

A New Year – A New Challenge

All Scripture is KJV: Ephesians 5:15-17

INTRODUCTION: WHAT DOES THE BIBLE HAVE TO SAY

Ephesians 5:15-17

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

1. With every new year there is a sense of want to achieve, there is a sense of wanting to be perfect, as well as sense of wanting to accomplish tasks that you never did in that preceding year.
2. With the New Year, people are excited because hopefully it will be a better year than the one they just experienced.
3. So the New Year is for them some sort of miracle that is waiting to happen or could happen if they play their cards right.

While this approach to the new year is mainly the way the unsaved people view the new year, it is not to different to the way in which many Christians want to and will celebrate the new year.

Just like the unsaved they will make New Year resolutions, which will amount to nothing in particular in most cases.

4. That is why the bible says in Ephesians 5:15, that the Christian is to walk “circumspectly” or cautiously. The word walk is the word used to describe the way in which you will approach each day. Each day is to be approached circumspectly or cautiously, because the tendency is to walk as fools walk.
5. A fool in the bible is described in Proverbs as the one who despises all wisdom.

Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

6. Not only does a fool despise wisdom, the bible says he also despises instruction. A fool hates to be told what to do.
7. But the bible says in Ephesians 5:15 also that the Christian is to walk in the opposite, which is to walk as the wise.

The bible says also in Proverbs a lot about the wise man. For instance.

Proverbs 1:5 A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:

8. You use the wisdom and being wise as God calls it is not the wisdom of the world but the wisdom of God’s word.
9. In the context of this scripture a wise man is one that follows after God, and with it God brings salvation.

2 Timothy 3:15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, **which are able to make thee wise unto salvation** through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

- ✚ So the New Year should be viewed as walking in wisdom of the Lord and not in the wisdom of the world.
- ✚ Every year, is work of our time that the Lord has granted to us, so how will you spend this coming year?

Relating to the coming year and in relation to our time the Lord gave us specific instruction. Look at Ephesians 5:16.

¹⁶ **Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.**

1. In relation to our time as we face the New Year, we have received instruction from the Lord to use it wisely as in verse 15.
2. But not only are we to use our time wisely in 2016, the Lord has told us also to redeem the time?
3. Do you know what redeem the time means? Because if you don't know what it means then how are you going to apply your time? Well redeeming your time is all about how much that time will be worth to the Lord in the future to come. Long after we die that time would have accumulated to the Lord, either something worth rewarding or something that is worthless?
4. So the scripture in verse 16 when it talks about redeeming the time? Is essentially saying "how much" "can I redeem that time for",how much in other words is that time worth at the end of the day to the Lord?
5. When viewed with the conclusion of that sentence of the scripture, we are told to redeem the time "because" the days are evil. So if the days are "evil" we have to make sure we can get some value out of it that will be pleasing unto the Lord to be able to "redeem" it for something.
6. But of course the New Year will never be looked upon in this light by the unbeliever. To the unbeliever it is "how much can he get out of it for himself".

- ✚ So now when we get to Ephesians 5:17, we have a better understanding of this verse because it has already been outlined in the previous verses of 14 and 15.

¹⁷ **Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.**

- What I would like to preach on this morning is about the subject of a New Year that has come around again.

I'm sure you've noticed that each year almost all the major news magazines put out an issue with special pictorial sections recalling people & events that made news during the previous year.

Many of the magazines also include articles by experts predicting what they expect to see happening in the years ahead. Some even go so far as to make long-range predictions covering 10, 20, or more years in the future. A few of these predictions may have proven accurate, while others couldn't have been more wrong.

So as we look at the remaining verse 17 of Ephesians 5, it addresses what the will of the Lord is. And that's the key to the New year approaching.

I. OUR TIME ON THIS EARTH IS LIMITED

A. First of all, we must be very careful how we live because our time on this earth is limited.

The Psalmist wrote in -

Psalms 39:4 "LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am."

Once a person becomes aware of his frailty he will recognise the Lord more and more, and will seek to draw closer to him.

But whilst a person is relying on himself and thinks that he can live forever and ever or for a very long time without God, then he is going to go down that path for sure.

The Psalmist in Psalm 39:4 is begging God to make him aware of his days that he may understand just how frail he is, so that it will help him turn more and more to the Lord.

Psalm 90:10 "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

In keeping with Psalm 39:4, the next Psalm 90:10 tells us how long our days are. It was the answer to the previous posed question of showing our frailty. So according to this passage we can live into our seventies and eighties, and anything after that is pure grace.

✚ But even when we live to that age the Lord says yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

B. The countdown clock on the computer and the sand of the hour glass continues to fall just as the seconds of time..... tick by without much concern for time. For every second that passes as we stare at the hand of the clock, our lives are passing us by with more haste than what we can begin to fathom from watching the clock.

Every person is rushing around to fill their time with something to while away the moments of their days, while killing that which does not seem to be precious to them and that is the hours of their limited days.

Appointments are being made to meet some or other commitment, whilst others would just as well like to sleep their days away and call it beauty sleep. That's what filled the old year just gone.

- Time is a non renewable resource that only ages itself.
- Never can we turn back the clock to relive that exact situation.

- Nor can we take away the age of time as it shows its scars on our body of wrinkles and aches and pains?
- ✚ What we have failed to realise is that our time on earth is limited. But long after we have gone time will continue its ultimate course until the Lord comes.

C. We Are Not Promised Another Day.

The Bible tells us not to count on tomorrow because tomorrow may not come for you or for me. All we have is right now. So our time on this earth is valuable because it is very limited.

A friend of mine earlier on in the ministry taught me this valuable saying from the bible and to this day I have never forgotten it because we used to always quote it to one another.

James 4:14-15 ¹⁴ Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

¹⁵ For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

Any plans should always be according to the Lords plans.

Our days should be filled with continuous prayer asking the Lord to guide us in making these decisions and even after that we have made them we need to ask for guidance.

II. MAKE THE MOST OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY

Secondly, Paul tells us that we must make "the most of every opportunity." and he gives a reason, "because the days are evil."

A. Jesus said that Satan is a robber & a thief, & one of the things he tries to rob from us is our time because time is a very precious possession.

Just think of the time wasted.

1. We're overloaded with commitments. We've committed ourselves to go here & there, to take part in this activity & that social function. As a result we don't know if we are coming or going because we have overloaded ourselves in the area of commitments.

2. People are overloaded with possessions. Closets are full, & Garages are overflowing. People have gone into debt to pay for all of those things that they must have. And now they are so afraid that someone will steal them.

There are so many demands on our time, so many good things that need to be done. But there are just a limited amount of hours in a year.

III. UNDERSTAND WHAT THE LORD'S WILL IS

Now what do you think God's will is for you in this New Year?

A little while ago I brought a message on "can we understand what the Lords will is for our lives"? Can you remember?

a) Do you think He wants your mind so saturated with worries & anxieties that you can't think spiritual thoughts?

b) Do you think He wants your calendar so crowded that you don't have time for the important things?

c) SoWhat do you think God's will is for you in the New Year?

A. First of all, establish your priorities.

1. I'm assuming that since you are in church this morning that you believe God should be a part of your life. But when you begin to establish priorities, you have to decide just where He stands in your life.

2. So ask yourself, "Who or what is most important in my life?"

Can you say this?

"Therefore, when Sunday rolls around neither rain nor shine nor sports will interfere with my being in church, because He comes first in my life. I will therefore worship the Lord & nothing will interfere with that."

3. You also need to schedule some time each day to pray & to read His Word.

4. You must also spend time with your family. Your spouse, your children, and Grandchildren even if they are a pain sometimes, because they're growing up so fast.

5. So don't let these precious moments run by. Don't let them get away for sake of time.

6. Make sure that you spend quality time with your children or loved ones.

7. Make sure that your family is very high on the list.

TO SUM UP: So first of all, establish your priorities.

B. Learn how to live today. The two greatest enemies of time are regrets for things we did in the past, & anxiety about what will happen to us in the future. And Many people are living either in the past or living in the future.

Let me help to explain that in a simple illustration:

A girl who went to college & she just hated it. But she told herself, "If I can ever get out of college & get married & have children, I know I'll finally be able to enjoy life." So she stuck with it. She went to classes every day & finally graduated from college. Then she got married & had children, & discovered that children are a lot of work. So she told herself, "If I can just get these kids raised, then I'll be able to relax & really enjoy life."

But about the time the kids were entering high school her husband said, "Guess what? We don't have enough money to send our kids to college. I guess you're going to have to get a job.

" Well, she didn't want to, but she knew that he was right & they needed the money, so she went to work. And she hated it. But she told herself, "If I can just get these kids out of college, & get all of the bills paid, then I can quit work & really enjoy life."

Finally, the last child graduated from college, & all the bills were paid. So she walked into her employer's office & said, "I quit." He said, "Oh, you don't want to quit now. If you stay with us just another 8 years you'll have a pension for the rest of your life."

She thought, "Well, I don't want to work another 8 years, but there's all that money there, & I just really can't turn down the opportunity.

" So she worked for another 8 years. Finally, she & her husband retired at the same time. They sold their home & bought a little retirement cottage. Then they sat down on the swing on their front porch & looked at the family picture album & dreamed about the good old days.

- So therefore it is said:

"Life is what happens to you while you're making plans to do something else.

" True, isn't it? Another year has come & gone.

- A new year stretches before us. **Help us Lord, to redeem the time.** Help us to use the hours of this year the wisest way we can for you, & for your glory.

- ✚ But if we had to listen again to Psalm 90 and verse 9 we would have known all this to be so.

Psalm 90:⁹ For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told.

- ✚ Our life will be toll as a story one day, but will it be the life that you wanted to live, because there is no practise runs.

Romans 13:11-12 says, "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. 12.The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. "

- ✚ The New year should be filled with the light of our Lord not the light of the world.

PRAYER.....CLOSE