

Redeeming the Time

Scripture: Ephesians 5

Code: BQ050812

making the most of your time, because the days are evil. (5:16)

By **the days are evil** Paul may have specifically had in mind the corrupt and debauched living that characterized the city of Ephesus. The Christians there were surrounded by paganism and infiltrated by heresy (see 4:14). Greediness, dishonesty, and immorality were a way of life in Ephesus, a way in which most of the believers had themselves once been involved and to which they were tempted to revert (4:19–32; 5:3–8).

Less than a hundred years after Paul wrote the Ephesian epistle Rome was persecuting Christians with growing intensity and cruelty. Believers were burned alive, thrown to wild beasts, and brutalized in countless other ways. For the Ephesian church the evil times were going to become more and more evil. Several decades after Paul wrote this epistle, the Lord commended the church at Ephesus for its good works, perseverance, and resistance to false teaching. “But I have this against you,” He continued, “that you have left your first love” (Rev. 2:2, 4). Because the church continued to languish in its devotion to the Lord, its lampstand was removed, as He had warned it would be if the believers there failed to “repent and do the deeds [they] did at first” (v. 5). Sometime during the second century the church in Ephesus disappeared, and there has never been a congregation there since. Because the church at Ephesus did not heed Paul’s advice and the Lord’s own specific warning, it ceased to exist. Instead of helping redeem the evil days in which it existed, the church fell prey to them.

If a sense of urgency was necessary in the days of the apostles, how much more is it necessary today, when we are so much nearer the Lord’s return and the end of opportunity (see Rom. 13:11–14)?

When pastor Kefa Sempangi, mentioned above, began ministering at his church in Uganda, growth was small but steady. Idi Amin had come into military and political power and the people expected conditions in their country to improve. But soon friends and neighbors, especially those who were Christians, began to disappear. One day pastor Sempangi visited the home of a family and found their young son standing just inside in the doorway with a glazed look on his face and his arms transfixed in the air. They discovered he had been in that state of rigid shock for days, after being

forced to witness the inexpressibly brutal murder and dismembering of everyone else in his family.

Faced with a totally unexpected and horrible danger, pastor Sempangi's church immediately realized that life as they had known it was at an end, and that the very existence of the Lord's people and the Lord's work in their land was threatened with extinction. They began continuous vigils of prayer, taking turns praying for long hours at a time. When they were not praying they were witnessing to their neighbors and friends, urging them to receive Christ and be saved. The church stands today and it has not died. In many ways it is stronger than ever. Its lampstand is still very much in place and shining brightly for the Lord, because His people made the most of the time, did not succumb to the evil days in which they lived, and would not leave their first love. It cost many of them dearly, but they proved again that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).