

## How Do Christians Walk Circumspectly In These Evil Days?

Text: Eph 5:15-21

Suggested Hymns:

530, 361, 268, 288, 579

1) They redeem the time

2) They are guided by the will of God

3) They are sober

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Ephesians 5:15–21, <sup>15</sup> *See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,* <sup>16</sup> *redeeming the time, because the days are evil.* <sup>17</sup> *Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*

<sup>18</sup> *And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,* <sup>19</sup> *speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,* <sup>20</sup> *giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,* <sup>21</sup> *submitting to one another in the fear of God.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

*“The days are evil,”* says St. Paul in our text. This was true especially of the days in which the Apostles and the early Christians lived. Those were evil days for the Christians because nowhere they went were they sure of their lives. They were hunted down like wild beasts, banished from their homes, beaten, scourged, or put to death in the most cruel manner because they would not worship the heathen gods.

And before these persecutions came, when the Christians were still permitted to hold their religious services without interference on the part of the Jews and of the Gentiles, and when Christianity spread from town to town, from province to province, from Asia to Europe and to Africa, the days were still evil for the Christians.

They were held in ridicule and contempt. They were beset with temptations in the heathen world, and many of those who had embraced the Christian faith dropped off again to the world and its evil lusts.

Read the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles in the New Testament! They are an almost uninterrupted narrative of persecutions and ill-treatments which the Apostles and the early Christians had to suffer from the Gentiles and the Jews in those evil days.

And are not the days evil in which we are living now? True, we are not harassed and persecuted, as the early Christians were. We can worship God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and in this country of religious freedom we even enjoy the protection of the state, so that no one can disturb our religious gatherings without impunity.

But must we not also say that the days are evil when we see how godlessness and crime are making headway, how the rich oppress the poor, and compel them to strike for higher wages, and how by the selfishness and greed of a few who have pocketed millions has brought upon a whole community calamity and suffering?

Must we not say that the days are evil when we see how worldly-mindedness is seizing upon the Christians, how few there are who regularly attend the house of God to hear the preaching of the Word, how many soon lose their interest in divine things, and finally drop off to the world?

<sup>15</sup> *See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,*” says the Apostle. Circumspectly, that is, looking around us, observing, and looking out for our own eternal welfare. This is how Christians should walk in this world.

With the help of God’s Holy Spirit let us therefore consider the question: *How Do Christians Walk Circumspectly In These Evil Days?* May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. Christians Redeem The Time**

Our text begins, <sup>15</sup> *See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,* <sup>16</sup> *redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

Christians walk circumspectly if, in the first place, they redeem the time. Now what does that mean “*redeeming the time*”? Time is here represented as a valuable article which may be redeemed, purchased, or bought.

As a merchant who is out buying goods will not pass by an article which is of great value to him, but redeem it, purchase, and buy it, likewise we should redeem, purchase, and buy for ourselves, make good use of, the time which God has allotted to us on this earth. For time is valuable.

Time is the gift of God. Can you prolong your days? Are not your days and your years in the hands of God who has determined in His wise counsel how long you are to live? We read in Psalm 31:15, <sup>15</sup> *My times are in Your hand.*

Redeem the time, then, for you do not know how soon your time may be ended. Life is short. Scripture says in Psalm 90:10, <sup>10</sup> *The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.*

Time is so valuable because, if wisely used, it will bring the greatest good to ourselves and to others. God has given you your days, my friends, for a certain purpose, and that purpose is not that you should simply live, and make the best of life, and fill out your station and position among the inhabitants of this earth.

God has given you your days that you should prepare and make yourself fit for an eternal union with Him, for a blessed life in the hereafter. God has given you your days that you should make the best use of your time for your own eternal welfare, that you should live in daily repentance of your sin, and daily flee in a true faith to your merciful Saviour Jesus who bled and died on the cross for your transgressions, that you would pray to Him daily, and be diligent to hear the Word of God which can save your immortal soul.

Does the person walk circumspectly and does he act wisely, who puts off his conversion from day to day and from year to year, who says: *I will wait until I am older and settled down; when I am married, or when I am better situated, or when this or that impediment is out of the way, then I shall turn, and be different, and go to church, and give thought to the hereafter?*

Is not the person an outright fool who wastes his time in the pursuits of this life and is suddenly cut off from the living before he has fixed his account with

God? And note that time wisely spent will not only bring the greatest benefit to ourselves, but also to others.

God has given your days, my friends, that you should also do good to others. You should not let an opportunity pass by for doing good. The Apostle says, *as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.*<sup>1</sup>

If you are the father of a family, you should work and make a living for those who are dependent on you; for God says in 1 Timothy 5:8, *<sup>8</sup> But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*

If you are a mother, you should attend to your household affairs and your children. If you are a child, you should make use of your time as directed by your parents. We all must redeem the time for the benefit of others, as well as for ourselves, if we want to walk circumspectly in these evil days.

## **2. In All Things Christians Are Guided By The Will Of God**

We must in all things be guided by the will of God. This is the second part of our meditation. The Apostle says, *<sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*

Often we find ourselves in a position where we are at a loss what to do. Temptations often come in disguise, so that we do not take them for temptations at first sight, and feel inclined to do what we should not do.

But if we are to walk circumspectly, as wise, we must not go by the dictates of human reason, or follow the voice of our own heart, but search for the will of God in the matter before us.

At cross-roads there are usually sign-posts put up to indicate where the different roads lead to, so that travellers will not go in the wrong direction. By looking carefully at these sign-posts, travellers can save themselves much trouble and delay. Likewise it is important for every traveller to eternity, to know the road that he is taking, whether it is the narrow or the broad. There are sign-posts put up by God by which we may ascertain this, and put ourselves right if we have to our own grief taken the wrong road.

The will of God, or what God desires of us, is to be found in the Bible, which is the divine revelation, God's infallible Word. <sup>9</sup> *How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word* says the Bible,<sup>2</sup> and *Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.*<sup>3</sup>

And we are at home in the Bible if we read the Bible diligently. If we search the Scriptures diligently, we shall never be at a loss what to do when we are being beset with temptations.

The Word of God will always reveal to us what the will of God is, and what the Lord requires, and demands of us in the case which we have before us. We are to do the will of God even if we should thereby incur the hatred of the world, or meet with earthly losses.

This is the great difference between the faithful Christians and the unbelieving children of this world, that the faithful Christian will be guided by the will of God in all his transactions and say:<sup>4</sup>

Where'er I go, whate'er my task,  
The counsel of my God I ask,  
Who ruleth all aright;  
Unless He guide both thought and deed,  
The wisest plans can ne'er succeed,  
And vain must be man's might.

On the other hand, the worldling simply does as he pleases, and does not care for the will of God, but laughs and pokes fun at those who are so scrupulous and careful lest they might do wrong. Christians walk circumspectly in these evil days if in all things they are guided by the will of God.

### 3. At All Times Christians Are Sober.

Christians walk in soberness. This is the third part of our meditation. The Apostle says, <sup>18</sup> *And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation.* Dissipation means too much indulgence in sensual or foolish pleasures; intemperance. In other words *do not be drunk with wine* because it leads to all kinds of bad things.

Christians are not forbidden to drink wine, or to make a rational use of any other intoxicating beverage. Did not Christ institute the Holy Supper in which

He used wine and said, ***“Drink from it, all of you.”***<sup>5</sup> Did He not turn water into wine at the marriage in Cana?

And did not St. Paul advise Timothy to drink wine<sup>6</sup> for his stomach’s sake and also write to him that ***every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving?***<sup>7</sup>

We cannot, therefore, endorse the people who condemn the use of wine and intoxicating drinks as a sinful practice. Not the use of wine altogether, is forbidden in the Bible, but drunkenness is forbidden. In our text the Apostle does not say: “Drink no wine,” but he says: ***do not be drunk with wine.***

Christians should walk wisely and circumspectly in this respect that they do not go to excess in drinking, that they do not become slaves of drinking, and that drinking does not become a habit with them which they cannot resist. For drunkenness is today, and always has been, a curse of mankind. What misery is caused in the world by drunkenness!

How many a family has been ruined and brought into poverty and starvation on account of drink! How many murders may be traced to excessive drinking, and what an immense percentage of drunkards we find in the penitentiaries and insane asylums!

Surely, the wisest thing for a Christian to do is to exercise the utmost carefulness as to intoxicating drinks, and to refrain from drinking altogether if he finds that it harms him. For the Word of God condemns the drunkard without mercy and in unequivocal terms when it says that drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God.<sup>8</sup>

If Christians are to walk circumspectly, they must at all times be sober, and true Christian soberness demands more than to abstain from excessive drinking.

The Apostle says, ***but be filled with the Spirit,***<sup>19</sup> ***speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,***<sup>20</sup> ***giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,***<sup>21</sup> ***submitting to one another in the fear of God.***

Instead of being filled with wine or other intoxicating drinks, Christians should be filled with the Spirit, with the Spirit of God. And as wine, according to the 104th Psalm, makes glad the heart of man, so does the Spirit of God make

him joyful who is filled with the Holy Spirit, so that he will make melody to the Lord in his heart and praise his divine Maker in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

God does not demand of the Christian that he should hang his head and entertain dismal thoughts in his heart, but He wants to see His dear children joyful and happy, filled with the Holy Spirit, singing and praising their divine Maker.

Has anybody in this world more cause to be joyful and happy than the Christian who has a merciful Father in heaven, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who bled and died on the cross for our sins that we should obtain eternal life?

Has anybody in this world more cause to be joyful and happy than the Christian, whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, and to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity?<sup>9</sup>

Has anybody in this world more cause to be joyful and happy than the Christian who knows that God will always hear his prayers, and accept his thanksgiving and praise, and will finally receive him to Himself in heaven for Jesus' sake in whom he has believed?

May the Lord, then, grant us all His grace that we walk circumspectly in these evil days, so that we do not lose the faith, and are not damned with the unbelieving world.

Let us rather redeem the time, so that in all things we are guided by the will of God, and are sober at all times. Then we will not be disturbed by the evil which is so prevalent in our days, but remain true to our God and to His Church unto a blessed end. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Galatians 6:10

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 119:9

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 119:105

<sup>4</sup> Hymn 579

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 26:27

<sup>6</sup> 1 Timothy 5:23

<sup>7</sup> 1 Timothy 4:4

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<sup>8</sup> Galatians 5:21

<sup>9</sup> Psalm 32:2