

083, Live Carefully

Ephesians

By Max Doner

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Ephesians 5:15-17
Preached on: Sunday, December 20, 1992

Sovereign Grace Bible Church
30375 Fairview Road
Lebanon, OR 97355 USA

Website: www.sovereigngracebible.com
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/sovgrace

Let's turn in our Bibles, please, to Ephesians 5. We'll read verses 15 through 17. Ephesians 5:15-17. Paul is speaking to the believers here. It says,

15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, 16
Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 Wherefore be ye not
unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

Now living on the basis of impulse of the moment, it seems to be the habit of life for many people. Little thought goes into many decisions and oftentimes even less reflection upon where those decisions might lead them in the long term. Little thought is given to consequences. For most people, if it seems right at the moment, if it feels good to do it, if popular opinion justifies it, then this is all that is required to make choices that have very important consequences. Needless to say, this business of living according to the impulse of the moment is the reason why many people wind up in very distressing circumstances. They wind up in distressing circumstances in this life with reference to their family, with reference to their finances, with reference to their health, and they wind up in very distressing circumstances on the day of judgment with reference to their standing before God.

Now God calls upon his people to repudiate such a careless and thoughtless manner of living and this is what he is telling us in verses 15 through 17. He's saying, "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise," and what he is saying to us is that we must live a life not on the impulse of the moment but we must live a life of thoughtful reflection upon our course of behavior and make wise choices regarding that course of behavior. You see, we are not to just slop through life any old way, but rather we are to live carefully. We are to live deliberately, following a clearly understood and articulated set of principles that will produce a predictable result and a desirable result both in this life and in the life to come.

Now one must engage in such thoughtful reflection in order to even become a Christian. He must think about his true condition before God. He must think about and reflect on his past actions. He must recognize his sinful condition. He must realize that he is under the wrath of God and he must think about where that will lead him, where will he be 100

years from today. You see, all of these thoughts are the kind of careful thoughtful type of living that go into making up one who is a Christian, and based on these reflections on his past actions and recognition of his sinful condition and realization that he is under the wrath of God, he begins to seek a solution to his problem. He applies himself to repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. You see, a Christian is one who has thought about his life and has thought about his conduct and about where they will lead him and what he is doing, and he has turned from his sin and embraced Christ as his Savior, and the very way in which we enter into and begin the Christian life is then the way in which we are to continue it all the days of our lives. We are not just to simply engage in serious thought about our standing before God, bring ourselves by repentance and faith into the presence of that God and into a relationship with him and then go and live a careless and indifferent and thoughtless life.

So Paul having told us that we are light in the Lord and that we must walk as children of light and having given us instruction as to what we are to avoid, namely have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, he now begins to tell us what we are to do and he tells us that we are to walk circumspectly, that we are to redeem the time, and that we are to understand the will of God. So this is how the children of light live and so in the first place this morning, we want to understand that to live as children of light, we are to guide our steps carefully. To live as children of light, we are to guide our steps carefully.

Now this is found in verse 15. It says, "See then." What that means is, "Make a point of it. Make sure. Look diligently. Open your eyes and evaluate. Take heed. Consider that you walk circumspectly." Now the word here for "walk" does not refer to locomotion across the ground with your two legs, but rather it is a figure of speech that refers to the whole manner and conduct of our lives, and what he is saying here is that we are to make a point of the fact that our whole manner and conduct of our lives is lived circumspectly.

Now you probably don't know what the word "circumspectly" means, I didn't know what it meant, but it comes from the Greek word "akribos" and it is the word from which we get our English word "acrobat." Now what does an acrobat do when he walks across a tight wire? Well, one thing he does is he walks very carefully. He pays intense attention to what he is doing and where he is going and he doesn't take his mind off of it and let it just wander from pillar to post. He is cautious. He is prudent. He is wary. He knows that one missed step means disaster for him. So to walk circumspectly means to walk attentively, it means to walk accurately, and it means to walk carefully and so what he is telling us in verse 15 is that we are to look diligently that our life is carefully lived and accurately conducted.

Now he goes on to say, "not as fools." Now obviously a fool doesn't live this way. He doesn't conduct his life accurately or carefully or with thought, but rather he is careless. He doesn't think about his steps, where they will lead him or whether they will cause him to fall. He is rash and reckless with his actions, just the opposite of an acrobat.

He says, "not as fools, but as wise." Proverbs 14:8 says, "The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way." You see, a prudent man is wise because he understands what he's doing. He understands his way. He not just happens to find himself in a certain pattern and course of life, he's in that pattern and course of life because he wants to be there, he intends to be there, and he has specific well thought out reasons for being there. So clearly, then, the Christian is not to live casually, he is to live carefully.

Now, I want to ask ourselves two questions with reference to this business of walking carefully and the first is this: why should I walk carefully; then secondly, how should I walk carefully. First of all, then, why should I live carefully? There are three reasons. There is a multitude but I've listed three. The first reason why we should walk carefully is that of gratefulness to God. Out of gratefulness to God.

Now, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 say this, "For the love of Christ," Paul says, "constrains us," it controls us, it directs us. "The love of Christ constrains us because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." You see, when Jesus saved us from our sins by dying for us and redeeming us from death and destruction, the natural implication of that in our lives is that we should no longer live for ourselves but we should live for him. Why? Because the love of Christ, the love that we have for Jesus Christ, for what he did for us, constrains us to no longer live for ourselves but to live for him, and this is the reason why we live for the Lord, because we love the Lord. And why do we love the Lord? Because he died for us. So because Christ redeemed us and saved us, our love for him, our gratitude towards him, constrains us to love him and, you see, love always desires to please its object and when you love someone, you will behave yourself thoughtfully and carefully with reference to that person so as to please them and this is the reason why the Christian is to walk circumspectly, because he loves his Lord and he wants to please him.

Secondly, we should live carefully not only out of gratefulness to God but for the good of those around us. We see in this passage in Ephesians that the manner of life that Christians live is the wake-up call to those who are still in darkness because we must remember that no man is an island to himself. The choices I make, the pattern of life that I follow, these all have a profound effect upon other people around me. My wife, my husband, my children, the people in my community, they can either be greatly blessed or they can be terribly cursed by the pattern of life that I follow. Think of the cases around you of families you know where the choice of one person has caused great sorrow or great blessing to those that are in his sphere of influence. We see this illustrated in the Old Testament by the kings of Israel. The choices that they made had a profound effect upon all the people around them and when they walked circumspectly and carefully and accurately, was that good for the nation? It was indeed. And when they didn't, when they lived sloppy lives, it had a profound impact as well. So that's the second reason why we need to live circumspectly, it is not only out of gratefulness to God but for the good of those around us.

The third reason is for the good of my own soul. You see, it's important for us to realize that a careful, thoughtful, biblical walk of obedience to Jesus Christ brings great blessing and comfort and peace into our lives. Isaiah 32:17-18 says, "the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." You see, when we walk circumspectly or accurately, then the result and the effect of that is peace and quietness and assurance in our lives. A lot of people have the idea that a careful walk before the Lord, a strict obedience to his law, a careful guarding of my heart and of my behavior, this is the way of dreariness and boredom and misery and unhappiness. Well, that's the lie of the devil. The exact opposite is the truth. The work of righteousness shall be peace and the effect of righteousness is quietness and assurance forever.

Psalm 16:11 says regarding God, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Where is pleasure to be found? Where is joy to be found? Where is life to be found? In the presence of God and in fellowship with God. It's not to be found in the brothels. It's not to be found in the bars. It's not to be found in all of the sinful activities that we can practice and engage in in this life.

Psalm 119:45 says, "I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts." Where do we find liberty and freedom? Not in going after sin, that is the worst form of dominion and bondage, but by going after a careful walk before the Lord and in harmony with his word.

Now, these three reasons are reasons enough why we should live carefully: out of gratefulness to God, for the good of those around me, for the good of my own soul. But we could adduce many others. We should live carefully because of the judgment to come. We're going to have to give answer for how we lived and the choices we made because of the weakness of our characters. We have certain defects and weaknesses in our lives that if we don't walk carefully we're going to fall into those things because of the snares of the devil. If we don't walk carefully and if we're ignorant of his devices, we're going to fall right into them. We need to walk carefully because of our testimony before the world. We need to walk carefully out of fear of the chastisement of God.

You see, there's all kinds of motives that can be adduced as to why we should walk carefully before the Lord and, in short, there is every good reason to order our lives carefully and there is no good reason why we should not order our lives carefully. Life is too important and the consequences of our actions are too great to live carelessly and without thought and yet that's what we see multitudes doing and that's the reason why the world and people are in such a mess. Moses declared in Deuteronomy 32:29, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" And you know, 90% of people's problems with not walking carefully before the Lord is not reflecting upon the latter end that that pattern of behavior is going to bring them to. We ought to live carefully when we consider where our choices will lead us and that we will give an account for all of them on the day of judgment.

Well, having considered together why we should live carefully, we need to ask ourselves how we should live carefully. How do we live carefully? Well, two ways. First of all, it begins with thoughtful reflection. It begins with thoughtful reflection. Consider, for example, where you are today and how you got there. That's a great place to start. Where am I today and how did I get here? Do I like where I'm at? What led up to me being where I'm at? Is where I'm at honoring to God? Am I reaping bitter consequences because of my past choices? And you see, as we begin to reflect on where we are today as a result of the choices we've made in the past, then that can help us to either make those same choices in the future, if they were good choices, or they can make us be aware of and avoid those bad choices.

Secondly, we need not only to consider where we are today and how we got there, we need to consider how the choices we are making now will impact our future. You see, so many people just choose on the basis of impulse, "I'm going to do this. I'm going to do that," and they never give a moment's thought as to what effect is that going to have on me a year from now, two years from now, 100 years from now. You see, the prudent man foresees the evil and hides himself, but the foolish pass on and are punished. The foolish man looks not only at the immediate benefits of the choice but at the long-term consequences of the choice, and on that basis he makes decisions in the present. So not only do we need to reflect on the past, we need to reflect on the future.

Thirdly, we not only need to consider where we are today and how we got there, we not only need to consider how the choices we are making will impact our future, we need to consider the examples of those around us. We need to consider the example of those around us both positive and negative. Stop and think about the people you know, stop and think about the conditions they're in, and ask yourself the question: how did they get where they're at? Why are they in the position they're in today spiritually, family wise, financially, health wise, maturity wise, all of these things? Ask yourself how did they get where they are at and then ask yourself the question: do I want to go there? What must I do or what must I avoid in order to turn out being like them? Do I want to be like them? So we need to not only reflect on the past and reflect on the future, we need to reflect on other people.

Now Proverbs is just full of this. We see Solomon saying, "Come, my son," you know? "Let me tell you about someone I observed out my window," and he tells this story about the young man who went and was involved in immorality in Proverbs 7, and over and over again the Bible calls us to remember and to think about and to reflect on the courses of action of other people in order that we might learn from their mistakes and not duplicate them ourselves in order that we might learn from their virtues and follow their examples.

Fourthly, we need to consider the principles upon which we order our own lives. The Psalmist prays in Psalm 119:133, "Order my steps in thy word." That is the simplest of all prayers and yet it is the most profound of any. We need to ask ourselves the question, "Can I tie my choices and my behavior to biblical principle? Am I doing something or not doing something because of what God's word has to say? Or do I act on impulse, peer

pressure or self-indulgence?" You see, a careful traveler consults his map regularly and why does he do that? Because he doesn't want to get off the path and a careful traveler through life will always be checking with the road map of life, God's word, in order to be sure that he doesn't get off the path, and he will be sure that he is ordering his steps in the word of God and in nothing else.

So we need to reflect on the past, reflect on the future, reflect on others, reflect on our own principles. How should I live carefully? Well, it begins with thoughtful reflection. Secondly, it is carried out by principled choices. It is carried out by principled choices.

Now we live carefully by making choices based on what is right, not on what is easy or what is convenient or what is pleasurable, and so we need to ask ourselves any time we face a decision or a course of action: will this glorify God? Will this best advance his cause? Will this draw others to him? Will this help me to be more like my Savior? And the only way we can come up with the correct answers to these questions is by searching the Scriptures and by praying for wisdom as we do so, and then by acting not upon preference, not upon expediency, but upon principle, and sometimes that means doing that which is to our disadvantage or it means doing that which is a denial to our flesh for the sake of doing what is right.

So how should I live carefully? It begins with thoughtful reflection, it is carried out by principled choices. We cannot be either holy or happy or useful without walking circumspectly before God. This brings us, then, to our second point this morning. To live as children of light, we not only are to guide our steps carefully but in the second place, we are to use our time wisely. We are to use our time wisely.

Now notice verse 16, it says, "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Now this is one aspect of a circumspect walk. A person who walks accurately or carefully or thoughtfully or reflectively is a person who recognizes that time is a valuable commodity and he doesn't waste it.

Now the word here for "time" is not the word "chronos" which means time is just a succession of moments, but rather it's the word "kairos" and it means the seasons of opportunities. What he is saying here is take advantage of the opportunity. The same word is used in Galatians 6:10 where it says, "As we have therefore opportunity," kairos, "let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

You see, the Christian is one who recognizes that time and opportunities are stewardships to be managed, not something to be killed and frittered away. Have you ever heard the phrase "killing time"? "I'm just killing time." We're going to have to answer for every moment we ever killed on the day of judgment. Time is not ours to kill. Time is ours to manage and use for the sake of our Master.

Suppose your employer walked in one time and he says, "Well, what have you done for the last hour?" "Well, I've just been killing time." What do you suppose he'd do? Well, he'd can you right there on the spot, wouldn't he? And yet we are servants of God, he is

our employer, he owns all of our time and we need to manage our time just as carefully for him as we would if our boss were standing there in a room looking over our shoulder deciding whether to give us a raise or not based upon how efficiently we were employing our time.

Opportunities which are lost are gone forever, you can't ever get them back, and our whole life is an opportunity, you see, to carry out the purpose for which we were created and that is to serve and to enjoy and to please the person of God and, therefore, each moment of our life is significant because there is nothing more important we can do than to please and serve and enjoy the person of God, and that leaves no moment of our life without significance. So we are to take these opportunities and we are to buy them up, to ransom them, to rescue them from loss. That's the meaning of the word "redeem" here. It means "to rescue from loss or to buy up or to ransom."

Now, our time can be used and spent on meaningless trivialities and thus lost forever, or it can be invested in carrying out the purposes for which God created us. John Trapp made a very interesting statement on this passage, he said this, "The common complaint is that we lack time, but the truth is we do not so much lack it as waste it." And one of the best ways to find time is to stop wasting time, investing it in meaningless trivialities.

Now, I would suggest three principles in order that we might use our time wisely. The first principle is this: we must establish clear priorities. We must establish clear priorities. Now the Bible itself tells us we must do this. Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, "But see ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and then all these things will be added to you." He's saying, "Set priorities in your life and a higher priority than even the pursuit of your food and clothing is to be seeking the kingdom of God, it's advancement in my own soul and in the souls of other people."

You see, we do not have time in life to do everything and we do not have time in life to do most things, we only have time in life to do the best things and that means that many things must be left undone that in and of themselves may be entirely legitimate but not eternally important. So Christ himself called us to establish as our priorities those things that are eternally important and God will take care of the temporal things.

To use our time wisely, we must not only establish clear priorities, secondly, we must learn to say no. We must learn to say no. 1 Corinthians 10:23 says, "All things are lawful for me but all things are not expedient." All things are lawful for me but all things edify not. So what he's saying here is that there is a whole universe of things I can do that are not sinful but he says that doesn't mean I ought to go pursue after every one of them. He's saying there are some things that are not expedient and that do not edify, that is, they do not address the particular needs that are resident in my life or those around me and so, therefore, I'm going to leave those things behind and go and do those things which do edify.

Now we have to learn to say no to two categories of people. We have to learn to say no to other people, first of all, because other people will make demands upon our lives that are

not bad in and of themselves but they will divert you from far more important tasks. Someone comes up to you and says, "Hey, let's go fishing." Is there anything wrong with going fishing? No. Maybe you ought to go fishing, but maybe you ought not too. Maybe there's something that is more important to be done. You see, we must not be slaves to other people's expectations if biblical priorities indicate that we must invest our time otherwise, and those of us who happen to be an easy touch for other people's requests can very quickly find ourselves doing things that are legitimate but things that are entirely out of harmony with a circumspect, careful, accurate, thoughtful, principled walk.

We must learn to say no not only to other people, we must learn to say no to ourselves. Jesus says in Luke 9:23, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." Self-denial is a fundamental requirement in order to be a follower of Christ. It means saying no to yourself, to your own desires. If it is not going to expedite the work of God, if it is not going to edify the people of God, if it's not going to produce growth in my own life, then even though the thing itself may not be sin, it may be that to which we have to say no. So we should ask ourselves questions. Should I read the newspaper or should I read the Bible? Should I go fishing or should I go to church? Should I take a nap or should I have someone over for lunch? Should I read a book or should I spend time with my kids? And you see, we have to ask ourselves these questions and the thing that we want to do for our own personal pleasure may not be the best way to redeem the time. There may be a better way to do it.

Now that is not to say that we're never to have any personal pleasure and every fragment of our time is to be spent serving someone else. There is a time to laugh. There is a time for legitimate recreation for the health of our own soul and for the well-being of our minds and bodies, but it has to be kept in its proper proportion, and I fear that we spend far too much time indulging ourselves and far too little time denying ourselves.

Thirdly, we not only need to establish clear priorities and learn to say no, but we also need to learn to say yes. We need to learn to say yes. Yes to God and yes to his priorities. Jesus said in John 4:34, "My meat," my food, the source of my vitality and energy and strength, "is to do the will of God and to finish his work." To do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work. You see, Jesus found his vitality and energy and strength in saying yes to God.

You know, it's interesting and fascinating to study the passage in John 4. It says that Jesus went and sat thus on the well. He was hungry. He was exhausted and the original Greek carries out the idea that he just flopped himself down there. He was beat. The disciples, of course, went into town to get food and along comes the woman. Now, what's he going to do? He can either sit there silently and rest or he can stir up that old tired body, deny the cries for rest and self-indulgence and minister to a needy soul. So when his disciples came back and said, "Here's food," he had forgotten all about it. He says, "My food is to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work." That's the heart of a disciple. Did Jesus go ahead and eat? Well, yeah, he certainly did, but more important to him than even eating was doing the will of God and the disposition of his heart which must be the disposition of the heart of every one of his disciples is, "Lo, I come to do thy

will, O God." So if it's the will of God, I must learn to say yes. This, then, is how we redeem the time.

Now, why must we redeem the time? Well, there is a reason given to us. It says, "Redeem the time because the days are evil." Now the people which lived in this wicked generation in which Paul lived, lived in very troublesome and dangerous times. Paul, of course, was in jail when he wrote this. The church was being actively and vigorously persecuted and these people did not know how much time they had left. They were living in evil times, dangerous times, troublesome times, and there was no guarantee that these people would ever live out their natural lifespans.

Paul was in jail at the time, persecutions were increasing. Now we see the same situation in America. Things are steadily getting worse. These are days of adversity. We don't know how much time we have left before overt persecution breaks out against the people of God or the collapse of this nation and economy as we know it occurs. We don't know how long we as individuals have to live. The point is, we don't have any time to waste. You see, the disciple of Christ has a sense of urgency about him. He doesn't sit there and say, "Well, I've got 60 more years to serve the Lord. I'll get around to it when it's convenient." He recognizes that he might die in the next five minutes, so in this five minutes he'd better employ it wisely and usefully.

Proverbs 10:5 says, "He that gathereth in summer is a wise son, but he that sleepeth in the harvest is a son that causes shame." You see, Proverbs recognizes that there is an opportune time and when that time is past, it's past and that's it. We can never regain it. Furthermore, evil never sleeps, does it? Are the wicked out there redeeming their time? You bet they are. Evil takes advantage of every opportunity and we must do so as well or it will very soon overwhelm us and our nation.

Jesus said in John 9:4, "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day. The night cometh when no man can work." You know, you only have one opportunity to lay up treasures in heaven and that's now. You only have one opportunity to glorify God and that's now. You only have one opportunity to share the Gospel and that's now because we have no guarantees of the future. The days are evil. Opportunity is a fleeting thing and it must be aggressively seized with both hands.

When God created the earth, he reviewed each day's work and he said, "It is good." You know, it is important for us each night for us to review the day's work and ask ourselves, can we say it was good? Did I redeem the time? Did I use it wisely? Did I walk circumspectly? Did I follow the Lord? We are to use our time wisely.

Our third point which I'll just briefly touch upon as time is escaping us, is that we are not only to guide our steps carefully and use our time wisely but, thirdly, we are to furnish our minds properly. Verse 17, "Wherefore," in light of these responsibilities to walk circumspectly and redeem the time, "wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." This, of course, is the crux of the matter. This is the crucial point to everything I've been saying. When we live carefully, when we decide how to use

our time, it all must be done according to a proper guide and the difference between the fool and the wise man is not that the one operates according to principle and the other doesn't, all people operate according to a set of principles, the difference is that the wise man adopts as his principles the will of God while the fool adopts as his principles self-indulgence or peer pressure or the convenience of the moment or something else. When we understand what the will of the Lord is and act upon that, we will live carefully and we will redeem the time properly.

Now it's important to note that verse 17 is not a suggestion, it is a command and a duty that we must obey, and if Christians are to know anything, they are to know what the will of the Lord is. We're never commanded to know what the baseball scores are. We're never commanded to know where the hot fishing spots are. But we are commanded to know what the will of God is and the sad truth is that most people know the fashions and the entertainers and the shows on tv far better than they know the will of God. They are experts in their field of recreation or employment but ignorant of the will of God as to the most simple principles of worship or family life or theology. The essence of being unwise is being ignorant of what is the will of the Lord. It's the exact opposite. What is a wise man? He's one who knows the will of the Lord. An unwise person doesn't.

Now, two presuppositions lie behind this statement. First of all, that God has revealed his will so that it may be known, and we know that God has not left us in the dark. His will is not some mystical secret that only a few may obtain. God's will is his word. Psalm 119:130 says, "The entrance of thy word gives light; it gives understanding to the simple." So God has revealed his will that it may be known and understood. You wonder what the will of God is for your life, it's right here in this book and it doesn't matter if you're a ditch-digger, a painter, or whatever you are, you can carry out the mandates and principles that are contained in this book. You are in the will of God.

The second presupposition that lies behind this statement is that I must apply myself diligently to learning that will. Psalm 119:97 says, "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." Can we say that? I hope we can. I hope we think about the word of God throughout the day. There are many activities that don't require our minds and while you're washing dishes or while you're running or while you're doing something that doesn't demand the full employment of your faculties, what can you be doing? Meditating on the word of God.

Psalm 119:9, he says, "I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation." And the reason why the Psalmist advanced beyond his teachers is because he spent more time learning what the will of God was than they did. Then he goes on to say in verse 104, "Through thy precepts I get understanding." Understanding of what? Of the will of God. "Therefore I hate every false way."

So when it comes to the word of God, we need to read it systematically, reflect on it thoughtfully, retain it diligently, and implement it practically. I should probably make that into a whole other sermon but we're going to skip all of that. The conclusion is this: we need to live a life of thoughtful reflection on our course of behavior and make wise

choices concerning it. To do so, we must guide our steps carefully, use our time wisely, furnish our minds. We furnish our houses. We're very careful about the furniture that we select to put in our house, we need to furnish our minds properly, to fill it with the word of God and may it be that the disposition of our heart is, "O, how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day."

Shall we pray together?

Our gracious God, we pray that you might help us to live not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil. Father, we confess that we have lived sloppily at times in our lives, we have frittered away valuable moments reading useless material, indulging ourselves in pointless activities. O, our God, help us to realize that life is a race, it is a battle to be fought, a stewardship to be managed, an investment that is to receive a rate of return. O, our God, when you come on that day of judgment, may we not be found to be those who have buried the talent of time that you've given but, Father, may we have multiplied it according to the ability that you have granted. Help us then, Father, not to just slop through life any old way but help us to live life thoughtfully and reflectively on the basis of biblical principle. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, let's turn in our hymnals, please, to hymn #491, and may this be the prayer of our hearts and may Christ be pleased to fulfill it in our lives.