

Redeem The Time.

Text: Eph 5:15-21

Suggested Hymns:

204, 163, 336, 343, 400

- 1) Redeem The Time - Use Your Time Wisely
- 2) We Must Strive To Improve Our Understanding
- 3) Do Not Be Drunk With Wine
- 4) Giving Thanks Always For All Things To God

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Ephesians 5:15-21, 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.* ¹⁸ *And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,* ¹⁹ *speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,* ²⁰ *giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,* ²¹ *submitting to one another in the fear of God.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

A Christian is a new creature. He has been born again. He has been born again into a new, spiritual life. With this new, spiritual life he has received a new conception, a new understanding, of life itself. He has a new purpose in life.

There is a new goal beckoning him at the end of the road. When he reaches that goal, at the end of this earthly life, he will be granted the joys of heaven. He will then be fully restored to the image of God which Adam and Eve lost through their fall in Paradise.

As a result of his new goal and new hope in life, the Christian keeps his eyes of faith focused on that goal, his soul's salvation. However, because of the besetting sins of the world, the constant temptations which Satan casts into his path, and his own weakness and natural inclination to heed these ever-recurring temptations, even a Christian must be warned continuously to be on the alert

against these threatening dangers, lest he lose sight of the goal and forfeit the crown of everlasting life.

A Christian must, in consequence, also be willing and ready to use every help and every opportunity for the strengthening of his faith and his advancement in holiness of life.

Of this, St. Paul speaks to us and all Christians in our text. He urges us to *Redeem the Time*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Redeem The Time - Use Your Time Wisely

In urging upon us the need for redeeming the time St. Paul presents several earnest admonitions for our consideration.

One of them is this: “WALK CIRCUMSPECTLY, UNDERSTANDING WHAT THE WILL OF THE LORD IS.”

Just before voicing this admonition, St. Paul had said, “*For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.*”¹ Paul considered it a natural result of the light which they had received that they should walk as children of light and therefore walk circumspectly, carefully, warily, wisely, and not as fools.

They are to realise that the time allotted to them is precious. They must make the best use of every opportunity offered to them for promoting their spiritual welfare. They dare not foolishly and wastefully squander the time which God grants them for the purpose of attaining the goal of their life.

What St. Paul here says to the Ephesians is meant also for us. When a person walks aimlessly, listlessly, and thoughtlessly, he does not make the best use of his energy nor cover the distance he is to cover. If he could retrace his steps, he would find that he wasted many of them. But if he fixes his attention on a definite goal, keeps it always before him, and aims to attain it, he will find that he has walked a fairly straight course to reach it.

Therefore **KEEP YOUR VISION FIXED ON THE GOAL**. There are so many things in life which would engage our attention, distract our vision from the goal of life, that our way of living may easily become careless and purposeless. Therefore St. Paul urges so earnestly: “Walk circumspectly!” Watch where you are going! Keep your vision fixed on your goal!

When we cross a busy street in the city, we look before we cross it. Common sense tells us to do so. We walk circumspectly. Not to do so would be fraught with danger and disaster. Likewise we are to keep our eyes open in a spiritual way, our vision fixed on the goal, our minds alert and clear, ever mindful of the many dangers which lurk along the highway of life. And here are some of the Apostle's directions for walking circumspectly.

He urges us to UNDERSTAND WHAT THE WILL OF THE LORD IS. We cannot walk circumspectly, we cannot redeem the time, we cannot make the most of our opportunities, unless we know the will of the Lord, our God.

Now, God has revealed His will to us. He has revealed His will in a twofold manner. His holy and righteous will He has revealed to us in His holy Law, the Ten Commandments. There He informs us how we are to be, and what we are to do and not to do.

His gracious and good will He has also revealed to us in His Gospel. There He informs us what He has done, and what He is still doing for us poor sinners through our Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation.

Both God's holy and righteous will and His good and gracious will are revealed to us in the Bible. It is very essential that we know both. We must learn to realise that we have not kept God's Law and that we are therefore lost and condemned sinners. But we must also know and believe that God has sent His Son into this world to save us and that this Son of God, made Man, has saved us from the curse of God's righteous Law by fulfilling this Law perfectly in our stead, as our Substitute.

Knowing this gracious and good will of God in Christ Jesus must make us grateful and willing to serve our loving Lord. It will and must prompt us to walk circumspectly to avoid the pitfalls of sin and evil on our earthly journey. Ignorance of God's will, both His just and righteous will and His good and gracious will, is sure to prove fatal to the sinner.

2. We Must Strive To Improve Our Understanding

Some Christians seem to be afraid that they might advance too far in Christian wisdom and knowledge. They think it is too much to expect them to be in church every Sunday, and in addition on the great festivals observed by the Church.

To read God's Word daily and to pray to God several times each day seems to them an overdose of piety. How foolish they are! God urges wisdom and understanding. He wants us to grow in knowledge of Himself and His will. To grow in knowledge, however, to increase in our understanding of His will, we must use the means of grace which God has placed at our disposal.

We must read, study, search, and hear His Word. There is no danger that any one might learn too much about God and about God's will. The great danger is rather this, that many who consider themselves quite intelligent Christians and well-informed Christians will find, when the time of testing comes, that they did not know enough about God and God's revealed truth. Then they will also realise that they did not redeem the time and that it is too late to remedy matters.

Friends, let us try, test, prove and examine our ways. Are we proving ourselves wise? Are we learning all we can about God and about God's will? Are we reading, studying, searching the Bible, God's book of wisdom every day? Are we regular in our church attendance? Do we listen attentively when we do attend, or has churchgoing become a mere matter of habit? Are we making use of every opportunity, every means, offered to us by our congregation to increase our knowledge and our understanding in spiritual things? Friends, let us be sure about ourselves that we are really redeeming the time - using our time wisely!

3. Do Not Be Drunk With Wine.

Another, and a very striking admonition of our text reads *do not be drunk with wine*.

It seems rather startling, rather strange, that St. Paul should find it necessary to give such an admonition to the members of the Ephesian congregation. But St. Paul harbours no illusions about his Christians. He knows that these people had been formerly given to such vices.

He knows that the old appetite may be aroused anew and that the former temptations may become strong again. He also knows that no one can redeem the time or walk circumspectly who is drunk with wine or any other strong drink, or is even partly under the influence of an intoxicating drink. Therefore he admonishes most earnestly, *do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation*. Dissipation is an excess, giving a temporary sort of a high that leads to all sorts of bad things. Drunkenness bewilders and confuses the mind, destroys all sense

of direction, and makes circumspect walking a thing altogether impossible. In our day and age, drugs also come under the same class as alcohol.

The Bible does not sanction or condone drunkenness or anything resembling or approaching such a condition.

It is a historical fact that Jesus made wine, genuine wine, excellent wine, at the wedding of Cana. It is also a fact that St. Paul encouraged Timothy, his fellow labourer, to drink a little wine for his stomach's sake.

Note well, however, that St. Paul said a little wine. But both Jesus and His Apostle denounced drunkenness in the strongest terms. Both declared that a drunkard cannot enter into, nor remain in, the kingdom of God. Habitual drunkenness and a living faith cannot exist together. The one excludes the other.

For many people it would be better to leave strong drink alone. For all who realise that they cannot remain temperate in the use of strong drink, it becomes imperative to forego the use of it entirely. That is God's will in their case. That is a part of walking circumspectly in this world. Moreover, the Bible urges temperance and moderation in all things.

Friends, we are to redeem the time. We are to be wise. We are to grow in the understanding of God's will. Did you ever observe anyone redeeming the time or showing a special measure of wisdom and knowledge of God's will while he was in a drunken or drugged state?

There are few things more pitiful than a person who has partaken of too much strong drink. Thousands of men and women are carrying incurable heartaches and the scars of shame because of sins committed while intoxicated.

Let us prove ourselves wise and circumspect also in this matter! Instead of giving ourselves to too much alcohol, we are to be filled with the Spirit of God. That is what St. Paul urges and recommends. What a contrast Paul creates here: ***“drunk with wine”*** and ***“filled with the Spirit of God”!***

Anyone can see that these two things do not harmonise, that drunkenness is and always must be entirely out of the question for every sincere Christian, in whose heart dwells the Spirit of God.

This calls to our mind the beautiful words which St. Paul writes in another Epistle, when he reminds us that we, though weak, erring sinners, are accorded

the great and sublime honour of being the temples of the Holy Spirit. Let us always remember our Christian calling and station in life.

4. Giving Thanks Always For All Things To God

As such honoured children of God, it becomes self-evident that we redeem the time. One more admonition: **GIVING THANKS ALWAYS FOR ALL THINGS TO GOD.**

This is a very helpful admonition. If we follow it, we shall find that it will prove a great help in redeeming the time and walking circumspectly in our life. We are to remain genuinely grateful to God for all the good gifts He has bestowed upon us.

To promote such a genuine attitude of gratitude, we are to speak and to sing to ourselves and to one another psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in our hearts unto the Lord God, the Giver of all good things.

Instead of trying to drown our sorrows by drunkenness, carousing, and world-liness, we who are children of God are to overcome moments of depression and sorrow by singing songs of glorification and thanksgiving to God. That will take our spirits out of the valley of depression and lift them to the mountain tops of new courage and strength and an earnest resolve to strive earnestly for the true goal of our life.

Through the strength-inspiring, courage-bestowing, soul-lifting psalms and other comforting Scripture passages, the power and grace of God will be bestowed upon us. That is the God-given, the God-pleasing way of fortifying ourselves against the evil days.

There should be more Christian singing in our homes. There is far too much singing of the other type coming into our homes via our radios. Much of it may be entertaining and harmless. But much of it is definitely anti-Christian and positively harmful. It does one's heart good to hear people sing good, edifying Christian hymns. This is not only entertaining but helpful.

Let us learn to meet the issues of life and its severe trials with a Christian song in our heart and a Christian hymn on our lips. Let us make genuine melody to the Lord, our God. Let us sing to the Lord with gratitude and with gladness.

It is a wonderful Christian tonic. It will drive away the blues. You will be surprised how effective this God-given remedy for your blues really is.

Paul and Silas lay chained in the damp, dark dungeon of Philippi. Their backs were bruised, bleeding, torn, lacerated from the cruel beating they had suffered. Yet they had the courage and the strength of faith to sing to the Lord, to offer thanks and praise to their Master for considering them worthy to endure this suffering for His sake.

Finally, *giving thanks always for all things to God.* For all things? Should I give thanks for the bitter experiences of my life? For the years of sickness I have suffered? For the loss of husband, wife, or dear child? Should I thank God for the deep disappointments I have experienced? Yes — our text says “*giving thanks always, for all things!*”

Your heart may revolt at first. But remember this: Whatever God bestows upon us in His eternal love and divine wisdom must be good for us, no matter how distasteful it may seem at the time. It takes a strong, a heroic faith to accept that without doubt, without misgiving. But God can supply also that type of faith.

Only believe! Take Jesus, take God, at His word. Do not doubt. Scripture says in Romans 8:28, ²⁸ *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.* “Nothing shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.”

Remember, God’s thoughts toward you are thoughts of peace. He is directing the path of your life toward the goal of life, your soul’s salvation. Let Him always be your Guide. Heed His will. Learn to know Him better and to understand, and to submit to, His will. Keep the goal of life, your salvation, always before your vision of faith.

Jesus is with you. He will lead you safely through every difficulty and every trial on the way. Yes, He will lead you safely through the valley of the shadow of death. Trust Him! Follow Him all the way! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Ephesians 5:8