

Brian Warnes

# Redeeming the time

*'Redeeming the time, because the days are evil'*

Ephesians 5:16

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Time is a very precious commodity which, once gone, can never be recovered. In our busy culture there is never enough of it, and there is always something else demanding our attention. I feel this keenly now that I have retired as I seem to be even busier than I was when I was working.

There is a question of priorities. Haggai 1:2 tells us, This people says, "*The time has not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built*". They were focusing on their own houses and had lost sight of what they had returned from Babylon to do, which was to rebuild the temple for the worship of God. Difficulties caused by the enemies around them had deterred them, so they had got on with their own things and neglected the temple. Haggai brought the exhortation from God to '*consider their ways*' and encouraged and helped them to get on with the building that God could '*take pleasure in... and be glorified*'.

There is also the question of opportunity. The Lord said in John 9:4, '*I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work*'. As our verse in Ephesians also suggests, there are things that will prevent us from working for the Lord, so we need to take every opportunity that we have. We enjoy many freedoms, but they are not guaranteed to us, so we are responsible to use them now. In some parts of the world the Lord's people are under open persecution and we don't know if, or when, this may come to us.

We also must consider the matter of possibility. Esther was told by Mordecai, '*Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?*' (Esth. 4:14).

She was in a special place to act for God's people as no one else could and was willing to risk her life to do so. This was not a chance situation; God had ordered it. In the case of Joseph, he could say, *'God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance'* (Gen. 45:7). He was in Egypt ready to be used of God to save life.

There is also the issue of obedience. Philip was busy serving the Lord in Samaria with great blessing, but he was told in Acts 8:26: *'Arise and go ... to Gaza'*. This was desert, but the Lord was in control of the timing so that he was in the right place at the right time to meet the Ethiopian coming that way.

What of being ready? In the story of the virgins in Matthew 25, we read: *'While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept'* (v. 5). In 1 Thessalonians 5:6 they were told, *'Therefore, let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober'*. We need to be awake and ready to seize the opportunities the Lord has put in our way, remembering that the time is short. *'For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry'* (Heb. 10:37).

From our point of view, we only see a small window of time or opportunity, but the Lord knows all and places us where He would have us to serve Him. Let us be willing, watchful and obedient to see what He has for us to do. Let us put His testimony first in our priorities.

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