

What Does God Mean By Redeeming The Time?

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In the fall of 2006, I had an encounter with an elk in the mountains on my motorcycle. The result was eight broken ribs, a broken collar bone, a partially collapsed lung and a concussion. After I got out of the hospital, I was in a lot of pain. I looked at my Harley all scraped up and I started thinking, if I could only go back and buy back the minute before the accident. If I could have done that, then I would do things differently. I think we've all had that same thought. The wife could be chopping onions or something and one of the kids yells and she looks up just as the knife comes down and takes the end of her finger off. She would think the same thing, "If I could just have that time back and not react that way."

Maybe we've been in situations (I have) where you go around the corner and all of a sudden the back end starts coming around and you're doing cartwheels down the road. If I could just have back the moment before entering the corner, you might have done it differently. You might have slowed down.

We've all been there when words come out of our mouth that shouldn't and we wish we could go back prior to that and think and exercise God's spirit and not have it happen.

We've all been in a position of wanting to buy back the time. We've all been in a position of wanting to go back and retrieve that time so we would have the opportunity to do things differently.

The Bible talks about that. The phrase, "redeeming the time" occurs twice in the Bible. They're both in the New Testament. Paul wrote them both and he was addressing two different churches.

Today we want to examine this concept of redeeming the time. The title of the sermon is:

What Does God Mean By Redeeming The Time?

Point number 1: The first way we can redeem the time is by getting our mind off the self.

What we'd like to do in the first point is look at the Greek definitions of the word "redeeming" and the word "time." It's not as obvious as you may think. Then we want to look at the two scriptures where these words occur.

The Greek word for "redeeming" is Strong's 1805, and it means to *buy up*, or more importantly to *ransom*. If someone is taken captive, you offer a ransom to buy them back. That is the sense of the word, to buy something back. It means figuratively to

rescue from loss or to improve an opportunity. Those are all meanings of the Greek word “redeeming.”

The Greek word for “time” is Strong’s 2540 and it can mean *a set time or a proper time* or it can mean *a period of opportunity*. Zodhiates says this about time: “It is generally the equivalent of the word ‘opportunity.’” We would normally associate time with opportunity. As we go, we will see that they are tied closely together in understanding the notion of redeeming the time. Both Greek words speak of opportunity and if we rescue something from loss, if we buy back something, then we increase our opportunity to do it differently and not make the same mistake that caused the problem in the first place.

Let’s go to the two verses that use this phrase, “redeeming the time.” Notice that Paul talks, in the beginning of this verse, about wisdom.

Colossians 4:5. *Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. (KJV)*

That means buying back the time, giving yourself a period of opportunity. The NLT says:

Colossians 4:5. *Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity. (NLT)*

It’s very interesting to understand the word “time” as opportunity.

So here we see in Colossians 4:5, tying together wisdom with redeeming the time and making the most of every opportunity. We are wise if we do that.

Let’s go to the second example. I’m reading from the King James. I will quote the margin here.

Ephesians 5:14. *Wherefore he [it] ... (KJV)*

The margin in the King James says it can also be translated “it” which is more appropriate.

14b) ... says, Awake thou that sleep... (KJV)

That sounds like Laodicea to me.

*14 continued) ... and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.
15) See then that you walk circumspectly... (KJV)*

The Greek for “circumspectly” means *diligently* or *accurately*.

15b) ... not as fools, but as wise, (KJV)

Again, it brings up the notion of wisdom.

16) redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

*17) Wherefore be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.
(KJV)*

So we see here redeeming the time associated again with wisdom, but also with understanding God's will. Verse 16 in the NLT:

16) Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. (NLT)

We see these two verses that use the phrase "redeeming the time" are tied in with wisdom and tied in with making the most of every opportunity and understanding what God's will is.

What Paul is saying to these two different churches in these two different letters is to develop wisdom, buy back the time spent on unprofitable works or thoughts. If we redeem the time, if we can buy it back and do it all over again so to speak, then we have more time and more opportunity to do God's will. We need to see how this phrase ties in with wisdom and opportunity and doing God's will.

With that in mind, that leads us to the second point. We want to look at three areas where all of us need to redeem or buy back the time, to save the time that is being lost or wasted.

Point number 2: We need to redeem the time spent focusing on the self.

If we are fixated on the self, that is wasted time. Let's turn to 2 Timothy 3:1-5. We've read this many times over the last two or three years. It shows us what the symptoms are of these end days. I will read it from the NLT. This gives a little different slant on it, but doesn't change the meaning.

2 Timothy 3:1. *You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. (NLT)*

We are seeing that already obviously.

2) For people will love only themselves and their money [gross selfishness]. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. (NLT)

We see that on the media and television. God's name is blasted all over the place and God's laws broken consistently.

3) *They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good.*

4) *They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. (NLT)*

That's all we see around us today is the pursuit of pleasure, not the pursuit of God.

5) *They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that! [Paul is telling Timothy] (NLT)*

You see, in these last days, so many will focus on themselves ... their wants, their desires, their problems, to the exclusion of all else. It's all about me. We talked about narcissism some time ago. Narcissism is the main characteristic of modern society. It's all about me. I'm the only one that is important. Where the main focus is on the self, I can guarantee you that Satan is there. It means that every minute that we fixate on ourselves is a minute shut off from God. Every minute we fixate on ourselves is a minute shut off from God's people. Now it's not wrong to be concerned about our needs. We have to provide for ourselves. I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about fixating on the self to where the whole focus is about me.

We need to understand that whatever direction the world is going, we would be well advised to go the other direction. That would be a good way to head out. Then you can modify it as you go along, but way too much time is wasted on television, internet, computers, games and all of that stuff. Talk about redeeming the time. Way too much time is wasted fixating about me, myself, my desires and interests.

Let's notice what God says about that. So much time is wasted that could be put to good use when we just fixate about us. The Bible says we should not do that. We're not the center of the universe. God is the center of everything. Paul says:

1 Corinthians 12:25. *That there should be no schism [division] in the body... (KJV)*

The body of Christ, the Church of God.

25b) ... but that the members should have the same care one for another. (KJV)

Care about others as much as we care about the self. That's the second great commandment.

26) And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. (KJV)

This is the opposite of selfishness and narcissism. It's having our mind on others.

Let's go to Philippians 2:3. Verse 5 talks about having the mind of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 2:3. *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit ... (NKJV)*

Selfish ambition and conceit focuses on the self and no one else. But Paul says:

3b) ... but in lowliness of mind [humility] let each esteem others better than himself. (NKJV)

This is the opposite of pride. Paul is saying that if the world is going this way (pride, narcissism and selfishness) we have to go the other way. That's esteeming others better than us. If people would esteem others better than themselves, this stuff wouldn't be happening. However, they don't have God's holy spirit. They will have their time.

Romans 15:1. *We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak ... (KJV)*

We all go through times where we are stronger some days and weaker other days. Sometimes we have months where we are spiritually strong and then we can slip into times when we're not as strong as we should be. What this tells us is that those who are spiritually strong, and it can also include physically strong as well if someone needs physical help, but those who are spiritually strong bear the infirmities of the weak. They help their brother or sister when they are spiritually weak or if they're physically weak and need physical help.

1b) ... and not to please ourselves. (KJV)

We're not to focus on the self. We must be there to focus on others, to serve and help.

2) Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. (KJV)

This is basic unselfishness, the concept of pleasing your neighbor, not burning your neighbor down, but doing what is best for your neighbor. We are only truly happy when we make others happy. To be just focused on the self doesn't compare to focusing on others and seeing joy in others. That makes us even happier. Sometimes happiness can be selfish. It is not as great as when that happiness includes other people. Therefore, we must get our minds off the self and fulfill the second great commandment of loving your neighbor as much as you love yourself.

So we can redeem the time by getting our mind off the self.

Point number 3: Redeem the time we spend focusing on the negative things.

When we focus on the negative, just about every second is wasted time. For example, we've had days that are basically good. On any given day let's say ten things happen and nine of them are right and good and one is a stinker and maybe it didn't go so well.

There are people who look at the ten things, nine good and one not so good, and they will fixate on the thing that is bad and totally ignore the nine things that went right.

Conversely, on any given day, someone can have one good thing and nine things are disastrous. Mothers raising children understand this. So we have the opportunity to decide what we are going to fixate on. Some, despite the fact that nine things went bad, will focus on the good thing and not fixate on the bad.

The problem is that when we fixate and obsess on the worst things that could happen, then we have a problem. I'm not planning for the worst. Sometimes in business, you have to plan for the worst thing, or for buying insurance, you have to plan for something that could go bad. I'm talking about when we fixate or obsess about the negative. There's an old saying that a coward dies a thousand deaths. The coward, who is fearful about the future, goes over in his mind all the bad things that could happen. They worry and stew over something that may never happen.

Let me give you an example. Let's say you have a pain where your appendix is. You start worrying about it and then you say to yourself, "What if it explodes? I'm going to have to go to the emergency room and they'll have to cut me open and then I'll get an infection." It goes on and on. When you fixate on it and go over it and over it. Your body, your mind and your adrenal system is actually going through that tragedy in your mind. It's devastating to the body when you focus on the negative. It may not even happen. You may wake up the next morning, the pain is gone and there's no problem. Some people will obsess about it and worry and it goes over and over in their mind and they have appendicitis a thousand times. That will wreck the body. It's very bad for one's physical health, mental and emotional health.

As an elder, you necessarily deal with a lot of negative situations. When the phone rings, you generally know it's a problem. I had a phone call this week. I picked up the phone and the caller said, "I want to tell you that everything is going fine." He told me all the good things that happened and we had a good conversation and that was great. However, those conversations are few and far between. So when the phone rings, particularly if it's late at night, you can expect the worst. The knot starts in the stomach. You know at two a.m., it's not good news. That can translate into other things where, as an elder, you can begin to expect the worst. You can't do that, but it's something you have to watch out for. Dorothy is immensely helpful in that area. Dorothy is one that if you had one good thing in a day and nine bad things, Dorothy will focus on the good thing. She says, "Well, at least this went right." That helps me greatly. You see, it is wasted time to focus on things that may never happen.

Also, it's wasted time to focus on things that we don't have. When we focus on the car we don't have or the home we don't have or the job we don't have or maybe the health we don't have, when we fixate on that, it is wasted time. It results in a lack of peace and tranquility and being satisfied. It keeps us in a state of turmoil. Let's turn to Ecclesiastes 5:10. This is talking about focusing on things we don't have. When I was younger, I did that, guilty as charged and it's not a good way to be.

Ecclesiastes 5:10. *Those who love money will never have enough. (NLT)*

If you have one million, you're going to want two. If you have two, you're going to want five. If you have one home, you'll want two or three. There's just never enough. It goes on to say:

10b) How meaningless to think that wealth brings true happiness! (NLT)

Focusing on things we don't have will not bring happiness, just the opposite. Where the focus is on the negative in our mind, I guarantee you that Satan is there. Satan will take that negativity and work and dig and push and shove until it becomes an obsession and we fixate on it and then it causes us to do things we shouldn't do. We waste the time.

Let's go to Matthew 6 and see what Christ said about this. Christ knew that humanly this would be a problem. He knew that we would tend to fixate on these issues that He brings up and He offers us a Godly solution.

Matthew 6:24. *"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. (NKJV)*

The NIV and the NLT translate "mammon" as *money*. In today's terminology that is a better translation. You can't serve God and money.

25) "Therefore I say to you ... (NKJV)

Now He says this several times during this treatise about focusing and worrying about the future and what we don't have.

25b) ... do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?

26) Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? (NKJV)

He's getting right down to the basics, our relationship with God. Does God value us more than birds and animals? Of course, He does.

27) Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

28) "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;

29) and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30) *Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? (NKJV)*

He is saying, "I know you're human and you're going to obsess and worry over these things and I'm trying to help you out here, to focus the mind on what's really important."

31) *"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'"*

32) *For after all these things the Gentiles seek ... (NKJV)*

Here's the key.

32b) *... For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. (NKJV)*

God knows that you need all these things.

33) *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. (NKJV)*

If our focus is right, all the other stuff comes into place, and we know that. We know when we are close to God, when our mind is headed in the right direction, everything seems to work out fine. Perhaps it's not the way we want, but it works out fine.

34) *Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (NKJV)*

Don't project today into tomorrow. If something didn't work out today, don't project it forward. If our mind is right, God will work behind the scenes. He moves those pieces on the chess board in ways we cannot understand or comprehend to work things out for us. By not worrying and not obsessing on the negative, it frees time to focus on what is really important. We will get into that a little later on.

Point number 4: We need to redeem the time spent on judging and condemning others.

It is wasted time when we judge and condemn. Look at what is going on with all sides. They're throwing rocks at each other, hurling ICBMs at each other. Condemning others wastes time. We are responsible for us. We're not responsible for the world or this society. We're responsible for setting a good example, loving God with all our heart and then loving our neighbors as ourselves. That's our sphere of influence. Our sphere of concern goes beyond that, but we can't do anything about that

We need to redeem the time spent condemning and judging, because by definition, judging and condemning are negative. They're negative thoughts and emotions.

Let's turn to Luke 6. This is so basic. This is Christ's first sermon and Luke is showing us that Christ started off on the most basic way possible. First things first.

Luke 6:31. *And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. (KJV)*

If we don't want to be judged or condemned, then we shouldn't judge or condemn others. It's very simple.

32) *For if you love them which love you, what thank have you? (KJV)*

Is God going to praise you for that?

32b) *... for sinners also love those that love them. (KJV)*

Sinners love other sinners, and that is not pleasing to God.

36) *Be you therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.*

37) *Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: (KJV)*

The Greek word for "udge" here is Strong's 2919, and it means to *decide mentally, to make a decision or to decide judicially* (like a judge in a courtroom) and it means, *by implication, to put someone on trial and make a judgment*. He says, "Don't do that."

37b) *... condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: (KJV)*

The Greek word for "condemn" is Strong's 2613 and it means *to judge against or to pronounce guilty*. Already in your mind, they're guilty. We've all been there and done that. The proverb says, *He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is a folly to him*. You answer a matter before you have all the facts. That happens all the time in the media and in this society. Christ is saying, "Don't put someone on trial and don't condemn. If you don't do that, you won't be condemned."

37 continued) *... forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: (KJV)*

If we do all that; we don't judge and don't condemn and we forgive, then verse 38 tells us the reward. I'll read this from the NLT.

38) *Give, and you will receive ... (NLT)*

You can't receive if you don't give.

38b) *... your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back. (NLT)*

Whatever measure you use in giving, large or small, it will be used to measure what is given back to you. So if we don't judge, if we don't condemn or put people on trial in our minds and in our hearts, then God will not do that to us. If we forgive, we will be forgiven even more. That's what this tells us. Where judgment and condemnation are, I guarantee you there is Satan right in the middle of that. So rather than judge and condemn, here's what we should be doing.

This is something that I continually have to remind myself of because this world is negative. Satan sees to that. Satan is negative and his broadcasting is making this world a very negative place. Paul says:

Philippians 4:8. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true ... (KJV)

That means if we don't know the truth, we shouldn't assume they're true. We know the Bible is true. We know God and Christ are alive right now.

8b) ... whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just [fair, even handed, no respecter of persons], whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. (KJV)

So we've seen here four areas where we need to focus on and buy back the time, redeem the time so we don't waste time in these areas. It's particularly important as we get closer to the end.

Point number 5: If we're capable of redeeming the time, if you stop wasting time on things we talked about, then what should we be doing with that redeemed time?

We will talk about four areas.

A. Use the time, and as the Greek words say, take the opportunity to appreciate our blessings.

It is a positive thing when we appreciate our blessings. Rather than focusing on what we don't have, we need to focus on what we do have. Let's go to Hebrews 13:5. If you look at Paul's life where he was the Hebrew of the Hebrews and was taught at the feet of Gamaliel. He was the rising star. Then he took on a mission of persecuting Christians and sending them to jail and killing some and dividing families where they had to flee. Then he did a 180 on the road to Damascus and then started this new journey. He suffered and suffered and suffered.

Hebrews 13:5. Let your conversation [conduct] be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have: for he hath said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you. (KJV)

Paul lost a lot, but he managed to focus on what he had.

With that in mind, let's go back to Philippians 4 and read verse 11. Paul learned this lesson after being the rising star to the one that was persecuted by his own people.

Philippians 4:11. *Not that I speak in respect of want ... (KJV)*

I'm not focusing on what I don't have.

*11b) ... for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.
(KJV)*

He said he was hungry at times, he was naked at times, he was shipwrecked at times, he was beaten at times, and still through it all he focused on the positive and focused on God's Kingdom. His body might be torn to shreds, but his mind was on his reward. He said, in that sense, "I am content."

How much money or how many things do we need? Dorothy was talking to her sisters this week. They celebrate wedding anniversaries and we give gifts back and forth and Dorothy came up with an idea. You get these gifts and what are you going to do with all this stuff? Most of us have so much. The world spends millions of dollars on storage facilities to store the stuff that we have and don't need, but we don't want to get rid of it, so we pay money to have it stored. At some point when we die, it will be bulldozed down and sent to a dump or whatever. That makes a lot of sense. How many things does a person need? How much money do we need? We need to appreciate the simple things.

We all have simple blessings and they cost next to nothing, and yet it's so easy to ignore and we fixate on the things we don't have. We need to be aware of the blessings of each moment. Dorothy likes to say, "Stop and smell the roses." She has me in the habit of smelling the roses. I never did it before we were married. We come to a rose bush and she smells them so I smell them. You take about ten seconds and say, "Oh, what a smell!" Each one is different. This is a thirty second timeout, a thirty second vacation and when you smell that fragrance, everything goes away. You're not thinking about anything else but that fragrance. It's a wonderful thing. Christ said that Solomon in all of his glory was not adorned like one of these flowers.

For the coffee lovers, it's the first cup of coffee in the morning. That is something to look forward to. It is so good. What does a cup of coffee cost? It's next to nothing.

Stop for a minute to look at the sunrise and sunset. It's free and you'll never see another one just like it. What a blessing. You look at a sunrise and thank God and say, "God, this is a gift from You to me, and I thank you. I thank you that I'm alive. I'm thankful to have eyes to see it."

Some people can sit and look out the window and see a gentle snowfall and they love it and appreciate it. You can walk outside and see the flakes fall. However, with some people, all they see is shoveling. All they see is driving through sloppy roads and they don't appreciate the moment because their mind is on the negative. It's easy to do. Just appreciate the snowfall.

The joy of a child; sometimes we get on our kids when they don't measure up. I drove up to a Starbucks in Ellensburg in the summertime. This mom and her little girl, maybe three years old, were headed to the door of Starbuck's. This little girl was so excited. She was skipping and hopping and her eyes were big because she was going to Starbucks and obviously her mom had promised her something. This little one could hardly wait and it was fun to watch the joy in this little kid's heart. We see it in our own kids. Yet sometimes we just don't stop and appreciate it.

Appreciating God's creation; we live in one of the most beautiful places on earth. We have so many blessings here. We have high desert, we have mountains and valleys and streams and the ocean. We have all kinds of blessings in this part of the world. I love the fall. You see trees that are yellow and bright with the sun shining through. So beautiful and there's no cost. The crisp fall weather is invigorating. The sunlight sparkling on a river; you look and wonder how God does that. The sunlight hits the river and it turns silver. It's a real blessing.

There's a true saying that goes, *The things that we take for granted are what others are praying for.*

When I was young and got up each morning, I just got up. I never stopped to thank God that I'm alive and I'm not in pain. We take it for granted when we're young, but when we're old and have aches and pains of our bodies wearing out, it's a blessing to wake up and take a deep breath and say, "Hey, I'm not hurting! That's a blessing. Thank you, God."

We need to stop and appreciate our blessings instead of focusing on the negative or judging or condemning. Focus on our blessings. Redeeming the time gives us the opportunity to focus and appreciate our blessings.

B. Another way we can use the time redeemed is to cultivate human relationships, to cultivate marriages, friendships, family.

Satan is attacking these as never before. I've never seen it as bad in God's church where Satan is trying to divide people, whether it's in a marriage or in a church or friends through misunderstandings, innuendos, bad attitudes or whatever it might be. We talked in previous sermons about how to cultivate a good marriage. We've also talked about cultivating successful and happy kids, where we shift from being god to them when they're little to being a friend and mentor as they get older.

Let's talk a minute about cultivating true friendships in the church. We need to use the time to cultivate relationships and friendships in the church.

Proverbs 18:24. *A man that has friends must show himself friendly ... (KJV)*

That's obvious. If you want to be loved, you have to love others.

24b) ... and there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother. (KJV)

There's a friend that can be closer than a blood relative and we know that in the church. My brother, thankfully, is in the church. However, those of you who have brothers and sisters outside the church, you know you have friendships in the church that are even closer because of the bond of the holy spirit.

Proverbs 17:17. *A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. (KJV)*

The Hebrew word "brother" here is the same that we just read in Proverbs 18:24. The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament by Baker and Carpenter gives three definitions for this word "brother." It can be *those with common parents or those with common ancestors*, like Jews are brothers in the sense that they have common ancestors, but it can also mean *a close friend outside the immediate family*. That is Strong's 251, where it says: A brother is born for adversity. Yes, it can refer to a blood brother, but it also refers to a friend outside of the family.

With that in mind, let's go to Galatians 6:10. We're talking about cultivating friendships within the body of Jesus Christ. There is a friend that loves at all times and is born for adversity, when we face trouble together.

Galatians 6:10. *As we have therefore opportunity ... (KJV)*

Remember the word "opportunity" is part of the definition of the Greek words for "redeeming" and "time." So it fits right in.

10b) ... let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household [Greek means family] of faith. (KJV)

So as we redeem the time and it gives us the opportunity to do things differently, then we need to cultivate friendships and do good to those who are in the body of Christ. Close relationships are worth more than all the money in the world. A guy can die with millions or billions of dollars and have no friends because he stabbed people in the back and crawled over people. He dies alone and miserable and he cannot take it with him. But close relationships are worth more than all the money in the world. Redeeming the time gives us the opportunity to form these relationships and develop and build them.

C. Take the opportunity to please God and make God happy.

Earlier I said that we are only truly happy when we make others happy. How much more can we be happy when we make God happy, if we know we are making Him happy by our thoughts, our words, our deeds, by the motivation behind our thoughts and words and deeds?

The Apostle John says:

1 John 3:22. *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him ... (KJV)*

He tells us why.

22b) ... because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. (KJV)

If we can redeem the time spent on unprofitable thoughts and activities, we can use that time to please God. But in order to please God, we have to know what God likes. How can you please someone if you don't know what they like? In order to please God, we have to get to know God.

1 John 2:3. And hereby we do know that we know him ... (KJV)

It answers the question ... How can we know God?

3b) ... if we keep his commandments. (KJV)

The commandments tell us how God would live if God were on the earth, how He would live as a human being and as Christ did.

4) He that says, I know him, and keeps not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. (KJV)

So by keeping God's commandments we learn more about God. We learn more about what God likes and doesn't like, what pleases God and what does not please God.

To please God, we need to know what His will is and what His desire for us is. With that in mind, turn to Ephesians 5:17. Paul is saying to those in the church of Ephesus and us today:

Ephesians 5:17. *Wherefore be not unwise... (KJV)*

Remember redeeming the time is tied in with wisdom.

17b) ... but understanding what the will of the Lord is. (KJV)

We read the definitions of “time” and “redeem” and they’re both tied into wisdom and understanding God’s will. One of the things that I stew about most is asking myself, “What does God want me to do here? What would Christ do if He had to make this decision?” All of us are there. We want to know what God’s will is. That understanding of God’s will only comes with much, much prayer, study and meditation on God’s word. If we pray to God, He speaks to us. By studying God’s word and what works and doesn’t work, God speaks to us. When we meditate and take the time and shut off the television, shut off the noise and go into a quiet room, take a deep breath, sit down, kneel down or whatever and start thinking about God, God speaks to us.

So redeeming the time gives us more opportunity to please God and as the time gets closer to the end, we have to spend more time in prayer, study and meditating on God’s word.

D. We need to take the opportunity to exercise God’s holy spirit.

Just like physical exercise takes time and effort, and by taking the time and effort to exercise a muscle, it gets bigger. This is a direct analogy to the holy spirit. If we spend time with God in prayer and study and meditation, God’s spirit starts growing. We exercise the spirit we have and God gives us more and we get stronger and stronger in God’s holy spirit. It takes time though.

We’re going to read the parable of the ten virgins. I want you to read it with the thought in mind of redeeming the time, using wisdom, and of understanding what God’s will is by redeeming the time.

Matthew 25:1. *Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins ... (KJV)*

Now this should get our attention when Christ talks about the kingdom.

1b) ... which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. (KJV)

It is obvious by studying the scriptures that the bridegroom is Jesus Christ. He is referring to Himself. Notice this:

2) And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. (KJV)

Remember the connection between wisdom and redeeming the time. This is not accidental. This is not a coincidence. It’s there for us to understand. Redeeming the time and wisdom are linked together and we are being told that five were wise and five were foolish. So with the focus of redeeming the time, you could say that five redeemed the time, but five did not.

3) They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: (KJV)

They had oil in the lamp but they didn't have an extra container that held the oil.

- 4) *But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*
- 5) *While the bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept.*
- 6) *And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom comes; go out to meet him.*
- 7) *Then all those virgins arose ... (KJV)*

All of them woke up.

- 7b) *... and trimmed their lamps.*
- 8) *And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. (KJV)*

It can also mean, *are going out*. They knew they lacked something after waking up at the last minute.

- 9) *But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. (KJV)*

Now we know you can't buy God's holy spirit. We understand that. This is an analogy.

- 10) *And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready ... (KJV)*

Meaning those who had redeemed the time used it properly to get close to God and to develop God's holy spirit.

- 10b) *... went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.*
- 11) *Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.*
- 12) *But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. (KJV)*

He said, "I don't know you. I don't recognize you. You're not in the image of my Son, Jesus Christ." Christ says, "I'm not going to marry someone that is unlike me. I'm not going to marry someone I don't recognize. I'm not going to marry someone that has a different set of values and a different mind than I do."

- 13) *Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man comes. (KJV)*

We need to understand that all were virgins. In Worldwide days we used to think that five were converted and five were not. No. They're all virgins. That means unspotted from the world. James 1:27 tells us that all were virgins. They had not fornicated with the world spiritually, or with Satan. They were all virgins and, yes, they were all asleep. If we are honest with ourselves, we will admit that from time to time we go to sleep.

It's obvious that the wise redeemed the time. They used the time before the call was made, before the bridegroom came. They used the time to do the things that are profitable, to get closer to God, get closer to His people, to get closer to Jesus Christ, to have the mind of Christ through study and prayer and meditation, through doing good works. The wise took the opportunity and they used the time to grow in His holy spirit.

The foolish did not redeem the time. They did not use the time wisely. Remember those words are tied in with opportunity. They lost the opportunity to marry Jesus Christ.

Let's understand this parable with the idea of redeeming the time. Redeeming the time gives us the opportunity to exercise God's holy spirit.

So here we have seen four areas where we can redeem the time and increase our opportunity to appreciate the blessings we have, to cultivate relationships, to please God and exercise His holy spirit.

Let's go back as we wind things down, to Ephesians 5, one of the two places where we find "redeeming the time." Colossians 4:5 was the other. Let's read Ephesians 5 based on what we have explored so far today.

Ephesians 5:14. *Wherefore it is said, Awake you that sleep ... (KJV)*

Remember that all ten virgins were asleep.

14b) ... and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light. (KJV)

With your lamps, with your oil and with the mind of Christ.

15) See then that you walk circumspectly [diligently], not as fools, but as wise, (KJV)

The five wise virgins.

16) Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

17) Wherefore be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. (KJV)

These verses tell us that having wisdom and understanding God's will should motivate us to redeem the time and to take every opportunity to please God and get closer to Him and closer to His people and appreciate our blessings.

Let me give you a bit of a story that comes from a news article that was in the billfold of the legendary Texas A & M and Alabama Coach, Paul Bear Bryant. He died in 1982.

When they opened his wallet, they found this old article that was called "The Magic Bank Account." I'd like to read parts of this article in closing.

"The Magic Bank Account"

Imagine that you won the following prize in a contest. Each morning your bank would deposit \$86,400.00 in your private account for your use. However, the prize has five rules.

First Rule: Everything you don't spend during each day would be taken away from you.

Second Rule: You can't transfer that money into another account to save it.

Third Rule: Only you can spend it.

Fourth Rule: Each morning when you awake, the bank gives you another \$86,400.00 because it cleaned out the account the night before.

Fifth Rule: The bank can end the game without warning at any time. It can say that the game is over. The account will be closed and you won't receive any more money.

What would most people do if this was real, if you had \$86,400.00 every morning? You would go out and buy everything you ever wanted, but not only for yourself because you couldn't spend that much on yourself, so you would spend it on your family and friends and others you love and care for. You might even give it to people you don't even know. You might hand out money on the street corner to people who are begging or whatever. You couldn't possibly spend it all on yourself. Every day you try to spend every penny because you knew at the end of the day you will lose what was still there.

The article goes on to say that actually this bank account is real. Most of you have probably figured out what it is. The article says that each of us is a winner of this prize, but we just don't realize it. The prize is time.

Each morning we awake and have 86,400 seconds as a gift. What we haven't spent at the end of the day you can't get back. It's gone forever. Yesterday is forever gone. We can't get it back, but each morning the account is refilled. However, the bank can dissolve the account and say the game is over. God can take our life at any time.

So this was the message Paul Bear Bryant had in his billfold. The question for us in light of what we've been talking about today is ... what are we going to do with our 86,400 seconds every day? What will we do with it? Believe me, those seconds are worth far more than \$86,400.00. What are we going to do with the time?

We need to think about this and remember that we must make every second of our lives profitable, because time races by so much more quickly than we can ever imagine. You only appreciate that as you get older. There's the old saying that life is like a roll of toilet paper; as you get toward the end, it unrolls faster and faster. That is true. You look back and say, "Where did the week go? Where did the month go? Where did the seasons go? Wasn't it hot just a while ago and now we have snow on the mountains." We need to make every second of our lives profitable because it goes by too quickly.

So the message is: Don't waste time. Redeem the time. We shouldn't waste time thinking about ourselves. We shouldn't waste time thinking about the negative. We shouldn't waste time judging and condemning. That is a waste of those seconds. Rather we should use those seconds to appreciate our blessings, to cultivate relationships within God's church, friends, families, our children and parents if at all possible. Most importantly we should spend this time cultivating our relationship with God and Christ and using the time to exercise the holy spirit.

So let's understand what God means when He inspired Paul to bring up the phrase of "redeeming the time." Let's understand that and let's use every second to please God and Jesus Christ and to make them happy with us.