

The Grace of God



"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us..." (Titus 2:11-12).

Sept. 2, 2007 (Vol. 7)

A Time To...

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Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 informs us that there is a time for every purpose under heaven. The difficulty is that, as with anything, our thinking and timing is not always what it should be.

Some things are beyond our control, but their time will come anyway: "a time to be born, and a time to die". Consider the points that Solomon connects to death in Eccl. 8:8, "There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power over the day of death; and there is no discharge in war: neither shall wickedness deliver him that is given to it." When our day comes, we will not be able to keep our spirit in our earthly vessel. It is something we do not want to face, but like war, it is inescapable. Solomon adds that we can no more avoid death than wickedness can save one who is given to sinful behavior. Seeing that this life is to be left and every work to be judged, how then out we to live it (2 Cor. 5:10)?

There is also "a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted". In farming this is obviously true. You cannot plant corn in December; it is just not the season for it. And there is equally a time for rooting up. In the fall, it is a good time to plow up the field. This helps to provide a field that is ready for crops to be planted in the spring. And when certain plants are diseased or unproductive, there is a point where you remove them in order to make room for plants that will produce as they should (Lk. 13:7-9). Jesus also applied this principle to a proper relationship with Him (John 15:1-6).

"A time to kill, and a time to heal". In reading this, I am sure most of us think "but killing is wrong!" Yes, the Lord forbade murder, but He has authorized those in authority to punish evil doers (Rom. 13:4). And, as our modern laws do, God recognizes the difference between self-defense and personal revenge. "If the thief be found breaking in, and be smitten so that he dieth, there shall be no bloodguiltiness for him. If the sun be risen upon him, there shall be bloodguiltiness for him" (Ex. 22:2-3). While we prefer times of healing, I have known some of the sweetest & gentlest

of ladies who were willing to pick up a shotgun if they thought their children were in danger.

"A time to break down, and a time to build up", "A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together", "A time to rend, and a time to sew". There is a time to build, whether it is a house or a barn, and a time to break them down. This is also true in the work of the gospel. God gave the gospel in order to building up (2 Cor. 10:8); yet there are times when people persist in sin. When such occurs, sin must first be torn down in order to make room for proper spiritual construction. (2 Cor. 13:1-3, 10).

"A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance". There are appropriate & inappropriate occasions for weeping and laughing. For example, "For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity." (Eccl. 7:6) In other words, the fool may laugh and think he is having a high time, but it will not benefit him in judgment. When we sin, we should mourn and weep, so that in due season the Lord will exalt us (James 4:8-10). On other occasions laughter is "good medicine" (Pr 15:13). In our modern society, many have emotions that are uncontrolled and out of kilter. Some place feelings above truth, even making feelings into their religion (Pentecostalism); while others are confused by rough backgrounds and difficult childhoods so that they do not know how to properly respond to the various circumstances of life. Learning to control our emotions is a valuable thing.

"A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing". Again God has created all things and given them a proper place. There are times when friends embrace or "hug" one another. But there are times when such physical closeness is inappropriate and even dangerous to the soul. If we are not married we must guard ourselves against behavior that stirs up desire. In fact, Paul warned Timothy to "flee" such things (2 Tim. 2:22) and to treat elder women "as mothers" and younger women "as sisters" (1 Tim. 4:2). Discretion, self-control and foresight go a long way in preventing problems in this area. And even in marriage, there are proper times to refrain from embracing. I knew a couple who were married, yet in public were in constant contact - inappropriately so. While they were married, such behavior is not acceptable in public.

"A time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away". It is written: "Seek ye Jehovah while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (Is. 55:6-7) Today is the time to seek the Lord and to cast away our sins; for if we delay then our heart will be even more resistant to

the truth. Yet, it seems that many in this old world are determined to “seek God” while keeping their sinful way of life. But “he that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.” (Matt. 10:39)

“A time to keep silence, and a time to speak”. Many a person has opened their mouth only to insert their foot. Controlling our speech is important, for “In the multitude of words there wanteth not transgression; But he that refraineth his lips doeth wisely.” (Prov. 10:19) It may be that by speaking too much, we reveal how little we know. It may be that by speaking, when we should be silent, we do not take the time to hear important things we could be greatly benefited from or to patiently comfort one who needs to share some burden in their life with a friend. When we don’t listen, and when we answer before we hear; it is folly & a shame (Prov. 18:13).

On the other hand, there is a time to speak, and not to remain silent. If our brother sins against us, we are commanded by the Lord to speak to them (Matt. 18:15-17). If they do not listen, we are commanded to speak again before witnesses. If they do not hear, then we are commanded to bring it before the congregation. Converting the erring demands and requires that we speak the truth in love (James 5:19-20). Too often, we choose to be silent, when we should speak and choose to speak when we should be silent.

“A time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.” Who will say that love and peace are bad things? Do we not all desire to have such times? Love is a very great thing, for it will move us to act in proper ways of selfless service (1 Cor. 13:1-8). And peace is to be prayed for (1 Tim. 2:1-2) and pursue (1 Pet. 3:11). But there also are times when we should hate and must have war. We are to hate evil (Rom. 12:9) and fight against every thought and imagination of men that exalts itself against the knowledge of the truth (2 Cor. 10:4-5). So, while we should realize

more fully that we are “family” in Christ (Rom. 12:10), we should not forget that we are also “soldiers for Christ” in a very serious spiritual battle (Eph. 6:10-18).

Ultimately, while there is a time for everything and a season for every purpose; the challenge is in making sure we are in step with God’s timing and purposes. The first step, of course, is in becoming a child of God (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16). From this point we are infants in Christ (cp. 1 Pet. 2:2). And as we learn more of His word and will, we can grow up in Him to know the proper “whens” and the “hows” of life.

PEOPLE TO REMEMBER & PRAY FOR

Johanna Fletcher, Othena Kinnard, Wesley Geer, Mag Bumbalough, Thelma Cunningham, Mary Cox, Monie Petty, Dave Poteet (NHC 220), Robert & Betty England, Joe Smith (Cookeville 558), Mike Tenpenny, Thelma Klein, Nathan Hill, DeLeesa Price (expecting), Lydia Poe, Larry Bumbalough, Jake Hale, Joshua & Misty Poteet, Ed & Carolyn Williams, Kenley Streeval, Matthew Taylor (leukemia).

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **Radio Program** - Every Sun. 2pm, AM 1050 WSMT
- **Home Bible Study** - Sat. Sept. 15th & 29th.
- **Ladies Class** - 2nd & Last Sunday Each Month.
- **Business Meeting** - Sun. Sept. 30th.
- **GM** - Raymond Castillo, Oct.14-19, 2007.
- **GM** - Ron Daly, April 2008.
- **GM** - Lanny Smith, Oct.12-17, 2008.

We Invite You To All Our Services!

Sunday @ 10am, 11am & 6pm
Wednesday @ 7pm

<http://frontiernet.net/~nscoc>
nscoc@frontiernet.net

North Sparta church of Christ

359 North Spring St.
Sparta TN 38583
(931) 836-3321

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Speaking As The Oracles Of God (1 Pet. 4:11)