

Ephesians 14-11-16a

This is Sunday, the 16th of November, 2014. We're in the book of Ephesians in our Bibles. The study resumes this morning at chapter 5, verse 18.

We'll take a moment to focus our attention and our concentration, go to the Lord and ask His blessing that we can be susceptible to and benefited by the presence of His Holy Spirit as we address this portion of God's Word, shall we pray? Father, thank You for granting us another day for another opportunity to grow in our experience of You through the truth that has been revealed to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You for Him. We thank You for His faithfulness, His obedience, His example of love for You reflected in love for us that made possible our salvation, our relationship with You, our hope, giving our lives meaning and purpose, giving us the promise of a bright future and the opportunity to learn and to grow and to enter into eternal things even though we began our existence in the dust and claimed and chained to a lost and cursed earth.

We thank You for our deliverance. We thank You for Your love for us, Your patience with us, Your provision for us, and the opportunity we have this morning to learn more about Your plan and purpose in our lives. We pray that we'll have insight and understanding as we look at this portion of Your Word through the ministry of the Apostle Paul.

We pray that each one of us will find useful, pertinent, and meaningful help in living a life that is more pleasing in Your sight, a more perfect investment of our time and our resources in those things that will comprise the future. We pray that in all things the Lord Jesus, our Savior, will be glorified. We pray it in His name.

Amen. Ephesians 5, verse 15 and following, Ephesians 5, verse 15 and following, See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God. This is our passage. We have already studied very closely the first three verses of this section.

See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. And that statement provides the context, provides the framework for understanding what is said afterward. What does it mean to redeem the time because the days are evil? It means to use the time wisely.

What is the definition of wise? Well, it depends on who you are and what your standards are. For us who recognize that God is the author and source of truth, wisdom is the fear of the Lord, the beginning of wisdom. This is what we're told in the Old Testament.

It pretty much goes without saying that the fear of the Lord, in other words, factoring Him in to everything we think and everything we do, that's the beginning of wisdom. If He defines reality, if He created reality and created us in it, then our best shot at understanding truth and living a meaningful life is to pay attention to the Lord. This seems like a fairly obvious observation, but it is surprising how often we acknowledge it and then go off and don't do it.

So Paul gives us this exhortation. See then. See then that you walk seeing.

You notice you have two different words there for vision, for perception. See then, make sure that you walk circumspectly. Here in our English translation.

And it is the same in Greek. The first word, see then, is from blepo. And blepo is like our word look.

If somebody is standing on a steep hillside and you see a large boulder tumbling in their direction, what would you shout to them? Look out. Look up. You don't have time to say, due to the force of gravity and the instability of the soil and boulder formations above you, at the current time there is descending upon you a mass that is greater than your ability to support.

It is going to crack your skull. You say, look out, right? Paul says, look out, watch, be watchful, be alert, pay attention. You cannot, although you may think you can, you cannot drive wisely, safely and intelligently while looking at your phone.

You cannot. Your eyes have to be on the road. Traffic can stop so quickly.

Somebody can jump, as happened this past week, last Wednesday, off an overpass onto the highway, right here in Plano, right there, Plano Parkway and Central. Guy decided he had no further reason to live, jumped into the highway, and of course was immediately struck by several cars who could not stop. I didn't inquire to find out if any of them were texting at the time, but this was early in the morning.

You wouldn't expect, you would think, well, light traffic, little going on, how could there possibly be an obstruction? And if you are not watching, if you are not alert, if you don't see the brake lights of cars in front of you, you're going to have bad consequences. Paul says, watch out, blepete, therefore, that you walk peripeteo, circumspectly, with care. It's an interesting word that's used here.

This means with diligence, understanding everything perfectly, having a perfect grasp. Lacking no information, lacking no proper procedure, you've done it exactly right. Not as those lacking wisdom, Safos is wisdom.

There was a software company I used to get antivirus from called Safos, and their company name means wisdom, be wise, don't be attacked and compromised by viruses, trojans, and other

malware, Safos. Well this is a Safos, the alpha privative, the negative, you don't have wisdom. Don't be without wisdom, be wise.

Not as a Safoi, but as Safoi, those who are characterized by wisdom. You don't just have wisdom on a shelf and you go get it once in a while. This is the way you live.

You are known as someone who is wise. Buying up the time, ex agorazo, the agora is the marketplace, and you are making an investment of time. Why? Because the days are poneiras, they are evil.

The days are evil. So you've got to redeem that time. You've got to turn what is by nature and by default evil into something good.

You have in your soul right now a time converter. Have you ever had one of those little boxes you put in your car that you can plug into the cigarette lighter and it gives you an outlet, it gives you an AC plug that you can plug your laptop into or a DVD player or something like that? It's a converter. It takes what is useless and turns it into something useful.

If all you have is an AC plug, the cigarette lighter is useless, unless you're extremely creative. Now, I have been able to take power from a cigarette lighter and actually power something, but it's useless until you convert it. It needs to be changed into something else.

Redeeming here, ex agarazzo, you're buying it out of evil and converting it into something good. It is a transaction. And this is something you have to do.

When you have your resources, you want to be the one to spend them, right? You don't want somebody else getting into your account and spending your money. This has happened to most of us at some time or another. Somebody has hacked our account or gotten our credit card number.

I had somebody buy three tankfuls of, I mean, big tankfuls of fuel down in Central Texas by impersonating me and misusing one of my credit cards. And they went to the liquor store and then got three big truckfuls of fuel purchases. They spent my money.

Ultimately, it turned out to be the credit card company who covered that. I wasn't ultimately out that money, but it's very disturbing to have somebody else spend your resources. I want to spend my resources.

I work for them. I earn them. I put them in the bank, and I want to spend them.

I don't want to give them away. I don't even like as much as the government and others take out of it. I want to be the one to spend.

Well, our time is a gift from God. We are given this capital, and we can either invest it in things

that have no return, or we can invest it in things that last. Redeem the time.

The days, if you do nothing, are evil. You have to proactively spend that money. You have to take it, you select what you're going to spend the money on, and then you spend it.

If you don't take care, if you don't think, if you don't analyze, if you don't select, the money will drain out of the account, and you will have nothing to show for it. Redeeming the time. The days, by default, are evil.

Every day, get up in the morning and say, I've got 12, 14, 16 hours of daylight here. What am I going to do with these hours, and what will I have when this day is over in exchange for that investment? They are going to spend. It's just a matter of where I direct them.

I can direct them. If you're walked into your house or into a room in your house, and all of a sudden you think you hear a faint noise, and you go over and investigate, and you find that there's a faucet on full blast that you or somebody else just didn't turn off. Has that ever happened? Maybe it's only happened to me.

But you wouldn't want to fess up, I guess, if you had. Or you go out, and you're walking out to get the mail or something. You walk across the lawn, and you think, boy, this is really spongy.

Or you go out in the back, and you see that there's water running down the alley, and you go and discover that your garden hose is on full blast, and it has been going for a long time. Well, this is your life. The water is flowing, and you can't turn it off.

The spigot is on, the faucet is open, full blast. All you can do is direct where the water is going to go. Are you going to water your lawn? Are you going to fill your pool? Are you going to wash your clothes? Are you going to clean things? Are you going to save it so that you can drink it later? What are you going to do if you just leave the hose laying there? It's just going to run away and be gone.

This is time. Every day. What are you doing with the full-on running faucet? You can let it run down.

I've often thought, I've told most of you this before. I have this notion in my head, and it starts with a dustpan and involves some tubing and a paddle pump and large containers where when my neighbors up the street are carelessly watering and all that excess runs down the gutter, I think, you know, I could put the dustpan there with a tube attached. I could suck that water up and store it in barrels and water my own lawn with it.

I could just, you know, as many barrels as I have, I could fill my whole side yard with 50-gallon drums, and just every sprinkling day, every time it rains, just put the thing out there, turn it on, paddle pump that water, store it. It's free. Somebody has just left it running in the street.

No law against collecting it. Why don't I just suck up that water and store it? One of these days, you're going to come over to my house, and I'm going to have a little pylon there that says, don't drive up next to the curb here because there's my dustpan. You'll see my little apparatus.

Time is precious. Time is precious. Wouldn't it be great if, in fact, they made a movie where people had a certain amount of time and then they would die? But you could trade time.

They had these little bracelets and said, here's how much time you have left. And transactions, time was literally money. And you could say, well, you know, I'll give you my car if you bump your bracelet on mine and give me so many days or so many weeks or so many months of life.

And time was literally money. And I thought that was very clever. That one and the Voyager episode where everybody's made out of muck and they don't know it and they're living their lives and they ultimately just become vapor on the windshield of the real Voyager, those two are my favorites for distilling really important truths in a creative, fictional way.

I don't have time to explain that episode again. You know the one I'm talking about. Redeem the time because the days are evil.

Therefore, do not be unwise. He just got through saying, don't walk as a asaphoi. He says, don't be unwise.

And he says, don't be unthinking. Froneo is the use of your mind. Many people who have other alternatives think that they have got something figured out.

They're day traders and they're going to make money or they're starting a business. I think they're going to make a fortune or they're engaged in some activity and they've got it all figured out. They've figured out success.

They've figured out happiness. They've figured out. Paul says, do not be a froneus, unthinking.

Thinking people don't end up with a goofy alternative. Thinking people, if you're genuinely intelligent and genuinely smart, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Any other path is a froneus.

You're really not thinking. Do not be unthinking, but understand. And this is suni-emi.

This is... Emi is the word that means to exist. Emi is to be and sun is with. And you exist with.

You co-exist. You've seen these bumper stickers, co-exist. It's made out of all these faith symbols.

But suni-emi means, it's translated understand, but it means you get this to the point that you're sort of a part of it. You exist with it. If you understand the will of the Lord, suni-emi,

understanding, really means I've soaked it up.

I am one with it. I am of like mind with it. I'm simpatico.

There's no distinction, no difference between what I think and what this says is the will of the Lord. There's no difference between the will of the Lord and what I think ought to be happening in my life. Understand, suni-emi, what the will of the Lord is.

Then he says, and this is our current verse, be not drunk with wine, do not be drunk with wine, in which is asotia. And I mentioned to you the roots of this word where it originally had the idea of something being incurable. Now this word is used a couple of other places in scripture, and then it is used adverbially.

Jesus uses the adverb form of this, as I mentioned in Luke 15, 13. Luke 15, if you will recall, is the prodigal son, the story of the prodigal son. Father, give me my portion, I'm leaving.

Father says, fine, here's your stuff. And he is prodigal with it. He is a prodigious spender.

I always thought, when I was little, I thought prodigal meant you go away and come back. And it is often sort of used in that loose way. But prodigality means you prodigiously expend things.

You are a prodigy when it comes to waste. Prodigal means you do the opposite of what we've just been talking about. And so when Jesus says, not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with asotos living, with the kind of living that is incurably bad.

There's no way to make that lifestyle work. You can't eat, drink, and be merry when he had spent all. It is an expenditure with no return.

He had spent all, and then there's a famine in the land. And he began to be in want. So he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country who sent him into his fields to feed the hogs.

What citizen did he join himself to? This is a good Jewish boy here. And what is he reduced to? Feeding the unclean swine. Probably the same herd that eventually is going to run over the cliff to get away from the demons.

But anyway, Jesus uses this word, the prodigal gathered all together, which he was given that he did not earn. This was his father's gift. His father earned this substance, gave it to him freely.

He takes it, goes to a far country, and there wastes his possessions with asotos living, the kind of living that cannot produce a return. It has this idea of an incurable problem. It's not fixable.

You can't make that lifestyle work. Asotos. It is used also in one other place by Paul, and this is in Titus 1.6. He's talking about the qualifications for an elder.

He says to Titus, in your area on the island of Crete, which is your assignment, to ensure that believers are learning the word of God and are being spiritually fed, you need to organize the effort. There need to be some individuals in every city who can guide new converts, new believers. They can't just get together and say, well, we're saved.

What do we do now? You need to ensure that somebody who has some knowledge, somebody who can impart truth, somebody who can help them redeem the time and understand what the will of the Lord is, there needs to be somebody there to do that. This is the very simple organizing principle for a local church. Somebody needs to be in the local church who knows more than the other people in the church about the communicated will of God so that they can share it.

It's just one of the functions. It's like in every military organization, somebody needs to be providing rations. You can't all get together and put on a uniform and grab a weapon and run off and have no beans, no chow, no rations.

Somebody's got to be in the supply chain providing the rations, replenishing the bullets. It's not a glamorous job. It isn't a pedestal job.

It's a supply job. And Paul tells Titus, I left you in Crete to make sure that there are logistics for the believers in every city. You make sure that they've got spiritual food.

So he says, there are places where this stuff is lacking. There's just no organization. There's no clue.

There's no structure. There's nobody assigned to do anything, and they're just kind of all standing around staring at each other. So you go set this stuff in order and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you.

Every city has its own. And remember, the island of Crete is small. Have you ever seen it on a map? Crete is small.

So when it says city, what are we talking about? Village. It's a little village. So these are going to be small groups, but each small group has, does it say elder or elders? It says appoint elders in every city.

So this is where we get the concept of a board of elders. There's not just one guy who is monomaniacally running everything in the church. And if there is a pastor, he shouldn't have just a token board of yes men.

The idea is that a collection of gifts, a collection of more advanced believers should get together and make these decisions. Why? Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst. We need fellowship.

We need cooperation. We need elders, plural, in every group. This is Titus' job.

What kind of elders? Verse 6, Titus 1, 6. If a man is blameless, this means he is not notoriously charged with wrong. It basically means free from reproach. This is another alpha priventive word.

Somebody in here is the idea of kleitos. This is anegkleitos. You remember kaleo, to call, and the kleitai are the called ones.

Well, to call out, ekkletoi, ekkleitos, you call someone out. You call out and say, hey, he's doing something bad. He's parking in a handicapped space.

He's shoplifting. He's stealing. He's doing something.

You call out a wrong. Well, this is someone who is not subject to any such reproach, anegkleitos. Nobody can bring a charge and say, look, this guy beats his wife.

This guy embezzles money. This guy got fired for bad practice. This guy is a rascal.

This guy is lazy. This guy is shiftless. This guy, whatever charge might be brought, above reproach in the standard sense.

Nobody can say, well, you know, this guy has no business being a leader because of what I'm about to call out. Anegkleitos. Appoint elders, blameless, a one-woman man.

In English, it says the husband of one wife. But this is aner, heis, gune. Aner is man.

Gune is woman. Heis is one. It doesn't mean you cannot have ever been married before or that there wasn't a divorce in your past.

There's people that have tried to press this and say, well, if you're widowed or if your wife dies, you can't be a leader in a church because if you remarry after your first wife dies, well, you're not the husband of one wife anymore and only somebody who has ever been married once. And it's just silly and it's a misunderstanding. This is a one-woman man.

What would be the anegkleitos? What could you call out on a man who didn't fit this? Well, he's not faithful. He plays around. He keeps mistresses on the side.

And it was very common in the Greek world, by the way, to have both a wife and a collection of occasional mistresses. And it was a commonplace. Men of wealth kept female slaves for this purpose and just kept them around for entertainment purposes.

Paul says Titus in Crete, and you remember Paul talks in another place about the Cretans, C-R-E-T-A-N-S, people who live on Crete, and that there are sayings about them that are true. They're kind of depraved people. He says, look, for elders in the church, nobody who's running a harem, nobody who's messing around.

If somebody's going to be an elder in the church, they need to reflect the model that is in

Scripture, which is a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves unto his wife, singular, and they, too, become one flesh. And he is to reflect that in his personal life. He is a one-woman man.

There are circumstances where you may be a one-woman man and something bad happens, and that situation disappears and is gone, and at a later point you are now a one-woman man with a different woman. It could be through death. It could be through legitimate divorce.

It could be through all kinds of means. But can someone bring a charge and say, well, this guy's just going through women like Kleenex. I mean, he's got one today.

He's got another one next week. He's got another one next month. That guy is disqualified.

You're a one-woman man. When you make a commitment, you keep it. As far as it is up to you, live peaceably.

That's the idea. One-woman man. Having faithful children not accused of what? Asotia.

A man who raises his children, and one or more of them is a sot, asotia, undisciplined, out of control, in an incurable lifestyle. That guy is disqualified. It may not be his fault.

It is a picture. What is the picture? If you cannot organize your own house... Now, what about children that have left home? Doesn't apply. These are children in the house.

Children here is techna. That's dependent children. If your child grows up, becomes an adult, goes off high and right, and becomes a lesbian folk singer or something, that's a different thing.

If your kid turns into K.D. Lang as an adult, that is not your fault. While they are under your roof, while they are subject to your control, you are feeding them, you are sheltering them, you are responsible for them, and they are out of control, well, then you're not qualified to be an elder in the house of God, because you do not have the skills to ensure that things are done decently and in good order. I don't care what kind of juvenile delinquent may arise like a weed in your family.

While they are under your roof and under your care, you will control them, or you will be disqualified until you get that fixed. The implication here is that all Christian parents should rule well their own house, and there should be no confusion, chaos, disobedience, and asotia, insubordination. And these two are put parallel to each other, asotia and anhypotactos.

Hupa is under, hupotaso to stand under, to respond to orders, to be obedient, and you've got the alpha privative again, anhypotaso, anhypotacton. You give them an instruction, and they just rebel, they refuse. They are sort of little miniature sinners of the high hand.

They dare you to stop them, they throw fits, they make noise and break things. You're not qualified to be an elder if that's the kind of children you allow in your house, and it is your fault. I don't care what kind of child it is, I don't care why they are that way, you will find a way to ensure

that they are compliant and obedient, or it's on you.

Go to God, find a solution, whatever it may be. But the word dissipation here in your New King James is our word, be not drunk with wine, wherein is asotia. And notice the parallel with insubordination.

This is a child that is unruly, and incurably so. It's not fixed, it isn't addressed. This is a pattern, this is a reputation type of thing.

The other place where this word is used formally is by the Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 4.4. And to get the context, you go back to the beginning of that chapter. He says, Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same thinking, the same mind. We talked earlier about being a thinking person, being wise.

Arm yourself with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. Notice, you're living for one or the other. It's not 256 shades of gray.

You're either living to gratify and satisfy yourself, or you are living to gratify and satisfy and obey the Lord God. It's either your own will or the will of God. We have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles.

Remember Paul has just talked about don't walk as the Gentiles in futility and darkness, bumping into things, hurting yourself and others, wasting your time, unfruitful works of darkness. Have no part of that. Doing the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in what? It says here, lewdness.

This is the word asalgeia. And it has basically the idea of debauchery. Lewdness sounds like somebody running around in a raincoat flashing people.

This is debauchery. This is the wanton pursuit of personal pleasure, usually involving abuse either of people or substances. You're either taking advantage of people in a physical way, or you are abusing whatever is at hand to stimulate your senses.

It may be chemical. It may be activities. It can be anything that takes your mind offline in the way that substances do.

When we walked in debauchery in lusts, this is epithumia. This is urges, satisfying urges, urges that come upon you. The epi idea there is it comes upon you.

It's an impulse. It feels like a compulsion, and you just go with it. If it feels good, do it.

That was the mantra of the late 60s. If it feels good, do it. It can't be wrong if it feels so right.

Epithumia. Drunkenness. This is your oinoflagia.

Oinoflagia in Greek. You recognize the first part. It's where we get the word wine.

O-I-N-O. This is way too much. Revelries.

Drinking parties. They talk about potable water that you can drink. Well, what's translated drinking parties here is potas.

Potas. It's just we're here for what is potable, and we're going to partake of the potable until there's nothing left. Abominable idolatries.

In regard to these, they think it's strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of asotia. All of those things together define and describe dissipation, this one-way downward practice, this one-way downward lifestyle. It has this quality of malignancy, this quality of incurability to it.

This isn't something that results in fruit and productivity and benefit and joy and peace and happiness and light and uplift and benefit. This sort of thing, lewdness, debauchery, drunkenness, revelries, abominable idolatries, where is the good in this? Tell me the uplift to the community. Tell me the personal benefit.

Tell me what a healthy new person you will be, the vibrant personality and sparkling contributions that you're going to make to those around you. No, it's asotia. It is inherently corrosive and corrupting and downward dragging.

It can do nothing else. It has no contribution to make. In fact, it is a form of parasitism because this can only occur in an environment where you have the leisure to do these things to excess.

You are being supported in some way, shape, or form. Do not run with them in the same flood of asotia. Flood of asotia.

Excess. Excess for the purpose of self-gratification. If there's a single way to sum this all up, anything done to excess, ANYTHING, all capital letters, ANYTHING done to excess for personal gratification.

You have not taken into account anything related to the will of God, the glory of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross and despised the shame, the mind that was in Christ Jesus when He emptied Himself, took on the form of a servant, and came in the likeness of men, and who endured the cross for our sakes. Greater love hath no man. None of that is in view.

You do something, anything, to excess for personal gratification. It always ends badly. It is, by definition, asotia.

It is an incurable, corrupting, corrosive, dead end. Can't be blessed. Can only be cursed.

Can't be a blessing. Can only be a curse to others. Oh, I just love old Joe the town drunk.

He's such a great guy to have around. As he lies under my porch peeing himself through excess because it made him feel good to drink that next bottle. Oh, what a great guy to have around.

That's the picture. Be not drunk with wine wherein is all of this. Asotia.

What is the contrast? That's what comes up in the next phrase, and that's what we're going to look at after the break.