

Walk in Wisdom

Text: Ephesians 5:15-18

Introduction:

1. This is the 5th time we encounter the word 'walk' in this practical section of Ephesians. We have already been exhorted to:
 - Walk worthy of the Lord (Eph. 4:1)
 - Not walk as the unsaved (Eph. 4:17)
 - Walk in love (Eph. 5:2)
 - Walk in light (Eph. 5:8)
2. In this section the Apostle now issues a call for us to walk in wisdom. Note the emphasis on wisdom in these verses – “not as fools, but as wise” (Vs. 15); “Wherefore be ye not unwise” (Vs. 17). “The challenge in this section is to walk in wisdom. This serves as the basis for the many exhortations found in 5:15-6:9...the metaphor of darkness and light is dropped, and the contrast is now between 'wise' vs 'unwise'.” (Harold Hoehner)
3. We will consider this section under 4 headings. Walking according to God's wisdom means we need to:

I. WALK CIRCUMSPECTLY (VS. 15)

A. The Definition of Walking Circumspectly (Vs. 15a)

1. “See then” = “see therefore”. This circumspect walk is a natural flow on and part of walking in the light. The Apostle has just exhorted us to a life of walking in the light which involves walking in a manner distinct from our old lives before salvation, having a proving mindset, separating from and reproofing the unfruitful works of darkness. Since God requires us to have “no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness” it follows logically then that in order to live that way, we will need to be watchful, discerning and careful in our walk. “If believers are bound to dispel the darkness from the hearts and lives of others, how careful should they be not to be dark themselves.” (Charles Hodge)
2. ‘circumspectly’ = carefully, exactly, accurately, diligently.
 - a. Webster defines it as “Cautiously; with watchfulness every way; with attention to guard against surprise or danger.”
 - b. The same Greek word is translated ‘diligently’ in Acts 18:25 and ‘perfectly’ in 1 Thess. 5:2.
 - c. The English word comes from 2 Latin words which mean “looking around.” It therefore means to “walk carefully, with exactness.” (Warren Wiersbe)
 - d. Wuest: “See to it that your conduct is accurate with respect to the demands of the Word of God. It is like a motorist accurately following on the right side of the centre line dividing traffic.”
 - e. Hodge: “Walk strictly by rule, so as not to deviate by a hair's breadth.”
 - f. Illustration: “A climber on a glacier has to look to his feet, or he will slip and fall down a crevasse, perhaps, from which he will never be drawn up.” (Maclaren)

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- g. Note: This is the opposite to the typical attitude found in all too many believers today which tends to be walking carelessly, flippantly and with a shocking lack of discernment.
- h. Alexander Maclaren: “**What shall the end be?**” ought to be the question at every beginning. If we would cultivate the habit of holding present satisfactions in suspense, and of giving no weight to present advantages until we saw right along the road to the end of the journey, there would be fewer failures, and fewer weary, disenchanted old men and women, to lament that the harvest they had to reap and feed on was so bitter.”

B. The Discipline of Walking Circumspectly (Vs. 15a)

- 1. Again, the word ‘walk’ is a present imperative. This spirit of godly caution is to govern our whole lives. We are not to let our guard down. This doesn’t mean a life of bondage without joy. It simply means we are paying careful attention to the wisdom of God as revealed in His Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- 2. How often do we see examples in the Word of God of men who walked circumspectly for the majority of their lives, only to let their guard down in a moment of weakness and do something foolish that marred their testimony. E.g., Hezekiah who showed the Babylonian delegation his treasures and kingdom after being sick (2 Kings 20:12-13).

C. The Detail of Walking Circumspectly (Vs. 15b)

- 1. “not as fools” = only occurrence of this Greek word in the N.T. It is ‘asophos’ which literally means “no wisdom, unwise.” a fool is one who walks without reference to the God’s truth. He lives according to the vain wisdom and imagination of his own heart.
- 2. “but as wise” = a wise man is one who orders his life according to Divine truth. He applies godly knowledge in a practical way in his life.
- 3. Note: In the context, the foolish would be those who walk in the darkness of sin whereas the wise would be those who heed God’s warnings and walk in the light of truth and purity.

II. WALK DILIGENTLY (VS. 16)

A. The Mandate to Redeem the Time (Vs. 16a)

- 1. ‘Redeeming’ = a specific example of what it means to walk wisely. The parallel passage in Colossians 4:5 also connects redeeming the time with walking wisely – “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.” The word means “to buy up, ransom, rescue from loss” (Strong’s). It contains the idea of “acquiring by purchase”. It means “to avail ourselves of the occasion” (Hodge).
- 2. “the time” = the Greek word is ‘kairos’ rather than ‘chronos’ in this verse so has more to do with the season or opportunity. It is ‘time’ in the sense of how it is used in Ecclesiastes 3:1 “To every *thing* *there is* a season, and a **time** to every purpose under the heaven:”
- 3. Maclaren: “A great element in that heedfulness is a quick insight into the special duty and opportunity of the moment, for life is not merely made up of hours, but each has its own particular errand for

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us, and has some possibility in it which, neglected, may be lost for ever.”

4. Illustration: The English word ‘opportunity’ comes from Latin and means “toward the port.” “It suggests a ship taking advantage of the wind and tide to arrive safely in the harbor.” (Wiersbe)
5. God gives us 1,440 minutes to spend every 24 hours. How do we use our time? We live in the time-wasting generation. Are we living with eternity in view? Or are we squandering our lives on the here and now? Are we making wise use of the season of life God has us in for the glory of God?
6. James 4:14 “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a **vapour**, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.”
7. Psalm 103:15-16 “As for man, **his days are as grass**: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and **it is gone**; and the place thereof shall know it no more.”

B. The Motivation to Redeem the Time (Vs. 16b)

1. ‘because’ = the reason for the command is given.
2. “the days are evil” = it was a true statement back then in Paul’s day and it certainly is a true statement of the times in which we live. The days are evil because they are controlled by the evil one, the god of this world who works in the children of disobedience (Eph. 2:2). The word ‘evil’ is the word ‘poneros’ from which our word ‘pornographic’ comes from. We certainly do live in a pornographic age!
3. It’s time to wake up and start living for Christ! The hour is late! The return of Christ draws nigh! The time of so many people is consumed with things that will accomplish **zero** so far as treasures in heaven and eternity are concerned.
 - a. Young people, don’t waste your youth.
 - b. Middle aged people, don’t waste the prime of your life.
 - c. Seniors, don’t waste your sunset years.
4. Romans 13:11-13 “And that, **knowing the time**, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. **The night is far spent, the day is at hand**: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”

III. WALK WISELY (VS. 17)

There are two aspects to this:

A. Avoiding Foolishness (Vs. 17a)

1. ‘wherefore’ = means “on account of this”. Ties back to the theme introduced in Vs. 15.
2. ‘unwise’ = means “senseless, unthinking, trifling. It refers to one who does not make the right use of his understanding, who does not see things in their true light, or estimate them according to their

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relative importance. He is indiscriminating between what is true and false, right and wrong, important and unimportant.” (Hodge)

B. Embracing Understanding (Vs. 17b)

1. ‘understanding’ = means to “set or bring together” (Strong’s). Understanding is “the ability to bring things together and see them in relation to one another” (Linguistic Key). The word “suggests using our minds to discover and do the will of God. We discover the will of God as our minds are transformed (Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 4:23). God wants us to not just know His will but to understand it.” (Wiersbe)
2. The word ‘understanding’ occurs 54 times in the Book of Proverbs. Prov. 2:6 “For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth *cometh* knowledge and **understanding**.”
3. “the will of the Lord” = this is not left to our imaginations. God has revealed His Divine will in His Word.
4. John Phillips: “Surely it is the height of stupidity to have in one’s hand the very Word of the living God – inbreathed by the Omniscient, all-wise Creator of the universe – and neglect to read it, study it, memorize it, and obey it! The angels must look at our foolishness with astonishment. We spend years going to college to study medicine, physics, chemistry, business management, engineering, and history. We invest time and money to sit at the feet of those we consider to be learned. We buy their books, attend their lectures, apply our minds to master what they have to say. But we neglect our Bibles. What folly! What an exposure of our warped sense of values!”
5. What a joy it is to have our lives governed by the eternal, unchanging truth of God’s Word rather than the ever-changing opinions and philosophies of fallible men.
6. Psalm 1 – “Blessed is the man that walketh not...”

IV. WALK SOBERLY (VS. 18A)

“Going from the general to the specific, Paul explains how this wisdom works out in the believer’s conduct.” (Hoehner)

A. Be Empty of Fermented Spirits (Vs. 18a)

Here we have “a specific example of an “unwise” walk. The man who has a right discernment will not seek refreshment or excitement from wine but from the Holy Spirit.” (Hodge)

1. ‘And’ = a transition from a general fact to a particular instance in daily life (Linguistic Key).
2. “be not drunk” = lit. “to be being made drunk.” “Paul prohibits them from a course of action.” (Hoehner) The word translated “drunk” is the verb, “Methusko”. It is related to the verb “Methuo,” which, according to W.E. Vine, “signifies to be drunk with wine”. In contrast, “Methusko” “signifies to make drunk, or to grow drunk (an inceptive verb, marking the process of the state expressed in No.1, Methuo (Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words)
 - a. The verb is in the present tense and the passive voice. The present tense views the action as currently taking place in time. The passive voice indicates that the subject is the recipient of

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the action. “Here the Holy Ghost forbids, not only the final state of drunkenness, but also **the process that leads to that state**. The believer is forbidden to place himself in the passive state where he allows alcohol to lead him to intoxication.” (I.W., Jan 2021)

- b. The Bible not only teaches us not to indulge in sin but also to avoid the pathway or process that leads to it. Prov. 4:14 “Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil *men*. **Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.**” We pray “And **lead us not** into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Matt. 6:13).
- c. Illustration: The young man void of understanding (Prov. 7:6-23) – “And beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding, **Passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house**, In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night:” (Vs. 7-9)
- d. This refutes the argument “I drink but don’t get drunk.” Medical research disproves this idea. How drunk do you have to be before you have crossed the line into sin? Who sets the rules for this? God’s Word exhorts us not to even start on the process that leads to drunkenness.
- e. Keith Malcomson (Sober Saints): “The pathway to drunkenness begins with one drink and the effect is almost immediate with the very first intake. This is true even if the effect is totally unnoticed by all. **Medical science tells us that the effect of alcohol reaches the brain within one minute of consumption**...When taken, alcohol passes from the stomach into the small intestine, where it is rapidly absorbed into the blood. As a result, it can be detected in the blood within three minutes of the first intake.”
- f. There is an interesting study published by “The Lancet” Vol 392, September 22, 2018 entitled “No level of alcohol consumption improves health” where they cite “the Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study (GBD) 2016 for 195 countries and territories, 1990–2016” They claim that it “is the most comprehensive estimate of the global burden of alcohol use to date.” They state: “The conclusions of the study are clear and unambiguous: alcohol is a colossal global health issue and small reductions in health-related harms at low levels of alcohol intake are outweighed by the increased risk of other health-related harms, including cancer. There is strong support here for the guideline published by the Chief Medical Officer of the UK who found that there is “no safe level of alcohol consumption.”¹

¹ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(18\)31571-X/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(18)31571-X/fulltext). Viewed 2/5/21.

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- g. The warning of God's Word is clear, "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, *when* it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." (Prov. 23:31-32)
 - h. Illustration: The documented revivals of history demonstrate that revival leads in the direction of total abstinence. Today we see the opposite of revival where believers in every increasing numbers are turning to the wine bottle rather than the Holy Spirit in their lives.
3. "wherein is excess" = means "riot." The word 'excess' is translated 'riot' in Titus 1:6 and 1 Peter 4:4. It refers to an abandoned, dissolute life. This type of life is in the direction in which fermented wine ('wherein') leads.
- a. "The word literally means "not to save". That is, that which has nothing of a saving quality about it, but rather, a destructive one. It expresses the idea of an abandoned, debauched, profligate life." (Wuest).
 - b. It refers to "a wild and undisciplined life; a life lived without restraint and in a wasteful manner. It refers to people who waste their resources to gratify their own sensual desires." (Hoehner)

B. Be Filled with the Holy Spirit (Vs. 18b)

- 1. This is the blessed contrast and alternative to drunkenness. "Paul not only instructs believers concerning the way in which they are not to live but also how they are to live." (Hoehner)
 - 2. "be filled" = lit. "be being filled". It therefore means "be constantly filled with the Spirit; be constantly, moment by moment being controlled by the Spirit." "Men are said to be filled with wine when completely under its influence; so, they are said to be filled with the Spirit when He controls all their thoughts, feelings, words and actions." (Hodge)
 - a. 'filled' = means "to fill up, to cause to abound, to furnish or supply liberally, to flood, to diffuse throughout." (Wuest) The is used "of something which is filled with content. For example, "to fill containers." (Hoehner) Illustration: John 12:3 "...The house was **filled** with the odour of the ointment."
 - b. The imperative mood places the responsibility on the believers. The passive voice suggest that believers cannot fill themselves.
 - c. "The idea of the word is 'control'. The indwelling Spirit of God is the one who should continually control and dominate the life of the believer." (Linguistic Key)
 - d. "With the indwelling each Christian has all of the Spirit, but the command to be filled by the Spirit enables the Spirit to have all of the believer. The wise walk, therefore, is one that is characterized by the Holy Spirit's control." (Hoehner)
 - 3. Illustration: The Equilateral Triangle (Stephen Olford). At the base of the triangle, we have "The Lordship of Christ". Then on one side
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“The Word of God” (Col. 3:16) and then on the other side “The Spirit of God” (Eph. 5:18).

4. Maclaren: “Paul makes a daring, and, as some would think, an irreverent, comparison, when he proposes being “filled with the Spirit” as the Christian alternative or substitute to being “drunken with wine.” But the daring comparison suggest deep truth. The spurious exhilaration, the loosening of the bonds of care, the elevation above the pettiness and monotony of daily life, which the drunkard seeks, and is degraded and deceived in proportion as he momentarily finds, are all ours, genuinely, nobly, and to our infinite profit, if we have our empty spirits filled with that Divine Life. That exhilaration does not froth away, leaving bitter dregs in the cup. That loosening of the bonds of care, and elevation above life’s sorrows, does not flow from foolish oblivion of facts, nor end in their being again roughly forced on us. ‘Riot’ bellows itself hoarse, and is succeeded by corresponding depression; but the calm joys of the Spirit-filled spirit last, grow, and become calmer and more joyful every day.”
5. Unknown author (quoted by Macdonald): “Just as you have left the whole burden of your sin, and have rested on the finished work of Christ, so leave the whole burden of your life and service, and rest upon the present inworking of the Holy Spirit. Give yourself up, morning by morning, to be led by the Holy Spirit and go forth praising and at rest, leaving Him to manage you and your day. Cultivate the habit all through the day, of joyfully depending upon and obeying Him, expecting Him to guide, to enlighten, to reprove, to teach, to use, and to do in and with you what He wills. Count upon His working as a fact, altogether apart from sight or feeling. Only let us believe in and obey the Holy Spirit as the Ruler of our lives, and cease from the burden of trying to manage ourselves; then shall the fruit of the Spirit appear in us as He wills to the glory of God.”

Conclusion:

1. Are you walking the Christian life circumspectly? Or do you coast through life in a careless manner, not taking heed to spiritual dangers.
2. Is your life being governed by the wisdom of God found in the Word of God or the fallible opinions of men?
3. How are you using your time? What season of opportunity to serve God is in front of you now? Are you distracted and missing it?
4. Do you seek the Spirit’s filling or do you turn to intoxicating substances and other substitutes for your joy?