

## **Walking in Wisdom, Part 2**

Ephesians 5:16-17

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Take your Bible, would you please, and turn with me to the 5th Chapter of Ephesians. If you didn't bring one along there's one near you in the back of the pew and you can follow along, Ephesians 5. It's brought home to me more and more all the time that many people never finish what they begin. There are unfinished symphonies, there are unfinished paintings, there are sculptures that have never had the finishing touch because in each case the master died, there are relationships that never become all that they could be, there are ministries that never really come to fruition, there are dreams that always remain dreams, hopes that always remain hopes never become realities, and I guess, for a lot of people life can be an unfinished symphony. It can be a dream without a reality. It can be an ideal without a truth, but I don't think it has to be that way. I think there's one great reality that we need to focus on in the text that we want you to look at this morning.

Look at the 15th verse of Ephesians 5 and I'll read through verse 17. "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore, be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." And we'll stop there. Now you'll notice that there's a major statement made in three simple words in the middle of this text. It is redeeming the time.

If we are ever to turn our dreams into reality, if we are ever to turn our hopes into fact, if we are ever to finish our symphonies and paint our paintings and sculpt our sculpture it's going to be when we have redeemed time. I believe that God has bounded our lives with eternity and I believe that God has prescribed before we were ever born the time that we were to live, and only as we maximize that time can we maintain its potential for its fulfillment.

You'll notice that it says in verse 16, "Redeeming the time." It is interesting to me how many times the Holy Spirit, when he talks about this concept of time uses a definite article. The time, as if it is not some indefinite a time, or some time, or any time, or times, but the time. God has almost prescribed times in very accurate and sovereignty determined doses. So God has given us definite time. In I Peter 1:17, there is a very important statement. "If you call on the Father without respect of persons judges according every man's work," listen to the next line, "Pass the time of your sojourning in fear," the time of your sojourning. In other words, Peter is saying you have a definite set time bounded by God's sovereign choice. In Job 14:14 it says, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait until my change comes." Job had a sense of an appointed time for living. In Acts 20:24, Paul says, "Neither count I my life dear unto myself." In other words I'm not out for self-preservation. I have one thing in mind and that is to finish my course. It's most interesting in the Greek, the original language. It says, "I am to finish tan dramon emu, the course of me. In other word, it is the course that God has prescribed and so we find that God has given us a time boundary and within that time he has defined a course. And Paul says, "I want to finish the course and the ministry given to me," a specific time, a specific course, with a specific ministry.

In Hebrews 12:1 it says, "Let us lay aside every weight and run the race that is set before us." And the Greek says, "the set before us race." In other words it's a race set before us. It is a beginning and an ending that we can see. There is a boundary to it. At the end of his life the apostle Paul said in II Timothy 4:7 that he desired to fulfill God's will and he could say he had. He said, "I have kept the faith, I have finished my course." Only the word there is THE course, THE course. It's a bounded course. It's a bounded time. People, I really believe God has given us the time of our lives in sovereignty. He knows the beginning and He knows the end. More, He has determined both.

David had this tremendous sense of time and the urgency that time places on us when he cried out to God in Psalm 89:46-47 with these words, "How long Lord, how long will Thou hide Thyself? Wilt Thou hide Thyself forever?" Then he said, "Remember how short my time is." In other words, in the midst of his distress, and in the midst of his anxiety, and in the midst of his pain he had felt diverted from what he ought to be doing. He had felt distracted from what he should be doing and he said, "God, how long do I have to be off center? I only have so much time."

The apostle Paul said in I Corinthians 7:29, this short phrase, "The time is short." David said in Psalm 39:4-5, "Lord make me to know mine end and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am." Lord, please tell me how much time I have so I'll know how weak I am and I can really use the time I have. And then he further said in the next verse, "Behold, thou has made my days as a hand breadth and my age is as nothing before Thee." James put it this way in Chapter 4 he said, "Don't say tomorrow we'll do this and tomorrow we'll do this and tomorrow we'll do this, for you know not what tomorrow brings for your life is a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away."

Reading the story about Kiefa Sampangy, he and his wife for years ran for their lives just under the providence of God that they weren't killed. Finally after this miraculous escape they found their way to Philadelphia to some people who were willing to care for them and his wife said to him one day, "Tomorrow I'm going to go buy some clothes for the children." And immediately they both burst into tears and they said it was the first time they had said the word tomorrow in four years. Tomorrow! And James said, "Tomorrow you don't know if you have tomorrow." Time! You see the whole aspect of life is built around time in Paul's thinking here. Wisdom in verse 15 leads you to think of time in verse 16. Why? Because I believe the greatest squandering of wisdom occurs in the use of time or the lack of it.

Now remember what we're talking about in Ephesians 5, will you? We're talking about the worthy walk, aren't we? We learned what it is to be a Christian in the first three chapters. And now in the last three chapters of Ephesians we learn how to live as a Christian. How do you walk? Walk means lifestyle, manner of living. First of all we learned in Chapter 4 we walk in humility.

Secondly we learned we walk in unity. Thirdly we learned we walk uniquely, different than the rest of the world. Fourthly we learned we walk in love, Chapter 5. Then we learned to walk in light, Chapter 5 and now we're learning to walk in what, wisdom. And what does it mean to walk in wisdom but to redeem time because that is the greatest squandering of potential. For Christ's sake, he says, for the sake of who you are, use your time wisely.

Now let's back up and see how we're supposed to look at these three verses. A wise walking

Christian knows three realities, all right? First he has a sense of his life principles, secondly he has limited privileges, and third his Lord's purposes. Very simple but very profound.

First, a wise walking person knows his life principles. Walking in wisdom means you conform to a certain standard of living. Now remember this: wisdom is used here in the sense of the Jewish concept, not the Greek. To the Greeks wisdom was something you spun off of your brain. Wisdom was an intellectual exercise. Wisdom was nothing more than unrelated sophistry. But to a Hebrew wisdom was a living principle. That's what we're talking about. We're not talking about thinking; we're talking about living and walking in wisdom. It's simply living according to divine principle. That's what verse 15 says. Look at it.

"See then," in other words since you have been made alive in Christ, since you are awake from your sleep, since you have come into light from darkness, according to verse 14, since this amazing thing has happened in your life, see then that you walk circumspectly not as fools, but as wise." In other words there's a certain life principles commiserate with wise walking. See that you do that. You're not asofas, a fool; you are sofas, wise, so live it. So act like it. So walk in a manner in accord with your wisdom.

And, beloved, I would remind you of this: as we saw last week that when you become a Christian immediately you become wise and you become accountable for that wisdom. As you know that we saw last week that Christ is made unto us wisdom. Do you remember Colossians 2:3 said, "In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." And verse 10 said, "And you are complete in Him." Listen, if Christ is all wisdom and all knowledge and I am in Christ then that wisdom and knowledge is mine in Him, right? So from the moment of my salvation wisdom is a part of my life. And Paul is saying, "Since you have become the wise, walk in wisdom." That's his point.

Now do you note the word circumspectly in verse 15? Circumspectly is the old English word that's used here. Walk circumspectly. Now what it literally means is walk accurately, walk carefully, and walk with exactness. In other words, what Paul is saying is this: when you become a Christian you don't just flip flop and lollygag and stroll and mope your way through the Christian life doing whatever you want. When you become a believer there is an exactness on how you are to walk. There are life principles laid out on this narrow path. You enter by the narrow gate; you walk a narrow path and the word there means a compressed path. And if you're going to walk it you've got to walk it carefully.

John Bunyan captured the reality of that in Pilgrim's Progress. By the time you finish reading Pilgrim's Progress, and I've been reading it to my children now for about six months, by the time you finish reading Pilgrim's Progress, if you learned on thing, you learned you'd better stay on the way of the king. You'd better walk with exactness and you'd better walk with accuracy, and care. You can't just flip flop in the Christian life. A wise man walks looking at every step.

You know if you read the second chapter of Proverbs it's almost a commentary on this verse. If the Old Testament had been written after the New Testament we'd say that Proverbs 2 is a commentary on Ephesians 5:15. All the way through Proverbs Chapter 2 he talks about walking the wise path, walking the wise way, not going the way of the wicked, not straying in the path of the evil people, but walking in the wise way, walking according to knowledge and understanding and precepts of God.

And so we are to walk in wisdom. That's very simple. And remember wisdom is a synonym for living

by divine life principles. Wisdom is a synonym for living by divine life principles. And you know we live in a fool's paradise in our world so it's not easy to walk in wisdom. The world is telling us all the time do this, do this, trying to suck us off the way of the king, trying to pull us off the compressed and narrow path.

And you know the amazing thing about the world is the world thinks it's wise. The world thinks it has the wisdom and the world looks at us and says, "You're the fools." But it's just the reverse. Now believe it, we were all fools before we knew Christ. When we came to Christ we became wise. We're not the brightest people in the world, and we're not the noblest people in the world, and we're not the mightiest people in the world, but we are the wisest people in the world because God has given us His wisdom in Christ. And on the other hand the world is foolish. You know in Romans Chapter 1 it describes the world in these terms. "Because that which may be known of God is in them." They have the knowledge of God innately in them, "But when they knew God they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful but became vain in their imagination and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise they became, what, fools."

You say, "What do you mean John?" I told you that last week. The greatest fool in the world is the fool who says there is no God. And that doesn't necessarily mean an atheist. That simply means somebody who doesn't think God has any claim on his life. That simply means somebody who doesn't think he has to live by God's standards. That's the biggest fool of all. And we come along and preach Jesus Christ in I Corinthians Chapter 1, we preach Christ and what does it say? "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish, what, foolishness." They think they're wise and we're the fools. They think they have the truth and our truth is foolishness. But the fact of the matter is we are the wise and they are the fools. And so Paul is saying here, "Since you are the wise, walk in wisdom." What kind of reality would it be to have wisdom and walk as a fool? It makes no sense. You know the principles you walk them.

Now we covered all that last week. That was just review. Now let's look at the second point. Not only are we to be aware of the life principles, but the limited privileges. You say, "You mean as a Christian my privileges are limited?" Yes. Your privileges are limited in this time. It says in 16, "Redeeming the time because the days are evil." There are limitations on our privileges, people. If we don't walk wisely now we don't have any other time. All we have is now, that's it. If I lose this moment it'll never be back again.

Redeeming the time, he's talking about opportunity here, by the way, because the word he uses is not kronis. Kronis is a Greek word that means time like a clock, time like a calendar, time like a sequence of minutes and hours. Kronis is the word from which we get chronology, the flow of events in history or chronograph, something that keeps time. But the word here is kairos and it means eras or epics or opportunities. We are to redeem the opportunities, the moments that can be grasped for God and for good and for glory for Him. The Greeks has a statue and the name of the statue of opportunity. In one of the ancient Greek cities the statue stood in the very center of the city. It was carved and chiseled by a man named Lysipus. It had wings on its feet and it had a great lock of hair in the front and it was bald in the back, from the middle back completely bald. And underneath the statue was a great base and carved in Greek on the base was this dialogue: "Who made thee? Lysipus made me. What is thy name? My name is Opportunity. Why hast thou wings on thy feet? That I may fly away swiftly. Why hast thou a forelock? That men may seize me when I come. Why art thou bald in back? When I am gone by none can lay hold of me." Opportunity. The believer who walks in wisdom knows to make the most of opportunity.

Now listen to me. I want to show you something interesting and I've already hinted at it. Do you notice how Paul says, "Walk wisely," in verse 15 and immediately talks about redeeming opportunity in verse 16? Why does he connect those two? Because I am convinced that man plays the fool with time and opportunity more than he plays the fool in any other thing. That is the greatest category of foolishness, the misuse of time and opportunity. I feel this is talking to Christians here. Remember what the Psalmist said in Psalm 90:12? He said, "So teach us to number our days," why, "That we may apply our hearts to wisdom." It is wisdom that numbers the days. It is wisdom that accounts the limited time. It is wisdom that buys the opportunity. Wisdom walking down that narrow path sees an opportunity for evil and shuns it because that's the fool's act. Wisdom sees an opportunity for good and grasps it because that's the opportunity for God.

And even more important is it as he says at the end of verse 16, "Because the days are evil." These are evil days and if we're going to make anything out of an evil day we're going to have to buy the opportunity. It's kind of like this, folks, what he's really saying could be seen in two or three ways, but first of all look at it from this angle. You know the days we live in, in general, are full of evil. And what he's really saying is the opportunities for righteousness are few. The opportunities for goodness are few. In the midst of an evil world, when they do come grab them.

When God is giving you an opportunity for glorifying Him and in return bringing blessing on you doing something for His namesake, grab that in the midst of an evil day. Can you imagine what a heartbreak it is for God to create a world like our world and fill it up with every good thing and when it's all made and done He says, "It's all good." And then to see the thing corrupted and debauched and made vile as it is today, as it has been since the fall of man, as it continues to increase in its corruption.

Can you imagine how it must be for God to see the days of the world that He made so filled with evil and then to see a Christian whose given a golden jewel of opportunity after opportunity and after opportunity who by passes it with never so much as a notice? The days are evil. This is an evil day. And God gives us those times and those opportunities to make things happen that matter, to fill up at least a moment of a day, and hour of a day with something good, something righteous, something for Him.

And so there's a general sense in which I see this. I see God and I see His heart broken over the evil of the world He has made for His own glory, and I say to myself, "If God gives me one little opportunity in the midst of an evil day to do something good and something to honor Him and something to glorify Him I'm going to grab that opportunity, see? The days are evil enough and it seems as though goodness is so few and far between that we need to take every opportunity. It's bad enough that my life is bombarded and inundated with evil influences that when one good one comes along I want to grab that.

But there's another way to look at it. It may be a more direct statement to the Christians who are reading this, who are living in an evil time. It may be a reference to the Ephesians who were living in an evil day. Their society was a debauched society. If you go back in Chapter 4, you find, for example in verse 14, that there were people going around teaching false doctrine. There were those who using the sleight of men and cunning craftiness were trying to deceive God's people. Satan had his false teachers. Satan had his harbingers of evil. Satan had the ones coming around masquerading as religionists that were propagating their lies that would damn them. Further there

was evil all about. It tells us in verse 19 in Chapter 4, that the people of that time were characterized by lasciviousness, which is a perverted sexual desire, that there was uncleanness and there was greediness. This is the play on xexia; this is the fulfillment of sexual desire to the point that it's to the point that it's beyond any kind of rational thinking.

Further, he says it's a day of lying, verse 25, it's a day of anger, it's a day in verse 27, when the devil has a place, it's a day of stealing, it's a day of corrupt communication. Chapter 5:3, talks about sex sin, uncleanness, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talking, jesting, and so forth. I mean it was a day of evil. And he may be making that major thrust and saying, look redeem the time because the days are evil. He may have been alluding to the very hour in which those people were living. Persecution and distress was on the horizon. You know it was only a hundred years or so from this time that Christians were burned at the stake and Christians were thrown to the lions. It was coming and it was coming fast and whatever they were going to do they were going to do then.

I'll tell you another thing, it was a few years after this, just a few years before the end of that first century that dear beloved John, the apostle, wrote to the Ephesian church and said, "You have lost your first love." And you know something, if something doesn't change the candlestick is going to be removed, the light's going to go out and there'll never be a church in Ephesus. And you know what happened? They didn't change, the candle was removed, there never was another church in that city. Their time was shorter than they thought because of the evil of those days. And when the church at Ephesus fell onto the spell of the evil they went out of existence. And today if you were to go to Ephesus you know what you'd see? You'd see nothing contemporary in existence there. It's gone.

The time was short, the days were evil; they fell prey to the time they lived in. You know they realized persecution was coming. They must have. They knew what Jesus had said about the fact that they would be persecuted for His sake. I think a sense of urgency is necessary, people. I can't say for America what's going to happen to Christians, but I've asked God that if it's going to take something persecution oriented to bring us to the place where we get a grip on what we ought to be, then let it happen.

As I was reading about Kiefa Sampangy and his church I just couldn't help but think of what they went through. You know he started out as the church began to grow and it was a nice group of people and they filled this area where they would meet every Sunday and he would preach and they would have a wonderful time and then all of a sudden when Amin came to power and they thought everything was going to be great, the church seemed to me didn't grow very much. And then all of a sudden something strange began to happen. People began to disappear and people began to die and Kiefa went one day to call upon a family that was very dear friend, and he walked to the front door and standing inside the front door was a little boy twelve years of age with his hands sticking straight up in the air, frozen, transfixed in a state like that of traumatic shock in which he had already been for two days without moving. He went further into the living room and found the eyeballs and tongues of every member of the family lying on the floor. He went from room to room and found that every one of them was dismembered and killed. And the little boy had seen it all.

And all of a sudden there was a new sense of urgency. All of a sudden there was a sense that these are the evil days and how much time do we have? And the people began to meet for prayer and they met not just at prayer meeting, but they met and prayed all night long and so many people came for the all night prayer meetings they couldn't get them into the place they met and they would be sitting

and lying on the ground outside all night long praying. And they would go from there to evangelize to win people to Christ because they didn't know how long it would be and it was a few short years and the church was gone. And Kiefa was gone. A sense of urgency, and now as he gets letters, even to this point, from people who were back in that place, he hears of those who are still being killed because of Christ.

The urgency, people, we don't know what's going to happen. We don't know what the evil day brings. Maybe the most evil day of all is the day in which everything is so easy that we lose our priorities. Maybe that's the most evil of all. The church would thrive better under Edie Amin than it does under affluence, in many cases.

It's been true all through history, you know, the blood of the martyrs becomes the seed of the church. I'm not asking for that. I'm just saying that we sometimes don't understand urgency. We don't see the evil day because we are sucked into the system and the line is not clearly drawn. Beloved, it's an evil day we live in and I'll tell you the time is short because we don't have long to live. I'm 39 years old. Nobody believes you when you say 39, but I'm 39 and I have a sense of urgency. I don't know how long God's going to give me, but I'll tell you one thing, I'm going to give Him all the time I've got. I have a sense of urgency. I don't know when Jesus is going to come. One of these days He's going to split the heavens with His coming and He's going to end it all and He's going to set up His kingdom and I want that day to come, but I know that there's a sense of urgency until He comes. And I know the world isn't getting better, it's getting worse. II Timothy 3:13, "Evil men grow worse and worse." Romans Chapter 1 says they invent new sins all throughout human history. The world is blacker; it's more expressive of its vices than it's ever been. We must redeem the time.

The word redeem is in the middle voice in the Greek. It means buy up for yourself and that's a beautiful thought. It isn't saying hoard your time for your benefit. It's saying buy up for yourself the time in this sense; when you redeem the time you benefit because God blesses you. You walk on the narrow way and you walk circumspectly and you walk accurately and you make the most of your time and the most of your opportunity and God will pour out blessing to you so that it's actually true that you're redeeming the time for yourself. Use it up in the way that can give God glory.

Every day, think of it on a daily basis, every day God gives you opportunity. Every day there's an opportunity to do a righteous thing and to shun a sin. Every day there's an opportunity, there's a golden jewel that God places in front of you that can be grabbed for His glory. Some people are always going to pray and they're going to get down to business to study the Bible and they're going to serve the Lord and they're going to tell their neighbor about Christ and they're going to read the Bible. They just never get to it. The greatest fool in the world is the fool who wastes time, who spends opportunity without a return.

You know in Galatians 6:10 it says, "As we have opportunity let us do good to all men, especially those of the household of faith." As we have opportunity we ought to grab it. What about your personal time? You've been telling the Lord for years that you're going to spend some time with Him. Do you do it? Or do you just let opportunity after opportunity go by and never redeem the time? What about time with your spouse? Do you take those precious times when you could contribute to him or to her what he needs or she needs? What about the children God's given you? Not many years and they're gone. What have you contributed? What have you done? What have you given? What does the time have to say? What about that ministry, those spiritual gifts, that thing you're always going to do for the Lord, but you can never really get to doing it because everything isn't just perfect the way

you wanted it or because you've got other things to do?

We are lulled to sleep by our fat society. Now let me give you a little philosophical to think about. Opportunity is in respect to time what time is in respect to eternity. Say it again. Opportunity is in respect to time what time is in respect to eternity. And what I mean by that is this: the only piece of eternity you'll ever hold in your hand is the opportunity of this moment, that's it. You can't live in the past; you can't live in the future. It's now and that's the end of it. We hold an opportunity in our hands. That is the only piece of eternity we'll ever hold. That piece of opportunity is to time what time is to eternity. I can hold eternity in my hand when I maximize this moment. Shakespeare said, "There is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at its ebb leads on to fortune. Omitted all the voyage of their life is drown in the shallows and miseries of life." Napoleon said, "There is in the midst of every great battle a ten to fifteen minute time people that is the crucial point. Take that period and you win the battle; loose it and you will be defeated."

There are many biblical texts, which stand as beacons to warn people of limited privileges and application to divine principles. You read in the Bible such a statement as, "The door was shut." Too late! When Noah and his family were in the Ark God shut the door. It was too late. Opportunity was gone. When the virgins came with an unprepared lamp, the door was shut, too late. The marriage would go on without them. The words of the Lord Jesus Christ ring down through history, "The night comes when no man can work." I hear the Lord say to the people of His day, "You shall die in your sins and where I go you cannot come." I hear the Lord say to the churches of the New Testament, "I will remove the candlestick." I hear God call to Israel year after year, time after time, century after century, until that nation finally turned its back on God and God called out to them through the prophet Moses and through those all the way down to Isaiah and beyond Isaiah and yet they were a stiff-necked and hard people who wouldn't hear and wouldn't listen. And God's heart was broken and Jesus finally uttered it when He said, "How oft I would have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her brood, but you would not." Lost opportunity!

I think of Judas, the greatest case of lost opportunity in the history of the world. Judas who spent three years with the Son of God, three years with the righteous one, three years with the God of glory, three years with the King of Eternity, three years with the judge of all the earth, three years with the only Savior and walked away from it and hanged himself and was dashed to pieces on the rocks below. What a waste of opportunity.

The Old Testament I Kings Chapter 20 tells the story of a servant who by a king was given a commission. He said to him, "Here's a prisoner. Watch that prisoner. If you lose him you'll pay with your life. The king went about his business in the midst of the war and this man was to care for that important prisoner. The king came back and the man said, "While thy servant was busy here and there the man was gone." Here and there, what is that? I mean if it was something significant it might be somewhat understandable, but to lose a man because you were busy here and there is stupid and he paid with his life.

When are you going to finally study the Bible? When are you going to finally teach? When are you going to finally pray? When are you going to finally share Christ? When are you going to finally minister your gift? When I was a little guy I played in the Glendale Little League and my buddy on the team was named Eddie. Eddie was a pitcher and I was a short stop. We were good friends. We went to elementary school together and we were both twelve. Eddie was a Presbyterian and I was a Baptist, but we were friends anyway. And Eddie was a good pitcher and a good friend. And Eddie

used to say to me, "I'm going to be a pastor." And I'd say, "I'm going to be one too." And we talked about both growing up to be pastors. Eddie told me that when he got out of high school he was going to go to college and he was going to study so he could be a pastor. When he was in the twelfth grade in high school Eddie was driving a little Model A that he had, had a canvas top, going about 40 miles an hour, the wheels locked, catapulted him through the roof and he hit his head on the curb and he was dead.

Eddie never knew the limited time that he had, never knew, never conceived. And all through the years of my life I've looked back and I've thought there's two young men, both had the same desire, God took Eddie and left me. Eddie never had the opportunity, but I do. I wonder if I'm doing any more with it than he would have done. In a sense Eddie being dead yet speaks. I want to take everything that God's given me and use it for Him. I want to make it most of every moment see because it's only His grace that I'm even here, 'cause I got thrown out of a car too, remember? Only I lived and God called me to preach and teach and I just want to make sure that I grab every time and opportunity that He gives me and redeem it to His glory in the midst of an evil day.

Listen to what Paul said in the 13th Chapter of Romans. "Knowing the time that it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our deliverance nearer than when we believed." Folks, we're getting nearer to the coming of the Lord, aren't we? "The night is far spent. The day is at hand. Let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in wild parties, drunkenness, immorality, shamelessness, strife, and envy." In other words, people, do you realize we only have a limited time and we've got to live according to God's life principles with our limited privilege of time?

I would call a man a fool who threw away jewels. I would call a man a fool who threw away money. I would call a man a bigger fool who threw away an hour. There's a world to be won. There's a church to be built. There's a God to be glorified and there's no time for triteness and there's not time for meaningless activity.

Melangthen, the great reformer, kept a daily record of every wasted moment, then took it to God in a prayer of confession at the end of the day. No wonder God used him to touch the whole world. So the believer who walks in wisdom knows his life principles, his limited privileges, now finally and briefly, his Lord's purposes.

You know I don't want to get you so urgent that you panic, 'cause then you're useless. It would be like the man who jumped on his horse and rode off madly in all directions. That really doesn't make a lot of sense. There's no sense in saying, "Oh man it's urgent." I could panic. I could say, "I got to get it all done," and you can just go whoa all over everywhere all the time. But that's why the beauty of verse 17 just comes like rock to plant your feet on. "Wherefore, since you have to redeem the time, since you have to walk wisely, since the days are evil, don't be stupid."

Now a stupid person would just panic. A wise person will understand what the will of the Lord. In other words, it's one thing to have a sense of urgency, but you need to channel that in the channel of God's will for your life. You don't just run off half-cocked doing anything. It's critical that the use of these life principles within the limited privileges be prescribed by the Lord's purposes.

We don't need more activity. Lord help us, we don't need more activity. We don't need to proliferate

more stuff, more meaningless stuff, more good stuff that isn't the best stuff. We need to be out there teaching the word of God, and winning people to Jesus Christ and a lot of the other stuff we can just chuck. People in a big mad hurry don't get anything done, but people with a resolute confidence that determines to follow God's will, will get a lot done. Don't be unwise. That's a fool. Don't be a fool. A fool functions apart from God's will. A fool just runs off. Find out what God's will is. You say, "Well John, how do I know what God's will is?" I'm going to tell you that.

And if you want in detail I have a little book called, Found God's Will, it will help you to understand it. Some of you have read it. Let me just remind you what God's people say. "Oh I can't find God's will, oh what is God's will for my .....?" You know like God is sort of the universal Easter bunny who stashed His will somewhere and sits in heaven saying, "You're getting warmer." Or the old deal God's will is like God speaks to you out of heaven or you're running down the street and you fall, your nose lands on a map of Chile, you know that's God's will, you're called to be a missionary to Chile. There's a lot of things that are said about how you know God's will.

I'll tell you it's very simple. If God has a will for your life I believe He'll tell you and if He tells you I think He'll tell you in the most obvious place, right here. One time a few years ago I just started trying to figure out God's will and I said, "Why don't I look and see what He says," and this is what I found: God, our Savior, who will have all men to be saved. Number one he wants me to be saved. That's his will.

Secondly, right here, be not unwise but understanding what the will of the Lord is and what is it? Be not drunk with wine, which is in excess, but be filled with, what, the Spirit. Number one He wants you to be saved; number two He wants you to be Spirit filled. That's His will.

Number three, I Thessalonians 4:3, "This is the will of God concerning you, even your sanctification." Saved, Spirit filled, sanctified! Convenient, they all start with S. Peter says, "This is the will of God that you be submissive to the powers that be." Submissive, that's that you live the kind of a life as a citizen that is an honor and a respect to Jesus Christ. That you abide by those people in government and in leadership and that you honor the King and you give due recognition to those in authority. Live a submissive life.

Then fifth Peter says, "Suffer." You suffer according to the will of God. That's what it says in I Peter. What is the will of God for you? Are you ready for this? Number one, saved, Spirit filled, sanctified, submissive, suffering and I'll add one more. In everything say thanks for this is the will of God for you. Now if you're living a life that's saved, Spirit filled, sanctified, submissive, suffering and saving thanks you say oh. But that doesn't help me if I ought to go here to school, or marry this person, or that isn't it. I've got great news for you. Are you ready for this? If you're all those things you know what the next thing is? Whatever you want. Whatever you want. What do you mean whatever I want? The Bible says it. "Delight in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart." And by the way, if you're fulfilling those six things you're delighting the Lord and He'll just give you the desire in your heart. People say, "Well does that mean He'll fulfill your desire?" Yes, but before He fulfills it He'll put it there.

People say to me, "Why did you go to Grace Church?" I always say the same thing, "I wanted to." Oh? You wanted to? What about putting out a fleece, and laying out a fleece, and opening a door and closing a door, and the Lord and all this. No, I didn't have a fleece and I never bother with doors. I wanted to. You say, "Where did you get the desire?" I believed in my heart that if I was saved, Spirit

filled, sanctified, submissive, suffering, and saying thanks God was putting the desire in my heart 'cause He was in control, you see.

And then when you know God's will you function in God's will with a sense of time and opportunity and obedience to His life principles, you'll find your life is going to make a difference. You know who the perfect illustration of this is? Jesus. Jesus always functioned according to divine life principles. In John 5 he says, "I do only the things the Father tells Me to do." He always functioned according to limited privilege. He constantly said, "My time has not come, My time is not come, or My time is come."

And thirdly, He always functioned according to the Lord's purposes because He said, "My meet is to do the will of My Father." He's the perfect illustration. Oh, oh what a sense of principle He had and He walked that righteous path and what a sense of timing He had. He knew His course and He grabbed every opportunity and yet you never see Him in a hurry. There was a determination and yet there was an availability to the most sensitive and sensible situations. And then there was a sense of being on a divine steppingstone, just moving from one step to the next on God's premises. He's our pattern. If you're going to walk wise this is how you do it. Let's pray together.

Father we would echo to you the promise of David when he vowed a vow and said, "I will sing of mercy and of justice unto Thee O Lord will I sing. I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way." Oh Father, that's our prayer. May it be our vow this day.

While your heads are bowed for just a moment, we'd like to give you an opportunity to respond to the Lord in some way in your own heart. In just the silence of this moment why don't you say, "Lord, help me to walk wisely. What am I doing with my opportunity? What am I doing with my opportunity to know Jesus Christ?" If you don't know Jesus Christ, right where you sit you can open your heart to God and say I want to know if this is true. I want to know Christ. If you're a Christian you can just ask God to help you with your opportunity, help you to walk wisely. Just talk to the Lord and ask Him to teach you to walk in wisdom.

Father thank you for our time this morning and so commit to our hearts all these things, good things from you. Strike out what is human and may what is divine be indelibly impressed upon us and we'll give you praise for being the all-wise God, who makes it possible for us to walk in wisdom. Amen.

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