because we've only one life. And soon it'll be past. And only what's done for Christ will last.

[15:37] My friend, we need to live life with an eternal perspective. Because there are so many barriers of time which waste our time and squander our time in this world.

And I'm sure we're familiar with the phrase that the devil makes work for idle hands. But you know, it was C.S. Lewis who wrote in his Screwtape Letters, which is a brilliant book about a senior devil who instructs a junior devil called Wormwood, teaching him how to succeed in the art of temptation. And C.S. Lewis, he wrote that the safest road to hell is a gradual one. The gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.

And you know, it was in relation to that that C.S. Lewis, he gave the illustration of this, of three demon apprentices who were trained by the devil on how they might be able to populate hell. And one demon said, we can tell people that there's no God. But the devil said, no, that won't work. People know better. Then the next demon, he said, we can tell them there's no hell.

[16:57] Again, the devil said, that won't work. People know better. So the last apprentice demon, he said, I know. We can tell them that there's no hurry.

And the devil said, that's it exactly. Tell them that there's no hurry. And you know, that has been the devil's ploy since the beginning of time.

Tell them that there's no hurry. Tell them that there's plenty of time. Tell them that there's no urgency. Tell them that there's always tomorrow. Tell them that they can come another time. At a more convenient time in their life.

Tell them that there's tomorrow. You can read your Bible tomorrow. You can spend time with God tomorrow. Tomorrow. You can pray tomorrow. You can come to Christ tomorrow. And yet the word of God says, you do not know what tomorrow will bring.

What is your life? You are but a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

[17:59] What is your life, my friend? What is your life? But as you know, we can't blame the devil for everything.

Because even though the devil makes work for idle hands, procrastination is the thief of time. And it's so true, isn't it?

Because we can waste our precious time and squander our precious time by our idleness. Or by being consumed by what has been described as binge-worthy TV.

Or by scrolling through social media. Or shopping for hours on end. Now, there's nothing wrong with any of these things in and of their proper place. But when they cause us to waste our time, procrastination then becomes the thief of our precious time.

And you know, one thing that always challenges me about my time is that, I don't know about you, but I get a weekly report of my screen time usage on my mobile phone.

[19:04] I get it every week. Where each week my phone tells me how many minutes a day I have spent looking at the screen on my phone. And you know, I often think to myself, if my Bible had that function.

Of telling me how long I've spent reading it. Or praying through passages. Or studying what the scriptures are saying. Would my Bible time, would my screen time of my Bible be more than the time I spend on my phone?

But it's not only the distractions of the devil and the procrastinations of precious time that are barriers in our life. There's also worry. Was it not Jesus who said, which one of you, by worrying, can add a single hour to his life?

Therefore, do not be anxious, says Jesus, but seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. My friend, even our worries can cause us to waste our precious time.

And to squander our short time that we have in our lives. And I know worrying is something we all do. But the Bible repeatedly exhorts and encourages us not to worry.

[20:19] And not to be anxious about anything. But in everything, by prayer and supplication, to make our requests made known unto God. Why? Because we're to cast all our cares on him.

Because he cares for us. He cares for us. My friend, we need to be wise. And we need to be wise and careful with the barriers of time.

Because they can cause us to waste our time and squander our short time in this world. And so Paul is throwing our attention to three things about time.

The boundaries of time. The barriers of time. And then lastly, the buying of time. The buying of time. We'll read our text again.

Look carefully then how you walk. Not as unwise, but as wise. Making the best use of the time.

Because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

[21 : 24] As Paul calls us to be wise with our time. And to make the best use of our time. He says that we must redeem the time. Although it's translated as make the best use of the time.

It's translated there as that in the ESV. The word that Paul actually uses is the word redeem. And as you know, the word redeem means to buy back.

It's the image of a slave being bought. And a slave being released from slavery. It's the language of redemption. The language that the Bible often uses to describe our salvation.

That we're redeemed. We're bought back. And we've been released from our slavery to sin. Not with corruptible things such as silver and gold. But by the precious blood of Christ.

We're redeemed. But how can we redeem time? How can we buy back our time? Because no one can buy time.

[22 : 24] Whether with money or with blood. That's why time is the most precious commodity that we have. Because no one can buy it back. And you know, Psalm 40, 49 affirms that to us.

We'll be singing it in a moment. Because Psalm 49, it's the most solemn psalm in the Psalter. Because it calls us to consider our life.

And Psalm 49, it reminds us that death comes to all of us. Whether we're rich or poor. Young or old. And the psalmist says, No one can buy time.

No one can redeem time. The psalmist says, Yet none of these his brother can redeem by any way. Nor can he unto God for him sufficient ransom pay.

In other words, no one can buy time. No one can redeem time. So what does Paul mean then when he says, Redeem the time because the days are evil.

[23 : 30] If we can't buy time, as the word suggests, And there are boundaries and barriers to our time, How are we to redeem time? Well, of course, we've redeemed time.

Or we make the best use of our time When we use our time for the glory of God And the furtherance of his kingdom. My friend, if we're going to be wise with our time, The time that we've been given, Then we must work within the time that we've been given.

If we're going to be wise with the time that we've been given, Then we must work within the time that we've been given. Is that not what Jesus said to his disciples? We must work the works of him who sent me, While it is day.

For the night is coming when no one can work. We must work. We must work. It's a must of necessity. It's an imperative for the church and for the Christian.

Because as long as we're in this world, Jesus says, we must work. We may retire from our day job. We may hang up our hat. We may leave our desk.

[24 : 41] But whilst we're here, we have our work to do. And we have to put our hand to the plough And invest our time and give our all In serving the Lord for his glory And for the extension of his kingdom.

My friend, we must be about our father's business. Because as Jesus says, The night is coming. The night is coming when no one can work.

In other words, we have an appointed number of days In which we must work. We've been given an allotted time to spend And be spent for the Lord.

We've been given this time And time is short And eternity is long. Therefore we must work. And we must work in our congregation. We must work in our community.

We must work for the glory of God. And the extension of his kingdom. There's a work to do, my friend. And every one of us can do something.

[25 : 42] You know, we can't be distant disciples. We can't be motionless members. We can't be lazy learners. No, our Lord says we must work.

Because the night is coming When no one can work. And you know, my friend, If we're going to redeem the time, If we're going to be wise With the time that we've been given, Even at this time, This time that we've been given, If we're going to be wise With this time that we've been given, Then we must work Within the time that we've been given.

We must work Within the time that we've been given. You know, it was Jonathan Edwards. He was a great preacher and theologian In the 18th century.

And he was even used by God During the Great Awakening. But at the age of 18, Jonathan Edwards, He wrote down 70 resolutions.

70 resolutions in which he promised He would read all these resolutions And live by them All the days of his life. He'd read them every week. And in fact, he did do that.

[26 : 54] He read these resolutions every week. And he lived according to these resolutions. And you know, you can read them for yourself. You'll find them online. Jonathan Edwards' 70 resolutions.

But I draw your attention to them Because I love resolution number 5. Where Jonathan Edwards, He writes, Resolved. Never lose one moment of time.

But seize the time to use it In the most profitable way I possibly can. And you know, What a resolution to have. Because that's how we're to live.

That's what the Word of God Is calling us to do this morning. Never lose one moment of time. But seize the time to use it In the most profitable way I possibly can.

My friend, If we're going to be wise with our time And make the best use of our time, Then we will be conscious Of the boundaries of time. We'll be concerned about the barriers of time.

[28 : 00] And we'll be committed To the buying of time. If we're going to be wise with our time And make the best use of our time, Then we'll be conscious Of the barriers of time.

We'll be concerned with the barriers of time. And committed to the buying of time. But you know, With all this talk about time, The shortness of time, The preciousness of time, The limits of time, The use of our time, With all this talk about time, You know, I can't get out of my head That 19th century hymn By Charles Mason.

It was a hymn about the shortness of time And the length of eternity. And I'm sure I've told it to you before. But it, you know, It sums up everything This passage is saying to us This morning about time.

Now Charles Mason, He wrote, Life at best is very brief. Like the falling of a leaf, Like the binding of a sheaf, Be in time, Be in time. Fleeting days are telling fast, That the die will soon be cast, And the fatal line be passed, Be in time, Be in time.

If in sin you longer wait, You may find no open gate, And your cry be just too late, Be in time, Be in time. Fairest flowers soon decay, Youth and beauty pass away, Oh, you have not long to stay, Be in time, Be in time.

[29 : 30] While God's Spirit bids you come, Sinner do not longer roam, Lest you seal your hopeless doom, Be in time, Be in time. Time is gliding swiftly by, Death and judgment draweth nigh, To the arms of Jesus fly, Be in time, Be in time.

Oh, I pray you count the cost, Ere the fatal line be crossed, And your soul in hell be lost, Be in time, Be in time. Sinner, heed the warning voice, Make the Lord your final choice, Then all heaven will rejoice, Be in time, Be in time.

Come from darkness into light, Come, Let Jesus make you right, Come, And receive his life tonight, Be in time, Be in time, Be in time.

My friend, If you're going to be wise with your time, And make the best use of your time, Then you'll be conscious of the boundaries of time, You'll be concerned about the barriers of time, And you'll be committed to the buying of time.

Time is short, So be in time, Be in time. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray together.

[30 : 52] O Lord, our gracious God, We give thanks to thee for Even the encouragements and The exhortations of scripture. We thank thee, O Lord, That thou art a God who not only Warms to us, But a God who also warns us.

And a God who reminds us That our time is short, That we have barriers and boundaries In this life. And Lord, We pray that we would take heed to them, That we would be aware of them, And that we would seek to Redeem the time For the days are evil, That we would realise that our time In this world is short, And that eternity is long, And that therefore we would seek the Lord While he's to be found, And call upon him while he is near, For Lord, thy word reminds us so solemnly, That we are only passing through, That our life is but a vapour, That for over it the wind doth pass, And it away is gone, And of the place where once it was, It shall no more be known.

O Lord, Hear us then we pray, Forgive us we ask, And Lord, We pray that there would be rejoicing in heaven today, Over sinners repenting, Cleanse us we plead, For Jesus' sake, Amen.

And we're going to bring our service to a conclusion By singing the words of Psalm 49, Psalm 49 in the Scottish Psalter, And we're singing from verse 7, Verse 6 down to the verse marked 9, As we mentioned earlier, Psalm 49, It's a very solemn psalm, In the Psalter, Where the psalmist is calling us to listen, He's calling us to give ear, To what he's saying, And what he's reminding us is, That it

doesn't matter who we are, Or what we have in this life, Our life will come to an end, And not one of us, Can buy our time back, That's what he says, He says, Psalm 49 of verse 6, Whoever they be, So whoever they are, Whoever they be, That in their wealth, Their confidence to pitch, And boast themselves, Because they are, Become exceeding rich, Yet none of these his brother can, Redeem by any way, Nor can he unto God for him, Sufficient ransom pay, Their soul's redemption precious is, And it can never be, That still he should forever live, And not corruption see, So we'll sing Psalm 49, From verse 6, Down to the verse mark 9, To God's praise.

[33 : 55] And force themselves, Because they are, Because they are, Become and seem rich, Yet none of these, His brother can, His brother can, Redeeming by any way, Nor can he not, To God for him, Suffocation, Ransom, Pain, Their soul's redemption,

Precious is, And it can never be, There still he should forever live, And not the Russians see, fish. SQL milligrams, Sorry enough, I might not sing you, Jeff! And not the om,ury Ki Nepal,adata, Loan ου e ene, King To go to di, nultura and property, Loan IT, And may be, There still he should...

Philippians, Be the truth is, But what is something you'veun grieving, Can you keep learning from that need St utilizar? For Christmas, For Christmas,