

Redeeming The Time

A Full Expository Sermon Outline • TheSermonOutline.com

Key Scripture

Ephesians 5:15-16 (ESV) Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Sermon in One Sentence

In a world that constantly vies for our attention and time, followers of Christ are called to a deliberate, Spirit-filled stewardship of every moment, understanding that time is a precious, finite gift to be invested in eternal purposes.

Introduction

How many times have you heard or said, "Where did the time go?" Or perhaps, "If only I had more time." In our fast-paced, perpetually connected society, time often feels like an adversary – a relentless current dragging us along, leaving us breathless and accomplished, yet somehow unfulfilled. We scroll, we consume, we chase, and too often, at the end of the day, we wonder what truly mattered. This feeling of temporal anxiety isn't unique to our modern age; it's a deep-seated human experience.

The Problem, dear friends, is not merely that time passes quickly, but that we often allow it to pass *unredeemed*. We drift, we procrastinate, we engage in activities that offer fleeting pleasure but little lasting value, all while precious opportunities to honor God and bless others slip through our fingers. We live as if time is an endless resource, or worse, an insignificant one, when in fact, it is a currency of divine design.

But the Apostle Paul, writing from a place of profound spiritual insight, offers us a radical alternative: the call to "redeem the time." In Ephesians 5, he presents us with a blueprint for intentional living, a clarion call to transform our relationship with the clock and, more profoundly, with our Creator. As we turn to this powerful passage, let's open our hearts to understand what it truly means to live wisely in a world that often compels us to live otherwise.

Historical & Biblical Context

The Apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians is a profound theological treatise, widely regarded as one of his most majestic writings. Penned likely around AD 60-62 during his first Roman imprisonment, it was addressed to the Gentile believers in Ephesus, a prominent and religiously diverse city in Asia Minor. Ephesus was a melting pot of paganism, particularly the cult of Artemis, with its elaborate festivals, magical practices, and prevalent immorality. Paul had spent three years ministering there, establishing a vibrant church (Acts 19).

The letter's first three chapters lay a deep theological foundation, emphasizing God's eternal plan for salvation through Christ, the glory of the church, and the riches of salvation available to believers. Chapters 4-6 then pivot to practical exhortations, calling believers to "walk worthy" of their high calling. Our passage, Ephesians 5:15-16, falls squarely within this ethical section. Paul is urging believers, who have been "made alive together with Christ" (2:5) and are now "children of light" (5:8), to live distinctively from the surrounding pagan culture. The phrase "the days are evil" directly references the moral darkness and spiritual dangers prevalent in Roman society (and indeed, in every age apart from Christ). Therefore, the call to "redeem the time" is not just about efficiency; it's about spiritual discernment, ethical living, and seizing opportunities for God's kingdom amidst a corrupt world. The ancient Greek word for "redeem" (*exagorazō*) implies a buying back from bondage, a seizing of opportunity like a shrewd merchant buying up something valuable from the market. It's a strategic, intentional act.

Main Point I — Live with Prudent Awareness

Scripture: Ephesians 5:15 "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,"

Paul begins this charge by commanding us to "look carefully then how you walk." This isn't a casual glance; it's an imperative to meticulously examine our lives, our choices, our habits, and our direction. The Greek word here, *blepete akribōs*, suggests a precise, accurate, and scrupulous observation. It's the opposite of drifting through life on autopilot. We are called to be intentional, to be discerning, to be keenly aware of the path we are treading. Are we walking "as unwise" (*aphronos*) – foolish, mindless, lacking spiritual understanding? Or are we walking "as wise" (*sophoi*) – exhibiting practical wisdom, keen insight, and sound judgment guided by God's truth?

This point emphasizes that redeeming the time begins with a conscious, deliberate mindset. It's about self-examination in light of God's revealed will. To walk wisely means to understand our purpose, to prioritize eternal values over temporal whims, and to recognize the true currency of our existence. It's an ongoing process of asking: Is this activity, this conversation, this consumption of media, truly aligning with my calling as a follower of Christ? Is it building up the Kingdom, or is it merely building up my own fleeting comfort or distraction? Prudent awareness is the foundational lens through which all time-redeeming decisions must flow.

Main Point II — Seize Every Opportunity

Scripture: Ephesians 5:16a "redeeming the time,"

The heart of our passage lies in this powerful phrase: "redeeming the time." As mentioned, the Greek word *exagorazō* doesn't merely mean to "spend" time or "manage" it well in a secular sense. It's a commercial term meaning "to buy something out of the marketplace," often at a cost, making maximum use of it. In this context, it signifies "buying up opportunities." Time, for Paul, is not an abstract concept but a sequence of moments, each presenting an opportunity. And these opportunities are precious, often fleeting, and capable of being lost if not seized. We are to be shrewd, like a discerning investor who sees a valuable asset and buys it before it's gone or its value diminishes.

This means actively seeking out and leveraging every moment, every interaction, and every circumstance for the glory of God and the advancement of His Kingdom. It's about intentionality in action. When an opportunity arises to share the gospel, to serve a neighbor, to encourage a fellow believer, to study God's Word, or to engage in meaningful prayer, we are to "buy it back" from the secular demands on our time. It means consciously choosing to invest our finite moments in activities that yield eternal dividends, rather than letting them be squandered on trivial pursuits or passive consumption. Redeeming the time is a proactive, Spirit-led engagement with our finite existence, transforming potential into purpose.

Main Point III — Understand The Urgency

Scripture: Ephesians 5:16b "because the days are evil."

Paul grounds his call to redeem the time in a sobering reality: "because the days are evil." This isn't a mere lament about general wickedness; it's a stark reminder of the spiritual warfare and moral decay that characterize a world alienated from God. The term "evil" (*ponēros*) signifies oppressive, harmful, and active wickedness. It implies that the spiritual climate is hostile, the temptations are strong, and the forces opposing God's truth are actively at work. In such an environment, complacency or spiritual lethargy is not just unwise; it is dangerous.

The evil of the days creates a profound sense of urgency. When the world is spiritually dark, the light of Christ in believers is more crucial than ever. When opportunities for good are constantly threatened or obscured by sin, we must be diligent in seizing them. This urgency isn't meant to induce panic, but rather to inspire strategic action. Knowing that the days are evil should sharpen our focus, clarify our priorities, and ignite a passion to make every moment count for eternity. It reminds us that our time here is short, the needs are vast, and the spiritual stakes are incredibly high. Therefore, we must not waste a single moment that could be used to proclaim truth, demonstrate love, and bring glory to our Redeemer.

Illustration

Dr. Howard Hendricks, a beloved professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, once told his students, "Most people major in minors." He would sometimes illustrate this by describing a group of busy travelers at an airport. Some are meticulously organizing their carry-on, agonizing over the perfect snack, checking their email one more time. Others are engrossed in a movie or a game on their phone. All are engaged in activity, expending energy and time. But then the boarding call for their flight rings out – their actual purpose for being there. Suddenly, all those meticulously organized snacks and engrossing games become secondary, if not irrelevant. The wise traveler, focused on their destination, would have been attentive to the boarding announcements and prepared to move. The "evil days" — the constant distractions, the ephemeral pursuits, the urgent but unimportant demands — are like the airport concourse itself, so full of noise and activity that we miss the boarding call for eternal significance. Redeeming the time is about discerning the flight and making sure we're on it, not lost in the airport's clamor.

Practical Application

- 1. Conduct a "Time Audit":** For three days, meticulously track how you spend every 30 minutes of your day. Journal what activities fill your time – work, sleep, prayer, social media, entertainment, family, commute. Then, prayerfully categorize each activity as life-giving/purposeful, neutral/necessary, or time-wasting/distracting. This awareness is the first step to walking carefully.
- 2. Schedule "Sacred Time":** Intentionally block out non-negotiable time each day for spiritual disciplines – Bible reading, prayer, and quiet reflection. Just as you schedule work appointments or chores, schedule your time with God. Consider that "redeeming the time" often starts by investing in the One who gave it to you.
- 3. Identify and Seize One "Kingdom Opportunity" Daily:** Look for one specific, concrete opportunity each day to invest in eternal purposes. This could be praying for a specific person, offering a word of encouragement, sharing your faith, performing an act of service, or making a phone call for a ministry. Don't let the "evil days" steal opportunities for good.
- 4. Practice Intentional "Unplugging":** Consciously commit to regular breaks from digital distractions (phone, social media, news feeds). Perhaps designate an hour each evening or a day each week as "unplugged" time. Use this redeemed time to connect with family, engage with nature, read edifying books, or simply be present in the moment.
- 5. Set Weekly "Purposeful Goals":** At the beginning of each week, identify 1-3 specific, measurable goals that align with your spiritual growth, relationships, and God-given calling. Review them daily to stay focused, ensuring that your week does not simply happen to you but is intentionally stewarded.

Discussion Questions

1. When you hear the phrase "redeeming the time," what is your initial reaction or interpretation?
2. What are some of the biggest "time-wasters" or "time-thieves" in your life that prevent you from walking "as wise"?
3. Can you recall a specific instance where you felt you successfully "redeemed the time" for an eternal purpose? What made it successful?
4. How does understanding that "the days are evil" motivate or change your approach to how you use your time?

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the precious gift of time, a finite resource You have entrusted to us. Forgive us, Lord, for the moments we have squandered, the opportunities we have missed, and the foolish ways we have walked. Grant us Your Holy Spirit's wisdom to see carefully, the courage to seize every moment for Your glory, and the urgency to live intentionally in these evil days. May our lives be a testament to Your grace, redeeming every ticking second for Your Kingdom. Amen.

Benediction

Now go forth, beloved of God, and walk with careful wisdom, diligently redeeming every opportunity, knowing that the Lord's hand is upon you to guide and empower your steps.