

“Because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:15-21)

In the previous time, we studied about “Harmony of Lights.” We were once darkness. But we received the light of Christ and we were brought to light by his absolute grace and creative power, and now we are made light. It is Christ who is the true light and who changed us into light.

However, there is always a possibility for us to turn our back on this true light. Great temptations surround us and they are tempting us to go back into darkness.

So the Bible tells us:

1. Make the most of every opportunity

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¹⁵ Be very careful, then, how you live-- not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

The Bible says the days are evil. As children of light, we must be aware that the days are evil so that we won't be carried away by them. When we face difficulty, we will take it as the opportunity to shine God's righteousness. We will receive wisdom to integrate our faith and action with every effort. That is the attitude of “making the most of every opportunity.”

I met one Japanese businessman in Singapore. Let me call him John. John had a printing company. One day, he noticed the company's sales were dropping visibly. Their competitor was making great discount. So even some of their regular customers stopped their order.

In his company, many of his employees said to him unless they would also do the same, they would never compete with the competitor, the company would bankrupt. John, who is a Christian, prayed to God and asked His wisdom.

He talked to his team like this. “We are serving our customers to benefit them and make their activity better. We will not change our mission. We will not make unreasonable discount. Let's do even better job to benefit our customers with all our heart and strength.”

The sales kept dropping. John continued to pray and encourage his team

and kept serving his customers. The difficult time continued for some time. But one day, the orders started to increase.

There was a reason why their competitor could make such a discount. They cheated. Something like: they would only put 970, when they should have put 1000. They would use cheaper paper than their estimation. People started to realize that they were cheated. So they started to search for a reliable company and they found John's company. Now John's company got more regular customers than before.

John's story gives us a good picture of what it means to "make the most of every opportunity."

"We have only two choices: either we compromise and allow ourselves to be absorbed into the culture of this evil days, or we "come out of her" (Rev. 18:4), faithfully bearing witness to what is true by both our words and our lives."¹

We can act following the trend of the evil days. Or we remember we are children of light. We can take it as the opportunity to shine God's righteousness and act on this conviction.

If we think and act following the trend of the evil days, we are also part of the evil days. When we come into a conflict with the world and respond the way worldly people do, fighting fire with fire, we stop being lambs and become wolves.²

But if we trust in the Word of God and think and act from the perspective of God's kingdom, the difficult situation can be the opportunity to shine God's righteousness. And that is not easy to do. So the Word of God encourages us: Be very careful, how you live. Be wise, making the most of every opportunity. Don't miss the opportunity. Take advantage of it, make use of it. If we don't have that attitude, we will be easily carried away by these evil days.

2. Evil days

Loren Cunningham, founder of YWAM says this in his book "Making Jesus Lord."

"Due to the combination of capitalism, technology, and modern

¹ Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, Zondervan, 2006, p.41

² Loren Cunningham, *Making Jesus Lord*, YWAM Training Centre, 1988, p.108

communications, the most powerful civilization ever – a global culture – has been formed. This global culture is the beast [or the power of darkness], that threatens to swallow us in these day.

It tells us:

- happiness is found in having things;
- you should get all you can for yourself, as quickly as you can;
- security is found in money, power, status, and good health;
- above all, you should seek all the pleasure, convenience, and comfort you can;
- there are no moral absolutes; whatever is true for you is what is true.”³

These values can enter church as well.

“What can Jesus do for me?” ... The beast has so taken captive the church that many of us act as if God works for us, functioning as our personal assistant when we need him. We, in effect, use God, squeezing him into our image of what he should be like. When he allows suffering in our lives, we get mad at him and pout.”⁴

In Luke 4, Luke records the incident in which Jesus was tempted by the devil.

Jesus didn't eat anything for forty days, so he was very hungry. Then the devil said to him, “You don't have to bear with hunger. Remember, you are the Son of God. It's easy for you. Change this stone into a loaf of bread. Then, not only you can eat it, but you can also save so many hungry, poor people, right? Let's save the world!

Then the devil took him up and revealed to him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. The devil told him, “You saw the world. It is full of injustice, evil, fighting, war. People are suffering, they are helpless. I will give you the glory of these kingdoms and authority over them-- because they are mine to give to anyone I please. I will give it all to you if you will bow down and worship me. Think about it. If you become a king over all these countries, you can immediately solve the problems. And people will worship you and praise you. All the glory will be yours. Is there anyone who is worthy of all these glory except

³ Ibid., p.42-43

⁴ Ibid., p.43

you? Why you should wait?”

Then the devil took him and said, “The Scriptures say, 'He orders his angels to protect and guard you. And they will hold you with their hands to keep you from striking your foot on a stone.' You know God is love. Father God will command his angels to guard you from all dangers, because you are his only son. How can he allow you to be despised, tormented, and crucified by evil people? He can never do that. As an experiment, throw yourself down from here.”

“Satan was promising Jesus the instant achievement of that goal, sidestepping the pain and suffering of the cross and the obedience of Christ’s followers for many hundreds of years afterwards. ... We have to learn to discern when the devil is offering us a shortcut – when he is tempting us to do God’s will the devil’s way.”⁵

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Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

As we live in these evil days, it is all the more important to understand the Lord’s will. Short-sighted thinking will drive us away from God’s way. God’s scale is eternity. If we forget this and keep worrying, we might lose faith. Having eternal perspective is not spending this present time idly, pointlessly or uselessly. We make the most of the present, by listening to God moment by moment, as one who is dearly loved by God.

What is God’s will? Ephesians begins with this. “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.” (Eph 1:4-5).

God’s will is to have us with him as His dearly loved children. God’s will is to make us holy, which is about our being and to make us blameless, which is about our doing. “We are to be the will of God in every event, not simply do the will of God.”⁶ In other words, we will not give up being who we are: being God’s dearly loved children, being children of light, in any moment.

⁵ Ibid., p.104

⁶ M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *The Deeper Journey*, IVP, 2006, p.157

3. Be filled with the Holy Spirit

Eph 5:18

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

It is said that the devil manipulates us through a spirit of Greed, Disloyalty, Independence, Immorality, Covering up or concealment, and Fear. And the Holy Spirit is the very key for overcoming those. Let's look at them one by one.

1) Greed

Greed is the core of global culture, the color of evil days.⁷ Happiness is found in having things. You should get all you can for yourself, as quickly as you can.

The Holy Spirit leads us to rest in God's care. "Like cattle that go down to the plain, they were given rest by the Spirit of the Lord. This is how you guided your people to make for yourself a glorious name" (Isaiah 63:14). As long as we rest in God's care, the spirit of greed is not able to touch us.

There are four elements for biblical Sabbath: stopping, resting, delighting and contemplating.⁸ In Hebrew, the word for Sabbath basically means "to cease, to stop working."⁹ "We must learn to trust God to run the universe without us."¹⁰ On Sabbaths, we slow down to pay attention and delight in God's creation. We can spend time in enjoying beauty and wonder of God's hand works. We relax and enjoy fellowship with others because we are not in a hurry.

2) Disloyalty

"In an age when people are so apt to attack others' actions, beliefs and motives, in a day when Christians address other Christians' faults over the national media, it's time to return to loyalty. Not blind loyalty, but loyalty that includes forgiveness and commitment to work together over faults and differences, to go in private to settle wrongs (Matt. 18:15). ... We need to restore

⁷ Loren Cunningham, p.110

⁸ Peter Scazzero, p.166-171

⁹ Ibid., p.163

¹⁰ Ibid., p.203

each other in gentleness.”¹¹

The Holy Spirit makes it possible. “Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted” (Gal. 6:1).

3) Independence

David Seamands in his book “Healing Grace” lists up three elements of Western culture which can be barriers to grace. They are self-reliance, individualism and activism.¹²

David Watson in his book “I Believe In The Church” also mentions that individualism has weakened so much of the church. So he explains that there are people in whom the Spirit of God is manifestly at ministries in a church. They should be willing to submit into the existing structures that is the leadership because that a part of God’s method of guidance for church.¹³

The Holy Spirit leads us to humility, unity and harmony in diversity. “Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love. Always keep yourselves united in the Holy Spirit, and bind yourselves together with peace” (Eph. 4:2-3 NLT).

4) Immorality

“Right now, Satan is having a heyday with the spirit of rejection and alienation. Many have been wounded as children and still expect people’s reaction to them to be rejection. Much of the sexual immorality so commonplace today is rooted in rejection. Men and women are looking for acceptance and affirmation through sexual immorality of all kinds.”¹⁴

What does the Holy Spirit convince us? “the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.” (Rom. 8:15-16). The Holy Spirit gives us the deep sense of acceptance and belonging.

5) Covering up, or concealment, based on pride

“Humility is being willing to be known for who you are. Pride is trying to

¹¹ Loren Cunningham, p.113-114

¹² David Seamands, *Healing Grace*, Scripture Press, 1988, pp..35-38

¹³ David Watson, “I Believe In The Church”, Hodder and Stoughton, 1978, p.262

¹⁴ Ibid., p.115

be known for something that you are not.”¹⁵

Philippians 2:1-3 says “Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, ... then make my joy complete by ... being one in spirit ... in humility value others above yourselves.” Only when we submit ourselves to the Holy Spirit, we can truly become humble.

6) Fear¹⁶

Fear is our enemy’s favorite weapon. A. B. Simpson said, “Satan is continually trying to weaken our faith by fear. He is a great metaphysician and knows the paralyzing effect of fear-the great enemy of faith. If he can cause us to fear, he will stop us from trusting and hinder the very blessing we need. Fear is born of Satan, and if we would only take time to think a moment we would see that everything Satan says is founded upon a falsehood.”¹⁷

The Holy Spirit sets us free from fear. “The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again” (Rom. 8:15). “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7 NKJ).

When we have submitted our rights to God, we have nothing to fear from the enemy.¹⁸ When God rules in my life or in yours, He is already ruling in whatever are of influence we have in this world.¹⁹

God is our fortress, our stronghold, our deliver, our shield, and our refuge (Ps 144:2).

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¹⁹ Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²¹ Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.117

¹⁶ Ibid., p.118

¹⁷ <https://www.emalliance.org/devotions/simpson?mmdd=0220>

¹⁸ Ibid., p.122

¹⁹ Ibid., p.132

There are sufferings and sadness, because the days are evil. We cannot solve the problems by just thinking about the better future but do nothing, or by escaping from the reality. Only by the Holy Spirit, we can live the abundant life.

We should not limit "Being filled with the Spirit" to the individual level. But let's picture in our mind what it will be like to be filled with the Spirit as the temple of the Holy Spirit, the body of Christ, the church.

When we speak to one another, share the Word of Christ stored in our hearts, share the grace we received, teach and encourage one another, there we have the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

When we praise the Lord together, when we sing to the Lord from our heart with all our might, the lies of Satan will be washed away from our hearts, and instead our hearts will be filled with the words to praise God's wonder, greatness and goodness. The Lord lives in praise (Ps 22:3). Through praise, we will have victory over evil power.

We will thank the Lord together. When we thank Him, we testify His wonder, greatness and goodness. That will encourage and strengthen our faith that had been weakened. That will remind us of the Lord's faithfulness which we had forgotten. Worries and anxieties will be driven away, and instead, gratitude toward God will spread.

To submit to one another practically means to serve one another. Each of us are redeemed by the cross of Jesus, we met one another by God's leading, and we are joined together by the Holy Spirit. Love drives out fear (1 John 4:18). Love covers over a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8). God is love (1 John 4:16). Where love is, there the Holy Spirit will overflow.

Serving in love, genuine love, self-sacrificial love. It is very challenging.

I've got a big encouragement by the word of Darrell Johnson, in his book "Experiencing the Trinity."

"How can we but love one another? ... I am commanded to love you as I love myself, right? And you are commanded to love me as you love yourself, right? Sometimes I can do it, but more often than not, I can't.

As a disciple of Jesus, I am commanded to love you as he loves you. And you are commanded to love me as he loves me. If we obeyed him it would change the world, let alone the church. Sometimes I can do it, but more often than not, I can't.

But here's what I am learning: I am to love you not as much as he loves,

but with him as he loves you. That is, I am to see him loving you and join him in his loving you. Co-lovers with him. Co-lovers of one another!"

"Our relationship is always with each other in and with the Trinity. I am to love you by joining the Trinity loving you. You are to love me by joining the Trinity loving me."

"As I look at him, I cannot but see you held by him in his love. As you look at him, you cannot but see me held by him in his love. ... This lifts a huge load off my soul."²⁰

Eph 5:15-18

¹⁵ Be very careful, then, how you live-- not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. ¹⁸ Be filled with the Spirit.

For LifeNet groups and personal reflection:

1) It is said the devil manipulates us through a spirit of Greed, Disloyalty, Independence, Immorality, Covering up or concealment, and Fear. Describe how these spirits are working in our society.

2) Read Luke 4:1-13. Jesus received devil's temptation in three ways. Can you recognize those temptations in your life? What was it? How did you respond?

3) The biblical Sabbath has four elements: stopping, resting, delighting and contemplating. You may plan to have "Sabbath time" in this week. Just remain in his presence calmly and quietly. Don't try to make something happen. Enjoy "Sabbath." (suggested scripture: Ps 84; Is 40:27-31; Ps 32)

²⁰ Darrell Johnson, *Experiencing the Trinity*, Regent College Publishing, 2002, pp.67-69