

Walking Wisely Ephesians 5:15-21

Ephesians 5:15-21 (ESV) Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, [16] making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. [17] Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. [18] And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, [19] addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, [20] giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, [21] submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Introduction

- A. A symphony is a musical composition. The form is often four movements (not always). *Paul's Letter to the Ephesians* unfolds like a musical composition. There are two movements:
1. First movement: What God has done (indicative). That which we cannot see with our eyes or understand with our natural minds is explained to us.
 2. Second movement: What we are to do as Christians (imperative). As Christians we become like Christ as we behold Him. Therefore, our lives imitate or mimic God:
- B. Within this second movement we are seeing additional segments:
1. Pursue unity (Ephesians 4:1-16) based on truth.
 - Walk in a manner worthy of your calling (all humility, gentleness, patience, and love)
 - Follow leaders (given by God)
 - Be joined and connected to other believers (a means of grace)
 2. Pursue purity (Ephesians 4:17 to the end).
 - Do not walk like the Gentiles (unbelievers) any longer
 - Put off sin and put on godliness
 - Live a life of love
 - Walk as children of light (last Sunday) - no sexual immorality, watch your companions closely, and live to please God by doing His will
- D. Now, here in Ephesians 5:15-21, we are commanded to be **Walking Wisely**. We would be hard-pressed to find a more important command.
1. I say that because before each one of us eternity looms large (one day closer).

2 Corinthians 5:10 (ESV) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

1. When we appear before Christ we will know with finality (permanence) whether the life we lived was lived wisely or foolishly. Those are the only options.

1 Corinthians 3:11-15 (ESV) For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. [12] Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— [13] each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. [14] If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. [15] If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

2. Do not be deceived. The way we live matters.

E. This text gives us the command to walk wisely and then gives us two ways we accomplish this. One, make the best use of the time and two, be filled with the Holy Spirit.

I. Make the best use of the time. If we make the best use of our time we are walking wisely. How do we make the best use of our time? There are two ideas in the text.

A. First, **make the most of every opportunity.**

1. Literally, “buy up” the time. Redeem it. Time is a precious gift from God. One day time will be no more. Therefore, spend your time wisely.

2. Jesus Christ only did what He saw His Father doing (in this sense reactive).

Ex: Look carefully at perceived interruptions. We tend to live in mission mode.

3. The Bible also tells us to discipline ourselves (proactive). Paul was a fine example.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (ESV) Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. [25] Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. [26] So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. [27] But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

Resolved, never to lose one moment of time, but to improve it in the most profitable way I possibly can. Jonathan Edwards Resolution #70

4. I sense an objection in your heart (and mine). That feels like pressure.

- Reminder: The things God calls us to do He gives us time for. We are not each called to do it all. The corporate body matters.

Ex: PFI, Morningstar, adoption, help the poor, outreach ... marriage, family, prayer. Find a passion. Question: What one thing can I do?

B. Second, **discern the will of God.** Two categories apply:

1. **God's specific will.** This is revealed to us in God's Word.

Ex: Don't marry an unbeliever. Don't get drunk (or do marijuana). Do marry a believer and do be clear-minded. Do be humble, do love.

2. **God's general will.** This is revealed by careful thinking, prayer and counsel.

Ex: Who should I marry? Finances (house, car, etc.). Church membership (the way we join or leave a church matters). Involve others.

II. Be filled with the Spirit.

A. The idea here is to along the lines of what controls or influences us.

1. Alcohol, consumed in large quantities, is a depressant (we lose self-control). The Holy Spirit stimulates us toward edification (we gain self-control). We are built up in our faith.

2. To be filled is a command. It is plural (to all of us), it is in the passive voice (no technique to

learn but do not grieve the Spirit), and present tense (ongoing).

- B. Four actions that result from being filled by the Holy Spirit. These actions edify and build up.
1. One, **speaking** to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. When we gather we sing songs to one another. This is a benefit of gathering together.
Ex: We do them all (songs) but we care about accurate doctrine.
 2. Two, **singing** to the Lord with all your heart (better would be in your heart). The condition of our heart matters as we gather.
Ex: God rebukes those who draw near with their lips but hearts are far off.
 3. Three, **giving thanks** (gratitude). Because we have received everything we have we have nothing to be proud about. Grace revealed yields gratitude.
Ex: Grumbling a besetting sin for many.
 4. Four, **submitting** to one another in the Lord. The idea here is that we have an inclination or a disposition to yield to one another.
Ex: Like the Army in which everybody submits to somebody. This disposition to yield is to be found in each one of us.
 - We will go on in Ephesians 5:22-6:9 to see specific roles (not vice versa).
- C. But, this heart of submission is to be in each one of us. No one is exempt because it is part of being filled with the Holy Spirit.
1. Ephesians 5:21 looks back (don't miss this) and looks forward.

Theologically speaking, it first presents us with our Christian duty (to avoid drunkenness but seek the Spirit's fullness) and then describes four consequences of this spiritual condition, in terms of our relationships. John Stott in *TBST Ephesians Commentary*, p 204

2. Do you see why we are all to walk in submission? It is because of reverence to Christ.

Ephesians 5:21 (ESV) Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

3. The characteristics of a person lacking a submissive heart are not pretty:
 - We are self-assertive.
Ex: Adam and Eve, in the first sin, asserted themselves. They did not believe God and they desired something for themselves.
 - We are opinionated (though we all have opinions).

He shows that he is proud of his knowledge. That is because he really does not understand the subject about which he knows a little. If he did it would humble him. But he is really not interested in truth, he is interested in his relationship to it, his knowledge of it. Opinionated people always cause clashes. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in *Life in the Spirit: An Exposition of Ephesians 5:18-6:9*, p 59

- We are dictatorial (sadly, these characteristics tend to cluster together).

Every discipline has its corresponding freedom. What freedom corresponds to submission? It is the ability to lay down the terrible burden of always needing to get our own way. The obsession to demand that things go the way we want is one of the greatest bondages in human society today... We are commanded to live a life of submission because Jesus lived a life of submission, not because we are in a particular place or station in life. Self-denial is a posture fitting those who follow a crucified Christ. Richard Foster in *Celebration of Discipline*, p 97 & 102

4. Our aim is to forego self-seeking and our personal rights because we have a Savior who did that for us (Christ made himself nothing). We are becoming like Him.

1 Corinthians 13:4-5 (ESV) Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant [5] or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful.

Close

- A. None of us have arrived. The good news of the gospel is that Christ's righteousness is ours. Now we have this life, a precious gift from God, to use for His glory.
- B. The Bible is a mirror that helps us see ourselves clearly. Others see us more accurately. We are wise when we ask for them what they see in us. Walk wisely!
 1. Use your time carefully.
 2. Be filled with the Spirit.