

Redeeming the Time
Ephesians 5:15-17,
New Year's Day January 1, 2015

Beloved of the Lord.....New Year's Day is a perfect time for us to consider time itself, and the grace of God given us in our time on earth. We know our life is short, as short as a blade of grass, and we just heard in Psalm 90 the prayer, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." The big question then is, what are we going to do with this brief time on earth, when God instructs us to number our days? This past week a memory came to mind which might prove useful. Years ago my father had a property in North Sioux City, where there was a beautiful garden. He painted and created a beautiful sign which said "Peter Rabbit's Garden". There was a nice picture of Peter Rabbit himself. It was very well done and I admired it. Someone else did too. They stole the sign and it was gone forever. That sign is still a distant memory and likewise that land now belongs to someone else. Of what value is that land or sign for us today? When we die of what value will they be? The answer is ZERO.

On the other hand, the Word of God, the love of Jesus taught me by my parents, that word taught still retains value to me today. That word spoken has borne fruit, and if I in turn speak the same word to others, God will likewise bear more fruit. The value then of our entire life can be boiled down to one simple thing.....did they pass on the Gospel Word to the next generation or did they not? Indeed God has called us all to do that, to speak God's Word to the next generation as it says in Psalm 78, "That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments." So God's Word spoken in this world lives and lasts forever and it saves souls from hell and delivers up to heaven, ONLY by the merits of Christ. But everything else fades away, even that sign....Peter Rabbits Garden. "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

Today then as we enter a New Year, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil." But.....

I. What does it mean, to walk circumspectly?

Circumspectly means to look around or be cautious. It is to be careful to consider all circumstances and possibilities. The Greek word which is translated also means exactly, diligently, or perfectly. We cannot then casually cruise through life without care or concern doing whatever strikes our fancy, but we are to be very careful so that we keep God's commandments, living to God's glory. We are to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the Scriptures, walking the straight and narrow way, for "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." Do not then underestimate the evil of this world, for the Bible teaches we do live in an evil day. Satan has many lies which he whispers in our

ears through people that we are in daily contact with. “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.”

To put this in picture form, how careful would you be if you had to walk through a minefield every day to get to work? If there were little flags scattered about which marked every mine so you could weave your way through, wouldn't you be very careful, even exact as to the placing of every step? That is how we must be in the Christian faith, as we follow the Lord and His Word which cannot fail us. It doesn't mean that we live in fear every day, but we are to fear God and keep His commandments and we are not to foolishly accept the lies spoken by our world. Today, for example, it seems most people have accepted evolution and homosexuality as normal, natural, and true, but they are lies meant to deceive. How many Christians do you suppose have fallen into the devil's hand simply because they believe the so-called science promoted by unbelieving scientists? They have put faulty human reason above God's clear account of creation. “In the beginning, God created the heavens and earth.” What is hard to understand about that? Doesn't all of creation declare God's glory? Likewise God's Word says, “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” God is very clear and those who support evolution are calling God a liar.

Of course the other big lie today is that people are born as homosexuals. But that is a blasphemous lie for it makes God the creator of their evil. Throughout the Bible we find God clearly condemning this wicked behavior in the strongest terms, and there is a wonderful sermon regarding this in the January edition of the One Accord. God hates and condemns those who do this sin so much, that in His anger He rained down fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah. And throughout the New Testament, when God condemns adultery and fornication, drunkenness and the like, we find sodomy condemned in the same passages and sentences. The main phrase God uses to describe this sin is “abusers of themselves with mankind.” Men are abusing their bodies with other men, which Paul calls vile and contrary to nature, or “unseemly”.

If then we ourselves are not to be deceived, God gives us the warning, “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.” This means don't keep company with such people, but instead rebuke them for their sins lest they perish in damnation. Your job is to deliver them from their sin, not keep company with them and accept their sin, for then you will be overthrown and perish in your sins. This is very similar to Paul's warning in First Corinthians five. There Paul says, “I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.” This means if in a congregation you have such a person who is a fornicator or adulterer, homosexual, drunkard, etc., don't keep company with them either. Don't even eat with them. They should be excommunicated so they repent, and ask Jesus to forgive them, but by all means don't accept their wickedness and keep company with them. Again “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful

works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.” “Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.....See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” Now.....

II. How do we redeem time (because the days are evil)?

To redeem means to buy or ransom, to rescue from loss. That is what God instructs us to do with our time in this coming year, even all the days of our life. But how do we do that? It is certain after all, we cannot do good in the present to counterbalance our evil in the past. Only the blood of Christ covers those sins. But rather our Lord instructs us here to simply diligent use of our time because we live in an evil day. Indeed we are living in Sodom and Gomorrah right now. But knowing the grace which God has given you in Jesus Christ, so you are delivered from the fires of damnation by the very blood of God's only-begotten Son, make good use of your time to the glory of God. Take every advantage of every opportunity in this brand new year before the night comes when no man can work. If this was the Last Day in which God allowed this world to stand, would you live it as it if were just another day? Let none hear you idly saying There is nothing I can do, while the souls of men are dying and the Master calls for you. Take the task He gives you gladly, let His work your pleasure be; Answer quickly when He calleth, “Here am I, send me, send me!”

III. Understand then, and do God's will in this glad New Year.

So the Bible says, “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” There are two primary ways in which we are to redeem the time, or spend our time wisely for the glory of God, and that is BY WORD AND DEED. Thus we are to be witnesses of His grace and salvation in this New Year, speaking to our children and all those in the world around us, for God would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth. And remember, we are not to have fellowship with the works of darkness, but we are to rebuke them. You ought to love your neighbor enough to tell them they are breaking God's commandment, and they should repent and believe in Christ. Shouldn't you speak God's Word while the souls of men are dying? The Bible thus reveals there is only one way for us sinners to reach heaven, and that is by the saving name of Jesus Christ. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Again remember, when you are dead, all the value and worth of your life will come down to the simple question, did they speak God's Word to others and share the love of Christ, or not? This is why Psalm 115 says, “The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence. But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the LORD.” Be then a good witness of the love Christ has revealed.

The second way in which we are to spend our time in this glad New Year, is by works of love for our neighbor. So the Bible says, "Let us not love in word only, but in deed and in truth." Likewise Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." You shouldn't just love your family or friends or fellow Christians who are easy to love, but you should love also those people who are difficult to love, the grumpy and complaining, even those who hate you and persecute you. Jesus teaches "Love thy neighbor as thyself". Romans 13 says "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

Finally beloved, let us all consider how much time we waste with entertainment and frivolous amusements, which really help no one. Do not let the electronic world so entertain you and keep you occupied that you pass by your neighbor who is in true need of your help yet you are too busy playing games. Of course there is nothing wrong with a certain amount of leisure and relaxation, but understand also we sin when we fall into excess. "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Let us all then, in this glad New Year of grace, be diligent and walk circumspectly by keeping God's commandments, searching the Scriptures daily, loving God and man. Have no fellowship with the works of darkness, but rather reprove them, for "Christ died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." "Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." Amen.