

Live Wisely

by Erlo Stegen

Christians should live wisely, making the most of every opportunity, and understanding what God's will is, even in evil days.

Duration: 1:02:21

Scripture: Psalm 46:1, Proverbs 3:5, Ephesians 5:15

Topics: "Christian Living", "Spiritual Wisdom"

Description

This sermon reflects on the passage from Ephesians 5:15, emphasizing the importance of living wisely in the face of evil days and uncertainty. It urges listeners to be vigilant in their conduct, make the most of every opportunity, and seek to understand and follow the Lord's will. The speaker draws parallels between the challenges faced by early Christians in Ephesus and the struggles of modern-day believers, encouraging perseverance and faithfulness amidst adversity.

Transcript

Today is the last day of this year. If the Lord keeps and spares us, tomorrow will be the first day of the new year. And today, we'd especially like to thank God for keeping us throughout this past year.

At the same time, it reminds us of our last day here in this world. When you're a child, time goes very slowly. But the older you get, the faster it goes.

And you start realizing that there where you are going is very nearby. Those in the world, when they celebrate this day, they do it with drinking, dancing, boozing, and all sorts of reverie. We had somebody here who was a white person who got converted just before Christmas.

But Christmas time, up to New Year, always found him being drunk. For 25 years before then, every Christmas and New Year period found him drunk, and that was the first sober Christmas and New Year that he had in 25 years. But we thank God for keeping us throughout this past year.

And that we can meet together around God's word, where God's word can help us. I'd like to take the text for this evening from Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 15. Ephesians 5 verse 15 Making the most use of every opportunity because the days are evil.

Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Our text for this evening is very short. Only three verses.

Firstly, this point, be very careful then how you live or how you walk. Not as unwise, but as wise. The second point is making the most of every opportunity because the days are evil.

And then thirdly, do not be foolish, but understand the Lord's will. These three points are written here so briefly. We need to pay heed to what God says.

These verses are so brief and short, and yet they contain so much. And God's word here says, be very careful how you live because the days are evil. God has kept us in this past year.

We don't know what the new year, which we're going to start tomorrow, will hold for us. God has kept us till today in this year, and yet there are others who passed by and did not see this day. Just today, there was a funeral down in Makogo of a young man who got killed.

He no longer or didn't see the end of this year and neither the start of the new year. We also don't know what his final destination was, whether he ended in heaven or in hell. And God says that the days are evil.

They are evil indeed. It's a secret. It's a secret what lies ahead of us in this new year.

But God knows what that secret is. We don't know exactly what we are going to meet up with, whether this or that. We don't even know who the first person is going to be in our midst, who's going to leave us and pass from this world.

And that's why God says we shouldn't live as fools, foolish, because we do not know what the future holds. These verses are so short, but they are profound in their teaching us how we ought to live. In these days that lie ahead, God willing, we will have many opportunities to live for God and to serve Him.

On the other hand, we may not have any opportunity whatsoever where death comes and it snatches us away like an eagle, a little chick. You may have the hope and the expectation that everything will go well. On the other hand, you may be doubting about that.

Maybe the coming days may not hold something good for you now, but something bad. You may be an optimist and maybe a pessimist as well. But you don't know what's going to come your way.

But let's pay attention to God's word and listen very attentively to what God's word tells us. The word says, be very careful then how you live, how you conduct yourself, not as unwise, but as wise. The word says, be very careful then, be circumspect as to how you live, how you conduct yourself.

When it says here, be very careful, it means that you ought to open your eyes and see where you are going to end up. See where you are going, not as a fool, not foolishly, but as a wise person. Walking wisely, very carefully on this narrow way of the Lord.

On either side of you, there is a deep, deep precipice. You find yourself on this very narrow way, where on either side of you, there is a deep precipice. And so you need to open your eyes as you walk on this way, lest you take a wrong step and you step besides the road and you disappear in that precipice.

Don't take a wrong step, whether to the left or to the right of the way, because you will tumble headlong into hell. And don't just run heedlessly with your eyes closed on this way, lest you also lose the way. We need to make the right decisions when we are placed before a decision or a choice.

Woe to us if we make a wrong decision. Woe to us if we are not before God and in prayer before God concerning our decisions, where we say, oh Lord, please lead me step by step. And we should also not walk and conduct ourselves as the world does, just doing as the world does and that's why the word says here, we need to walk wisely.

And we need to even be careful about every word we say, and that which we do. What we do need to be the acts of wise men. We need to be in prayer at all times saying, oh God, lead me according to your will, may I not obey the will of men and just please men.

The Bible says there is a way that looks right unto a man, but the end thereof is death. That way looks so right and yet the end thereof and of many other ways like that is that you perish. There in Psalms it says, be still and know that I am God.

Not that you just speak rashly and say any old thing, but you need to be still and know that the Lord is God. You may live wisely, going the right way and then experiencing and reaping that which is good. On the other hand, you may go a wrong way and reap and harvest something bad.

And then I'd like to speak about the second point, making the most of every opportunity, redeeming the time. To redeem the time. What does it mean to redeem the time? Why are we instructed to redeem the time for this reason that the days are evil? We need to redeem the time.

We need to make use of every opportunity God gives us, lest we lose and we waste the opportunities that God gives us. To redeem the time means looking very carefully how you use that time because that time could mean salvation to you. That time could be of benefit to you, but if you lose it, if you don't use it in the right way, you just waste and squander it.

Redeem the time, buy out the time, make the best use of every opportunity. Maybe God says to you, speak to that person, you don't do it, you just ignore that, and maybe that person is harmed through that, and you too. Make the most use of every opportunity God gives you, and by that you will profit and gain.

So let's make use of every opportunity lest we regret it afterwards and say, oh my, if only I had spoken there, if only I had done that. Paul says, use every opportunity, take hold of every opportunity God gives you. If God says to you, speak to that person about his soul, you need to do so.

Maybe you don't use that opportunity and afterwards you hear that he's passed away, and you regret not having used that opportunity. A wise person realizes that we are living in evil times, in evil days, and such a person is wise and careful as to how they conduct themselves. Paul said that the time is evil.

Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesians whilst he was in chains in jail. He was there in a Roman jail. And the Roman Caesar at that time was Nero.

Nero was a wicked man, perhaps even more wicked than King Herod, who killed all those many innocent babies. Nero set fire to Rome, and when a large part of Rome burnt down, he then blamed the Christians for that, saying it was the Christians that had set fire to Rome. And the Christians experienced severe suffering and persecution after that, when everybody persecuted them, saying that they're such evil people, because they were accused of having set fire to Rome, and having burnt down their shops, their businesses, their homes, whereas they were innocent of that act.

It was Nero himself. And it is said that Paul himself was put to death, executed by Nero himself. Now just imagine that.

Perhaps it was the first time and the last time that there was such a man of God as Paul, and yet he was put into chains and eventually beheaded by Nero. Rome was a heathen city. And the king of that city and of that empire was Nero.

Even if you've got a dog and you don't even like that dog, don't give it the name Nero. And there were a few cities like this city of Ephesus. It was a large and it was a spectacular city there in Asia.

And it was built close to the sea. It was the business and the trade center of the whole world. Where all the wealthy businessmen gathered together.

That city was known for its splendor and few cities had such splendor as Ephesus. And it was actually called Artemis. By Diana.

By the Romans. Now Artemis meant that six goddesses. Now her temple, the temple of Artemis was one of the seven wonders in the world.

It was so such a marvel. And this city had a stone statue of Diana. She was so to say the queen of prostitutes.

Here on her top part of her body there were many breasts hanging, indicating that prostitution and immorality is her thing. And according to that religion there was no law that required you to be morally upright. Everyone had the freedom to do whatever they liked.

There was an author of that time. And he said that the people in Ephesus, the inhabitants of Ephesus were more immoral than even animals. They lived worse than animals.

Their morals were lower than animals. And they were also known for their astrology, doing fortune telling by using the stars. That's an evil thing.

Reading the stars and telling the fortune or the future by looking at the stars. And they were involved in black magic. They were very well known for their sorcery.

They were immoral and their goddess was a goddess of immorality. And all these evil influences ruled and reigned there in Ephesus. These things which are an abomination to God.

And that is why Paul said this is an evil time. The days are evil, be wise. There were dark evil clouds gathering against the Christians.

And the Christians suffered severe persecution at this time. It was dangerous in those days. Even to go by the name of being a Christian, your life was at risk.

The pure faith of Christianity was smeared pitch black and it was made out to be something evil. And that's why Paul said that these days are evil. I wonder what Paul would say about the times in which we are living in.

There are many Christians who want to give up. They find it difficult. They say it's so difficult to be a Christian at this time.

They say it's so difficult to go on as a Christian. If you are determined to serve the Lord, then you are persecuted. There were many Christians in Ephesus, but due to certain elements and certain people, it was made very difficult for them to be Christians.

Now we know that the darker it is, the brighter the light shines. And so it's actually good for us when we experience opposition and difficulty, because that's when our light should shine all the brighter. So even though it's difficult to experience opposition, and yet that actually contains blessing.

Times of persecution provides us with opportunities to further and to propagate the gospel. We shouldn't fear it when there are times of opposition, when it's difficult, when it is dark, because that is when the light will shine all the brighter. We shouldn't fear it when there are times of opposition, when it is dark, because that is when the light will shine all the brighter.

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We shouldn't fear it when there are times of opposition, when it is dark, We shouldn't fear it when there are times of opposition, when it is dark, And the third point, which we find in this word, is doing what the Lord's will is. It says, Therefore do not be fools, but understand what the Lord's will is. We should not be fools.

We should understand what God's will is. Remember, when Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem, on that Friday when he was crucified, it was dark and the disciples had lost all hope. They were disheartened, but on the Sunday when the news came that the Lord had risen, How bright didn't that day dawn, their tears were turned to laughter, their gloom to joy.

It was a wonderful day. We, Christians, ought to realize at all times that we are still on this side of the grave. We are always on this side of the empty grave.

We shouldn't mourn and grieve like those who are on the other side of the grave, but we should be like those who rejoiced because of the empty grave. We should not be downcast, disheartened, like people who are depressed with no hope. Christians should never be pessimists, they should always be optimists.

It's heartbreaking when you find a Christian with a long coffee pot face, when you find him depressed and having lost hope. Jesus conquered the grave, Jesus conquered death, there was no enemy as powerful as death and yet Jesus conquered it. Jesus conquered death and therefore we too are victorious and conquerors.

So even though these are evil days, difficult times, yet it should make us excited. These should be wonderful, marvellous days where we've got great expectation of that which is good from God. We should always remember what the Lord Jesus said, let not your hearts be downcast or be troubled.

Let not your hearts be troubled. If they are troubled, dear Christians, you are sinning, you are doing the wrong thing. Jesus is alive and we should be alive in any situation.

The Bible says the Lord is my strength and my song. A Christian is a person who sings because Christ has become our salvation. Often the Bible says, be strong and courageous, do not fear for the Lord God is with you, He will go with you and give you strength.

The Bible says there is no rock as strong and as firm as our Lord.

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