

Ephesians 5:15-20

¹⁵Consider carefully, then, how you walk, not as unwise people, but as wise people. ¹⁶Make the most of your time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷For this reason, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸And do not get drunk on wine, which causes you to lose control. Instead, be filled with the Spirit ¹⁹by speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (singing and making music with your hearts to the Lord), ²⁰by always giving thanks for everything to God the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Make the Most of Your Time

I.

You sit alone in an empty house. Everything is quiet. The only sound reminds you that there is a commodity that's so valuable one might think it should be traded on the New York stock exchange. But it isn't. It can't be bought or sold. The sound is the ticking of a clock. The commodity is time. You have some, but you don't know how much—at least, in the long term.

In the short term, you know that there is a finite amount in every day. 24 hours are there to be divided up. Sleep is going to take up a large percentage. If you sleep 8 hours, $\frac{1}{3}$ of your time is gone. Everyone needs to eat; that requires some time, too. There are some personal hygiene necessities that consume some, as well. Beyond a few absolute essentials, everyone's allocation of time is different.

“Make the most of your time” (Ephesians 5:16, EHV). Do you feel the pressure? If not, Paul gives you a reason to feel the pressure. “Make the most of your time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:16, EHV). It's true, isn't it? While Paul wrote this letter thousands of years ago, what he said has been the case ever since. The days are evil.

Whether your focus is local or national or worldwide, you can surely find the evil of the day. In Afghanistan a few years ago a law was enacted to include on identification cards a person's religion. Now Christians and other religious minorities are being rounded up and murdered unless they renounce Jesus. The days are evil.

II.

The days are evil, but the whole point of bringing up days of evil is to remind you to make the most of your time. Your time is finite. It is precious. You can't buy more; you can't sell whatever amount you might have. Make the most of it.

Paul gives two opposing alternatives. “Consider carefully, then, how you walk, not as unwise people, but as wise people” (Ephesians 5:15, EHV). What is wisdom? How can you walk in wisdom, rather than as someone who is unwise? Wisdom comes from learning. That doesn't necessarily mean a person has to have an advanced degree; some people can rattle off lots of bits of information, yet not be wise.

“Do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:17, EHV). Paul lists the two alternatives again. This time the unwise he calls “foolish” and he explains what wisdom is. Wisdom isn't just having a bunch of trivial information, but understanding the will of the Lord.

Yet again Paul lists the two alternatives. “Do not get drunk on wine, which causes you to lose control. Instead, be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18, EHV). The Greek word the EHV translates as “lose control” indicates behavior which shows a lack of concern or

thought for the consequences of an action. Substance abuse is not the only sin you could come up with in which people lose control, or show a lack of concern for the consequences of their actions. Paul simply chose one behavior to make his point.

Three times Paul gave the two opposing alternatives. In three different ways Paul showed that there are things that are part of a God-pleasing life, and things that are not.

III.

“Understand what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:17, EHV). That was how Paul described wisdom. Understanding the will of the Lord comes from knowing about sin and grace. Every human being has done things that go against the will of the Lord. It isn’t just substance abuse that causes people to lose control, every sin means that we lose control and cave in to our human nature.

Jesus did *not* lose control. He lived in perfect harmony with God’s Law. In today’s Gospel he said: “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life in yourselves. ⁵⁴The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the Last Day” (John 6:53-54, EHV). Jesus wasn’t talking about the Lord’s Supper—he hadn’t instituted it yet. Also, he said you *must* eat his flesh and drink his blood. Many Christians die without ever having the opportunity to receive Holy Communion. He was talking about having faith in the salvation he purchased for all people.

“Understand what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:17, EHV), Paul says. The will of the Lord is that you, personally and individually, have faith in the salvation Jesus purchased for you.

IV.

Knowing it, “Make the most of your time” (Ephesians 5:16, EHV). The footnote in the EHV says this could also be translated: “Redeem the time.” From your Catechism days you will remember that redeem means “buy back.” Jesus bought us back from sin. But “buy back the time”? It isn’t sold on the stock exchange. You can’t go into a store and purchase it.

Buy back the time, redeem the time, make the most of your time, means making some effort. Wasting time takes no effort. Making the most of your time requires thought and energy.

“Be filled with the Spirit ¹⁹by speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (singing and making music with your hearts to the Lord)” (Ephesians 5:18-19, EHV). When you are filled with the Spirit, your life will show it. You will talk and sing with your fellow Christians.

Paul speaks especially of a group setting. We gather for worship, just as Christians in the early church did. This is a place that even when you know that the days are evil, you are assured you are not alone; others are here who share your love for Christ; others build you up as they lift their voices and play their instruments to make music around you and with you. You are here not just to *be* built up, but to do the same for others. They face the same days of evil you do. They need the same community of believers to bolster them for what lies ahead.

“Be filled with the Spirit... ²⁰by always giving thanks for everything to God the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:18, 20, EHV). Paul’s words are so loaded. If you really want to make the most of your time, focus some attention on giving thanks.

Always give thanks to God. For many years now this nation has set aside a day for giving thanks. For many it has become just another day off from work, or a day to prepare for the

shopping deals of Black Friday. For some it seems that Thanksgiving Day is the *only* time they stop to give thanks to God. Do it always. And by always, I don't mean just muttering "O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good" at mealtimes, either. Give thanks to God throughout your day.

There is more in this verse, however. Give thanks for *everything*.

There are the little things you never really think about: the air you breathe, the water you drink. Perhaps you don't even give much thought to the food you eat, or your clothing and shelter.

Perhaps there are some other things you don't think much about. Give thanks for the abilities God has given you. Perhaps you can play an instrument or a sport. Maybe you are gifted in finance or medicine or good at working with your hands. Remember to thank God for them all.

"Everything" includes a category we rarely think about. Give thanks for the problems you have in life. There seem to be an endless list of those; after all, the days are evil. Give thanks for the loss of health or a loss of loved one. Give thanks for the car accident or the loss of your job. Remember that God has promised that he will be with you in everything, so give thanks that he is there and be reminded that he has also promised to work even things that happen in the days of evil for the good of those who love him and are called to his purpose.

Give thanks especially for the spiritual gifts God has given you. You might be good at speaking about Jesus with others. Perhaps you have a gift which you can use in service to your Savior in other areas of work in the church. I know of two spiritual gifts you have, even if you think you have none: the gift of faith itself, and the gift of prayer. Thank God that he has brought you to faith in your Savior. Pray continually that he would strengthen your faith and expand his Kingdom according to his will.

The days are evil. Be wise. Understand that the will of the Lord is that you would live for him. Serving God is exciting. Thank God that you have been called to live *his* kind of life. Working for the Lord is sometimes hard, but it is never a hardship. As you live for God, make the most of your time. Amen.