

## WALKING WISELY IN A WICKED WORLD – PART 2

Please take your Bibles and turn to Ephesians 5. As mentioned **last time, this time** we are going to spend **more time** talking **about time**! Ephesians 5:16 says, “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” I want to read the surrounding verses for context, though, so follow along as I read verses 15-20.

Last Sunday we looked primarily at verses 15 and 16; today we are going to look at verse 16 again, then verse 17. Verses 15-17 are **challenging to preach on** for a couple of reasons.

1) There are a number of things referred to that could be sermons in-and-of themselves, like: how we live, not being a fool, being wise, redeeming the time, evil days, and understanding the will of God. So it takes discipline—for me anyway—not to overemphasize some of them and neglect the others.

2) The second thing that makes it difficult is determining **how** the verses correlate with one another. For example, verse 15 is a **command**—so is verse 17 and verse 18. Verse 16 is not, however. Instead, it describes **how** a person goes about walking circumspectly; meaning “carefully; distinctly, with exactness.”

Here’s what I believe is the main point and how they fit together: **The key to living carefully in these evil days is to be wise and redeem the time by understanding what the will of the Lord is.** I actually tweaked this statement slightly from last week. If you have your outline from last week, you’ll find the difference. If not, I guess you won’t!

In way of review, here’s what we looked at last Sunday.

### 1. The context (Big Picture) of our text

In chapters 1-3 of Ephesians, God through Paul instructs them regarding **the blessings they have** in Christ. In chapters 4-6, Paul instructs them **how they should** live based on those blessings. They are told to walk—meaning to **live a certain way**—because they belong to God!

--In 4:1, they—and us—are told to “**walk worthy** of the vocation wherewith you are called,”

In other words, if you are a Christian, **live like one!**

-- In 4:17, they—and us—are told to “...**walk not** as other Gentiles walk” meaning “Don’t live like the unsaved!”

--In 5:2, we see we are to “...**walk in love**...”; in 5:8 we are to “**walk as children of light**.”

--And in 5:15, they—and us—are to “**walk circumspectly**,” meaning carefully.

### 2. The command to live carefully

“See then that ye walk circumspectly” (vs 15) is in the form of **command** that we are to be **continually** doing. It is not a one-and-done kind of thing. We are to **start** doing it, then continually **keep on** doing it! What is the command? “**Be continually being careful to live carefully!**”

**Sadly**, we often take **great care** to do things **carefully** in our jobs and hobbies but aren’t nearly **as careful** when it comes to **living our life for God**! Instead of making **living for God** a priority, we treat it as something we “get around to”—**if** we have time!

The last thing we looked at was...**3. The characteristics of living carefully**

What are the characteristics? What commitments will we need to make in order to live carefully?

#### A. Don’t live like a fool does

Vs 15 “See then that ye walk circumspectly [carefully] **not as fools**...” **How** do fools live?

1) **A fool lives as if there is no God.** Psalm 14:1 “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.”

2) **A fool lives as if they are God.** Rom 1:22 “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools...”

#### Characteristic #2? B. Do live like a wise man does!

How does a wise man live? Here are the three marks of a wise man that we looked at last week.

1) **A wise man fears God.** Psalm 110:10 “The **fear of the Lord** is the beginning of wisdom:”

2) **A wise man obeys God.** Mt 7:24 “Therefore whosoever **heareth** these sayings of mine, **and doeth them**, I will liken him unto a **wise man**, which built his house upon a rock:”

**3) A wise man considers his latter end!** Deut 32:29 "O that they were **wise**, that they understood this, that they would **consider their latter end!**"

What is meant by our "latter end!" The day **after** our last day—in other words, **judgment day!**

Characteristic #3 of someone who is continually being careful to live carefully?

C. They will redeem the time

We see that in vs 16 "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

What does it mean to "redeem the time?"

It means to "buy up"—to seize—**important** opportunities by being "freed from" **unimportant** ones!

That's it for review; let's think a little bit more about this thing called **time**. How many of you remember your kids saying when **they were young**, "I'm bored!" They had **plenty** of time—and not a lot of **demands** on that time! And then they get older and soon discover "our world": **too much** to do—and **not enough time** to do it!

Not sure where I heard this quote. I tried to Google it and couldn't find it. Who knows, maybe I made it up...lol... Here it is: "Time is like a suitcase—some people pack more into it than others!"

Dr. Stephen R. Covey—author, successful businessman, educator, and public speaker—shared the following story in his book *First Things First*. Not sure if I've shared it with you before or not. If so, it's been awhile.

One day a college professor was speaking to a group of business students and used the following illustration to drive home a point. As he stood in front of the group of high-powered over-achievers he said, "Okay, time for a quiz." Then he pulled out a one-gallon, wide-mouthed mason jar and set it on a table in front of him. Then he produced about a dozen **fist-sized rocks** and carefully placed them, one at a time, into the jar.

When the jar was filled to the top and no more rocks would fit inside, he asked, "Is this jar full?" Everyone in the class said, "Yes." Then he said, "Really?" He reached under the table and pulled out a bucket **of gravel**. Then he dumped some gravel in and shook the jar causing pieces of gravel to work themselves down into the spaces between the big rocks.

Then he smiled and asked the group once more, "Is the jar full?" By this time the class was onto him. "Probably not," one of them answered. "Good!" he replied. And he reached under the table and brought out a bucket of **sand**. He started dumping the sand in and it went into all the spaces left between the rocks and the gravel.

Once more he asked the question, "Is this jar full?" "No!" the class shouted. Once again he said, "Good!" Then he grabbed a pitcher of **water** and began to pour it in until the jar was filled to the brim. Then he looked up at the class and asked, "What is the point of this illustration?"

One eager beaver raised his hand and said, "The point is, **no matter how full your schedule is, if you try really hard, you can always fit some more** things into it!" This young man was looking at it in the way I mentioned just a few moments ago: "Time is like a suitcase—some people pack more into it than others!"

That was not why the speaker gave the object lesson, though. He said **packing more into** our life to make it busier **was not** the point. He then said this, "The truth this illustration teaches us is: If you **don't put the big rocks in first, you won't get them in at all!**"

See the connection between this and how we use our time? There are **important things** in our life—like relationships with people and our relationship with God—that we should look at as the "big rocks" that **absolutely must** be put "into the jar" **first** to make sure we have room for them. But too many times we don't!

We'll come back to how we determine what is important—and what is not—in a little bit, but next let's notice... **4. The catalyst to live carefully**

**Why** should we be continually careful to live carefully; to live wisely? End of vs 16 "because the days are evil."

That was true in **Paul's day** when he wrote this letter to the believers in Ephesus—and it is **still true** today! I don't think I'm going out on a limb to suggest that we could spend the rest of our time this morning discussing the **evil days**—the evil times—in which we live.

**II Tim 3:1-4** “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. <sup>2</sup> For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, **disobedient to parents**, unthankful, unholy, <sup>3</sup> **Without natural affection**, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, **despisers of those that are good**, <sup>4</sup> Traitors, heady, highminded, **lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;**”

The list is too long to go through all of them but notice the ones that I have in bold.

**Disobedient to parents:** Is that true today? It sure is—and sadly it's getting worse. Instead of **respect** in the home depicted in the old shows like “Father Knows Best,” sitcoms portray fathers **as idiots** who **should not** be listened to—and should **be made fun of!** Things are so backwards and upside down that schools not only **encourage** children to **disobey** their parents—they help them keep secrets **from their** parents! What kind of secrets? “Minor things”—and I'm obviously being facetious—like wanting to change their pronouns...or needing a pregnancy test...or providing them with the morning-after pill!

**Without natural affection:** Although it is “natural”—in a human sense—to have affection for your children, grandchildren, and parents, **many women** don't have that affection anymore. What makes me say that? One word. What's the word? **Abortion!** Not only are they compassionless and heartless in wanting to kill **their own** children in private, but they also **openly march...** and hold signs... and are proud that they **defend the “reproductive rights”** of women—**except baby women** who haven't been born yet!

**Despisers of those that are good:** If you listen to Crosstalk even occasionally, you've heard Jim Schneider quote **Isaiah 5:20** “Woe unto them that **call evil good, and good evil...**” Is that happening right now? Yes!

--It is called **good** to **fight for the death of the unborn—but bad** if you want their life protected

--It is called **good** for **men to “marry” men**—and women to “marry” women—**but bad if you agree with God's definition of marriage** as being between one man and one woman

--It is called **good to have a drag queen** read and perform for children at the library—but **bad if a coach prays** at the 50-yard line with high school students after a football game

--It is called **good to pretend a boy is a girl** and let him play on the girls' basketball team—to include changing clothes in their locker room—but **bad if you want biological girls** to only compete against biological girls

--And it is **called good to pull eye drops** off the shelf because a handful of people have lost their sight... or their eyes...or even their life—but **bad** if you question the safety of a certain shot!

**Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.** Any evidence of that in our society?

Here are some statistics from 2018—5 years ago!

NBA – 7.4 billion/year      Netflix – 11.7 billion/year      NFL – 14 billion/year

And the not-to-be-named “adult” industry—b/c it is so difficult to track—is anywhere from 6 to 15 billion/year. And yet, it usually takes 2 years for a **missionary to raise the support they need** to go to a foreign country to teach God's Word! Are we not **lovers of pleasure** more than lovers of God?

The evil days—the days in which we live—should **motivate us** to recognize what is bad...and understand what is good...and make wise use of our time. **How** do we do that? And how do we **know** what the “big rocks” in our life should be so we make sure we have enough time to do them?

The answer, I believe, is in vs 17: “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” I'm calling that... **5. The concluding summary of living carefully**

Notice the verse starts with “wherefore.” One pastor I had would often say, “When you see a ‘wherefore,’ ask yourself what the ‘wherefore’ is **there for!**” “Wherefore” indicates **a summary/conclusion.**

The Greek word that “wherefore” comes from could also be translated “because of this” or “on account of this”—which still carries the idea of summarizing what was previously said.

“Wherefore”—to sum it all up—the way to live carefully in these evil days and redeem the time is to “be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” In other words, learn the will of God and do it!

#### A. Why should we seek to understand the will of the Lord?

- 1) Because the **days are evil**—and we need to know how to live in these evil days! Think of the challenges parents with children face right now! These aren’t necessarily in order, but here are a few. There is **gender** “confusion”—which I believe is really gender **rebellion**. There are **social media devices** like phones, iPads, and computers that can **expose children** to all kinds of things they ought not to be exposed to. And there is a **disdain—a hatred**—for that which the Bible calls good as mentioned earlier.
- 2) Because **time is limited**—and we need wisdom for our priorities!
- 3) Because **people are lost**—and God wants to use us to reach them!
- 4) Because it is “unwise” **not to understand** the will of God! “Unwise” here means “senseless, without reflection, acting rashly, unperceptive.” It is the proverbial “flying by the seat of your pants.”
- 5) Because **God says we should!** Be “understanding” of “what the will of the Lord is.”

#### B. How do we understand what the will of the Lord is?

- 1) **Believe** it is understandable! If God tells us to understand His will, it obviously can be understood! Too many people are content to believe that God’s will is mysterious and unknowable.

Think of our over-arching theme verse—Psalm 19:11.

--If God uses His word to **warn us**, we can obviously understand the warnings!

--And if God blesses us **for obeying**, we can obviously understand what it is He wants us to do!

- 2) **Have a teachable spirit.** Is God going to show you His will if you don’t **want to know it?** Probably not! What does a teachable spirit look like? **Psalm 25:4-5** “**Shew me** thy ways, O Lord; **teach me** thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and **teach me**: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.”

**Psalm 143:10** “**Teach me to do thy will**; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; **lead me** into the land of uprightness.”

- 3) **Have an obedient spirit.** A teachable spirit and obedient spirit go hand-in-hand. Why do I say that? Because if you really want to **know** God’s will, it should be because you **want to do** God’s will. If you only want to **know** God’s will to see if you **like God’s** will so you can decide if you want **to do** God’s will, do you really have a teachable spirit? Obviously not!

And is God going to give you direction in your life when you are **refusing to do** what He has already told you? I’m going to answer the question with a question: **Why** would He?

- 4) **Go to the source** of God’s will—His Word! **Rom 12:2** “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the **renewing of your mind**, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, **will of God.**” Our minds are renewed—our thinking is corrected—through God’s Word!

But what about **being torn** between doing two equally important things—and **not being able to do both?** What then? How do we say “yes” to doing one thing—when it means we will be saying “no” to another? Does God give us any guidance on how to handle this situation? He does—from the life of Jesus Himself!

Was there any “Person” that ever lived on earth that was **more important** than Jesus? Obviously not! And if there was anyone you would expect to be **super busy running** all over the place healing and helping people, you would think it would be Jesus.

And yet, you never see Jesus hurrying... or scurrying... or running around in a tizzy. He was always “cool, calm, and collected” as we use to say. But how? Please turn to Mark 1:32-38.

--In vs 32-34, we see Jesus healing a lot of people. He healed many, but He didn’t heal them all.

--In vs 35, we see Jesus getting up early—although most certainly being tired from the day before—to meet **with His Father in prayer.** What did Jesus pray about? What did He ask the Father? We don’t know because it doesn’t say. But—we kind of do! Here’s why I say that.

--In vs 36-37, we see Simon Peter finding Jesus and telling Him there are a bunch of people that still want to see Him. Some undoubtedly needed healing.

--What is Jesus' response? Although He doesn't say "no," He **does say** "no"!

Vs 38 "Let us go **into the next towns**, that I may preach there also..."

It seems to me, then, that Jesus got His priorities for **that day** from God! And that—I believe—is the pattern God wants us to follow. He wants us to consult Him and His will **each day**.

Will He **show us His will** when we do that? I believe He will. The problem is not with God **being unwilling** to show us His will—it is us being **unwilling to seek it** and do it.

So what does God want you to do with what you heard this morning?

He wants you to **be wise and redeem the time by understanding what the will of the Lord is**.

What is God's will?

1. First, God's will is for you to be saved from the future penalty of your sins!

I Tim 2:4 "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

II Pet 3:9 "...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

2) Second, God's will is for you to live a surrendered life; to have a daily attitude that says, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do!"

In a book I'm reading called, "Freedom from the Tyranny of the Urgent," Charles Hummel writes: "Nothing substitutes for knowing that on this day, at this hour, in this place, we are doing the will of our Father in heaven" (pg 66).

Should that not be the heartbeat of all of God's children—to live for the one who died for us!