

No Time To Waste

Ephesians 5:15-21- Joel Pickett

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Introduction

In 1904, William Borden graduated high school at the age of 16 in Chicago. He was an heir to the Borden family fortune. **Before Borden moved** onto an Ivy League education at Yale university, his parents sent him on a trip around the world as a graduation present.

Earlier in his life, William came to Christ through D.L. Moody's ministry. As Borden traveled through Asia, the Middle East, and Europe he felt a growing burden for the world's hurting people. **While abroad**, Borden wrote a letter to his parents informing them that he wanted to be a missionary for the remainder of his life. It was at this time that in the back of his Bible he wrote, **"No Reserves."**

One of his friends heard and said he would "be throwing his life away as a missionary."

Borden returned home and graduated from Yale university and then graduated from Princeton theological seminary as well. He turned down very high paying job offers, and his father told him he would never let him work in the company again. Borden wrote two other words in the back of his bible, **"No Retreat."**

After his education, at 25 years old, he boarded a ship to serve as a missionary in China. On the way, he stopped in Egypt to work with Muslims. While there, he contracted cerebral meningitis and within a month Borden was dead. After his death, his parents received his bible and they discovered two more words that were written shortly before his death in Egypt, **"No Regrets."**

NO RESERVES / NO RETREAT / NO REGRETS

When the story broke back home in the states, God used this tragedy for His glory. Borden's story inspired thousands of young people to give their lives to reach the nations of the world.

We have no time to waste, no time to lose. We are to redeem the time that God has given to each of us. ***Whatever time we have we are to live it without reserves, without retreat, and without regrets.***

Context

The portion of Scripture that we come to today is found in the middle portion of Ephesians chapter 5. This chapter opens up with Paul exhorting his readers to be imitators of God by walking in love and walking in light. How as believers we are to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but we are to expose them.

Directly following our passage Paul gets into his famous portion on the distinct roles within marriage and how marriage is ultimately a picture of Christ and the church.

But sandwiched in between is a rich passage full of deep and practical truth for us to live by.

Our Objective (verses 16a)

¹⁶ *redeeming the time,*

Redeeming: to utilize or efficiently use something, to make good use of something

There is an implication that this is to be done with intensity and urgency.

Time: “*karios*” – a fixed and definite period, a time, season, sometimes even translated as opportunity

Paul intentionally does not use the Greek word “*chronos*” which has to do with the flow of time, the following of one event upon another. *Where we get our word chronology.*

And we know the time that we have on this earth is fixed. It is only for a season and there is a definite end to it. Our window of opportunity is not forever. Which is why we must REDEEM it, why we must utilize every moment we are given.

Ephesians 5:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ making the most of your time, because the days are evil.

Ephesians 5:16 (NLT)

¹⁶ Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days.

It's almost like Paul is referring to time as a purchasing power or a currency. In other contexts, this same word is used twice in the book of Galatians referring to Christ redeeming us from the curse of the law. In that context “redeeming” means to buy back.

Another way to say it is that we are to “*to buy up every opportunity.*”

Many of us are very good at making sure we don't let a good deal pass by on days like black Friday or cyber-Monday. We are on those lightning deals so fast because the sale is so good, we can't afford not to buy it.

This is the idea of this phrase, that with such intensity and urgency we are to buy up every moment that we are given.

I love the question and response of someone who once asked their friend who was a lifelong reader, “*How do you get time for reading?*” **He replied,** “*I don't get time for it; I take time.*”

*You won't get time, you **MUST** take it.*

Now this phrase could be stolen and used in some 10 steps to a living your best life now article or blog but within the context of Scripture we know that the best use of the time we have is not to live for ourselves but to live every moment for the glory of Jesus Christ.

There is almost nothing more valuable than time. All the money in the world is not enough to buy more of it. It is something that we all have but we aren't guaranteed how much of it we do have. It is something that can be easily wasted and easily taken for granted.

David speaks of the time that man has here on this earth in this way...

Psalm 39:4-6

⁴ “Lord, make me to know my end, And what *is* the measure of my days, *That* I may know how frail I *am*. ⁵ Indeed, You have made my days *as* handbreadths, And my age *is* as nothing before You; Certainly every man at his best state *is* but vapor. *Selah* ⁶ Surely every man walks about like a shadow; Surely, they busy themselves in vain; He heaps up *riches*, And does not know who will gather them.

There is a certain measure or number of the days that we have in this life known only to God Himself until the day that we die. Though David knows the Lord won't reveal to him the time of that exact day he pleads with him to show him how **SHORT** his time is in the span of eternity.

David knows that even a long life is but a vapor which is here and then gone in a moment. And yet many people live as if they have an unlimited number of days here in this life and he says they busy themselves for nothing.

Moses spoke something similar in Psalm 90...

Psalm 90:12

¹² So teach *us* to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.

A heart of wisdom comes from recognizing that you aren't promised tomorrow or even guaranteed the rest of today!

You know there is something in you that can kick it into another gear when you know the time is running out. Like in a race, you can be absolutely exhausted thinking that you have given all you have to give and then when you get your eyes on the finish line and you feel the presence of others around you getting closer to it, your body is able to give you one last push that you didn't think you had.

We must always live with the finish line in sight because today just might be the day that we cross it.

Spiritual Leadership by J. Oswald Sanders (chapter 12)

Each moment of the day is a gift from God that deserves care, for by any measure, our time is short and the work is great.

Jesus serves as the greatest example of what it looks like to redeem the time during His earthy life. He was always concerned with the divine timing of His life. There were many times where Jesus had to tell people that His hour had not yet come. He was always aware, always conscious of the time He had.

In John 11, where Lazarus becomes sick and dies, we find the disciples questioning His timing and Jesus responds in this way...

John 11:9-10

⁹ Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. ¹⁰ But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."

This rhetorical question that Jesus asks shows both the **shortness** but also the **sufficiency** of the time that each day holds. It was daytime but night was coming so they better get going and redeem the time they have.

Our objective is clear. *We are to make the most of every moment for Jesus.*

Our Motivator (verse 16b)

"because the days are evil."

Days: current period of time we are living in

Evil: wicked and morally corrupt

Another way to put it is that *"the current time when we live is filled with evil."*

The clear teaching from Scripture is that before things are going to get better, they are going to get worse. Before God makes things right, things are going to get more and more wrong.

Galatians 1:4

⁴ who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,

Our current age is classified as evil, and you don't have to look very far to have this confirmed.

And like in the days of Noah, this will not last forever. Judgment is coming and so time is of the essence. *We must make the most of our time because there isn't much time left.*

The writing is on the wall of the prophetic timeline that the Bible lays out for us.

We can have a tendency to see the evil of our world and become discouraged by it, but it should be the opposite! We should see the evil and not bow out of the race but seek to overcome evil with good!

Romans 12:21

²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

And so rather than being in despair about our current age, it should be to us a motivator to make the most of every moment for the sake of Jesus Christ.

John 9:4-5

⁴ I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; *the night is coming when no one can work.* ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

As dark as it might seem, it is not yet night. The day is at hand, and we are to work the works of Him who sent us out into the world to be the light of the world!

Paul used similar language in when talking about time...

Romans 13:11-14

¹¹ And *do* this, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation *is* nearer than when we *first* believed. ¹² The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts.

Our objective is clear. *We are to make the most of every moment for Jesus.*

Our motivator is compelling. *We live in evil days that will not last forever.*

6 Practices to Accomplish This Objective or Goal

But how do we actually accomplish this? What are the practical steps we can take to ensure that we are fulfilling the command to make the best use of the time that we have?

*I believe we can find the answer to those very questions in the surrounding verses of **Ephesians 5.***

1. Live with Intentionality (verse 15)

¹⁵ *See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,*

Circumspectly: carefully, mindfully, intentional, deliberate, with accuracy and exactness

The Greek word carries the idea of precision.

This would be how one would walk a tightrope across Niagara Falls. This is how someone would perform an open heart or brain surgery, or at least you would hope so. This is how a formula 1 driver would race. And this is how the Christian is to live every day.

We find this same Greek word used twice in Acts 18 when we are introduced to Apollos.

Acts 18:25-26

²⁵ This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶ So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

To live circumspectly is not live obliviously and carelessly. If you ever want to experience the opposite of circumspectly go to Costco on a Saturday, you can experience the lack thereof either in the parking lot or as people attempt to push their carts around the store.

Christians are not to be careless but careful. Not just when we shop at Costco but with how we live our life. Our days and weeks should be calculated and well thought out.

Our lives should not be “go with the flow” or “go wherever the wind takes us”. Spontaneity has its place, but we must be the few who pursue the narrow way which is difficult but leads to life.

Matthew 7:13-14

¹³ “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. ¹⁴ Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

This is not only in regard to our salvation and Jesus being the only way but the journey itself is to be narrow. It is compressed and we must watch where we go. We have been given very specific instructions in the Word of God and we must do all we can to follow them. This will not happen automatically. You don't wander onto the narrow road; it takes intentionality to not turn to the left or the right.

Remember when you were a kid during the summers and the days just melted all together?
Wake up whenever, do whatever, go wherever. You were just along for the ride.

Jesus walked circumspectly. He lived with intentionality in regard to the location, the activity, and the timing what he did. He knew He had a purpose, and nothing would stand in His way of fulfilling that purpose.

Mark 1:38

³⁸ But He said to them, “Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.”

“not as fools but as wise,”

To live your life without intentionality is a foolish thing to do. If tonight, you feel like you are floating through life with no real purpose or aim. It's time to come to Him who is wisdom and begin living with purpose. His purpose.

Or maybe tonight you are living with intentionality but for the wrong purpose. You have a goal, but it has to do with you and not with Him. It's time to repent and do the first works.

Jesus told the parable of a certain rich man who had stored up for himself for years to come and was looking to enjoy all that he had and yet Jesus refers to that man as a fool...

Luke 12:20

²⁰ But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'

2. Seek the Will of God (verse 17)

"Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

Unwise: foolish, ignorant, mindless

This is that same word that Jesus used of that rich man. The NLT says, *"don't act thoughtlessly."*

Understand: to know and comprehend the nature of something

Specifically, here the will of the Lord, or what the Lord wants, the Lord's desires.

1st, this tells us that God's will is something that can be understood. It can be grasped.

Amplified Bible

¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish *and* thoughtless, but understand *and* firmly grasp what the will of the Lord is.

2nd, we know that understanding God's will comes from knowing God's word.

There are a handful of verses that say something along the lines of, "this is the will of God for you." Now those are very nice to come across but even more than that when you start to really consume God's word you begin to know Him and so you begin to know what He wants over time. You are able to take the word of God and practically apply it to the situations of your life.

Notice it doesn't just say *"know"* God's will but rather *"understand"* God's will. This is the idea of recognizing how to apply that knowledge of His will to your personal life.

Romans 12:2

² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Step 1 – Know His Word (you will know His general will)

Step 2 – Do His Word (you will then be living in His general will)

Result – You Will Understand His Will (specifically for your life)

He has a tailor made will for each of our lives.

Psalm 139:16

¹⁶ Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When *as yet there were* none of them.

He not only knows every day of our life, but He has His specific plan for them.

Knowing His will starts with the Word but it doesn't end there.

James 4:13-15

¹³ Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; ¹⁴ whereas you do not know what *will happen* tomorrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. ¹⁵ Instead you *ought* to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."

This type of sentence ought to find itself in our speech and in our thinking!

*How exciting that the understanding of what God desires for our life is available to us! We don't have to guess what He wants! We can not only know His will but **UNDERSTAND** how it looks in our life, but we must seek Him out.*

3. Be Spirit Filled (verse 18)

“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.”

DO NOT = be drunk with wine

WHY? Well number one because God says that drunkenness is a sin and those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But sin is not something God arbitrarily makes up. His commandments are given for our benefit and not our detriment. Paul here gives the reason and rationale. It is because of what drunkenness leads to which he describes as dissipation. This is recklessness and wasteful living. Also referred to as debauchery. *(this clearly goes against redeeming the time)*

TO DO = be filled with the Spirit

To be filled with the Spirit is to willingly come under the power and influence of the Spirit of God. *Not to be drunk in the Spirit as some weirdos try and say. Alcohol is a depressant. It disrupts the neurotransmitters in your brain affecting feelings, thoughts, and behavior.*

Conversely, when a person is filled with Holy Spirit of God they are stimulated by God to the things of the Spirit. It is the Spirit who renews our mind giving us clear thought, stable emotions, and control over ourselves.

To be filled with the Holy Spirit is not a one-time thing. The first occurrence of this filling is on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, 50 days after Jesus' resurrection. But then we find numerous occasions in the book of Acts where those same people and others are filled with the Holy Spirit.

The grammar tells us three things about this verb “be filled”:

Present perfect tense: continual, not a one-time event *(which tells us this is separate from salvation)*

Imperative: it is not a suggestion but a command

Passive command: can't do it yourself, can't be manufactured by us, only received.

To be filled by the Spirit is to live in the constant awareness of God's presence in your life. It is to choose to be led by Him. Handing Him the reins. Putting Him in the driver's seat. This is something we must consciously do every day.

The picture here is not that of volume. *(one can't be more filled with the Spirit than someone else)*

Where if you had a glass and you poured water into that glass, and it filled it. **RATHER** it is the picture of a boat that raises its sails so that the wind that is always blowing is able to FILL the sails.

Are your sails up? Are we daily filled with the Spirit? It doesn't happen by default!

It's not like breathing, you breathe by default because of how God made your body. God is always ready to fill us with His Spirit, but do we ask? Do we seek to be Spirit filled?

These next three really come of the one who is Spirit-filled. To be honest with you, trying to redeem the time by walking circumspectly and understanding the will of God is not something we will be able to accomplish in any substantial way without the Spirit's power.

Do you remember what Jesus told the disciples in John 15? *“apart from ME you can do nothing”*. However, in this direct context, notice the use of commas and not periods with verses 18-21. That is done by the translators because there is a continual flow of thought here. Verses 18-21 actually form one long sentence. It is out of the Spirit filled believer that these last three practices flow.

4. Prioritize Praise (verse 19)

“speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”

A supernatural result of being filled with the Spirit of God is having a desire to sing praises to the Lord. This can come through a variety of ways listed here by Paul. It can be through the singing of Scripture, or through biblical songs that have been passed down through generations or it can be something that we have even created to worship the Lord.

This is why we choose to dedicate such a sizable portion of our services to worshipping the Lord by singing. This concept of praise is found all over the Scriptures!

Now notice that Paul references outward singing but also an inward melody. Praising the Lord is not about how loud someone sings or how well someone sings but the heart behind it.

And I for one am very thankful for this reality! I am thankful that the Bible says that we can make a joyful noise to the Lord because sometimes that’s all that it sounds like I’m doing!

Colossians 3:16

¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

It’s interesting that so much great music came out of great revivals. Where the word of God was exalted came the worship of God through song. Reformation, Wesleyan Revival, Charles Simeon in Cambridge, music that came with Moody’s ministry or the early Calvary Chapel days.

Martin Luther

“I have no pleasure in any man who despises music. It is no invention of ours: it is a gift of God. I place it next to theology. Satan hates music: he knows how it drives the evil spirit out of us. Who has skill in the art of music is of good temperament and fitted for all things.”

Do we make praise a priority? Notice how this is not something that Paul references happening by ourselves but in the presence of one another.

Do we think that the singing portion of our service is worth our time? Do we think of worship as something we can miss but make sure we are here for the Bible study? Is the last song just a formality or do we see it as an opportunity to praise the One who died for us?

5. Express Gratitude (verse 20)

“giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”

Now I can say with certainty that this next practice is truly impossible without the power of the Holy Spirit. *And I don't care how positive a person is.*

Another practical way to redeem the time is to take the time to say “thank you”. AND to say thank you to whom the credit is due. This goes back to living intentionally and THINKING about what you have and where it comes from.

How often? = Always **For what?** = All Things → Always and All Things

1 Thessalonians 5:18

In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

It's not His will for us because He just loves to hear the “thank yous”, He knows that it is good for us to thank him! He knows the danger of un-thankfulness and bitterness.

This doesn't mean that you have to fake it and lie to yourself but that even in the difficulties choosing to have that sacrifice of praise by giving thanks to His name even if we don't feel it.

Hebrews 13:15

⁵ Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His name.

6. Put Yourself Under (verse 21)

“submitting to one another in the fear of God.”

The word **submitting** here literally means, “to be under in rank.” *It is a military word. It speaks of the way that an army is organized among levels of rank. You have generals and colonels and majors and captains and sergeants and privates. There are levels of rank, and you are obligated to respect those in higher rank.*

Yet we know how the kingdom of God works = those who are greatest are the servants of all *To submit yourself to someone is to humble yourself before them treating them better than yourself. It is an act of service. Jesus gave us this example when he was the highest in rank but submitted himself to his disciples in an act of service when He washed their feet.*

Romans 12:10

¹⁰ Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; *That is to submit yourself to the needs of others before yourself.*

1 Peter 5:5

⁵ Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to *your* elders. Yes, all of *you* be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.”

This is not because the person in front of us is worthy of it but because our Lord is worthy of it.

2 Corinthians 4:5

⁵ For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.

“In the fear of God”

It has nothing to do with if we respect another believer to do this or not, the other person is not our motive. It is out of our reverence and respect for the Lord as our Master.

CONCLUSION

Our objective is clear: redeem the time

Our motivator is compelling: because the days are evil

Our practices to accomplish this are convicting....

- to live with intentionality
- to seek the will of God
- to be Spirit filled
- to prioritize praise
- to express gratitude
- to put ourselves under one another

There is no time to waste.

Now tonight, if you have found yourself here in this sanctuary or maybe evening watching online and you know that you are not forgiven of your sin, that you have yet to receive the salvation of God through the finished work of Jesus and the blood that He spilt for you, I want to tell you that it is not too late.... yet....

You know life is full of “too-lates”, but don’t let salvation be one of them. Don’t put it off.

2 Corinthians 6:2

² For He says: “In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you.” Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.

There is no bigger waste of time than a life spent without Jesus. Without Jesus, everything you do in life will be for nothing. ***THERE IS NO TIME TO WASTE!***

Isaiah 55:6

⁶ Seek the Lord while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near.

Call upon the name of Jesus! Confess and turn from your sin and change your mind. Come to Christ, trust Him for salvation, trust Him to forgive your sin. Give Him your life that you might not lost it.

It will be the greatest decision you could ever make but if I were you, I wouldn’t wait a single second. Redeem the time and come to Jesus.

And so as we close today, let’s think about that day that we will arrive at eternities shore. Will we have made the most of the time that God gave us?

May we like William Borden, determine to live with...

NO RESERVES

NO RETREAT

NO REGRETS