

**Redeeming 2014
Ephesians 5:15-21**

January 5, 2014

Dr. Steve Horn

Text: Pay careful attention, then, to how you walk—not as unwise people but as wise—¹⁶ making the most of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ So don't be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. ¹⁸ And don't get drunk with wine, which leads to reckless actions, but be filled by the Spirit:

¹⁹ speaking to one another
in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs,
singing and making music
from your heart to the Lord,
²⁰ giving thanks always for everything
to God the Father
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
²¹ submitting to one another
in the fear of Christ.

Introduction: Ephesians, along with Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon are usually grouped together as a unit that we call Paul's Prison Letters. As the description suggests, the general feeling is that Paul wrote these four letters while in prison. Paul's references to being a prisoner in Ephesians 3:1 and 4:1 are probably more than just figurative language of Paul's life as a Christian. The same holds true for his reference to his chains in 6:20. These descriptions almost certainly are in reference to his current status of imprisonment.

Ephesians has the classic division of theology (1-3) and practice (4-6). Ephesians 4:1, begins "Therefore." This transitional word precisely divides the book into the equal parts of theology and practice. So after describing the benefits, basis, and blessings of salvation in chapters 1-3, Paul gets to the practice of our salvation with chapter 4-6.

In our text today, we encounter an interesting phrase. It has been translated "making the most of the time" in the Holman, but some translations render it in a most literal way, "redeeming the time."

The word for "redeem" was and is a business term. Goods were redeemed; slaves were redeemed. The word for "time" is not so much the seconds and minutes, but the era of time. You could easily understand this to be your life—the time on earth that God has given you. (or any other large portion of time—the time that you have as a parent, the time that you have as a student, the time that you have as an employee of such and such a place, the time that you will be a resident of Lafayette, the time that God gives you to be a member of FBC, Lafayette—all of these can be large units of time.) For specific application, we can think of it in terms of one year. As we begin this new year, what will we do with 2014? What's the only way to redeem time? The only way is "to make the most of it" while we have it, thus the translation in many English texts.

How Can you “make the most of time?”

Verses 15-21 are organized around three contrasts: unwise/wise, foolish/wise (understanding the will of the Lord), drunk with wine/drunk with the spirit. Rather than distinct instructions, I see these contrasts as all basically making the same point—here is how we walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. One of the descriptive phrases is “making the most of time.” So how do we do that? Seeing this passage as a whole, you will see five ideas of how to make the most of time.

- **Measure Your Life by the Wisdom found in the Word of God.**

The first thing we see is to live our lives in a wise manner. As believers this side of Jesus, with full access to the Word of God, we believe that we find ultimate wisdom in the Word of God. So, we give our lives to the Word.

For a great example of the wisdom of the Word, consider Psalm 1.

John Bunyan, who wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*, testified, “Read the Bible, and read it again, and do not despair of help to understand something of the will and mind of God, though you think they are fast locked up from you. Neither trouble yourself, though you may not have commentaries and expositions; pray and read, and read and pray; for a little from God is better than a great deal from man.” (From *Our Daily Bread* Devotional, August 12, 1992)

- **Make Sure of the Will of the Lord.**

It is impossible to be in the will of the Lord and not make the most of time. “Understand what the will of the Lord is.” You begin to understand the will of the Lord by being in His Word.

Philipp Melancthon was the right hand man of the great reformer Martin Luther. Melancthon was said to be so consumed with rightly spending his time that he kept a daily record of every wasted minute so that he could take that list in confession to God at the end of the day. If this sounds a little out of balance, an exchange with his mentor, Luther, gives us great balance. It is said that one morning, Melancthon said to Luther, “Martin, this day we will discuss the governance of the universe.” Luther replied, “This day, you and I will go fishing and leave governance of the universe to God.”

There is balance and the Lord wills that we have rest and recreation, but let us work to make sure that we are in the will of the LORD.

- **Mark Your Life by Leadership of the Holy Spirit.**

If this passage is marked by contrasts, notice that being drunk always leads to reckless actions, but being filled with the Spirit (though unstated) implies that we will avoid reckless actions.

- **Make the Most of Worship.**

- Can you worship too much? I don't want you to see attendance of public worship as something you have to do. I don't want you to feel guilty for missing. Nobody should be made to feel guilty. However, I do want you to see the public gathering of worship as something that you feel like you cannot do without because of the value of the time spent in worship of God. So, can you worship too much? Some even in our church de-

value the importance of weekly worship and certainly scheduled Sunday evening and Wednesday evening gatherings. Understanding that there are work obligations and various factors related to age and health, to simply stay away from these appointed times of gathering for the sake of your convenience raises an important question on the value that you place on worship. Again, can you worship too much?

- Seek to make worship not an event in your week but the activity of your life.

A.W. Tozer said, "For the Christian, everything begins and ends with worship. Whatever interferes with one's personal worship of God needs to be properly dealt with and dismissed. Keep in mind that above all else, worship is an attitude, a state of the mind and a sustained act. It is not a physical attitude, but an inward act of the heart toward God."

- **Make an Investment in your Relationships.**

- 4 Kinds of relationships are mentioned in the following passage:
 - One Another=submission
 - Marriage=submission + sacrifice
 - Parent/Child=obedience, honor, instruction, and training which requires submission + sacrifice
 - Slave/Masters which can be applied to workplace = hard work + respect

First published in 1927, many Christians have used Oswald Chambers *My Utmost for His Highest* as a daily devotional reading. The devotional book was compiled by his wife from lectures. In this timeless classic, the reading for January 1 contains the following:

My Utmost for His Highest—my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed. We will all feel very much ashamed if we do not yield to Jesus the areas of our lives He has asked us to yield to Him. It's as if Paul were saying, "My determined purpose is to be my utmost for His Highest—my best for His glory." I am determined to be absolutely and entirely for Him and Him alone.

I don't know if you are into making resolutions or have made them yet, but here sounds like a great resolution for 2014—

I will make the most of 2014 by determining to be absolutely and entirely for Him and Him alone.