

Spiritual Drowsiness

Ephesians 5:14-18

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, October 4, 2020

While we're talking about the church and the wonderful things we have going on, I want to invite you to turn in your Bibles to a book that talks about that. It talks about the church and the wonderful things that God does in the church. And that's the book of Ephesians. It's the book we're in this morning. If you would, please turn to the book of Ephesians. We're in chapter five, which I want to read to you before we get started. If you would look in Ephesians 5:1 with me. Paul writes and he says,

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

But a morality or an impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. For this reason, it says,

*“Awake, sleeper,
And rise from the dead,
And Christ will shine on you.”*

Therefore, be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

We're going to stop the reading there.

But just to say a few words about this, I've told you before, that one of the goals of our church is to teach the Bible. It's one of the goals of our ministry. In fact, I was reminded this past week; I looked it up, that when I was first hired on here as a pastor, it said that in my contract, the very first line of my contract said "the pastor of Grace Fellowship Chilliwack is to preach and teach the Word of God, as revealed in the Old and New Testaments." That got me excited. That got me fired up. Very first thing, it said. In other words, he is to preach all of it, he's to teach every word because the people believe that. They believe every word. And it's so important that they had to spell that out in that document. And as we've done this here, as we've talked through every word of the book of Ephesians, we come to chapter five, we come to verse 14, which is on the subject of apathy. It's what this passage is about. It's on the subject of apathy or indifference, because if the church is anything today, if it struggles with anything in its fight with sin, it's this issue. It just doesn't care. It just doesn't care.

The reason the church worldwide is so sinful and so wicked, and so evil in what it does, is it's because it's fallen asleep. And that's what this passage addresses. And just to give you the background for this, if you notice, verse eight is a key part of this passage. It's very important because it falls right in the middle of the chapter. And it says this, verse eight says,

for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light.

I told you before, this is the first time the word light appears in the book of Ephesians. And it's the word "phos" from which we get the word photograph or photography. It means something that is bright or radiant, like the sun, but it also refers to something that reveals things, because that's what the light does, it reveals what is there. If you don't know what's in a room what do you do? You turn on the light. That's what shows you what's in the room. And this is a fitting picture here for what God has done for you, for what salvation has done. It has shown you who God is. Before you couldn't see him, before when you were lost, you didn't know he was there. But now through His grace and mercy, now you do know who he is. And Paul says as a result of that, verse eight says you need to walk as children of light. That means you need to walk in the direction of the light. You need to walk in the knowledge of the light. It would be a pretty foolish thing to see the light and not walk accordingly, right? It would be a dumb thing to walk in a room, turn the lights on, and then go knock over the furniture, and go on as if nothing has happened.

Paul says in the same way, you need to respond to the light by putting away your sin. This is the connection here. This is how you walk in the light. Chapter four says you put away your lying and stealing and anger. Those are the first sins that he mentions here, the first ones he brings up. Then chapter five says you need to put away your lust. That's another sin that we've talked about recently. It's a big one in here, because Paul says so much about this, but you do all of that, you put away those sins, because you are now in God's light. You're now living for something better. The sin is not attracted to you anymore. You see it for what it is and so you live a different life.

I can't tell you how many people I've talked to recently who have said, they love coming here. They love coming to church, because this world is so discouraging for them right now. Does anybody agree with that? This world is so depressing right now. And I said, Well, that's good because you need to be living for another world anyway. It's good that you think like that, because you need to be living for another place and thinking about another place. I've talked to other ones who have said they watch the news and they see what's going on, and they feel like they're going crazy. And I said, Well, you should feel crazy, if this world is all you have. But it's not. You have another one to come. And what Paul says here is you need to live for that world by turning away from your sins.

To say this another way and talk about our passage, particularly this morning, you need to put away your apathy. You need to put away your indifference. And so what Paul says in verse 14, if you read again, he says

*For this reason it says,
“Awake, sleeper,
And arise from the dead,
And Christ will shine on you.”
Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.*

I'm going to explain all this to you in just a moment. But the passage starts off with the word "awake". You see that there in verse 14, because that's a theme of this passage, that's the focus. Paul says you need to wake up from your sleep. If you want to fight your sin, you want to put it to death, you want to walk in the light, you need to wake up from your slumber. The word awake here is the Greek word "egeire", which means to wake up, stop sleeping, but it also means to rouse yourself and get excited about something. When it comes to sin, that's what you have to do. That's how you defeat it. You need to get excited about that. Rouse yourself. You can't kill it passively. You have to kill it actively. You can't kill it by accident, you kill it on purpose. You have to try. One thing he says all throughout this chapter is you have to try to kill your sin. It doesn't happen by mistake.

So many people don't do this today. So many people make no effort whatsoever to kill their sin, which is why they keep falling into it over and over and over again, and keep messing up with the same sins over and over and over again. I counsel them and the conversation goes the same every week. What did you change this week to fight this? Nothing. Well then what did you expect? You ask them what are you reading in the Bible? They say I don't know. I haven't read my Bible in weeks. You say well, what are you learning in church? They say I don't know. I haven't been. I don't go to church anymore. What are you praying about? I don't know. Who are you witnessing to? I don't know. Who are you serving? They don't have an answer to any of that because they're asleep. They're like a spiritual zombie. Paul says you can't be that way and be a Christian. You can't be that way and do all of this stuff in this passage. You have to wake up.

You can see this for yourself. If you look at all the verbs in this passage in verses 14 and 16. One thing you notice, they're all action verbs. These are all terms of action. Awake, arise, be careful, make the most of your time. None of it's passive. You can't see this in the English but in the Greek all these verbs are in the continuous tense, which means you do all of this continually. You do it every day. And the reason you do it every day is because sin attacks you every day. Sin doesn't take a break. Sin doesn't take a rest and neither can you. You may get holidays from work, but you don't get holidays from the Christian life. I heard one pastor say this, he said, What do you have to do to go to hell? Nothing. Do absolutely nothing and you will go to hell. And then he said, What do you have to do to sin? Nothing. Do absolutely nothing and you will sin.

We get it so backwards. We think if I just go into a room and shut the door or go up on a mountain to some monastery, the sin won't find me there. The sin will find you there. You know, I don't want to step on too many toes, but I'm guessing some of you may be in sin today, because this is what you're doing. You're doing nothing in the Christian life. All you do is sleep spiritually. Some of you may be in sin, and I don't say this to hurt you; I really want to help you with this. Some of you may be in sin because you're lazy, because you know what to do and you're not doing it. You know what to do, it tells you right here, but you're not making the effort. Let this be a call to wake up. In Matthew 22:37, Jesus told us to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. The word "all" means all there. It means you love God with everything, all that you have, especially your attention.

So many people want to love God with everything but their concentration. In Romans 13:11-12, Paul says this, he says,

Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from your sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we first believed. The night is almost gone, the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

I like that word, "armor" because you only put on armor if you're going into a fight. And friends as believers in Christ, you're going into a fight. Salvation is near, there's only so many days and hours left. And you need to act like it, which is what we're going to talk about this morning. If you're taking notes in Ephesians 5, we're going to look at four steps to fighting your spiritual drowsiness. That's our outline for today. If you're taking notes, this is what we're talking about. In Ephesians 5:14-17 we're going to look at four steps to fighting your spiritual drowsiness as a Christian. We're going to make this simple. We're gonna make this real basic because let's be honest, we need help in this, don't we? I mean, does anybody feel sleepy this morning, as a Christian? As you go through the week, as you go through work? Do you feel tired?

I read somewhere this week that the average person or the average internet user today spends an hour a day on Facebook. An hour a day comes to 7 hours a week and 15 days per year doing nothing but

looking at faces. And it wears them out. Paul says you don't want to be worn out on that, you want to wear yourself out on these things. These are the things that matter. And let's talk about that with four steps to fighting your spiritual drowsiness.

The first one which we've already talked about, but we need to say some more about this; the first one is just to wake up. The first step to fighting your spiritual drowsiness is to wake up and that means to pay attention. Snap out of your coma and act like you're alive to the things of God. If you look in verse eight, again, I just want to read this again so it's fresh on our minds. But Paul says in verse eight,

for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light.

And he goes on a few verses. In verse 14, he says,

For this reason it says,
“Awake, sleeper,
And arise from the dead,
And Christ will shine on you.”

I read those two verses to you because when Paul says here in verse 14, “For this reason”, he means ‘for the reason I've been writing about’; ‘for the reason I've been talking about in this passage’, and the reason ties you back to verse eight. The reason is, you were formerly darkness but now you are light. Paul says since you're in the light, since you're saved out of darkness, this is what you need to do. This is how you need to respond. And he gives you several commands here. If you look in verse 14, there's several calls to action. He actually puts several Old Testament passages together to present this. So this is not just one passage from the Old Testament, but several. The first one is to awake. We just talked about that, that means to stop sleeping or stop dozing off. The next one is to arise, which means to get up. So not only should you wake up, but you need to get up, get out of bed, open your eyes, get your day started. And then he says to let the light of Christ shine on you. That means let it keep shining, let it keep falling on your soul. Because this is how you defeat sin. This is how you get rid of it, you let the light of Christ keep shining on your heart. That's what he's saying, let it keep burning bright. You have to fan the flames of it is what he's saying. You have to feed the light. When you're in sin, the reason is because you're feeding the darkness. Paul says you need to feed the light.

You know, when some of you were a child, your parents would do this, they would wake you up in the morning by turning the lights on. Do you guys remember that? Anybody's parents do that? They wouldn't say anything to you, they would just walk in the room and flick the lights on and it would wake you up. But as you got older, they stopped doing that. As you got older, they stopped dragging your foot out of bed, because you were old enough to do it on your own. In a similar way, Paul says, as a Christian, this is your responsibility. You need to keep the light of Christ shining on you. God has saved you. His light is shining on you once and for all. But it's your job to live that out.

You know, one commentator said it this way. He said the greatest difficulty in conversion is to win the heart to God; is to get the heart attracted to God. But the greatest difficulty after that is to keep the heart with God. The greatest difficulty after conversion is to keep your heart close to God. That's what this is referring to here. That's what this is describing. The problem with sin is it wants to pull your heart away from God. The problem with sin is it wants to take you out of the light. You're already in the light. Spiritually speaking, and eternally speaking, you will never be out of the light as a Christian. But sin just wants to get your attention, point it elsewhere.

And so what you have to do is every time it comes up, you have to kill it. As you read through the book of Ephesians, you can tell that there's a sense of urgency here. There's a sense of seriousness about this, because every time a sin is mentioned in this book, Paul tells you to kill it, every single time. It's not a not a theoretical discussion to him. It's not some kind of abstract thing. Every time, if you want to see this for yourself. Chapter 4:25 when Paul mentions falsehood, what does he say? He says, Lay it aside, right? Lay it aside. We're not having an abstract conversation about falsehood. We're not having some kind of theological dialogue. Paul says when you see a lie, you need to kill it. He says in verse 26, be angry and yet do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger. In other words, kill that one as well, before the sun goes down. Verse 28, he who steals must steal no longer. Then you get into chapter five, verse 3, but immorality or impurity or greed must not even be named among you and on and on and on. But the point is, if you want to do what Paul is saying here, you need to kill your sin.

You know, just to give you a practical example of this. We've been talking about the sin of lust recently, because that's the last sin Paul mentions here. It's the last one that he brings up. But a lot of Christians fall into that sin. A lot of Christians fall into lust, because they don't kill it right away. They let it kind of linger in their lives. Because they come home after a long day of work. They come home after a long day at the office and they're tired. They're worn out because it's been stressful. It's been a very hard day. And so what do they do? They sit down in a chair and they turn on the TV and before long, they're gone. Before long they're in sin. They've got lustful images pouring one after another into them. They've got vile images coming into their soul. Why? Because they fell asleep. They let their guard down. They didn't kill it right away. Some of us, our TV watching should go like this, "Oh, no, that's bad, turn it off." Why do we have to argue with ourselves about that? Or to give another example of this, take it from another perspective, you see so many wives do this as well. Moms do this because they sit down after a long day of work. They sit down after a long day with the kids, and they just want to talk. They just want to visit with their husband, but he's too tired. He can't do it, so they pick up a book. They pick up a trashy romance novel that just drips with all kinds of stuff. And before long, they're gone. Before long the wives are in sin now. Because they fell asleep. And Paul says you can't do that anymore. You can't act like that as a Christian, you need to stay awake.

By the way, it's important to understand this, this is what sin does. This is how sin operates. It wants to lull you into sleep. It wants to catch you when you're least expecting it. That's what it does. Sin doesn't

attack us when we're on the mountaintop, it attacks us when we're in the valleys. A Puritan, John Owen once said, The devil is a coward and he does what cowards do. He attacks us when we're weak and tired and vulnerable. That's when you have to be prepared.

The story is actually told of a time the devil and his companions met to find a way to trick people. They met to find a way to deceive them. One demon stood up and he said, I know what we should do. I know how to deceive man, we should tell them there's no God. That's how we should do it. And all the demons cheered, and they thought that was great. You know, tell them there's no God. Then another demon stood up. And he said, You know, I know what we should do. We should tell them there's no hell, let's just tell them there's no punishment. And the demons cheered at that as well. They thought that was great. And one said one thing and one said another until finally the devil himself stood up and he said, you know, you don't have to do all that. All you have to do is distract them. All you have to do is get people thinking about something else. And so that's what they've done. Friends, it's an important lesson to learn here, all the devil wants to do is distract you. All the devil wants to do is get your mind on something else. That's it. And once he has that, he's won and you can't let him do that. You have to wake up.

Which leads to another point to talk about this morning, another step to fighting your spiritual drowsiness. The first one is to wake up. The first step is to pay attention and act like you're alive, act like you care. You can't fight sin if you don't care. You can't fight it if you don't even try. That brings us to another point to consider, another step to fighting your spiritual drowsiness and that is to be careful and make the most of your time. This is a two in one here, a second and a third step to fighting your spiritual drowsiness; is to be careful and make the most of your time. That means to be cautious with your time, to be smart with how you spend it. Because if there's one thing sin is, it's a waste of time, a total waste of time. I remember talking to some neighbors the other day, some last neighbors, and I'm not criticizing them, I'm just talking with them. They said they were going on holiday. "What are you gonna do on your holiday?" Oh, we're gonna drink! "Then what?" There is no then what? That's the holiday. It's a total waste of time, spiritually. You stand before God one day and then what are you going to say? That's what this is talking about.

Next, if you look in verse 14, Paul writes, he says,

*For this reason, it says,
Awake sleeper,
Arise from the dead,
And Christ will shine on you.*

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.

Just to explain that, you know, as you read that, you can tell verse 15 gives us a word that is very familiar to us. In the book of Ephesians it says the word “walk”. That word is mentioned seven times in this letter to remind us that this is what we need to be doing in the Christian life. This is how we need to be acting. We need to be walking, we need to be making progress. When you walk, that's what you do. You start off here, you end up there. You're not staying put, you're growing. In a similar way, Paul says we need to walk, verse 15 says, carefully or diligently. Some of the translations may say the word diligently. Not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. Walk with wisdom, he says. Some of you have seen people in sin and you say, there goes a fool. Paul says, Don't walk like that. Don't live like that. Live with wisdom.

Just some insight into this, the phrase, “making the most”; it's one word in Greek and it means redeem the time or buy it back. If you have the King James translation, it actually says, redeem the time here. I've heard some of you pray that way. You've prayed for the Lord to help us redeem the time. It's a very biblical prayer. Paul tells us to do that here. And this is a business term from the world of finance in the first century. It gives the idea of a merchant who knows the value of something. He knows the price of it, so he buys it back. He invests his money carefully. He doesn't squander it, doesn't blow it and fritter it away. And Paul says, you should do the same thing with your time. Don't fritter your time away.

To add to this though, the word “time” here means moments in time, or instance in time. So this literally means you need to buy back the moments. You need to buy back the instance of time. The idea here is I'm not going to say, well, I'll do that later. I'll do that later. I'll do that later. No, you do it now. Because the days are evil, it says, which means the days are against you. The days are not on your side. When I was younger, I thought I had all the time in the world, right? We would all say that. As you get older you realize you don't. Time waits for no man, you can't hold back the hands of time. We could go on and on with these phrases, but it's true.

I read somewhere this week that when you're a baby, time crawls. It could not go any slower. Then when you become a teenager, time begins to walk, kind of moves a little bit. Then when you're an adult, time runs, and then when you're elderly, time flies. It just never stops. Time never stops. And what Paul is saying here, especially in regards to the struggle with sin, is you need to be careful how you spend it. You need to be careful with what you do with your time, because if you don't, it will get away from you. If you don't, it will be gone. So you need to invest it carefully.

I talk to people at the end of their life and they've said Where did the time go? You know, when I think about this verse and this idea of buying back the time, I'm reminded my grandparents because they were very poor. They were sharecroppers in Tennessee who grew up during the Great Depression. And they said they were so poor that when the Depression hit, they barely noticed. They said they were already depressed, so it didn't affect them that much. But I just bring them up because it was miserable shopping with them. I mean, they would take forever to buy a pair of socks! It would take all day and they would do that because they knew the value of a dollar. They knew the value of money. They didn't have any

money. Paul says you need to live like that. You need to live like that with your time and how you spend it.

You know one commentator said this means several things. There's several applications you can draw from this. It's a wonderful, very rich passage. But one is that you need to live a disciplined life. You need to live a life with some sense of order because you can't do whatever you want and do this. You can't live however you want and make the time count. Something has to give. There's not room in your schedule for everything. You can't say yes to every TV show, yes to every romance novel, yes to every Facebook.

This also means you need to be stable. It means you need to learn how to be stable and consistent in the Christian life, because you're going to have to be disciplined to every day. This will do you no good if you do this for one day and then blow it off the next. It doesn't do you any good that way. You have to do this all the time.

And then third, he said, this means, another application is that you need to be thoughtful in how you live. You need to use your head, because you can't do all this by accident. I just want to stop there and say a few words about that, about this last issue. Because if we were honest, most of us don't do this very well, do we? Let's just be honest. Most of us don't do very well, with using our head with our time. We don't give any consideration to it, because we're so distracted, right? We're so preoccupied with the things of this world. I walk out the door and it's like an attack, right? Pulling for your attention. And if we were brutally honest about this, want to really get into our lives a little bit here, most of us give more attention to our cars than we do to our lives. We give more attention to our homes and our possessions than we do to where this whole thing is heading. And some of you, if I asked you to describe your motorcycle or a hockey game, you could talk for 10 minutes about that, but if I asked you to describe your Bible, you wouldn't know what to say. Now I'm not saying there's anything wrong with those things, those things are fine. But the point is that those things are possessions, your homes, cars, none of that can help you in your fight with sin. None of that can help you prepare for the day you meet God. So Paul says you need to focus on that.

You know, when I counsel someone who's struggling with sin, struggling with lust, this is one of the first things I do, I try to help them learn how to think clearly about it. They can't think clearly about this sin, they're so caught up in it, their brain is so distorted and twisted by the devil. They don't know what to do. So I sit them down and say very practically, here's what I want you to do. Before you give in to that sin the next time, before you give in to lust and look at that pornographic video, or think about having an affair, here's what I want you to do: I want you to ask yourself, then what? Then what? What happens after I do this? And write it down. That's your homework assignment, come back and write all that down. What happens if I do that, give in to that sin? Here's what would happen, you're going to feel guilty for weeks, weeks, over a one minute sin. Weeks of your time, months maybe. It may ruin your marriage, permanently. It will destroy your witness for Christ, your co workers will think you're a hypocrite. All for what? Friends, these are things, it's a little emotional for me, I deal with this so much in the church. What

Paul is saying here, what he's trying to get your attention, trying to get you to do, is to think that way before you commit the sin. The days are evil, they're against you. You only have so much time. Use it for things that matter in eternity.

You know, when the Englishman, Sir William Russell, was on his way to be beheaded; he was on his way to the scaffold, to lose his life, to be executed, legend has it that he took his watch off and handed it to a friend and he said Please take this because where I'm going, I don't need it anymore. Where I'm going I'm no longer dealing with time. Now I'm dealing with eternity. And friends, there's a lesson in that, the lesson is this, the time to deal with God is now. The time to deal with your soul is now because after that it's too late.

It brings us to one more point to consider this morning. One more step to fighting our spiritual drowsiness. Just to review these other ones, the first one is to wake up. Just basically the first step to finding your drowsiness is to wake up and pay attention and snap out of the coma. Act like you care about these things. Act like you're alive. Second and third, Paul says you need to be careful and make the most of your time. That means you need to be cautious with your time. You need to see what sin is doing with your life. It's taking you on a path that will eat up everything. You only have so many days and you don't want to spend them in that. You don't want to spend them in all this sin. It leads to one more point here, one more step to fighting your spiritual drowsiness, and that is to understand what the will of the Lord is.

A final step to fighting your spiritual drowsiness is to understand what the will of the Lord is, which means, again, this is simple stuff, but it means you need to understand your Bible. You need to understand what the Word of God says about this because that's where you get help in the fight with sin. That's where you get help in the fight with temptation, and we won't say too much about this one. We'll talk about this next week. But if you look in verse 14, Paul writes, and he says,

*“Awake, sleeper,
And rise from the dead,
And Christ will shine on you.”*

Therefore, be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

As Paul is wrapping up this passage here and he's drawing it to a close, he gives us one more warning against drowsiness, one more warning against apathy, and that is to not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. That phrase "will of the Lord" it's just another way of saying plan of the Lord, or purpose of the Lord. It's a reference to the Bible, because that's where God's plan is found. Paul said, it would be foolish, it would be stupid to have the will of God and the plan of God and the purpose of God

in your hands and not read it. That's the height of insanity. Why would you do that? This is why God gave the Bible to you. This is why he wrote it out, so you would know his will. A lot of people today say they want to know God's will. They want to know his plan for their lives and so they look for it in the heavens and they look for it in the stars. They look to find God's will in the horoscopes, in the newspaper. It's amazing how popular that stuff is, and with the palm read, they want to know God's will that way. Paul says you don't have to do that. You don't have to go to the heavens and all these other places. God's will is in this book. It's in these pages and you just need to see it there. In fact, you can find God's will here in the book of Ephesians. You can find it in this book that we're studying, because it tells you about his will. For instance, a couple passages here, if you look in chapter two, verse 10, you don't see the word "will of God" here but this is very clearly His will, 2:10, Paul writes and says,

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.

So that is God's will for you. That is what God wants in your life. He wants you to do good works. Not sinful works. Not evil works, good works. You are his workmanship, Paul says, so act like it. Put away you're lying and cheating and stealing, get rid of those things. Chapter Four, verse one also refers to this. If you want to look in chapter 4:1, there Paul writes, and he says, it is the will of the Lord, for you

to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called.

So now Paul says this another way, he relates this to your calling now, and he says you need to live according to that because you were called away from sin. When God saved you, you were called out of darkness. So don't go back to that now. It doesn't make any sense. It's totally unproductive. Then chapter 5:1 says it another way. If you want to look there, we've read this recently, but chapter 5:1 says,

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ loved you

So now Paul says you are God's child. Now you are part of his family. So you need to imitate him in all these things, but the point is that this is all God's will for you. This is all what he wants for your life. You don't have to wonder about that. There's no mystery there. In fact, I told you last week the world makes this so confusing, it makes God's Will so confusing, because it muddies the waters on sin. There's not a sin in this book that the world has not redefined as a disease or a disorder. Or if you're talking about the sin of homosexuality, which is what we talked about last week, it calls that a mental illness; says you're born with it, therefore you can't help it. The Bible doesn't say that. The Bible doesn't say you can't help these things. It says you can and you need to repent. You're born in sin, that's true, but you need to turn away from it now. In fact, this is the only thing that will tell you this, the Bible is the only thing that's going to give you a clear outlook on sin. You won't find it anywhere else. Someone asked me the other day, they said how often should I read my Bible? And I said well every day because you sin every day. You need help every day, right? Then they asked me Well, how do I do that? How do I

read my Bible? And I said, Well, you just read it. No secret to it. You just open it up and study it. I gave him some helps. But the point is, you need to make a priority to do that.

Several years ago, LifeWay Christian research polled 1000 Canadians about this, and they asked them how often they read their Bible. Two thirds of them said never, they never read it at all. And these are Christians, these aren't worldly people. These are believers, professing believers. And the survey said they didn't really show any remorse about that. It didn't bother them because they thought that was normal. Friends, I hope it doesn't apply to us, we need to be reading our Bibles. Listen, if you can look at Facebook for an hour a day, you can read your Bible. You know, if you can watch TV and have hobbies, and all these other things, which are fine; those things are fine, but if you have time to do that, you have time to do this.

Which leads me to ask are you doing that today? Is this important to you? Are you making the Bible a priority in your life? Not because you have to but because you want to. Not because someone's twisting your arm but because you have to have it. This is the bread of life to you. I ask you that, because that's what this is talking about here. This is what Paul is telling you to do. You need this book, you need to know what it says.

To ask this another way, how are you doing with time? How are you doing with your schedule? Listen, I ask you that because if I hear anything from our people, I hear that you're busy. And I'm listening to you. I hear you. If I hear anything regularly from our congregation, it's that you feel overwhelmed, and I get that. But the question I'm asking is, what are you overwhelmed with? What are you busy with? Are you busy with your car, and your house and your possessions? Are you busy with your TV and the novels and then in the media? Or are you busy with the things of God? The question is important because the only way to redeem the time is to be busy with the things that God is busy with. You need to prioritize the things of eternity.

Now I read this past week that a wasted life is nothing more than wasted time. And a wasted life is nothing more than wasted opportunities. Friends, you don't want to do that today. Don't waste the opportunities God has given you to serve him. You have one life. One shot, and that's it. Make it count. Make it count for heaven.

You know, I'll never forget the time I did a funeral for a man I didn't know. You always remember those. He wasn't part of our church. I'd never met him before. The first time I met him was when he was in the casket. But he was a friend of someone so they asked if I could do the service, and when I arrived there were only four people there. That was it. This man had died. This was the celebration of his life, four people; me, my friend and then two co-workers, and the co-workers said they didn't know him that well; they just read his obituary in the newspaper. Because apparently, come to find out the man was a drunk. He lived for the bottle. He lived in sin to the point that he didn't have any friends. He died completely alone because he wasted his life. Friends, you don't want to do that today. You don't want to

waste your life. You want to make it count, for the Lord. Will you do that today? I think it's the most important thing you could ever do.

Let me close this in a word of prayer. Father, our hearts are heavy, or at least my heart is heavy when I study a passage like this, on one hand because I feel like I never get to the bottom of it, never get to the depth of something like this. It's so rich. But on the other hand, my heart's heavy because I see how we fail at this as a society, as a church. Not just our church, but the church worldwide. Lord, we are wasting our time. We spend it on so many things. Lord, help us to walk away this morning with a sober-mindedness about this. Help us to walk away this morning with an awakening in our souls. God, I praise you that the time you've given us so far, many of us have lived more years than we ever thought we would. We've lived more days than we ever thought we would but our lives aren't over yet. There's still more to do and we need to make it count for Christ. Lord, I pray for those who are listening, have been listening this morning, either online or here, and they read a passage like this or they hear some of these illustrations and they say That's me. I am blowing my life, wasting my life. Lord, would they be brought to repentance this morning. Would they remember the words of the poem that says only one life will soon be passed but only what's done for Christ will last. And when would they be drawn to that? Lord, as we come to your table, as we come to the Lord's Supper, would we examine our hearts, make them right with you? And then celebrate this together, in honor of the life that changed all of our lives, the life of Jesus Christ, we pray this in his name. Amen.