

Discovering Our Purpose

A Distinctive Approach to life
(Eph. 5:15-21)

Intro: As we have looked together at Ephesians we have seen that God had a clear vision of what He wanted the church to be. As Christian we must discover and be driven by this purpose (and not our own agenda). God wants us to be a people distinct from the world--“walk not as the Gentiles...”. Instead he wants us to be people of honesty, conviction, industry, love, purity. Now as Paul wraps up this section he shows us that God’s people have a distinct approach to life itself. They hold a different set of priorities and values for day to day life.

Paul in Ephesians 5 tells us not how to merely spend time or life but to invest it. Listen to him in 5:15-21.

Our approach to life (the nature of our walk)

Walk circumspectly or cautiously

Our word comes from Latin words meaning "round" and "looking"; hence looking around with caution.

The Greek word conveys more the idea either of strictness or precision. It might convey the idea that we are really careful about what we do, paying attention to details.

Walk not as unwise men but as wise

In Biblical terminology the “fool” is not a person without intellect. In fact, one can be smart as all get out and still be a fool. A fool is someone who does not acknowledge God and live by His will.

What an indictment of the follow-the-crowd philosophy. We give the world direction, not the world us!

Because we are a demonstration of God's wisdom to rulers and authorities in heavenly places (3:10) and in order to convert others (Col. 4:6). God’s ultimate glory comes when we enable men to honor Him by the lives we lead. This is the ultimate business of the church of Christ.

Making the most of your time

Two words for time: chronos (the passing moments, the space of time); kairos (fit time, God-given opportunity)

redeem translates a word meaning, "buying from"

The sense is: Invest time, not merely spend it. We have a goal we are working toward. We want to glorify God and for others to do so. We must seize every opportunity.

Because the days are evil.

Paul may have in mind because the influences of evil are already great, and they are!

He may also be suggesting that as evil progresses the end of all things also hastens. Surely there is a point at which God will

no longer strive with man. As this day approaches, time becomes more precious to us.

Stop for an evaluation of your approach to life. Do you see life this way?

Three priorities for a spiritually productive life

Do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is!

If we are going to spend our lives doing what God has said, we need the understanding that comes from his word! That's why we appeal to people to attend Bible classes, that's why we have a local church, that why's you need to read your Bible every day.

We cannot emphasize enough the need to be well-taught in the Scriptures. To rely on the wisdom and advice of men and the neglect of the Scriptures is to court disaster for us and for our neighbors and friends.

But now Paul goes a step forward. Is it just knowledge that matters?

Do not get drunk with wine but be filled with the Spirit.

Do not get drunk is always an appropriate exhortation because drunkenness itself is sinful. But drunkenness is also a poor investment of time. It brings none of things it promises but rather results in "dissipation", a wasteful using up of life! Cf. Lk. 15: wasted your substance in riotous living".

But here Paul is giving the exhortation to emphasize the contrasting idea--Be filled with the Spirit. What is being contrasted is the idea of what controls us! Cf. the drunkard--"he was found driving under the influence of alcohol". Did you ever think about the word "influence". It means literally "a flowing in". The Christian is under the "influence" of the Spirit. He is being filled by Him! Clearly this is a figure of speech, a metaphor of control. Paul did not mean to imply that the Holy Spirit was some kind of holy energy or liquid God pours into people. To be filled with a person is to be under the influence of their teaching and example. Cf. the parallel statement in Col. 3:16 How important to add this idea to the one before. It is not just what you know that matters. It is what has influence in your life! Are you under the control of the Spirit of God? Does He have control of your will?

Paul gives two participles to help us understand what being filled with the Spirit results in:

Speaking to one another. We will teach the word of God in song. Cf. the drunkards who under the influence of wine sung their drinking songs with the Christian who sings "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs".

The psalm is a song in the character of those in the O.T. speaking of praise to God and personal deliverance; hymns (songs of praise to God); spiritual songs (any remaining song emphasizing a spiritual theme).

Singing (the meaning of which is self-evident)

Making melody (the Greek word originally meant "pluck or twang"; by the first century meant "to praise" as one would do in singing psalms.

"With the heart" not just with the mouth (inwardly as well as outwardly).

"To God" shows there is the dual element of teaching and praise!

Always giving thanks

Expressing thanks and praise to God. For all things. In the name of Christ to the Father.

One place we do this is in the assembly, but isn't it clear in this context that Paul is not in the midst of a discourse about public worship but about the Christian lifestyle? Wherever a Christian is, he is to be "filled with Spirit" and the Spirit leads him to sing and praise with his heart to God. It is the only authorized form of musical worship one may give to God!

Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

The third use of our investment time is in the service of others. The Holy Spirit cannot use us until we are willing to subject ourselves not only to Him but also to others. Here is an ironical principle of investment in the spiritual realm. In earthly investment the objective is the get. In the spiritual realm the objective is to give. Being subject to one another means treating each other with the respect and consideration that says, "What does that person need from me?" and then giving that service.

Paul will make the application to some special areas where submission exists by virtue of the principle of authority itself. But this application is for us all! There are times when all of us regardless of our position of authority must look to the business of serving others.

Elders are instructed not to lord it over God's heritage but be examples to the flock.

Parents surely subject their wishes to that of their children.

Employers to their employees.

There is a sense in which all of us need to have the humility to serve for the well-being of others. We do so out of our respect for Christ, who gave himself up for all of us. He gave up the highest authority to serve His creatures. It is the highest expression of love to give unconditionally to others because of what the Savior has done for us!

It is not what we keep that will count in eternity but what we will have given. "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose!" We must let this concept we deeply ingrained in our thinking. God's people are servants of others.

Conclusion: So take a look at your approach and mission for life. How well are you doing? Do you purpose to live cautiously and wisely? Are you growing in your knowledge of God's will with understanding? Are you Spirit filled,

speaking and giving thanks? Are you submitting to those around you for their good? If so, then you live in keeping with the purposes of God. You are investing your life for eternal rewards that will never be taken away.