

NUMBERING OUR DAYS

"Psalm 90:1-17; Eph. 5:15-17; Matt. 20:1-8.

In the light of eternity our life upon this earth is brief. Therefore we need to live wisely, redeeming the time and doing the will of God. According to Psalm 90:12, we have to ask the Lord to teach us to number our days so that we can live wisely during this short life upon this earth. When we make sure of this, we can live joyfully (Psa. 90:14, 15), live a life of real satisfaction in doing God's will (v. 14), a life which reveals God's glory (v.16), and be formed into God's beauty (v.17). Now we want to see how God counts our days, so that we may make sure our days are not wasted in our spiritual journey on this earth.

Psalm 90 contains the prayer of Moses the man of God, Who led the people of God, the Israelites, after He redeemed them from Egypt. In the wilderness he saw the wrath of God on the people when they rebelled against Him and also saw His loving kindness when they repented and turned to Him. Therefore, in this prayer he says, "...teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (v. 12).

God does not count our days according to the calendar. In His numbering, only some days are counted and others rejected. The years spent without God i.e. without salvation are not counted by Him. We can see this from Genesis chapters 4 and 5. The genealogy of Cain, who sinned against God is very brief, but the genealogy of Seth, the descendant of Adam, is given in full detail because his descendants were righteous before God; they communed with Him and pleased Him (4:25,26). This shows that God counts our days only after we repent of our sins and become righteous before Him.

When the children of Israel came out of Egypt God said, "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you" (Exo. 12:2). Because they were redeemed from Egypt through the slain lamb and the blood that was sprinkled, it was counted as a new beginning in their lives before the Lord. In the light of this, we can count our spiritual age before God. We may be twenty, thirty or forty years old physically but our spiritual age can be very less, because it is counted before God only after we are born again. So we need to make sure that we have put our faith in the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who shed His precious blood for the remission of our sins.

Even after being born again, some days are not numbered before God - He looks upon them as wasted days and therefore they are not credited. For example, in the case of Israelites, the period from the time of their exodus to the building of Solomon's temple in the fourth year of his reign, was 573 years according to Acts 13: 18-22, i.e. 40 years in the wilderness, plus 450 years upto Samuel, plus 40 years of Saul's reign, plus 40 years of David's reign, plus 3 years of Solomon's reign before he started building the temple. However according to 1 Kings 6:1, the same period is counted as 480 years. We see the difference of 93"years. Why this discrepancy? Both the records of Acts 13 and 1 Kings 6 are correct. Then how do we account for these missing 93 years? The answer is found in the book of Judges. For 93 years the children of Israel were oppressed by the heathen nations and they came under their servitude because they had disobeyed God. The details are as follows.

1. They served Chushan - rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia for 8 years (Judges 3:8).
2. They served Eglon, the king of Moab for 18 years (Judges 3:14)
3. They served Jabin, king of Canaan for 20 years (4:1-3).
4. They served under the hand of Midian for 7 years (6: 1).
5. They served under the hand of Philistines for 40 years (13.1)

This brings the total to exactly 93 years.

In Acts 13 Paul was narrating the mere history of the Israelites, but in 1 Kings 6:1 the emphasis is on their condition before God, therefore the 93 years are excluded. This shows the principle on which God numbers the years of His children. They were redeemed people who belonged to God, but they sinned against Him and came under bondage of the enemies, and could not serve God. Those years during which they did not serve the Lord were considered lost. This is a solemn warning to us. We can also be enslaved by similar enemies when we disobey and rebel against the Lord. We must stand in the liberty with which the Lord has made us free, serving Him alone and not give room to the enemy, the flesh and the world. In Acts 13 Paul was narrating the mere history of the Israelites, but in 1 Kings 6:1 the emphasis is on their condition before God, therefore the 93 years are excluded. This shows the principle on which God numbers the years of His children. They were redeemed people who belonged to God, but they sinned against Him and came under bondage of the enemies, and could not serve God. Those years during which they did not serve the Lord were considered lost. This is a solemn warning to us. We can also be enslaved by similar enemies when we disobey and rebel against the Lord. We must stand in the liberty with which the Lord has made us free, serving Him alone and not give room to the enemy, the flesh and the world.

Let us examine and see how we can also be brought into bondage to the same kind of enemies whom the Israelites served.

1. Mesopotamia- Abraham left Mesopotamia to obey and follow the Lord. We too have to leave the world and come out of it. This speaks of our pilgrim character as those who are separated from the world and are moving towards heaven (2 Corinthians 6: 17, 18).

2. Moab-They were the descendants of Lot; "they speak of a cursed life, because they were riot allowed to enter into God's congregation for ten generations (Deut. 23:3). They also speak of the deception of the flesh.

3. Canaan -speaks of idolatry in any form. We have to beware of allowing anything or any person in our lives taking the place of God. These come in subtle forms.

4. Midian -means contention. It speaks of competing with God's will in our lives. We have to obey the will of God at any cost. This may mean losing certain things in this present life, but being in God's will ensures eternal security for us.4. Midian -means contention. It speaks of competing with God's will in our lives. We have to obey the will of God at any cost. This may mean losing certain things in this present life, but being in God's will ensures eternal security for us.

5. Philistines -were uncircumcised; they speak of uncircumcised hearts. It means, death to the flesh has not fully worked in our lives. We cannot serve God with fleshly mind and with our old nature by refining it. The death of the cross applied to our lives only can deliver us from the activities of the flesh.

We have to search our hearts and see how many days since our new birth have been actually credited by God. What discount had God to make in our days? How many wasted days were there? We must realize that if we are in bondage to any of the above enemies, i.e. if we live according to our human will, being away from God, defeated and fallen, those days will not be numbered by Him. So let us honestly ask ourselves since the time of our new birth experience, how many days are wasted and how many days have been numbered by God.

"From the wilderness journey of the children of Israel we can see how serious it is to waste our days indeed (see Exodus 19:1; Numbers 10:11, 12; Deut. 1:2). Kadesh Barnea was at the border of Canaan, so that upon leaving Mount Sinai they could have entered Canaan after eleven days' journey. Instead of that they wandered in the wilderness for forty years before their descendants finally entered the Promised Land. What a circle they traveled! Not three or five years, but forty long years! Likewise, how many days have we wasted in our spiritual journey? Whereas a problem or sin could have been resolved and set aside in three or four days, we have allowed them to remain unsolved for several years and wasted many years. Such a loss is truly serious and should not be viewed as insignificant. 1 Cor. 10:5, 6, 11 tell us that the children of Israel are our ensamples and so we need to be warned.

In the New Testament, the Lord Jesus Christ shows us how we must redeem the time by living for Him and working for Him (Matt. 20:1-8). If you are not living in the will of God, you are in God's sight as one standing idle, no matter how much of other work you might have been doing. The work done in His vineyard alone is recognized by Him. "All day" in this passage refers to a lifetime. Working for Him does not mean full-time ministry, resigning our jobs and going for full-time service, although God does call some for such ministry. But we all can serve Him faithfully in the place where He keeps us by doing His will. There are several kinds of work in His vineyard, not preaching only. The question is what is your heart-attitude towards God's will? It makes individual consecration absolutely necessary (Romans 12:1, 2). If you do not love the Lord whole-heartedly after being saved, your life is deemed as standing idle. According to 1 Corinthians 3:1, 2 you will remain babes spiritually. The believers at Corinth actually wasted their time; instead of growing in the Lord, they became carnal. Therefore we need to pray like Moses, asking the Lord to teach us to number our days.

In Galatians 6: 10 we are taught to make use of the 'opportunities' to love the Lord, obey Him and serve Him. There are several examples of this in the New Testament. In John 12:3, Mary took the opportunity to anoint the body of the Lord Jesus Christ before His burial. The other women who went to anoint His body on the resurrection morning could not do so. Similarly, Zacchaeus in Luke 19 took the opportunity to set things right with the Lord and experienced the salvation although his background was very bad; whereas the rich young ruler lost his opportunity in obeying and following the Lord, though he was good in himself (Mark 10:21,22).

How do we redeem the time? It is by placing our lives and our time into His hands upon the altar. Often we cut short the time of devotion that we need to spend in His presence, to attend to other jobs. This leads only to loss. In the example of the five loaves and two fishes placed in His hands, the Lord could bless and multiply them. Similarly, when we place our time in His hands, He will redeem it for us and we will have sufficient time for everything that we need to accomplish.

When we look back upon our lives and on the lost opportunities, our hearts ache over the years we have foolishly wasted. We may lament and say, "My best years are eaten by locusts. What shall I do?" Thank God, He still gives us hope, comfort and assurance from His Word. "And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you" (Joel 2:25). Thank God, He still has a way to restore to us those years which the locusts and caterpillars have eaten away. As for the wasted days, our ten years may have been counted as only one day in God's calendar. But if we repent and seek His mercy and hereafter redeem the time, one day may become equal to thousand days. "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand" (Psalm 84:10a), the day on earth is not clocked in heaven on the basis of twenty-four hours. Instead, God has His way of computation. If our service is according to His will, one day in His sight may be reckoned as many days.

A young man who was about to die, heard the Gospel and on his deathbed he received the Lord and was born again. He lived as a believer only for a month and sorrowed that he did not have any opportunity to serve the Lord. He said, "I am not afraid to die; Jesus has saved me, but I have done nothing for Him. Must I go to Him with empty hands?" This incident prompted the hymn-writer to compose the famous hymn:

"Must I go and empty handed?

Thus my dear Redeemer meet?

Not one day of service give Him, Lay no trophy at His feet?

"Must I go and empty handed?

Must I meet my Savior so?

Not one soul with which to greet Him?

Must I empty handed go?"

This hymn was published in 1878 and God has used it to challenge many to offer themselves to serve the Lord. Though that young man lost many of his days, he still retained a little desire for the Lord in his heart at the time of his death and the Lord fulfilled it.

May we all learn to number our days and plead with the Lord to restore our lost days. May each day be equal to thousand days as we walk in God's will step by step.

D.S.C.