

We constantly hear more and more the statement, "time is going by so quickly." The days run into weeks, weeks run into months, months into years, and it seems the older you get the faster the years go by. We also hear the expression "there are not enough hours in the day to accomplish all I need to get finished."

I was riding home from work one day when a brother's name came to mind, my thought was to give him a call that evening. Business with other matters prevented the call. Soon after I was informed the brother was having a real trying experience that day and a phone call would possibly have provided just the encouragement he needed. **A missed opportunity.**

Another time we had visited a sister in a nursing home, did not get back to see her for some time-the next time we visited she could not communicate. Shortly thereafter she finished her course. **Another missed opportunity**

A brother recently related an experience of procrastination in preparing for a service and because of that had to decline an opportunity of an additional service.

Someone else testified of a failure to be properly prepared for ecclesia study and for that reason missed the blessing of participating in the study as they desired.

Finally, I knew a brother who failed to offer a timely apology for a misgiving he felt had taken place. When he did finally settle the issue, it was not nearly as serious as he had imagined, and he said it was like a 100 pound weight was taken off his shoulders.

Brethren, have you ever taken a very nice picture of a beautiful landscape or some meaningful event and when you down loaded the files to your computer found your wonderful picture was out of focus?

Brethren, sometimes our lives get a little out of focus too. We have the large focus the big picture – We need to keep our eyes on Jesus the author and completer of our faith, and we certainly try to do that. Within that greater picture though are many

smaller pictures, specific elements of activity and development as new creatures in Christ Jesus and sometimes we lose our sharp focus on those smaller pictures, those smaller elements.

What we have been talking about brethren can be categorized into four areas of consideration that will help keep our consecrated lives in sharp focus.

The **first** area of consideration is Procrastination: If someone has a problem with procrastination it definitely needs to be addressed. It keeps us from doing our best because when we do get started on a project we are usually rushed to completion.

**Second:** The failure to prioritize the things we need to do, remembering to place the most important items first. **Third:** Just stop wasting time. **Fourth:** We need to be more diligent at staying focused not only on the bigger picture but on all those little areas that go to make up that bigger picture. Because that is the way our consecration is, it's day by day, it's hour by hour.

There is a little saying that very well expresses this thought of living out our consecration each day one day at a time. It goes like this, "*inch by inch life's a cinch, yard by yard, life is hard.*"

The Apostle Paul said in I Cor.15:31 (from the Amplified) “[I assure you] by the pride which I have in you in (your fellowship and union with) Christ Jesus our Lord, that I die daily—that is, that I face death every day and die to self.” One of the most discouraging experiences that a follower of Christ will go through is repeated failures in certain specific areas of conduct and then wonder, how can they go to the throne of grace again? Certainly, this is just the time they need to approach the Father of mercies. But this is also an opportunity for great steppingstones. Once the Lord’s help is realized it will help us appreciate more and more His provisions, and to grasp onto and make use of them to their full advantage. Brethren, I am sure you will agree, one of our most precious resources is our time. Time management in the world today is very important, just ask your foreman or immediate supervisor. For the consecrated Christian this importance is even greater.

From God’s Purpose In Christianity. Remember, we as “Christians are in training for a glorious future work of bestowing blessings upon the whole world of mankind. It is this blessed,

Scriptural fact that gives point to the Christian life. The trials of faith, the discipline, and the hours of patient toil in the Master's service, would lose much of their meaning if when the end of the narrow way of sacrifice is reached there would be nothing to do—nothing but an eternity of idleness.

The Scriptures admonish us to put down self and selfishness in order that our hearts and minds may be filled and controlled by love. We are to love God and each other as He loves us. God manifested His love by the gift of His Son to be our Redeemer and the Redeemer of the whole world. Jesus demonstrated His love by the willing sacrifice of His earthly life as a ransom for Adam and his race condemned to death because of sin. It is clear that if we are moved by such love, we, too, will delight in the privilege of serving others.

Unquestionably, one of the sweetest joys of the Christian is experienced in self-sacrificing efforts to help others. But the present life is short. Human frailties are a handicap which limit our feeble service. Almost before we realize it the eventide of life begins to spread its darkening shadows around us; and if the

Spirit of God and of Christ fills our hearts we will feel that our service has been all too meager, that if it were possible we would like to continue that service and increase it to the glory of God.

It is the possibility of doing just this that the Scriptures hold out to us as the great objective of the Christian life. The Christian church, made up of all the true followers of the Master, is identified by the Apostle Paul to be the divinely provided channel of blessing for all mankind. God promised Abraham that his seed would bless all the families of the earth. The apostle reveals that Christ and His church constitute that promised seed."

From the Sermon Book on pages 467 and 468, Br. Russell examines the value of time where he says "And when we consider the time to work, sleep, eat, supply the legitimate needs of providing for one's own things decent: the time left to do the work of the Lord, at best, is very small. And while the actual hours vary between brethren, depending upon circumstances and how faithful each one is at carrying this out—yet the time then available is still very limited." Brethren, this is not to say that there are not many of our fellowship who are making good use of

their time and who are being faithful at carrying out the work of the Lord—we are not saying that at all. Our Lord made no hard and fast rules, Br. Russell suggested no hard and fast rules and so we would not either, as to how or on what we should spend our time. But we would offer a reminder, that we have consecrated our all including our time, and how we carry that out is the matter at hand. The Apostle Paul considered this subject for us as well, knowing that it could, or would be, a problem in the Gospel Age and particularly to the Church at the end of the age that they would have this difficulty. You are very familiar with the Apostle's words on time management in Eph.5:15-17 and Col.4:5. In Ephesians 5 we read, "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil." And Col.4:5 says, "Walk in wisdom towards them that are without, redeeming the time." We see that both of these citations bring forth the importance of wisdom in determining, first, the proper use of our time, and second in reading further in the context of this passage, the proper understanding of what God's will is. Proverbs 4:7 states,

“Wisdom is the principal thing.” Whose wisdom is being spoken of here? Certainly not man’s wisdom, but God’s wisdom, the wisdom that cometh from above. James tells us in Chapter 1vs 5, “that if any man lack wisdom let him ask of God...” We need to realize our need for divine wisdom and to make this a daily request to our Heavenly Father. Again the Apostle James in chapter 3 verse 17 describes the qualities of wisdom which is from above and compares it in the preceding verses with human or earthly wisdom. We would like to read the passage in James chapter 3 beginning at verse 13 through verse 17.

**Jas 3:13** Which of you is a wise and well-instructed man? Let him prove it by a right life with conduct guided by a wisely teachable spirit.

**Jas 3:14** But if in your hearts you have bitter feelings of envy and rivalry, do not speak boastfully and falsely, in defiance of the truth.

**Jas 3:15** That is not the wisdom which comes down from above: it belongs to earth, to the unspiritual nature, and to evil spirits.

**Jas 3:16** For where envy and rivalry are, there also are unrest and every vile deed.

**Jas 3:17** The wisdom from above is first of all pure, then peaceful, courteous, not self-willed, full of compassion and kind actions, free from favouritism and from all insincerity. (Weymouth New Testament)

In R.#1520 the pastor offers these words, “Those who have this kind of wisdom that is from above, the attitude of heart and of mind to receive instruction from the Lord, are sure to get

understanding from whatever truth is meat in due season.” (end quote)

Let us apply our hearts unto wisdom that our thoughts, our motives, and our reasons for our actions will be holy unto the Lord.

The Ephesians quotation that we read earlier, speaks of walking circumspectly. Walking implies action, movement on our part. It tells us that activity or effort is necessary, but not just any activity or walking, the Apostle Paul distinguishes between improper and proper walking. We just saw that illustrated in James about the difference in walking in wisdom from above compared to earthly wisdom. *The word walk is Strong's #4043 signifying the whole round of the activities of the individual life, of the unregenerate or of the believer, hence the thought of improper or proper walking or activity.* Walking circumspectly—looking around—that is looking about to see how we are doing; to see how we are fulfilling our covenant of sacrifice. To see not only how we are growing positively in the Lord, but to look for

those failings and shortcomings and how we can correct them in the development of our Christ mind.

In I Cor.11:28 we read "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup.

Here we see a special examination as to ones worthiness to partake of the emblems.

And again in II Cor.13:5 "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

Here the Apostle is encouraging us to examine ourselves as to whether we be in the faith. Search our hearts, looking at our present condition compared with the past, to see if we are making progress.

We would like to give you a reference for personnel study in the 5<sup>th</sup> Vol. page 232 where the Pastor suggests five areas of the Lord's hand in our development they are chiseling's, polishings, pruning's, disciplines and chastisements.

In Vines Word Studies there is a thought on Redeeming The Time: “Where time is the word **KAIROS**, a season i.e. (a time in which something is seasonable); that is making the most of every opportunity and turning each to the best advantage since none can be recalled if missed.” I think we can understand the importance of that explanation. Sometimes we use the expression, “that’s like water over the dam” or “water under the bridge”—it can’t be recalled, it is gone. I am sure we have all had experiences like that. Another consideration might be the fact that we do learn from our experiences, even our missed opportunities, so that eventually (hopefully sooner than later) those missed opportunities will teach us the lesson of being more watchful and we will not miss them again.

How can we “buy up” or “purchase back” these opportunities? Since there are only so many minutes and hours available to us each day, how are we to accomplish all that we are to do? Each day is a test upon us to see if we will let go of #1 the worldly things, and #2 the desires of the flesh, that we would have time to pursue more of the opportunities of the

spirit—the activities in which the new creature is truly interested? To give up those things that are even right and proper but which might be hindrances to fulfilling our covenant of sacrifice? As we look again at Eph.5:16 we are strongly encouraged to redeem the time **because the days are evil**. The days that we are living in are not very conducive to spirituality or spiritual growth. We see that the influences are all about us for just the opposite. The pride of life, the desires of the flesh are strong influences over man in general. Probably more now, than ever before, earthly attractions are so numerous it is difficult to avoid them completely. There are so many ways to spend our time, minutes here and minutes there soon add up to even larger blocks of time. The television might be one of the greatest hindrances to the consecrated Christian. It used to be the local channels (maybe 6 or 8 selections at most) were all that were available. Now, you can receive hundreds of channels. Whatever your interests there is a channel just for that subject. Newspapers, magazines, email— the internet—and you can lose a lot of time there, a lot of time. The U-Tube channels are a good way for the

brethren to witness but there are draw backs here also. Social media platforms can be good and not so good. Not that there isn't constructive use in using these forms of communication, but we are talking about excessive time.

I use the excuse that I want to watch the 6:30 news (World News) to see if there is anything about Israel. If I haven't fallen asleep before the news is over, and if I don't turn the TV off, then I might watch more than just a little of the news. It seems a small thing, and insignificant, but it really is not when the one little thing builds upon another and another.

In Harvest Gleanings II on page 468, Br. Russell says, "the increase of wealth, the comparative cheapening of luxuries, the fact that these are becoming almost necessities; together with the growing ambition of our neighbors and friends, all these appeal to us and strive to get from us precious moments and talents; opportunities and influence which as ambassadors for the Great King of Kings, we feel we ought to be rendering to Him and to His service." (end quote) What would the Pastor say today about the luxuries and the conditions we are living in? The

Apostle Paul in Col.3:2 instructs us to "...set our affections on things above and not on things that are upon the earth." This is not always easy to do brethren, but we must try. The Pastor in one place says we might have to reset our affections 1000 times a day until they finally begin to stick. Let us be strengthened by the Apostle's words to redeem this time and to buy back as many opportunities as possible. To use the help the Lord has promised and does provide, and to do our part that we would be well pleasing to our Heavenly Father.

**For the remainder of the time we would like to consider four areas of our consecration.** They are not going to be "how to" do each one, but they are going to be "we must" do each one. They are not going to be details on how we go about doing each of the four, but rather some encouragements on why we need to do each one; prayer being at the forefront of the four. We must have prayer in our life—so the first item will be PRAYER, another will be STUDY and MEDITATION, a third will be FELLOWSHIP, and the fourth will be SERVICE.

**PRAYER** should precede any and all activity of our Christian life. The first thing we should do before we begin, or as we begin our day is pray. How much time do we spend in prayer with our Father at the throne of heavenly grace? Learning to pray is like learning to swim; it can only happen in the water, despite fears; insecurities; and doubts. We talked earlier about "focus." Focus and concentration are definitely helpful for meaningful prayer. Our Lord Jesus spent much time in prayer with his Father. He was a wonderful example to us. He spent time with his disciples and prayed within their hearing. He was not content with just those opportunities but went to the Father alone as we read in Matt. 14:23 "And when he had sent the multitude away, he went up into the mountain again to pray and when even was come he was there alone." Nearly all the great teacher's recorded prayers are simple and brief. In R.#5095 we read, "Whenever he wanted to make long prayers, he went to be alone with the Father." Our Lord would often spend whole nights in prayer. If Jesus needed that special secret time with his Father to replenish his soul, to keep alive that burning zeal (Love) to do the Father's will at any

and all cost; then so do we, brethren, have even more need to keep our frail selves before the throne of grace.

We have the Scripture that speaks to us about continuing instant in prayer (Rom. 12:12); and to pray without ceasing (I Thess. 5:17) to encourage us to realize that God is never too busy to hear and to receive our petitions. The adversary can assail us with temptations and fiery darts—they can come upon us anytime, especially when we are unaware or unprepared. Satan looks for our weak moments. We need that continual assurance that the Father hears and will respond at any time, his ear is ever open to our cry. Matt. 6:6 speaks to us also about that time of secret prayer, “But thou, when thou prayest, go into thy closet and when thou hast shut thy door pray to the Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee (openly).” If our time is so fully occupied that we have no time to pray remember the little saying, “if we are too busy to pray, then we are probably too busy.” Here we see the need of purchasing back from less worthy activity the time to establish a proper prayer communion with the Father and with

the Son. In Isa.40:3 we are given this encouragement (from the Good News Trans.) “But those who trust in the Lord for help will find their strength renewed. They will rise on wings like eagles, they will run and not get weary, they will walk and not grow weak.” In Phil.4:6 we are encouraged with these words, “In everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known unto God.” In R.#2692:1 we quote, “the neglect of prayer is sure to lead to a leanness of soul and a lukewarmness in respects to spiritual things.” (end quote) Then the Pastor used three other words, “unfaithfulness, coldness, and death,” as a result of further deterioration of our consecrated life. Let us not miss this needed habit of regular, specific season of communication with our Heavenly Father.

The second area, **STUDY and MEDITATION**—you understand why this doesn’t have to be a “how to” because if we make the time to implement these activities and practice them we will already know “how to,” won’t we? We want to remind you of the Scripture mentioned earlier that spoke of “those who have the wisdom of God will always have the meat in due season for

whatever subject they are studying.” The time we take to eat, and what we eat for the proper care of our natural body is of prime importance—I think we would all agree—even more so is the time to study and meditate upon the Lord’s word. It is our meat and drink. In Jesus’ prayer his request was “give us this day our daily bread.” But in Luke 4:4 he said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” There is a close link between prayer and study that we would miss altogether if we did not redeem the time to allow both of these areas of our Christian life to take place—more than to take place, but even to abound. If we ask in prayer to have, or to know, the will of God concerning a specific matter and then fail to go to the textbook where we find the instruction, how will we receive the answer to our prayer? When we read and study His word, we would include the Harvest Truth message, the writings of the seventh messenger, including the later Reprints and the 1916 forewords as meat in due season so necessary today. The volumes for class study are essential. We can read the Bible and receive a blessing; we can hear the words of a discourse and receive a

blessing; but these two alone will not maintain our spiritual strength. The Apostle Paul in II Tim. 2:15 tells us, "To study to show ourselves approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed rightly dividing the word of truth." There must be study, regular and consistent study. We are familiar with the Bereans of old in Acts 17:11 who received the word with all readiness of mind and "searched the Scriptures daily to see whether those things were so." If our prayer is for God's Plan to become clearer to us, the habit of daily study must become a reality.

Life is full of choices. This is another opportunity to make a choice—do we choose to take time to study, or do we choose something not necessarily bad just less beneficial to our new creature? Our growth in grace and knowledge is dependent upon our right choice. We know that the word "**STUDY**" means more than just textbook understanding (or learning). It has a far greater thought—it goes to make up all the experiences of our life. Whether it is with our family at home, or our co-workers on the job, whether it is with the stranger on the street, or our

brethren in convention; they are all opportunities to apply what we are learning from God's word. In I Thess. 4:3 the Apostle Paul tells us what God's will is for us—"This is the will of God for you, even your sanctification." As we study God's word, we find the full meaning of "sanctification"—to be set apart unto holiness unto the Lord. The Apostle Paul again shows us the importance of study and application of that study in Heb. 12:14 where we read, "Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:"

Not only the studying but also the **MEDITATING** upon God's word; which means that we reflect upon it and allow the Bible to settle in our mind and heart. In I Tim. 4:15 we are told "to meditate upon these things, to give ourselves wholly (completely) to them, that thy profiting may appear to all (or that it may appear in all things)." The reading of the Manna each morning will also be beneficial to meditate upon throughout the day. In talking to a brother one day about his work schedule (he took many business trips), he said, "but at night I can sit in the motel

room and study; then the next day on the job I go over what I had studied the night before. It did not hinder his job activity or performance; he still had that opportunity to have those things in his mind and think them over redeeming the time. Hear what the Prophet Jeremiah says about the words of God and how we should receive them (Jer. 15:16) “Thy words were found and I did eat (appropriated) them and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing in my heart.” And so, dear friends, we want to redeem the time, to buy back the time from other activities in our life which will allow us the time we need for study and meditation upon God’s word. We study to show ourselves approved unto God—but in so doing we benefit from each other’s efforts. Which leads us to our next consideration.

The third area is our **FELLOWSHIP**—you know our praying and studying should lead us to a desire for fellowship. An opportunity to not only receive a blessing from God’s word, but to be a blessing. To be able to share with those of like precious faith; to someone else who has a need to hear an encouraging word; to another we can be in fellowship with them and share a

precious promise (that is a favorite one that has been helpful to us) or an understanding that we have received from our personal studies on a particular topic or our preparations for class studies. The word **FELLOWSHIP** is from the Greek word "Koinonia" and is translated communication or communion, contribution, distribution, fellowship, to communicate. It is the same word that we visit at least once a year (or more) in I Cor. 10:16 & 17 where it is referencing our participation with our Lord Jesus in the bread and in the cup. Our participation not only with him, but with each other in that bread and cup. This also includes the thought of this fellowship that we have during the year with each other. Whether it be a fellowship where two or three are gathered together or a larger group; a class or a convention; we can go with the intention of giving a blessing and to be a blessing. True fellowship today means that we must redeem the time to allow us the most benefit of our opportunities together. The adversary will place roadblocks of one kind or another in our way to keep us from fellowship. He knows the importance of our being together and he will interfere as much as possible.

In II Tim. 4:2 the Apostle Paul says to Timothy, “Preach the word, be instant in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.” Even though that was given to Timothy, as an Elder, by the Apostle Paul, we know in principal that we each have that opportunity to help instruct, to exhort, to encourage each other. In Heb. 3:13 Paul says, “we are to exhort (warn, admonish, urge, encourage) one another daily while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” There are many ways of uniting our hearts and minds in fellowship. We can do this through letters, phone calls, visits, through email or “online studies.” Brethren are able now with computer internet, cell phones with face time and various social media outlets, and, Zoom connections for class meetings and conventions, that make it possible to extend our fellowship worldwide. All these are good and helpful; in many cases they bring brethren together who would not be able to do so otherwise (this convention today is a good example)—but where we have the opportunity, there is no substitute for the gathering together for study and fellowship. The Apostle

encourages us to do this in Heb. 10:24 & 25 where he says, "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another and so much the more as you see the day approaching." Now these texts have been the subject of many studies, and rightly so. Our intent here is just to remind us of the necessity of fulfilling these verses in our lives. Where the Lord provides such a strong statement from the Apostle, it would be a very dangerous thing for us to ignore that admonition. In the 6<sup>th</sup> Vol. on page 310, the Pastor says, "None of us is so strong in the new nature that he can disregard the fellowship of kindred minds." End of quote. I think we would all agree with that statement. It is in vain that we seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit if we neglect the word of God, if we neglect our prayer privilege, if we neglect to assemble with the Lord's people. How can we provoke to love and good works? There are numerous ways that we can do that. Let us redeem the time, let us be aware and look for opportunities to be able to encourage our brethren. Think about how we have been helped by our

brethren at various times and use those examples as much as possible.

The last area of consideration where we may purchase opportunities to redeem the time is in **SERVICE**—in Heb. 12:28 we read: “Wherefore receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably (that is be well pleasing) with reverence and Godly fear.” (End quote). He deserves our highest praise and our strongest efforts. Are we giving God what is our first, our best? Or are we giving him what is leftover? We don’t want to give what is leftover, do we? But sometimes we must make a concerted effort to make sure that we are giving our first fruits, the best that we have. In Gal. 5:13 we read, “For brethren, ye have been called unto liberty only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh but by love, prefer one another.” (end quote) Service becomes a means of outward expression of our inward growth and development. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” is a similar expression. Any service we perform must be supported by the proper motives. Whether it be a menial service as is suggested

by our Lord Jesus in the feet washing lessons that he gave to the disciples and to us; or a more important service that we can perform, the proper desire is to do it from love. Seeing an opportunity to be of service, to be a strength and encouragement to others; love then is the driving force behind our service. We would like to quote a portion of the Manna text for May 2<sup>nd</sup>. The last part of the comments begins with, "to be really in the Lord's service involves first, the careful and continual study of God's Plan. Second, the imbibing of its spirit leading; thirdly, to an enthusiastic zeal for its accomplishment and to activity to the extent of ability in its service, at whatever cost or sacrifice it may require." (End of quote). The Lord does not require any of us to do more than what we are capable of doing. But he does require us to do what we are capable of. That is why it is "to the extent of our ability." There is one other Manna text one month earlier on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, "As we have therefore opportunities, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them that are of the household of faith." (End of quote). That is from Gal. 6:10 and the comments are, "The Christian is to be ready to do good at the expense of his

own time and convenience to all men, but he is to be ready to lay down his life for the brethren. He is to seek opportunities to lay down his life day after day in the sense of giving his time to the communication of the truth or helping the Lord's brethren in any matter to put on the whole armor of God and to be able to stand in the evil day." (End of quote). It is the new creature that is in covenant relationship by sacrifice. It is the new creature that is on trial now for life or for death. So, it should be primarily along the lines of spiritual help for the new creature that we should consider first and foremost for our brethren. But you know, sometimes temporal blessings, temporal opportunities, can produce a spiritual blessing also. Some of our brethren are burdened down so much with the cares of today, that they cannot spend the time mentally to think properly along the spiritual lines that they need, in order to help their new creatures grow. If we can relieve them of one of those temporal burdens, we are able then to free up their minds that they might be able to consider things that would be more profitable for their spiritual welfare. Each of us has a responsibility. There are opportunities for

service for each of us. God would not give us the responsibility without also providing the opportunities to fulfill it. The important thing is our heart condition. The important thing is to “do with our might what our hand finds to do” as expressed in Eccl. 9:10. To serve the Lord, the Truth and the Brethren individually and/or throughout our ecclesia arrangement. Jesus is our prime example, he came not to be served, but to serve.

Brethren, the convention has come to an end. Remember how quickly time goes by, so when we gather in the coming days with our ecclesia let us be reminded how we do need to **redeem the time because the days are evil**; because the days are shorter the conclusion of the Church this side of the veil is closer now than when we first believed. Brethren, by redeeming the time may we be more faithful and more pleasing to our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus.

May the Lord overrule anything said amiss and add His blessing.