

Redeeming the Time

Colossians 4:2-6

Benjamin Franklin wrote that, “Lost time is never found again”. Time is something we all desire right? Each day you are given by God 24 hours of time, which you determine how you are going to spend. You also determine whether or not any of your time is considered lost.

Time on its' own can never truly be lost, or deleted, or end up missing. Time is considered lost when we use it on activities that have no real purpose or goal **versus** using it on things that have purpose or are necessary tasks that you must spend time on. Time is something we feel we never have enough of, yet we give it away so freely. **We need to redeem the time we have been gifted.**

According to government surveys, in 2017 the average American 15 years and older watches about 2 hours and 45 minutes of television every day. Some of you are thinking, “Wow! That is so much TV! I only watch an hour after dinner!” Yet some of you are embarrassed because you were binge watching your favorite **Netflix show for 8 hours last night and you've got the crazy eyes!** I took the statistics a step further though... I figured out that for a lifespan of 75 years, **you would have spent over 8 and a half years of your entire life watching TV... That is ridiculous!** What a waste of time, time that you will never get back or be able to exchange for something new.

The survey also figured out that Americans aged 15 to 44 said they spent on average ten minutes or less each day reading a book. **That certainly includes God's Word...** Over a lifetime of 75 years, an individual would have spent **about 3 and a half months reading.** Quite less than the time we spend in front of our flat screen right? My point is simple... we complain that we don't have enough time each day to do what matters, **like reading God's Word**, yet we often choose to use our time foolishly. We neglect what matters most, the eternal matters, our walk with Jesus...

The core issue is that **we don't prioritize our time based on what takes supremacy in our lives.** As Christians, our priority should be our personal relationship with Jesus and His calling. Yet we place the trivial issues over the eternal. Worldly tasks, even the necessary ones like house chores and spending time with your family, take precedence before your walk and Kingdom work. **We eventually lose sight of what WAS ONCE the most important thing in our life, Jesus.**

Instead of diving into God's Word, we decide to watch another episode of Full House. **Instead** of spending time in prayer, we decide to read another article on Yahoo news as we fall asleep. **Instead** of going to church, you commit to taking your kids to their soccer games on Sunday mornings. **Instead** of fellowshiping with other believers during the week, we bring our work home and become engulfed in stress after hours.

*By no means is going to your kids soccer game or watching Full House inherently evil! And I am not telling you to avoid responsibilities you must handle. We do actually need time to do these things and enjoy down time. But these moments of time must be placed into context of our priorities. We must not do these things at the **expense** of time we should have spent with God! Is God the first priority of your day and all the way through it... or do you keep pushing Him to the bottom of your “to-do” list as the day goes on, just to*

find out you didn't have time for Him at all... Unfortunately we do this though. We are all guilty of it. And we are very good at making excuses, "oh well there is always next Sunday", "I'm just too busy with life", "It's the only way I can make it work for my kids", "I deserve more ME time!"

Friend the reality is that time on earth is running out! Jesus could come in the blink of an eye, to take His church home. **We need to redeem the time we have!**

There are not many moments in history where the world has been as corrupt and deceived as it is today. It is not hard to see why this is true either:

- War continues to erupt across the world.
- Tyrannical dictators thirst for more power while destroying the livelihoods of their people.
- 215 million Christians worldwide are experiencing high levels of persecution in the countries where it is most dangerous to live as a Christian. (OpenDoors USA)
- Hedonism, the pursuit of personal pleasure and self-indulgence, rules the hearts of men and women today.
- Homosexuality is considered normal and is encouraged by the world's standards. If you stand against it, you are thought of as a bigot and small-minded.
- From 1973 through 2011, nearly 53 million legal abortions occurred in the U.S alone. (The Guttmacher Institute)
- False teachers are deceiving more people everyday to follow their own version of Jesus. Many people in our community say they believe in Jesus and believe they are going to heaven, yet they have never met the true Jesus, repented at His feet, and entered into a relationship. They are totally deceived and comfortable!

2 Timothy 3:1-5 reads, **"But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!"** Church, that certainly sounds like our days today...

Would you like me to continue to depress you this morning? If we wanted, we could spend the whole morning and more talking about ALL of the somber realities of this world we currently live in. BUT my point is not to stress you out or depress you or make you want to leave... my point is that **OUR TIME IS VALUABLE!** We have no time to waste! We have been called to action, to bring the lost to Jesus, to spread His light, bring truth to the deceived, bring the hopeless to the One true hope. **This is why we are called to redeem the time!**

Paul knew this as he was writing from his jail cell to the church in Colosse. His speech is filled with urgency. Paul encourages them and us **to redeem our time in two of the most powerful ways we can influence this world for Jesus: Prayer and Witnessing.** We will cover three points this morning that Paul lays out for us:

1. How to Pray

2. What to Pray For

3. How to Witness to Others

Let's dive into Colossians 4:2-6...

2 Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; 3 meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, 4 that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

5 Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. 6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

POINT #1: HOW TO PRAY

Our first point that we are going to cover this morning is how to pray in verse 2. The first thing Paul tells us is to **continue** earnestly in prayer. **The word "continue" in the Greek is the word proskartereo.** This specific word is found 11 times in scripture and seven of those times it is in reference to prayer. The word means to, "be devoted or constant to one, to give unremitting care to a thing, to continue all the time in a place."

One of my favorite verses, **1 Thessalonians 5:17, Paul writes simply, "pray without ceasing".** We are to be praying continually! Now Paul is not saying we need to be constantly verbally uttering prayers, bowing our heads, closing our eyes, folding our hands without ceasing, but that is not what prayer is! Those are only customs of prayer. Prayer is communication with God, and we can live each minute of the day in a constant, flowing, conversation with God. There should never be a place where you feel that you cannot pray! **This is how we need to pray!**

Paul does not say pray when it is convenient, or when you have time too. **You see...I know myself! I struggle with time organization often... If it was left up to my time management skills, no time would ever be convenient to pray!** Again we have no time to waste though, our time is valuable and **we must redeem it** wisely! The attitude we have to avoid is "oh I will just wait until later to pray... I will wait until I am more available.... It makes me a little uncomfortable to pray right here, I will pray when I'm by myself."

Early African converts to Christianity were earnest and regular in private devotions. Each one reportedly had a separate spot in the thicket where he would pour out his heart to God. Over time the paths to these places became well worn. As a result, if one of these believers began to neglect prayer, it was soon apparent to the others. They would kindly remind the negligent one, "Brother, the grass grows on your path." Has the grass begun to grow on your path? When is the last time you got alone and poured your heart out to God? Let's not become careless with our prayer life!

Instead Paul says that a key attribute of **how to pray** is **to be vigilant in our prayers**. The same word appears 24 times in Scripture and is often translated as to watch, or be watchful.

We need to be praying vigilantly, or alert and awake, as if at any moment Jesus could return for His church! How often do we pray expectantly, cautiously, actively like this though? Friend, we can not let our prayers become lazy, a habit, or routine. Don't let it become a rutt! We are quick to become bogged down, and be negligent towards prayer. Worse yet, we fall asleep. **1 Thessalonians 5:6 says, "Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober."** When we fall asleep while trying to spend time with God, we are not alert and **we become vulnerable like these young ladies at the red light!**

Now I don't want you to misunderstand, setting aside prayer time when we wake up and go to bed is a great thing to do! I am not telling to you stop your prayer routine, in fact more of us probably need to do more of this... What **I am** warning you of is what Paul is saying here, that we need to check our attitude about prayer. Do you **view it** as just a routine habit you can check off your list? Is it something that you view as a hassle...

Prayer should be something we are passionate about, built into every moment of our time, all of our thoughts... prayer should be something we enjoy. Prayer is a spiritual exercise. It is warfare with the enemy. It can be emotional, and bring you to tears, force you to your knees.

Prayer is also a duty. Pray without ceasing is a command from the Lord. It is a labor. **This is how we are to pray**. Why? Because we live in a world broken. *People are facing so much trial. People are hurting. Lost in sin. There is a spiritual battle going on right now and we are being called to the front line! There's no time to cower away in the background!* We need to be pray awake and vigilant.

Paul's also tells us **how we should pray always with thanksgiving**. This is coming from the same man who is in prison behind bars! Paul, in the midst of his own trial and physical toil, is encouraging us to pray with gratitude! Wow!

So, to pray with thanksgiving seems simple enough by concept, **but we don't always do this**. Sometimes terrible things happen in our lives. We go through hard losses. BUT we can be thankful even in all things. Even in the times of trial, or prison, or challenges, or in the face of humiliation.

I know the people of this church go through many trials and difficulties... the death of a loved one, health issues, financial struggles, a family member who doesn't follow Jesus, a horrible car accident... We have many troubles and hard times but we can be thankful in everything. This is how Paul is telling us to pray.

*Why? Because we have a God that is faithful and is in control. We have a hope that surpasses this life. God's sovereign hand is in charge, not blind fate or chance. Everything you deal with happens for a reason and God is orchestrating it all together for your own good. He is shaping you and me into an image of His Son. **Remember, unbelievers go through the same things we do, but they do it without hope...***

Verse 2 shows us **how to pray!** Prayer is our duty, and it should be a constant conversation with the Lord. We need to be careful and not become lazy.

Let's read verse 3 and 4 and dive into our second point...

Colossians 4:3-4 reads, 3 meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, 4 that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

POINT #2: WHAT TO PRAY FOR

In verse 2 Paul told us **how to pray**, and now in verses 3 and 4 **he tells us what to pray for. This is our second point.**

Paul tells the church in Colosse **to pray for him and the leaders, pray for us!** He didn't ask them to pray for his release out of jail, or for more food and water, he asked for them to pray for his ministry. Likewise we need to pray for our pastors and our church! Pray for our Sunday school teachers, the home fellowship leaders, our worship team, our missionaries. We need to be praying that in the lives of our pastors and leaders that the Word of God would be real!

We need **to pray for** our pastors to be a mouthpiece for Him. We want **God's Word** to go forward in power. I was not given the opportunity to teach this morning to tell you what I want to say! I am here to tell you what God wants to say to each of us. And for all of this to happen the pastors of your church need your prayer continually. **This is what we need to pray for.**

Next Paul tells us we need to pray "**that God would open to us a door for the word**", exhorting us to pray boldly for opportunity to share the good news of Jesus! How often do we pray, "God I pray that today you will give me an opportunity to share your Word and be a light" ? Probably far less than we should...

But we should be praying for this everyday when we walk out the door to work, and back through the door to our families! We should be boldly expecting opportunity to share Christ. *He will bring you that co-worker who is struggling to cope with a death in the family. You and your neighbor will run into each other, and they'll open up about financial difficulties they are dealing with. Your child will come to you hurt by a friendship at school that has crumbled... And you get the opportunity to be a light, and share the comfort and peace you have received in Jesus.*

Jesus wants to use us, but notice who opens the door? Does Paul say, " pray that you will find a door and by your own strength open it up?" NO! **We can't force our way into a door that is shut. Only He can open the door.** Pray that God would sovereignly open the door that His Word would go forward. **Be led by the Holy Spirit.** We can't shovel a mouthful of the Gospel down someone's throat without having God already open that door. It doesn't matter if you have all of the right things to say, and know exactly how to present God's Word to a certain individual... God has to open the door by His power alone! He will lead and direct you in this by His Spirit. You and I can't do it! Let's **pray for** His direction.

The same goes for Calvary Stone Mountain as a whole... We need **to pray that** the people who come in these doors will be opened to the Word that God would like to speak and that we would never get in the way, but only cultivate His work. Only by God, not by gimmicks... We are not here to put on a show, with strobe lights, smoke machines, glitter clouds, or even playing entire secular movies and applying God's Word to it, branding it "finding faith in Hollywood's biggest films!" Not even a joke, the caption for this church's series reads, "Sometimes life's best lessons are found out in this world." **ARE YOU KIDDING ME?**

That is all just a show being put on to tickle your senses and make you feel good, and hey come back next week to church so we can watch **Marvel's Avengers: A Story of God's Grace!** That is not what Calvary Chapel Stone Mountain is here to do... We want to be used by God, and be a mouthpiece for His power to go forth and His Word to be spread. **We have to be praying for this very thing.**

And we do not have a single moment to waste! Paul was staring death in the face everyday for his belief in Christ. The pressure of the government was coming down on the church back then, similar to how it is today too isn't it... **We need to pray for these things because of the time we live in!**

We have no time to be wasting on the wisdom of men, gimmicks, or tickling the senses... We need the power of God to break open doors and so we may preach Christ crucified to the lost and hurting world. Time is fleeting! We need to pray that God would open to us a door for the word to go forward.

Finally, Paul tells us **to pray that** God would make His Word **manifest**, as it ought to be shared. **The Greek word translated as manifest, is phaneroo** (fa nee rahh ohh). It means to make known or visible what has been hidden or unknown. In other words to bring clarity.

*In sixth grade, I started having trouble reading the teacher's whiteboard in class. I tried my best to hide this problem because there was **NO WAY** I was going to have to get glasses! So everyday I would move to front of the class in order to see the right answers clearly on the dry erase board. **Sadly**, I was eventually forced to ruin all hopes of social status and get my first pair of glasses. And naturally every time I left the house with them on, I would take them off at school! Sorry mom and dad, I thought I was way too cool for glasses! In reality I really wasn't cool and I already was a geeky, shy, quiet kid, but wearing glasses oh that would push me over the edge of societal obsolescence! The way we see the Word of God is just like this too!*

Paul is telling us to pray that people will see God's Word, His whiteboard, through God's goggles! We need to see and understand His Word through His eyes, so we may know it as He intended! Clarity of God's Word, does not require us to scoot up in class, get a better angle on it, or even see it through man's glasses! If we try to study His Word in our own sight, we so quickly reach for that dry eraser and erase those parts of His Word we don't want to talk about. Or we grab a marker and add a few of our own thoughts onto God's whiteboard!

Look, clarity of God's Word does not require us to take any parts of it away or add our own thoughts to make it "better". **God's Word can speak for itself** and we need to pray to share it the way God intended it to be. Psalm 33:4 reads, "For the word of the Lord is right, And all His work is done in truth."

God's truth is perfect, crystal clear, and needs no changing. The Psalmist exclaims that His Word is right, done, and true! **We must let God's word speak for itself.** We must **pray for** the clarity of the Gospel to be presented always. **We must be praying for these things.**

The truth is that failure, disappointment, weakness, pain, suffering, is around every corner of this earth. But we need God to open the door to go forth and share His Word, bring hope, and clarity to the truth of this Bible! Our time is valuable and can't be wasted on the trivial. We need to remember:

1. How to Pray - continually, awake, with thanksgiving
2. What to Pray For - our pastors/our church, an open door, and clarity of God's truth.

But Paul doesn't stop there. After redeeming the time praying **for** the hearts of men, we need use our time **to go** out and talk to them! Let's read verses 5 and 6 and cover our third and final point...

Colossians 4:5-6 reads, 5 Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. 6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

POINT #3: HOW TO WITNESS TO OTHERS

Our third and final point is **how to witness to others.** In order **to witness** to **those who are outside**, we must first **walk in wisdom.** To walk in wisdom refers to the order of our behavior. The first thing that matters when we are trying to reach the outside world, is our behavior. BECAUSE, before someone will listen to you, they watch you...

They know who you are, and that you claim to be a Christian. And so they will sit back and watch you. They watch how you are with your kids. With your wife or husband. They look at how you react under pressure. When you face trials, when your world looks like it is falling apart, they see you and how you walk. They want to see if you are different, if this God you believe in has actually made you different.

Friend, you are called to be a light to this dark world. In **Matthew 5:16 Jesus tells us, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."** If you are going to communicate effectively to the unsaved world and be a light, the first thing you must do is check the way you live! If you are not living the way you are TELLING the world around you to live, they aren't going to listen to you! You have to live it out. The way we behave completely effects **how we witness to others.**

Let's say I am meeting one-on-one with a high school guy and I tell him he should probably cut out that TV show that is full of sin and is negatively influencing his walk. BUT in reality if I'm actually still watching the SAME show I am a hypocrite and sending a

confusing message to the student. If our actions don't match our words, here is what our witness to the unsaved world looks like: **Do as I say, but not as I do.** That is quite the opposite of walking in wisdom.

This kind of attitude immediately makes the other person feel either that you are a hypocrite and what you believe in is totally false and foolish... OR... they are left feeling inadequate, or as if they just haven't "made it" to your status yet. **This is NOT how we are to witness to others!** That is so detrimental to the work of God. We have to check the way we live... Maybe you talk the talk, but do you walk the walk FIRST? Let your life preach before your mouth does it. The world is watching you.

Can your peers see something different about you? Do your friends only **hear** you talk about Jesus and faith, but never **see** any fruit in your actions... Are you seen by others as different? Can people tell that you are a Christian? I can tell you this, an unsaved person will read your life before they ever even think to pick up a Bible. What will your life say about Jesus? We must first walk in wisdom in order **to witness to others.**

Verse 6, Paul tells us to witness to others we must let our "**speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one**". Once we walk in wisdom **THEN** we should open our mouths, and speak always with grace as we **witness to others.** Key word there is always right! Some of us are glad there aren't **microphones in our cars** hearing all the not-so graceful things we have to say about other drivers, myself included!

This exhortation is so difficult because we have emotions and feelings. I get hurt by somebody, and I lash out at them. I don't agree with something you said, and I argue and speak in a harsh manner. I've had enough of you, and I can't hold it in. Yet Jesus always spoke with grace. With love. And He had the same emotions and feelings we do. Imagine how He must have felt when He was betrayed, mocked, beaten... Yet He always responded in grace.

Luke 6:45, Jesus said that "For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks." The mouth speaks of what the heart is full of. If grace is not what is coming out of our mouths, then we have not been fully partaking of the grace that He extends to us daily. The goal is not speech that contains graceful words or eloquent phrases. To truly speak with grace is to speak the realness of the cross. The righteousness of the cross covering every word you utter. When the grace of Jesus is real in us, **that is** what will spill out of our mouths **as we witness to others.**

You and I have the answer that this world is searching for! Jesus calls us the salt of the earth, we should make the earth a purer and more palatable place. We should create thirst and appeal for the work of the cross with every word that leaves our mouths! So, what is our next move then? There is a need in this world, and we know the answer... it is time to act on it. Jump back and read the last three words of verse 5. "**Redeeming the time**".

Time on earth is fading... Paul is telling us that we need to use every opportunity we have to share the gospel. We as Christians need to be opportunists! God will present opportunity and we have to act! This means you have to choose how to spend your time. Is it

going to be spent praying for and witnessing to men? Realize, God has given you stewardship over the time that you have. It is in your hands...

Often though we miss opportunities because we sit in the same excuse we haven't stopped repeating: "I just need to find more time to do _____" I need to find time. But you can't find time! I hate to break it to you, but you ain't going to find more time.

There is still 60 seconds in a minute.

60 minutes in an hour.

24 hours in a day.

7 days in a week.

You know where all the time is already! There is no extra time out there hiding, waiting to be found. **You don't need to find time, you need to use your time more wisely.** We need to use our time wisely **witnessing to others.**

God is saying to me, "You and I need to talk more! Spend more time with me in prayer! Maybe you need to wake up 30 minutes earlier and pray with Me. The world is falling apart and you value that 30 extra minutes of beauty sleep more. And then you come later and make the excuse that you don't have enough time to pray with Me, to read My Word."

There are lost people out there. Everywhere. People are empty, and looking for hope. They come to you and ask, "Why is this happening to me? Why am I dealing with this?" And you can answer, "I ask myself that too sometimes and I don't always understand why. But I know this. I know that God loves Me, He sent His own Son to die for Me, and I've been freed from sin and death. His love surrounds me and I have hope. And He wants to have that relationship with you too..."

Calvary Chapel Stone Mountain, let us redeem the time He's set before us, all for the glory of God and His Kingdom.

How do you want to be known?

What will be said of how you spent your time?

We need to prioritize our time based on our relationship with Jesus. We need to become devoted to prayer, vigilantly praying for an open door for the Word to go forward. And we need to be bold, and be a witness to the world for Jesus, in our deeds and in our speech. **That is why we are still here on earth. There is no time to waste...**

As Pastor Sandy just spoke on last week, I believe the signs of the last days are clearly here. Jesus is coming... And after He comes for us, the defeat and final judgment upon sin are going to be poured out. You know what is in store for the earth and its'

inhabitants. AND you also know the key to salvation. The one thing this world needs, and is desperate for... Jesus. What is stopping us from sharing that knowledge? Time is limited... **Don't leave here and waste another moment.**

Heavenly Father, thank you for Word and the truths it presents to us. We pray that You will work these things in our hearts, and use us in powerful ways for Your glory. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Maybe you are here today and you actually don't know Jesus and the salvation He's provided for you. If you've never given your life to Christ, then don't hesitate another moment. Jesus is calling you today, He loves you and wants to have a relationship with you. He died for you. Yet He's given you a choice, only you can make. If you haven't made that choice, I pray that you do this today. We have prayer counselors down here by the stage who would love to pray with you.

Or maybe you haven't been a good steward of your time. You haven't been doing what the Lord has called you to do and you need to shake things up in your life. Don't leave today without addressing it and getting prayer.

Let's go out with a song of worship!