

“Understanding God's Time for You”

Various Scriptures

As we've been exploring the theme 'Understanding the Times' this year, our focus has been predominantly how does God want us to live wisely in the circumstances, seasons and culture we find ourselves in. With no pun intended, it was very timely because this is the most unprecedented time we have found ourselves in, a 20 month now pandemic where we're still wearing masks, washing hands, using zoom and still not quite returned to normal. How have we managed during this time? How have we grown closer to God the last 20 months?

Whether we're in a pandemic, a world war, a depression or peace, safety and plenty, our responsibility has never changed. Are we growing more like Jesus each day? Am I more Spirit-filled and being Spirit-led? Am I more patient and accepting? Am I more generous with my resources and less fearful of my world and problems?

If Acts 17:26 is true for you and me where Paul says,

²⁶From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. ²⁷God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. ²⁸'For in him we live and move and have our being.'

Then that means God has marked out for you and me now and here in world history to live where we do, when we do so that we would find Him (Spiritually) and since we have to live and move and have our being in Him. God is not going to say to us, 'Oh, I'm not going to review how you served Me and lived for Me because there was a pandemic..' Instead He's going to say, 'Why did you put your relationship with Me on hold during Covid? I purposely chose for you to live at that time so that you would live in Me and for Me even in a pandemic? God planned for when we would be born and what circumstances in life we would experience. Life's circumstances are God's plans for how to shape us into Christlikeness. So here's some overriding principles that each one of us must understand and respond appropriately to that will help us allow God to mature us spiritually regardless of life's circumstances. Let's first go to Psalm 90:10-17,

¹⁰Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures; yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away.

¹¹If only we knew the power of your anger! Your wrath is as great as the fear that is your due.

¹²Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

¹³Relent, LORD! How long will it be? Have compassion on your servants.

¹⁴Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.

¹⁵Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, for as many years as we have seen trouble.

¹⁶May your deeds be shown to your servants, your splendor to their children.

¹⁷May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us; establish the work of our hands for us— yes, establish the work of our hands.

While we don't know how many days we have left on this earth, the notion to count each day is God's way of saying

Each Day is a Gift: Give Thanks

(Ps. 90:12-17)

As we too readily know, we did nothing to earn our existence. God in His grace created each one of us and given us a life to enjoy. Even more so, He has opened our hearts to His existence and love through his Son Jesus Christ and given us eternal life through faith in Christ Jesus.' Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love that we sing for joy and be glad all our days' should be our prayer each day right after we've thanked Him that we are alive to enjoy His blessings today. 'Unfailing love' is the Hebrew word 'hesed' which refers to God's unconditional covenant commitment to His children. 'Lord, may I find satisfaction alone today that You are committed to me unconditionally regardless if I am thankful to You today and forget to acknowledge You today.'

We can find satisfaction in God alone because He has wired us in that very way. And we also need to see God's hand all around us by thanking Him for the many blessings in life. Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Tim. 4, warning against false teachers who want to make life legalistic and joyless,

³ They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. ⁴ For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, ⁵ because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.

Everything that is good and right has God's stamp of approval on it. There are many things we take for granted each day because we don't have to struggle for food, drinking water, a place to live, good health, marriage and children. Yet how many people in the world don't have those things or relationships while we do and yet we complain about wearing a mask or a long checkout line or a back order of a product we want to buy. God's people of all people should be the most thankful in the world.

Each day should be appreciated as a gift from God for another reason. The prophet Jeremiah grieved over the destruction of Jerusalem in Lamentations. It is five chapters of sorrowful observation and remembrance over the terrible circumstances they experienced as the people of God. And yet, he looked up long enough and remembered God's hesed to them in the middle of the book and he wrote this in 3:19-27,

¹⁹ I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall.

²⁰ I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me.

²¹ Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope:

²² Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.

²³ They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

²⁴ I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him."

²⁵ The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him;

²⁶ it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

²⁷ It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young.

Jeremiah reminds us, no matter how difficult life can be at times, to remember

Each Day Brings New Grace and Mercy:
Trust God
(Lam. 3:19-27)

Jeremiah acknowledges his depression and anxiety over their circumstances yet, he reminds himself of God's covenant commitment to them and says 'I have hope'. What's his hope? That as a child of God he knows God has not abandoned him because he and many others survived as a result of God's great love. His compassions never fail. Every day He extends new mercies and grace to us to handle and trust Him for that day. We measure our life in years but God says count your days. Just live one day at a time and see the grace and mercy I extend to you today. What it did for Jeremiah at a terrible time in his life was renew his hope and so he continued to trust God for his future - and his future started with the next day when God's mercies and grace arrive freshly for that day. Jeremiah said, I can wait patiently for the Lord. I can trust Him to reverse my situation around because He is with me and committed to me one day at a time.

If you're in a tough spot where you can't see how things can improve, wait patiently on God today. He gave you grace and mercy for today. trust Him for today, thank Him for all that He's done in your life, and wait patiently for when He will turn your situation around. Jesus said it similarly in Matt. 6:33-34 after exhorting the 12 not to be anxious about what they will eat or wear,

³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Jesus says don't worry about tomorrow but instead focus on God's kingdom. The literal kingdom is Jesus' rule on earth which we're awaiting, but His kingdom exists spiritually in the hearts of those who have made Him their king now. Since He is our Lord and Master we are to live for Him. Focusing on what improves or brings about more quickly His return to rule. By maintaining our trust in Him and being thankful, we will help people see the difference faith in Jesus brings and Lord -willing ask us about Jesus themselves. Jesus hasn't return because God wants to extend His grace and mercy to more people. And He wants us to bring the message of hope to our neighbours, co-workers and friends. We just need to trust Him for that as well.

It's not easy to keep our focus on God's purpose each day. The apostle Paul reminds us that

Each Day Has *Evil & Good* in it: Keep Looking Up **(Eph. 5:15-21)**

⁵ Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. ¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²¹ Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Yes, Paul says each day contains evil and good so if we're not wise we will be foolish, not focus on God's will and fail to be filled with the Spirit. How do we know if that happened? The answer is in vv.19-21. Did we encourage other people with Scriptural words and ideas? Were we sensitive to giving thanks to God for many things and people during the day? Did we do anything in the name and power of Jesus? Did we humble ourselves and submit to serve someone today?

Maybe your thinking, well I may not have done many or any of those things but I wouldn't call what I did evil. Evil is simply the absence of God. If I lived my day without any thought to God then it wasn't for God's glory it was for my own - and that's what Satan wants us to do. Remember he

disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). By making us think we are doing good even when we were just doing our own thing; without involving God of course.

While focusing on God and the things He wants us to do should come naturally, unless we discipline ourselves to do just that, we will resort to our sinful nature and live a nice life, just absent of God's power because we're not depending on it. That's why Paul exhorts us in Col. 3:1-4

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

If we know Christ as our Saviour, then our future is guaranteed. We have been raised with Christ. We died to self and our life is kept secure in Jesus, so keep looking up to the Lord for direction, hope, depending on His working in our life to help us mature and be used for His purposes. Have we looked up in prayer for God's help today? Have we looked up and asked Jesus to help us die more to self and live more for Him? Have we looked up today asking what Jesus wants for us today or have we only looked down at our calendars, computers or phones? Monitor how often you're looking down at something that keeps you distracted from God rather than looking up to Him for guidance and purpose. Each day has good and evil. How will we use it?

Which leads us to realize this as well,

People are Tempted Every Day: Encourage Someone **(Heb. 3:12-15)**

If every day has opportunities for good and evil, that means every day you and I are tempted to sin. That is not earth shattering, and yet, how many of us confess sin to God each day? Each one of us has the opportunity to help each other with each other's temptations. Listen to Hebrews 3:12-15,

¹² See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. ¹³ But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. ¹⁴ We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end. ¹⁵ As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion."

The author is talking to God's people who are tempted each day to not live for God. What can help us? Who can help us? Fellow believers who encourage us to live for God, to keep us focused on looking up. "Encourage one another daily" means we have to stay connected to believers each day. Depending on our life schedule we just may not have many opportunities to connect with another believer. That means we make an effort. Ask the Lord who can you encourage today? Inevitably the Spirit will bring people to mind. When He does text, phone or pop in and ask them how they are doing, what do they need praying for or just 'God brought you to my mind today, how are you doing?' If that's happened to you and you appreciated it, then why not do it for someone else. And when we encourage someone, we're encouraged. Who knows, maybe we prevented someone from sinning by a few moments of our time (I mean God's time).

Our words are powerful. Paul reminds us in Eph. 4:29,

²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others

up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

Build someone up today. Find out if they have a need. Benefit someone today with God's building up words and we will prevent sin from happening; theirs and maybe even our own.

All of us want to finish well, to stay focused on God's purpose to glorify Him in all that we do and say. We all want to say what Paul said at the end of His life:

⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

How do we finish well at the end of life? Simple,

Finish Today Well and You'll Finish Life Well **(2 Tim. 4:7)**

Since only God knows how many days we have, and tells us to count them or better, make them count, and He doesn't want us to worry about tomorrow since I only receive mercies and grace on a day-to-day basis, then all He expects me and you to do is finish today well. How do we do that?

Did we notice and thank Him for the many blessings in our life and the way He revealed His presence and power today? What did we trust Him for today based on the resources of His grace and mercy? What prayer did He not answer that we're still trusting Him for? Did we live to glorify God today? Who did we encourage today?

It may sound like a lot but it really isn't. It's just keeping our eyes upward and forward and less downward and inward. 'Fight the good fight' was not a new phrase for Paul. In his first letter to Timothy he said in 1 Tim. 6:11-16,

¹¹ But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³ In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you ¹⁴ to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ which God will bring about in his own time—God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.

Each day we are tempted in many ways to live a self-focused life instead of a God-focused life. Each day we have to choose who we will serve. It is a fight. It's a battle between good and evil. We know God wins and evil/Satan is defeated so let's keep this command to fight the good fight looking for the appearing of Jesus Christ, which not surprisingly could happen any day.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please
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