

THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

EPHESIANS 5:15-21, *WALKING IN WISDOM, GODLY ADVICE*

A. A Christians must be careful to live responsibly (15-16)

1. He is to be wise in what he does (15), ***Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,***
 - a. *Then*
 - 1) It is the same word for *therefore*.
 - 2) It looks back to verse 5:14, emphasizing the importance of how one behaves because it will be exposed by the light.
 - 3) It is best translated, *Therefore, look that you walk carefully*, because *carefully* modifies *walk*.
 - b. *wise*
 - 1) A wise person is *skillful in discernment*.
 - 2) John Stott, ... *Christian wisdom is practical wisdom, for it teaches us how to behave*.
 - 3) He is careful to live in such a way that he pleases the Lord.
 - a) Ephesians 5:10, *and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord*.
 - b) James 3:13, *Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom*.
2. The manner of walking wisely is the proper use of time (16a), ***making the best use of the time,***
 - a. *making the best use of the time*
 - 1) It means *to redeem the time, to do something with intensity and urgency*.
 - 2) It carries the thought of *buying back the present time, making the most of every opportunity*.
 - 3) Colossians 4:5, *Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time*.
 - b. The contrast is between what pleases the Lord to what doesn't.
 - 1) Thomas Constable, *We live wisely when we use every opportunity to please and glorify the Lord. Every day and every hour provide opportunities, and we should seize them for these purposes*.
 - 2) Jonathan Edwards, *Resolved: Never to lose one moment of time, but to improve it in the most profitable way I possibly can*.
3. The reason for walking wisely is that the days are evil days (16b), ***because the days are evil.***
 - a. *evil*
 - 1) It is *worthless, vicious, degenerate, morally corrupt*.
 - 2) The days we are in are full of that which is morally corrupt and those who are morally corrupt.
 - 3) Galatians 1:4, *who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father*,
 - b. Evil days demand discernment concerning the will of God and give opportunity to reach out to those in darkness.
 - 1) Thomas Constable, ... *we live in days that evil influences and evil individuals dominate*.
 - 2) Harold Hoehner, *Many are walking in sin, and since the time is short believers must make full use of their time to help turn them from darkness to light. This necessitates wise conduct*.
 - 3) Max Anders, *The will of the Lord is that we live carefully, cautiously, always matching our lifestyle with the teachings of Scripture*.

B. A Christian may know God's will by being filled by the Holy Spirit (17-18)

1. Don't be foolish by not understanding God's will (17), ***Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.***
 - a. *Therefore*
 - 1) It looks back to the previous two verses, 15 and 16 where Paul encourages Christians to walk wisely.
 - 2) Also, it looks back to verse 10 where we are to discern what is pleasing to the Lord so we will do it.
 - b. *do not be foolish*
 - 1) It means *to be senseless, unwise, not using potential for understanding*.
 - 2) It was used in classical Greek of a man who defrauded his mother of some allowance.
 - 3) 1 Peter 2:15, *For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people*.
 - 4) Thomas Constable, *The unwise simply lack wisdom, but the foolish behave contrary to what they know to be right*.

- c. *understand*
 - 1) Literally, it means *to put together*.
 - 2) It is *to put together mentally, specifically, to comprehend, to perceive, to have insight*.
 - 3) Mark 4:12, *so that “they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.”*

- d. *the will of the Lord*
 - 1) Understanding is not to be an academic exercise but the guide for daily living.
 - 2) Harold Hoehner, *Only after one understands what pleases God can he carry it out in his life*. Note Ephesians 5:1, *Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children*.
 - 3) John Stott distinguishes between general and particular will. He states, *The former is so called because it relates to the generality of his people and is the same for all of us, e.g. to make us like Christ. His particular will, however, extending to the particularities of our life, is different for each of us, e.g. what career we shall follow, whether we should marry, and if so whom*.
 - a) God’s general will is found in Scripture.
 - b) On God’s particular will, John Stott, *...detailed decisions have to be made after careful thought and prayer and the seeking of advice from mature and experienced believers*.
 - c) Of course every Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit Who gives general and particular direction, Romans 8:27, *And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God*.
 - 4) Warren Wiersbe, *Too many Christians have the idea that discovering God’s will is a mystical experience that rules out clear thinking. But this idea is wrong—and dangerous. We discover the will of God as He transforms the mind (Rom. 12:1–2); and this transformation is the result of the Word of God, prayer, meditation, and worship. If God gave you a mind, then He expects you to use it. This means that learning His will involves gathering facts, examining them, weighing them, and praying for His wisdom (James 1:5)*.
 - a) Romans 12:1-2, *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect*.
 - b) James 1:5, *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him*.
 - 5) Max Anders, *The will of the Lord is that we live carefully, cautiously, always matching our lifestyle with the teachings of Scripture*.
 - 6) Scripture verses concerning the will of God.
 - a) Conformity to the image of Christ, Romans 8:29, *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers*.
 - b) Spiritual maturity, Colossians 4:12, *Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God*.
 - c) Sanctification, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, *For this is the will of God, your sanctification...*
 - d) Thankfulness, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, *give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you*.
 - e) Doing good, 1 Peter 2:15, *For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people*.

2. Don’t get drunk with alcohol but be filled by the Holy Spirit (18), ***And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,***
 - a. Christians are not to be controlled by external forces.
 - 1) *Debauchery*
 - a) It means *senseless deeds, recklessness*.
 - b) It is *behavior which shows lack of concern or thought for the consequences of an action*.
 - c) It may be rendered *what one does without being able to think about it*.
 - 2) He mentioned wine which can change one’s behavior which is probably tied to the Ephesians’ worship of Bacchus, the god of wine and drunken orgies. Max Anders, *They believed that to commune with their god and to be led by him, they had to be drunk. In this drunken state, they could determine the will of their god and determine how best to serve and obey him*.
 - 3) Today, there are many external forces that can take the place of wine which include drugs, immorality, ambition.

- b. Christians are to be controlled by the indwelling Holy Spirit.
 - 1) Paul makes a strong contrast between the god of Ephesus and the true God.
 - a) The god of Ephesus leads followers into immorality, darkness and that which is not true.
 - b) The true God guides His followers into sanctification, light and truth.
 - c) William Barclay, *Those who were not Christians found their happiness in filling themselves with wine and with worldly pleasures; Christians found their happiness in being filled with the Spirit.*
 - 2) *filled with the Spirit*
 - a) It means to allow the Holy Spirit who indwells us to control us.
 - b) Acts 4:31, *And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.*
 - c) Harold Hoehner, *Each Christian has all the Spirit, but the command here is that the Spirit have all of him. The wise walk, then, is one that is characterized by the Holy Spirit's control.*
 - d) Max Anders, *In this ethical context, it means directed, influenced, and ultimately governed by the Holy Spirit...This filling, then, is best understood, as a command for the believer to yield himself to the illuminating, convicting, and empowering work of the Holy Spirit. As he works in our hearts through his Word, our lives are brought into conformity with the will of God.*
- 3. Four results of being filled by the Holy Spirit (19-21)
 - a. There are four participles which have the force of commands and deal with worship.
 - b. Understanding worship
 - 1) Meanings
 - a) The primary word for worship centers on prostrating oneself in reverence.
 - 1] The English word *worship* is shortened from *worthship* which means to attribute worth to the object worshiped.
 - 2] Psalm 95:6, *Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!*
 - 3] Revelation 11:16, *And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God,*
 - b) A second Greek word for worship emphasizes worship as service.
 - 1] A Christian's service may be through prayer, giving, and serving.
 - 2] Romans 12:1, *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*
 - 3] Charles Ryrie, *Perhaps the reason this word is used of the believer's worship rather than the first one is simply that since Christ is not visible today our worship is to be shown in service.*
 - 2) Jesus' clear statement on worship contains two requirements, John 4:24, *God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.*
 - a) We are to worship in spirit.
 - 1] The human spirit is the point of contact between God and man.
 - a] God is incorporeal - not composed of matter, not bound by space or time.
 - b] Man's worship is not bound by location either.
 - 2] It must be energized by regeneration.
 - a] Romans 8:8-9, *Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.*
 - b] Charles Ryrie, *True worship is a person-to-Person experience, honoring with our spirit God who was revealed through the Lord Jesus at all times and in all places.*
 - b) We are to worship in truth.
 - 1] It is sincere worship.
 - a] God hates insincere worship because He is truth.
 - b] Matthew 15:8-9, *This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.*
 - 2] It is worship according to God's nature, truth.
 - a] John 3:33, *Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true.*
 - b] True worship demands a growing knowledge of the Word which enables us to increase our knowledge and appreciation of the God we are to worship.
 - c] 2 Timothy 2:15, *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.*

- 3) Vance Havner notes why these two components of worship are so important, *The problem with the typical morning worship service is that it starts at 11 o'clock sharp and end at 12 o'clock dull.*
- c. Four results of being Spirit-filled
- 1) A Spirit-filled Christian fellowships (worships) with other believers (19a), ***addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,***
 - a) *Addressing* seems to say that communication between Christians in public worship can take place musically.
 - 1] Colossians 3:16, *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*
 - 2] Spirit-directed music communicates instruction, correction and bonds between believers as they commune together.
 - 3] Consider Psalm 95:1-3, *Oh come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.*
 - 4] Warren Wiersbe, *Christians who are filled with the Holy Spirit enjoy being together and experience a sense of joyful oneness in the Lord. They do not need the false stimulants of the world. They have the Spirit of God—and He is all they need.*
 - b) Paul lists several ways of musical communication.
 - 1] *Psalms* refers to Old Testament psalms which were designed to be sung in corporate worship with musical accompaniment.
 - 2] *Hymns* are songs of praise and thanksgiving to God composed by Christians.
 - 3] *Spiritual songs* are probably the experiences of Christians put to music, as in thoughts and feelings.
 - 4] William Barclay, *The early Church was a singing church. Its characteristic was psalms and hymns and spiritual songs; it had a happiness which made people sing.*
 - 5] H. D. M. Spence, *The great thought is that this musical service must not be musical only, but a service of the heart...*
 - 2) A Spirit-filled Christian worships the Lord (19b), ***singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart,***
 - a) Spirit-filled worship is not only between believers but should be primarily directed to the Lord.
 - 1] The Lord specifically refers to Christ but does not preclude the Father, as well. Note, how Father and Son are tied together in verse 20.
 - 2] Charles Hodge, *In worshiping Christ we worship God. God in Christ, however, is the definite, special object of Christian worship, to whom the heart when filled with the Spirit instinctively turns. This special worship of Christ is neither inconsistent with the worship of the Father, nor is it ever dissociated from it. The one runs into the other.*
 - b) It is worship/praise to the Father and the Son which is audible (*singing*) and inaudible (*making melody to the Lord with your heart*).
 - 1] It might be that worship concerns Who God is and praise concerns what God has done.
 - 2] Worship to God is not lip-driven but heart-driven, Colossians 3:16b, *...singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*
 - 3) A Spirit-filled Christian is always grateful to God for everything in Christ (20), ***giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,***
 - a) *Giving thanks always* is a strong command that certainly requires the empowering of the Holy Spirit.
 - 1] 1 Thessalonians 5:18, *give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*
 - 2] John Stott, *The grumbling spirit is not compatible with the Holy Spirit. Grumbling was one of the besetting sins of the people of Israel; they were always 'murmuring' against the Lord and against Moses. But the Spirit-filled believer is full not of complaining, but of thanksgiving.*
 - 3] We can give thanks always as we trust God's sovereignty, Romans 8:28, *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*
 - 4] William Barclay, *The early Church was a thankful church because its members were still dazzled with the wonder that God's love had stooped to save them; and it was a church that gave thanks because its members had an awareness of being in the hands of God.*

- b) *in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*
 - 1] God the Father is the proper object of thanksgiving with the thanks given in the name of Christ.
 - a] H. D. M. Spence, *That is, through him (Christ) who has brought in the economy of grace, whereby for wrath we get blessing, for suffering we get reward, for misery glory; whereby, in short, the whole aspect of life is brightened, and even the greatest trials and sorrows turned into real blessings.*
 - b] Thomas Constable, *Praying in the name of Jesus Christ means praying because of His merits and work and in harmony with His will.*
 - 2] Jesus Christ gives confidence in prayer, 1 John 5:14-15, *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.*
- 4) A Spirit-filled Christian submits to others out of reverence to Christ (21), ***submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.***
 - a) Jesus is our example of submission.
 - 1] Philippians 2:3, *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.*
 - 2] If we truly understand Who Jesus is and What He did for us, our reverence for Him must be evident by a submissive spirit.
 - b) Jesus is our motivation for submission.
 - 1] It is our reverential fear of displeasing the Lord which motivates Christians to serve others.
 - 2] John 13:14, *If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.*
 - 3] 1 Peter 5:5, *Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*
 - c) Comments on a submissive spirit
 - 1] Warren Wiersbe, *When Jesus washed their(the disciples) feet, He taught them that the greatest is the person who uses his authority to build up people and not, like the Pharisees, to build up his authority and make himself important.*
 - 2] William Barclay, *The early Church was a church where people honored and respected each other. Paul says that the reason for this mutual honor and respect was that they revered Christ. They saw each other not in the light of their professions or social standing but in the light of Christ; and therefore they recognized the dignity of everyone.*

CONCLUSION

- A. Use time wisely because the days are evil.
- B. Seek to know and to do God's will.
- C. Submit to the control of the Holy Spirit.