

“Your phone call came at just the right time.” “If I had been five minutes later, I would have missed you.” “You couldn’t have timed that any better.” Do any of those statements sound familiar, like statements you’ve used in the past? Without thought, we talk about the right time, about perfect timing, but there’s only one event that actually occurred and definitely needed to occur at the perfect time. As we focus on our text, we do so under our theme: Perfect Timing.

I. Paul tells us that Christ died at just the right time. A. His death occurred at the perfect time because we were numbered among the sinners. 1. We were numbered among the sinners by birth. Sin a topic most like to avoid today. We don’t even like to hear the term because it makes us uncomfortable. Yet we are sinners and have been since birth. You may have the perfect parents, but even perfect parents bring imperfect children into the world. The moment we arrived, we were numbered among the sinners, those who needed the work of Christ to occur at the perfect time. Left to ourselves, we were helpless, hopeless, destined to life apart from Christ.

2. We were numbered among the sinners because we lived as the ungodly. “Ungodly” in our minds is almost as disturbing as the term “sinner.” We don’t like either term used of us, yet Paul tells us that Christ died for the ungodly. Think about that for a moment. If we avoid the term, if we somehow move ourselves out of the ungodly category, did Christ die for us? Christ died for the ungodly, not for the self-righteous, not for those who think they are pretty good on their own, not for those who think they can get there by their good deeds. To receive the benefits of Christ’s death, we first must admit that we are numbered among the ungodly.

3. We are numbered among the sinners because it’s the only way to be numbered among the saints. Suppose you were standing on one side of a deep ravine. Crossing that ravine was the only way you could arrive at your destination. If that ravine were only two feet wide, how many of you would step over that ravine so you could get to your destination? The ravine between sinner and saint was a ravine we could not cross on our own, a ravine only Christ could carry us across. Yet for Christ to carry us, we had to acknowledge that we couldn’t do it ourselves. By declaring that we bring nothing to the table, we stand ready for Christ to lift us to the other side.

B. At the perfect time, Christ offered us forgiveness through His death. 1. Because of His perfect timing, we have peace with God. Every day, we live with war, unrest, and chaos. But the great news that’s ours because of God’s perfect timing is that we are at peace with God, and it’s peace with God that matters most. That peace is the peace that surpasses our understanding, the peace that we could not create or obtain on our own. At this very moment, you are forgiven and because of that forgiveness, the relationship we broke because of our sin, God has repaired. As He looks at you, He sees a child of God with whom God Himself has chosen to make peace.

2. Because of His perfect timing, we have access to His grace. In our technological world, we’re all familiar with passwords. For many of us, we have to create a password for our lengthy list of passwords. God’s perfect timing has

granted us unlimited access to God's grace. No password required. No limitation because we are only logged in as a guest user. Because of the cross and the work of Christ, He has granted us access to His love, His forgiveness, His mercy, His kindness, His care, His compassion, and on the list could go. We couldn't get there on our own, but because of God's perfect timing, the door to His grace is open for us as His children.

3. Because of His perfect timing, we have the hope of glory. Our world is hopeless, chaotic, broken, and we wonder how much longer it can last. Although we are surrounded by such hopelessness, we are people of hope, possessors of hope, people who have the promise, the guarantee of that eternal hope, that eternal home in heaven. That's the hope of glory. That's the great news that comes to us in our lostness as Jesus says, "Take heart. I have overcome the world. I have come that you may have life and have it to the fullest. Be thou faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life!" It's all ours because and only because of God's perfect timing.

4. Because of His perfect timing, we rejoice in our sufferings. "Wait a minute. This doesn't belong here. Who wants to rejoice in sufferings? Who wants to face suffering? I want life to be great!" But life is great and the most amazing thing is that life can be great in the midst of our suffering. Why? Because God uses even suffering to work His amazing work. If we never faced challenges, would we ever grow, learn how to persevere, or become the person God intended us to be? Suffering may not create life's most enjoyable moments, but the good news is that suffering works; it produces and what it produces is blessed by God to fulfill His specific purpose.

5. Because of His perfect timing, God has poured His love into our hearts. Suppose you had an empty five-gallon bucket. Into that bucket, you dropped a handful of sand to represent your life. Now, imagine that you filled that bucket to overflowing with water. That water represents God's love. Into our bucket of life, God pours His love and as He pours His love, He says to us, "With My love, I am bringing your life to life. I am pouring into you something great, a life beyond your imagination. More than you can understand, I love you and I will always love you. My love will always overflow your life-bucket no matter what may come!"

6. Because of His perfect timing, we possess the Holy Spirit. Baptism, that's the moment when faith is worked in our hearts, the moment when the Holy Spirit took up residence in our hearts. But why would the Holy Spirit want to live in your heart or my heart? It's purely because of timing. At just the right time, Christ died to bring us back to life and at just the right time, the Holy Spirit took up residence in our hearts. Left to ourselves, we didn't have a chance. But since the Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts, since He has taken up permanent residence, we offer our good works as a response to faith purely because the Holy Spirit arrived first making such actions possible.

7. Phrases like, "You couldn't have timed that any better," or "Gee, that was perfect timing," may come from our lips without a thought. But the next time you hear such phrases, listen to your heart as it quietly says to you, "The work of God - Now that's always perfect timing!" Amen.