

**Ephesians 5: 15 & 16; “Walk Circumspectly”, Message # 43 in a series entitled –
“The Greatness of His Power”, a Bible Study prepared by Pastor
Paul Rendall for January 11th, 2023.**

Seeing that we are to awake from sleep and rise from the dead in regard to our walking as children of light and not have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, Paul now tells us to make sure that we walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise people. What does it mean to walk circumspectly? The word in the Greek is ἀκριβῶς akribōs - means to be diligent, or exact, or careful. To me, in the context of these verses, the word circumspect should be thought of, not only as your watching where you place your feet so that you will not slip or fall, but that you would also remain on the path of righteousness all during your earthly walk through this life.

There are 2 ways that Paul gives to us here of how we can walk circumspectly. They are 1st – That we would not be fools, but be wise. And 2nd – That we would redeem the time. Tonight we will look at the subject in general of what it means to walk circumspectly. And then in the next study we will begin to look at the particulars of what it will mean to walk circumspectly. May the Lord give us help in living this kind of a Christian life, to Him.

1st of all – That we would not be fools, but be wise.

“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise...” These terms “fools” and “wise” in the Bible refer first and foremostly to unbelievers and believers. You can see this if you will turn over to Psalm 14 with me. “To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. The fool has said in his heart, *There is no God*. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good. The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. They have all turned aside, They have together become corrupt; *there is none who does good, no, not one*. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge, who eat up my people *as they eat bread*, and do not call on the Lord? There they are in great fear, For *God is with the generation of the righteous*. You shame the counsel of the poor, but the Lord *is his refuge*. Oh, that the salvation of Israel *would come* out of Zion! When the LORD brings back the captivity of His people, let Jacob rejoice *and* Israel be glad.”

You can see here very plainly stated that it is the fool who says in his heart that there is no God. What is of interest to us now, is verse 2; that the Lord looks down from heaven upon all the children of men to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. It is the believer in God who seeks God. But, as God looks upon all men, it is apparent that He does not find one person on the face of the whole earth, in all generations who does good. No, not one, it says in verse 3. They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt. In other words, all of us are fools by nature and practice before we come to Christ for salvation.

The prayer of the Psalmist David is that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! This is referring to Christ’s coming into the world in His incarnation. He would come into the world to build His Church. It is through this means that the end of the captivity of God’s people would come about. That is, both Jacob and Israel, both Jew and Gentile who are chosen of God and who are called, would be set free from the law of sin and death. They would be saved and be able to rejoice over the greatness of the grace of Christ which has been given them. To find this great salvation you must not disdain the message of the cross, that Christ had to die for you to be able to be forgiven of all of your sins and to be able then to wisely live, walking on the path of righteousness.

To be wise, then, is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to whole heartedly embrace the idea that both salvation from sin and the wisdom to live the Christian life are found only in Him.

This begins with receiving the message of the gospel. Look with me over at 1st Corinthians 1, verses 17-31. “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.” “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” “For it is written: I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND BRING TO NOTHING THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE PRUDENT.” “Where is the wise?” “Where is the scribe?” “Where is the disputer of this age?” “Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?”

“For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.” “For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” “Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” “For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called.*”

“But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.” “But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption— that, as it is written, ‘HE WHO GLORIES, LET HIM GLORY IN THE LORD.’”

You can see here that Paul is saying here that Christ did not send him to baptize, but rather to preach the gospel. Salvation is not sacramental. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ. Salvation comes to people, only when they are able to understand that they are fools. If they only believe in their own wisdom, or in the world’s wisdom, they cannot be saved. Paul did not preach with the wisdom of words. That is, he did not preach in a way that showed his ability in eloquence or public speaking. Rather, he preached in a plain, straightforward, sincere, and earnest manner about Christ and Him crucified for sinners.

He spoke in that way, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. Lest that somehow people would think that they could save themselves, or be saved by their own good works. So the message of the cross, verse 18, is foolishness to those who are perishing. That is, they trust in the supposed wisdom of their own understanding of life and what would please God. But the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. It seems foolish to them to have to receive the message of Christ having to die for their sins on the cross. Am I really this sinful, they think?

But God through this means of the preaching of the cross is destroying the wisdom of the wise; that is, the wisdom of the worldly wise people who are wise by their own observations and their own understanding of things. Where are these wise people today who are wise by their own learning and supposedly wise in their own writing? Where is the scribe, where is the disputer of this age, Paul says. Hasn’t God made foolish the wisdom of this world? God knew that people could never come to know Him through their own wisdom. And so it pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe.

To people who are effectually called to faith in Christ through the gospel, Christ becomes to them the power of God and the wisdom of God. In saving unworthy sinners God is wiser than men. His weakness, which is only the weakness of His love, His mercy, and His condescension is stronger than men. In His saving sinners He is showing them the glory of Christ’s wisdom and His power to save them. And since not many wise according to the flesh are call, not many mighty,

not many noble, God has in this way chosen to save those who in the world's eyes are foolish to believe in the gospel, so that he might shame them. He has chosen the weak people of the world, weak in the eyes of those who are strong in themselves, to put those same people to shame as they behold what Christ's grace can do to transform them. His object in all this is to bring to nothing the things that are, so that no flesh should glory in His presence.

And so salvation is of Him. It is because of the Father's loving purpose that we are in Christ Jesus. He has become for us wisdom from God – and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that when we boast, our boast is in the Lord. All of this grace which is given to us should lead us to walk circumspectly. We are told here to take heed that we do so. A Christian person can be a foolish person still. Not that he or she is an unbeliever, but because it is possible to do a right thing in a wrong way. You want to convince other Christians, of some point of orthodox doctrine. But you are unable to love them or befriend them enough to truly help them. Let this not be true of any of us.

2nd – That we would redeem the time.

“See that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” What does it mean for a Christian to redeem the time? Well, the words in the Greek are – Εξαγοραζόμενοι τὸν καιρὸν. Redeeming or making the most of the time. ESV – Making the best use of the time. John MacArthur says – Paul did not here use *chronos*, the term for clock time, the continuous time that is measured in hours, minutes, and seconds.” “He rather used *Kairos*, which denotes a measured, allocated, fixed season or epoch.” “God has set boundaries to our lives, and our opportunity for service exists only within those boundaries.”

Matthew Henry says it means: “Literally, buying the opportunity. It is a metaphor taken from merchants and traders who diligently observe and improve the seasons for merchandise and trade.” “It is a great part of Christian wisdom to redeem the time.” How can we redeem the time? Turn with me over to 1st Peter chapter 1, verses 17-19 – “And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay *here* in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

Our life is called by Peter, the time of our stay here. And we are to conduct ourselves during that time in fear; that is, the fear of God. The reason that we are to conduct ourselves in the holy fear of God is because we have not been redeemed with corruptible things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. This was the purchase price of our redemption, and therefore we ought to walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise. He offered Himself up as the Lamb of God, without blemish or spot. Why were redeemed? Why were we bought back from our slavery to sin? So that we could be wise and holy people and become more like Jesus.

You see this same truth taught by Paul in Colossians 4: 5 – “Behave wisely in relation to the outside world, buying up your opportunities,” it says in the Weymouth translation. Walking in wisdom toward those who are outside means those who are outside the church and outside the faith. We are not to waste our precious time frittering it away in pursuits which worldly people pursue continually. How can we serve Christ and His kingdom and cause and people if we are continually caught up in the world's pastimes? Whether it is living for our work or living outside of our work, for the things that worldlings continually play at, will we waste our precious time? To walk wisely and circumspectly in the fear of the Lord is imperative.

Look at Proverbs chapter 9, verse 10-12 – “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” “For by me your days will be multiplied,

and years of life will be added to you.” “If you are wise, you are wise for yourself, and if you scoff, you will bear it alone.” These verses show us that if we have a reverential fear of God, and cultivate the knowledge of the Holy One, our Lord Jesus, then we can expect according to His will and purpose for our lives, we will have our days multiplied by Him. If we are wise, we are wise for ourself. If we scoff at the idea that God is sovereign and has all of our days in His hands, we alone will bear it.

I think of Abraham in Genesis 25, verses 7 and 8. “This is the sum of the years of Abraham’s life which lived: one hundred and seventy-five years.” “Then Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, and old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people.” Look also at Proverbs chapter 10, verses 27 and 28. “The fear of the Lord prolongs days, but the years of the wicked will be shortened.” “The hope of the righteous will be gladness, but the expectation of the wicked will perish.” Now, the fear of the Lord which prolongs days will not be any longer than what God has decreed they shall be, but our fearing the Lord will cause us to live longer than we have expected that we should be able to live.

You remember how when godly Job was going through his trial that he fully expected to die during it. But the hope of the righteous will be gladness. And so it says in Job 42, verse 12 – “Now the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning...” And verse 16 – “After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children and grandchildren for four generations.” “So Job died, old and full of days.” He gave him gladness in those latter years. This is why when you are going through a trial for walking circumspectly, as Job did, you ought to do what David says in Psalm 55, verse 22 – “Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.”

But on the other hand when a person does not fear the Lord and does walk circumspectly, and acts wickedly, then God can certainly take them to judgment earlier than what they anticipated. Psalm 55: 23 – “But You, O God, shall bring them down to the pit of destruction; bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in you.” When a righteous person trusts in the Lord and will walk circumspectly, he will delight greatly in God’s commandments as it says in Psalm 112, verses 1-8.

“Praise the LORD! Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who delights greatly in His commandments.” “His descendants will be mighty on earth; The generation of the upright will be blessed.” “Wealth and riches will be in his house, and his righteousness endures forever.” “Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness; He is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.” “A good man deals graciously and lends; He will guide his affairs with discretion.” “Surely he will never be shaken; the righteous will be in everlasting remembrance.” “He will not be afraid of evil tidings; His heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD. His heart is established; He will not be afraid, until he sees his desire upon his enemies.”

So, to redeem the time, the righteous man should delight greatly in keeping God’s commandments. When he does this, the promise is that His descendants will be mighty on the earth, and the generation of the upright will be blessed. Does this mean that there will not ever be opposition and persecution that will come to him? Or that he will always be rich? No, but it does mean that light will arise in the darkness for him. It will mean that he will not be shaken and will be had in everlasting remembrance. He will not be afraid of evil tidings because his heart is steadfastly fixed upon His walking with His Lord, not turning to the right hand or to the left off of the path of righteousness. The days may be evil, but he will redeem the time.

