

Focus on Ephesians 5:15–20

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Jaime Clark-Soles

Our passage juxtaposes two apparently incongruent facts that mark our daily existence: at one and the same time, the author declares that “the days are evil” (v. 16) *and* enjoins us “always and for everything give thanks to God in the name of Jesus” (v. 20, my translation). Has he forgotten by verse 20 what he declared in verse 16? No more than we have forgotten the prayers of the people by the time we sing the doxology. Indeed, we know this world of which he speaks, and if the language is to be at all useful, it has to cover the whole range of human experience, from realism to hope. Ephesians does this especially well.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” G. Porter Taylor

We are called to give thanks always and everywhere. Give “thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:20). This attitude of thanksgiving requires a radical openness to existence. We are to receive the day the Lord has made, certain that God is in it. Paul certainly distinguishes between the forces of darkness and the forces of light, but he refuses to limit God’s sovereignty or God’s presence. This is not a gnostic world; rather, it is God’s world and God is in all of it.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Paul V. Marshall

Both testaments reject “worldly” wisdom and offer advice on how to be wise in a godly way. This passage repeats the exhortation. The mark of the wise, according to this passage, is using time wisely, and using it to change the world. “Making the most” of the time, or more familiarly, “redeeming” the time (v. 16) carries with it the urgency of a shopper snatching up a bargain. Grab it while you can, the writer urges here. We all know that time we do not use is lost, but once again in Ephesians the writer adds purpose to what might be merely a statement of the wrong to be avoided or the virtue to be acquired.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,”

Richard F. Ward

The value of drunkenness (v. 18) is not as a particular behavior, but as a metaphor. When the church is out of touch with its vocation, it moves through these evil times as one who is intoxicated—satiated and reeling, engaging in regrettable behaviors. If a quest for spiritual formation and maturity in the church displays a desire for balance and integration, drunkenness is the condition of being unfocused, off balance, and out of kilter with “what God wants for you” (v. 17 CEV). So how do we fill in the blank: “The church’s vocation is _____”?