

A New Year (Slide 1)
Redeeming the Time!

Reading: Philippians 4:4-9

(Slide 2) The word ***gentleness*** found in our reading carries with it a couple of meanings. It can mean *forbearance*-which I believe may indicate a level of tolerance for one another and our attitude toward living in this dark world.

It is the way we would treat someone who has a different view or has idiosyncrasies that are somewhat difficult to deal with.

But it also means *graciousness*. In my estimation one who is gracious is kind, compassionate, empathetic to another's circumstance, loving, caring, and willing to aid someone in their distress. In other words, the Christian puts others first.

Philippians 2:3 (NIV) (Slide 3)

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves

It's all about making righteous decisions!!

A New Year has rolled around and with it comes all the New Year's Resolutions. (Slide 4)

Some of the most common ones are:

"I'm going to lose weight!"

"I'm going to get in better shape by exercising more!"

"I'm going to be more fiscally responsible by saving money!"

(Slide 5) "I'm going to build better relationships and be more outgoing!"

"I'm going to read more and increase my knowledge on some subjects!"

"Better health-more time with family-more organized, etc...etc....the list goes on and on!"

Most resolutions are made just for ourselves though some do benefit others in a round about way.

Some of those resolutions require a great deal of physical work, yet they all require the decision to commit and to be dedicated.

There isn't anything wrong with making New Year's Resolutions based on one's ability and resources.....Yet, so often just as the New Year comes and goes.....so too, do the resolutions.

Many feel a great sense of renewed hope and excitement.
A fresh start so to speak.

Yet, in reality, each new day brings new hope.

Hebrews 10:23 (Slide 6)

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

Everyday in the Lord offers everlasting hope!

Some folks resolve to read their Bible more.....to draw closer to God and build a better relationship with Him.....to eliminate those things that are sin in the eyes of God.....In fact, many go as far as to promise to eliminate those things in their life.

These are great intentions but often they fall short again as the passing of time swiftly fades into the New Year.

Christians must live their lives in constant dedication to the one they worship, that is, The Almighty God.....and He cautions in His word to not make promises we cannot keep....

Matthew 5:33-37 (Slide 7)

33 "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.' 34 But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; 35 nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; (Slide 8) nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. 36 Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. 37 But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

James 5:12 (Slide 9)

But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your "Yes" be "Yes," and your "No," "No," lest you fall into judgment.

The Christian affirmation, that is; their word should be taken with validity based on the sincerity of the life and commitment to God that they have lived or are living without making an oath that invokes God's name as a promise in which we have no authority to do so. This affirmation is based on the character of our word, thus ***let your "Yes" be "Yes," and your "No," "No.***

It seems to me as we approach the New Year or even a new day, that is, day after day, our approach to everyday life should be with focus on decision making.

I really believe that is one of the emphases in the Ephesian letter that the Apostle Paul alerts the church of Ephesus to be aware of.....

Ephesians 5:15-17 (Slide 10)

15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

“Redeeming the Time”

As a person gets older that phrase takes on new meaning.

Most of us are familiar with this verse in this favored hymn

(Slide 11) *Time is filled with swift transition,*

none on earth unmoved can stand

Build your hopes on things eternal

And then hold, hold onto God's unchanging hand

Time moves seamlessly generation after generation. The old saying.....*"The days are long but the years are short"*.....definitely takes on new meaning the older you get.

When we're young we can't wait to be older.....when we're older we often look back and wish we could do some things over again or maybe.....all of it over again.

Looking at time from the swift lens of perspective we can see just how quickly it goes.

This coming year marks the *250th* birthday of our Nation. In *1776*, *13 colonies* declared their independence from Great Britain and on *July 4th* of that year this country created its *Declaration of Independence* giving way to the birth of our Great Nation. Only 250 years ago!

This country has certainly had its triumphs and its shortcomings but it has withstood all of that to create a civil society despite its differences and one that cannot be matched anywhere else.

Yes, its culture has changed.....great things have been developed.....and some have been erroneously used, but we still have an independent society in which one can make a great deal of decisions that impact their own daily

life and according to scripture, more importantly the lives of others.

I want us to think of it from the perspective of ***“Redeeming the Time.”***

(Slide 12) 250 years is really not all that long. Much has occurred in this nation during that short time. The industrial development and innovation of the nation was really unmatched for many years.

The development of land into great cities and then to be connected by miles and miles of interstate travel.

Inventions that propelled us to victory in war including 2 World Wars.

Men landed on the moon and thus began the exploration of “outer space.” The advent of the satellite era for defense, travel and communication.

The age of communication from land lines to individual devices, and great strides in computers, robotics and medical technology.

Travel, from horse and buggy to automobiles-even some that drive themselves, international trade.....and the list goes on and on.

Though many of those accomplishments have faded from their original purpose, this country is still the land of opportunity and the envy of many other nations.

With each new technological stride comes enormous responsibility. Some of it personal and some nationwide.

Sadly, many inventions have caused great harm and in just a very short time. The advent of the internet really began in 1969 with the very first rudimentary net-work link with the World Wide Web coming into existence in 1989.

Just 20 short years and incredibly, information is at our fingertips. Yet, it is often used for harm and manipulation.

Nearly everyone has internet access and with it many intrusive variables have been produced causing harm to the once solid lives we once knew.

Our abstract and impersonal communication capability has created a very dark delusion and shattered the development of interpersonal communication and replaced it with cold/ calculated communication where one does not have to be face to face and can say anything they wish without real accountability. It has become in some instances faceless torment.

This kind of communication is often misunderstood, creating miscommunication.

Much harm has been created from the advent of social media and many have been hurt. It can be used with reason and prudence but is often used with bad judgment spitefully.

Because ridiculing someone on-line is easier than in person, we have created an epidemic of suicide in teenagers and young to middle age adults.

Our once golden communication that was really based on one's word and a handshake, that is our **"yea and nay"** has been replaced with biased uncertainty. We are not necessarily a better society despite the invention of this unprecedented form of modern communication.

In just 250 years by God's continued Grace, look where we started and where we are now and without doubt we can see that **"redeeming the time, because the days are evil"** is really about choice/ about decision making. Do we choose to do good or are we going to be indifferent to what we see?

Apostle Paul is saying make wise choices and use every advantage that God has given us to do good for others. Resolutions are most often made with our own welfare in mind rather than someone else's.

What is past is past and we cannot go back but we can go forward. But to do good, no New Year's resolution is needed. It is a permanent fixture in God's expectation.

(Slide 13) The **Galatian** letter tells us to ***"not grow weary in doing good"***.....**Ephesians** tell us ***"we are God's workmanship for good works"***.....of which we spoke of not long ago.

Jesus makes this statement in:

Luke 6:35-36 (Slide 14)

35 But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. 36 Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

Delve into the meaning of what He says here and you will see based on being set apart for good works, the Christian has many opportunities to make decisions based on the real needs of others and to do good.

Our real spiritual identity is revealed by how we respond to those who treat us with ridicule or indifference and by how we supply for the extreme needs of others.

Time is a very precious gift God has given us. In the comparison of time on earth to eternity where time is no longer, our earthly stay is extremely miniscule/very short.

(Slide 15) Approximately 78 years for men and 81 years for women are the averages. That is very short. So time is extremely precious. When I think of that from the time of life that I personally have reached, I realize how little truly is left.

But I don't want us to look at that from a negative viewpoint, rather a positive perspective because something greater in Christ is just beyond the horizon of spent time!

I've heard this story about a Christian doctor treating a dying man. He was in the doctor's office and the dying man asked; *"Doctor, what's on the other side of life?"*

The doctor replies, *"I don't know."*

"You're a Christian and you don't know what's on the other side of death?!"

Suddenly, there was a scratching on the other side of the door and the doctor went to check out the cause. He opened the door and the doctor's dog came running into the room so excited, happy and relieved to see him.

The doctor told the dying man, *"My dog has never been in this room and she had no idea of what was in here. But what she did know is that her Master was on the other side of the door and that is all that matters to her. I don't know exactly what's on the other side but I do know my Master will be there."*

That truly is what matters no matter how long we live.....if we are in Christ.

I really think it is fine and even appropriate to wish one another a Happy New Year. I even think it's fine to resolve to make changes in our lives. In fact, it's often appropriate to do just that.

However, for the Christian the passing of time is a reminder of the brevity of life and how little time we really have to be about the *"work the Lord has given us to do."*

I also realize that in my own life I've squandered many opportunities to really do the work. In other words, I haven't **redeemed the time** as I should have.

Notwithstanding, I have for the last several years resolved to do better. Not because of the New Year, but because of stronger faith.

Jesus said in:

John 9:4 (Slide 16)

I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.

I think that's the example we should follow and what the New Year should remind us as Christians to do.

Invitation

Today is a new day, the right time to resolve to put off the old man and to be renewed, becoming new in Christ by being baptized and washed clean in the Blood of the Lamb. Please don't delay, put on Christ today. The very best decision you can ever make.

If you are in Christ but feel the need to make changes in your life and renew your commitment to Him, we can pray for you and help you. Whatever your need, we welcome the opportunity to lift you up in prayer.

Please let your wish be known.....

Reading

Philippians 4:4-9

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!

5 Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer

and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. 9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

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