

Fact Sheet for **“Redeeming the Time”**  
**Ephesians 5:15-21**

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Many of us are most familiar with the KJV of verses 15-16.

<sup>KJV</sup> **Ephesians 5:15-16** ¶ See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, <sup>16</sup> Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Many a missionary conference has had the theme, “Redeeming the Time”, which meant for these conferences that we should be involved in evangelistic endeavors while the opportunity still exists. But are these verses referring to missionary endeavors? Let’s look at them carefully.

<sup>15</sup> ¶ **Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.**

What did Paul mean by “making the best use of the time”? What did he mean by “the days are evil”? There are several passages that I could call on to illustrate what Paul meant by these words. One of them is 2 Peter 1:3-4. Paul meant by “making the best use of our time” or “redeeming the time” that the Ephesian believers should live for God rather than the world. By “the days are evil” Paul meant that the world around us is full of evil. Those who are spiritually wise will live for the Lord instead of following the ways of the world around us.

<sup>17</sup> **Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.**

The word “foolish” can be translated “unthinking”. To “understand” is “to comprehend” or “to gain insight into”.

Let me illustrate what Paul does *not* mean by the “will of the Lord” “Is it time to trade-in my car? What is God’s will?” Trying to find God’s will for this sort of question will most often come down to “What do I *feel* God wants me to do?” I can so easily fool myself into thinking that my “feelings” are God’s leading. Think about the romantic attachments that young people too often have to the wrong kind of people. Instead, starting in the next verse, Paul will go on to describe exactly what he meant by the will of the Lord.

Paul wrote verses 18-2 as one sentence. That sentence begins with two commands, with the second command being described by four phrases.

<sup>18</sup> **And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,**

The first command is not to get drunk with wine. That is debauchery. Your translation may have “excess” or “dissipation”. Here’s the meaning. When someone deliberately chooses to get drunk they have chosen to participate in reckless foolish behavior. Peter uses this word “debauchery” in his 1 Peter 4:3-4. Getting drunk is not “having a good time”, it is reckless and foolish.

The second command, set in opposition to this, is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Now look at the four phrases which describe what Paul did mean by being filled with the Spirit, things which were the will of the Lord for them, and are for us.

Phrase #1

<sup>19</sup> **addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,**

Most translations begin this phrase with the more literal translation “speaking” instead of “addressing”, while the NLT renders it “singing”. Given the psalms (which were to be sung), hymns, and spiritual songs, the NLT’s rendering makes sense. You naturally get the idea of singing with a group of Christians. The music may take various forms but the words need to ring true. When we sing in a group we are communicating what we believe to those around us. One aspect of being filled with the Holy Spirit is wanting to participate in this kind of singing.

#### Phrase #2

#### **singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart,**

This is not focusing on group singing. It is focusing on what is going on in your thoughts while you sing. When you sing in a group are you first and foremost singing to the Lord in your heart, or are you just singing as everyone around you is singing? Do you sing when you are by yourself? Do the words of the music run through your head? Do you find yourself at times humming a spiritual tune? This is evidence that you are being filled with the Holy Spirit.

#### Phrase #3

#### <sup>20</sup> **giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,**

What about the evil things and tragic things of life? Is Paul saying that we should thank God for them? We normally quote that verse we looked at earlier...

<sup>KJV</sup> **1 Thessalonians 5:18** In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

But Ephesians 5:20 says **for** everything. Colossians is a book with many parallels to Ephesians, and indeed it was written around the same time as Ephesians, A.D. 60-62. Here is a quote from Colossians, as Paul is dealing with the same topics, that sheds some light on his thoughts in Ephesians 5:20.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Colossians 3:17** And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Ephesians 5:20 can easily be understood to mean that in everything we do or say we should give thanks to God the Father. Giving thanks to God as you go about your day is evidence that you are being filled with the Holy Spirit.

#### Phrase #4

#### <sup>21</sup> **¶ submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.**

This phrase sets the core thought for the rest of chapter five and the first half of chapter six. The word submitting, in its grammatical form, has the idea of “submitting yourself”. It is something you consciously choose to do. The word “submit” literally means to place yourself under something or somebody. As Paul will mention only people in his following words, then Paul meant by this phrase that being filled with the Holy Spirit will motivate us to place ourselves under others. Another way to put it is seen in Philippians 2:3-4. This can be tough at times. We can easily be more concerned with our lives than with being a blessing to others. The real bite of this Philippians passage comes in the following words of verse 5.

When Paul wrote that fourth phrase he would follow it up with six examples that we will consider in coming weeks. But here is the point today...

**Redeem the time and be filled with the Holy Spirit.**