

A Cup Overflowing – A study of the Christian life

Lesson 12:

A Christian Life is...

An Opportunity-filled Life

Eph 5:15-16

“Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.”

Eph 5: 8-17

“Live as children of light...¹⁰and find out what pleases the Lord. ¹¹Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹²For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. ¹³But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, ¹⁴for it is light that makes everything visible. ¹⁵Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.”¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.”

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Ecclesiastes 9:1-12

So I reflected on all this and concluded that the righteous and the wise and what they do are in God's hands, but no man knows whether love or hate awaits him. ²All share a common destiny—the righteous and the wicked, the good and the bad, the clean and the unclean, those who offer sacrifices and those who do not. As it is with the good man, so with the sinner; as it is with those who take oaths, so with those who are afraid to take them. ³This is the evil in everything that happens under the sun: The same destiny overtakes all. The hearts of men, moreover, are full of evil and there is madness in their hearts while they live, and afterward they join the dead.

Ecclesiastes 9:1-12

⁴Anyone who is among the living has hope—even a live dog is better off than a dead lion! ⁵For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten. ⁶Their love, their hate and their jealousy have long since vanished; never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun. ⁷Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for it is now that God favors what you do. ⁸Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil. ⁹Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun—all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun. ¹⁰Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.

Ecclesiastes 9:1-12

¹¹I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all. ¹²Moreover, no man knows when his hour will come: As fish are caught in a cruel net, or birds are taken in a snare, so men are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them.

- Do you remember how he sums it all up?
 - “Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole man.”

Ecclesiastes 12:13, English translation of the LXX
- Let’s look at 9:1-12 in more detail...

Ecclesiastes 9:1-12

Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart,...⁸Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil. ⁹Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love,...¹⁰Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might...

- Parallel passage: "...man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment..."
- It's never too late to make a difference!
- Not only should you enjoy life while you can, but
 - exude happiness,
 - show those you love, that you love them, and
 - "any job worth doing is worth doing well!"

1 Corinthians 10:13

- “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”
- This verse deals with temptation; what does this have to do with the subject of opportunity?
 - Does the principle extend to God not opening up opportunities for us that we can't handle?

A final example

- Jesus provided a great example of an opportunity that many of us fail to take full advantage of.
 - Matthew 9:10-13
 - Matthew 11:19

Next week...

- A Christian Life is *A Worship-filled Life*

Notes for *A Christian Life is An Opportunity-Filled Life*

Slide 2:

- “...making the most of every opportunity...”

Questions 1 & 2: What does *that* mean? What types of opportunities is he talking about? What does it mean to “make the most” of an opportunity?

Paul uses the same metaphor in Colossians 4:5 – “Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.” The Greek word here is *exagorazo*, and is translated “redeeming [the time]” in the KJV. The word means “to make wise and sacred use of every opportunity for doing good, so that zeal and well doing are as it were the purchase money by which we make the time our own.” (Thayer)

Another way to put it is “don’t waste time”.

Slide 3:

- Essential points to emphasize:
 1. Like any passage, it’s important to look at the full context. (next slide for more notes)

Slide 4:

- “...making the most of every opportunity...”

Questions 1 & 2: What does *that* mean? What types of opportunities is he talking about? What does it mean to “make the most” of an opportunity?

- Essential points to emphasize:
 1. Like any passage, it’s important to look at the full context.
 2. He’s contrasting light and darkness, good and evil. This is one of the passages we looked at in Lesson 7. **Question 3.**
 3. If we’re going to “live as children of light”, we must know what the Lord’s will is – vs 10 & 17. Important enough for him to mention twice!
 4. “Be very careful, then, how you live” is literally “look carefully how you walk”.
 5. “making the most of every opportunity” is literally “redeeming the time”. This implies that we should not allow ourselves to be controlled by our circumstances, but rather should make use of time as a valuable commodity or resource, as a master does with his servant, or a merchant with an opportunity to acquire the best goods.
 6. **Question 4.** A verse that may help here is Ecclesiastes 12:1 – “Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, ‘I find no pleasure in them.’” Make the best use of your time now, while you still have the strength and energy to do what needs to be done.

Also, keep in mind that many of the Christians who were reading Paul’s letter for the first time would soon face severe persecution and some even death. The days were very evil, but not really any more or less evil than they are now.

Slide 7:

- Interestingly, he begins 12:13 by saying “Hear the end of the matter...”. This is an English translation of the Greek (LXX) “Τέλος λόγου τὸ πᾶν ἀκούεται”, or “telos logos to pan akouetai”. “Telos” means “end”, which is where the word “teleios” (perfect, or complete) comes from. “Logos” is a word (no pun intended) you should remember from last week. It can refer not only to the spoken word, but also with respect to the mind alone – consideration, reckoning, grounds for an action, etc. (Thayer)

Slide 8:

- All are destined to die – Hebrews 9:27. It doesn’t matter whether man or woman, rich or poor, righteous or unrighteous.
- I don’t know why I remember this, but my high school senior English teacher would be pleased. This reminds me of Mark Antony’s “Friends, Romans, countrymen...” speech in Shakespeare’s Julius Cæsar. Act 3, Scene 2: “Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears; I come to bury Cæsar, not to praise him. The evil that men do lives after them, The good is oft interred with their bones...”
- - Not only should you *be* happy, you should show it!
 - Show your appreciation for those you love.
 - Ever wonder where your mother got that saying?
 - (Incidentally, in v.9, where the NIV renders “all the days of this meaningless life”, the NASB more correctly renders “all the days of your fleeting life”.)

Slide 9:

- **Question 6**
- This passage doesn’t directly relate to the subject of opportunity, and it’s a dangerous hermeneutic to extend an interpretation to a separate, unrelated passage. However, there is scriptural basis to support the idea that not only will God not let us be faced with temptations we can’t stand up to, but he won’t present us with opportunities we can’t handle.
 - One need look no farther than the parable of the talents to see the principle (Matthew 25:14-30). The one-talent man *thought* he couldn’t handle the opportunity, but his master told him he could at least have earned interest on it.

Slide 10:

- While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and “sinners” came and ate with him and his disciples. ¹¹When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners’?” ¹²On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ¹³But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”
Matthew 9:10-13
- The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and “sinners.”’ But wisdom is proved right by her actions. Matthew 11:19
- The point is, we’ll bring more friends to Christ than we will strangers or acquaintances. If we don’t *have* any close friends outside the church, how will we ever bring them to Christ?