

The Time Is Now

Text: 2 Corinthians 6:2

²For he says,

"In the time of my favor I heard you,
and in the day of salvation I helped you."^[a] I tell you, now is the
time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

**Now is the acceptable time.
(2 Corinthians 6:2)**

It should be said that although God is the Master of time, He is the Creator of Time, we are not.

In fact, we are pretty much the slaves to time.

As a matter of fact, we get pretty nervous if the our conceived thought of time should go beyond what we think.

You see – Understand this with me - The clock is always ticking, and there is never quite enough time left.

It seems that we are always running out of time.

Time passes so quickly.

Deadlines are upon us before we know it and we feel the intense pressure and stress that these fixed moments in time cause us.

If only we could in some way find a way to s-t-r-e-t-c-h time. But we can not.

The founder of *MicroSoft*, Bill Gates, a man who has amassed around several billion dollars in personal wealth, was asked what one thing he wanted.

He replied, "More time."

And Yes - Indeed. We would all like more time.

As one man said it, "Time is a ruthless taskmaster."

But for all of our frustrations concerning time, we must remember that **time may be less real than we think.**

- Do you suppose that God has a calendar in heaven?
- What kind of watch do you think God wears on His wrist?
- There is no time as we know it in heaven.

There God lives in eternity, which is not time drawn out but **timelessness.**

The concept of time is a creation for the benefit of man so that our lives can experience some sense of order.

Time certainly has a definite impact in all of our lives.

And we deal differently with time in different stages of our lives.

- When we were young we tended to wish time away.
- We were always waiting for something---for some future event to happen.
- It might have been a birthday, or a vacation, or Christmas.
- Time seemed to move incredibly slow back then.
- And the time between the present and that longed for event was always wished away.
- We were always wanting to grow up more quickly.

Do any of you who are older understand what I am talking about?

To some degree we still do this.

But this is a false dealing with time.

By wishing for some future day to arrive we may miss the present entirely.

But we still wish, don't we?

- We wish for the day that we will graduate from high school,
- then college.
- We wish for the day we will be married to the one we love.
- We wish for the day we will begin that new job.
- We wish for the day we can buy that new home.
- We wish for the day when our children will be on their own.
- We wish for the day when we will retire.
- These are all good milestones, **but what about today?**

You see, if we are always living for some future event, we are wasting today.

If we never learn to live in "now" one day we will look back on our lives and conclude that they were wasted waiting for the next thing to happen.

So - Today marks the beginning of a New Year in time.

The year of our Lord we have called 2005 is over.

A new year designated as 2006 has begun.

So what?

Does it really matter all that much?

Does it really make any difference?

Every year we come to this time with the concept of time on our minds.

We feel that the passing of time compels us to think about our lives and the direction we are taking.

A "New" year ought to cause us to make "New" resolutions concerning our lives.

This is the way we think.

But should we be thinking this way?

Well, it seems to me that we certainly should be thinking about time.

While time may not be "real" in the ultimate sense, it is not an illusion.

It is something with which we must deal with, and deal effectively.

The Bible deals with it in 889 references throughout it's passages.

God calls us to deal with Time.

What would He say to us at the beginning of this New year?

I. Let's talk about Yesterday

A. In thinking about time, we must think clearly about the past.

It should go without saying that the *past is past*.

What we have done is done and there is nothing we can do about it.

And people who can allow the past to be past are very fortunate indeed.

You see, the past can bind us, **it can imprison us.**

Some people live in the past.

Story:

I remember in one of my pastorates in Urbana, Ohio.

A beautiful old couple by the name of Hubert and Grace Huffman.

I would go and sit in their living room and they would talk about the past and relive it like it was only yesterday.

And if Hubert didn't tell it right, Grace would say, "No! now Hubert, that's not the way it was."

And Grace would go on to tell the corrected version.

Their minds were sharp when it came to remembering the past.

You see - It is in this sense that the past can enslave us.

This is not to say that there is anything wrong with memories.

In fact, good memories are exceedingly valuable.

But the memories of our failures and our fears, and the times we were hurt by others; these are the things that can drag us down.

In one sense, **this sense, we do need to let the past go.**

B. In another sense, however, *the past is not dead at all.*

And it should not be.

The past is very much alive in us.

The past has shaped us.

It has made us, to a certain degree, who we are.

Because of our experiences in the past, our character has been formed the way it is.

So in a real sense the past is present with us every moment.

How do you view your past?

Is it something that still haunts you, or is it something that helps you?

Are there unresolved situations in your past that you need to deal with today?

Are there people in your past you need to contact in order to make something right?

Are there past sins you need to confess to God, to repent of, and to turn from?

The past is past, but it is not dead.

We must deal with the past effectively if we are to live in the present happily.

II. Next, let me talk to you about Tomorrow

In thinking about time the next thing we must deal with is **the future**.

Our yesterdays are behind us.

Our tomorrows are not yet here.

Indeed, *tomorrow never comes*.

When it gets here, it is today.

A. It should be said about the future, that *it is uncertain*.

There is no guarantee that we will ever see any point in what we call the future.

Our lives could end at any time.

There is no guarantee that we will live to be ninety, or eighty, or seventy, or fifty, or even thirty.

Keats died at twenty-five, Shelley at thirty, Byron at thirty-six.

History is filled with people who met unexpected tragedy.

I have personally known several people who died unexpectedly at a very early age.

You probably have known some yourselves.

None of us have a guarantee of tomorrow.

Tomorrow is not even ours anyway.

God holds our future in His hands.

This does not mean that we do not think about the future or plan for the future.

We should certainly do both of those things.

We should consider the possibilities for the future and we should also be prepared for what the future may behold.

But we should think realistically about the future if we are to live effectively in the present.

B. The *future can give us hope.*

As we sit here today we face the beginning of a New year.

What will this year hold for us?

We certainly hope that it holds good things.

One thing it does hold is the promise that it may be better than the last year.

It also holds the promise that things needing change in our lives may in fact be changed.

While there are no guarantees, it does hold the promise and the hope for good things in 2006.

And might I add, this very well could be the year that Jesus comes and Raptures the Church from this earth.

So our days could be numbered.

C. On the other hand, *the future can give us a false hope.*

It can provide a false sense of security and therefore keep us from living effectively in the present.

By assuming that we do have the guarantee of tomorrow we can post-pone many of the things we need to be doing today.

This false hope that we will be able to accomplish something "tomorrow" provides many people with the excuse they want **so they can put off the very thing they need to do today.**

Application:

I have met so many people who attempt to live in the future.

They are going to do great things when they get around to it.

When they have time, they are going to become more involved in things that count.

When this happens, or that happens, they will then begin.

They will do it later, tomorrow, next week, next month, someday.

The fact is that the time never comes, the situation never is right, **tomorrow never arrives.**

Story:

I heard a story of a pastor visiting newcomers to the community.

The wife began to attend church but this man always put the pastor off.

He said that he would come to church just as soon as he got straightened out.

Each time the pastor would visit him the man would make the same reply.

As soon as he got straightened out he would come to church.

Finally, the man died.

The pastor was called upon to hold the funeral.

As he stood behind his pulpit in the church sanctuary looking down at the coffin with the man inside, he thought to himself, "Well, he finally kept his promise." Be careful not to let your promises be fulfilled the same way.

III. My last point is - Today

The bottom line of the whole matter is that *we only have today*.

A. Today is all we have.

This is why the Scripture says that **now is the acceptable time**.

It is an affirmation that we live in the present.

The past is gone.

The future may never arrive.

But **now** is here.

Now is the only time we can accept and it is the only time **acceptable** to God.

The question we must answer is: **What are we going to do with now?**

How are you spending **now**?

Are you either living in the past or the future?

Are there things you have been putting off until tomorrow---things which you should be doing today?

Are you sitting back thinking that there will come that perfect situation which will enable you to be involved?

It will never come.

This is the message we need to hear at this time of year.

We must live in the **now** in 2006, because it is the only time we have.

Thank God for the past.

Thank God for whatever future there is awaiting us.

But live **now**.

B. We must live now in terms of our personal lives and also in terms of the church.

You see, we cannot simply wait for the future to come upon us.

If 2006 is going to be lived for Jesus, it must be lived one day at a time.

Every day will be today.

The only time we will have to live will be **now**.

So, there are no resolutions to make other than the decision to live **now**.

And the questions which you need to answer today have to do with what God is telling you to do **now**.

What are the issues with which you need to deal today?

Are there sins you need to confess today?

"Today is the day of salvation."

God's forgiveness awaits you today if you will come to Him.

In terms of your commitment to this local church, what is the Lord telling you to do today?

This church is you, and is only as strong as you allow it to be by your commitment and service.

Are you involved, committed, active, alive, pressing-in, dedicated, and dependable?

Are you involved in the ministry of this church by giving of your **time, talents, and tithes**?

Without your support this church might just as well close its doors.

And if you are not giving to the Lord's work, both of yourself and His tithe, then you are robbing God of what is His by right and you are robbing yourselves of the blessing God will give to you.

What is the Lord touching in your life today?

What will you do about it?

Whatever you do, you must do **now**. It is the only time you have.