

## Carpe Diem: Haesum Deus

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The English translation of the above Latin title means to "Seize the day: Cleave to God." Both are equally profound admonitions for the faithful, effective and obedient Christian.

### Seize the Day

Carpal bones are those parts of the human skeleton which are located in the wrist. In conjunction with one's hands and the muscles and tendons to which they are attached, they assist the act of seizing. Thus the reason why the ancient anatomists' named those bones that are interposed between the forearms and the hands the *carpi*.

Carpe diem is a familiar expression to most of us and one that urges us to make the most of the present time. That admonition is in perfect agreement with the Scripture that reads *Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; **make the most of every opportunity**. Let your conversation be always full of grace; seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.* (Colossians 4:5-6; emphasis added)

The first caveat in that passage of Scripture implies that we are confronting "outsiders." It refers to those persons who are not of the faith; not regenerated believers. All too often Christians have confined their associations to "those of like precious faith." We can never be salt to ham, which is not in need of it anymore than Christians are in need of an evangelical witness and the spiritually enlightened are not in need of our role that Jesus opined as being "the light of the world." (Matthew 5:13-16)

Our opportunities for sharing truth will only come when people see that we have a different worldview on such matters as the origin of the universe, natural death,

abortion, war, euthanasia, capital punishment, embryonic stem cell research and in vitro

fertilization. When they ultimately notice that we do not fear death but instead have the great hope of eternal life, we must *always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...* (1 Peter 3:15). To be prepared is to have biblical knowledge and understanding. To possess that is to be a student of God's word. Being gentle with the unbeliever's state of spiritual ignorance and respectful of their particular state or non-state of spiritual development reigns supreme in the act of Christian witness. As the old saying goes, "folks don't care how much you know until they see how much you care." Francis Schaeffer said this about our witness and teaching: "There is nothing so ugly as a Christian orthodoxy without understanding and without compassion."

They must also see that apart from Christ, you are just as guilty of wrong as they are. Once, the late great Christian apologist and syndicated columnist from Great Britain, G.K. Chesterton, was asked to write an article for the London Times pointing out what was responsible for the sad state of affairs and moral indifference in the world. His piece was very short indeed. It was a simple letter to the editor that read, "Dear Sir: In answer to your recent query regarding who or what is responsible for the moral decline in our world, I now offer you my explanation: I am." Chesterton, a man who never took himself too seriously is known for making frequent self deprecating remarks or some laced with levity. One such statement reads, "The reason angels can fly is that they take themselves so lightly." We Christians might accomplish much more as evangelists if we take the disapproving, judgmental frowns off of our brows, lighten up and present a joyful demeanor to our local worlds.

A gentle and respectful dialogue that is full of grace, will win more people to Christ than

an attitude reeking of spiritual superiority, piety and condescension. The seasoning with salt will melt a hardened heart, heal a broken relationship, preserve a rotting spirit and

create a thirst for God that only a personal relationship with Christ, the living Water, can satisfy (Read John 4:7-14).

The apostle Paul continues on this theme when he avers, *Be very careful then how you live\_not as unwise but as wise, **making the most of every opportunity**, because the days are evil.* (Ephesians 5:15-16; emphasis added) We are living during some of the most evil days in all of history. Jesus said that we are to be as “wise as serpents, yet harmless as doves.” That wisdom comes from a personal relationship with **God** (Yahweh) through **Christ** and a conversant knowledge of the Biblical truth that He reveals to us through the **Holy Spirit**. (Read Proverbs 2: 1-6) It is a very Trinitarian experience indeed.

One of the ways by which we can show the world a positive witness is through good works; those good works that God planned for us to do even before we were saved by His grace. (See Ephesians 2:10) Paul touched on that when he admonished the Galatian Believers through writing these words: *Therefore, **as we have opportunity**, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.* (Galatians 6:10) If we do not care about those who are less fortunate, especially the less fortunate within our local churches, the world has less respect for us and the reality of our faith.

When it comes to seizing the day or making the most of every opportunity, no living being has a better handle on the diabolical techniques of deception than Satan and his cadre of fallen angels; the demons. Paul warned the Roman church of this when he wrote about his attempts at pleasing God through his futile endeavors at obeying all of

Jewish law, *For sin, **seizing the opportunity**, afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death.* (Romans 7:11)

Satan is a master when it comes to *carpe diem* and Paul eventually realized (having been enlightened by the indwelling Holy Spirit as he says in II Corinthians 4:6) that only through faith in Christ and what He did to redeem us from the penalty of sin (which is death-Romans 6:33) could he be assured of eternal life. Earlier he had written about the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment that warns of covetousness; *But sin, **seizing the opportunity** afforded by the commandment produced in me every kind of covetous desire.* It is somewhat like telling a toddler not to shove beans up his nose; you can bet your life that he will. His sinful nature will drive him to do something he had never thought of doing until you told him he shouldn't.

In his 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to Timothy Paul wrote about the opportunities that Satan will use to his advantage; *so I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes, and to give the enemy **no opportunity** for slander.* (I Timothy 5:14) Satan is just waiting to *carpe diem*, size the day, when we are tempted to fall and use it against us and our testimony for Christ. Being married to a godly man is one way that a young widow can be protected against such slander.

"When opportunity knocks" is a very old saying. In general terms it means not letting chances to improve pass you by. That usually pertains to improving one's financial and/or social standing in the community. However, in reference to the Christian life opportunity knocks in other ways. It may consist of the possibility of being mentored or mentoring someone else. In either case as the Proverb goes, *As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.* (Proverbs 27:17). The interplay between two men of God,

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even if they are on different levels of spiritual development is mutually beneficial. In my own experience the teacher often learns much more than the student and the student's questions drive the teacher into a deeper consideration of biblical truths. Never pass up an opportunity to be mentored or to mentor someone else. One word of caution

however; on threat of being called a chauvinist; keep it a guy thing if you're a guy and a girl thing if you are otherwise.

Opportunities to use your spiritual gift should never be ignored. One of the reasons for God's gift of faith to each of us was His desire that we would be of service in His kingdom here on earth. Of first importance in that regard is the discovery of that gift. Leighton Ford, a man whom I have considered a role model and mentor in the Christian realm since I first met him in 1976, once told me that if you are coveting another's spiritual gift, in all likelihood you already have it yourself. In his case it was his desire to be an evangelist like Billy Graham. At the time Leighton was a young man involved in Campus Life and Billy was a Youth for Christ evangelist. Of course as we all know, not only did Leighton eventually become an evangelist and a member of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, but he also married Billy's sister Jeanne, the young woman he fell in love with while they were both attending Wheaton College in Illinois.

There are three tests that we should utilize when determining if the gift we seem to have is truly of the Lord. (1) You love exercising it; be it teaching, leadership, helps, prayers of faith, evangelism or encouragement. You are like a fish out of water when you are not putting your gift into service for Christ. Also in the particular case of the gift of teaching, you love to study God's Word and like to read other educationally positive literature. (2) You are effective in the gift's main purpose. Even though I might love to teach, if I find that no one is learning anything from my instruction, I am either ineffective and

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probably lack the gift, or I have not learned its proper use. Furthermore, if no one follows, I am not a leader: If no one is encouraged by my presence, I lack that gift. (3) The most important test is the fact that the body of Christ confirms your gift. You don't seek to use it; they seek you out, having consistently discerned your usefulness

for God in that particular area of service.

### **Cleave to God**

To cleave is to hold fast, cling to, keep hold of, latch on to or be dependent on. When a Roman Christian of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century living in Rome said *haesum Deus*, he or she meant that they were holding on to and depending on God for their very lives. They held onto Truth and possessed a Christian *zeitgeist* or world view.

Writing in Proverbs 4:4 Solomon quoted God as saying, "**Lay hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands and you will live.**" (*Emphasis added*) Do you realize that the most tangible evidence we have for the existence of God is that miraculous work of revealed truth known as the Holy Bible? That book has outlived every one of its critics. It has never been proven to be in error or fallible; unlike the works of mankind it is inerrant and infallible. In fact as more and more archeological explorations have come about over the succeeding years the Bible is being proven more and more correct, not less so. By laying hold of God's words we have the will of God and knowledge about the character of God firmly in our grasp.

As Joshua was nearing the end of his days as Israel's leader he warned and encouraged the people in this manner; *But be very careful to keep the commandment and the Law that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you; to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to obey all His commands, to **hold fast to Him** and to serve Him with all your*

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*heart and all your soul.* (Joshua 22:5)

We hold fast to God when we regularly meet or commune with Him in prayer, meditate on and study His Word and then put that Word into practice by patterning our lives after its eternally significant precepts. We hold fast when we worship in the company of other

believers, partake of the Sacrament of Holy Communion, seek to do His will through the exercise of our spiritual gift or gifts and witness by our lifestyle that ours is truly a Christian worldview and not that of the pagan culture and fallen world around us.

Paul prudently advises each one of us to wisely *Test everything. **Hold on to the good.*** (I Thessalonians 5:21) Only God and His Word are "good." The greatest test of Truth is God's Word. It is utterly true in everything it reveals about history, science, law and philosophy. It is perfect (Psalm 19:7). If anyone tells you anything that is contrary to God's Word, do not believe it. Be like the people in the Berean church who when they heard even the great apostle Paul preach, *examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was really true.* (Acts 17:11) To examine the Scriptures means to note the context in which a statement appears and to cross reference the verse or verses by comparing them with other passages of Scripture that deal with the same subject. The Bible never contradicts itself and so Scripture is the best commentary on the Bible.

In Romans 12:9 Paul tells us to *Hate what is evil; **cling to what is good.*** It is very hard to avoid evil because it lives within us day by day; it is known as radical depravity because it goes to the heart like the radius of a circle. It is the original sin which we each possess from the moment of conception (See Psalm 51:5)

In the seventh chapter of Romans we find that Paul, the greatest Christian of all time

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battled this strong inclination to sin against God. *For what I do is not the good I want to do; no the evil I do not want to do\_ this I keep on doing. Now if I do want I do not want to do, it is no longer I who does it, but it is **sin living in me** that does it.* (Romans 7:19-20, emphasis added) The sin is original and we all have it.

It is that evil inclination (Genesis 6:5 and 8:21) that occupied and drove our hearts prior

to our salvation in Christ. Now however, besides that sin, we also have residing in our hearts the good Holy Spirit and it is Him to whom we are called to cling, grip, adhere to and hug. *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit let us keep in step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5:24-25)* Like a child keeping in step with a parent when out for a walk by holding the parent's hand, we need to hold on to the Holy Spirit of God.

King David said, and we can all relate to the fact that, *My salvation and my honor depend on God. (Psalm 62:7)* He was utterly dependent on God for both his eternal life (salvation) and his reputation (honor). If we have salvation we live forever; that is of the utmost eternal significance. If we have honor we will live among others in this life with integrity, admiration and respect; that is of the utmost temporal significance. David's son King Solomon advised this, *Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. (Proverbs 3:3-4)*

If we love, respect and are faithful in our dealings with all people, our name will be held in high esteem. That is the visible wearing of those attributes around the neck. People may not agree with our stand for Christ, but if they see a consistency in our lives and a respect for others made in God's image, they will hold us in a higher regard. If we are

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faithful to God and His Word in all of our dealings with God and mankind, by adhering to His commands, those that are written on our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33), we will be returning some of the free gift of favor (grace) that God has already shown to us when He chose us (Ephesians 1: 4-5) to be members of His eternal family. We can never ever entirely repay God back for our redemption (Psalm 49:7) but we can show our gratitude by treating others with the favor He has shown to us. The apostle Peter aptly and succinctly summed it up this way, *Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a*

*cover up for evil; live as servants of God. Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers: Fear God: honor the King.* (I Peter 2:16-17) Respect, love, fear and honor; four verbs that will serve us well if we apply them as Peter has suggested. None of this will be of any use however unless it is done in the name and strength of our Lord Jesus Christ on whom we are utterly dependent. (Read John 15:5) Let us then vow to continually *haesum Deus* (cleave to God) and then to *carpe diem* (seize the day) as He sees fit to use us for His glory and our good. By doing so we can fulfill that sagacious admonition which flowed from the pen of St. Francis of Assisi who wrote in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, "It is the responsibility of every Christian to be a witness for Christ, all day and every day; and if necessary, to speak."

In a baccalaureate sermon preached at the Princeton College's commencement ceremonies on September 23, 1770, the school's president, Samuel Davies, told the graduates that "the day of life is short" and because it is they must "seize therefore the flying moments" and above all he said "let religion be the source of your benevolence and public spirit." That sounds to me very much like the persistent message that our pastor Dr. Brent Allen has been averring during his recent series of teachings from the book of James; a message that encourages each of us to be "recklessly generous" in the use of our time, talents and treasures for the glory of God alone; *soli deo gloria*.

