

WORD OF TRUTH

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REDEEMING THE TIME

BY CHARLES WOODRUFF

On certain days we are more time-conscious than on other days. For instance, in the spring of the year on a certain date at 2:00 a.m. it suddenly becomes 3:00 a.m.! Then in the fall on the last Sunday morning in October the process is reversed. At 2:00 a.m. it becomes 1:00 a.m. and we get our time (one hour) that we have had in the "bank" for seven months, returned to us. Another day, perhaps, we are very aware of time is on February 29th. This date only comes once every four years. The reason being that the earth actually requires 365 and 1/4 days to make one revolution around the sun. So in leap year we have an extra day.

International travelers to the Orient are often confused by crossing the International Date Line when suddenly a whole day is lost or gained, depending on direction.

All these things are man-made divisions in time made for the convenience of living in this present world. The Bible tells of two times in the past that God has stopped time. Joshua commanded the sun to stand still and "**for about a whole day**" neither the sun or the moon moved, "**freezing time,**" as it were (Joshua 10:12-14). Hezekiah was allowed to choose, as a sign that God would heal him, whether the sun's shadow would go forward or backward 10 degrees on the dial of Ahaz. Of course, he asked the "**impossible**" that the sun would come back 10 degrees. Isaiah prayed to the Lord and it was done (2 Kings 20:8-11). Recently I read an article that stated scientists had confirmed both these biblical events by space age computer. Whether they did or not, God's Word still stands!

TIME IS TEMPORARY

In Revelation 10:5, 6 we read these words: "**And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven and sware by him that liveth forever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer.**"

There you have it. Time is temporary. That commodity that we value so highly—that which with every tick of your wristwatch is moving toward the event—"that time should be no more." That precious thing that we of Adam's race are **so prone to waste** as if we had "**all the time in the world.**" But we don't, because we are each warned that even if this event of the end of time is so far off as to be of little concern, now it is still "**appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment**" (**Hebrews 9:27**). Time for repentance from sin will then be past. As far as this earthly life, it will be over and the judgment will be ahead. The shortness of life, the fragileness of it, is to show us the temporary nature of time.

"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14).

"Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth"
(Proverbs 27:1).

TIME IS TRANSITORY

In time we find there are many changes taking place. An example is the rising costs we all face in everything we purchase. Items that once cost very little (such as a loaf of bread) are now expensive. One of the factors involved in this change is time. Nothing stays the same. There are so many new inventions replacing the old. The automobile has been both a blessing and a curse. It has certainly reduced the time it takes to get from one place to another. The evangelist George Whitefield once set out on a preaching journey in America traveling mostly by horse from Philadelphia to Savannah. It took him **43 days** (counting the time he had to go by ship from Charleston, S. C. to Savannah—a distance of only 100 miles, **but there was no road!**). Now the same 800 mile journey from Philadelphia to Savannah can be driven by automobile in less than 24 hours!

And what of the airplane? Atlanta to Los Angeles is only four and ½ hours, and half-way around the world takes less than 24 hours! Time has seen some changes! How many other things can you think of that have "**changed with the times?**"

Certainly **sin hasn't changed** although we are seeing it manifested in a greater way now. It is more open, more widespread, perhaps more ugly.

"In the last days perilous times shall come. Men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud," etc. (2 Timothy 3:1,2).

There is One who has not changed, neither has His hatred of sin. This One is the Lord God! "**I am the LORD, I change not**" (**Malachi 3:6**). Although time is transitory and things change in the course of time, there is an **unchangeable** God called "**The Ancient of Days**" who does not change. He does not dwell in time, but in eternity. "**From everlasting to everlasting thou art God**" He is the Creator of time and the Lord of time!

TIME IS TELLING

You have probably heard the expression "Time will tell." This goes with an attitude of "wait and see." Often in our earthly circumstances this is what we in great patience must do, wait and see because time **will** tell. We look at things in this way that we have no control over. Everything from new marriages to serious operations are placed in the category. The plans of men and nations, of kings, presidents and paupers must all be put to this test. Only time will tell about someone's professed conversion. Too often we see those who "**did run well**" that later fall by the wayside. There are so many spurious conversions today. Many say they will follow Christ, but these have not counted the cost. Many profess with their mouth, but the heart is left untouched. Many, many have had some kind of church related experience, but few, relatively speaking, are really born from above! "**Many are called—few are chosen**" (**Matthew 22:14**).

It is popular now for movie stars, sports figures, politicians, etc. to declare "I am born again." We can only say "**Time will tell!**"

How close are we to the second coming of Christ? We seem to be in those "perilous times" previously mentioned as being in the last days. John said in his epistle that we were in the

last days and that was over 1900 years ago. Surely we are now in the last days of the last days! But wait—no date setting! Time will tell!

TO REDEEM THE TIME, WE MUST BE AWAKE

"Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:14-16). In this passage we are clearly told to redeem the time. This means to buy up the time, to use it wisely for the Lord. "Ransoming the Opportunities" is a rendering given by some. Since God is timeless, He is not the One concerned with redeeming time. It is we mortals that are told this. But you cannot buy up time if you are sleeping it away.

SLEEPING SAINTS

"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Romans 13:11).

Here, saints are told it is high time to awake. This is addressed to those that "**know the time**"; not to lost, unregenerate men, but to the saints. Our current day crop of Christians would rather "**kill time**" than redeem it! People are bored today if they don't have something exciting to do. That is why it is no problem to fill the football stadium, the dance halls, and the amusement parks, but you have great difficulty getting anyone to just about any church during the middle of the week (or even Sunday night in most cases). Even in weeks of so-called "**revival meetings**" it is hard to get folks to come unless you offer some give-away program or award. Brethren, these things ought not to be! The professing church is asleep as sure as the five virgins in Matthew 25 and it is going to take a loud call to awaken it!

SLEEPING NATIONS

The nations are seemingly unconcerned that (as Karl Marx said) "A spectre is haunting Europe [and *now* the world], the Spectre of Communism". When in Moscow in 1978, I saw banners that proclaimed in Russian, "**Our Goal is Communism.**" This goal was not just for Russia and east Europe, but for the entire world. Communism is still a danger, don't be fooled. But in our new century there has arisen a danger that may be greater at this time. The danger of radical Islam that seeks not only to destroy Israel, but America and the western nations as well. No one is exempt from their goals. They say in their own words they will destroy the White House, and even the United States. How far will God let them go? I don't know, but America is being judged for her collective sins, and **unless** there is a turning to God I fear for her. (See my article "**What Is a True Revival?**". (Link to *The Highway* at this URL: <http://www.the-highway.com/index.html> ; then *Calvinism and the Reformed Faith*; then click on *Evangelism*).

Our own nation seems to be asleep, unheeding to the danger. May God shake her as only He can. "**Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit saith the Lord of Hosts"** (Zechariah 4:6)

SLEEPING SINNERS

They that are "**of the night**" are said to be asleep and only the voice of God can awaken them. (see I Thessalonians 5:4-8). Just as Lazarus was said by the Lord Jesus to be asleep

(John 11:11). Sinners are not only asleep; they are “**dead**”, and even “**stinking**” in their trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1).

Men are commanded to preach the gospel and trust God to awaken the sinner. We are not to use human manipulation and psychology to get “**converts**”, but believe that God’s Word will not return void. His hand is not shortened.

It would behoove each of us that are awake to cry unto the Sovereign of the universe to “**give us children lest we die**” (Gen. 30:1), but we are content to be barren! Often we are not doing our job of persevering in prayer and a strong gospel witness. God will save, but we must pray.

TO REDEEM THE TIME WE MUST BE AWARE

“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise” (Eph. 5:15).

The Christian life is often spoken of as a walk. We walk through this world and leave a testimony everywhere we go. We are told here to see that we walk circumspectly.

The Greek word translated “**circumspectly**” here is rendered in most of the modern translations as “**accurately**”, “**carefully**,” etc. Here I think we have a good example of the God-given wisdom of our King James Version translators. The Greek word here can be rendered “**exactly**” and be true to the Greek, but it loses some of the force of “**circumspectly**.” The Latin origin of the word is evident: “**circum**” (around); “**specere**” (to behold or look). So what you have is to walk—looking about **on all sides**. To be aware. This is consistent with other scripture. “**Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour**” (1 Peter 5:8). Because “**we are not ignorant of his (Satan’s) devices**” (2 Cor. 2:11), we have to be extremely careful on all sides for the enemy is working night and day.

Also these words from the Puritan, Paul Bayne (died 1617): “That we walk **avoiding every extremity (both to the right and left)**; for this circumspection doth keep us, that we fall not into one vice while we fly another. **Walking cautiously**, that we be not deceived with false colors, for the devil doth sometimes dye vice in the color of virtue. **Walking providentially**; for he that walketh **circumspectly** must be double faced; he must not only see things present, but have eyes behind eyes to look before him, to procure and provide good things, to prevent evil, impediment to good—again, **circumspection**” (**Commentary On Ephesians**).

See how much rich thought is involved in the word “**Circumspectly**.” It is a **great mistake** of modern Christians to be so quick to change the KJV. Sure, there are some archaic and obsolete words in the book, but most of the problem is that our 20th Century English has deteriorated and we are **too lazy** to study **unfamiliar** words. This is to our shame and detriment! From verse 15 here, and also from verse 17 we see that to redeem the time you must understand the will of the Lord. You **must** be aware. Awareness (spiritual understanding), comes from study of the Word of the Living God.

TO REDEEM THE TIME WE MUST BE ALERT

“And be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18).

We looked at awareness, which comes not from reading the newspaper. That will only give you awareness of the world. We need **awareness of God** to understand His will. This also requires being **Spirit-filled**. As in 1 Cor. 2:14: “**The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of**

God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.”

I have already stated a sinner must be awake. The Holy Spirit awakens him and comes to dwell. Every believer is baptized by the Spirit into the body, the church. Every believer is **not** filled, but every believer is **commanded to be!** The same God that says it is sinful to be drunk says it is **sinful** not to be filled with the Spirit (this means to be controlled by the Spirit). You see, a drunk is **controlled** by wine or other liquor. Have you ever seen a truly drunk person alert? Of course not! On our highways one of the greatest dangers we face is getting in an accident because of some drunk. Drunks are the opposite of alert. You had better stay out of their way!

When we are Spirit-controlled the world may count us as **more unusual** than drunks, **perhaps more dangerous**, because **if we are preoccupied with God we are a threat to the complacency of the world.** But God says to be drunk is **excess.** It opens the door to all kinds of sin. **By contrast**, being filled with the Spirit opens the door to spiritual alertness and enables us to truly redeem the tune.

The evidence of this Spirit-fullness, this alertness, is not said to be speaking in tongues! The evidence of the Spirit filled walk is found here in Eph. 5 as follows:

1. The **inward** evidence, verses 19, 20—a singing heart.

The **churchward** evidence, verse 21—patience and submissiveness.

The **homeward** evidence, verse 23—God's proper order as in the church, so in the home. Husbands who are **leaders** and love their wives (w. 25, 28) and wives that **reverence** their husbands.

ARE YOU REDEEMING THE TIME?

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