

**Ephesians 5: 14-17; "Redeeming the Time", A Sermon for  
the coming New Year, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on  
December 27th, 2009, In the Morning Worship Service.**

In the sermons that I will preach to you today and next week I want to bring to your attention the importance of time. In this sermon I will attempt to show how important it is that every believer in Christ be redeeming the time which is given to them by the Lord. In order to do this, the concepts of time and the light of God's truth must be brought together in our minds this day. Christ the Sun of Righteousness has arisen with healing in His wings, but there may be many of us here present this morning who are not comprehending what we should do with the light we have been given. Everything which we would do and become, both in this life and into eternity is impacted by how we spend out time. We are coming up on the entrance to a another year, and we must solemnly consider the fact that we are only given so much time to improve all that God has given to us, and then we shall be called to give an account of it before God. Will you resolve to live as a person who will not receive the grace of God in vain? We want to ask ourselves this question: How can I as a person redeem my time, the time that the Lord gives to me; how can I use it to the greatest advantage to my Lord Jesus Christ? To redeem the time is to buy it back from being wasted on pursuits which will not be profitable to our bringing glory to our Lord Jesus Christ. Well then; if we would redeem the time, there are 3 requisites (things which are very necessary) if we would be serious about redeeming the time. The first is that we must awake from sleep. The second is that we should walk circumspectly. And the third is that we would be wise.

**The 1st Requisite - If we would redeem our time in order to bring glory to our Lord Jesus Christ, we must awake from sleep.**

"Awake you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light." Sleep is the time of insensibility among men. It is a state which in some respects resembles death. Sleep is given to men from God as a time of rest and recovery from the labors and activities of the day. But the sleep being talked about here in our text is not a natural sleep, but it is rather the deadness and insensibility of the heart and the mind to be aware of what God requires; of what He expects; and what He will do if a person continues to love their sin, or if they neglect the doing and keeping of His Word. This command to awake from the dead may legitimately be applied to both the unbeliever; the person who has not been born again by the Spirit of God; and also to the professed believer who may be negligent, careless and insensible of the consequences of their disobedience. Let's take the unbeliever first. The unbeliever's nature toward God is sleeping the sleep of death in relation to God. He is awake and he is alert to the passing pleasures of sin. He is alive to the profit of his own selfish pursuits and whether he is being satisfied by them or not; but he is not awake to the reality of the fact that God his Maker has given him

laws to live by; laws, which if he violates them, and will not awake and repent of his sins, God will bring upon that person eternal consequences of the most unpleasant sort. They are asleep in a house that is on fire, and they are having pleasant dreams of worldly pleasures which they imagine will last forever. All the while they hoping that there is no hell, and that perhaps in the end, all will still go well for them beyond the grave. To a person in this state, it makes no absolute difference to them if they live for God or for the world. They can't see making a big deal about knowing God at all. It doesn't seem to them to be an enjoyable way to spend their time. It does not seem to be profitable to them to be a Christian. They want to remain blissfully ignorant of what that means if they can. They find it dull and boring. To you, if you are living this way, I have a word for you. "Awake, sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will shine upon you and give you life.

But let it be understood by everyone here today, that there is time which must be redeemed if you would be saved. You cannot die physically in this spiritual sleep of death, or you will perish forever in the lake of fire. You must arise from this death of sleep or die eternally. If you do not leave the burning house of sin, there will be an eternal consequence of punishment to pay forever if you simply live to yourself and your own understanding of things. That person who has misspent their time here upon the earth, should know and understand, that a good account cannot be rendered before God, for time which has thus been wasted. A rationale cannot be given to Him which will save the soul which has misspent time. That is why you must arise from this sleep. You must awaken up from God's wrath and flee to Christ. John Wesley lived in the Epworth parish when was young. But one night in February of 1709 the roof of the house caught fire somehow, and everyone managed to get out but John who was seen in the upper window. One strong man who was standing by, had another lighter man get up on his shoulders and he was pulled from the window just as the roof fell inward and collapsed in the flames. His father was told that everything was lost. He said, "Let us give thanks to God!" "He has given me all of my eight children; let the house go, I am rich enough."

Now young people and children, do you not see how precious you are to your parents? They could lose everything in terms of their worldly possessions, but they cannot bear to lose you. You have an eternal soul, and will you not awake and flee from the wrath of God which is coming upon all those who are careless; all those who are sleeping the sleep of death? The flames draw closer. Come to the window and look by faith and see; Christ is there to help you, and you will not lose your soul if you leap into his strong arms! John Wesley used to call himself a brand plucked from the fire, because of this incident. But he was not converted for many years after this incident. His was a physical deliverance. Later, when he was a minister, he would awaken up to spiritually understand that he needed Christ to be saved and to have eternal life. At that time when he heard a man speaking on Luther's commentary to the Romans, and the doctrine of justification by faith alone, he was converted to Christ, he said, "I felt that my heart was strangely

warmed, and that my sins; even mine were forgiven." Will you not become another brand plucked from the fire? Will you not awake and see your need of Christ? God commands you to arise from the dead, not because you have the power to save and deliver yourself - but He does expect you to strive to enter the narrow gate of salvation prepared for you in Christ. He is the door; you must walk through it by faith. John Wesley strove to get to the window. When he got there, others saw him and helped him. Will you not strive to enter the door which is Christ? Come and knock and cry and pray and the Porter, the Holy Spirit will open that door and you will come through it and find Christ waiting to save you and to help you to live the Christian life.

But I must also address those of us who are Christians as well. You too, must wake up from spiritual lethargy if you have fallen into it. You may have fallen asleep in regard to your pressing on to know the Lord. Perhaps you have a name to live and you are dead. Ask yourself this question - "Am I walking as a child of light?" "Am I redeeming my time, knowing that the days are evil? Is the fruit of the Holy Spirit's working growing in me; the fruit of the light, in all goodness and righteousness and truth?" If it is not, then know, that you are not redeeming the time. To redeem the time is to buy up the opportunities to make it manifest that you are a child of God. It is that you are awake to your duty of being faithful to Christ. You are not to sleep on your watch to guard your heart and to do good to others around you. You are rather to awake to the value of all that Christ has given to you. Do you remember the parable which Jesus told in Matthew 13: 45 and 46? "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. If you are looking for eternal life and to glorify God, you are that merchant man. When you came to Jesus for salvation and were seeking the wisdom to live righteously in Him, you sold all that you had (you gave your life to Jesus) in order to obtain Him. Now that you have Him, you are a merchant man who is purchasing and storing up in your heart, the good spiritual things of Christ's grace. You have no time for purchasing fool's gold; for "buying" those things which have no eternal and everlasting value; you have purchased Christ; the pearl of great price. You have sold all that you had to obtain Him, and now that you have Him, you should realize that you do not have any time to waste. It will cost you something to redeem time. There are worldly things, and futile things, and vain things that will attempt to steal this precious time of building up the treasure of all that Christ would have you to learn and to do for Him during the time that you have. Time is precious and so you must redeem it; you must buy it back from being wasted, and you must learn to spend it wisely.

**Now, the Second Requisite to Redeeming the Time, as we have it here in our text, is to walk circumspectly.**

Verse 15 says, "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." To walk circumspectly is to watch to see how you are walking and where you are going. It is to be diligent about it,

and exact about it. When a person is trying too hard to hold on to his sin or to the world; when he or she walks the fine line between obedience and disobedience, they are displeasing to the Lord. They think all is well and that they can even lie down next to the precipice of disobedience and sleep; but the danger much greater than they think, and it is most likely that they will fall spiritually into sin unless they awake. What is the problem here? The problem is what the person is giving their time to. Why is it that a person does not become a Christian? Often it is because they will give their time to become a fool, but they will not give their time to become a Christian. I do not mean that you do not give your time to come to church. I mean that when you leave the place of worship that you do not seek the Lord in prayer. You do not read His Word or pray. You have a thousand other different things to think about besides God. You think about the things that please you the most, but you do not ask the Lord what He would have you to do. A fool is one who says in their heart that there is no God. It is out of the heart that all the issues of life flow. If you are not growing stronger as a Christian, could it be that it is because the world has your heart? Is it because you are toying with things that are a waste of precious time? You need to learn to drain this swamp of worldliness in your life and reclaim your time and energies to further Christ's kingdom in your heart, and in regard to other people. It is His interests that you should be seeking, not our own. It takes time to do that. You must come to realize that as a Christian you are "in" the world, but you are not "of" the world.

In walking circumspectly you must address what is tempting you; to avoid falling. How much time are you spending in amusing yourself; how much time in reading novels and fiction versus reading the Bible, good commentary and books which will build up your faith? How much of your precious time is spent in television and video games and magazines and newspapers versus abiding in the Word of God. It is not that these things that I have mentioned are necessarily bad in themselves, but the temptation is put them entirely in the place of godly things. What is it that is stealing your time? Let me briefly give you a few things which may be stealing your time. Richard Baxter calls them thieves. First of all, there is sloth or laziness. Proverbs 10: 4 says, "He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich." "He who gathers in summer is a wise son; he who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame." If you have a slack hand you will become poor in material and worldly things. There is no doubt about this. You must be diligent if you would make money and not always be spending it. But how much more this is true in spiritual things; that you must be diligent in them, as well. If you never read your Bible you will never gather the precious treasure that will make your soul rich, so that you will be rich toward God. In Luke 12: 16-21 the Lord Jesus tells a parable about a certain rich man whose ground yielded plentifully. And he thought, "I have no room to store my crops; what shall I do?" "So he said, I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods." "And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many good laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink and be merry.'" "But

God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." The only way that you can be rich toward God is if you give your time to Him in your thoughts, and to storing up good things for your soul.

The second thing that will steal your time is too much sleep, or sleep at the wrong time. Proverbs Chapter 24: 30-34 says, "I went by the field of the lazy man, and by the vineyard of the man devoid of understanding; and there it was, all overgrown with thorns; its surface was covered with nettles; its stone wall was broke down." "When I saw it, I considered it well; I looked on it and received instruction: a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest; so shall your poverty come like a prowler, and your need like an armed man." Some of you, I think have not learned this truth, that too much sleep is just as bad as too little. And sleeping at the wrong time, when you ought to be up working or helping your family with the tasks and chores of the day is not a good thing. Staying up too late at night is not a wise practice. I used to make fun of Benjamin Franklin's saying in my mind when I was a younger man, when my mother used to say it to me, but I have learned to see the wisdom in it. "Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise." The third thing that will steal your time is paying too much attention to your body. That is; if you have that proud tendency to sit looking at yourself in the mirror to see if you are the fairest of them all, or to be continually trying to make yourself look better. Proverbs 31: 30 says, "Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised." This fault of paying too much attention to the body can be something that a man can fall prey to as well as a woman. It is a great waster of time. Determine it in your heart that the way that you look is important. It is important to take time to be clean and neat and to have a pleasant appearance. But it is not necessary for you to try to make yourself strikingly beautiful so that people are always remarking over you. This is vanity. Study to cultivate the inner beauty of the heart and then you will come to know how much time will be needed to maintain your outward person. It will fall into place. Someday you are going to lose all that beauty and all that strength that you now have in your youth. Try often to think of yourself in that way, and what beauty will remain when you grow old? If you spend more of your time cultivating the beauty of grace working your heart, it will shine through and even the outward person will be seen as pleasant.

The fourth thing that will steal time from you is idle talk. Turn with me to Matthew 12, verse 35. "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things." "But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. The context of these verses is the Pharisees saying to the multitudes who were following Jesus and wondering whether He was the Son of David, the Messiah, "He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons. (Verse 24) But Jesus showed clearly that this could not be so and that He was doing His

miracles, casting out demons by the Spirit of God. But He went on to teach a valuable lesson about being a true Christian in verse 33. "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit." You, as a Christian are known by the fruit that you bear. Do you bear good fruit in the time that you take to consider your words? Or do you rattle off the first thing that comes to your thoughts? Do you take delight in sharing your own opinions over a thousand different things, but neglect to speak of Christ and the Word of God? Then your much speaking will be "idle". In God's eyes, it is idle speech. The word "idle" in the original is ἄργός which means inactive - i.e. unemployed; (by implication) lazy, useless: —barren. In other words, you are not thinking about the things that are coming out of your mouth and what you are saying is really foolish and useless at many points. And thus, you are truly wasting time, and God says that you will render account for it in the Day of Judgment unless you repent of it. A godly person is one who is "quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger," it says in the book of James.

The fifth thing that will steal time from you is vain and sinful company. That is - spending too much time with those who do not know the Lord in their worldly, sinful, and selfish pursuits. Or spending too much time with even believers who are willing to waste precious time on things which have no eternal significance. In 1 Corinthians 15: 33 it says, "Do not be deceived: 'Evil company corrupts good habits.'" "Bad company corrupts good morals," it says in the NAS. "Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God." "I speak this to your shame." Evidently there were some at Corinth that thought that they could, as Christians hang around with those who were of bad character. But Paul reproves them for it here and he says he had to mention these things, "to their shame." They needed to awake to righteousness and stop this sinfully compromising practice. It is a total waste of time to be "casting your pearls before swine", and not to become "wise as a serpent and innocent as a dove." Don't let any person of compromised character take away your good reputation or the good habits that you have cultivated because of the grace of Christ. Be faithful to God in keeping yourself pure in everything that you do.

The sixth way that we may be wasting precious time is by an inordinate participation in sports and games; either playing them or watching them. What! Is life a game? You would think that this was so by the way that some people live their lives. You might expect some people who were not Christians to make an idol out of sports, and spend all of their spare time watching them on TV and checking up on the statistics on the computer. But should you expect to see a Christian act so? I think not. Did Jesus and the Apostles pursue the sports of their day or the sharing and preaching of the Word of God? Were there some days that the disciples stayed home to watch sports rather than follow Jesus and listen to His teaching? I think that you can see how ludicrous this would have been. I think that it is a terrible testimony to people around us if we are spending countless hours watching sports or playing sports and we cannot make it to a Mid-

week prayer meeting or an Afternoon Worship service on Sunday because there is some game that is more important to us than being at church. A worldly Christianity is really no Christianity. Reconsider the way that you think about being Christian if you have made some sport or the watching of sports an idol; more important than your devotion to Christ. Bodily discipline profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." "Exercise yourself toward godliness" it says in 1 Timothy Chapter 4 and verse 7. These are six of many ways that you may be wasting precious time. I hope that you will seriously consider whether you have fallen into any of them, and repent and change the way that you are living to stop wasting the precious time that God has given to you.

**This leads us to the 3rd and final Requisite for redeeming time. That is; Being Wise.**

Verse 17 says, "Therefore do not be unwise but understand what the will of the Lord is." This is what it means to be wise - To understand God's will and to implement it in our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is finding out what is acceptable to the Lord and doing it. It means no longer having fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather exposing them. We must be actively trying to persuade other that good is good and that evil is evil. We cannot fall into being spectators of evil, watching all the sinfulness of people around us and disapproving but being unwilling to lift a finger to speak to them in the right way about it. We cannot hide our light under a bushel basket. What can we do to be wise? How should we spend our time? How can we wisely employ our time? 4 brief things.... 1st - We should spend our time in gaining useful knowledge and spreading it in a loving way. Proverbs 10: 14 says, "Wise people store up knowledge, but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction." Proverbs 18: 4 says, "The words of a man's mouth are deep waters; the wellspring of wisdom is flowing brook." In other words, if you are wise you will store up knowledge with a view of sharing it with others as the overflow of your heart's meditation before God. Do you do this? You should study to do what you can.

Secondly, you can wisely spend your time by doing good to others. In Acts 10: 38 it says, "Jesus went about doing good." You and I must let our light shine in such a way that men may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5: 16) What good works have you done for others around you. If you can't think of any, then you should begin to pray and ask the Lord to show you what you can do. It could be a letter or phone call of encouragement. It could be giving money or help to the poor. It could be helping a neighbor or friend with shoveling or raking or any number of things which they have a hard time doing by themselves. There are many things which the Lord will bring to your mind if you will simply pray for people around you.

Thirdly; you can wisely spend your time in providing an honest living for yourself and your family. If it is true, and indeed it is true, that "anyone who does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied

the faith and is worse than an unbeliever; then it must be a very good use of time for the head of a household to provide well for the needs of his household. Six days shall you work and do all of your labor, and the seventh is a Sabbath to the Lord. It is one of the best ways that you can spend your time, to provide well for the needs of your wife and children in both material and spiritual things. It is a work which will take most of the time of a family man.

Fourth, you can wisely spend your time in prayer and self-examination to make your own heart, and the hearts of others; better. 2 Corinthians Chapter 13, verses 5-9 say this: "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith." "Test yourselves." "Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?" -- "Unless indeed you are disqualified." "But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified." "Now I pray God that you do no evil, not that we should appear approved, but that you should do what is honorable, though we may seem disqualified." "For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth." "For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong." "And this also we pray, that you may be made complete." I hope that this is the attitude that you have in relation to the growth of other believers around you. You wish and you pray that they would be made complete in the truth of the Word of God and that even if you are weak through efforts made in prayer and loving concern for the growth of believers around you in the local church of which you are a part; that you are glad. Truly that is the Christ-like attitude.

And then lastly - You can wisely spend your time in seeking salvation and endeavoring to do the will of God. "The world is passing away and the lusts thereof; but he who does the will of God abides forever." "Strive to enter by the narrow gate, for many I say to you will seek to enter and will not be able," Jesus says in Luke 13: 24. "When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door (there's the time element), and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, "I do not know you, where you are from, ' then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets." "But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from." "Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity." "There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out." "They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God." "And indeed there are last who will be first and there are first who will be last." Each of here today will be in one or the other of these situations, either of blessing or judgment, depending upon whether we have used our time wisely and profitably in the sight of God.

These, then, are the 3 Requisites for redeeming your time. Let us remember that time is passing, and once it is gone, it cannot be retrieved. Time is short and we do not know how much of it remains to us. Eternity depends on the improvement of time. Wake up and be wise. Walk circumspectly. Improve all the time and grace given to you by God, to His eternal glory.

