

# **HEALING ON THE SABBATH RIGHTEOUS LIVING**

**December 7, 2014**  
**10<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Luke**  
**Revision E**

**Gospel: Luke 13:10-17**  
**Epistle: Ephesians 5:8-19**

Today's Gospel lesson is not used at all in the West.

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### **Background: Jesus and the Sabbath Laws**

The Mosaic Law concerning the Sabbath was very clear, specific and strict; and the Law had teeth in it. For example:

<b>Mosaic Law</b>	<b>Reference</b>
Complete rest was required.	Exodus 23:12, 31:15, 35:2
One could not even kindle a fire (to cook a meal).	Exodus 35:3
All cooking had to be done the day before.	Exodus 16:23-29
No gathering of wood for the day after the Sabbath was allowed either.	Numbers 15:32-36
This was one of the Ten Commandments.	Exodus 20:9-11, Deuteronomy 5:13-15
The death penalty was prescribed for anyone breaking the Sabbath.	Exodus 31:15, 35:2
One could not carry heavy loads or use pack animals to do so either. The day of rest applied to animals also.	Exodus 20:10, Deuteronomy 5:14, Jeremiah 17:21-22
One could not travel on the Sabbath but had to stay in one's place and rest.	Exodus 16:29
Later this traveling restriction was limited to "a Sabbath day's journey" of 2000 cubits <sup>1</sup> (about half a mile).	Acts 1:12
No buying and selling were allowed on the Sabbath. Nehemiah locked the gates of Jerusalem to prevent Gentile vendors from selling on the Sabbath.	Nehemiah 10:31, 13:15-21

These Sabbath rules did not just appear suddenly with Moses. In ancient Babylon, even prior to Abraham, there was a Sabbath observance<sup>2</sup>. It was not as strict as the Sabbath of the Mosaic Law and it was also tied to astrology. Other ancient countries had Sabbath traditions also. Thus, when the Lord commanded the Sabbath observation to remember how He created the world in six days and rested on the seventh (Exodus 31:15-17, 20:9-11), this was probably what other cultures commemorated also.

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<sup>1</sup> 2000 cubits is the distance between the Ark and the people as Israel traveled in the desert (Joshua 3:4) and also the limit of the pasturelands outside the Levitical cities (Numbers 35:4-5).

<sup>2</sup> Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1967, p. 939. The origin of the "Sabbath" went back to pre-Semitic days, and the name "Sabbath" is actually of Babylonian origin. This day was described on cuneiform tablets as "a day of rest for the soul". In Accadian times (early Babylonian), the Sabbath was a day on which certain work was forbidden.

Tertullian described<sup>3</sup> the gist of the Mosaic Law as having been given in embryo to Adam in the Garden of Eden, and that if Adam and Eve had obeyed it, they would not have fallen. Thus the Gentiles had the Law prior to Moses. This is reflected in the Sabbath laws of other cultures prior to Moses

But also tied in to the Sabbath observation was a recalling of the time Israel was being “worked to death” in Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15). Thus the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27). This is very apparent from a careful re-reading of the original Sabbath commands where the whole point is complete rest (Exodus 23:12, 31:15-17, 35:2; Deuteronomy 5:14).

The Sabbath was more than just rest, however. It was also a holy day (Exodus 16:23, 20:11, 31:15), and a day of gladness (Numbers 10:10). On this day, the daily offering was doubled (four lambs versus two, see Numbers 28:3-15) and the showbread was set out in the Holy Place (Leviticus 24:8) before the Lord. The Sabbaths were also to be a sign (or omen) between Israel and God “that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them” (Ezekiel 20:12, 20). Thus, there was to be a focus on the things of God and on doing good.

In the true spirit of the Sabbath, Jesus did a number of healings on the Sabbath. For example:

<b>Healing</b>	<b>Reference</b>
The paralytic (4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Pascha)	John 5:9
A man with a withered hand	Matthew 12:10, Mark 3:2, Luke 6:7
The man born blind (6 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Pascha)	John 9:14
A woman’s hunchback (today’s Gospel)	Luke 13:14
A man with dropsy	Luke 14:3

When the Scribes and Pharisees criticized Jesus for these things – saying that He was working on the Sabbath – Jesus replied:

<b>Work Allowed on the Sabbath</b>	<b>Reference</b>
The priests work on the Sabbath in performing all the sacrifices.	Matthew 12:5
Circumcision is performed on the 8 <sup>th</sup> day, whether that day is a Sabbath or not.	John 7:22
The Jewish leaders will lead their animals to water on the Sabbath.	Luke 13:15
They will also pull their animals out of a hole on the Sabbath.	Luke 14:5
He also challenged them regarding Mosaic Law regulations for or against doing good on the Sabbath.	John 7:23, Mark 3:4, Luke 6:9
The bottom line was: He’s Lord of the Sabbath. He’s the One who gave the Law to Moses.	Matthew 12:8, Mark 2:28, Luke 6:5
Mercy, not sacrifice was to be the spirit of the Sabbath.	Matthew 12:7, Hosea 6:6

The paradoxical aspect of all this confrontation Jesus had with the Jewish leaders over the keeping of the Sabbath is that they thought they were upholding the letter of the Law while Jesus was merely doing good on the Sabbath, which is what the Sabbath was for. And Jesus is Lord of

<sup>3</sup> Tertullian, Answer to the Jews, I, iii, 2.

the Sabbath (Matthew 12:6-8, Mark 2:27-28) for He gave the Sabbath Law to Moses and made the Sabbath for man.

John of Damascus stated<sup>4</sup> that the Sabbath rest was made for people who were carnal and worldly. Since they did not devote their whole life to God, the Law bound them, with stiff penalties for disobedience, to devote a small part of their week to distraction from worldly things. Those people who did devote their whole life to God are noted as sometimes “breaking the Sabbath” in doing the Lord’s will.

“The seventh day is called the Sabbath and signifies rest. For in it God rested from all His works, as the divine Scripture says; and so the number of the days goes up to seven and then circles back again and begins at the first. This is the precious number with the Jews. God ordained that it should be held in honor, and that in no chance fashion but with the imposition of most heavy penalties for the transgression. And it was not in a simple fashion that He ordained this, but for certain reasons understood mystically by the spiritual and clear-sighted”.

“God, knowing the denseness of the Israelites and their carnal love and propensity towards material in everything, made this Law: (1) in order that the servant and the cattle should rest as it is written, for the righteous man regards the life of his beast. (2) In order that when they take their ease from the distraction of material things, they may gather together to God, spending the whole of the seventh day in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, the study of the divine Scriptures and resting in God”.

“For when the Law did not exist and there was no divinely inspired Scripture, the Sabbath was not consecrated to God. But when the Scripture was given by Moses, the Sabbath was consecrated to God in order that on it they, who do not dedicate their whole life to God, and who do not make their desire subservient to Him as though to a Father, may on that day discuss the purpose of the Sabbath. Thus they may abstract a small, truly a most insignificant, portion of their life for the service of God, and this from fear of the chastisements and punishments, which threaten transgressors. For the Law is not made for a righteous man but for the unrighteous. Moses was the first to endure fasting with God for forty days and again for another forty. Thus he afflicted himself with hunger on the Sabbaths, although the Law forbade self-affliction on the Sabbath. But if they should object that this took place before the Law, what will they say about Elijah the Tishbite who accomplished a journey of forty days on one meal? For he, by thus afflicting himself on the Sabbaths not only with hunger but also with the forty days’ journeying, broke the Sabbath. Yet God, Who gave the Law, was not angry with him but showed Himself to him on Horeb as a reward for his virtue. And what will they say about Daniel? Did he not spend three weeks without food? And again, did not all Israel circumcise the child on the Sabbath, if it happened to be the eighth day after birth? And do they not hold the great fast<sup>5</sup>, which the Law enjoins if it falls on the Sabbath? And further, do not the priests and the Levites profane the Sabbath in the works of the tabernacle and yet are held blameless? If an ox should fall into a pit on the Sabbath, he who pulls it out

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<sup>4</sup> John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, IV, 23.

<sup>5</sup> That is, the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:27-32)

is blameless, while he who neglects to do so is condemned. And did not all the Israelites surround the walls of Jericho, bearing the Ark of God for seven days, in which the Sabbath was included? The observance of the Sabbath was devised for the purpose of securing leisure to worship God in order that they might, both servant and beast of burden, devote a very small share to Him and be at rest. For the carnal that were still childish and in the bonds of the elements of the world, were unable to conceive of anything beyond the body and the letter”.

### **Gospel: Luke 13:10-17**

The Gospel lesson took place in late 29 AD just before the Feast of the Dedication (i.e. Hanukkah or the Festival of Lights, John 10:22) and probably occurred in Perea on the Eastern side of the Jordan as Jesus was heading toward Jerusalem (Luke 13:22). Jesus had been teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath (Luke 13:10) and He used the occasion to give an important teaching on the Sabbath itself. There was a woman who had a severe hunchback or spinal injury such that she couldn't straighten her back (Luke 13:11). Jesus remarked that Satan had bound her like this for 18 years (Luke 13:16). This seems very similar to the affliction of the Patriarch Job by Satan, both in the destruction of his family and property (Job 1:9-22) and the destruction of his health (Job 2:4-10). It would seem like all health problems might be traceable to Satan in some way. For more discussion on this, see the Gospel lesson for the 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Luke.

Knowing that He would get a reaction, Jesus called the woman over to Him, laid His hands on her and said, “woman, you are loosed from your infirmity” (Luke 13:12). The Synagogue Ruler (equivalent today to the pastor of a church) rebuked Jesus publicly for doing work on the Sabbath (Luke 13:14). The Synagogue Ruler undoubtedly had the backing of the other attendants and council of the synagogue since Jesus' reply addressed a number of people (Luke 13:15). Jesus' reply compared the practice of the Synagogue Ruler and the others in caring for their animals on the Sabbath. The animals needed to be unbound from their stall and led to water; why couldn't a daughter of Abraham also be unbound? (Luke 13:15,16).

Jesus stated His reply very strongly as a confrontation, calling the Synagogue Ruler a hypocrite (Luke 13:15). The result was that the Synagogue Ruler and his attendants were put to shame while the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things done by Jesus (Luke 13:17).

Cyril of Alexandria made<sup>6</sup> three points in commenting on this:

1. God had commanded men to rest on the Sabbath. When Jesus gave rest to the crippled woman freeing her from diseases, and the Synagogue Ruler forbid it, plainly it was the Synagogue Ruler and not Jesus who was breaking the Law of the Sabbath.
2. Jesus did no manual labor in healing the woman. If the Synagogue Ruler wished to forbid labor of the mouth, does this mean that one can't sing Psalms or pray on the Sabbath either?
3. The Synagogue Ruler was not really angry on account of the Sabbath Law being broken, but because he saw Christ honored and worshipped as God. This was concealed in his heart

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<sup>6</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 97, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983.

and the Sabbath Law ruse was just a pretext. For this reason, he was most excellently convicted by the Lord and called a hypocrite.

On another occasion about a year and a half earlier (early 28 AD) in Galilee, the Scribes and Pharisees criticized Jesus for munching on heads of grain that they picked as they walked through the grain fields (Mark 2:23-24). They had interpreted the Sabbath regulations as prohibiting work such as “harvesting grain”, even though the Law did not address such minutia as walking and munching.

Later that day in early 28 AD, when Jesus was in the synagogue, they watched Him closely so they would have witnesses against Him if He did any healing on the Sabbath (Mark 3:1-2). Knowing this, Jesus asked a man with a withered hand to step forward (Mark 3:3). Addressing the Scribes and Pharisees, He asked them: “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they kept silent. Looking around, He was grieved by the hardness of their hearts. So Jesus told the man to stretch out his hand and it was restored. The Pharisees then went out and began plotting with the Herodians (their enemies) on how they might destroy Jesus (Mark 3:4-6).

All this represents taking the Sabbath Law to an unmerciful, legalistic extreme. Christ had said, “For the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath” speaking of Himself. Referring to our humanity, He said, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27-28, Luke 6:5). John Chrysostom commented<sup>7</sup> as follows:

“Why then was he punished who was gathering sticks? (Numbers 15:32-36) If the laws were to be despised at the beginning, of course they would not be observed afterwards”.

“The Sabbath at first conferred many great benefits; for instance, it made them gentle towards those of their household, and humane; it taught them God’s providence and the creation; it trained them by degrees to abstain from wickedness, and disposed them to regard the things of the Spirit. Did Christ then repeal a thing so profitable? Far from it; no! He greatly enhanced it. For it was time for them to be trained in all things by the higher rules”.

Irenaeus stated<sup>8</sup> that the Jewish leaders, in their desire to uphold their traditions, were unwilling to be subject to the Law of God, which prepared them for the coming of Christ.

“For not only by actual transgression did they set aside the Law of God, but they also set up their own law in opposition to it, which is termed, even to the present day, the pharisaical law. In this law they suppress certain things, add others, and interpret others, as they think proper, which their teachers use, each one in particular. Desiring to uphold these traditions, they were unwilling to be subject to the Law of God, which prepared them for the coming of Christ. They even blamed the Lord for healing on the Sabbath, which the Law did not prohibit. For they themselves, in one sense, performed acts of healing upon the Sabbath, when they

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<sup>7</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXIX, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, 12.

circumcised a man on that day. But through tradition and the pharisaical Law, they did not blame themselves for transgressing the command of God, and for not keeping the commandment of the Law, which is the love of God”.

Chrysostom also stated<sup>9</sup> that Jesus had prepared the Jewish leaders for His healing on the Sabbath by driving the moneychangers and merchandisers out of the Temple. In all His doings, He was clarifying to them various aspects of the Law that He had given to Moses.

“Do you see their excessive malice, and how the benefits done to others incensed them more than reproofs? At one time He said that they made the Temple ‘a den of thieves’ (Mark 11:15-19), showing that what they sold was gotten by theft, pillage, and covetousness, and that they were rich through other men’s calamities; at another time, He called it ‘a house of merchandise’ (John 2:13-17), pointing to their shameless trafficking. Why did He do this? Since he was about to heal on the Sabbath, and to do many such things, which they thought were transgressions of the Law, in order that He might not seem to do this as though He had come to be some rival God and opponent of His Father, He took occasion to correct any such suspicion of theirs. One who had exhibited so much zeal for the House was not likely to oppose Him who was Lord of the House, and who was worshipped in it”.

Tertullian noted<sup>10</sup> that there are distinctions of “work” on the Sabbath: God’s work and man’s work. Christ sought to clarify this distinction with the Jewish leaders and included a number of examples. As the “Lord of the Sabbath”, He could have annulled the Sabbath, since it was He that instituted it, but He didn’t since God’s work continues today.

“The Pharisees were in utter error concerning the Law of the Sabbath, not observing that its terms were conditional, when it commanded rest from labor, making certain distinctions of labor. For when it says, ‘In it you shall not do any work of yours’ (Exodus 20:10), by the word *yours*<sup>11</sup> it restricts the prohibition to human work — which everyone performs in his own employment or business — and not to divine work. Now the work of healing or preserving is not proper to man, but to God. So in the Law it says, ‘You shall not do any manner of work in it’ (Exodus 12:16 LXX), except what is to be done for any soul, that is to say, in the matter of delivering the soul<sup>12</sup>; because what is God’s work may be done for the salvation of the soul. When Christ wanted to initiate them into this meaning of the Law by the restoration of the withered hand, He asked, ‘Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good, or not? To save life, or to destroy it?’ (Luke 6:9) In order that He might remind them what works the Law of the Sabbath forbids and what it commands, He was called ‘Lord of the Sabbath’ (Luke 6:5), because He maintained the Sabbath as His own institution”.

“Even if He had annulled the Sabbath, He would have had the right to do so, as being its Lord, and as He who instituted it. But He did not utterly destroy

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<sup>9</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilies on John*, XXIII, 2.

<sup>10</sup> Tertullian, *Five Books Against Marcion*, II, ii, 4, 12.

<sup>11</sup> Tertullian connects this to the previous verse “all your work”.

<sup>12</sup> That is, saving life.

it, in order that it might be plain that the Creator did not break the Sabbath, even at the time when the ark was carried around Jericho. That was really God's work, which He had ordered for the sake of the lives of His servants when exposed to the perils of war".

"He has in a certain place expressed an aversion of Sabbaths, by calling them *your Sabbaths* (Isaiah 1:13-14 LXX), reckoning them as men's Sabbaths, not His own, because they were celebrated without the fear of God by a people full of iniquities, and loving God 'with the lip, not the heart' (Isaiah 29:13). He put His own Sabbaths (those, that is, which were kept according to His prescription) in a different position. By the same prophet, in a later passage, He declared them to be 'true, delightful, and inviolable' (Isaiah 58:13, 56:2). Thus Christ did not at all rescind the Sabbath. He kept the Law, and did a work, which was beneficial to the life of His disciples, for He indulged them with the relief of food when they were hungry (Matthew 14:15-20), and cured the withered hand (Matthew 12:9-14). In each case, He stated, 'I came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it' (Matthew 5:17). He fulfilled the Law, while interpreting its condition. Moreover, He exhibited in a clear light the different kinds of work, while doing what the Law excuses from the sacredness of the Sabbath, while imparting to the Sabbath day itself an additional sanctity by His own action. In like manner, the prophet Elisha, on this day, restored to life the dead son of the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:32-37). It was *proper employment* for the Sabbaths of old to do good, to save life, not to destroy it; Christ introduced nothing new, which was not after the example, the gentleness and the mercy of the Creator. He fulfilled the prophetic announcement, 'The weak hands are strengthened', as were also 'the feeble knees' (Isaiah 35:3) of the two paralytics" (Mark 2:1-12, John 5:1-9).

Sometime during the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, Christians began meeting for worship on Sunday rather than Saturday, which was the traditional Sabbath. This was done to proclaim the Resurrection, which occurred on a Sunday, and also to distance themselves from the unrighteous Jews. The Apostle John refers to this in Revelation 1:10, where Revelation was written in about 95 AD. Ignatius of Antioch (107 AD) refers<sup>13</sup> to the Lord's Day having replaced the Sabbath as the time for worship. The Didache also refers<sup>14</sup> to the Lord's Day. Sunday was seen then as comparable to the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles represented the coming of the Kingdom of God in Glory and the eighth day of the feast – a Sabbath – represented the Feast as stretching into eternity. It was on this eighth day – the Great Day – that Jesus stood up and said, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37-38). Where the living water refers to the Holy Spirit (John 7:39)!

Taking the Sabbath as Christ meant it to be taken in our lives today, we as individuals often need healing on the Sabbath also. Our culture sometimes drives us to be workaholics where working harder or longer gives us the illusion that we will catch up. When demons try to bind us with this treadmill lifestyle, we should remember that the Sabbath Laws brought to mind how Israel was being "worked to death" by slavery in Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15). We should

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<sup>13</sup> Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Magnesians*, 9:1.

<sup>14</sup> The Didache, or the Teaching of the Twelve, from the late 1<sup>st</sup> or early 2<sup>nd</sup> Century, 14:1.

also remember Jesus' gentle rebuke to Martha, Lazarus' sister, who had gotten into a workaholic state serving God: "One thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part (i.e. sitting at Jesus' feet, hearing His Word) which will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:41-42).

The Lord used as an example of the spirit of the Sabbath how the priests under the Old Covenant worked on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:5). This was hard work also: killing, gutting, and butchering animals one after another to prepare the peoples' sacrifices. Yet the priests also had days off to spend time with their families; they didn't have to work seven days per week. For those of us that have to work on the Lord's Day, we should follow their example and plan for some time off on other days to devote to Sabbath type activities.



# ***RIGHTEOUS LIVING***

**December 7, 2014**  
**26th Sunday after Pentecost**  
**Revision E**

## **Epistle: Ephesians 5:8-19**

Today's Epistle lesson is used often in the West, either for the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent or the 20<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity.

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## **Background to Ephesians**

Paul wrote his Epistle to the Ephesians from house-arrest in Rome in about 62 AD. He had first met with and reasoned with Jews in the synagogue there in about 52 AD on his Second Missionary Journey (Acts 18:19). Although Paul did not stay there long in 52 AD (Acts 18:20), he left Aquila (of the Seventy) and his wife Priscilla there and promised to return (Acts 18:18-21). About 53 AD, Paul returned on his Third Missionary Journey and spent two years in Ephesus (Acts 19:8-10). At this time, the church took a separate direction distinct from the synagogue. On his return to Jerusalem at the end of his Third Missionary Journey in 57 AD, Paul had a very emotional farewell meeting (Acts 20:37-38) with the elders of the Church (Acts 20:17), knowing he may never return.

Ephesus had had a number of distinguished visitors over the years. The Apostle John and the Virgin Mary had gone there to escape the bloodbath of Herod (Agrippa) trying to please the Jews – which resulted in the martyrdom of James the son of Zebedee and the imprisonment of Peter (Acts 12:1-4). That bloodbath began in 44 AD and ended with the death of Herod soon thereafter (Acts 12:20-23). Apollos (of the Seventy) also was in Ephesus in 53 AD and vigorously refuted the Jews showing from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah (Acts 18:24-28).

After the death of the Virgin Mary in the mid 50's AD, the Apostle John returned to Ephesus and worked with a number of Churches in that area: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea (Revelation 2, 3). John may have been in the area when Paul wrote his Epistle.

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We might note that Paul, in his humility, had been preparing the saints of Asia Minor for the Apostle John between 46 AD and c. 55 AD. When the Apostles in Jerusalem divided up the world after Pentecost and drew lots to see who should go where, John had drawn the lot for Asia Minor. But John was also constrained from going there by the Lord until the death of the Virgin Mary (John 19:25-27).

### **The Saints as Light to the World (Ephesians 5:6-14)**

Paul had just finished encouraging the saints to be imitators of God, offering themselves as an offering for a sweet-smelling aroma (Ephesians 5:1-2). Paul had similarly encouraged the Roman Church to do so (Romans 12:1). On the other hand, the world around them was involved in other uses for their bodies: fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, etc. (Ephesians 5:3-4). Paul reminded them not to be partakers with them (Ephesians 5:7) since

- No one who does these things has any inheritance in the Kingdom of God (Ephesians 5:5).
- Don't let empty words deceive you about this (Ephesians 5:6).
- Because of these things, the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience (v.6).

The context implies that some of the believers in the Ephesus area were involved with the things mentioned (Ephesians 5:3-5). Paul thus encouraged the saints to walk as children of light since **they now are light in the Lord** (Ephesians 5:8). Christ, the Head of the Body, had come as Light overcoming darkness (John 1:4-9). If the saints are to imitate Him, they need to be light also. In being light, all they need do is exhibit the fruit of the Spirit: good works, righteousness and truth (Ephesians 5:9); this is well pleasing to the Lord (Ephesians 5:10). Part of this is remembering our baptism (Romans 6) and that we were bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20, 7:23).

One aspect of the fruit of the Spirit, namely truth, involves the responsibility not to ignore the unfruitful works of darkness (Ephesians 5:11), but reprove them. Paul said not to have any fellowship with them, but don't just ignore them either. Speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15) was a major factor in the maturity of the Church. Speaking the truth with one's neighbor (Ephesians 4:25, Zechariah 8:16) was supposed to be part of the Old Covenant and is of major importance now that we are members of one another (Ephesians 4:25) in the Body of Christ.

Besides exposing the unfruitful works of darkness, Paul said that, "it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret" (Ephesians 5:12). This admonition extends even to gossip about someone's sin; the gossip-minded person shares in the sin of the unfruitful works of darkness. Even this is shameful, and is not what Paul is encouraging the Ephesians to do.

John Chrysostom points out<sup>15</sup> here that Paul said to reprove, not to judge. So long as the wound is concealed in darkness, it is secure; once it is brought to the light, the darkness is cleared away.

"The Lord had said, 'Judge not, that you be not judged' (Matthew 7:1) and He spoke this with reference to very small errors. Indeed, He added, 'why do you

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<sup>15</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XVIII, vv. 11-13.

look at the speck in your brother's eye but do not consider the plank in your own eye' (Matthew 7:3). But Paul did not say to judge; he said to reprove. What Paul is saying is that sin is sometimes like a wound; so long as it is imbedded and concealed outwardly, and runs beneath the surface, it receives no attention. So long as it is concealed, being as it were in darkness, it is daringly committed in full security. But as soon as 'it is made clear' (Ephesians 5:13), it becomes light – not indeed the sin itself but the sinner. For when he has been brought out into the light and admonished, and then he has repented, have you not cleared away all darkness? Have you not then healed his world?"

Chrysostom adds<sup>16</sup> that some people fear that they will be hated for convicting a brother of sin. Doing so can represent showing true love to our brother. Even if he is incorrigible, we need to do our duty before God; a man will listen differently to a friend than a chance acquaintance.

“If a man robs someone we justly convict him, but yet we may fear being hated by him. Convict your brother; incur enmity for the love's sake which you owe to Christ and for the love's sake which you owe to your brother. Stop him as he is on his road to the pit of destruction. When we see him lying prostrate in the furnace of wickedness, let us raise him up. 'But', they say, 'it is no use; he is incorrigible.' However, we need to do our duty and then we have excused ourselves to God. It is for this that we have speech, and a mouth and a tongue that we may correct our neighbor. It is the dumb and reasonless creatures only that have no care for their neighbor, and take no account of others.”

“There is no evidence of friendship so true as to never overlook the sins of our brethren. And it is not on our neighbor, but on ourselves that we are conferring the chief benefit. It is for this that we are friends that we may be of use to one another. A man will listen in a different spirit from a friend than from a chance acquaintance.”

In this same vein, Ephesians 5:14 has been called an early baptismal hymn that may have been adapted from parts of Isaiah (Isaiah 26:19, 60:1). The message of the hymn is to awake from the sleep of sin (Romans 13:11-14, 1 Thessalonians 5:5-8) and arise from being dead in our trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1) and put on the armor of light (Romans 13:12) and walk in the light (John 12:35, 11:9, 9:4).

### **Redeeming the Time (Ephesians 5:15-17)**

Having awakened out of the sleep of sin, Paul encouraged the saints to walk carefully, not as unwise but as wise and to redeem the time. The term “redeem” and “redemption” had connotations in 1<sup>st</sup> century Israel that have been largely lost today.

According to Mosaic Law, every firstborn from man or animals was to be redeemed (Exodus 13:11-12). The firstborn of clean animals were offered as a sacrifice (Numbers 8:17). The firstborn of unclean animals (e.g. a donkey) were redeemed with a lamb (Exodus 13:13, 34:20). And the firstborn of man was redeemed with a price: five shekels in silver (Numbers

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<sup>16</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XVIII, Moral.

18:16). Initially, the firstborn of every family was designated to serve the Lord as a priest (Exodus 13:2, 11, 12). But when only the Levites responded to Moses' call for repentance at the time of the golden calf (Exodus 32:26), the Levites replaced the firstborn in the Temple service (Numbers 3:12-13).

The principle behind redemption was a buying back; Christ did this for us by buying us back from the penalty of our sin (Hebrews 9:12-15). In the context of Ephesians 5, Paul spoke of the days being evil (Ephesians 5:16) and therefore needing to be redeemed or bought back. Paul used this same expression in his letter to the Colossians, which was written about the same time (Colossians 4:5).

Chrysostom stated<sup>17</sup> that the time needs to be redeemed from the evils that men do. We are just passing through on our way to the Kingdom of God. By bearing all things, we redeem the time.

“Christ had said, ‘Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof’ (Matthew 6:34). In what sense does He call the time evil? It is not the essence of the day, or the day as so created, but it is the things transacted in them. Now the events which take place in it are good things from God and evil things from bad men. So then of the evils which happen in the day, men are the creators and hence it is that the times are said to be evil.”

“Therefore, the time is not yours. At present, you are strangers, sojourners, foreigners and aliens (cf. Hebrews 11:37-38, Ephesians 2:19); seek not honors, seek not glory, seek not authority or revenge. Bear all things (1 Corinthians 13:4-7) and in this way ‘redeem the time’ or buy up for yourselves the opportunity”.

So how does one redeem the time? In the latter part of Ephesians, Paul details a number of specifics:

- Worship in the Church (Ephesians 5:18-21)
- Husbands and wives (Ephesians 5:22-33)
- Children and parents (Ephesians 6:1-4)
- Slaves and master (Ephesians 6:5-9)
- Spiritual warfare, weapons and readiness (Ephesians 6:10-20)

The bottom line to all these is walking carefully, not as unwise but as wise (Ephesians 5:15), and understanding what the will of the Lord is (Ephesians 5:17). This involves not growing weary of doing good (Galatians 6:9) and conducting ourselves throughout the time of our stay here in fear (1 Peter 1:17). We can then use earthly goods and actions to store up treasure in heaven (Luke 18:22, 12:21, 33).

### **Being Filled with the Spirit – Ephesians 5:18-21**

Chrysostom pointed out<sup>18</sup> that wine has been given us by the Lord for cheerfulness and for medicinal purposes. “Give strong drink to him who is perishing and wine to him whose life

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<sup>17</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX, vv. 15-17.

<sup>18</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX, vv. 17-18.

is bitter” (Proverbs 31:6). “Wine can mitigate bitterness and gloominess and drive away clouds from the brow; thus the Scripture says, ‘Wine makes glad the heart of man’ (Psalm 104:15). Paul also wrote to Timothy, ‘Use a little wine for your stomach and your frequent weaknesses’” (1 Timothy 5:23).

Wine is also good for external medicinal purposes. In treating the man left for dead, the Good Samaritan poured wine and oil on his wounds after applying bandages (Luke 10:34).

But like the covetous, some people are not satisfied with just a little and use God’s gift for drunkenness, rioting and their own self-destruction. Paul contrasts this with being filled with the Spirit. About seven years earlier, he had written to the Romans about how the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17).

Other ways of redeeming the time and being filled with the Spirit that Paul mentions are:

- Speaking to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19).
- Singing and psalming in your heart to the Lord (Ephesians 5:19).
- Giving thanks always for all things (Ephesians 5:20).
- Submitting to one another in the fear of God (Ephesians 5:21), that is, out of humility (1 Peter 5:5).

Chrysostom stated<sup>19</sup> that we can use spiritual drink and be filled with the Holy Spirit by singing Psalms. We do this with understanding, not just mouthing the words.

“Do you wish to be cheerful; do you wish to employ the day? I give you spiritual drink. For drunkenness even cuts off the articulate sound of our tongue; it makes us lisp and stammer and distorts the eyes and the whole frame altogether. Learn to sing Psalms and you shall see the delightfulness of the employment. For they who sing psalms are filled with the Holy Spirit as they who sing satanic songs are filled with an unclean spirit.” Chrysostom adds that “singing and psalming in your heart to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:19) refers to doing so with close attention and understanding, and not just mouthing the words while our heart is roaming elsewhere.”

“And is then this Spirit within us? Yes, indeed, within us! When we have driven away lying, bitterness, fornication, uncleanness and covetousness from our souls, when we have become kind, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, when there is no coarse jesting, when we have rendered ourselves worthy of it, what is there to hinder the Holy Spirit from coming and lighting upon us? Not only will He come unto us, but He will fill our hearts; and when we have so great a light kindled within us, then will the way of virtue be no longer difficult to attain, but will be easy and simple”.

## **Giving Thanks for All Things – Ephesians 5:20**

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<sup>19</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX, vv. 18-21.

Another aspect of being filled with the Spirit is thankfulness. The Greek word meaning to give thanks (*eucharisteo*) has been transliterated into English as the word Eucharist referring to the Lord's Supper. When the Lord first instituted the Lord's Supper, He used the same terms: giving thanks (*eucharisteo*) over it and blessing it (Matthew 26:26-39, Mark 14:22-26, Luke 22:15-20). Following the Lord's Supper, Jesus and the Twelve sang a hymn before leaving for Gethsemane (Matthew 26:30, Mark 14:26). This hymn was probably part of the liturgy that was sung after the Passover meal.

But Paul said to give thanks for all things, not just those that we consider blessings. Remembering the story of Job, there were things going on that Job had no knowledge of. The Lord had pointed out Job's righteousness to Satan; but Satan had challenged the Lord's judgment (Job 1:8-11, 2:3-5). Satan was allowed to afflict Job with every evil imaginable such that Job was destitute and in great pain (Job 1:13-19, 2:7-13). Yet Job's words were "Blessed be the Name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

John Chrysostom stated<sup>20</sup>, "If you give thanks when you are in comfort and in affluence, in success and in prosperity, there is nothing great, nothing wonderful in that. Compare this to a man giving thanks when he is in afflictions, in anguish, in discouragement". As an example, one might recall Paul and Silas, broken and bleeding and sitting in a Philippian jail, but praying and singing hymns to God – at midnight (Acts 16:23-25).

Chrysostom encourages<sup>21</sup> us to give thanks even for hell itself and for the things that we don't want. Hell can be good as a bridle on our hearts; some things we receive keep us from sin.

"Surely it is a thing beneficial to those who attend to it, when the dread of hell is laid like a bridle on our hearts. Let us therefore give thanks not only for blessings which we see, but also for those which we don't see and for those which we receive against our will. Many are the blessings He bestows upon us without our desire, without our knowledge". In this regard, we need to remember how the story of Job ended. Job benefited greatly from his affliction both in this world and in the age to come (Job 42:10-17, James 5:10:11).

Chrysostom also encourages<sup>22</sup> us to increase our thanksgiving whenever poverty, sickness or disasters affect us.

"Let us increase our thanksgiving when evil comes our way; thanksgiving, I mean, not in words nor in tongue, but in deeds and in works, in mind and in heart". Chrysostom reminded us of the words of our Lord and of the Prophet Isaiah: "What man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him" (Matthew 7:9, 11). "Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget you but I will not forget you" (Isaiah 49:15).

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<sup>20</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX, vv. 18-21.

<sup>21</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX, vv. 18-21.

<sup>22</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX, vv. 18-21.

## Submitting to One Another – Ephesians 5:21

Paul's statement, "submitting to one another in the fear of God" belongs Ephesians 5:20 as a fourth part of the definition of being filled with the Spirit. [The other three are (1) speaking to one another in Psalms; (2) singing in your heart and (3) giving thanks always]. To illustrate this, the Lord had taken a young child in His arms. (According to tradition the child was Ignatius of Antioch, later the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bishop of Antioch). "Whoever receives one of these little children in My Name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me." The point was that "if anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant (literally deacon: Greek *diakonos*) of all" (Mark 9:35, 37). The above statements Jesus made following a dispute between the Twelve over who would be the greatest.

A little later, James and John (along with their mother Salome – Matthew 20:20) asked Jesus to grant that they might sit on His right and left in His Glory. This caused another dispute among the Twelve, to which Jesus replied: "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant (Greek: *diakonos*). And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served (*diakoneo*) but to serve (*diakoneo*) and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:42-45). Thus submitting to one another is not a new teaching that Paul came up with, but is just part of basic humility.

Chrysostom pointed out<sup>23</sup> that mutual submission – all waiting upon one another – makes for a much happier, more pleasant life than a forced domination by one individual including fear and apprehension. What then if someone does not choose to submit to us?

"Continue to submit to him, not simply yielding, but really submitting. Entertain this feeling towards all, as if all were your masters. For you will soon have all as your slaves. This is 'subjecting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ' in order that we may subdue all the passions, be servants of God and preserve the love we owe to one another".

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<sup>23</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX, vv. 18-21.