

Ephesians 5:15-20

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

Dear children of God whose hearts and lives have been changed by the Holy Spirit. Amen

How many of you have calendars at home? How many of you have master calendars displayed on your refrigerator or somewhere else that everyone can see? How many of you have calendars on your smartphones that you carry with you everywhere? As we go through life, we soon realize that it is very difficult to live without a calendar of some sort. Something to help us manage the 24 hours, seven days each week, 12 months of each year that God has given to us.

Let's look a little closer at your calendar. As you look at your calendar what gets the most attention? Is it your children? Is it yourself? Is it your job? Is it your family? What stands out? This might not be an easy questions to answer with our calendars being so full, but today we are going to try and simplify our calendars and our lives as we remember the words of the Apostle Paul using the theme:

Sermon Theme: Why Are We Here?

- 1. Greet each day thankfully in the Lord**
- 2. Spend each day wisely for the Lord**

These words from God through the Apostle Paul fall in the middle of a large section on Christian living and relationships. We who were dead in our sins and unbelief have been made alive with Christ. By grace we have been saved! A good question is: "How does the God who saved me from my sins want me to live?" Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, answers that question for us.

"Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." As we look at our time on this earth, we soon realize that our time on this earth is rather short. We might not think about it in this way, but in the grand scheme of eternity, our time is very short. That being said, the real question is how are we going to live our short time on this earth? Paul starts with some very basic thoughts for us to consider. Paul is calling for a life of thanksgiving, not a mere Thanksgiving Day! He is calling for nonstop thanksgiving, not only at times of success and at happy events, but also for everything!

Why can we live a life of thanksgiving all the time and for everything? Some may see our lives on this earth as a long journey that amounts to nothing more than aimlessly wandering. Others may see their time on this earth as a time to make a name for themselves, which might include living as the world lives. While others might just see their time on this earth serving other purposes. Let's talk for a minute about time. The most important truth in the Bible is this, that God at just the right moment sent his Son into the world to save people who were lost in their sins. God took time to save us. For thirty-three years Jesus

became a man to live among the people of this world for the sole reason of man's eternal welfare. As far as we are concerned, there could not be any time that was better spent.

As children of God who have been saved by the work of Jesus' perfect life on this earth, we soon realize that we are completely changed. We are new creations. Our time is no longer our time. Our actions are no longer our actions. Our thoughts are no longer our thoughts. We no longer live for ourselves, but for Jesus who has given us everything. We are to give the best of our time, our thoughts our lives to our heavenly Father.

Our lifetime then amounts to one gigantic thank you to God. We are not do as we please with our hours, days, and years. God has a plan for us. While we are here, we are to take every chance that God gives us and use it to show our thanks to our good and gracious God. Did we wake up this morning thinking about all of the ways that we might show our thanks to God? If we looked at the replay of your lives from last week, how much of your time was spent living in thanks to God and how much of it was living for some other reason? Did you see the two words that Paul used? He said **"always"** give thanks and **"for everything"**. Everything includes everything from a car accident to job loss to health problems, and the list goes on and on! But **"everything"** also covers all the rich spiritual gifts showered on us daily through the saving work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Forgiveness, peace, joy, love, and hope are everyday realities in and through Jesus. Because Jesus was punished for our sins by his Father, we can claim God as our loving and caring Father. We know that our Father will work out everything, even life's disasters and distresses, for our good. Thus we are blessed with a constantly grateful spirit, "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise." Paul urges us to live as children of light, to find out what pleases the Lord, to expose the fruitless deeds of darkness and to realize that by a miracle of God's grace we are spiritually alive. Our Savior shines on us with his love and forgiveness. God has placed the precious gift of salvation in our hearts and hands. But this gift can be lost, foolishly tossed away and discarded as if it were worthless garbage. Who could do such a thing? We could and so could the people Paul was writing to! That's why Paul emphasizes, **"Consider carefully, then how you walk.."** Being wise means that we can discern between what is valuable and vital and what is not. It means, too, that we recognize the constant danger we face as Christians living in a hostile environment. We walk in danger all the way. Therefore we step carefully, mindful of Satan's mine fields and protective of the precious gift of salvation cradled in our arms. And in wisdom we view wisdom itself as another priceless gift of God.

"Making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is." It doesn't take a top-notch detective to find evidence that the days we live in are indeed evil. Just read your newspaper or watch the nightly news. Violence, apathy, moral decay and evil are everywhere. Even many churches and religious institutions have become rotten to the core, promoting homosexuality, abortion, and other evils while avoiding any worthwhile Bible teaching and instruction. It's a fact: the days are evil!

Since this is so, Paul encourages us to make the most of every opportunity. Opportunities to do what? First of all, since the days are evil and we are in danger of being sucked in by that evil vacuum, Paul wants us to seize every opportunity to be strengthened and built up by the means of grace. Then he encourages us to make the most of every opportunity to spread the gospel and so to snatch someone else from evil and the evil foe. He is leading us to overcome evil with good.

For emphasis God's apostle repeats himself. The Lord doesn't want his people to be ostriches with their heads in the sand. He wants us to be people with our heads in the Book, the Bible. For that is the only

way we gain an understanding of what God wants for us and from us. From the Word we learn that the first item on “God’s Will List” is for sinners to be with him in heaven. For this reason Jesus came from heaven to earth and allowed himself to undergo hell’s torments as our sinless substitute. Eternal blessings are what the Lord wants for us. And what does he want from us? He wants our hearts, trusting in our Savior and responding to his grace in grateful service.

How might we use our time on this earthly wisely as we do the will of our Heavenly Father? Time comes in small doses. Probably nothing is given to man in such small amounts as the element of time. God may give us material things in abundance all at one time. But with time there is neither an overabundance nor a lack, since it marches on relentlessly the same day in, day out, in good days and evil. There is no time but now. There is no time but the present. Time cannot be saved. We may save money. We may increase the possession of our properties and earthly goods. But with the element of time it is different. It cannot be saved for future use. It cannot be stored up. Its use cannot be postponed. Whatever time is past, is past, never to be reclaimed.

God determines the length of our days. We may confidently believe that our times are in God’s hand. That is comforting to know. Christ has promised to be with us during our lifetime with His gracious presence. We never live too long or too short a time in this world. So long as we are here, God wants us to use our time well. We are constantly using our time on this earth to plant the seeds of God’s saving grace in time our thoughts, words, actions and even with our offerings. If we speak a good word or do a good thing, we are sowing. If we speak an evil word or do an evil deed, we are sowing. The type of sowing we do determines the manner in which we use our time. It shows whether we fulfill God’s purpose or not.

To make the best use of our time requires good planning. From Christ we get the whole plan of our life. His love to us prompts us to love Him and to do His will. We must understand what the will of the Lord is, what Christ would have us to do to manage our time. Proper planning calls for the proper balance between the various duties of life. None of them are to be left out, and all to receive their proper place. First of all, we are to keep the right balance between our religious and our worldly duties, always giving first consideration to our heavenly duties. There must be time for the worship of God, for prayer, for meditation on the goodness of God, for church services, for service in the church. To attain to the knowledge of life eternal, and to remain in that faith, is life’s greatest profession, and, according to God, holds priority in time over everything else. “Seek first his Kingdom” says Christ. As important as earthly ties are, they should not hinder or block our time with God and for God

It naturally follows that we must give first place to God’s Word, hearing and learning, through the ministry of the Christian Church, God’s way of life. The Bible may contain other interesting facts, but its chief purpose is **“to make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”** Therefore we must take time to study that Book, to hear it expounded and applied to our life. That assuredly belongs at the very top of the right use of time. We dare not be too busy with other things that we have no time for the reading of the Bible and the hearing of God’s Word.

It is easy for us to lose track of how we spend our days and hours. How often do we look back at the past and wonder what we accomplished. We pray that as we live our lives we realize that God has placed each of us into this world for a reason. That reason is to hear God’s Word and come to know the way to heaven through faith in Christ Jesus, but that reason is also far more than that. Look at each day as another opportunity to live according to God’s will as I humbly and thankfully do the tasks that God has laid before me. To God be the Glory. Amen