

Creative Nonfiction



The Hour of Salvation

A biblical survey of the Church's relation to time

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The church has history, testimonies of triumph and tales of tragedy. The church also has plans, budgets and growth charts, statistics, and think tanks. But what does a proper ecclesiastical relation to yesterday look like? The pedagogical application of history may aid our trajectory, but it can also become a stumbling block. In error, we allow days-past to haunt our troubled mind. Moreover, adding compound-to-injury, we worry about tomorrow. We attempt to map the course ahead; projecting, forecasting—leveraging our best and brightest. But is this an exercise in futility? We are a people of stories, naturally carrying the memory of days past: *homo-memoria*. We are also anxious for the future, worried what tomorrow holds: *homo-futurum*. Where these two axes meet is what I would like to call our *kairos*; the moment where we choose to follow Christ. Now is the only moment where we are given sovereignty. Yesterday is set and tomorrow is unknown; only today is within our grasp. This essay will explore the biblical implication of *kairos*, and by God's grace, challenge the church to choose this day who we will serve.

The theme at hand is presented with stunning lucidity in Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus:

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth (Ephesians 1:7-10)²

It is *time* that the English Standard Version translators have chosen to use for *καίρος* (*kairos*). The term is translated elsewhere as:

- ∞ *opportunity*: "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most the *opportunity*" (Colossians 4:5);
- ∞ *time of harvest*: "Allow both to grow together until the harvest and in the *time of the harvest* I will tell the reapers, 'Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn'" (Matthew 13:30); and
- ∞ *acceptable time*: "Behold, now is *the acceptable time*, behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Indeed, now is the acceptable time. Now is the only acceptable time. Our past, present, and future must first go through Friday's execution before we meet Sunday's resurrection. We look forward, "forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead" (Philippians 3:13).

No doubt, wisdom would teach us to learn from our mistakes, but wisdom is not Gospel. There is a fundamental difference between learning from our mistakes and granting the enemy room to haunt us. If our omniscient Father has declared, "I will remember their sin no more," (Jeremiah 31:34) who are we to remember? This means forgiving ourselves, others, and even the Church. We cannot be bogged down with yesterday's trespasses. We push on. This is our *kairos*. In the Ephesians passage previously

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² All Scripture references are from The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016)

mentioned, Paul writes, “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses” (Ephesians 1:7). This is the lens through which we see our past, and not only our own past, but the history and transgressions of others. We forgive ourselves and our perpetrators. When we see our past through Calvary, we see with the Romans 8:28 promise, “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” It means abuse, despotism, and regret are seen through the redemptive work of Christ. We trust that our Lord who created *ex nihilo* can redeem even our most grievous failures, making beauty from ashes, turning joy into mourning, and pulling life from the grave.

Just as our memory is filtered through the lens of Calvary, so too is our vision of tomorrow. Paul continues in Ephesians, “in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ” (Ephesians 1:9). It is in Christ that we understand the mystery of God’s will and purpose. When we consider what tomorrow holds, we must start and end with Christ. It is only through Him that tomorrow is secure. James poignantly penned, “you do not know what tomorrow will bring” (James 4:14). And Jesus is recorded as saying, “do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself” (Matthew 6:34). Proverbs tells us, “The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps” (Proverbs 16:9). We plan, “build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce,” (Jeremiah 29:5) but we trust that in Christ alone is our tomorrow secure.

Paul continues, “[God] set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time” (Ephesians 1:9-10). Christ is our plan; He is the *Telos* of time itself, the Cosmic *Kairos*. The implications for this are beyond measure. We long for purpose, legacy, and excellence; noble pursuits to be sure, but they must be filtered through the Ancient of Days. Christ is life (John 14:6). In Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). He is the Vine in which we bear much fruit (John 15:5); the One who’s yoke is easy, and burden is light (Matthew 11:30). Any movement onward from this very moment, outside of Christ, will bring death. He is life. When we decided like Joshua, “as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15), we step into streams of living water and our future becomes secure. Indeed, words fail in this regard, for *security* does no justice to the perfect certainty in which our tomorrow lies in Christ. He is the First and Last, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and End (Revelation 22:13). Who else should we trust our future to? In faith, may our prayer be like that of David’s, “My times are in your hand” (Psalms 31:15). May we be a Church who gives our tomorrow to its rightful owner.

Seeing yesterday through grace and tomorrow in mercy, we have only today. This very moment. Here is where we are given sovereignty. I invite the reader to see Mordecai’s rhetorical question to Esther as a watchword: “And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14). Today is our moment; today is the hour of salvation. Today we are invited to find our all in Christ, “forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead” (Philippians 3:13). Resting in the confidence of a loving Father, the One who made the clouds its garment, who calls forth the morning, the One who walks the recess of the deep, who says to the tide, “this far you may come and no further” (Job 38:11). Our future is secure, our past is forgiven. Let us once more take hold of the *kairos* we find in Christ.

