

"The Practice of the Believer"

Ephesians 4-6

Part 16

Introduction: Today I want to consider a message that focuses upon one of the most important gifts that you possess. It is the gift of TIME. Each week we are given 168 hours, that is 10,080 minutes. We have 8,736 hours in a year. It sounds like a lot but in real time it goes by so fast.

Someone has personified time, and, in the picture, time looks like a man with wings on his feet because he goes by so quickly. He has hair only on the front of his head and that is so people can grab him as he approaches. He has no hair on the back of his head because after he is gone there is no way to grab him and get him back.

This past week when I was out walking, I was thinking about this message as I listened to the cicadas in the woods. They were here 17 years ago, and I can remember clearly back to those days. The girls were young, and we were spending time on the porch and the cicadas would land on the porch. They had W's on their wings and people were saying that means the next 17 years would be a time of war. That 17 years went by like a flash and I know that the next 17 will pass just as quickly. Many people here may not be around for the next cicada hatch. I may not be here to see it.

I say all of this to help you to stop and realize how important our time is.

James 4:13-15

¹³ Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:

¹⁴ Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

¹⁵ For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

Let me show you what Moses recorded concerning the shortness of our days:

Psalm 90:4-6

⁴ For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.

⁵ *Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up.*

⁶ *In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.*

Listen to the words of William Bradshaw on this thought.

"Let us meditate seriously upon the swift passage of our days, how our life runs away like a stream of waters, and carrieth us with it. Our condition in the eyes of God in regard of our life in this world is as if a man that knows not how to swim, should be cast into a great stream of water, and be carried down with it, so that he may sometimes lift up his head or his hands, and cry for help, or catch hold of this thing and that, for a time, but his end will be drowning, and it is but a small time that he can hold out, for the flood which carries him away will soon swallow him up. And surely our life here if it be rightly considered, is but like the life of a person thus violently carried down a stream. All the actions and motions of our life are but like unto the strivings and struggles of a man in that case: our eating, our drinking, our physic, our sports, and all other actions are but like the motions of the sinking man. When we have done all that we can, die we must, and be drowned in this deluge."

Last week in our study of Ephesians we looked Ephesians 5:15-16.

Notice Ephesians 5:15

To walk circumspectly is to walk cautiously, not willing to take any risks. This means that as we pass through this world, we are to stay far away from anything that could take us down the path of sin. We are especially, to avoid anything that is connected with spiritual darkness.

Paul also says that we are not to live as fools. The fool lives as there is no God. He does not bow to the Authority of the Word of God but instead he lives to please the flesh. We must be very careful because we too can fall into sin and find ourselves living for the desires of the flesh. We too can find ourselves ignoring the warnings of God's Word. We still have a sin nature and so the potential is in every one of us.

This now brings us to what we are going to consider today.

"Redeeming the Time"

Notice Ephesians 5:16

When Paul tells us to "redeem the time" he means to buy up every opportunity that comes before you to serve the Lord.

Have you ever had a great deal right in front of you, but you hesitated, and it got away? You now wish that you had moved quicker but it was only there for a moment. This is the very idea here. There are opportunities which God places before us and we must buy each one up because once they are gone, we will not get them back.

Now I want to use the Scriptures to help you to see something that should stir our hearts to buy up every opportunity before us.

1. We who are saved are all gifted.

Ephesians 4:7-8

⁷ But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

⁸ Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

We are all given at least one gift and the grace to use our gifts. Let us notice what is said in 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

⁴ Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

⁵ And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

⁶ And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

⁷ But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

You not only have a gift/gifts, but you have also been given the ability use your gift by the Holy Spirit.

There is also something else that we need to see.

2. We are given opportunities.

Matthew 25:14-19

14 For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

15 And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.

17 And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.

18 But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

19 After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

This text is a warning for those who will be in the Tribulation letting them know that Jesus Christ will come, and they need to be prepared for they will be accountable. There is also an application here for us.

Just as these servants were given talents to invest so we are given opportunities to use our gifts and we are given opportunities to serve the Lord, and one day we will be held accountable for what has been given to us.

2 Corinthians 5:9-10

9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Let me now get you back to redeeming the time. There are opportunities placed before us but often they are not there for long.

3. Limited Time

Let me take you to Kadesh Barnia and give you a reminder. Isarel has been out of Egypt two years and they have come to the border of Canaan. The spies are sent out and the report is brought back.

Numbers 13:25-30

25 And they returned from searching of the land after forty days.

²⁶ And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and shewed them the fruit of the land.

²⁷ And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it.

²⁸ Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there.

²⁹ The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan.

³⁰ And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.

Here is a once in a lifetime opportunity for the Israelites. Canaan is theirs if they will just trust the Lord and go forward. But they refuse.

Numbers 14:1-4

And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night.

² And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!

³ And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt?

⁴ And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.

Their unbelief and their rejection brought upon them the wrath of God.

Numbers 14:22-23, 29-33

²² Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice;

23 Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it:

29 Your carcases shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward which have murmured against me.

30 Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.

31 But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised.

32 But as for you, your carcases, they shall fall in this wilderness.

33 And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcases be wasted in the wilderness.

All their numbered men would die in the next 38 years. According to Numbers 1:46 that would be 603, 550. That would be about 2 men per hour.

After this pronounced judgment, the people decided they would go into Canaan. But the opportunity was gone.

Numbers 14:39-42, 45

39 And Moses told these sayings unto all the children of Israel: and the people mourned greatly.

40 And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we be here, and will go up unto the place which the LORD hath promised: for we have sinned.

41 And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the LORD? but it shall not prosper.

42 Go not up, for the LORD is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies.

45 Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, even unto Hormah.

Moses later reflected upon this when he wrote Psalm 90.

Psalm 90:12

¹² So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

Conclusion:

We need to be very careful about getting so busy in life that we miss the opportunities and actually don't even see them.

Hebrews 2:14-15

¹⁴ Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

¹⁵ And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

In this bondage there are many people who are afraid of missing out on life so they try to do all they can so as to find fulfillment. Believers can also fall into the trap of thinking that we must be involved in all we can and have the kids involved in everything and in so doing we neglect to redeem the time for the Lord.