TIME: A GOD GIVEN OPPORTUNITY

A New Year's Challenge

Selected Scriptures
1/1/2012

Why so much excitement and enthusiasm and celebration over a new year?

After all, it's just another day, of another week, of another month, of another year of another decade, of another century of another millennium?

Why be time conscious at all?

Have you ever observed all of the time-related activities/celebrations we partake in? Examples: Birthdates; Anniversaries; Memorials; Holidays;

It is important to be time-conscious. That is why we have watches; calendars (day-timers); live by schedules; do certain things at certain times of the day;

Certainly, one reason, mankind is so celebratory over the matter of time is simply this: To have the satisfaction of saying within ourselves "I made It!" "I have experienced another year" "I am still alive!" "The Death Reaper didn't get me yet!"

But should there be more to the extention of time than to merely have the satisfaction of saying "I made It another year"? Shouldn't there be a grander purpose to the time we are alloted?

In a one word answer, why does God give us time?

Answer: **OPPORTUNITY**

God gives us time to give us OPPORTUNITY

Eph 5:16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

The Bible has a lot to say about time. The word "time" occurs 563 times from Genesis to Revelation. (In the KJV)

Time therefore is important to us, since we live in the realm of time and do so for a very brief time.

1. ***God gives us TIME to give us***
the opportunity for: **Salvation**

2 Peter 3:15 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation;

"The longsuffering of God" – Refers to His patient waiting before judging the world in the Day of the Lord's Wrath!

Why no return of Christ yet? God is giving men time for repentance that they might obtain salvation!

Just as He waiting in Noah's day before He unleashed the flood, so God is waiting today before He unleashes the fire!

2 Cor. 6:2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)

God is ready to save NOW!

A. God HEARS the sinner at a favorable season of time

In verse 2 Paul gives the Corinthians a very good reason why they should come to genuine faith.

V.2) **"For He saith"** – Paul quotes in the first half of this verse, Isaiah 49:8 -"Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages"

"in a time accepted" – in a favorable (dektos) season (kairos). At a welcome moment. In many people's lives, there are those open times when distractions are few, the felt need for salvation is great, and the invitation is available.

There are favorable seasons in which it is easy to come to God for His grace. That time is now.
God hears the call of the sinner at this time as He offers salvation.
When you die, it is too late!

B. God <u>HELPS</u> the sinner on the day of his salvation

"the day" – there is a particular day in which someone believes and comes from darkness to light, from lostness to being found, from blindness to sight, from distance from God to intimacy with Him, from being a child of the Devil to becoming a child of God.

God by His spirit actually helps the lost sinner to come to receive His grace.

How does He help?
By softening one's hardened heart
By opening one's blinded eyes
By convincing us of Christ and His alsufficiency

"Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation"

Paul now gives an application to his quote of Isaiah 49:4. Paul's emphasis is on the word "Now".

Salvation is the most urgent matter on earth! The word "behold" (Look) is also an attention getting word to express urgency.

If people only knew ***The Doom of the Lost***

1. Luke 16:19-31 -
--eternal conscious torment
--eternal unfulfilled desire (v. 24)
--eternal memory (v. 25)
--eternal hopelessness (v. 26)
--eternal loneliness (v. 19-21)

2. Matthew 8:12 - outer darkness
But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

3. Matthew 13:42 - furnace of fire
And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

4. Matthew 25:41 - everlasting fire

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

5. Matthew 25:46 - everlasting punishment

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

6. Mark 3:29 - eternal damnation

But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation:

7. Rev. 11:7 - bottomless pit

8. Rev. 20:10 - lake of fire and brimstone

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are,* and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

9. Rev. 21:8 - second death

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

Every person has a soul-spirit which is of...

More value than all the <u>wealth</u> of the <u>world</u> (Mt.16:26, Mk.8:36,37)

Every person will...

Live on for <u>eternity</u>

A. The souls of the saved are <u>with the Lord</u> (Gen.35:18; II Cor.5:8; Acts 7:59)

B. The souls of the lost are experiencing <u>eternal anguish & suffering</u>
(Mt. 10:28; Rev. 14:11; 20:14,15)

2. ***God gives us TIME to give us***
the opportunity for: **Wisdom**

Ps 90:12 ¶ So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

This psalm, written through Moses who lived to be 120 years old, unveils a theme that Moses saw vividly portrayed before his eyes, as 1.2 million of his people perished in a brief 40 years: namely, the brevity of life.

Psalm 90 is the oldest of all Psalms. Interestingly enough, the age of this psalm corresponds to the theme of it - namely, the shortness of life on earth.

Every day 130,000 people die somewhere in the world. Every hour 5,417 people go to meet their Maker.

That's 90 per minute. That's nearly 2 people every second.

The clock of time is wound but once,
And no man has the power
To tell just when the hands will stop,
At late or early hour..
Now is the only time you own;
So live, love, toil doing God's will,
Place no faith in tomorrow,
For the clock may then be still.

"So" - in light of what was previously said (v. 1-11)
"Teach us" - only God can place within man an accurate value of each minute of time.
"To number" - to truly consider that life's days are few.

God likens the swiftness of our lives unto:
1) A weaver's shuttle (Job 7:6)
2) A breath of air (Job 7:6)
3) A runner (Job 9:25)
4) Swift ships (Job 9:26)
5) A flower (Job 14:1)
6) A shadow (Job 14:2)
7) As evaporating water (Job 14:11-12)
8) A shepherd's tent (Is. 38:12)
9) A vapor (Ja. 4:14)

The reason given for numbering our days is not so that we can miserably lament the brevity of life, but so that we will both learn and experience the art of skillful living.

"Wisdom" - is truth put into life. it is applied knowledge. Our heart (the core of our being) needs to know God's truth, then live it in order to make the most of our lives.

Sawyer's paraphrase: "So teach us to understand the shortness of life, so that we may live for what really matters."

Rev 1:3 ¶ Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

"He that readeth" - refers to the one (NOTE - singular) who would publically read this book before others. I will be blessed for reading and preaching the book of Revelation to you.

"They that hear" - (plural) those who listen as it is read. You will be blessed for coming faithfully to church to hear the proclamation of this book.

"Keep" = to hold on to what God says. To preserve what you hear in your heart and mind. To not be a "forgetful hearer" but one who pays serious attention to what he has been taught (cp. Rev. 12:17; SEE: 22:7).

The reason why the readers of this book are blessed is: "for (because) the time is at hand." I.e., the season (of the end) is near.

The angel later tells John not to seal up (keep hidden and closed from our view) "the sayings of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand" (Rev. 22:10).

No other book in the Bible promises a blessing to the reader, listeners, and doers like Revelation.

And yet many have never taken the time to read it. Many are afraid of it, and view it as totally incomprehensible.

3. ***God gives us TIME to give us***
the opportunity for: **A Testimony**

Col 4:5 ¶ Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

"To walk in wisdom" - means to live wisely, to conduct our life in such a manner that our lives do not offend or become a stumbling block to any unsaved (by our inconsistency, poor testimony, etc.)

"Wisdom" is truth put into action (in life; into "shoe leather" etc.)

Hence, God is commanding us to have a walk that is not mere religious talk, but genuine Godliness.

To walk in wisdom would certainly include:

1)Walking in "newness of life" (Ro. 6:4)

2)Walking in "the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16)

3)Walking "worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (Eph. 4:1)

4)Walking "in love" (Eph. 5:2)

5)Walking circumspectly (carefully) (Eph. 5:15)

6)Walking in the light (I Jn. 1:7)

7)Walking like Jesus walked (I Jn. 2:6)

A .Wise living is concerned about:
What Others Think (v. 5a)

"Them that are without" - those who are on the outside; those who are excluded from the fellowship of Christ, those shut out from Christianity.

"Without" - refers to the unsaved

I Tim. 3:7 - "Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without: lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."

What awful predicament it is to be "without" - How terrible it is to be:
Without Christ
Without forgiveness
Without the Holy Spirit
Without Heaven
Without peace, joy
Without spiritual understanding
Without hope
Without direction
Without personal holiness
Without genuine relationships in a loving assembly

One reason why many are "without" is because as they look at some Christians who are "within" they see nothing attractive or desirable.

If we bear the name "Christian" we must rightly represent Christ (ILLUS: TAN #4999 - Alexander's namesake)

ILLUS: a preacher was followed - Dr. Will H. Houghton (SEE: Wiersbe, p. 141)

B. Wise living is concerned about:
Taking Advantage of Golden Opportunities (v. 5b)

NOTE how a life of wisdom is linked with time.

It is only as we realize the brevity of life and the importance of every moment that we live truly wise lives.

The phrase "redeeming the time" in the context of verse 5 means:

*Make the most of every opportunity to show your unsaved friends, neighbors, and relatives the light that is in you (Mt. 5:16 - "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven")

"Redeeming the time" - this participial phrase describes the walk of the believer toward the unbelievers.

"Redeem" = to buy out; used of the market place (EX: To take advantage of a tremendous sale). **This word points to the value of time.

"The time" - 3 Greek Words for time in the N.T. -

1)"Aeon" - a long span of time; an age
2)"Kronos" - a chronological period of time
*3)"Kairos" - a brief season of time; a moment; or brief opportunity
**This word points to the brevity (shortness) of time.

Love them; help them; tell them! You may never see them again!

Neglected opportunities often never return.

4. ***God gives us TIME to give us***
the opportunity for: **Prayer**

Heb 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Many times people are reluctant to go to someone they view as unapproachable, harsh, unbending, unforgiving, unmerciful (EX: the boss of Larry Tims, who was the boss of Joe Carlone, who was the boss of me at Stanley Works). Many people have this warped view of God.

"Most ancient rulers were unapproachable by the common people. Some would not even allow their highest-ranking officials to come before them without permission. Queen Esther risked her life in approaching King Ahasuerus without invitation, even though she was his wife (Esther 5:1-2). Yet any penitent person, no matter how sinful and undeserving, may approach God's throne at any time for forgiveness and salvation--confident that he will be received with mercy and grace." (MacArthur, p. 115).

"Therefore" - Because Jesus is sympathetic (v. 15), we can have boldness in going to Him in prayer.

"Boldly" - with confidence. Confidence in what?

1) that Jesus bears, cares, and shares with us in our weakness; 2) that Jesus will not reject one who genuinely comes to Him; 3) that Jesus will answer our requests regarding victory over
sin.

"Unto the throne" - not to the confessional booth, but straight through to headquarters! Directly to God.

"The throne of grace" - the gracious throne of the throne from which grace flows. Although God is to be feared (10:27, 31), He (unlike Allah) gives grace (unmerited kindness) to the penitent. Because God's wrath against sin has been propitiated by our Great High Priest, we can now approach Him without fear.

There was a Mercy Seat on the Ark of the Covenant (Ex. 25:17-22) in the Holy of Holies of the Old Testament Tabernacle, but no common person could enter. Priests could go up to the veil, and the High Priest once a year could go beyond. Yet we can go anytime and under any circumstance to enter the Throne of mercy and find help.

Available and Attainable:

A. Mercy (He does not give us what our sin deserves)

"Mercy" - God's withholding of judgment and wrath (Heb. 8:12). Everyone who sincerely asks for mercy receives it (Ex: the Publican - Lk. 18:13).

B. Grace (He does give us what we don't deserve)

"Grace" - not the grace of salvation, but the grace of strength to live victoriously.

"To help" - to help specifically with the area of temptation; to help in our area of *"infirmity."*

The Lord helps by not allowing us to bear more than we can endure and by providing an exit door from temptation (I Cor. 10:13 - "*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but god is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.")*

"In time" - at a good time; at the right time; God's help is well-timed . . .
"Just when we need Him most."

5. ***God gives us TIME to give us***
the opportunity for: **Service**

Philippians 1:21-25: For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;

- Paul's predicament (v.22b-23a)
"I am in a strait betwixt two" = I am being pressed on both sides. Pressure from both angles. "in a pickle"
He was caught between 2 desires.

- Paul's preference (v.23b)
"desire" = a longing; strong urge.
"depart" = word used by armies that took down their tents & prepared to go to another location.
word was also used by sailors who pulled up their ship's anchors & set sail for another port.

If you are not ready to die maybe its because you are too stuck (anchored) to the port of this world. Your anchor is deeply sunk into other priorities.

Paul in a sense feels like an eagle trapped in a cage. Ready to soar away from such an unnatural environment.

"together with Christ" - There is no intermediate stop between earth and one's final destiny. "...to be absent from the body (is to be) present with the Lord" (II Cor.5:8).
Jesus said to the repentant thief dying on the cross: "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise"(Lk.23:43) As Stephen faced death, he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God" (Act.7:56)

death immediately ushers us into God's glorious presence.

"which is far better" - Death for one who is ready is a preference. If this is true the ending of life should not be a burden but a blessing. I should be a translation, not a termination; an advantage no adversity; ecstasy not agony. It is a "graduation to Glory!" (Taylor p.54)

We do not sorrow as others who have no hope (I Th.4:13).

Being with Christ is the best thing imaginable (He is our bridegroom Eph.5)

(v.22a)
For Paul, life automatically equalled fruitful labor.

(v.24-25)
Although he had a longing to depart, Paul wanted to live for the benefit of others.

"That which anchors us to life for a longer season should be an awareness that we may help others" (Taylor)

How long will doctors be needed in the world? - As long as there are sick.
How long will firemen .....fires.
Sunday school teachers?.....Children who need the gospel.
preachers.....Lost men, Christians in need of growth.
encouragers.....discouraged.

Paul was willing to have heaven postponed so that he could help other Christians grow & glow.

6. ***God gives us TIME to give us***
the opportunity for: **God's Will**

1Peter 4:2 That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

"The rest of his time" - the remainder of our lifetime.

Prior to coming to Christ, we gave enough of our time fulfilling the carnal desires and appetites of our unsaved, lost, misguided worldly friends, relatives, neighbors, associates, etc. Let's give the rest of our time for things that really matter -

--the eternal, not the temporal
--the Godly, not the worldly
--the spiritual, not the carnal

We are ***"in the flesh"*** (in mortal bodies) only for a brief moment (in light of eternity). Once we are in Heaven, we will never again have the opportunity to glorify God by resisting temptation, conquering sin, walking by faith, witnessing to a lost and dying world, etc.

We should live with a passion to fulfill ***"the will of God"*** (i.e. to carry out the desires and wishes of our Heavenly Father as revealed in His Word).

"Time past" (v. 3)	***"The rest of his time"*** (v. 2)
(Prior to conversion)	(After conversion)

"Suffice" - Sufficient; more than enough; far too much. What God is saying is this: "Far too much time has gone by for us to have accomplished the will of the Gentiles" (the worldly nations).

We wasted enough of our life feeding the coffers of the world, pouring our energies into vanities, investing our talents for filthy mammon and worldly glitter, spending our time on self-gratifying pleasures.

We should have "closed the book" on worldly lusts.

Conclusion:

We need to make resolutions regarding the above mentioned reasons as to why God gives us time.

Note the resolutions of Jonathan Edwards

Note the resolutions written By A Young African Pastor and Tacked on The Wall of His House

I'm part of the fellowship of the unashamed.
I have Holy Spirit Power.
The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line.
The decision has been made. I'm a disciple of His.
I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still.

My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, my future is secure.
I'm finished and done with my low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, mundane talking, cheap living, and dwarfed goals.

I no longer need pre-eminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity.
I don't have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded.
I now live by faith, lean on His presence, walk by patience,
lift by prayer, and labor by power.

My face is set, by gait is fast, my goal is Heaven, my road is narrow,
my way rough, my companion few,
my Guide reliable, my mission clear.
I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away,
turned back, deluded, or delayed.
I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of the adversary,
negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity,
or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

I won't give up, shut up, let up, until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up,
preached up for the cause of Christ. I am a disciple of Jesus.
I must go till He comes, give till I drop, preach till all know, and work till He stops me.
And when He comes for His own,
He will have no problem recognizing me – my banner will be clear.

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