

What Time Is It?

In 2 Corinthians 6:1-2, Paul says, "As God's co-workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. For he says 'In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.' I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation."

Hey, what time is it? I guess it depends on who you ask. If you ask a kid, they might say, "It's time to eat!" If you ask an elderly person what time it is, they might say, "It's time to rest." If you ask me that question I'm likely to say, "It's time for coffee!" However, God has a pretty specific answer, and that answer is, "**Now** is the time."

As I have watched so many of my loved ones pass away over the last couple of years, I have come to realize that we aren't guaranteed anything.

We may not even get to say goodbye to people we love. God has blessed us so richly! He gave us this moment, this day, this time — for a reason.

Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 6:1-2 that the time of God's favor is **now**. We really may not get another week or another day or another minute. We have **now**, this day, this breath, to share the love of Christ, to pray for our family, to ask them if they know Christ, to live for Christ until we draw our final breath. We are to live in the awesome knowledge that we are one breath from eternity — **now**.

I'm looking forward to spending eternity with Jesus! How about you? Do you know him? Do you love him? It's best not to wait, no one knows how long Christ has given us. What time is it? The time is **now**!

-Mary Malone

A Rhythm to Life

I love music, but I am not musical. I have no rhythm. It's hard for me to clap my hands or tap my foot to the timing of any song. I know, I'm pathetic. Still, I love music and I am glad some people can keep time.

Brothers and sisters, our lives are meant to be like songs sung to God. In part, this means our lives are to have a rhythm to them. Our lives are to be set to a particular keeping of time.

Sunday, resurrection day, the Lord's day, is to be central to our keeping of time. Dedicating every Sunday to the worship of God with our church family is meant to establish a base line for our lives. When we are forced to miss the Sunday gatherings of the church our week should feel off kilter and out of sync, because it is. God has not

meant for us to live chaotic, haphazard lives in which we don't know what day of the week it is. The song of our lives is not to be one of racket with different instruments randomly playing. No, God means for us to live orderly lives; central to that order is the orienting of every week around Sunday. Each week is to have a similar rhythm, first preparing for and looking ahead to Sunday, then reflecting and meditating upon what was sung, prayed and preached on Sunday. God has meant for us to no more imagine a winter without Christmas than a week without the Sunday gathering of the church.

Think with me about the "Order of Service" in our bulletins every Sunday. The Order of Service outlines for us the rhythm of our worship time together.

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TIME

In this issue we focus on "Time" – how it affects our lives, and how God wishes us to use it.



"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.

What gain has the worker from his toil? I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live."
-Ecclesiastes 3:1-12 (ESV)

"What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes."
-James 4:14 (ESV)

"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world."
-Hebrews 1:1-2 (ESV)

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We don't just "wing it" on Sunday mornings. Nor do we do whatever we feel like, whenever we feel like it. No, there is an order to our gathered worship. Referring to the church's corporate worship 1 Corinthians 14:40 says, "All things should be done decently and in order." An Order of Service may strike some as monotonous, or too routine, but it is neither of these. It is the pattern through which we ensure our time together is focused on Christ and filled with what Christ has commanded us to do as we worship Him.

Brothers and sisters, may we redeem the time by ordering our time. May our lives be filled with customs, traditions, and practices, that repeat like a song repeating its rhythm. With winter there should always be Christmas. With Spring there should always be Easter. Every day is to be met with prayer and thanksgiving, the reading and discussing of Scripture. In doing so we harmonize with, and join in on the song God has for us. Maybe like me you can't clap your hands or tap your foot to a song, but by the power of the Holy Spirit we can keep the time and sing for God His song.

-Matt Peery

Time: Friend or Foe?

How do you view time? For most of us, especially as we get older, we view time as an enemy. We often try to defeat the effects of time on our bodies, but have to admit that it's a losing battle! Before we begin a discussion of the subject of time, we need to consider definitions of the term. The word "time" is defined in the American Heritage Science Dictionary as "A continuous, measurable quantity in which events occur in a sequence proceeding from the past through the present to the future." In other words, time is sensed in a series of events or changes to our physical dimensions. For us to sense the passage of time, we must observe changes, whether great or small. It's interesting to note that when there are few noticeable changes around us we think that time moves

slowly, or "...this seems to be taking forever!"

How does God define time? In Genesis, chapter one, we have the first references in the Bible to the concept of time, where God led Moses to write, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." For us on earth, time begins in Genesis 1:1 where the universe was spoken into existence by God's Word, as detailed in Hebrews 11:3, "By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible." This Word is explained in several places to be Jesus, particularly in John 1:1-3, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." As the creation account moves through the stages of creation, we see that on that first day in Genesis 1:4, "God separated the light from the darkness" in some way. This is clarified as a time marker in verse 5, "God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day." From the first day of creation, and for all of human history, we were given the gift of this daily time marker of dark and light to define a day. This definition from God is the foundation of all our understanding and use of the concept of time.

When did time begin? Was it in Genesis 1? There is a possible indication of some kind of pre-history before the creation of the earth. In Job 38:4, God asks Job, "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?" In verse 7, God says, "...the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy..." at the time of creation. This implies that the "sons of God" (spirit entities whom we often interpret as "angels") existed before physical creation was complete, witnessed it, and rejoiced with God as He spoke it into existence. If these spirits existed prior to the physical creation, for them some sense of time must have

existed, since they were also created by God, hence have a starting point, and have existed since the time when they were created. Were they created on day 1 as mentioned in Genesis 1:1 when "God created the heavens and the earth"? This seems possible. Were they created prior to Genesis 1:1? We don't know. In Genesis 2:1, we are given the summary statement, "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them." This phrase, "all the host of them" is an indicator that all the living things (perhaps BOTH spirit and physical) were part of the Genesis creation sequence, and are all subject to the same time-cycle passage of time (day/night defining one day). At the fall of mankind into the depravity of sin, God rendered judgment as detailed in Genesis 3, and mankind along with all creation became subject to death and decay. This is when time became an enemy of sinful mankind. However, the problem we have with time is not so much with time itself, but the effect of sin through time.

How does science define time? The basic structure of time (days, hours, minutes, seconds) is related to the length of a natural day. The precise standard in recent times has been based upon the vibrational characteristic of the metallic chemical element Cesium. This is used because it is able to provide super-fine precise and repeatable measurements of time. Regardless of the precise standard we use, time structure is still organized around God's created order of the 24-hour day, as in Genesis where the evening and the morning define the day. Time is one of the "dimensions" of our existence. We live in a three-dimensional physical world (up/down, left/right, in/out), but the fourth dimension of our existence is time. Like the dimensions of measurement we use to describe the size, shape, or mass of something, we also are able to measure time as one of the dimension of our existence. Does the size, shape, mass, or any other characteristic of something change? This is observable because of the dimension of time. We are subject to the dimension of time, as is proven by the change of size, shape, mass, and several other characteristics of our own bodies (called getting older!).

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(“Friend or Foe”, continued from Page 2)

Does God change with time? In Hebrews 13:8 we see that, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” Even the prophet-for-hire Balaam was given the word from Yahweh that, “God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?” (Numbers 23:19) The psalmist contrasts the timeless nature of God, and the time-limited nature of mankind and all of creation when he says, “Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but you are the same, and your years have no end.” (Psalm 102:25-27) These, and many other scriptures, make it clear that God is not constrained in any way by the dimension of time. When we study difficult topics such as “predestination” (Romans 8, Ephesians 1) and prophecy, it is good to remember that God created time, controls time, and is not constrained by time as He exercises His will. We are simply not capable of fully grasping how God works in all time, but we can trust Him and praise Him because, as repeated in Psalm 118 (KJV), “...His mercy endureth forever.” Since God created the heavens and the earth, and everything in them, he uses all the characteristics of His universe (physics) to accomplish His will. God tells us through the prophet Isaiah that He declares, “...the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose’...” Only God can know, determine, control, and “declare” the beginning from the end because time itself is His creation. This creation is held together by the Creator, identified as Jesus in Colossians 1:16-17, “For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” The phrase “all

things” means every aspect and characteristic of all parts of everything, whether in the physical realm or spirit realm. Even though we view time as an enemy, in God’s hands it’s a wonderful tool He uses to work His will, bringing salvation to many faithful people through the ages. Time in God’s hands is therefore a wonderful thing because His righteous purpose works in it.

How does God want us to use the gift of time He has given us? To honor and worship Him! The apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:15-16, “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.” Paul also wrote in Colossians 4:5-6, “Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.” As long as we are present in this world and have any time left, we should do as Jesus commissioned us, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Jesus, being not subject to time, but being lord of time, has sent His Spirit from the Father in heaven to make it possible for us to carry out His commission through the generations until His return. Yes, we as individuals may come and go, but God’s work continues uninterrupted.

What will happen to us in time? In these corrupted fleshly bodies, we deteriorate and die, but only in the flesh. Since God controls time, He also can restore us from the ravages of time, having secured victory over death in Jesus’ resurrection. “And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.” (Heb 9:27-28) Praise God that upon Jesus’ return,

“We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.” (1 Corinthians 15:51-53) Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has granted us His mercy, and has given us the benefit of His lordship over time, so that we who belong to Him will inherit immortality and time will no longer seem to be our enemy, but a dimension which we can fully explore and enjoy in His glorious presence!

-Joe Counsel

Praise

by George Herbert

King of Glorie, King of Peace,
I will love thee:
And that love may never cease,
I will move thee.

Thou hast granted my request,
Thou hast heard me:
Thou didst note my working breast,
Thou hast spar’d me.

Wherefore with my utmost art
I will sing thee,
And the cream of all my heart
I will bring thee.

Though my sinnes against me cried,
Thou didst cleare me;
And alone, when they replied,
Thou didst heare me.

Sev’n whole dayes, not one in seven,
I will praise thee.
In my heart, though not in heaven,
I can raise thee.

Thou grew’st soft and moist with tears,
Thou relentedst:
And when Justice call’d for fears,
Thou disentedst.

Small it is, in this poore sort
To enroll thee:
Ev’n eternitie is to short
To extoll thee.

T. S. Eliot: The Poet of Time

I was first exposed to the poetry of T. S. Eliot as a junior in high school. I had an English teacher whose passion and enthusiasm for literature was contagious. Together my classmates and I read *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, with our teacher guiding us along. It was then that the rhythms and the depth of Eliot first captured my imagination.

The poem begins with a young man reflecting on life and coming to the conclusion that there is plenty of time ahead of him. Early in the poem Eliot writes, "There will be time, there will be time." It's clear though that something is not settled within the narrator of the poem. There is a restlessness within him, a longing that needs to be addressed. But he has time. So, he delays taking any action and as he delays time keeps running on.

The poem turns darker. The narrator wonders if the unsettled matter within him is worth addressing. In the end he decides it is not. He is not a prophet and the issue is not a great matter. The poem ends remarkably bleak with the narrator pondering trivial matters such as if he should eat a peach, and instead of finding himself with ample time for whatever is ahead of him, he finds himself suddenly drowned.

Eliot grew up in St. Louis in the family that founded Washington University. Like many such families the Eliot's had over generations drifted from the fully immersed faith of the medieval English, to the strong faith of colonial Puritanism, to the weak faith of American Unitarianism, to the modern lack of faith altogether. *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* would make Eliot a well known poet. A few years later his even darker poem, *The Waste Land*, would make him famous. Yet, it is clear in these early poems that Eliot was struggling. He and his first wife divorced. He moved about Europe as an expatriate, and is said to have experienced a mental breakdown.

Then light shined in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.

Eliot came to faith in Christ and wrote a conversion poem of sorts called *Ash Wednesday*. At that time, Eliot was a middle-aged man, and wrote as one who surrendered his previous desires. In surrendering them he turned a corner in his life. This turning also changed his relationship to time. As a Christian, Eliot no longer felt himself the victim of time's endless marching, but instead at rest in God's providence.

Eliot's greatest meditation on time and his greatest poem is *The Four Quartets*. Eliot had settled in England and joined the church of his ancestors, the Anglican Church. In *The Four Quartets* one senses that Eliot has now come full circle. The poem is really four poems, and one describes Eliot's visit to the town, East Coker, where his ancestors lived before they came to America. The poem ends with the line, "In my end is my beginning."

Throughout his life Eliot was struck with the brevity of life. Recently I was standing in line with both of my boys at the Sight and Sound theater in Branson. They were some of the only children there. Within the span of a few minutes three completely separate people conveyed the same message to me: I better not blink because before I knew it my boys will be grown. This is the way life is. James 4:14 says, "You are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes." If the Lord wills, and does not first return, I will soon be an old man. Soon, some of you will be at my funeral. Such reality seems to have haunted and tormented the young Eliot. Apart from Christ what hope is there with the passing of time? We blink and we are old. We blink again and we are dead, done, end of story.

In Christ though we have hope, the hope of glory. In Christ we have eternal life. In Christ we see that our end, our death, is only our beginning. In Christ we know this is true because He, the one who has no beginning and no end, mysteriously came to an end and died for us. Yet, having died he lived again so that you and I who believe in Him, love

Him, follow Him, adore and worship Him, will live forever with Him.

In our culture death is said to be a depressing topic. And it is indeed if it is the end. But for us in Christ our death is really our beginning.

Eliot's poetry can be difficult. Yet, this seems to be his central and final message: Hope in Christ., for soon we shall be with Him where sun and moon and time itself disappears in the radiance of His glory.

-Matt Peery

Wisdom from Scripture About Time

"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil."

-Eph 5:15-16 ESV

"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world."

-Heb 1:1-2 ESV

"But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

-2 Peter 3:8-9 ESV

"...remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose...'"

-Isaiah 46:9-10 ESV

Preparing for the Sabbath

Saturdays find us enjoying whatever we like to do. We enjoy our weekends by traveling, cooking, spending time with family, being outside, talking with loved ones, fixing something and the list goes on. For everyday life we spend some time preparing for what awaits us, it could be that we prepare for our jobs, a project at home, a ballgame, recital, etc. A point I would like for you to consider is preparing for the Sabbath. We celebrate the Sabbath on Sunday and God has commanded us in the Fourth Commandment to "Remember the Sabbath and keep it Holy". How do you prepare for the Sabbath? My answer would be that it is for you to figure out. We can find what is asked of us on the Sabbath in scripture, and we can find when the Sabbath started for the Jews, which would be a good practice for us to consider.

The Fourth Commandment is the last commandment that directly relates to God. It is important! Is it a day of rest so kick back and watch the world go by? NO! It's a day to focus solely on God! As I stated above, we prepare for a lot of things from a worldly standpoint, and we spend a lot of time preparing for them. As for the Sabbath, today it is now known as the last day of the weekend. In Genesis, the day started at sundown and lasted until the next sundown. I'm not stating we need to reconfigure the calendar but to recognize the Sabbath at sundown on Saturday will change how we view this special day. As I have stated before, getting a good night's rest is a great way to start. Preparing your heart, your mind on Saturday will help you focus on the Sabbath. We don't know how God will use us on the Sabbath, someone might just need a good smile, some kind words of encouragement, some prayers. If we attend to "go through the motions" what will we miss?

How the Williams household prepares for the Sabbath is just an example and by no means how everyone should do it. It works for us. What does it look like? For Jenny to prepare a Sunday lunch to celebrate the Sabbath would take a lot of time and work so we decided to have a Saturday evening Sabbath meal. Jenny will set the table Saturday afternoon using her grandmother's dishes, her great grandmother's and my grandmother's dishes along with nice, cheap glasses. Sometimes she will have fresh flowers on the table, or she has a small chalkboard that has a part of scripture she has written on it. As we all go in and out of the house during Saturday afternoon, we see the table prepared for supper, it's beautiful, calming and creates excitement for the meal that follows. Usually, an aroma of bread also fills the house. As we gather as a family to eat Jenny will have music playing, it's a joyous time and a time to prepare for the Sabbath, it's a reminder of what Christ did on the cross. How we spend the Sabbath day, our preparedness, is on us. I'll be honest, I've come to church unprepared, not ready and I got nothing from it. I realized my excuse, if given at the foot of the cross for Christ to hear, eye to eye, would bring me to sheer devastation! The weight of mankind's sin was on him and I have no excuse!

I urge all of us to prepare for the Sabbath so we can remember the Sabbath day and keep it Holy. Whatever that ends up looking like in your house is for you to find out. God wants us focused and fully prepared. A term often heard in our home is "fight the dragon to save the bride". Prepare yourselves for the Sabbath, prepare for the fight!

-Matt Williams

The Time is Short

The text [1 Cor. 7:29] does not say that time is short. That would have been a true statement. Compared with eternity, time, at the very longest, is but as a pin's point. But note what the text does say: "The time is short." It is the time of our life, the space of our opportunity, the little while we shall be upon the present stage of action, that is short. It is narrow and contracted, as the original implies. "Behold," saith the psalmist, "thou hast made my days as a hand-breath; and mine age is as nothing before thee." Brief is the season we have allotted to us, brethren, in which we can serve the Lord our God.

This is a truth which everybody believes, knows, and confesses. It is trite as a proverb on every tongue; yet how few of us act as if we believed it! We are conscious of the precariousness of other people's lives; but, somehow or other, we persuade ourselves that our own time is not quite as limited as theirs. We think we have "ample time and verge enough;" but we wonder that our neighbours can be so careless and prodigal of days and years, for we observe the wrinkles on their brows, we detect the grey hairs on their heads, and perceive the auguries of death in their mien, and we doubt not they will soon have to render in their account. "All men think all men mortal but themselves," is a "night-thought" that may well startle us, as we rest from the business and the bustle, or the waste and wantonness of each succeeding day. Why hide ye from yourselves the waning of your own life-work, the weakening of your own strength, the weaving of your own shrouds? As a creature, you are frail; as an inhabitant of the world, you are exposed to casualties; as a man, there is an appointed time for you on earth. You must be swept away by the receding tide; you must go with the rest of your generation.

[Now is the time] that some souls may be saved, that Jesus Christ may be glorified, Satan defeated, and heaven filled with saved ones!

-Sermon Excerpt: C.H. Spurgeon