

EPHESIANS 5:15-21**WALK WISELY !**

See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

- *and do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,*
- *speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,*
- *giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,*
- *submitting to one another in the fear of God.*

When you were young, were you ever entrusted by your mother with carrying food to the car for a visit at Grandma's? Did Mom say, "Be careful!" Of course you knew that, but then there was the door that didn't want to stay open, the narrow steps, the patches of snow and ice, and the dog and the cat. You definitely had to have your wits about you—treading cautiously!

The Apostle Paul said the same thing to the Ephesians and to you and to me about Christian life. In the first part of his letter he reminded them they had been dead in sin before God (2:1), broken down sinners in a broken down world, facing God's eternal wrath in the pangs of hell; yet they had been saved to life, a pure GIFT of God, by Jesus! "By grace you have been saved through faith, and not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast" (2:8-9). They, and you, and I, have been so highly privileged to receive His unbelievably great love and pardon! Paul exhorts, "Walk worthy of the calling with which you were called!" (4:1). In other words, "You are God's rescued people in Christ; do not dishonor Him and His priceless gift in your walk in life."

That same theme is present in our text (5:15). *See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise.* "Circumspectly" sounds like a hard word, but it's not. "Circumference" is the distance "around" a circle. Also five hundred years ago, Magellan "circumnavigated" the globe. One of his ships with a mere eighteen men successfully returned after sailing "around" the world. "Circumspectly." Then there's the second part of that word—"spectly." Do you wear "spectacles"? Perhaps you were a "spectator" at last summer's rodeo. To walk circumspectly means to walk looking all around. Satan lays many spiritual trip hazards, spiritual booby traps, spiritually mismarked signs, spiritually untrustworthy companions, spiritual ambushes. The devil wants you to fail. Don't be naïve about sin. It always comes back to bite. Sin starts out as something you get away with and feel smart about, but it gradually makes you stupid and bites. A pastor I knew had to deal with young man who started robbing convenience stores. He later related, "It was so easy." Ultimately, after yet another robbery, he forgot to take off his ski mask!—it was summer. He was quickly apprehended. You can't trust the devil. He is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44). Walk circumspectly. Grow in the Bible, learn what God says. Ignorance will no excuse. Ignorance will not help you if hiking a national park trail, not reading the trail markers, and then getting into a fix.

Walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise. Foolishness/folly is the opposite of wisdom. There are several words in the Greek New Testament which are translated "fool" in English. 1.) "Whoever says to his brother, 'You fool!' will be in danger of hellfire" (Matthew 5:22). That word for fool is particularly biting—meaning "dull, stupid, a moron"—someone stubbornly inept. It is not a compliment. 2.) A different word translated "fool" was used by Jesus when He walked with two disciples on the road to Emmaus on Easter Sunday evening, unrecognized by them. They couldn't make sense out of why Jesus of Nazareth had to die; and then this news that He was alive again. Jesus said, "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25). This word "fool" is not derogatory but means "lacking understanding" or "not thinking." 3.) Finally, in our text, *walk not as fools but as wise*, uses yet a third word also translated "fool." It is not derogatory nor does it mean un-thinking. This word means unskilled, unlearned, lacking in training or experience. It is the direct opposite of "wise"—skilled, clever, learned. Wisdom and intelligence are not the same thing. Wisdom and intelligence are not the same thing. Wisdom is correctly applying what one has learned—from books, observation, or experience. Paul is saying, "You have come to know Christ and the gift of God's great love and forgiveness for you, and heaven that awaits you. Now walk attentively, circumspectly, through life, applying what you have learned about sin, the devil, the sinful world, and your own sinful flesh. Do not live as unskilled and unwise. Do not see how close to the edge you can walk without falling off. Do not see how close to sin you can walk without giving-in. Do not maintain a little sin is ok or harmless." Like an addiction, sin gets its claws in, ever deeper.

Paul says, *Walk circumspectly redeeming the time because the days are evil.* The days and times in which they lived, and in which we live, are evil. Haven't you felt, "I wonder how much longer will God put up with this world?" Our society and values are rapidly unraveling. Consider the changes in the past ten years. Our nation becomes ever less secure in all its self-secure, smug, "modern" thinking. Salvation in Christ slips ever further down the list of priorities. What shall we do in such evil days? Wring our hands in hopelessness? Paul says "redeem the time!" Redeem means to "buy back from captivity," as one would redeem or buy back his phone from a pawnbroker. "Buy up the time!" Paul says. Opportunities abound every day to be active in your Christian faith and life. Now is the right time to act, curb sinful habits. Forget the excuse, "I can't help it; it's who I am." Now is the right time to part from sin X, Y, or Z, before the time comes when you cannot! Be attentive to the growth of God's kingdom, before the day comes when you cannot! Speak to people of the Savior, pray for them, before the time comes when you cannot! The "season" is at hand, the right time is now! Redeem the time. How wise is it to put something off, to put off haying when the season is here? Or harvesting? Or branding? Or bringing the cows home from summer pasture? Are you waiting for the "perfect" day?? Or an easier week? That would be foolish. The same is true in Christian life. Now is the time to grow in God's Kingdom of salvation in Jesus. Nourish your own heart, and to nurture its growth in others. Redeem the time!

Understand what the will of the Lord is. It's true, wisdom in earthly matters has its value—finances, farming, mechanics, computer tech, etc. But without *understanding the will of the Lord*, it's all foolishness. What is the will of the Lord? Acknowledging your disobedience, realizing His anger and punishment; yet also knowing the peace He made for you through Jesus! To grasp "sin and forgiveness of sin in Christ" is true wisdom. In I Corinthians Paul writes, *Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? . . . 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 (I Corinthians 1:20-25).* Jesus is your wisdom.

Paul gives four practical examples on how to "walk circumspectly, redeeming the time":

Do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit

Drunkenness or use of any other substance to escape the realities and responsibilities of life, is not God's solution for the problems of the day. Such an escape beckons with "fun," but offers no real help. Replace the spirit of alcohol with His Word and the Holy Spirit of God, the Comforter and Encourager. He points you to Christ every day. He is your "lift" in life. Walk circumspectly with Him.

Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord

Get rid of harsh and hard talk, using God's name foolishly to back up your statements, using cursing, blasphemy, words of anger, hate, and lies. Rather, *sing* to uplift the sin-broken heart. There are so many wonderful words and melodies to sing pointing to our rescue in Jesus. Have you ever been around someone softly singing or humming while working? It's a joy. And not just a top forty song, but a precious hymn or spiritual song pointing to Christ, songs pleasant to hear. Rock of Ages, What a Friend We Have in Jesus, Go My Children with My Blessing, The Lord's My Shepherd, Silent Night, I Know that My Redeemer Lives, Asleep in Jesus. And if you can't sing well, it doesn't matter to God. Sing from your heart or sing in your heart, encouraging to the soul! Redeem the time.

Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Instead of whining, complaining, fretting or worrying, be content. Be filled with thanks to God every day. He has sent His Son for you. He will never forget you. You can be thankful even for the hard knocks in life. By them you are taught and brought closer to your Father, the God of all mercies, hope and good comfort in Jesus. In Jesus, life will all be ok, even death. Walk circumspectly!

Submitting to one another in the fear of God.

You are not the be-all and end-all of life on this earth. You are not God's great gift to the community or the family. You are another part of the whole, another finger, arm, knuckle of the entire body of Christ. Don't be "domineering." Be submissive and respectful of the needs of others. Walk circumspectly. Redeem the time.

You are not just carrying dinner to the car. Through Jesus you are walking the narrow path to heaven. Be alert.

Amen! So be it!

Pastor Kanzenbach---