

Paul H. Dixon: Thank you, Janice. That's a great song. Beautifully given this morning. I'd like to add my word of welcome back for this winter quarter. It's great seeing all of your smiling faces. You can't imagine how dead it is on this campus when we have breaks like we just had. And we were eager to have you come back. In fact, the faculty couldn't sleep last night just waiting for you to hit this campus. They're just so excited and ready to go. Oh, it's thrilling and it's a blessing. We have a good shot at having even more students here this winter quarter than we did in the fall. That'll be only the second time, I think, in the history of the college that that's ever happened. And we're just so thrilled for all the new students who are coming our way.

I was speaking in Cincinnati yesterday and had an opportunity to present the college to a church that runs over a thousand. As far as I know, we'd never been in that church before. And as I was by the literature table after the service, a young lady came up to me and said, "Can I still get in the winter quarter?" I said, "Well, it's getting a little bit late." She said, "Well, I have a plane ticket to go to a school in Florida on Tuesday, and I'd like to know if it'd be possible to get in in Cedarville?" I said, "Well, you come on Monday and look it over, and we'll see what happens and see what can be worked out." But she said, "I'd never heard of the college before and it just interests me, and so we're going to come and we're going to see." But it's just a blessing to see the way that God leads. We've had a number of students who were in some secular universities and colleges, and God's led them to come be with us this quarter. And we're just so thankful for those who had to stay out for a quarter or so and are back with us. And we know it's going to be a great time.

I want you to take your Bibles this morning and turn with me to the book of Ephesians Chapter 5. I would like to speak on the subject redeeming the time in 1981. I don't know about you, but I get excited at two times of the year, perhaps above all the other times. One of those times is in the fall when the new school year is beginning, and the second time is at the beginning of the calendar year. Since I was a boy, it just seemed like the beginning of every year was so very, very special, and I'm sure that's true for most people, but it's always been a time of just evaluating, looking back, seeing where we've been, and looking forward and seeing what our new objectives are, and our new goals personally and family-wise, and, of course, now as an institution. I think it's a great time to just take a new look at all that we're doing.

I believe that at the beginning of this new year and a new quarter it's a time to evaluate anew our lives, a time to establish new priorities, a time to make wise use of a quarter, 10 weeks that go by so very quickly, and breaking that down week by week and then, of course, by the hours that go into those weeks and by the minutes that go into the hours. By that, as I think about making the best use of our time, I am not saying that it has to be all work, all business, all seriousness. I believe that a proper use of time involves relaxation. I believe that a proper use of time involves leisure. In fact, if you do not learn to incorporate that into your life habits and into your lifestyle, then it can become a very

frustrating year and you become so pressured and you're establishing such high goals for yourself that you become frustrated because you never realize those are never satisfied in what you're doing. So, there's a balance to all. But for most of us, I think we usually find time to have fun. We find the time to relax, and need to be challenged and stimulated to take more time to be serious.

In Ephesians Chapter 5, the Apostle Paul, who certainly set a worthy example for us in the use of his time, tells us in Verse 15, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, exceedingly carefully, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil." In the light of the evil day, in the light of the sin and the wickedness and the enemies of the cause of Christ, Paul said it was extremely important to redeem the time. As you probably note, other translations have said, "Buy up the opportunities." In Colossians Chapter 4, the Apostle had something else to say along that line, almost the same. Colossians Chapter 4, Verse 5, "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. The responsibility that we have in our walk for God's glory, for our own personal benefit, for the value of other believers, but especially for those who know not Christ, how we ought to walk in wisdom toward those that are without Christ redeeming the time."

You see, time is a mystery. It has captivated man's thought down to the ages. Benjamin Franklin once remarked that, "We should guard well our time, for it is the only ingredient of life." CS Lewis declared, "Our future is what we are all rushing into at the rate of 60 minutes an hour." Isaac Watts said, "Time, like an ever rolling stream, bears all its sons away. They fly forgotten as a dream, dies at the opening of a day." Some years ago I was fascinated with the overall emphasis in the Bible on the brevity of time. I'm sure we're familiar with other passages in the New Testament, such as, "What is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away." But I thought perhaps you would profit this morning along with me by marking some of the verses of the Old Testament that speak to the brevity of life, the urgency of the best use of our time.

Let's begin with going to 1 Samuel Chapter 20. I've always been impressed with David's life. I'm sure you have as well. One of the things that would impress us is the way that he used his time. In fact, I'm convinced that one of the chief reasons David fell into sexual sin and had this terrible mark, this blemish on his life and his record, is because of a poor use of time. And in 1 Samuel Chapter 20, earlier in David's life we see that this was not the case. David is interacting with Jonathan, and in 1 Samuel 20, Verse three, David swear moreover and said, "Thy father, certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes," speaking of Saul. And he sayeth, "Let not Jonathan know this lest he be grieved, but truly as the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth there is but a step between me and death." Now, I am well aware that David was living in the context perhaps of Saul taking his life and murdering him, but it's a truism. It's true today. There is but a step between me and death, between you and death.

Let's look again. Let's turn in our Bibles to 1 Chronicles Chapter 29. I don't know about you, but first Chronicles 29 is one of my favorite passages of scripture. As David is commending the responsibility of building the temple to Solomon, let's begin reading at Verse 10. It's such a blessed passage. 1 Chronicles 29:10.

"Wherefore David blessed the Lord before all the congregation. And David said, 'Blessed be thou Lord God of Israel, our Father forever and ever. Thine, oh Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory.'" Isn't that great? "And the majesty for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine. Thine is the kingdom, oh Lord. And thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all, and in thine hand is power and might. And in thine hand it is to make great and to give strength unto all. Now, therefore, our God, we thank thee and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee."

And here's the verse to especially underline in the light of our subject today, "For we are strangers before thee and sojourners, as were all our fathers. Our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding. Just as the shadow comes for a short period of the day and casts itself and then it is gone, so is life.

Let's look again in our Bibles and turn to Job Chapter 6. And, of course, in the light of Job's circumstances, we can understand how he had some problems on how long he would live and the quality of his life. But there are some things, some statements that he makes within his book, that I think are worthy of underlining. In Job Chapter 7, Verse 6, he says, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle." Have you ever watched someone weave? And that shuttle moves so very quickly that it is almost like a blur. Job said that's how life is. Turn again, if you will, to the Book of Job Chapter 9, Verse 25, and he says, "Now my days are swifter than a post. They flee away." In that day, of course, the postman would deliver everything on foot or on horseback or by hand. I doubt that we would want to even say that today in the light of present day postal service in America. That would not speak to the brevity of life, that would speak to longevity, I'm quite sure. But in that day, they could say, "Now my days are swifter than a post." The postman who was always in a hurry, always running to get the message. He said, "That's the way my life is. That's the way my days are."

Turn again to Chapter 10, Verse 20. Very simple, but pungent question, "Are not my days few? I am impressed that if we live to be a hundred, that is true, our days are but few. Our days are so short. Life itself is so compact and goes by so very quickly." And then in the Psalms there are so many verses that speak to this. Turn to Chapter 39, 4 and 5. When Mrs. Dixon and I were married, we were living in that apartment on 15th Avenue in Chattanooga. We took a piece of cardboard and took these two verses and pinned them on the cardboard, so that every morning when we would get up and open the closet door to get our clothes out, we'd be confronted with this thought. "Lord," Psalm 39:4, "make

me to know mine end and the measure of my days, what it is that I may know how frail I am. Behold thou hast made my days as a handbreadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee." Think that one through. "Mine age is as nothing before thee." God is no respecter of persons nor ages. Barely every man in his best state is all together vanity.

And in Psalm 90, Verse 12, I would hope that many of you have already memorized this verse. Psalm 90:12, "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Redeeming the time, numbering our days, buying up the opportunities that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." I'm sure that many of you know that in recent days while we were on vacation, Dr. John R. Rice went to be with the Lord. This famous evangelist, leader of fundamentalism, editor of the Sword of the Lord, prolific writer that influenced so many Christians, so many preachers over the decades. His ministry is over. He's gone to be with the Lord.

I talked with Dr. Rice just a few weeks ago; in fact, he was scheduled to come and speak in chapel and he had to cancel because of some of his recent illnesses. We've been there many times in the church where he attends and belongs, and I sat down and chatted with him. You say, "Brother Dixon, did you always agree with Dr. Rice?" Oh no, but I learned early in my Christian life that because you disagree with someone, that doesn't mean that you can't learn from them and that you can't respect them and you can't love them. Oh, the great, great ministry of Dr. Rice. I believe he was 85, 86, 87, something like that.

Then just, I believe, two Sundays ago yesterday, I received the report that one of the fine GARB pastors in California, Art Rainey, and I understand he's was 50 years old, had an aneurysm in the pulpit and was out in eternity just like that. Exceptional man, building a fine church, Bible teacher, soul winner, doing a job for God. His ministry is over.

And I'm sure many of you heard in your churches that the good friend of this college, Dr. Wendell Kempton, his wife Karolyn, 45 years of age, went to the bank, was depositing his check. Wendy was just returning from speaking at South Baptist and Flint, Michigan, and she just collapsed at the steering wheel. They rushed her to the hospital. They put her on the equipment. The equipment kept her going for a few days, but she went to be with the Lord, 45 years of age. Delightful human being. Most of you who know Wendy, vibrant and alive and dynamic. God gave him a helpmate who just meant so much to him; in fact, I was in South just a week ago Sunday and they were telling me how that Wendy, all the time he was there, just kept going on and on about Karolyn and how he was looking forward to getting home Monday night, and he was going out with Mike Schmidt and Bob Boone and some of the other Philadelphia players and their wives and Karolyn. They were going to go hear the Philadelphia Boys Choir. But instead he went through the sorrow of the experience at the hospital. But her life was 45 years of age.

Then over this Christmas break, two of our graduates, Steve and Joyce Wilsey, where I understand on their way perhaps even to Cedarville, they were involved in a teaching ministry in a Christian school over in the Middletown area. They hit a spot of ice and they went out in front of a semi, and our graduate of 1979, Steve Wilsey, went out into eternity, went to be with the Lord. We'd also ask you to pray for his wife, Joyce. Many of you would know her. Joyce Wheeler Wilsey. Joyce is in serious condition, and she's undergoing surgery today, and the report that we get is there's only a 50/50 chance that she's going to make it. In their twenties.

You see, life is so important. Time is such a vital part of our lives, and, yes, there is a time to be light, but we must buy up the opportunities and realize that we are at serious business, because we know Jesus Christ is our savior and we must give an account as to the best use of our time. May I just give you in a very practical way some challenges as to how we ought to buy up the opportunities? Number one, let's buy up the opportunities to be with God. Let's evaluate our own devotional lives. As you look back at 1980, what did you profit from your morning meetings with the Lord? You do get up every morning and set aside time for God, don't you? "I met God in the morning when my day was at its best, and His presence came like sunrise, like a glory in my breast. All day long His presence lingered. All day long He stayed with me, and we sailed with perfect calmness over a very troubled sea. Now I think I found the secret, found on many a troubled way. You must meet Him in the morning if you want Him through the day."

As I have studied the Word of God, I found that most of the great men of the Bible, it's spelled out in scripture that they met God in the morning. Before you go to class, before you go through the day, have a time alone with God in devotional study and allowing God's Word to speak to your heart. Have a time of prayer with God. Let's evaluate our prayer lives.

I'm often reminded of Daniel who prayed three times a day. Set times that he prayed. I fear that I am a great failure in this. Generally, I am reminded to pray in the morning, and a time at night as we close the day as a family to pray. But, oh, how often there is so little time that is taken to pray between the beginning of that day and the ending of that day. And perhaps we'd do well to set aside at least five or 10 minutes in the middle of the day in this new year to commune with our God. If we're going to buy up the opportunities, the first priority must be to spend time with God, in devotional study, in our prayer lives, in our own Bible study. Oh, how important it is that we do not allow our classes and our Bible classes to take the place of personal Bible study. You say, "Oh, but Brother Dixon, so much time is taken working on the job or preparing for the classes." I know that. But you know it's an amazing thing how much time most of us waste.

When I was in college, I was impressed that the students who accomplished the most were the students who had 40 hour a week jobs. They usually did the best in their studies. They seemingly made the best use of their time. And many of

the students who didn't have a job, and all they did is they went to school to study, somehow did not do the best in the books, in the classes, and squandered so much of their time. So it just comes back to me that however busy we might think we might be, as faculty and staff and administrators and as students, there's far more time there to use in studying the Word and in our own prayer lives and cultivating our relationship to God than we even realize.

We ought to buy up the opportunities in 1981 to memorize the Word of God. How many verses did you memorize in 1980? It is not that I'm saying if you memorized 300 that you are more spiritual than the individual who memorized 10, but I guess the problem is for most of us we don't even know because we didn't have a plan. We didn't even have a plan to review the verses that we've memorized over the years. For most of us, we've somehow hidden away in our hearts a lot of verses in Sunday school and vacation Bible school and camp and Awana, and maybe in the Bible Memory Association or in Navigators, or somewhere along the line, but we need to review those so that they become a part of us, so we really begin to think God's thoughts. So that we really begin to allow the Word of God to penetrate our very being.

And then this year to have some objectives as to finding more verses to memorize, put out on cards. I don't know what kind of a system you have. Maybe you're different than I am, but I have to have a system. If I don't have a system and some goals and some objectives, I end up with a year passing and two years and a decade and a lifetime passing without accomplishing much. I've recommended for years the Seven-Star Diary System. I'm not saying this is the only system, but it is at least a system. They're available in our bookstore. That will help you to make the best use of the hours of your day. That will help you to project the entire month, the entire year, to write down your goals, to include your prayer list, and maybe you'd just like to stop in the bookstore and just look it over and see what you think or talk to some of the other professors and see what they're using, but get some kind of a system in 1981 to help you in your relationship with God. Buy up the opportunities to be with God.

Number two, buy up the opportunities to be with Christians. Now, obviously we believe at Cedarville College and going to church Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night. We believe that we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together and we place tremendous emphasis upon chapel. There are students who are not back this quarter because they cut chapel too many times. See, this is a priority with us, and if it's not a priority with you, then you'll pardon me, but there's something wrong with you, and you don't understand what this college is all about. We consider this to be one of the greatest hours of the day when we gather as a family and when we somehow articulate what we are and where we're going. We believe in going to church and being together as believers and as a family, as a church family, and then as a college family in chapel.

But it has to go beyond that. That's the problem in many of our churches. That's where it stops. You need to buy up the opportunities to just be with some stronger Christians, to learn from them. Or to be with just some other Christians who are perhaps on the same level you are, to just build into each other's lives. Or to be with some who are struggling, whether they're struggling spiritually or psychologically or whatever their problems are, to really be concerned about them and to set aside time, quality time, not just to pass the time of day, not just to have a Coke together, but really share some biblical principles and try to benefit from each other's lives. Helping one another, encouraging one another, reinforcing one another in the dormitory rooms, in the snack shop, in the few minutes before the class starts. Yes, we, some of us, have our formal programs going, but beyond that, a formal program of discipleship or whatever you want to call it, just on a one-to-one basis where we're concerned about each other in God's family.

Buy up the opportunities to be with God, buy up the opportunities to be with Christians, buy up the opportunities to be with the unsaved. You have to work at this. I do, and you do. Here at Cedarville College and at every Christian school, it's so easy to get boxed in and have absolutely no contact with unsaved people, but that's our fault. I'm not talking about an institution fault, I'm talking about an individual fault. You see, the reason I know that it's not just the problem of the institution or our location or what we're all about, I see it out in the churches.

I spoke in a church recently and I challenged them. "How many of you have witnessed to a single person in this last year? I'm not asking you how many of you won someone to Christ. I mean, how many of you even witnessed to someone?" And the problem is they don't even work at getting around any unsaved people. In fact, many consider themselves spiritual because they don't know any unsaved people, totally contrary to the Word of God. We have to work at it. You do, and I do. Listen, you can get to know some unsaved people and invite them to come to some of the activities at the college. You can invite them to join you and be in the missionary conference at night. You could work at maybe inviting someone to join you and being in a chapel service. Many of you have noted that I have unsaved friends that we introduce to you from time to time. Some of them are Christians, but most of the people Mrs. Dixon and I bring with us to a chapel service don't know the Lord. They're business people we've met and invite them to come. God works in their hearts.

You can invite them to go to ballgames with you. I'm thrilled with the number of people who don't know the Lord who come to our ballgames. You can invite them to come to some of the artist series. There are opportunities, but we have to look for them. We have to buy up the opportunities. Our soccer team has taken advantage of a formal opportunity and gone to Africa and had a fantastic ministry. We all look forward to hearing their report. But I'm sure it was not only in Africa, but they had contact with people on the way. Our men's basketball team continues to do quite well. We're now 10 and one. We lost one game in a



double overtime to Finley College in the finals of that tournament, but the opportunities our ball teams have to come in contact with the lost.

One of the most encouraging things to me was at the women's basketball tournament the other night when I picked up this. Our women put together this for those who came in in the tournament. "Our message to you from the Cedarville College women's basketball team." Lists the players and the coaches. "Our team has a special closeness. This unity comes not from all being able to play basketball, but from having a personal relationship with our savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, our main goal as a team is to share the news of our savior with those we meet and to be a living testimony on and off the court that Jesus lives within us." And then they go on to give the gospel and an invitation for them if you have any questions, if you have made a decision to accept Him as your personal savior or if you'd like to correspond with us, we'd love to hear from you. Each of the girls can be reached at the following address, and the address of the college. Isn't that great? That's what that team's all about. That's what athletics is all about at Cedarville College. That's what this school is all about. We need to buy up the opportunities to be with the unsaved.

Then, in conclusion, buy up the opportunities while you're here at Cedarville. Listen, young people, perhaps four of the most profitable years in your life take place right here. There will never be another four years quite like it. You will look back upon these years with most of you tremendous fond memories. Buy up the opportunities. Don't waste your classes this quarter. Go into those classes with new zeal and earnestness to get the best out of that course. Oh, but you say, "I don't like that course." That's even a greater challenge. Some of those courses you don't like and that are so tough, you will look back on years from now and say, "Oh, I wish I could take it over again. That was one of the best classes. That was one of the best faculty members I ever had. I didn't know it then, but I know it now."

Buying up the opportunities in your courses, in your classes, in your studies, in your interaction with the professors. Buying up the opportunities in the dormitories, buying up the opportunities in the chapel services. All coming into every chapel service saying, "I want to hear from God." Never allowing this to become old hat or mundane, but profiting from every single hour. Then buying up the opportunities in our conferences. We are beginning in one week, little bit less, one of the greatest weeks in our calendar year, our annual missionary conference.

I had someone from another school come up to me just a few days ago and say, "What are you doing at Cedarville? We're hearing so much about the missionary emphasis at Cedarville College." I said, "Well, it's a lot of things. Just an atmosphere. It's created by our professors. It's created by our missionaries who come our way. We try to bring in certain chapel speakers who can communicate to young people from the mission field. It's our MIS program. It's the work of our FWM, but one of the big things is our missionary conference."



We endeavor to bring some of the greatest missionary speakers in America to this platform during that conference. And through the work of FWM, and they spend hours putting this together, we are going to have something like 25 other missionaries here this year again, I believe the most that we've ever had. Along with Dr. Don Ketchum, missionary Dr. De'Bangladesh, and Dr. Don Jennings, as he represents ABWE around the world in evangelism. These will be our main speakers. Paul Tidball from Cleveland Hebrew Mission will be representing Jewish missions and bringing one message. Art Cunningham from Hiawatha Missions and representing Home Missions, one message. Then Norm Bright of EBM and from Australia will be bringing one message.

You say, "Brother Dixon, what can we do?" Number one, as you get ready for this conference, pray. Pray for the missionaries. Pray that the conference will be a blessing to them. We're going to have a tremendous music program. May of these missionaries need to be ministered to, and God will use the speakers and the music. You can pray for them. Pray for all of us, for each other. Number two, listen. Listen. Listen to the missionaries for information, for edification, for direction for your life, for motivation. God will direct some of you as a result of this conference to give your lives on mission fields. God will also motivate some of you as he directs you to other ministries in business or medicine or teaching or whatever it may be, to pray for missionaries, to support them financially, to write to them, to have a heart for a lost world and those who labor therein.

We pray, we listen, and interact with. What an opportunity. To rub shoulders with together perhaps 30 missionaries. Take the time to go by their tables and sit down and ask questions. They'll have displays all over this building. When you're in the services, after the services, before the services, to come up and interact with them. Set up appointments. It's a busy week. You'll be in classes, but set up appointments with various missionaries to talk to them. When they're over in the dining hall at their meals, make it a point. Break out from your usual group and sit with the missionaries, and let's have a whole group of kids around missionaries asking questions during the meal hours.

In the dormitories, as they will be coming into your dormitories to speak and to pray and to have devotions. What a great week. Let's pray and trust God as we enter into it in just a few days. "The clock of life is wound but once and no man has the power to tell just where the hands will stop, at late or early hour." Let's buy up the opportunities for God's glory.

Our Father, thank you for this new quarter, for the opportunities that are ours. May it be the best that any of us have ever experienced. We need your enablement. We pray again that you will just bless every faculty member and staff member, administrator, and student. We praise you for what you're going to do for us and through us in this new year, for Jesus' sake. Amen. God bless you.