

CHIEF MINISTRIES

March 2015

Of all the gifts God gives us, surely the most precious is the gift of time. Seconds, minutes, years are all life parts, assembled and ready for our use in His service. The sand of our lives is running through the hourglass - fast, steady, precious. It is so precious that when we give it back to God, it sets the Angels at their alleluias. Yet we cannot give our entire lives to God at one time and have it done with for all time. We must surrender second by second.

Making Holy the Days of our Lives

Therefore, the primary question for the indwelling Christ is not "What will you have me do in life?" but, "What will you have me do today?" The clock belongs to Christ, and each tick summons us to surrender every second to the glory of His name.

Jesus knew His earthly life had limits. *"Mine hour is not yet come" (John 2:4). "The hour is coming and now is" (John 5:25). "Behold the hour is at hand, and the son of man is betrayed" (Matthew 26:43).* He criticized the Pharisees because they could not *"discern the.....times" (Matthew 16:3)*

The apostle Paul also seemed to be aware that his time upon the earth was brief. He said, *"but when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under law, to redeem them that were under law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Galatians 4:4-5).* Towards the end of Paul's life he wrote, *"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand" (2 Timothy 4:6).* The apostle understood that only those who obey in the moment can link their obedient moments into a significant lifetime. The point is not to merely live a long time. The point is that we're to offer our days as a sacrifice of silver on the altar of gold.

Time may be either the friend or the enemy of our surrender to Christ. The Chinese sage offers up our clock-ish lives as: hurry, worry, and bury. How often this sums up our churchmanship. Church is so often the busiest of all madness. We run from meetings/classes to service and back again. Exhausted by our frantic exercise we collapsed in bed at night, and for what? Does our hurried religiosity cause us to lift up our lives to the King? Have we looked upon our small performance with spurious pride? Have we sighed over our small prayers and been satisfied? All the while we know - deep in our hearts - there must be some deeper, more meaningful way to live for Christ.

When we sum up our large professions and our little faith, we know we need to confess our spastic obedience of time. "Lord Jesus forgive us our hurry. Help us to cling, linger, and savor." We need to pray, "Lord our spiritual dysfunction is an indication that we are splashing about on the shallow surface of our religiosity to avoid diving into Your depths."

What mature believer does not delight in seeing new converts talk with Christ? As we get older we sometimes hurry past the passion we knew as young Christians. Hurried Christians beget hurried disciples. Hurried disciples become a hurried church - a hassled fellowship of disciples who serve the clock and call it God. But this subnormal Christianity has become so normal we don't see anything abnormal about it. In fact we've come to believe that the most sincere Christians are supposed to be shallow, self-centered neurotics. Yet the church holds only one possibility of relevance. Time itself must be surrendered to the pursuit of the depths of God. God does not wear a watch. His unthinkable glory is learned only in our consuming communion with Him. But once we learn this we are delivered. Delivered? Yes from our horrible addiction to hurry.

One Sunday at a church service in the world a young girl was singing the song "I Exalt Thee", only she was saying "I exhaust thee". If God weren't all powerful, He likely would be exhausted by our neurotic adoration. We cannot

possibly flatter the Almighty by hurrying into his presence, flinging a song or two at him and a prayer and hurrying back out the church doors to our TV time, craft shop obsessions, recreational activities or our busy-bodied-ness. God is never flattered by our sanctified exhaustion.

Let's look at two Greek concepts of time: *Chronos* and *Kairos*. *Chronos* is clock time: minutes, decades, centuries - past, present and future or is-ness, was-ness, and will be. *Kairos* on the other hand, is time as substance. It is non-sequential and indivisible. Such time is merely is-ness. It is God's category of time just as *Chronos* is the human category.

Most of us spend our lives serving *Chronos*; we run from it and yet surrender to it. Clocks dictate our pace and wall us in with agendas and deadlines. Tick by tock we serve the clock.

In *Chronos* the secondhand drives life forward, but in *Kairos*, time doesn't move. *Kairos*, like God himself is not static. It ever moves, still it is ageless. *Kairos* never looks back and wishes it had achieved more, with *Kairos* there is no back. Therefore, there is no driven-ness in *Kairos*, which would make us want to do more planning or strive to achieve more.

Kairos is the "is" of being, the "I AM" of all existence. As Jesus pointed out to the Pharisees, God did not say to Moses at the burning bush, "I Was the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, (Mark 12:26). God is all present tense. To say He has been, or He may be, is to strip all Godhood from Him and make Him a prisoner of mere measured time.

Change your time zone. How can that be done? Paul says it this way, "*Be very careful then how you live - not as unwise, but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.*" (Ephesians 5:15-16) Time belongs to God. "*Now listen you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money. Why you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little way and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, if it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that. As it is you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil."* (James 4:13-16)

Mythologically, *Chronos* was the name of a short Greek god whose legs were muscular and he had wings on his heels. He moved fast. He was bald and slick at the back of his head, but hair licked at the front. The implication was that if you could grab him as he came toward you, you could take hold of him and make him grant you your wish. But if you waited till he was passed you, it was too late, for he was smooth-headed in the back and could not be grabbed once he had passed.

Chronos is like water flowing through a pipe. The pipe could be cut in three parts and water would be equally present in all three. *Kairos*, by contrast is a grand ocean and oceans are immeasurable. There a single drop of rain might fall into the grand sea of measureless time and be absorbed.

In the Christian view of time, our earthly lives are like time in the pipe. Once our frail lives are over, we too join the sea of God's immensity. Our ultimate joining of *Kairos* does not mean we will lose our own separateness. We will retain our identity all throughout eternity, but we will no longer need to chop time in parts. Until that time - the grand *Kairos* to which our present *Chronos* is headed - we will always be in the hands of God. Even Jesus, during His earthly journey admitted He did not know the time (*Chronos*) of His second coming.

To change from *Chronos* to *Kairos* time is to discover that prayer is not a pry-bar given to us to open the future. All watches must be checked at the Gates of the throne room. None who wish to commune with God can ever see Him while they insist He tell them exactly where their lives are going. God is to be met and listened to, not sat down and talked at. God alone says when He is through talking and the time of our Communion is over.

To run in and out of the presence of royalty or to try to set the limits on our conversation is to forget who we are and to whom we are talking. God is the King. We are fortunate to have an appointment with God. We must lay down all our appointment books, they are not significant in the king's presence.

Throughout history, those that wrote about prayer were not largely people of intercession. They rarely went to God to get Him to do things for them. Rather, they were controlled by a hunger for relationship. They seem to understand

that *intercession* makes a "to-do" list. Those who serve such lists actually make note of the time when they ask God for something and then leave a column in their prayer ledgers to record the date God gives an answer. I suppose there's nothing wrong with that. I just see it as an odd way to keep track of the faithfulness of God. It can foster the notion that when the check list is through, our prayer responsibilities are through.

Regardless, Satan has no desire to see anyone develop an abiding prayer life, so he will always be there like the Sandman in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:40). I remember those initial attempts. I rose early, because it is generally agreed that no prayer warrior ever prayed at two in the afternoon. I set the alarm early and have pages and pages of requests. Yet after I had finished asking God for things, very little time had passed. Then I began to pray for everyone I knew by name. That began to feel like telephone book recitation. Still I had only prayed a few minutes. Then as I try to begin the process all over again, I'd fall asleep.

I felt that if I wasn't talking, I wasn't praying. I didn't realize that my conversation with God resembles that with a friend. At first there are a thousand things to be told and just as many to be asked. After time however these diminish, while the pleasure of being together does not. Once I discovered the pleasure of His presence, I learned that prayer is not a monologue. Prayer is being with God. The basis of real praying is longing after relationship. Real relationships never keep their eye on the clock.

John Wesley often attributed his power in preaching to prayer that lost itself in such heavy adoration that it never watched the clock.

So how do we change from *Chronos* to *Kairos*? How do we change time zones. Obviously the answer doesn't lie in the grinding of our teeth to show we're serious. We have to fall in love with God. Then we fall in love with the wonders of our togetherness with Him. Can we force this to happen? No! Yet it happens on its own under the gentle urgings of our need for God. It has its own language. The language of praise - of worship. I'm speaking of good, intelligible adoration. Praise and worship is the language of spiritual lovers. In the joy of such togetherness, the clock disappears, and our relationship transcends clocks. Then time doesn't matter, only God. I remember worshipping for hours at a church in Pensacola Florida moving into the night and no one cared. God's presence was there and we loved to be with Him. It's difficult for time-conscious Americans to imagine great worship services. People who come to Christ in order to know Him, grow even deeper. No one complains that prayers and alter times are too long. It would be great to see the prison church have a service on a Friday night of just praise and adoration and worship to God. If we did, I know we'd see a change in all our other programs because men would have the opportunity to fall in love with "being" in Christ instead of the doing. We get that backwards so much of the time.

We have been given 86,400 ticks of the secondhand each day. And only 8,760 strikes of the hour hand each year. Having been entrusted with this precious commodity called time, we must realize that, once spent, the treasury cannot be replenished. So our stewardship of the clock must be defined by these truths.

1. We clearly are not the owner of our days. James reminds us that our days are fleeting. "*What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes*" (James 4:14). Whatever the work the Lord has given us to do, we are always working against a deadline. We recognize that Jesus is coming again, and at that moment every pendulum will cease to swing and all watch springs will break. A brand-new infinity will amputate the hands of all clocks. Then, time will no longer be our master. Then we will meet Jesus whose very life taught us that mere deadlines are a small reason ever to have lived.
2. We are to be faithful in our management of all these gifts and goods, talents God has given us. I Corinthians 4:12 says, *and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; (ESV)*. In terms of natural talents, such as communication or music or administration, these natural and spiritual gifts should be used in the church. *Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men."* ^{v9} (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? ^{v10} He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) ^{v11} *And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ^{v12} to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, (Ephesians 4:8-12 ESV)*. The material gifts, such as salary, income, inheritances, are to be spent in such a way that our use of all our money will indicate that we understand

that our material possessions were never our own. On the other hand, neither were our days. God gives them to us to be spent like currency drawn from the wallet of our lives.

I have never known anyone who wanted to waste life, but I have known only a few who could make decisions and stick to them until they held the destiny and dream of God.

3. The ultimate purpose of Christians is to glorify God. *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ^{v20}for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (I Corinthians 6:19-20 ESV).* The tiniest of God's are to be found in the egotists mirror. Yes, the little "mirror of me" is where most of the worlds masses worship. They may occasionally peer past the edges of the mere to see that there is a worthy year vastness beyond it. But we must continue to adore the little image of themselves, always asking at every turn, "What's in this for me?".

But praise - authentic adoration - smashes such little altars and bids these micro-idolaters to Get Real! Praising Jesus cries out, "Come past yourself and see the heavens opened and hear the angels singing "Holy, Holy, Holy". Smash your little mirrors, for past your slavery to the clock, lies the vastness of His glory. There you will see the Lord high and lifted up. There you will praise Him and be forever free of your ego. To glorify God is the very reason we are given life and "being". Our management of our days tend to move in two directions. We either use our time to magnify God or to exalt ourselves. Since our days are owned by God, our stewardship must consider every second precious.

Using time without regard to God is indeed to lose it.

4. We are the trustees of our glorious individuality. *O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge," (I Timothy 6:20 ESV).* No two of us are alike in this universe; we each have been given unique kinds of gifts. There is something given to us to do that no one else can do quite like we can. DNA is God's chromosomal stamp that speaks to the individuality of our lives. This glorious and God imparted uniqueness should put zeal into our stewardship of life. But our self-esteem must never be a springboard into arrogance. On the other hand, we must use the years so that our management of time may end in eternity with the compliment of Christ, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matthew 25:21).

Don't let time destroy the holy leisure by which we make friends with God. To be a godly disciple means that we go beyond the clock, because to be with God mandates that we give our life to become one who waits on God for the sheer pleasure of His company.

I challenge you, wherever you're at people of God, to serve Him today! Make a difference in someone around you based on your love of God. Redeem the time He has given us for it's coming to an end! See you in eternity fellow worshipers!

Be Blessed,

Chief

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