

*The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 18 September 2022. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.*

## **Time Is Running Out for the Lost!**

In the wee morning hours of 1 June, 2009, Air France flight 447 was *en route* from Rio de Janeiro to Paris, with 228 passengers and crew onboard. The three pilots on this flight were all operating on little sleep. In fact, earlier in the evening, the captain, Marc DuBois, had complained to his colleagues that “One hour sleep is not enough.” You see, DuBois (a married man) had been enjoying the pleasures of sin the night before. He and his illicit lover had been partying in the nightclubs of Rio de Janeiro, and had gotten less than an hour of sleep. Thus, about three hours into the flight, Captain DuBois went to the back of the plane to catch up on sleep; and he left his much less experienced co-pilots, Pierre Bodin and David Robert, in charge of the cockpit. Bonin was nervous about the storm in which they were flying; and before DuBois left the cockpit, Bodin asked DuBois whether they should ascend to 37,000 feet, to get above the storm. DuBois, who had been through many storms, saw no need to do so; and so, they stayed at 35,000 feet, and DuBois went to bed.

Little did DuBois, Bonin, Robert, and the 225 other souls onboard that plane, realise that they were only minutes away from departing this world. Flying through a storm in the mid-Atlantic is a routine occurrence, and usually does not pose a problem; but on this particular night, the high concentration of air crystals in the thunderclouds caused the airspeed sensors to clog. As the result, the airspeed sensors stopped functioning correctly, and the readings became invalid; and this caused the autopilot and the auto thrust to switch off suddenly, at 2:10 a.m. Without this luxury, the two relatively inexperienced co-pilots were now in charge of keeping the plane in the air. They began to panic, and made a series of very bad decisions. Not trusting the instruments (which were all functioning properly), they climbed too rapidly, to an altitude of 38,000 feet—which caused the plane to stall in the thin atmosphere, and then nosedive.

The co-pilots were too paralysed with fear to process the information. They no longer knew whether they were climbing or descending. They desperately hit the call button for the captain to come to the cockpit. By the time he got there, it was too late to undo the deadly mistakes that had already been made. As DuBois came into the cockpit, Robert yelled, “We completely lost control of the airplane, and we don't understand anything! We tried everything!” They were now plunging toward the ocean at 10,000 feet per minute. Censors were blaring warnings, and no one was thinking coherently. Bonin cried out, “**We’re going to crash! This can’t be true! But what’s happening?**” With a curse, he then cried out, “**We’re dead!**” A few seconds later, at 2:14 a.m., the plane slammed into the Atlantic; and 228 souls had an appointment with God—whether they were ready for it or not. Their time in this world had run out.

In a few weeks, we will be holding our annual missions conference; and our theme will be “Time Is Running Out to Fulfil the Great Commission.” Brethren, time truly is running out. Time is running out for **the lost to be saved**; time is running out for **the saved to reach the lost**; and time is running out for **this church age**. As God’s people, we must do all in our power, in the time that we have, to reach our dying world with the Gospel. The title of this morning’s message is “*Time Is Running out for the Lost.*”

**Read Hebrews 9:27.**

### **I. Every man has an appointment with death.**

Probably not one person on flight 447 thought that that night would be his last night in this world. The words of Pierre Bodin said it all: “We’re going to crash! This can’t be true!” As the stark reality that he was seconds from death dawned upon him, he couldn’t bring himself

to believe that it really was happening—that his time really was up. So it is with most people. Most people think that they have plenty more time to enjoy the pleasures of this world; and they rarely give a thought to what lies just on the other side of death. However, God’s Word brings us back to reality. The Apostle James reminds us, **“Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away”** (James 4:13-14).

We all have an appointment—an appointment with our Creator and Judge. It doesn’t matter whether you *believe* that you have an appointment with God: it *will* come, whether you are prepared or not. As Jesus was preaching to the crowds one day, He spoke a parable about a farmer who spent his life acquiring things of this world, but who was not **“rich toward God.”**

### **Read Luke 12:16-21.**

In **Luke 12:1**, we are told that there was such an enormous multitude of people when Jesus preached this sermon, that people were literally treading on each other to try to see Him! Yet, how many of the people in that enormous crowd really heeded what Jesus said? Probably not many. How do I know? Because the nature of man is just the same today as it was then. Most people are just like that rich fool. You don’t have to be “wealthy” to be like the foolish farmer in Jesus’ parable; all you have to do to be like him is to share his philosophy of life. The farmer’s philosophy was that this world is the “end-all.” He thought that life was all about pursuing ease, comfort, and enjoyment; and he thought that he had plenty of time. He did not stop to think that he was a sinner, and that his sin had separated him from God, and condemned him to hell. He didn’t consider that **“The wages of sin is death”**—eternal separation from the presence of the Lord. He didn’t stop to consider that because he had told lies, stolen things, had envious thoughts, cursed and hated people in his heart, committed adultery with his eyes, coveted, set up idols in his heart, and loved and exalted himself instead of God, he might be in serious trouble with God. This man may well have been outwardly moral in men’s eyes; but his heart was filled with pride and wickedness, just as all other men’s hearts are. Jesus said that **“From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride,”** and **“foolishness.”** This farmer had not given thought to these things; nor had he sought to know how his situation could be remedied.

If you have not been saved, I am here to warn you that you have an appointment. It is appointed unto you once to die; but after this, the judgment. Furthermore, there are only two kinds of judgment. There will be a judgment for **those who are saved**, because they repented of their sin and trusted in Jesus; and there will be a judgment for **those who are eternally lost**, because they died in their sins, having rejected Jesus. The Bible says in **1 Corinthians 3** that Christians will be judged at **“the judgment seat of Christ.”** At this judgment, Christians will receive reward for the things that they did for God; but they will also give an answer for *everything* that they did in this life, whether it be good or bad. They will suffer loss of reward for the things that they did in the flesh; but, praise God, they will not suffer the penalty of sin (which is hell), because they are covered by the blood of Jesus. On the other hand, those who departed this life without having received God’s gift of salvation will face the terrible **Great White Throne Judgment**. Let’s see what John had to say about this judgment.

### **Read Revelation 20:11-15.**

If you have not been saved, I am here to warn you not to end up at this judgment! Jesus shed His precious blood to wash away your sin. He died and rose again to secure your salvation (which includes complete forgiveness of sins, and the future resurrection of your body to sinless immortality). All you need to do to be saved is to confess to God that you can't save yourself; to believe, with all your heart, that Jesus paid your sin-debt in full; and to repent in your heart (turn to God from sin), and ask Him to come into your heart, and be your Lord!

Now, if you are saved, please do not switch off your mind, because this message is mainly for you! *You* are saved, and secure in Christ; but lost souls all around you are heading toward a Christless eternity. Day by day, hour by hour, they are marching toward an appointment with God; and you have only a limited time to reach them with the Gospel. Does this thought weigh upon your mind every day? If not, it should! It is my prayer that you will allow God's Word to *transform* your thinking during this missions conference season!

Every day, lost people are slipping into eternity, and facing that appointment with God—that appointment for which they are not ready. As God's people, we *must* be motivated by this thought. Secondly, we must realise that...

## II. Every Christian is given appointments to preach the Gospel.

In **2 Corinthians 5:19-20**, the Apostle Paul reminded the Christians in the church of Corinth that ***“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.”*** However, that wasn't the end of Paul's thought. Not only does the Father reconcile the lost to Himself through His Son: He uses *believers* to bring the lost to His Son! Paul went on to explain that God ***“hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.”*** That word ***“committed”*** is translated from the word *tithemi*, which means “appointed.”

Think of that, Christian! God has “appointed” *you* to the ministry of bringing others to His Son, so that He might reconcile them to God the Father! Paul says, ***“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.”*** God has “appointed” us as ambassadors, to go into this darkened world, and to tell people, ***“We beseech you, be reconciled to God!”***

Now, think of the implications of this truth. If we have been divinely “appointed” to this business, that means that we have divine *appointments*! **First, it means that we have appointments to present the Gospel to people personally.** Every day, we should be asking the Lord to give us appointments with lost souls, so that we might present them with the Gospel. This is the way that the Apostle Paul looked at life. He was always on the lookout for divine appointments with the lost. Let's examine a couple of Paul's appointments.

### Read Acts 16:6-34.

Paul was very sensitive to the Spirit of God. First, the Holy Spirit gave Paul a strong inner sense that he was not to go into Asia, nor to the province of Bithynia. Then, He gave Paul a dream of a man saying, ***“Come over into Macedonia, and help us.”*** That was enough for Paul. Paul didn't shrug these things off as mere coincidence. He didn't say, “Macedonia is a Roman colony, under direct Roman law. It's too dangerous to go over there. Besides, there are plenty of people here in Asia who need to be saved; and the churches here need discipleship. So, let's just stay here.” No, he followed the Spirit's leading, and crossed the Aegean Sea. He then followed the Spirit's leading to Samothracia, to Neapolis, to Philippi, and, finally, to a riverbank in Philippi, to a woman named **Lydia**, and her friends. As it turned

out, these Gentile women were seeking to know the God of Israel, and were gathered by the river on that Sabbath to worship Jehovah. In reality, *God* had been seeking after *them*, and preparing them to meet Paul. As Paul and Silas began to share the Gospel with them, the Lord “*opened*” Lydia’s heart; and she and her family ended up getting saved and baptised. But that’s not all. God had another divine appointment for Paul and Silas in Philippi. He also wanted them to meet up with **a jailor and his family**. However, this wasn’t going to be a piece of cake. In order for this appointment to happen, they had to be arrested, severely beaten and lacerated, put into the darkest part of the Philippian jail, and tightly bound in stocks.

Now, put yourself in Paul and Silas’s shoes. Would you feel like witnessing to the man who had beaten you until you were bleeding and raw, and who had placed your hands and feet in stocks, in the darkest part of the prison? Many Christians would probably say, “I’m not going to give the Gospel to *that* man. He doesn’t deserve it. Besides, I’m in pain, and I don’t feel like talking to anyone. I’m going to keep my mouth shut. I’m done!” Yet, that wasn’t Paul and Silas’s attitude. Even in their pain, they shared the Gospel with this man. The Bible doesn’t specifically record that they had tried to witness to him; but we know that they must have done so, because later that night, when the jailor came trembling to Paul and Silas, he said, “*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*” Where did he get that notion? The jailor wouldn’t have asked this question unless Paul and Silas had been trying to tell him about salvation earlier that day! Not only did they try to give him the Gospel; but they showed, through their singing of praises to God, that their hearts were filled with God’s love and peace.

Paul and Silas were always thinking about people’s souls. The very fact that they didn’t try to escape after their shackles fell off and the prison doors flung open, shows how sensitive they were to the Spirit’s voice. This was their golden opportunity to make their jail break; yet, they didn’t. Instead, they stayed right there in their cell. They knew that Roman law demanded the death penalty for Roman guards, if any of their prisoners escaped; and they probably figured that this jailor might try to take his own life if he thought that his prisoners had gotten away. They foresaw the danger to this man’s soul, and were ready to stop him from harming himself, and to share the Gospel with him. Because of their persistence, the jailor and his whole family were saved that night, and baptised.

Brethren, God has appointments for each of us to share the Gospel with people; and we *must* be ready to seize them. But that’s not all. God has also appointed us to **send forth labourers to take the Gospel to places where we ourselves cannot go.**

**Read Romans 10:9-17.**

**Read Acts 13:1-4.**

Paul asked the rhetorical question, “*How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?*” Now, this raises an important question: Who does the sending? God does. It is the Lord who calls believers to leave their home, and to take the Gospel to other places. However, we must not forget that God sends His labourers *through the institution* that He has ordained; and that institution is **the local church**. God has commissioned *churches* to send forth missionaries. There is no other earthly institution on earth that God has ordained to this work! Nor are Christians to go out on their own, as “lone rangers.” All believers are to submit to the authority of a local church—first by being *baptised* into the church body, and then by serving the Lord within the body. God’s plan is that churches **preach** the Gospel to the lost, and **lead them to Christ; baptise** them; **teach** them to observe all things that He has

commanded; and then **send forth** labourers to start *new* churches. Those new churches then start churches, and *those* new churches start churches, and so on. Like the church of Philippi, which supported the Apostle Paul as their missionary, *this* church should be giving to support and send missionaries. However, we should be doing more than that. We should be praying that the Lord would send forth missionaries from *our* church!

**Read Matthew 9:35-38.**

Brethren, we *must pray* not only that the Lord would send forth labourers from other like-minded churches, but that He would send forth labourers from *our* church! That is why I want us, this coming Saturday, after our prayer breakfast, to do nothing but *pray!* We must pray that God will send forth labourers all around this island, and throughout the world, to preach the Gospel, to baptise people, and to start churches. This means that we ourselves must be willing to be sent. Don't pray that God will send someone else until you yourself are willing to go wherever He sends you—whether it be across the street, or across the ocean!

Brethren, don't ever think that God cannot use you. When God sent Moses to Pharaoh, and Moses objected that he was a man of slow speech, and of a slow tongue, God said, "***Who hath made man's mouth? Or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, of the blind? have not I the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.***" God doesn't need super-talented people; he merely needs those who, like Isaiah, will say, "***Here am I; send me***"—and then allow *Him* to equip us for the work. God can use *anyone* who is willing to be used of Him. Take, for example, a man named **Ko Tha Byu**. Ko Tha Byu was led to the Lord by Adoniram Judson, the Baptist missionary who took the Gospel to Burma in the early 1800's. Ko Tha Byu was once a slave; but Judson freed him with his own money, and led him to Christ. Ko Tha Byu was a murderer, who had killed more than 30 people; but God changed him. Shortly after Ko Tha Byu had received Christ, he went back to his own people (a jungle tribe called the Karens), in company with Judson's missionary friend, **George Boardman**; and *many* were saved through his witness.

Now, how did an illiterate man like Ko Tha Byu accomplish this? Well, for one thing, God had been preparing the hearts of the Karens to receive the Gospel for a long time. Even though they were idol worshippers, they still had some nuggets of truth which had been passed down through the centuries. They believed that there is an unchangeable, eternal, all-powerful God, Creator of heaven and earth, who formed the first man from the dust of the earth, and created the first woman from his rib. They believed that the first man was tempted by a devil to eat from a tree of death, and thus fell into sin. They believed that the Creator promised this first man that a Saviour would come someday. They believed that this God, whom they called Y'wah (yes, this *does* sound like Jehovah!), had promised mankind that He would send them a Messiah to rescue them from their sin. They believed that the Karen people had once had a sacred scroll (a holy book) which contained the knowledge about God and the coming Messiah; but they believed that the father of their Karen tribe had carelessly lost that scroll centuries ago. And so, they were literally waiting for foreigners to come to them with "the sacred book," and tell them about this Messiah who could save them! In fact, they even had a tradition that the foreigners who would bring the sacred book to them would be white men!

Well, the Karen readily received the Gospel; and many of them were saved! The truths that God gave to Adam 6,000 years ago had not been entirely lost to these people. They had enough memory of the true God to realise that they *didn't* know Him, and that they needed to find out who He is, and be reconciled to Him. God sent the right man, at the right time, to

give them the Gospel. Yet, this man wasn't educated, or talented. He was an illiterate Karen, who believed that Jesus died and rose for him; and he took the Great Commission seriously. *That* is he kind of God we serve! God will use *whoever* will surrender his ambitions, his will, and his heart, to Him. What if Judson hadn't answered God's call to Burma? Or what if he had allowed the sufferings that he had endured in Burma (such as being imprisoned and tortured, and losing his wife Ann, and his three children, to sickness) to cause him to give up, and go back to America? What if Boardman hadn't answered God's call to Burma? What if the churches that supported Judson and Boardman had *not* supported them, thus making it impossible for them to go to Burma? Ko Tha Byu would never had been saved, and would not have taken the Gospel to the Karens. Their long-awaited appointment with the Gospel, which God had been orchestrating for centuries, would have been missed!

Now, this brings me to one last point. Here it is:

### III. **Appointments can be made—or missed!**

#### **Read Ezekiel 3:16-21.**

The words of warning that we just read were given to an Old Testament prophet, who was commissioned to preach to the house of Israel; but the *principle* behind it is just as relevant to us New Testament believers as it was to Ezekiel. *All* of us have been commissioned as “watchmen”—except that we are commissioned to go not just to the nation of Israel, but to *all* nations. God has appointments for us; and we *must* make them in time!

Now, let's start with the good news. The good news is that it *is* possible to make our appointments! Consider the following examples.

In 2009, a Christian friend of mine was walking through his town one balmy evening, at a much later hour than usual. Just after midnight, he noticed that there was a light on in the back of a restaurant, which belonged to a friend of his. (I will call his friend's name “John.”) My friend sensed that God wanted him to knock on the window of the restaurant; and so, he did. John came to the front door; and they talked for about half an hour, while John had a smoke, and my friend had a Coke. Well, a couple years later, my friend found out that he literally had saved John's life by tapping on his window that night! John told him, “That night, I was tidying up the shop for the next shift, and I had planned to go home and kill myself. My life was over, I had nothing left to live for. But you came to me that night and talked to me, and I never did it.” Now, at this point, John still was not saved; but after years of witness from Christian friends, John finally received Christ in 2019. The appointment was made; and in God's perfect time, a soul was re-born.

In the late 90's, a Christian named Nik Ripken visited a Muslim country (whose name he could not disclose), and tried to find Christians there. He wanted to hear their salvation stories, and encourage them. Well, somehow or other, a man from a remote jungle people had heard about Ripken; and he travelled 29 hours to find him! The man (whom Ripken called “Pramana”) told him that five years earlier, his life was falling apart, and he was about to divorce his wife. He wanted to know God; and so, he asked his imam what to do. The imam instructed him to pray and fast for 3 days, and on the third day, he would have his answer. Well, on the third day, he got his answer: but it wasn't from Allah! It was from the true God, who had heard his prayer. After midnight, Pramana heard a voice saying, “Find Jesus, find the Gospel.” Now, Pramana had no idea who Jesus was; but the voice told him to “Get out of bed, go over the mountain, and walk down to the coast to \_\_\_\_\_ (a city where he had never been).

When you get to the city at daybreak, you will see two men. When you see those men, ask them where \_\_\_\_\_ street is. They will show you the way. Walk up and down that street and find this number. When you find the number, knock on the door. When the door opens, tell the person why you have come.”<sup>1</sup> Well, Pramana left immediately (without even telling his wife), and travelled for two weeks to find that house! When he knocked on the door, he said, “I have come to find Jesus, I have come to find the Gospel.” Now, the old man on whose door he had knocked was (as far as he knew), one of only 3 Christians in a nation of 24 million Muslims! The old man was afraid that this was a trap to incriminate him; nonetheless, he listened to Pramana’s story, and shared the Gospel with him; and he was saved! The old man then spent the next two weeks discipling him. The old man *could* have passed up his appointment out of fear; but he didn’t. The appointment was kept; and a soul was saved.<sup>2</sup>

These are all happy stories; but before we close this morning, I have a sad one to tell. It is a story that was told by **Ralph Wimm**, a missionary to the Tarahumara Indians of Mexico. Now, by man’s reasoning, Wimm should *not* have even lived long enough to get to the mission field. He had a rare lung disease called Eosinophilic Granuloma; and the doctors predicted that he would not live more than 4 years. (This was in 1956.) Yet, he lived on; and in 1965, he and his family went to the Tarahumara Indians of Mexico. For decades they plodded on, showing the love of Jesus to these precious people; and many souls were saved. God miraculously enabled Wimm to live until 1992, just so that he could reach them. However, there was one time when he missed an appointment. Wimm had been preaching and teaching classes in the village of Bacabureachic, on the other side of a canyon behind his home. He was very tired after a long day, and it was getting dark as he rode his horse uphill toward home. On the way, a lady came out of an adobe house, and asked him to teach her and her two little boys the Word of God. He felt that he was too tired to do so; and so, he said that he would stop by on his next trip. Well, shortly after this, there were very heavy rains, which made the river between him and her impassable. Several weeks passed by; but finally, one of the men whom he Wimm led to Christ helped him to get across the river (which was still quite turbulent). After crossing the river, he saw those two little boys coming out to meet him. He asked them where their mother was; but he was shocked when they said, “Mom is dead.” Her time was up; and Wimm had missed his appointment with her. The words of **Ezekiel 3:18** flooded his mind: *“When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.”*<sup>3</sup>

**Conclusion:** Whenever we miss an appointment, it is *not* because there was an unfortunate circumstance that prevented it. If God have an appointment for us, He *will* open the door for it happen. The problem is that we often fail to go through that door, because we consider it to be an inconvenience. *We* tend to think that if an appointment didn’t happen, then it wasn’t supposed to be. Yet, could it be that the appointment *was* supposed to be, but we didn’t take the opportunity? We don’t like to entertain that thought, because it smacks us square between the eyes with our responsibility. The Bible says that **“God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”** It isn’t *God’s* will that anyone should perish: thus, the responsibility falls upon us to seize every moment for Christ. Before we close, **I would also address those who aren’t saved.** If you are not sure of where you stand with God, don’t put it off any longer. Time is running out. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ today, and be saved!

<sup>1</sup> Nik Ripken, *The Insanity of God* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2013), p. 267.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 266-268.

<sup>3</sup> Clifford E. Clark, *Drama in the Real Lives of Missionaries* (Milford, OH: John the Baptist Printing Ministry), pp. 158-159.