

The Careful Walk
Ephesians 5:15-18
Reading: 1 Peter 2:13-20

Bethany Baptist Church
September 24, 2017

...pray...

Let's turn back to Ephesians 5:15-21 (middle of your NT; today – vv.15-18).

Do you see Paul's familiar *signal*? In v.15 the apostle writes *therefore...walk*. This is the *fifth & final time* in **ch.4 &5** the apostle begins a *new thought* with a reference to your *walk* – the way you *live*.

Starting in **4:1**, he's already instructed us to *walk in unity, walk in holiness, walk in love, & walk in light*. Now he calls you to *walk carefully*.

Therefore...walk carefully...as wise men & women.

“*Therefore*” looks back to v.8 and tells us that Christians need to *walk carefully* because we *once* were *darkness, sons of disobedience*, but *now* we are *children of light*.

Yet the *world* is still *dark* & your *flesh* is often *weak*, so *walk carefully!*

Paul outlines the *careful walk* (15-18) with **three** sets of *commands*, each framed in a *contrast*. All **three** help you to *understand & apply* the apostle's instruction to *take pains to walk carefully*.

How to walk carefully in evil times.

1. **Step wisely** (vv.15-16).
2. **Seek God's will** (v.17).
3. **Submit to the Spirit** (v.18).

1. Paul begins with a call for *wisdom*: read vv.15-16.

- a. You can see the first *contrast*: you will either live *wisely* or the *opposite*.
- b. *Children of the light* (us!) should *walk wise*!
 - i. “*Wisdom*” is the ability to *understand & apply* what you *know*. To take your *facts* and use them to *solve life’s problems*.
 - ii. I also like to say (stole this!) that “*wisdom is seeing and understanding life from God’s perspective*.”
 - iii. In fact, Scripture tells us (Prov) that *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*.
 - iv. The NT goes on (1 Cor 1) to add to that, that *Christ is wisdom* and that His *cross* (gospel) is *wisdom*.
- c. But the *sons of darkness* don’t see life that way, because they are *unwise*.
 - i. *Wise & unwise* are obviously opposites, so if the **wise** *fear the Lord*, then the **unwise** *despise Him*.
 - ii. The psalmist famously wrote, *the fool has said in his heart, ‘there is no God.’*
 - iii. The sophisticated sceptic *unwisely* labels the *gospel* of Jesus *foolishness* & calls His *cross* a *cosmic scandal*.

- d. Paul immediately *highlights* a specific practice of *wisdom* in **v.16**: if you are *wise* you **redeem** your time.
- i. There are several terms in Gr. vocab that relate “*time ideas.*”
 1. One is **κρονος** (→ *chronology*) which pictures the progressive march of time: time passes *minute by minute* or *day by day.* ... But Paul is thinking of another *nuance* of *time*...
 2. So his *time-word* (16) is **καιρος** which suggests a *specific* or *strategic* moment in time.
 - a. Jesus repeatedly said “***My time has not come...***”
 - b. *Until* hours before His betrayal, when the Messiah revealed, “***My appointed time has come!***” (**pause**)
 3. Beloved, Paul understands that in God’s *providence* **you** *walk in times& seasons* that God has *appointed for you...*
 - ii. ...not to *endure* or even simply to *manage*, but to **redeem!**
 1. My **NASB** reads (16) “***making the most of your time,***” but the **KJV** is *better*: ***redeeming the time.***
 2. “*Redeeming*” (Gr) is rooted in *slave market language.* It suggested *purchasing a slave* to give him his *freedom.*
 3. To *redeem* from *bad* in order to accomplish *good.*
 - iii. The *wise man* understands the *times/circumstances* and presses to *redeem the opportunities* of life (*good/even bad*) for the *kingdom.*

- iv. And our text goes on to tell us that this is *wisdom because we walk in evil days*. It is *unwise* to spiritually *ignore* your *times*...
1. ...to go about your day as if *evil* is unimportant, as if the *lost* around you are not bound for hell, and as if *Christ* will *not* return at any moment!
 2. The **OT** remarks that the *sons of Issachar were men that understood the times*; they *understood what Israel should do*; and they were able to *command* the people.
- e. When the entire *exiled Jewish nation* fell under the threat of *King Ahasuerus'* foolish genocidal decree, only one person was in the *right place & the right time* to influence the king. His beautiful wife *Esther* (her own *Jewish* identify hidden from Ahasuerus). Esther's uncle *Mordecai*, a leader among those threatened exiles, appealed to *Queen Esther* to set aside her *fears* and *speak* to the king for her people: "*who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?*"
- i. Beloved, some matters are *crucial* & some opportunities are *fleeting*. You can't afford to *sleep at the wheel*!
 - ii. **Napoleon**: "*There is in the midst of every great battle a ten to fifteen minute period that is the crucial point. Take that period and you win the battle, lose it and you will be defeated.*"
 - iii. **NT** warns (Jas): *you are a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away*. ... What are you *doing w/ your life*?
 - iv. Beloved, are you *wise*...? Do you see your *times* from God's *perspective* & press to *seize the day* for *Christ & His kingdom*?

2. If you want to *walk carefully* you have to *seek God's will* (read v.17).

- a. This is Pauls' **second** *contrast* and it is very similar to v.15.
 - i. In fact, when you compare them, v.17 helps to *explain* 15.
 1. *Wisdom* involves *understanding God's will*.
 2. But the *unwise* **foolishly** *ignore* what *God values*.
- b. A great illustration of this *foolishness* is found in Jesus' parable of the *wealthy farmer who prided himself on his big bulging barns*.
 - i. Luke 12 Jesus called him a **fool** for *building* his barns but not *preparing* his heart to *meet* his Maker. “*You fool, this very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?*” *So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not **rich** toward God.*”
 - ii. Are you *rich* in the *things of God*? Are you *pursuing* His will?
- c. Then how do you *understand* (*find*) God's will?
 - i. You know I like to say that *God's will is found in His Word*.
 - ii. And one of my fav. Bible teachers, Pastor John MacArthur, likes to *summarize* God's will for you with a simple recipe derived from the Bible; *God's will* involves your:
 1. *Salvation*. If you want to *please God*, trust in Christ!
 2. *Sanctification*. God's purpose is for you to be *holy*.
 3. *Spirit's leadership*. All of God's children have His Spirit.
 4. *Submission*. Do things *God's way*.
 5. *Suffering*. (pause) *All who walk godly in Christ Jesus will **suffer** persecution.*
 6. *Thankfulness*. God wants a *grateful* people.

iii. These are helpful, general guidelines for *understanding God's will*. But I think James Boice has great insight into *understanding God's will* in light of the context from v.16 (**read v.16&17**). Do you see how v.17 begins *because of this*...?

1. **"This"** → *"redeeming the times,"* so the *connection* between v.16&17 is: you need to understand God's will for *redeeming your time* – **your opportunities**.

a. What is God's will for your *relationships*? Are you close to someone who needs *Christ*?

b. What is God's will for your *resources*? Do you have *gifts & talents & assets* that should be invested in the *Kingdom*?

c. What is God's will for your *time*? Do your *priorities* need to be reevaluated & rearranged?

d. What *doors* is God *opening* in your life?

e. What *windows* are about to *close* – i.e. is there something you need to do for Christ, *now*!?!?

2. What does God want you to **do** about these things? What is His **will** for these *times/opportunities* that **you** are *called to redeem*, and perhaps *only you can*? These questions call for *godly wisdom*...

Lovely older saints → *legacy*

Enthusiastic young saints → *make a diff*

You do that by *redeeming the time: seek His will*

d. Here is a great *next step* when you are trying to *pursue God's will: pray!*

i. Spec., Jas 1:5 – *If any man lacks wisdom let him ask of God who gives to all men generously and w/o reproach and it (wisdom) shall be given to him.*

ii. Are you *overwhelmed* or *uncertain* about how to *step up & lean into* "redeeming your days" for Christ....? *Ask Him!* I can guarantee you, God wants you to *seek & see His will!*

3. The wise Christian is careful about what *controls* him (read 18).

- a. This is the **third** *contrast* defining the *careful walk*.
 - i. Paul's *point* is **control**. What do you allow to *control* you?
What do you *submit yourself* to?
 - ii. Will you be controlled by (e.g.) *wine*, or by *God's Spirit*?
- b. A *drunk* can't walk **carefully** – it's practically a stereotype: a *drunk* can't even *walk in a straight line*! He's *lost control*...
 - i. To be clear, Paul's prohibition is against *drunkenness*, not *wine*.
 1. Strictly speaking, Paul is *not* prohibiting a drink of wine,
 2. But he commands you to **not** to let it take *control*.
 3. Because if you allow *drunkenness* to run its course, the end result is "*dissipation*" – a *decadent, wasted life*.
 - ii. Studies indicate that **1 in 12** adults in the U.S. are *alcoholics* (not to mention statistics on *teen abuses*).
 1. That's not just a 21st century problem; as Solomon said: *there is nothing new under the sun*.
 2. *Drunkenness* (w/*promiscuity*) was practically a *core value* of the 1st century society the **NT** saints had been *saved out of*.
 3. And these *old fleshly habits* were so stubborn that Paul found it necessary to warn against *drunkenness* even in the churches' *older women* (Titus) & potential *elders* (Titus & 1 Tim)!
 - iii. Again, Paul's point is that you are responsible to *control* what *controls* you!

c. So *wise Christians* are *filled* with God's Spirit.

- i. "*Filled*" - Paul's verb is **πληροω** ... It has several shades of meaning:
 1. It can mean *filled* like a *cup* is *filled* w/water.
 2. It can mean *filled* like a *sail* is *filled* & *pushed* by the *wind*.
 3. It can mean *filled* like *permeated*, as in a kitchen *filled* w/ the *aroma* of *fried bacon* & *hot coffee*!
 4. And here (v.18) *filled* means *controlled by* – as in, that which *fills* you, *controls* you.
 - a. It could be *wine*... ☹️
 - b. But it *should* be God's *Spirit*!
- ii. **πληροω** is an *imperative* here in v.18 – being *Spirit-filled* is a **command**. It is in the *passive voice* – being *Spirit-filled* is something that happens to you, i.e. you **submit** to. It is *present tense* – God wants the *Holy Spirit* to *guide every step of your daily walk*! And if you are *wise*, that's what *you want*!
 1. And that is *absolutely completely realistic* because every Christian has the **Spirit** *living* inside, never to *leave* (→ "*indwelt*," you are constantly *indwelt* by God's Spirit from the *moment* of salvation).
- iii. The **NT** has several ways of describing the *Spirit controlled life* (not too fast):
 1. In **Gal** Paul writes about *walking by the Spirit*.
 2. In **Rom** he writes of being *led by the Spirit*.
 3. In **John's Gospel**, Jesus speaks of the *abiding life*.

- d. One Bible teachers suggests that the command to *be filled with the Spirit* is the single most important command in the entire book of **Eph**
 - i. That's because allowing the Spirit to *fill/control* you is **essential** to *obeying* all of the Bible's commands.
 - ii. In other words, you can't *obey* a single command, or *understand* a single truth or *wrap your head* around a single biblical principle **w/o** God's *grace* poured out in your life through His *Holy Spirit*.

- e. NT teacher **Harold Hoehner** has a great comment on Paul's command to be *filled with the Spirit*:

Every Christian has all of the Holy Spirit...but does the Holy Spirit have all of you?

4. But how do I know I'm Spirit-filled?

- a. "I can't see Him (He's spirit)!"
- b. "I didn't come equipped w/ some kind of *gauge* to tell me if I'm *filled, half-filled, or almost empty!*"
- c. "So how do I *know*...and how do I avoid the excesses & errors of *mysticism* that often arise from teachings on the '*Spirit filled life*'?"

- d. So next week:
 - i. We will examine more NT teaching on the Holy Spirit (e.g. *Spirit filled* verses *Spirit baptized* – are they the *same*?)
 - ii. and we're going to unpack **three** evidences that will tell when you are *filled with the Spirit* (vv.18-21).
 - iii. You *don't* exactly have a *gauge*, but God does want you to *know*. We'll see how next Sunday.

In the meantime:

- e. *Walk wisely* by learning to *see* & to *seize* every opportunity for Christ.
- f. Pray for insight into *God's will for you*, so you can understand *how* to live for Him.
- g. *Submit to Him, follow Him!* Do things *God's way*. The Holy Spirit wants to *fill* you & *lead* you.

...pray...