**FOOTPRINTS ON THE SANDS OF TIME**

***Birthday Reflections***

I write this on my 69th birthday. On this day, reflecting on my God-given long life, allow me to read for you a famous poem by a famous poet. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882) became the Poet Laureate of America back in the 19th century. He was quoted by all school children from the east coast, across the fruited plains, to the great blue water of the west coast. Every child heard his eloquent poems such as ***The Song Of Hiawatha*** (“On the shores of Gitche Gumee, of the shining Big-Sea-Water..”), and ***Paul Revere’s Ride*** (“Listen my children and you shall hear of the midnight ride of Paul Revere…”).

But my favorite was his ***A Psalm Of Life***, for it vividly, and accurately, tells the Biblical principle of redeeming the time. Read it slowly, and thoughtfully, to see in secular literature what Paul said in spiritual literature. Reading Longfellow’s wonderful poem, connect it to Ephesians 5:14-17.

**A Psalm Of Life**

**Henry Wadsworth Longfellow**

Tell me not, in mournful numbers, Life is but an empty dream!
For the soul is dead that slumbers, And things are not what they seem.

Life is real! Life is earnest! And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest, Was not spoken of the soul.

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow, Is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each to-morrow, Find us farther than to-day.

Art is long, and Time is fleeting, And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating, Funeral marches to the grave.

In the world’s broad field of battle, In the bivouac of Life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle! Be a hero in the strife!

Trust no Future, howe’er pleasant! Let the dead Past bury its dead!
Act,— act in the living Present! Heart within, and God o’erhead!

Lives of great men all remind us, We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us, Footprints on the sands of time;

Footprints, that perhaps another, Sailing o’er life’s solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother, Seeing, shall take heart again.

Let us, then, be up and doing, With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing, Learn to labor and to wait.

Beautiful, isn’t it? Now connect it to Paul’s words to the Ephesians:

14 *Therefore He says:
 "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light*."

15 *See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,*

16 *redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

17 *Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*

Longfellow wrote, “time is fleeting…and our hearts…are beating funeral marches to the grave.” That said, forget the mistakes of our past (“let the dead Past bury its dead!”) and focus on today and into the future. Mr. Longfellow prods us with his epic verse: “Lives of great men all remind us, we can make our lives sublime, and, departing, leave behind us, **footprints on the sands of time**.”

Every time I recall that poetic line, it inspires me to remember I am trailblazing in front of dozens, if not hundreds, if not thousands, of lives that will follow me. What I do, what I am, will impact the hearts and lives of so many. I cannot, I must not, leave footprints on the sands of time that will affect in any negative way the eternal destiny of anyone who knows me.

Longfellow’s poem is meant to spark us to life. We are created to live life to its full each and every day. To be alive, now! To realize the vast potential every one of us possesses from “God o’erhead.” Let us then be up and doing, still achieving, still pursuing. That is just another way of saying, with Paul, “*Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light*.”

Carpe Diem, “seize the day!” Walk circumspectly (circum = around; spectly = looking). As you walk, look around. See the opportunities that abound everywhere. Then, redeem the time.

If each second was worth $1, each minute worth $60, each hour worth $3,600 and each day worth $86,400 how would you view this day? Doing the math that comes to $31,536,000 a year. That would certainly make my past year of life hold a lot of value. But in reality, the time God has given us is worth infinitely more than millions of dollars. It is truly priceless, for it holds within those precious seconds, minutes, hours and days the value of making a difference for eternity.

God help me redeem these next 365 days as I leave behind me footprints on the sands of time. To each of you let me say, Let us be up and doing, still achieving, still pursuing.

May God bless us as we work together for the only cause that will live into the next world. That, dear friends, will make my birthday truly happy.

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