

The Days Are Evil

Ephesians 5:15-17

15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil. 17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. (Ephesians 5:15-17 (NASV))

To say that it is not easy to be a “real Christian” during these days in which we now live truly is an understatement. These words here in verse 16, “the days are evil”, are so very true and so very descriptive of the days in which we now live.

The very present “darkness” that we have been talking about over these recent few weeks is so very, very real, enshrouding our world with its pervasive and controlling nature, reaching into every person’s life and bringing about behaviors more corrupt and more depraved than we have every known before, accentuating these words of our Lord in verse 16, “the days are evil”.

One of the difficulties of being of the age that I now am, my days on this earth have afforded me the opportunity to see and to experience what might be some of the worst periods of decline in all of the history of men. As a teenager in the latter years of the 1950s, I can recall what I would describe as being days of relative innocence, especially when compared to the years that would follow.

Because, I can clearly remember a very dramatic downturn in moral values that took place during the decade of the 1960s. In those days, our country’s leaders welcomed into being a counter-culture that was led almost entirely by young and very foolish idealists who knew very little about real “truth”. But they did not let their lack of wisdom inhibit their drives, as they set about to carve out for themselves, and consequently for all the people of our nation, a kind of “truth” that fit standards we never knew before. And the changes they brought about were far, far-reaching, from errant political beliefs to uncontrolled immorality and sexual misbehavior.

It was a decade when whatever meager levels of wisdom of the aged that existed at the time were simply cast aside in favor of a new kind of rationale and behavior that had few boundaries, exchanging the value systems of their parents for new-found freedoms of completely unbridled sexual misbehavior and drug addictions.

Sometime, when you have the opportunity, you might listen carefully to a song of that day entitled “American Pie”. That song was in many ways a chronicle of the loss of innocence taking place at that time, set into a metaphor called, “the day the music died”.

In that song, whether Don McLean knew much about what he was singing or not, he voiced a great deal of truth that was captivating the culture, even attributing much of the “takeover” to the devil himself.

One line in the song used the metaphor, “And the three men I admire the most, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, they took the last train for the coast, the day the music died”.

Looking back on those days, it does seem that God might have actually pulled away and pulled back His precious hedges of protection to allow the errant generation to suffer through some of the consequences that their new found freedoms brought with them.

And yes, I do know that people of other generations might have said much the same about their cultural declines. But from my vantage point, it began for “real” in those days. And it has not slowed down for a moment even to this day. Those days, and these days, and all the days in-between truly are as our scripture text tells us “the days are evil”.

And I can’t help but see the exact parallel that is given to us in the words that the Apostle Paul gave in Romans 1. May I ask you to turn there and follow along with me? This is a quite lengthy portion, but each word is so appropriate to our understanding of these words before us today, “The days are evil”. Listen, beginning in verse 18!

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. 21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. 24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, 27 and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward

one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. 28 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; 32 and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them. (Romans 1:18-32 (NASB))

Again, I can personally remember those days of decline in the 1960s when our nation began to take on these very same kinds of awful conditions of depravity spoken about here. Beginning there in those days, the college age youth set our nation onto a path of no return, highlighted daily by everything from free love to LSD trips to student protests and revolts. As these words in verse 22 tell us, they thought themselves to be so very “wise”, and they still do. Verse 22 of Romans 1 . . .

22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man. (Romans 1:22-23)

And just as these words foretold, those were the days that we, as a nation, began in earnest to exchange faith in God for faith in human knowledge and leadership, asking and expecting our governmental leaders to do more and more for us, much in the same vein as the example given in Isaiah 44. In that parable, God spoke of a man who planted trees in his forest. Then one day He went and cut one down, carved out its pieces carefully, using some for firewood, but with other parts of it he made an idol to which he then bowed down before it and cried out, “save me”.

How foolish! How so very, very foolish! A piece of wood cannot save a person, and neither can people, nor can governments, nor political systems. Men are not gods and they make a very poor imitation of the One True God. And God really does not like for us to do those kinds of things.

And again, do not these words of Romans 1 sound so very much like today’s culture and behaviors? Depravity has such a deceptive nature. It creeps into people’s hearts and minds so subtly that few are aware of its presence. Behaviors that once were unacceptable, become acceptable, our “new normal”.

The bible scholars call these steps here in Romans 1, “steps of reprobation”, and they truly are. We take one small step into depravity and we like it, so we take another and

then another. And yes, God will warn us away from those steps, but He seldom ever just stops us from doing what we want to do. He sadly, does as there words tell us. He gives us over to those perverse choices that we make. Verse 24

24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, 27 and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. (Romans 1:24-27)

Again, depravity most often begins exactly as it is presented to us here in verse 25. We “exchange the truth of God for a lie”. That one thing, “exchanging the truth of God for a lie” is all that is needed to set all sorts of sinful behavior into motion, especially sexual misbehavior. We follow the lustful passions of the lie we have just accepted and we begin to do despicable things, from having sexual relations outside of marriage, to men having sex with men and women having sex with women.

May I point out here that if you or any of your friends wonder what God thinks about the depravity of homosexual behavior and “same sex marriage”, read these words over and over until they sink in! Then go over to the Book of Genesis and read the account of Sodom and Gomorrah. If any questions still remain, then I suggest that you stay on your knees until the Holy Spirit explains the matter to you. God is being very, very clear here. He condemns it all. And any confusion or misunderstanding or denial will be completely on our side of the equation.

And so, as we would consider these days in which we now live, and look back at the decline that has taken place over the past fifty or so years, we can see all of these exact steps occurring over and over again, leading our generation into deeper and deeper pits of depravity, validating the words of our Lord here in Ephesians 5,

15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:15-16)

This is a stern warning from the Lord, and we need to listen and heed it. And note here again, that we see the word “walk”. And the words of our message last week still rings clearly in my mind concerning this word. We said that the word “walk”, though it be simple, it is all inclusive. It means every thought that we think, every relationship we involve ourselves in, every conversation we have, every bit of work we

put our hand too, literally every breath we breathe, is to be done in the ways of the Lord. And folks, God is that serious!

The words of our scripture passage for today are given to us with the assumption already in place that you and I are secure in our salvation. But though that be so, we are still, each day, walking through what might aptly be called a “mine field”. The darkness is still so very pervasive and deceptive in its ways. Thankfully, we who have Christ as Savior really do have His very special “light” shining in and through us. And because of that “light” we can see things that we would not otherwise see. And we have wisdom that we would not otherwise have. And so, this warning is about something that we can, and must actually, do. Listen again!

15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:15-16)

Recently, I was asked about the definitions of knowledge and understanding and wisdom, how those words might differ in their meaning. I gave the short answer because the full answer is far bigger than my mind is capable of knowing. But I said simply that “knowledge” can be acquired through intellect, i.e. reading, hearing, seeing. “Understanding” is the ability to know what the “knowledge” we just acquired really means. But “wisdom” far exceeds both knowledge and understanding. “Wisdom” is the “right use and application of the knowledge and understanding we have received”. For us who have Christ as our Savior, it is the Holy Spirit within us discerning and explaining knowledge and understanding to our spirit, as well as to our mind.

And this is what these instructions from the Lord are telling us here. With God’s Holy Spirit providing the wisdom we need, even though these days we live in be so very evil, we still can “walk as wise” men and women.

15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:15-16)

May we examine one last thought before we close for the day . . . note here in verse 16 that a very subtle possibility is being suggested,

16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:16)

The subtle possibility is that we will not “make the most of our time”. While often the things we get caught up in are not necessarily sinful, especially as compared to the depraved and sinful behaviors we just read about in Romans 1, still the use of our time may not always be of the best kind of use, not as profitable to us or to our situation, and especially to the Lord, as it should be. It is that old dilemma that we get mixed up in,

that of choosing “good” things, which are mediocre, over the very “best” things, things that God would have us to be doing.

As for myself, sometimes I feel like the pinball in a pinball machine, being bounced from one bumper to another, the activities of my day being determined by chance rather than by planning. And yes, sometimes those kinds of responses can be alright, but most of the time they are simply “distractions”. And here, God is exhorting us to be careful about distractions and to make the most of the time that we have each day.

15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:15-16)

We will stop here for the day and pick back up next week. And hopefully, next week we will learn what God has to say about drinking and the way alcohol can corrupt our behaviors.

Listen again to the words we have been examining today and may I encourage us to write these words indelibly upon the doorposts of our hearts.

15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:15-16)