

Sermon Title: Be Careful How You Walk  
Scripture Text: Eph. 5:15-18 (Ephesians #35)

Speaker: Jim Harris  
Date: 5-1-22

---

I want to invite you now to come with me again to Ephesians Chapter 5. We are going to be looking at Verse 15 through part of Verse 18 today, as we continue our study there.

Earlier in the service, we read from the Book of Proverbs, as we have been doing and we will do until we finish it. If there's a theme-verse to the Book of Proverbs—and that's a difficult thing to say, because there are so many themes in Proverbs—it would probably be Chapter 9, Verse 10 of Proverbs; it says: "The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (LSB).

I want to submit to you that *that* also describes the Book of Ephesians. Chapters 1 through 3 tell you what it is to fear the Lord Yahweh. From your relationship with God, then, flows wisdom. Wisdom begins with knowing God. Ephesians 1, 2, and 3 tells you how you can know God. Remember Chapter 2? "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus"—that's the theme of Ephesians: "in Christ," [repeated] 27 times—we are "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (vss. 8-10, NASB-1995; and throughout, unless otherwise noted). You must first have the knowledge of God and what He has done for you in order to have the understanding necessary in order to live wisely.

Our passage is about walking in wisdom. Chapter 5, Verse 15, brings us to this section that is a connecting-portion, if you will; it's the transition that connects two crucial parts of this book—and especially the practical second half of the book. In Chapter 4, we are introduced to the idea of the "new man" (vs. 24, LSB), and that thought was developed through the last half of Chapter 4, and then on through the first 15 verses of Chapter 5. When we get to Chapter 5, Verse 18—a verse you probably know by heart—we are going to be introduced to the concept of the Spirit-controlled man, and that is going to take us all the way through Chapter 6, Verse 9. Our passage this morning connects those two sections.

The wise thing for the "new man"—who you are in Christ—the wise thing for the "new man" to do is to walk in a manner that he is "filled with the Holy Spirit." So, Verse 15—"Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise." That's where we are going to start this morning, and then we'll outline it based upon the next three verses.

By the way: this is the final occurrence of the word "walk" in the Book of Ephesians. I've told you it would be a very fruitful study to just develop the "walking" theology of the New Testament (e.g., Rom. 6:4; 8:4; 2 Cor. 5:7; Gal. 5:16; Eph. 4:1; Col. 1:10; 1 Jn. 1:7); you'll wind up spending quite a bit of time in Ephesians.

"Walk" is how you live your life (e.g., 1 Cor. 3:3; Eph. 2:2; Phil. 3:17-18). We would say, in our vernacular, it's your "lifestyle." The command here in Verse 15 is literally: "See therefore carefully how you walk." The Legacy Standard Bible renders it: "Therefore look carefully how you walk"—make sure of your steps that you don't slip, that you don't get off the path, that you don't wander somewhere you should not be (cf. Prov. 4:26; 16:17).

Sermon Title: Be Careful How You Walk  
Scripture Text: Eph. 5:15-18 (Ephesians #35)

Speaker: Jim Harris  
Date: 5-1-22

---

The command "see" or "be careful" is used in a metaphorical sense for discerning something mentally, considering it, perceiving what it means and taking heed. In other words, it's a command to be always carefully watching how and where you are walking.

The presence of this command, and the way that it is worded, and the fact that you are ordered to "be careful" about it, makes it clear: there is a choice! God expects you to choose between different paths that you can take (e.g., Deut. 30:15, 19; Jos. 24:15; Prov. 1:7; 1 Ki. 18:21; Is. 7:15). But He doesn't force you. *Even as His child*, you have the option to be an idiot, if you want to! You don't *have* to walk wisely—but *that's God's call*, that's what He wants for you, that's what He designs for you, that's what He wants to see you do for His glory. But He won't *force* it upon you; He *invites* you, He calls you, He urges you, He *commands* you (cf. Deut. 10:13).

"Wise" is obviously a key word here; it is the Greek word from which several English words come. The name "Sophia" is a transliteration of this Greek word—*sophia*, from the adjective *sophos*. "Philosophy" is "the love of *wisdom*"; "Philadelphia" is "love of the brethren."

"Wise" means: having proper insight into the things of God, *and* living according to them. It is *knowing* the Lord and *knowing* what the Lord says, and then putting that knowledge to use in the best possible ways for your spiritual growth and for spiritual results, in general. It is the marriage of *intellectual* understanding and *practical* application of what you know (cf. Jn. 13:17).

The rest of our little section for this morning introduces three characteristics of the wise walk. If you want to be wise, you will make all your decisions in light of these three things in Verses 16 through 18. Number 1—Redeeming The Time. Number 2—Understanding God's Will. And Number 3—Avoiding Drunkenness. We are going to see something really cool as we connect this week and next to Verse 18.

Let's start with Redeeming The Time. Start again at Verse 15, read through Verse 16—"Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil."

Now, let's pick that apart a little bit. If you are old enough that you were personal friends with King James, you remember that that verse says "*redeeming* the time." That is actually the most literal translation, because what is translated "making the most of" *is* the word that is related to redemption and redeeming something—buying something out of slavery, if you will. It literally means "to buy up," and the form that is used here means "to buy up for your own advantage"—do what is best for you in this time.

The word "time" is also crucial, and it carries an important insight. There are two distinct Greek words, appropriately translated "time," that are used in the New Testament. One of them means "time" in the sense of, "Oh, it's *time* to start the service!"—"time" as measured by a clock. It's the word *chronos*; we get "chronometer" from that, a measure of the passing of time. "Chronology" comes from that word.

Sermon Title: Be Careful How You Walk  
Scripture Text: Eph. 5:15-18 (Ephesians #35)

Speaker: Jim Harris  
Date: 5-1-22

---

And that's not the word that is here. If you're looking for a verse to use for your time management seminar, and you're willing to rip one out of context, this is as good as they come...But that's not what it means! The word *here* translated "time" is the word *kairos*; it describes time, but in a different way. It means "time" in the sense of the strategic passing *opportunities* that come to you.

This isn't about *wasting* time—wasting time is another subject. This is a command to take advantage of opportunities that present themselves to you. He is telling you, to draw from his own context here in Chapter 5: Make the most of every opportunity to let your light shine in the darkness. Remember: "You were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord" (vs. 7). "Let your light shine" (Matt. 5:16); seize *every opportunity* to "let your light shine"—to win people to Christ, to strengthen believers, to abound in good works. Missed opportunities seldom return. Therefore, use them to the *fullest* when they come.

There are a lot of people, including Christians, who don't do very much of significance because *they're afraid of failing*. "Well, what if I try doing that, and it doesn't go well?" Well—you *tried*, right? And, you did it "as unto the Lord," right? And now, you're wiser! You might have found out something that you're not gifted at! Oh, but on the *other hand*, it might have been the beginning of something that you found out you *are* gifted to do, and it could be the beginning of *untold* blessings!

Now, notice: "making the most of your time, *because the days are evil*." Everything that you can do to bring glory to God in this world can *only* be done on enemy territory because "the days are evil" because *the whole world system* is evil because the "whole world" system "lies" in the hands of "the evil one" (1 Jn. 5:19; cf. 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2). And so, in light of the fact that you live in an environment that *hates* the Christ that you love, which *hates* what you stand for—you better do something in active opposition to what actively opposes good. If you are going to have a spiritual impact, come to grips with the fact: it has to be done on enemy territory, under *constant* threat of hostile fire.

So, seize the opportunities as they come. If you keep letting opportunities go by, you may come to that "judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:10) and watch a lot of "wood, hay, and straw" *go up in flames* (1 Cor. 3:12). Oh, you'll still belong to the Lord (vs. 15), but seize the opportunity.

I would give credit to whoever wrote this, if only I knew—unless it was somebody named "Mr. Unknown"; that's who it was attributed to when I read this. It makes the point. It's the story of one man's life. When he was seven years old, his family was forced out of their home on a legal technicality; and he had to go to work, at age seven, to help support the family. When he was nine, his mother died. At 22, he lost his job as a store clerk. He wanted to go to law school, but his education wasn't deemed good enough. At 23, he went into debt to become a partner in a small store. At 26, his business partner died, leaving him a huge debt that took years to repay. At 28, after courting a girl for four years, he asked her to marry him; she said, "No." At 37, on this third try, he was elected to Congress. But two years later, he failed to be reelected. At 41, his four-year-

Sermon Title: Be Careful How You Walk  
Scripture Text: Eph. 5:15-18 (Ephesians #35)

Speaker: Jim Harris  
Date: 5-1-22

---

old son died. At 45, he ran for the Senate, and lost. At 47, he failed as a Vice-Presidential candidate. At 49, he ran for the Senate again, and lost. At 51, he was elected President of the United States. His name: Abraham Lincoln. Some people get *all* the breaks!

Now, I'm not commenting on Abraham Lincoln's spiritual condition; that's another subject for another time; but I'll tell you: humanly speaking, he understood "buying up" opportunities. And even the ones that don't work out forge you into the person that God wants you to be as "a new creature" in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

Be wise, but don't be so cautious that you never take a risk. Every opportunity that God allows to cross your path is an opportunity in which He is asking you to apply wisdom to figure out how best to exploit it for the fullest possible spiritual advantage.

Someone said one time—and I thought it was kind of snarky, and then I realized it was also kind of wise—"Anything in the church worth doing is worth doing poorly." I always thought, "Don't you want to strive for excellence?" Well, yes. But if you see a need that isn't being met, God is asking you: "Ask Me for wisdom, and see what you can do to meet that need." And it just might be that you are not very good at that; and somebody else may come along and say, "Oh, dear, you're not very good at that. I can do better—let me help!" And that might be how a ministry gets started. Or, you might do it and start out kind of fumbling, and then say, "I have a *better* idea!" And you might *grow* into that ministry (cf. Eph. 4:12).

My friends, there are *always* opportunities that can be seized. At Heritage Bible Church, there are more opportunities that are going to be coming your way pretty soon. We have some things in the planning stages that are going to help us go deeper and do better in our shepherding and in our fellowship and in our maturity in Christ and in our ability to reach out. Watch for the opportunities. Ask God for wisdom how you might seize those things, "buy them up."

The second aspect of walking in wisdom, besides Redeeming The Time, is: Understanding God's Will. Verse 17—"So then..."—and that's literally: "on account of this." On account of *what*? "Because the days are evil," because you live behind enemy lines. "On account of this, then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

"Foolish" is a word that means "without reason"—senseless, stupid, without reflection or intelligence—or, it can also mean "acting rashly." Don't be that way! "Do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." "Understanding" is the exact opposite of being "foolish"; it connotes reflective thinking—seeking that wisdom, as we saw already.

You cannot depend on your own ability to understand everything (Prov. 3:5; 28:26). Nor can you just regard the advice of other people as the ultimate means to determine truth. Why, even Saints Google and Wikipedia may not give all the wisdom you need to be wise in this world.

Sermon Title: Be Careful How You Walk  
Scripture Text: Eph. 5:15-18 (Ephesians #35)

Speaker: Jim Harris  
Date: 5-1-22

---

Now let me say something here—you know, I want to tweak a few people today, if I can—Neither does just spending a lot of time praying over and over about something, mean that you end up with the truth. Sometimes, I've seen people pray *obsessively* about something—just over and over and over—and then they come back and say, "I've prayed about this for three months, and here's what I think," and they tell you something that is just *flagrantly not biblical!*

You have to put it all together, right? The understanding and the disposition to use that understanding in the most spiritually-productive way within the bounds of the Word of God. Scripture teaches us that we come to an understanding of the will of God by seriously thinking about all things that He says, and taking into account all of the data available. Do you want to "understand what the will of the Lord is"? Let me suggest to you that the recipe is something like: prayer; plus Scripture; plus your experience; plus advice from other godly people; plus understanding whatever resources are available to you; plus being aware of your circumstances; plus the ministry of the Holy Spirit who lives in you, "who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13), "understanding what the will of the Lord is."

Beware of people who make up their minds about the will of God, and are *unwilling* to consider other opinions, other evidence, to seek godly advice, to try it out in the fellowship of the saints (Prov. 15:22).

So look again at our verse. "So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." Look at that word "will"; it means: "design" or "standard." It is not necessarily talking about a *specific* direction of *exactly* what to do in a specific circumstance. To put it in this context: this is a command to understand the moral will of God before you make decisions.

And let me try to bring that to life to you a little bit. There is a common but wrong way to think about the will of God: It is to think of His plan for your life as something like a marked map, or a specific itinerary. I just used that the other day, looking forward to a trip that we are planning to take; there's a place online where you can put in this address, and how do I get to this address—and up pops two things: A map marking the highways with a line, telling you how long it's going to take and what the best route is; sometimes there's a secondary line or a tertiary line; if you want a little side-trip here, it might add five minutes to your trip, and you can take this other road here. And then on the other side of the screen is a detailed list: "Take this street to that corner, turn left, take that street 8 miles to the next one, turn right"—an *exact* description of how to get from Point A to Point B.

And that is how some people feel about the will of God: As long as you are making progress, according to the *exact* route, you are safely within the will of God. But you make a *wrong* turn—or you turn to go to Dairy Queen—you might be out of God's will for as long as it takes for you to retrace your path back to the point of your error and get back on course by making the correct turns.

Sermon Title: Be Careful How You Walk  
Scripture Text: Eph. 5:15-18 (Ephesians #35)

Speaker: Jim Harris  
Date: 5-1-22

---

(You might even want to go fishing on our website and get back to our series on First Corinthians; we did three sermons on decision-making and the will of God; but this is an important principle that is stated right here). By that kind of thinking, it is even possible for a person to get *so far off the path*—I mean, what if you were supposed to go to Portland, Oregon, and you headed for Portland, Maine, and you *totally missed* the event that was going on in Portland?—you could get so far off the path of God's choosing that it might be *impossible* to get back on! I mean, suppose your great-grandfather turned right when he should have turned left, and he met Martha instead of Betty, and he married the wrong one, and you didn't even turn out to be the person you were supposed to be?!? That view of God's will *just doesn't work!* It is *not true!* It is *not accurate!*

Now, understand: I am *not* saying that God doesn't have a specific plan (cf. Prov. 20:24). I am saying: He does not reveal to you *in advance* what that plan is! Do you want to know God's specific plan for your life? Go read your own diary. Look back and see all the places that He has led you. And sometimes He led you through a decision that you made when you were *stupid!* Sometimes He led you by a decision that *somebody else* made that was *evil*, that impacted your life—and He used it in His glorious sovereign grace to make you into the person that He wants you to be (cf. Gen. 50:20). He doesn't reveal that plan in advance. He didn't tell Joseph, "Hey, go see your brothers, and they're going to sell you into slavery!" He doesn't reveal that in advance.

But, His will *is* completely revealed—His *moral* will. He tells you what is right and what is wrong; He tells you what kind of person that you need to be (e.g., Ps. 15:1-5; 24:3-4; Mic. 6:8). So the map that we have from Him is the boundaries for safe travel through life, and it includes telling you where *not* to go. There's a whole list of those things, to tell you how to stay in bounds: Do not worship idols. Don't covet. Don't steal. Don't lie. Don't commit adultery. Don't neglect the assembly of the brethren. Don't mishandle Scripture. Don't be anxious. There are a lot of cautions, warnings, prohibitions in Scripture. You don't need to *pray* about those things! *Don't go out of bounds!* You don't have to ask for guidance—*stay in bounds!*

If you go out of bounds, there *will be* damage, and your progress *will be* hindered—your progress toward "maturity" (Heb. 6:1; cf. Col. 3:25). But God loves you so much, He has told you about every prohibited thing (Deut. 10:13; Prov. 3:7-8; 4:27; 13:13; 16:20), and they are all identified in the "map" which is His "Word" (Ps. 119:1-3, 9-10, 24, 105; cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17). But *everything else*—everything that *isn't* prohibited, everything that *won't* cause you to have a wreck—all of those things are acceptable (Rom. 14:22b).

Here's the way of looking at God's will that is *much* more accurate: Instead of marking a *specific route* that you have to follow with making every turn at precisely the right time, God has said: "My child, within the boundaries of My revealed truth, as My adopted child in Christ, you are free. I paid to redeem you out of *slavery* (1 Pet. 1:18-19); now, you belong to Me! Stand in My grace! Now, in whatever you do, glorify Me, and we will enjoy this eternal fellowship that we have begun." (cf. 1 Cor. 6:20) And then He gave you, not a marked map and a warning to stay on the path—He gave you a compass! And He said, "Follow, within the boundaries, what you will."

Sermon Title: Be Careful How You Walk  
Scripture Text: Eph. 5:15-18 (Ephesians #35)

Speaker: Jim Harris  
Date: 5-1-22

---

Oh, and by the way: Do you want to be wise? Well, pay attention, on the map, to the—oh, what shall we call it? The educational sites, the historical sites, the ones that give you wisdom. Like, He tells you what He wants you to do: Be "born again" (Jn. 3:7). "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). "Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart" (Ps. 37:4). He tells you He is "not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9), so, spread "the gospel" (Rom. 1:15-16; cf. 10:14, 17). He tells you to "Go into all the world" (Mk. 16:15) and "make disciples" wherever you can (Matt. 28:19; cf. Acts 8:4), and He tells you to "Preach the word...reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction" (2 Tim. 4:2; cf. Col. 3:16). He says, give "a cup of cold water" in Jesus' name (Matt. 10:42; cf. 3 Jn. 8), put on "the full armor of God" (Eph. 6:13), "provoke unto love and to good works" (Heb. 10:24, KJV), "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed" (2 Tim. 2:15), hide His "word in your heart" so you won't "sin against" Him (Ps. 119:11), "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17), "support the weak" (Acts 20:35, NKJV), "Encourage the fainthearted" (1 Thess. 5:14), "Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks" (1 Thess. 5:16-18), live by the "one anothers" of the New Testament (e.g., Jn. 13:34; Rom. 12:10, 16; 13:8; 14:19; 15:7, 14).

*You don't lack for things to do!* In this, rather, "redeem the time"—"buy up" the opportunities, make the most of what God gives to you (Matt. 25:20). He *does* have a plan (Eph. 1:11), but He works out His plan *through us—including* the decisions that we make (Prov. 16:9), and *including* the circumstances that we encounter that *we didn't even mean to!* James Chapter 1 says, "Count it all joy when you *fall into* various trials" (vs. 2, NKJV)—that's an accident, when you "fall into" something: "Well, I didn't *mean* to step into that pothole and sprain my ankle! I *fell* into it." It wasn't a willful choice—but it's something that God will use, in His sovereign grace, to make you more mature and more effective (cf. vss. 3-4).

You are free, as long as you stay within the boundaries of His will, which is revealed in His Word (cf. Ps. 19:7-11). And through this most exciting of all adventures, the sovereign God of the universe—"the King of kings and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:15), "God Almighty" (Gen. 17:1), Creator of "heaven and earth" (Ex. 31:17)—He promises to be "with you" (Matt. 28:20), to "keep you" (Ps. 121:7; cf. Ps. 37:24; 2 Tim. 4:18; Jude 1), to "lead" you (Ps. 31:3), and to do His will (Ps. 138:8).

And get a load of this: We have an acronym that would have made no sense to most people in a generation before us, before the age of the Internet; you go to almost any website and there will be an option to click on "FAQ"—"F-A-Q": "Frequently Asked Questions." Do you know that God's "FAQ" line is always open, and you can talk to Him? He commands you to "be wise" (Prov. 8:33; 23:19; 27:11; Rom. 16:19); and then, James Chapter 1, Verse 5—"But if any of you lacks wisdom"—in other words, if you're *breathing*, and you don't know everything yet—"let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him." And by the way, the context of that is exactly what I just mentioned: "falling into various trials"—and God will give you the wisdom that you need (Prov. 2:6).

Sermon Title: Be Careful How You Walk  
Scripture Text: Eph. 5:15-18 (Ephesians #35)

Speaker: Jim Harris  
Date: 5-1-22

---

Wise people don't act "rashly" (Prov. 20:25); they work hard to "understand" what the moral will of God is (cf. Heb. 5:14).

There may be no grief more bitter to the taste buds of your memory than to have acted hastily, and later discovered: that was a foolish choice (cf. Prov. 29:20). Anybody else here ever done that? It's bitter, isn't it? Maybe worse yet is to give advice that affects the lives of others, and then find out you were wrong. That's the "foolishness" to avoid.

Now, speaking of "foolishness," let's wrap this up for today by looking at the first part of the next verse. This passage *does not* lend itself to the nice, sweet, syrupy pastoral pat-on-the-back conclusion, okay? I'm just warning you.

Walk wisely by not only Redeeming The Time, Understanding The Will Of God, but, Number 3—Avoiding Drunkenness. We are going to stick our toe into the waters of Chapter 5, Verse 18; we will pick it up and continue next week. Ephesians Chapter 5, Verse 18—"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit." We will look at the positive part next time—"be filled with the Spirit"—but let's look at the negative half of the contrast that is in this verse: "Do not get drunk."

Now, what does "drunk" mean?—as if you need to be told. It means "influenced to the point of losing control of one's faculties"—or, I would say, even "*diminishing* one's faculties." This word—*methuskō*—was a word that was used by Homer in his writings, describing, of all things, the process of stretching a bull's hide. Now, I know you have your way of stretching bulls' hides, and you've probably done it several times this week—or, maybe not; but the way that he was describing to stretch the bull's hide to make it elastic so it could be shaped—because they don't start out real pliable when you get them nice and shaved and cured and hard—is to soak them with fat. And the word for "soaking in fat so as to make pliable"—*that's* the word that he used.

So, in the context of "wine," it means that a person is "soaked" with alcohol and *made more pliable*. The *first thing* that happens under the influence of alcohol is: slower reaction time and less coordination: more pliable. When you see somebody *staggering* under the influence of alcohol—how *pliable* can you get? You can fold them in half and take them home.

He says: "Do not get drunk with wine, for that is"—here's another key word—"dissipation." "Dissipation" is the word for "saved" or "salvation," but it has a negative prefix in front of it; so it means "something with *no* saving or redeeming quality to it." Instead, it's wasteful and destructive (cf. Prov. 23:20-21, 29-35; Is. 5:11, 22; 28:7).

So, drink all the wine you want—all the alcohol you want—if your goal is to be "soaked in fat" in order to become as pliable as possible. I'm just telling you what the verse says.

Now, in our remaining time, I want to talk about what the Bible says about this word "wine" and other alcoholic beverages.

Sermon Title: Be Careful How You Walk  
Scripture Text: Eph. 5:15-18 (Ephesians #35)

Speaker: Jim Harris  
Date: 5-1-22

---

For one thing, the Bible does *not* prohibit the drinking of wine or other alcoholic beverages. Somebody came up to me after the first service who had spent a little time at a certain "Christian" university—the name of which rhymes with "bones"—and had been told in a recording of the founder of that university that when the Bible says wine, it means grape juice—*not* fermented. And that is true, except for—*it's false! It's a total lie!* It means "fermented" grape juice! It means "wine"!

As a matter of fact, the Bible not only doesn't prohibit it, it *assumes* that *consuming* wine is normal (e.g., Gen. 14:18; 27:25; Num. 6:20; 1 Chr. 12:40; Ps. 104:14-15; Prov. 3:10; Lk. 7:33-34; Jn. 2:1-11; 4:46; 1 Tim. 5:23). I want to say that up front so we make sure that we are not making fools of ourselves by saying the Bible says something that it doesn't say.

Now, I understand: Being confronted with the *horrors* of rampant alcoholism, seeing the destruction that has been caused, and is always being caused, by the abuse of alcohol, some people have said, "Well, obviously, that's *so bad*, it can't *possibly* be God's will; therefore: the Bible prohibits it!" Only, it *doesn't*. We have to think things through. Don't look foolish by misrepresenting Scripture.

But here is the crucial point: In ancient times, wine was mixed with water before it was consumed. Now, you probably cannot go to the Napa Valley or to anywhere in France on a wine tasting tour, and find diluted wine. That's not real popular these days. But what is *called* "wine" in the New Testament is what we would call "wine" today—like you could go to the grocery store and buy wine today—*except*, it was mixed with *three to ten times* as much water as wine.

Again, Homer, in the "Odyssey," mentions the ratio of what kind of drink you should make with a ratio of 20 to 1—20 parts water, 1 part wine. If that sounds like that's more like water purification than it is wine tasting, that's because it is; that's *exactly* what it is. Pliny mentioned a ratio of 8 to 1. Athenaeus mentioned the ratio of 3 to 2, and that was considered strong. Hesiod says it was 3 to 1. Alexis said 4 to 1. Go home and ask her; say, "Alexis, how much water should I put in my wine?" Nah, I think that was her great-grandmother. Diocles says it's 2 to 1. Nichocharus says 5 to 2. Anacreon says 2 to 1. Do you get the point?

Sometimes in ancient literature, references are made to a mixture of equal parts water and wine—half and half, or even stronger—and those mixtures were called "strong drink" or "strong wine"; those terms are used in the Bible (e.g., Lev. 10:9; Prov. 31:6), and so we are left to understand: when he says "do not get drunk with wine," he is talking about drinking a lot of diluted wine.

That's why, in the descriptions for spiritual leaders, it talks about not being drunk, literally "lingering long beside the wine"—taking in a lot of it (cf. 1 Tim. 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7; 2:3). As one person said: "To become intoxicated based on the drink that was normally consumed, it would affect your bladder long before it would get to your brain." So, understand that: Drinking wine undiluted with water was considered barbaric.

Sermon Title: Be Careful How You Walk  
Scripture Text: Eph. 5:15-18 (Ephesians #35)

Speaker: Jim Harris  
Date: 5-1-22

---

Here's from an ancient writer in Athens—so this is Greece; same culture that some of the New Testament is addressed to; here's the quote: "The gods have revealed wine to mortals, to be the greatest blessing for those who use it aright, but for those who use it without measure, the reverse. For it gives food to them that take it, and strengthens in mind and body. In medicine it is most beneficial; it can be mixed with liquid and drugs, and it brings aid to the wounded. In daily intercourse, to those who mix and drink moderately, it gives good cheer; but if you overstep the bounds, it brings violence. Mix it half and half, and you get madness; unmixed, bodily collapse." It was used; it was normally consumed greatly diluted, and it was also used for medicine and as a solvent for medicine.

Now, let's look at a couple of Scriptures. The blessings that God promised to Israel in the Land of Promise *included* "wine"! Remember when the spies went into the land, and they brought back samples of the "grapes"? They had to hang the bunches of grapes over a stick and carry it across the shoulders of "*two men*" (Num. 13:23), there was such a bounty of grapes—and that made for plenty of wine. Deuteronomy 14:26 says this: "You may spend the money"—that's referring to what He is going to allow them to have within the land—"for whatever your heart desires: for oxen, or sheep, or wine, or strong drink, or whatever your heart desires; and there you shall eat in the presence of the Lord your God and rejoice, you and your household." So, what you find in the Bible is that God prohibits "drunkenness" (Lk. 21:34; Rom. 13:13; Gal. 5:21; 1 Pet. 4:3), not wine drinking.

Proverbs Chapter 20, Verse 1; we went past this when we were reading through Proverbs: "Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise." Hmmm. What's that command in our passage? Don't be "unwise," but be "wise." Okay—Don't be "intoxicated"! That is "unwise"! And the circumstances in which that doesn't apply are: *it always applies!* To be "intoxicated" *is* to be *in sin!* It's to be a "fool"! That is *not* where God leads His people!

So, notice: Our passage, and the New Testament, and the Old Testament, *assume* wine drinking was normal. But, moderation and wisdom is required in the use of wine—even in the *preparation* of wine to use, as in: how diluted it will be. Its misuse is *never* wise, and that is *exactly* the terminology that we have here in Ephesians Chapter 5.

So, Paul says: Do not be "unwise," don't be "drunk with wine," *but...* Next Sunday, we're going to pick it up on the other side of that conjunction "but," and you are going to see that it is a truly amazing and powerful way to describe what God *does* want for your life.

I'll finish a couple of other passages about wine (e.g., Prov. 31:4-7; cf. Lev. 10:8-10). But understand what we already know here: Be "wise." God's will for what kind of person you are to be is fully revealed in Scripture (see 2 Tim. 3:17; 2 Pet. 1:3). You and I must "understand" what it is. "Drunkenness" is sin—*always*.

Now, buckle your seatbelts. I don't care if you read ahead, but come back next Lord's Day, and let's talk about where to go from there. "Be careful how you walk."

Sermon Title: Be Careful How You Walk  
Scripture Text: Eph. 5:15-18 (Ephesians #35)

Speaker: Jim Harris  
Date: 5-1-22

---

Let's pray:

*Our Father, we want to be wise. We say, with Mr. Kauflin, from that song: "Hallelujah! All I have is Christ." You have given us Your Son. For us, "to live is Christ, and to die is gain." He is wisdom embodied, and Father, we just want to be wise men and women. Help us to know Your will so we can grow more like Christ. Help us to be useful to each other in growing in that direction. Keep us from anything that would ever weaken our resolve or our control of our actions. And we know, Father, that it is not just "wine" or "strong drink"; it can be something on the Internet, it can be a cellphone, it can be a hobby. Help us to focus on that which makes us wise, not that which wears us down in our resistance to evil in this evil day. Provoke us, please, to help one another along the way. And Father, I know the folly of trying to impose Your moral will on people who don't have Your Holy Spirit within them. Please don't let a single soul leave this place today without Your Spirit, without the salvation that is found only in Christ Jesus. Please, call them to Yourself. Have them reach out to You, call out to You for Your mercy and grace; and then, have Your way to bring new life. And for all of us, oh Father, so often, regardless of how much wisdom we have, we just seem to be able to be content with it and not take that next step to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." So, may we do that very thing, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.*