

Be Careful
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Ephesians 5:15-21 (New International Version)

- It's coming up in just 19 days. The day that BOTH BARGAIN HUNTERS and RETAILERS live for. What is it? BLACK FRIDAY, the day after Thanksgiving.
- Why do they call it BLACK FRIDAY? Retailers have a shot at getting "in the black" for the year...swinging into the PROFIT column.
- Anybody ever get a really INCREDIBLE DEAL on Black Friday?
- What are some of your STRATEGIES/TACTICS for making the most of Black Friday?
- There are even websites that publish "leaked" sales circulars for Black Friday...retailers hit them with copyright "take down" orders to get the circulars off the sites.
- Other than the "deals" what has been in the news about Black Friday in recent years? Violence.

The shoppers who make the most of Black Friday realize it's a LIMITED TIME offer and they MUST BE SMART in taking advantage of it. They PLAN CAREFULLY to MAKE THE MOST of their OPPORTUNITY.

In this part of Ephesians chapter 5 the Apostle Paul challenges the church at Ephesus and US to be CAREFUL and WISE in living our lives to make the most of every OPPORTUNITY God has given us as BELIEVERS in Christ.

15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

- Verse 15: In the King James Version, how does Paul tell us to live? Circumspectly.
- Let's study that word a moment. Two Latin root words:
 - CIRCUM – What word does that remind you of? Circumference – Around
 - SPECT from SPECTACULUM – What word do you think of with SPECT? Spectacles = Glasses; Spectator = on looker.
 - Circumspect = "look around"...to pay attention to your surroundings...to be DILIGENT, CAREFUL.
- What can you tell me about Mr. Magoo?
- What happened to the people; animals; and things in Mr. Magoo's path?
- Mr. Magoo was so MYOPIC or "near sighted" that he was OBLIVIOUS to his surroundings and any DANGER or HAZARD.
- How many of us go through life as Christians as CARELESSLY as Mr. Magoo?
- Second part of verse 15: How does Paul say we should live? Wise not unwise.
- Verse 16: What is the WISE way to live? Making the most of every opportunity
- How does the KJV put that? Redeeming the time

- There are two Greek words for TIME
 - Chronos and Kairos
 - Chronos = The measurement of time...on our watch.
 - Kairos = Meaning the right or opportune moment (the supreme moment).
- We talk about TIME MANAGEMENT. We can't MANAGE Chronos...the passing of time. But we CAN CONTROL how we use the Kairos ... the OPPORTUNE MOMENTS in our lives.
- Back to our example of BLACK FRIDAY. Redeeming speaks to BUYING.
- What context do we usually have when we use the word REDEEMED? SALVATION. We have been BOUGHT WITH A PRICE.

KJV Commentary says...

Redeeming the time. Buy up the opportunity. The Greek present tense denotes keep on buying. There is a price to be paid or we will forgo the bargain. The price is self-denial and strenuous work. There is also opportunity, i.e., to serve the Lord, to witness for Christ, to be a channel of blessing, and to advance the cause of Christ. We must recognize the opportunity, appreciate it, and take hold of it for God's glory.

- TV Commercial for AT&T. The commercial begins with a man being introduced in the future as the 57th president of the United States as his parents watch and smile. It then rewinds to a much earlier point in his life where the man's parents first met, when his father changed a train ticket on his smartphone. It ends with the line "Any second could be the second."
- How many times do we miss an OPPORTUNE TIME because we're not LOOKING AROUND for it? Living CIRCUMSPECTLY /CAREFULLY/WISELY?
- Why does Paul say we are to live the Christian life CAREFULLY and WISELY?
- Because the "days are evil".
- What does that mean?

Warren Wiersbe

Our English word opportunity comes from the Latin and means "toward the port." It suggests a ship taking advantage of the wind and tide to arrive safely in the harbor. The brevity of life is a strong argument for making the best use of the opportunities God gives us.

- We need to BE CAREFUL to make the most of every opportunity
- We also need to BE AWARE of God's will

17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

- One of the great questions Christians ponder is: How do I UNDERSTAND WHAT THE LORD'S WILL IS FOR MY LIFE?
- Well, sometimes DISCERNING His will is hard.

- Sometimes, it's pretty straightforward.

Chuck Swindoll wrote a great book: *The Mystery of God's Will*. He writes:
"God's Word clearly declares that certain things are not the will of God and never will be the will of God in the Christian life. It also clearly teaches that certain things ARE the will of God for the believer. We don't have to pray to "find leading" on this. We only have to dig through the Scriptures to mine it for ourselves. Once unearthed, these truths sparkle like the richest ore or brightest gemstone."

- What is God's will for me? It's IN THE BOOK!

1 Thessalonians 5:18

18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1 Peter 2:15

15 For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people.

1 Thessalonians 4:3

3 It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality;

2 Peter 3:9

9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

- Some things are plainly God's GENERAL WILL for ALL believers.
- There are also questions NOT IN SCRIPTURE of his PARTICULAR WILL for us: Who should I marry? What job should I take? Etc.

Here's a thought: If we're not willing to follow God's GENERAL WILL as revealed plainly in scripture; how can we expect to discern his guidance on his PARTICULAR will for our circumstances?

Back to Chuck Swindoll's book on *The Mystery of God's Will*. He gives...

FIVE GUIDELINES FOR READING GOD'S LIPS (A, B, C, D, E)

A – An accepting frame of mind – OPEN, TEACHABLE, SENSITIVE, AVAILABLE

B – Biblical investigation – God's will is NEVER CONTRARY to God's Word

C – The Clarification and conviction from the Holy Spirit – More about that in a minute

D – Determine if peace is occurring – Is there peace or an absence of peace?

E – Expect struggles and surprises as you experience the results – Even when it IS God's will...there will still be struggles and surprises.

- The way we discern the PARTICULAR WILL of God is to BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Do not get drunk on wine.
- It's plain in the Bible that we are not to be "drunk" on wine.
- But before you think we're about to have a TEMPERANCE LECTURE...
- Paul is using this example to make a COMPARISON: BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT rather than FILLED WITH SPIRITS!
- Remember Acts chapter 2? Peter: These men are not drunk...it's 9 a.m.!
- How can you tell is someone is DRUNK ON WINE?
- Being DRUNK leads to CONFUSION; RECKLESSNESS; BAD JUDGMENT.
- Before the BREATHALIZER...FIELD SOBRIETY tests
- What kind of things do they use in FIELD SOBRIETY TESTS?
- There are some TELLTALE SIGNS if someone is UNDER THE INFLUENCE of alcohol or drugs.
- If we're a Christian, there ought to be some TELLTALE SIGNS of LIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE of the Holy Spirit.
- Paul gives us some in verse 19 and 20. What are they?
 - Worship
 - Giving thanks. When? ALWAYS. (Which can be HARD! Rom. 8:28)
 - Theological Sidebar: Notice all three persons of the Trinity?
 - From the Spirit
 - Thanks to God the Father
 - In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ
- Question: In addition to these things, what are some other things that would be EVIDENCE that we are LUI – LIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE of the Holy Spirit?
- Galatians 5:22-23 The Fruit of the Spirit
 - Love; Joy; Peace; Patience; Kindness; Goodness; Faithfulness; Gentleness; Self-Control

John MacArthur

Being filled with the spirit is living in the conscious presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, letting his mind, through the word, dominate everything that is thought and done. Being filled with the spirit is the same as walking in the spirit. Christ exemplified this way of life. (Luke 4:1)

If someone accused me of being FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT, would there be enough EVIDENCE to convict?

- Being SPIRIT FILLED helps us to Know God's Will as we discussed in verse 17

In his book *the Wonderful Spirit Filled Life*, Charles Stanley talks about being in the Bahamas on a little island called Inagua. There's a small commercial port on the island where salt ships dock to load huge quantities of salt for export. He talks about noticing three large wooden posts. These posts or towers, were approximately 50 feet high with lights on top of them. He says he assumed there were some sort of channel markers. But, since they were on land and not in the channel he couldn't figure out exactly how they work so he asked.

What he found was that in this harbor most of the water was shallow. There is just one narrow channel that leads straight into the protected harbor. The three posts guide the ships through the channel and ensure they don't veer to the left or the right. As the captain makes his way into the harbor he aligns the three posts so it looks from his perspective as if there is only one post. In this way he knows he is in the channel.

The ships don't "veer right or left"...reminds me of a verse:

Isaiah 30:21 (New International Version)

21 Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

Dr. Stanley goes on to say:

"For too many believers the Christian life boils down to simply doing the best they can. If the Christian life is simply a matter of doing our best, there was no need for God to send the Holy Spirit to help us."

If we're going to MAKE THE MOST of every opportunity as a Christian...If we're going to KNOW GOD'S WILL for our lives...We need the Holy Spirit as our guide and comforter.

- Paul has one more point for us in how to live the Christian life.

21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

- "King of the hill" "Cry Uncle" "Who blinks first?" What are those?
- What is the OBJECT of those childhood games? Never SUBMIT to the other.
- That word "submit" in verse 21 is the Greek word...HUPOTASSO

hupotasso (ὑποτάσσω, 5293), primarily a military term, "to rank under" (hupo, "under," tasso, "to arrange"), denotes (a) "to put in subjection, to subject,"

Vine, W. E., Unger, M. F., & White, W. (1996). *Vine's complete expository dictionary of Old and New Testament words* (2:606). Nashville: T. Nelson.

- Some scholars argue that this is a transition to the scripture to follow about husbands and wives in marriage...that's next week!

- Others say it's related to this previous section on living WISELY and CAREFULLY

Matthew Henry writes in his commentary:

There is a mutual submission that Christians owe one to another, condescending to bear one another's burdens: not advancing themselves above others, nor domineering over one another and giving laws to one another. Paul was an example of this truly Christian temper, for he became all things to all men. We must be of a yielding and of a submissive spirit,... Where there is this mutual condescension and submission, the duties of all relations will be the better performed.

Henry, M. (1996, c1991). Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible : Complete and unabridged in one volume (Eph 5:21). Peabody: Hendrickson.

- Get that? When there is MUTUAL submission to each other as believers “all relations will be better performed.”
- Translation: When we're willing to subordinate our rights to others, life in the Christian family will be SWEET and we'll ACCOMPLISH SO MUCH MORE for Christ.

Romans 12:10

10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

Galatians 5:13

13 You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh[a]; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

Philippians 2:3-4

3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

1 Peter 5:5

5 In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because,

“God opposes the proud
but shows favor to the humble.”[a]

Ray Stedman writes:

Paul changes the whole pattern for Christians by introducing two radical factors: First, the Christian must never forget that in every relationship of life, another person is present: It is not merely a problem of what I want versus what you want. In every relationship, the apostle reminds us, a third Person is present—the Lord Jesus Christ.

That brings us to the second matter. When I am at odds with another person, to see that Christ is there too is to make me aware immediately of what He has taught me. It is only when I forget myself and devote myself to another's fulfillment that I will find my own heart running over with grace and satisfaction. This is one of the fundamental mysteries of life, and it is confirmed to us every day. Those who try desperately to satisfy themselves are the ones who end up hollow inside.

How many Christian friendships have been ripped apart and churches have been split because people were playing a childish game of “Uncle” or “who blinks first?” instead of have HUMILITY towards one another?

So, What's The Takeaway?

- The DAYS ARE EVIL and our OPPORTUNITIES are precious and FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY...we need to LIVE CAREFULLY and WISELY
- We need to SEEK GOD'S WILL as revealed in His Word
- We need to SEEK GOD'S PARTICULAR WILL through His Spirit
- We need to BE RADICAL ENOUGH to seek give preference to OTHER BELIEVERS desires and needs over ours...and WATCH how God will use that.