



The Soul-Winner's Secret

Chapter 6 – Redeeming The Time

"See that ye walk circumspect, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." (Eph. 5:15, 16.)

The soul-winner must value time. Diamonds and gold nuggets are not so precious as minutes. One morning, about five o'clock, John Wesley lost ten minutes through the tardiness of his coachman, and mourned for them more than over lost treasure.

Dr. Johnson tells us that "Whenever Melancthon made an appointment, he expected not only the hour, but the minute to be fixed, that the day might not run out in the idleness of suspense." A lady told me that she was sure she got a position as a teacher once by being sharp on time. Another young lady, better fitted for the position, arrived a bit late, and remarked, "I thought it wouldn't make any difference if I were a few minutes late." She was politely informed that her services were not wanted, as a teacher had been secured. Eternity is made up of moments, and "lost time is lost eternity."

"Believe me," said Gladstone, "when I tell you that thrift of time will repay you in after life with a usury of profit beyond your most sanguine dreams, and that the waste of it will make you dwindle alike in intellectual and moral stature, beyond your darkest reckonings."

And yet thoughtless idlers try to "kill time," and thus destroy their most valuable possession. What is life but a glad, present consciousness of God and self and duty, and a hearty obedience thereto? But he that kills time seeks to forget, and would be far better dead.

"The future is nothing but a coming present," wrote Jean Paul Richter, "and the present which thou despisest was once a future which thou desiredst" Said a heathen philosopher, "Every man's life lies within the present, for the past is spent and done with, and the future is uncertain."



If you would redeem the time, begin the moment your eyes open in the morning. Let no idle, foolish, hurtful thoughts be harbored for an instant, but begin at once to pray and praise God and to meditate on His glories, His goodness and faithfulness and truth, and your heart will soon burn within you and bubble over with joy. Bounce out of your bed at once and get the start of your work and push it, else it will get the start and push you. For if you in the morning, throw minutes away, you can't pick them up in the course of the day. You may hurry and scurry, and flurry and worry, You've lost them forever, Forever and aye."

Said a chief divisional officer to me the other day, "There is much in the habit of work. If a man forms the habit he naturally turns to it. I find it so with myself. I squander less time now than I used to do."

The difference between wise men and fools, rich men and poor men, saints and sinners, saved men and damned men, does not usually result so much from difference of circumstances, and the start they had in life as the difference in their use of time. One redeemed it for the purpose he had in view; the other squandered it. One was a miser of the minutes; the other was a spendthrift of the days and months and years.

The one was ever up and doing, packing into every hour some search for truth, some prayer to God, some communion with Jesus, some service to man, some counsel to a saint, some warning or entreaty to a sinner; the other was ever neglecting the opportunity of the present, but full of vague purposes and dreams for an ever-receding will-o'-the-wisp-like future.

The one plods his way patiently and surely to "glory and honor, and peace, and immortality, and eternal life;" the other drifts dreamily, but certainly into the regions of "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish," and finally lands in hell (See Rom. 2:6-10).

To redeem time one does not want feverish hurry, but a prompt, steady, quiet use of the minutes. It was said of John Wesley that he was always in haste, but never in a hurry. "Make haste slowly," is a wise old adage.



To save time the soul-winner will find it profitable to go to bed promptly after his meeting at night, and to get up promptly on waking in the morning. Men who have accomplished anything in the world have usually gone to work early in the day.

The Rev. Albert Barnes wrote sixteen volumes in less than an equal number of years, devoting to them only the hours before breakfast.

If you would save time, have a Bible, a notebook and a pencil always at hand. Never go on to the street or take a journey without at least a Testament with you, and some other useful book if possible. And don't forget to use them. The Gospel of St. Matthew can be read through in two hours. This may not be the most profitable way to read it, and yet it will pay to read it right through at one sitting, that we may see the life of Jesus as a whole as we would the life of any man.

Paul's first letter to Timothy can be read in twenty minutes, while Jude can be read in three minutes easily. Then don't throw away these minutes.

Mrs. General Booth had to snatch time from household duties and the care of small children to prepare her marvelous addresses that stirred England, and helped so much in making and molding the Army.

The minister who sits about smoking and reading novels, and The Salvation Army officer who whiles away the minutes idly thrumming on his guitar and reading the daily papers will not succeed at soul-saving work. Again, the soul-winner can redeem time by being "instant in season, out of season," in dealing with men about the things of God. Uncle John Vassar, an eccentric but marvelously successful soul-winner, once saw two ladies in the parlor of a Boston hotel, and immediately inquired if they were at peace with God, and kindly and earnestly preached Jesus to them, and urged them to make ready for death and judgment by accepting Him as Saviour and Lord. A few moments later the husband of one of them came in and found them in tears. He inquired for the reason, when his wife said, "A strange little man has just been talking to us about



religion and urging us to get right with God."

"Well," said the man, "if I had been here I should have told him to go about his business."

"My dear," replied me wife, "if you had been here, you would have thought he was about his business."

That blessed young saint of God, James Brainerd Taylor, met a traveler at a watering trough one day, and during the five minutes their horses were drinking he so preached Jesus to the stranger that he was saved and afterwards became a missionary to Africa. They met no more and the stranger was ever wondering who the angel of mercy was that pointed him to Jesus. One day in Africa he received a box of books, and on opening a small volume of memoirs, he saw the picture of the saintly and sainted young man who was about his Father's business and redeemed the time at that watering trough by preaching Jesus and saving a soul, instead of idly gossiping about the weather.

It takes no more time to ask a man about his soul than about his health, but it will require more love and prayer and holy tact and soul-wakefulness to do it with profit, and these the soul-winner must have.

With many much time is lost for want of system. Things are done at haphazard, duties are performed at random, and after one thing is done time is wasted in deciding what to do next. It is well, then, to have a program for every day, or, better still, for every hour and minute, as our General does when he goes on a tour. For months ahead the General will have a program for every hour of the day, and whether he succeeds or not in perfectly carrying it out in all its details, he at least works to it, saves anxious worry, loses no time and accomplishes a well-nigh incredible amount of business. Of course in this busy world, full of surprises and unexpected calls, any program must be flexible and not like cast iron, and in times of emergency the soul-winner must be prepared to cast it to the winds and follow according to his best judgment where the Spirit leads, singing with all his heart:



"I would the precious time redeem, And longer live for this alone To spend and to be spent for them, Who have not yet the Saviour known, And turn them to a pardoning God And quench the brands in Jesus' Blood. My talents, gifts and graces, Lord, Into Thy blessed hands receive. And let me live to preach Thy Word, And let me to Thy glory live; My every sacred moment spend In publishing the sinner's Friend."

Finally, if you would redeem the time, keep a conscience void of offense, keep your soul at white-heat with love for Jesus and the dying world. "Have faith in God." Expect victory. Nothing saps a man's energies, dulls his faculties and takes from him all incentive to holy and high effort like doubt and discouragement. It is your duty to expect victory. Hallelujah! After the defeat at Ai, Joshua in a fit of discouragement stopped all efforts and fell flat on his face and stayed there till God came by and said, "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them; for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen and dissembled also. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies.... neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed thing among you. Up, sanctify the people and say, "Sanctify yourselves," (Joshua 7:10-13.)

God wanted Joshua to be up and doing, and if he could not whip the enemy, then he was to clean out his own camp and not be discouraged. Trust God, and trust man, and where men cannot be trusted, then love them and pray for them, and you will surely redeem the time and win souls to God.