

HOW MUCH TIME DO WE REALLY HAVE?

I want to begin this morning with the reading of a portion of the **90th Psalm**. If you have your Bibles with you this morning, and I trust that you do, please open them to that place and read with me **verses 1-12**.... Notice **verse 12**: *“So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.”*

Procrastination may be defined as putting off until tomorrow what needs to be done today. Or, as Mark Twain put it, *“never put off till tomorrow what may be done just as well the day after tomorrow!”* Someone else explained that procrastination is *“the art of keeping up with yesterday.”*

I almost became a procrastinator but I never got around to it!

One procrastinator with a sense of humor said,

*“Procrastination is my sin.
It brings me nothing but sorrow.
I know that I should stop it.
And in fact, I will—starting tomorrow!”*

Here’s one that many of us can readily identify with. Someone wrote:

*I spent a fortune
On a trampoline
A stationary bike
And a rowing machine.
Complete with gadgets
To read my pulse,
And gadgets to prove
My progress results
And others to show
The miles I’ve charted,
But they left off the gadget
To get me started!*

Well, procrastination is a very real problem and it imposes some pretty severe penalties. *“A stitch in time, saves nine,”* we use to hear. If you don’t take care of today’s business, tomorrow it may be too late. I remember one college class where the teacher set a deadline for turning in our term paper, which counted

heavily towards our final grade. Well for some reason I was running behind and didn't have the paper finished by class time on the day it was due. I tried to take it by his house an hour or so later, but he refused to accept it. At the time I thought he was being very unreasonable, but I see now, he was teaching me a valuable lesson.

I suppose we put off things because in some cases, we lack the motivation to attend to them right then. In other cases, we do so because we think that we will have the time later, but of course, we really do not know that do we? This morning, I want you to spend some time considering the question, "***How much time do we really have?***"

Think about it. Imagine your life as a clock. According to one source, the average lifespan of people in the U.S. is 79.8 years. Incidentally, you might want to move to another country. There are 34 countries that have a higher average than we do, including Japan which has an average lifespan of 84.6, or either Australia or Sweden which has an average lifespan of 83 years. If we round off our average lifespan to 80 years, then if we are...

- 10 years old it is 3 a.m.
- 20 years old, it is 6 a.m.
- 30 years old, it is 9 a.m.
- 40 years old, it is high noon and the sun is beginning to go down!
- 50 years, it is 3 p.m.
- 60 years old, it 6 p.m.
- 70 years old, which is what I am, it 9 p.m. in the evening
- If we are above 80 years old, it is after midnight!

You see, the truth is, the clock is running, and the sands of time are pouring through. We are powerless to stop them! People think they have so much time, that they will always have time, but that isn't true. One day you will wake up for the last time. One day you will drink your last cup of coffee, take your last walk, buy your last car, eat your last meal. One day you will spend your last dollar, make your last decision, breathe your last breath, and read your Bible for the last time. Think about it, good people. ***How much time do we really have?***

What are the reminders of these things we find in the Word of God?

- Remember? "***Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation,***" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

- Remember? *“We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work,”* (John 9:4)
- Remember? *“Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts...”* (Hebrews 3:7,8)
- Remember? *“But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin,”* (Hebrews 3:13).

The average lifespan may be almost 80 and some may live longer, but some die younger, and no one lives forever or avoids their appointment with death. **Hebrews 9:27** says, *“...it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes [the] judgment.”*

So, are you thinking brethren? ***How much time do we really have?***

It is important for us to realize that time for our families is also running out. Have you thought about that? I can remember when we brought our children home from the hospital. I can remember when they were small children running around the house. That was just yesterday, and now they are grown and have families of their own. Children grow up, leave home, make choices, and take new paths. Think about all of the things we plan to do, the places we want to take them, the lessons that we so urgently need to teach them. When are we going to find the time for all of that? The clock is running and the pages of the calendars are flying off the wall.

I have often counseled young parents, “Love and enjoy your children all you can because you are going to turn around one time and they will be going off to school. You will turn around again, and they will be graduating from high school and going off to college. By the time you’ve turned around a third time, they will be off on their own. I’m not trying to be pessimistic, I’m just describing what seems to be a reality! The goals we have as a family—spiritual, teaching, traveling, being together have to be worked on while the family is still capable of being together.

Mothers and Fathers also do not live forever. They too are moving ever so quickly towards that time when they will no longer be what they once were with respect to energy, ambition, and goals. Do you remember what the writer of Ecclesiastes wrote about that? Turn to **chapter 12, and look at verses 1-7:**

Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, "I have no pleasure in them"; 2) before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain, 3) in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those who look through the windows are dimmed, 4) and the doors on the street are shut--when the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low-- 5) they are afraid also of what is high, and terrors are in the way; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along, and desire fails, because man is going to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets-- 6) before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, 7) and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

Grandparents too are soon gone; aunts and uncles slip away from us. The world changes and we wonder where it went! Indeed it is something to think about: How much time do we really have?

Think about it, time for the world is also running out. We know what the Bible says about that. We know what Jesus said about that. We know the end is coming. Just when it will end we do not know, but it could be today, next week, or it might be a thousand years from now? Scientists tell us that it will be billions of years before our solar system burns out but there is no reason to think that God is going to wait that long. I'm not trying to frighten anyone, I'm just stating what we all know to be true but maybe do not want to think about.

How much time does the world have left? How many more days or weeks or months or years will it have to hear the gospel and obey it before all opportunity is gone? None of us have the answer to that question for sure, but this much we do know, it has less time today than it had yesterday, and tomorrow, *if there is a tomorrow*, it will have even less time than it does now. We need to understand, there is urgency implicit in the gospel. If Christians procrastinate or get distracted, or get too busy with other things, the only chance many people will ever have to be forgiven of their sins and be saved may be lost forever. Think about it: ***How much time do we really have?***

The people of this city are a part of that world, and yet, every day the newspaper prints the names of several people who have passed from time into eternity. One who was familiar to many of us was among that number just this past week. There are people in your neighborhood who will not be around a year from now. There are people you work with, go to school with, do things with in the community who will be among those who will be carried to their final resting place. Others will perhaps move, graduate, find another job, retire and relocate.

Not only that, but while we attend to our own concerns, we must keep in mind that the devil is also working. False teachers are teaching people things that are not true, blinding them to the truth, closing their hearts and minds to the gospel of Christ. If we do not reach them with the gospel soon, it may soon be too late.

Jesus spoke about the love of many growing cold. That too is taking place almost continuously. Christians becoming lukewarm, distracted, unfaithful, caught up in the world, hardened in their sin. Do we realize that there is just a small window of opportunity open when a brother or sister stops assembling with the church and being a part of the fellowship of believers? If we do not move quickly and with love, they may be gone, and gone forever. As the Hebrew writer said of some, *“For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5) and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6) and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt,”* (Hebrews 6:4-6)

Think about it, ***how much time do we really have?*** Think of all those things we have said to ourselves that someday we are going to do.

- Someday I am going to read the Bible all the way through.
- Someday I am going to really learn my scriptures.
- Someday I am going to talk with so-and-so about the Lord.
- Someday I am going to teach a class, or devote more time to helping people.
- Someday I am going to be an elder, or a deacon.
- Someday I am going to quit this or that bad habit
- Someday I am going to get right with God
- Someday I am going to come back to the church

- Someday I am going to be baptized

But think about it good people! Where do you find someday on the calendar. Which day of the week is that? Why are we putting off doing what we know already we ought to do, need to do, and probably even want to do? Why are we procrastinating when we know that we are not in charge of the clock that is our life? We did not wind it up, and we did not set its hands. That is all in the mind and hands of the Lord. We have no power over any of that. Our primary duty is to seek Him with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength!

Have you ever thought, and I will close with this, that one day ALL you will have is time? An eternity will stretch before you and you will have all the time you could ever imagine to think about all of those things you could have done, should have done, but didn't do because you thought to yourself that someday I will do that. You will have time without limit to regret those things that you knew you should change but put it off; hating yourself for not acting when you had the opportunity.

How much time do we really have? You know, don't you? You know that the only time that we really have is this very moment of time. As we read earlier, *"Now is the favorable time, today is the day of salvation."* *"Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts."* The question is not what will we do next year, or when we retire, or when we graduate, or when we get the children raised. The question is, what will we do with this minute, with this moment, with this time, because it is the only time we really have.

My friends, if your life is not right with God; if you have yet to truly obey the gospel, or if you know that you have strayed away from God, or become lukewarm in your faith and heart, I urge you to not do what so many have done for so long, what maybe even you have done so many times—and that is, think to yourself, "Yes, I really need to do something, but not now; not just yet. I will wait until I do such-and-such. And so we put off till tomorrow something that really needs to be done today.

If that is you, I urge you to do what you know you need to do, and to do it right now. If you would like to respond to God, please come while we stand and sing.