

THE RIGHT USE OF OUR TIME

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Ephesians 5:16

These words stand at the end of a series of moral counsels and warnings, of which it is difficult to exaggerate the urgency and solemnity. Probably a better rendering would be, "buying up the opportunity, because the times are hard". But no mere translation can fully convey the idea Paul had in his mind. The picture suggested by the Greek is this: here stands a wise and wary merchant, keen for traffic and gain. Like Milton, he has fallen on evil times; on "hard times", as men of business would say. The days drag slowly by, bringing him few means of moral culture, rare occasions in which he can trade with his talents and make them more. But at last, as the caravan of time moves tardily by, among the captives in his strain he espies an opportunity such as his heart has long craved. He leaps at it, seizes it, redeems it, that is, pays a price for it, and makes it his own. This seems to have been the picture in the mind of the apostle. And thus he defines the Christian attitude toward time.

Paul thinks of opportunity as an article in the market. He teaches that we can get what we want in this market. What is this commodity which he asks us to purchase? The text says it is time. But the term used signifies that it may be taken for opportunities, or the favorable moment for doing anything, which, if lost, can never be recovered. We may speak of life as a succession of opportunities. Life is always bringing opportunities to us, which we may seize and handle and turn to our profit, or which we may neglect to our loss. It is a mark of wisdom to make a wise use of opportunities.

I. The Wrong Way To Use Our Time

1. In a life of idleness
2. In trifling amusements
3. In useless conversation
Mere chatter, senseless gossip, and frivolous talk are destructive of our days. Some talkers, like the brook, go on forever, and like the brook again carry very little freight.
4. In undue devotion to subordinate or secondary matters.
5. In positive wickedness
 - (1) Sinful indulgence
 - (2) Dissipation

II. The Right Way To Use Our Time

1. In guarding against the loss of time
2. In gaining useful knowledge
3. In gaining an honest livelihood
4. In walking circumspectly
5. In helpful recreation
Avoid the two extremes of over-work and no work
6. In habitually doing good to others
7. In seeking to do the will of God.

III. The Reasons For Using Our Time Rightly

1. Our time is short
All we know about our days is that they are few. Providence conceals their number. And yet, most of us live as if we expected to abide here always. The philosopher Seneca said, "We are always complaining that our days are few, and acting as though there would be no end of them." Another has said, "All men count all men mortal except themselves."
2. Much of our short time has elapsed.
Already, we have lost much time. With many of us the morning of life has gone.

With others the noon of life has come and gone. Still others are in the evening of life; the last milestone is already in view.

3. We do not know how much time yet remains to us. God has given us so many days to live. These days are His, not ours. They are ours only to use. We should use them rightly.
4. Time is very precious
Nothing is so valuable as time.
5. We have much to do
Our time should be used in:
 - (1) Self-improvement
 - a. Physical
 - b. Intellectual
 - c. Spiritual
 - (2) Service to Society
 - (3) The worship of God
 - (4) Service for God
6. The work to be done is so important
 - (1) Prepare for eternity
 - (2) Help each other
 - (3) Work for Christ
7. Time misspent can never be recalled
When time is lost it can never be redeemed.
8. We shall have to give an account for the way that we use time
To God we shall answer for the manner in which we use His days. To use the days allotted to us, wisely and well, is to gain:--
 - (1) The approval of conscience
 - (2) The plaudits of society
 - (3) The approbation of God
9. The days are evil
 - (1) They are uncertain in their number
 - (2) They are days of temptation and sin
 - (3) They are liable to be interrupted by sickness, infirmities, and death.
 - (4) Evil days leave many opportunities unimproved.
 - (5) Evil days bring many opportunities of their own.
That is, we never have them at any other time.
 - (6) Do not dream about what you might do some other time, but do what you can now.
10. Momentous consequences depend upon the way we use time.
For some it will mean an eternity of bliss; for others an eternity of woe. Every Christian ought to be intent on helping in some form or manner to make the world a happier and a better world. The troubled, the weary, and the unfortunate are always near to us. There is always something within our reach which we could do, if we would.

The chief lesson in this text is that we should use every opportunity, and use it thoroughly while we have it.