

Burning Daylight

The wonderful people who have gone on trips to Mexico have heard me call out burning daylight many times as I tried to get them loaded up in the vans. Some times as early as four in the morning when it was pitch dark. I don't know where I picked this saying up, but I think it is these words I hear from them later on. On these trips it meant that we needed to get on the road so we could be at the village where we were going to have services or a medical mission.

“BURNING DAYLIGHT” is my way of saying to them that we are wasting time (GOD'S TIME). As I was thinking on this it came to me that we do the same thing spiritually. We let so many things come in that keep us from doing what God wants us to be doing. Just one person being thirty minutes late to the van can prevent as many as four sick people from seeing a doctor that day and one from seeing the dentist.

**Proverbs 6:9-11 How long will you lie down,
O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep?**

***A little sleep, a little slumber, a little
folding of the hands to rest—***

***And your poverty will come in like a
vagabond, and your need like an armed man.”***

I find that I can only write about what has happened in my own life or about what I have seen in the fifty five years in the ministry. When I was a pastor in Oak Grove, Mo. some thirty five years ago, I visited a lady in the hospital, and after a time of prayer I told her I would see her the next morning. Her sickness wasn't life threatening or so I thought, and so the next day when another pastor asked me to play golf, I thought I could go to the hospital tomorrow. The next morning when I arrived at the hospital, they told me she had died during the night. I want to tell you it took a long time for me to let God forgive me. I know God forgave me as soon as I asked, but we hold on to our guilt some times and do not forgive ourselves.

I know that all of you can look back in your lives and think of things you wish you could do over. Those times

you said you would do something or be somewhere and then something came up and you didn't keep your word. My father's word was his bond and our Heavenly Father's word cannot change even in this changing world. So when we speak, let our word be our bond. What did Jesus say about this?

Matthew 5:37 "But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes' and your 'No' be 'No'. For whatever is more than these is from the evil one."

So many times I have set up meetings in Mexico for some church group only to have them call one or two days before the meeting to say they were not coming. Then I had to drive alone hundreds of miles to hold that meeting for I had told them I was coming. They not only burned their own daylight, but caused me to keep their word at great expense to me. My word to the brothers in Mexico is something I must keep. I know many times people of all ages have walked many miles regardless of weather conditions to be there for the meeting.

On occasions I have preached when my voice was so weak that you could hardly hear me before I stood up to preach. But then my voice would be strong, even though

afterward I could not even speak. We must keep our word. It is God's command. When we break our word, it is like a stone cast into the water; it reaches out and affects many others. I know men who have given pledges to churches that they have not kept because they got mad at the church or pastor. They made that pledge to God, not the church. How do you think our loving God feels about that?

Every man, woman and child on this earth has received a call from God to his or her special ministry. Some have refused their call and turned their backs on God. Those of us who have lived a long time in God's service know that we go through seasons. On looking back over my eighty years, I see eight seasons in my life. In watching others I believe about every ten years we go into another season, I still have my call from God, but it has changed from preaching and teaching in Mexico and the world to writing for God. These changes of season are not always easy for we get set in our ways and don't want to change. Please hear God, for it will always bring peace into your life.

We look out over our land today and see poverty everywhere in this land of plenty. WHY? What happened to these people? Where are their friends that they should have made over the years? Where is their church? Where are their families? When I was younger it seemed to me that my father gave to everyone who came along with a hand out and sometimes when their hand wasn't out. When I asked about it years later, he said to me, "Walter, I could start at the east coast with only \$25 in my pocket, and when I return home I would have \$50 because I have so many friends all over these United States. You help others and you will never be without help." I have hidden that saying deep down in my heart, and I know that I have others that would help me no matter what comes along. I have tried to keep that in my heart, and though I can never reach as many as my dad, I can say along with him that I have friends not only all over the USA but all over the world, because of my work with the church and WIM.

Seed time and harvest: when you plant a seed, whether it is good or bad, you are going to get back what you planted. So let us plant seeds of love, peace, goodwill, joy and salvation. Let God's kingdom reap a harvest of souls, five, ten or a hundredfold. We should

always be sowing into others, helping and lifting them up and our God will lift us up.

The Word of God says in Exodus 20:12 “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.”

This is one thing I have done all my life. Haven't I proved God's Word for I am in my eightieth year on this earth? In my early years at the last part of the great depression, Dad would come home from working twelve hours and get down and let my sister and me use him as our horse. I look back on it now and see that my father never burned daylight, and I wish I could say the same. You see he loved his wife and children, and always took time to show it.

You know it is the same with God! ***Malachi 3:10***
“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this, says the Lord of hosts, If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.”

When I was in Bible College, we lived hand to mouth. I remember one time when I came home to study, and my wife told me we had nothing to eat. There was no money left to buy food. Lorraine was due to get home from school soon. What do you tell a loved child when she wants something to eat and you have nothing? Well my God has never let me down. I went down to the mail box and there was a letter from a woman from my home church (First Christian Church in Clovis, NM). In the year we had been gone she had never written, but here was a letter with a check for ten dollars. That would feed us for three days. Our God will supply your needs if you are in His will. I was working and going to school. After five hours of school, I would go to work at noon till dark running a backhoe for a Christian brother. Pay day was three days off. I had brothers in Christ I could have asked, and they would have helped, but I wanted to depend on my God. He will always provide!

2 Thessalonians 3:10 "For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: IF anyone will not work, neither shall he eat."

You may think these are hard sayings. They are, but they must be said. Don't get me wrong; I help those in need as much as I can. However, we must teach them to help themselves. In addition to our help they must be "taught "how they must stop burning daylight and help themselves. They must change their lives and the **spiritual must come first**. I remember one time in Bible College some farmer came and gave the school a pickup load of fresh corn. We rejoiced as all of us were living on very little money. About that time some people came and asked us to help them for they needed food. So we gave them some corn and watched them drive down the street pitching it out of their car. You see they didn't want food, but money. We went down the street picking it up, for if you waste not, you want not. We should be good stewards of God's gifts.

Over the years as a pastor and working with the benevolence program in the churches where I have served, I have found that many times we don't help by just giving out. Much of the time we are just helping these people burn daylight (waste our time and God's money) instead of helping themselves. I see the same

ones coming back week after week, month after month asking for help. Frequently I have found that their problem has not changed, and they have made the same unwise decisions even though we have discussed and agreed on a better way to handle it. To continue to give is only enabling them to make the same mistakes. They begin to think the church owes them something, and when this is the case you are just throwing God's money away. Sometimes we need to stop giving and start teaching. I hate to say it, but most of the time they will not receive teaching and hate you for it. The world has a saying "tough love "and sometimes the church must give this kind of love also.

It is so sad that we live in a day where work ethics have fallen by the wayside. When I was a child everyone of the family worked, if not for pay then to help keep the house and yard in good order. Most everyone had a garden (flowers and vegetables). In the world today, it seems that in many families we have taught our children that they must be entertained all of the time, and if they are not we are misusing them. I realize that family situations have changed considerably in these years, but God forbid that we expect them to respect their father and mother by helping out at home.

Proverbs 22:6 “Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.”

Proverbs 10:1 “A wise man makes a glad father, but a foolish son is the grief of his mother.”

Where are the men and women who made this country great? By the sweat of their brows and being willing to even give their lives that their children could live free. This change of attitude and heart did not begin overnight; it came slowly as we let government take over what the family and church should have been doing. Let us stop burning daylight and bring our family, churches and country back to GODLY Living according to the Word of God. If we do not, we will be like the foolish virgins in ***Matthew 25:1- 12***

“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise,

***‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’
"But the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’ "And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.
"Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ "But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’”***

I tell you that we Christians should be like the wise virgins and be prepared to live a long time for our Lord. At the same time we should live like this might be the last day on this earth. What a joy that would be to all you meet .You would never have any regrets, and most of all you would never have to say you are sorry. Our Lord Jesus the bridegroom is coming, and we do not know at what time, but let me say that I believe it is close now. Have you the oil of the Holy Spirit in your lamp? Are you renewing it every day? Are you ready for His coming?

Many times those crying for our help have been like the foolish virgins and let their oil run low. Not only that but they have burned their bridges behind them. Sometimes they think that if they just become a Christian

that all of a sudden everything will be all right. We must teach them to rebuild some of those bridges, and that it will take some time and a great effort on their part to put things right. DO NOT FORGET THAT LIKE JESUS WE MUST LOVE AND HELP THEM. However, we know that just meeting their needs for today is not the only help they need. I have found one thing to be true, and that is that something given outright with no cost to the recipient is of little value to them. However, it becomes of great value if they have had even a small part in it. I have seen many church buildings in Mexico without any people to worship. The church building was just given at no cost to them. They could just walk away. Every one of the twenty to thirty churches that WIM and our supporting churches have built is in use today. Why? Because we set guide lines for helping the churches build. One; that they must have a national pastor who has established a congregation, and are meeting every week. Two; that they have the land to build on. Three; that they have laid the foundation. Then and only then will we come in and help them build a building. You see when they have worked for it and put their money into it they will not let it die. It is only natural to have a greater commitment,

and a sense of responsibility for something that you have helped to build.

You see having a plan and wanting to do something for the church is not all it takes to do God's work. You need God's vision for your life and what He wants you to do in this season of life. Sometimes we get so comfortable in what we are doing that we refuse to hear what God is saying to us. I know that three years ago God told me to change my ministry and I did so "partly" (God didn't say "Partly"), but I held on to what I had been doing before because I loved it. All the people I had been working with wanted me to continue. To change would mean that I would be moving completely out of my comfort zone. Well I was just burning daylight and not only that but it just about killed me. God has told us in ***Jeremiah 29:11*** "***For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.'***" (NAS95)

Only after three trips to the hospital and complete exhaustion, did I let God have His way in my life. How much better would it have been if I had just listened to the Lord in the first place? Cathy is always reminding me

that **Pastor Karen Duncan** said, **“Letting go of the past is the price we pay for living in the future.”** This can cover many things: past sins, slights that love ones have given us in the past, or a change of activities. **Listen to God and Do what He says. STOP BURNING DAYLIGHT AND WASTING GOD’S TIME.**

As soon as I turned my mind to do the work that God had told me to do, He sent someone to take over my ministry and gave me a love for what He had called me to do in this season of my life. What He will do for me, He will do for you. Stop and hear what God is saying to you for today. Remember David, when he was facing a daunting task, he brought to mind all the things the Lord had done for him in the past to bring him through to victory. Sometimes your task may seem impossible, but nothing is impossible for God. If we obey Him, He will make the way.

I am not a trained writer, but I know when God tells you to do something, He will give you the heart and means to do His will. So I am starting into the third phase, or season of my ministry: First, a pastor and church planter, second, working in missions, and third, as

a writer. In my fifty two years in the ministry, God has used me in many ways. The greatest thing He has said to me is, **“Always love the people_ saint or sinner”**.

You will find your greatest happiness when you are in God’s will. But you must remember to slow down and smell the roses. I used to pray “Lord just burn me up in your service”. Well that should not be your prayer because God wants you to live for Him and not burn yourself up in the ministry. The time you spend to renew your strength or the time you spend with your loved ones is not burning daylight. **YOU CAN DO MORE FOR GOD WITH A LONG LIFE THAN A SHORT ONE.** I have a hard time saying NO when someone asks me to do anything for the Lord, but remember God didn’t call you to do everything, just **your** ministry.

In Mark 16:15 God tells us to go into all the world and preach the gospel, (yes that is for you, not just the preacher, or missionary). In the Greek it can be translated “As you go, preach the gospel”. It could be as simple as a walk in the park and you share with someone you meet, or in the store, etc. **WE ARE ALL GOD’S MESSENGERS EVERY DAY; DON’T BURN DAYLIGHT! USE EVERY CHANCE**

YOU HAVE TO TELL SOMEONE THE GOOD NEWS THAT JESUS IS LORD. Every one of us should be a soul winner. It just might be that someone you bring to the Lord would become a great evangelist who changes a whole nation to God's ways.

Take every opportunity to tell your wife how much you love her. What does the Word say about the man who finds a wife? It says that he has found a good thing. The Word also says that you should not provoke your children to anger, but love them. Please give them words of encouragement along with many hugs and kisses. Oh! How many have burned their bridges behind them as well as burning daylight. Why do we waste so much of our life doing nothing, and then as we get into our golden years look back and see all the times we could have said a loving word or helped and did not? If you want to have a great marriage, give your wife lots of hugs and words of love. Do the same with your children and you will see heaven here on earth. As I start my eighty first year, I am going to make the most of every chance to bring happiness to all I meet and the love of God to everyone He puts in my path.

Did you miss a chance to pat someone on the back and say how much you appreciate them? Tell your pastor what a great sermon that he preached. The lawn boy what a great job he did on the lawn. The cook what a great meal she or he prepared. Be specific about what each has done with their God given talent. Recognition of achievement is a great motivator, and it encourages one to increase in their abilities to do their job. We need to make everyone feel as if they are something special for they are. God made them and they are one of a kind. Let them give God the praise. Wouldn't it be heaven on earth if everyone would do this? Well everyone will not. But you can do your part to make this land what God wants it to be.

Let me tell you about two other ways I see people burning daylight: being unforgiving and angry. If you cannot forgive others who have wronged you, how can you expect God to forgive you? When you cannot forgive and have anger in your heart, who are you hurting? Not the one with whom you are angry since most of the time they could care less. You have really just bound them to you just as if you had tied a great stone around yourself.

It becomes a heavy burden that keeps you from moving forward. You are only hurting yourself and hindering your walk with the Lord. I tell you anger in your heart for others will give Satan a foot-hold in your life. It is so important that the Lord says that when you come to give your offering to the Lord, and remember that you have something against your brother, leave your offering at the altar and go and make peace with that brother or sister. Then you should come and make your offering to the Lord.

Matthew 5:23, 24 “Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, “leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

If you have had hard words or a disagreement with your spouse, immediately go and ask forgiveness. It does not make a difference which one of you was wrong; it will bring peace to you and your God. Always start your day by holding your spouse in your arms with love and prayer. One of the greatest gifts you can give your children is to love your mate and let your children see it. You will find the greatest joy of your life and have a

happy loved one. I know this works for I have lived it for over sixty years.

Our God is no respecter of persons. If He will do it for me, He will do it for you. Having an unhappy married life is just burning daylight and not only that, it is displeasing to our Lord.

My hope in writing this little booklet is that I can bring you to a closer walk with your God, and be of help to you in dealing with some of the problems we all face as we go through this short time here on earth. All of these are common to man. We know the answers to each problem through the word of God. Now we must put them into practice. If you get half as much out of studying this as I have in writing it, you will walk away a far richer person.

***GOD BLESS AND KEEP YOU TILL WE ALL MEET
AROUND THAT GREAT TABLE WITH THE LORD AND
ALL OF THE SAINTS WHO WENT ON BEFORE US.***

Walter Fleming

Thanks to Maria Walicki for translating “Burning Daylight” into Spanish. In 2009, “¡Estamos Perdiendo el Tiempo!” will be distributed in Mexico and Peru.

Unless otherwise noted, the Scripture references contained herein are from the New King James authorized translation of the Bible.

The Scripture quotation marked NAS is taken from the Holy Bible, New American Standard 1995 Version.