

Redeeming the Time

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 5:1-21

Time is a precious commodity. It is like money that must be spent now and cannot be stored or saved for later. Though God is the master of time and of timing (Ecclesiastes 3:1-14), He is not bound or controlled by time. He is eternal (Isaiah 46:9-10). However, God has given us time to make us efficient, decisive, and patient. God has given us time to help us have priorities and balance. Through the gift of time, God teaches us management. Time is the enemy of laziness. Time reminds us that bad things won't last forever; that good things need to be appreciated while they last; that opportunities require action and decision. Through time, God reveals His faithfulness to His promises, as well as His longsuffering and forbearance (Galatians 4:4-5; II Peter 3:9; Romans 2:4; 3:20-25).

Ephesians 5:15-16 warns us to wisely consider our use of time. The work of evil in our world is a motivation. The mystery of iniquity (lawlessness) is already at work (II Thessalonians 2:7). The world, presently, is dominated by evil – by the wickedness of the Wicked One (Galatians 1:4; Ephesians 2:2-3; I John 5:19). Let's look at the setting for our warning in Ephesians 5:15-16:

- We need to be aware of and separate from the unfruitful, shameful works of darkness which are done in secret all around us (Ephesians 5:8-12).
- We need to be like light, revealing the darkness to others (Ephesians 5:13).
- We must not be spiritually sleeping (i.e. ignorant and apathetic) to the situation (Ephesians 5:14).
- We must be wise, watchful, and careful – using our time well (Ephesians 5:15-16).
- We must also be wise concerning the will of the Lord (Ephesians 5:17).
- We must be filled with God's Spirit, rather than be intoxicated with wine, [or figuratively intoxicated with unfaithful thoughts and the pleasures of the world – Isaiah 29:9-14; Revelation 17:1-2] (Ephesians 5:18).

A word on being filled with the Spirit:

This is not a vague instruction. As surely as a person can consume alcohol and lose control of himself, a person can do things which give God's Spirit control of their heart and mind. The text gives precise instruction:

- Meditation and worship using the Scriptures (Ephesians 5:19 cp. Colossians 3:16; Psalm 1:2-3; 19:14);
- Deliberately and specifically thanking God for everything (Ephesians 5:20 cp. Colossians 3:15, I Thessalonians 5:18);
- Submission to one another in the fear of God (love, honor, and respect for Jesus' sake – Ephesians 5:21 cp. Colossians 3:12-15; Philippians 2:1-4; I Peter 5:5).

This creates an environment that invokes (invites) the Holy Spirit to take control of us. Being filled with the Spirit is not a quantitative statement. It's about Who is in control. The behavior

which is opposite to that which is mentioned above, resists, quenches, or grieves the Spirit of God (Ephesians 4:30-32). The word “grieve” means “to cause pain.”

Life is described as a walk. If we are to redeem the time, we must learn how to walk in life. Ephesians has much to say about our walk. Before we can walk the right way, we must avoid the wrong way. **Do not walk** according to the world, the flesh or The Devil (Ephesians 4:17-19 cp. Psalm 1:1; Jeremiah 17:5-6; Leviticus 18:3; 20:23; Ephesians 2:1-3).

Here are a few observations:

- **Walk in love**, as dear children following God (Ephesians 5:1-2).
- **Walk as children of light** (Ephesians 5:8-10 cp. I John 1:5 – 2:3).
- **Walk circumspectly** (carefully, looking all around – walk with accuracy and precision – Ephesians 5:15-18). No sleep-walking (Ephesians 5:14 cp. Romans 13:11-14).

So many more things could be said about how to live and manage ourselves and our time. Here is one last consideration:

- Let all things be done unto edifying (I Corinthians 14:26)
- Let all things be done decently and in order (I Corinthians 14:40).
- Let all your things be done with charity (i.e. with **love** – I Corinthians 16:14).