

## Redeeming The Time

Joe Slater

Let's hear it for Daylight Saving Time! Now we have an extra hour of daylight in the evening. I like that! Of course, we surrender that hour in the morning. I don't like that so much. In the final analysis we save nothing.

Paul exhorted the Ephesians, "*See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil*" (Ephesians 5:15-16). His word for time isn't chronos (as in chronometer, a watch or clock). It's a different word that has more to do with opportunity, as in "this is a good time to patch the roof."

We ought to take advantage of opportunities as they come up. It might be an opportunity to "*do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of the faith*" (Galatians 6:10). It might be an opportunity to set a wise example before unbelievers (Colossians 4:5 "*Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time*"). It might be an opportunity to evangelize. Just before urging the Colossians to redeem the time, Paul asked them to pray "*that God would open to us a door for the word*" (4:2-3), a metaphor for opportunity to speak about Jesus.

An old cliché says opportunity knocks only once. That may not always hold true, but often it does. Who among us hasn't regretted squandering an opportunity? It's frustrating enough in the material realm; how much more so in spiritual matters of eternal consequence! King Agrippa II heard the word from Paul and had opportunity to obey. He said he was almost persuaded! Whether that was sincere or mockery, the fact remains that opportunity was his. If he never trusted and obeyed, he will have all eternity to regret it.

What opportunities has God placed before you? Are you taking advantage of them ("redeeming the time")?

## Are You Worried Yet?

Everywhere we turn, we're told we should be worried about something. If you watch the news, then they're telling us that we should be worried about the economy, politics, homelessness, world hunger, endangered animal species, the environment, our health and the weather. If you watch the commercials between the news segments, then we're to be concerned about having the right clothes, shoes, houses or cars. They tell us that we should worry about our savings and investments or our children might not get to go to college. We're told we need insurance for our house, car, teeth, eyes, ears, and anything else that might fail us. We can now purchase insurance in case our car's transmission breaks or the refrigerator goes on the blink. They say we need to have a certain lawyer's number handy just in case we're injured in an accident.

Are you worried yet?

The truth is, we spend a lot of time worrying about things that never come to pass. Anyway, as Christians we are not to be a worrying people. We have put our trust, not in the securities of physical life, but in God. Jesus said, "*Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'*" He then said, "*Therefore do not worry about tomorrow...*" (Matthew 6:31-34). Does that mean that we should be "happy-go-lucky" without a concern in the world? Certainly, we are to be concerned about our relationship with God, raising our families, being good stewards over our blessings, and helping our fellow man, but not to the point that it cripples us into a state of ineffectiveness. The bible tells us not to worry, but in everything give thanks to God and His peace, which surpasses all understanding will guard our hearts through Jesus Christ. (Philippians 4:6-7). We can have confidence and ease our worries because, as Peter wrote, we can cast all our cares upon God because He cares for us. (1 Peter 5:6)

--Jay Launius (Maud, TX)

God expects me to do what I can, where I am, with what I have. No more, but certainly no less.

## The Race Of Life

Like a sprinter who pulls up lame in the 100-meter dash, so is the Christian who does not maintain confidence in Christ firm until the end. The Christian life is a daily commitment to follow Jesus (Luke 9:23). It is a race which must be completed (Hebrews 12:1-2). One cannot stop half-way through the race. We must give our best effort every step of the way!

The Hebrews writer says that if we wish to be partakers of Christ, we must "*hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end...*" (Hebrews 3:14). The runner has no chance of victory without crossing the finish line. Similarly, the Christian must be faithful until death in order to receive the crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

Another important thing to keep in mind is that we cannot rest upon past accomplishments. It would be foolish to stop half-way through the race, turn around to see how far we have come, and then conclude: "Well, I guess I've made it far enough!" Jesus says, "*No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God*" Luke 9:62). The apostle Paul, who worked tirelessly for the sake of Christ, never reached a point where he said, "I have done enough!" He continually reached forward, pressing on for the sake of Christ (Philippians 3:13-14). In the same way, we must give our hearts in steadfast devotion to the will of the Lord.

All that God requires is that we put forth our best effort. We stumble and falter at times, but we must get back in the race and concentrate on doing our best for the Master. Like the runner who lunges forward with his last ounce of strength to reach the finish line, so also the Christian must run in such a manner as to win the race of life (1 Corinthians 9:24). The race is set before us. Our goal is heaven. The strength we need comes from the Lord. But we must do the running every step of the way.

--Glen Elliot (Greenbriar, AR)