

DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

Verses & Notes March 19, 2008

Ephesians 5:15-20 (Part 1)

- 15: *Look carefully then how you walk,
not as unwise men but as wise,*
- 16: *making the most of the time,
because the days are evil.*
- 17: *Therefore do not be foolish,
but understand what the will of the Lord is.*
- 18: *And 'do not get drunk with wine', for that is debauchery;
but be filled with the Spirit,*
- 19: *addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart,*
- 20: *always and for everything giving thanks
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.*

Introduction: We are now right in the middle of Holy week. Tomorrow night will begin the Easter Triduum, beginning with the mass of Holy Thursday and ending with vespers of Easter Day. This is a center piece, if you will, of the entire Liturgical year, beginning in November with Advent and ending with Christ the King, But every week of our lives has a day set aside for the Lord in which we gather for worship, and then also since the beginning of the Church, every day has been arranged with hours of prayer. Why do we do this? Why is this important? This is part of what we'll be discussing today on ***Deep in Scripture***.

House cleaning items...

- Today's Special: <http://www.ewtn.com/podcast/index.asp>
- We want your input!!! Phone: On air phone number: 1-800-664-5110
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REVIEW:

- **Today we're continuing our discussion of Ephesians:**
 - **In the first three chapters**, St. Paul describes the changes that take place in our lives once we have heard, believed, and then were sealed with the Holy Spirit in baptism. Our relationship with God, with other baptized believers, and with ourselves is changed by grace. By grace we were saved from our old life / nature and made children of God, full members of His family, members of the Body of Christ, the Church.
 - **In the second half of Ephesians**, St. Paul exhorts the newly baptized that they now must live out this new life, which requires surrender and faithful obedience.
 - He began this section with this statement: (4:1-3)
*"I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to **lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called**, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."*
 - In 4:4-6, he enumerated the ways they are united in the Body of Christ;
 - In 4:7-16, St. Paul explained how members of the Body have been given spiritual gifts for leadership and for ministry, so that the entire Body grows in unity & love;

- Then in 4:17-24, he warns them to put off their old way of life and put the new one, i.e., live the new life they received in baptism, summarized in verses 22-24,
 - 22: Put off your old nature*
which belongs to your former manner of life
and is corrupt through deceitful lusts,
23: and be renewed in the spirit of your minds,
24: and put on the new nature,
created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.
- In 4:25-32, he describes how they are to deal with conflict within the Body;
- And in 5:1-14, he describes how they are to walk in love.
 - i. Walking in Agape love means wholesome / pure Intimacy: (5:3)
 - ii. Walking in Agape love means wholesome / pure Language: (5:4)
 - iii. Walking in Agape love means wholesome / pure company: (5:6-7)
 But why must we live this way? What difference does it make?!
 - iv. Because these are contrary to the will of God for our lives: (5:5)
 - v. Because these are contrary to our new natures: (5:8a)
 These are the negatives, what are we to do positively?
 - vi. Walk in the light (5:8b)
 - Our lives ought to exude virtues that are good, right, & true: (5:9)
 - We ought to seek to please God (5:10)
 - We need to say No! (5:11a)
 - We need to take a stand against immorality (5:11b-13)
 Conclusion: Truly live by the new life / new birth of their baptism! (5:14)
- All of this, essentially, has been a detailed exhortation of what he said back in 4:1,
 - “...lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called.”*
- **Now in 5:15-20, St. Paul begins with another summarizing exhortation, but then moves on into what, in form, is very much like Hebrew poetry:**
 - 15: Look carefully then how you walk,*
not as unwise men but as wise,
 - 16: making the most of the time,*
because the days are evil.
 - 17: Therefore do not be foolish,*
but understand what the will of the Lord is.
 - 18: And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery;*
but be filled with the Spirit,
 - 19: addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,*
singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart,
 - 20: always and for everything giving thanks*
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.
- **Why is this (possibly) in poetic form?** (possibly for memorization, or to connect with their liturgical heritage)
 - Interesting connection revealed in verse 18:
 - “Do not get drunk with wine” is a direct quote from Proverbs 23:31 LXX;
 - This reveals the influence of hearing Proverbs read in liturgy!
 - Psalms, Proverbs, Sirach, etc., served in Liturgy as the exhortative words of instruction for forming the consciences of the Jewish people before Christ;
 - This was continued by the early Christians; all the early Church writings are full of quotes from these books.
 - Therefore, behind St. Paul’s exhortations we hear the exhortations of Proverbs:

Proverbs 23:

- [15] My son, if your heart is **wise**,
my heart too will be glad.
- [16] My soul will rejoice
when your lips speak what is right.
- [17] Let not your heart envy sinners,
but **continue in the fear of the LORD all the day.**
- [18] Surely there is a future,
and your hope will not be cut off.
- [19] **Hear, my son, and be wise,
and direct your mind in the way.**
- [20] Be not among winebibbers,
or among gluttonous eaters of meat;
- [21] for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty,
and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags.
- [30] Those who tarry long over wine,
those who go to try mixed wine.
- [31] **Do not look at wine when it is red,**
when it sparkles in the cup
and goes down smoothly.
- [32] At the last it bites like a serpent,
and stings like an adder.
- [33] Your eyes will see strange things,
and your mind utter perverse things.
- [34] You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea,
like one who lies on the top of a mast.
- [35] "They struck me," you will say, "but I was not hurt;
they beat me, but I did not feel it.
When shall I awake? I will seek another drink."

- These wise words, like St. Paul's, are spoke from experience!

Today, we'll consider verses 15-17, in which St. Paul emphasizes the need to redeem every moment of our lives:

- 15: Look carefully then how you walk,
not as unwise men but as wise,
- 16: making the most of the time,
because the days are evil.
- 17: Therefore do not be foolish,
but understand what the will of the Lord is.

- **Note: 3 stanzas with essentially parallel meanings:**
 - This is how Hebrew poetry "rhymes."
- **"Then [therefore]"** = indicates another of his summations;
- **"Look carefully"** = "pay close attention"
- **"how you walk"** = common word used through the Bible to mean how we live our lives, which means more than just our actions, but everything we do, say, or think; (i.e., as they leave the baptismal liturgy).
- **"not as unwise but as wise"** = the use of the word wisdom (sophia) brings to the surface their entire background/history/culture of wisdom;
 - Jewish and Greek! Both needed to be modified in relation to Christ.
 - Jesus called for this: Matt 7:24, "Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock..."
 - Their catechetical training and sacramental graces were all given to enable them to learn and then carry out true wisdom;

- **“making the most of”** = “redeeming” = possibly “exploiting” = stewardship
 - Therefore, in the context, the need to make holy or “sanctify”.
- **“the time”** = “kairon” = time, season, age, moment;
 - Therefore, not their past, nor their future, but NOW;
 - Jesus: Matt 6:34, *“Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day.”*
- **“because the days are evil”**
 - Can imagine St. Paul reflecting on all that he has experienced, ever since he was knocked off that horse; not only has he fought the spiritual battle, but the proclamation of the Gospel and the spread of the Church has awakened the Beast (world, flesh, and the devil) and persecution is on the increase;
 - In all of his letters, he warns us that we, too, will fight against the enemy if we seek to follow Jesus Christ;
 - And the enemies will certainly try to entice us to waste our time / lives; the time God has given us to live in obedience & love & to grow in holiness;
 - In Matthew 25, we find three of Jesus’ parables (foolish maidens; the talents; and the separation of the sheep & the goats. He begins his parable about the foolish maidens with, *“Five of them were foolish, and five were wise.”*
 - The entire context of these parables is “making the most of the time” we have been given, because we never know when the King will return!
- **“Therefore do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is.”**
 - Here St. Paul summarizes how we are to redeem / sanctify our time: by following the will of God.
 - How does one learn this? The same way these early baptized Gentile converts did:
 - NOT *sola Scriptura!!!* They did NOT learn merely by reading the OT!
 - They heard & believed & then were called to follow the teachings of St. Paul and the other Apostles and their hand-picked disciples! (Eph 4:7-16) as they taught them how to apply the teachings of Christ & the Scriptures to their lives.

So, why the Liturgical Seasons? Why Sunday worship? Why the Liturgy of the Hours?

- Because this is how we “make the most” or redeem or “sanctify” time;
- Jesus: Mark 2: 27-28, *“The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath; so the Son of man is lord even of the sabbath.”*
- The Liturgical seasons and rituals were not given as constricting measures of obedience but rather as opportunities and channels of grace to help us order & sanctify our lives;
- So that we can “pray without ceasing.”
- When the liturgical seasons & rites are abandoned, so is a sense of the sanctification of time; this eventually led to Puritanism, which sanctifies life through obedience (works)!
- But even those who practice liturgical rites can do so for the wrong reasons / motives, and miss the graces & benefits.
- Every liturgical moment is an opportunity to “make the most of the time;” to “understand what the will of the Lord is;” to “attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13).

Quote from *“Abandonment to Divine Providence,”* by Jean-Pierre de Caussade (1675-1751), Image Books, (1975), pg. 50-51:

“Every moment we live through is like an ambassador who declares the will of God, and our hearts always utter their acceptance. Our souls steadily advance, never halting, but sweeping along with every wind. Every current, every technique thrusts us onward in our voyage to the infinite. Everything works to this end and, without exception, helps us toward holiness. We can find all that is necessary in the present moment. We need not worry about whether to pray or be silent, whether to withdraw into retreat or mix with people, to read or write, to meditate or make our minds a receptive blank, to shun or seek out books on spirituality. Nor do poverty or riches, sickness or health, life or death matter in the least. What does matter is what each moment produces by the will of God. We must strip ourselves naked, renounce all desire for created things, and retain nothing of ourselves or for ourselves, so that we can be wholly submissive to God’s will and so delight him. Our only satisfaction must be to live in the present moment as if there were nothing to expect beyond it.”