



Sunday, March 13, 2022



Main Text: Eph. 5:14-16 (14)Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. (15) See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, (16) Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Introduction: Doesn't it seem that the days, weeks, and months are becoming a blur? They are. That's one reason no one affected by daylight savings time relishes moving their clocks forward an hour this time of year. When we spring forward, instantly, it's as if an hour simply vanishes. We feel that way because truth is we are running out of time. God is shortening the days. Even the unchurched can sense the acceleration of time. Believing Christ would return in his lifetime, the apostle Paul urged the saints to awake and live in anticipation of that great event—the catching away of the church—the rapture! Paul warned the saints to “redeem the time” for the days were evil. In other words, make the most of your time. Use it wisely. Focus on eternity. Stay ready. Nearly two thousand years later, the Lord still has not returned, but evil, natural disasters, and wars have all intensified and spread around the globe. While these things occurred a hundred and even a thousand years ago, to dismiss them as just another cycle of universal tragedies is a mistake. Instead of ignoring the handwriting on the wall, we should heed Paul's warning. We should take deliberate steps to be rapture ready. If ever we needed to redeem the time; to make the most of every moment, it is now. Who knows? This Spring may be the last before our clocks click forward into eternity.

How to Be Rapture Ready

- **Step 1--Set Your Face Toward Eternity:** Luke 9:51, 21:28

Luke 9:51--And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,

Luke 21:28— (28) And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

Note: Jesus mastered His time. The closer He came to Calvary, the more He readied Himself for the event. As the day of His crucifixion approached, He “stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51). In other words, He did not become distracted. He didn't allow anything or anyone to hinder His mission. To redeem the time, we must set our face toward the coming of the Lord. Jesus told His disciples that when they saw certain things take place, the destruction of Jerusalem was near and that they should look for their opportunity to escape. Likewise, as we witness the intensified violence, unprecedented climate change, natural disasters, and spreading

wars, we should not ignore these events, but anticipate our redemption—the return of Jesus Christ. That’s redeeming the time.

- **Step 2—Set Your Heart on Jesus:** Matt. 6:21, 22:37

Matt. 6:21-- For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Matt. 22:37-- Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

Note: Make no mistake, each of us will set our affection on the things we treasure or value. The Bible declares that the things we see are temporary, but the invisible things are eternal. It is a mistake to set our affection on the material things of this world, as those things will someday be destroyed. One of the most important things we can do to make the most of our time is fall in love with the right things. Jesus said we are to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind. When we love something more than we love God, we devote more of our time, resources, and energy to that thing than is appropriate. Our affection for the Lord is not our primary focus. To redeem that time, we must set our heart on the One who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

- **Step 3--Expose Your Entire Life to God:** Psalm 139:23-24

Psa. 139:23-24—(23) Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: (24) And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Note: This one seems like a no brainer. The Scriptures declare that if hell and destruction are before the Lord, how much more are the hearts of men exposed to Him (Prov. 15:11)? God sees and knows everything! So, how do we expose our life to a God who already knows everything about us? Exposing our hearts to the Lord is an attitude of submission and surrender. It means that we invite God into every aspect of our public, private, and secret life. Remember, we cannot enter heaven with sin in our hearts. Since our hearts are so deceitful, we cannot know it (Jer. 17:9), we need God to reveal what is inside our hearts, especially any sin. Like King David, we must ask God to examine our hearts and reveal any wickedness lurking inside. If we don’t try to hide our sin from God, He will gladly reveal our sins and cleanse us of them when we repent (1 John 1:9). Exposing our hearts to God is a great step toward redeeming the time and being ready for the rapture.

- **Step 4--Embrace Stewardship Over Ownership:** 1 Chron. 29:12-15, Luke 12:16-21

1 Chron. 29:12-15—(12) Both riches and honour *come* of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand *is* power and might; and in thine hand *it is* to make great, and to give strength unto all.(13) Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. (14) But who *am* I, and what *is* my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things *come* of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.(15) For we *are* strangers before thee, and sojourners, as *were* all our fathers: our days on the earth *are* as a shadow, and *there is* none abiding. (16) O LORD our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name *cometh* of thine hand, and *is* all thine own.

Luke 12:16-21—(16) And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: (17) And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? (18) And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. (19) And I will say to

my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry. (20) But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? (21) So *is* he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Note: One of Satan's most effective devices is deceiving us into believing we are owners, not stewards. The more we accumulate, the more we think we own! Pride of ownership drains us of time and energy as we fight, claw, and buy our way through the game of owning stuff. But we brought nothing into this world and will carry nothing out. Therefore, we need to settle it in our hearts that we are only stewards of God's blessings. We must strive to be God's redeemed more than we strive to achieve the American dream. Perhaps one of the reasons God loved David was because David embraced stewardship over ownership. When David gave an offering for God's house, he saw his offering as simply giving back to God what was rightfully God's! David didn't feel he owned anything! He acknowledged that everything belonged to God! By contrast, the rich farmer adopted an ownership mentality. "I will pull down my barns," he said. But he forgot that he belonged to God, the barns belonged to God, and time belonged to God. The owner says, "It is mine," but the steward says, "It is thine, O Lord." If you want to redeem the time, and be rapture ready, embrace stewardship of anything you cannot carry with you in the rapture.

- **Step 5--Live Without Offence:** Acts 24:16, Matt. 16:14-15, 18:21-22

Acts 24:16-- And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.

Matt. 16:14-15— (14) For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: (15) But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Matt. 18:21-22— (21) Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? (22) Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

Note: Another of Satan's devices is to keep us living in offense. We live in offense in one of two ways: someone has offended us, and we will not forgive them, or we offend others and will not ask for their forgiveness. Paul told the saints to redeem the time because the days were evil. As evil as these last days are, sooner or later someone will offend us, or we will offend someone. Count on it! Satan knows that if he can keep us in offense-mode, we will never be rapture ready. The apostle Paul realized how deadly it is to live in offense to others and to God. So, he forgave and asked for forgiveness. If we refuse to ask for forgiveness or forgive others, we are in offence toward God and man, and God will hold our sins against us. Jesus told Peter to forgive his brother seven times seventy; that is, an unlimited number of times or as often as necessary. Living without offense is a powerful step toward redeeming the time because we're free to focus on heaven without regret. If we want to be rapture ready, we must strive to live without offense.

- **Step 6--Love, Learn, and Live the Bible:** Psalms 1:1-2, 119:11

Psa. 1:1-2—(1) Blessed *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. (2) But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. (3) And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Psa. 119:11-- Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

Note: Nothing is a better use of our time than saturating our heart and mind with the word of God. The person who loves God's word, learns God's word, and lives God's word will not walk in the counsel of ungodly or unbelieving people. He/she will not take part in what sinners do; nor become scornful. Many Christians are filled with fear, doubt, and hopelessness in these last days because they take counsel of (listen to) the ungodly! They do not believe the report of the Lord-the word of God. Instead of standing on the promises of God, they find themselves standing with sinners. Therefore, they are tossed about like a leaf in the wind. But the person who delights him/herself in the law of the Lord, and meditates on it day and night, is like a tree planted by a river. The roots of such a tree run deep, stabilizing the tree against storms, decay, and unproductivity. It is well nourished and will produce fruit in abundance. David hid the word of God in his heart so that he did not sin against God. When we love God's word enough to learn it and live it, we redeem the time, and remain rapture ready.

- **Step 7—Watch and Pray:** Matt. 26:41, 1 Pet. 5:8, Luke 21:34

Matt. 26:41-- Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

1 Pet. 5:8--Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

Luke 21:34-- And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

Note: If there are any watch words for the perilous times in which we live, "watch and pray" are those words. Jesus told His disciples that watching and praying prevents falling into temptation. Our spirit wants to watch and pray, but our flesh wants to sleep and play! Therefore, Paul told the saints at Ephesus to "awake" and God would give them light! No one perceives the light when they are asleep! Watching and praying go hand in hand. We cannot redeem the time sufficiently by doing one and not the other. We must employ them both! To watch is not simply to see, but to examine with reflection and anticipation of what might occur. It implies being sober (serious) and vigilant (alert). Watching and praying feed each other. The more vigilant we are the more we realize the need to pray. The more we pray the more watchful we become. If we do not watch and pray, we can be seduced into a careless and sinful lifestyle that leaves us oblivious to the closeness of Christ's return. For those serious about redeeming the time and being ready for the rapture, watching and praying is the order of the day.

Summary: The last days began almost two thousand years ago. Today, we're living in the last of the last days. The world is springing forward toward eternity. Christ's return is imminent. Many people wave off intensified natural disasters, global wars, and all manner of evil as cyclic events that have come and gone for centuries. Don't be lulled to sleep. Time is running out, and Christ will return for His Church. If we do not awake now, soon it will be too late. More than ever, we need to awake. We need to redeem the time. To be ready for the rapture, we must make the most of every moment. We must set our face toward eternity and our hearts on Jesus Christ. We must expose every aspect of our lives to God's divine inspection, declaring ourselves stewards of God's possessions and owners of nothing. We must live without offence toward God and man; confessing our sins daily and forgiving all trespasses against us. We must love, learn, and live the Bible, meditating on it day and night and walking in its light. Finally, we must watch and pray without ceasing; knowing that the Chief Shepherd can appear at any time. "Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing" (Matt.24:46).