



THE GOSPEL TRANSFORMS

THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

EPHESIANS 5:15-21

Walking Worthy of the Calling, part 4: Walking in Wisdom

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Church family, there is a strong connection between the gospel and our life. In short, the gospel transforms our life so that we no longer walk in foolishness but in wisdom. We have learned that the gospel compels us to walk in unity, holiness, love, light, and now, we learn that it compels us to walk wisely. In fact, this is the main point of this sermon: the gospel compels us to walk in wisdom.

Let's investigate this truth together in Ephesians 5:15-21.



WALK IN WISDOM (EPHESIANS 5:15-16)

“ *15 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.*

Walking worthy of God's calling means that we walk in wisdom. Wisdom is a characteristic of God's people in both the OT and in the NT, but unfortunately, we do not always think rightly of wisdom. When we think of wisdom, we often equate it to Christian maturity. We think of varsity Christians as wise and junior varsity Christians as sort-of wise. Those on the Christian freshman team are fools, but they are still on a team. In other words, we often portray wisdom as a characteristic that may or may not describe a Christian. This is wrong.

In the OT, for example, wisdom and obedience are two ways of describing our obligation to God as his people. This is evident since Solomon in the book of Proverbs identifies the wise as the righteous. The wise are those who receive the blessings of being in right relationship with God. The fools do not receive blessings, but curses. Paul communicates the same idea here in Ephesians 4-6 since the gospel transforms us to be holy and wise. Paul's point in Ephesians is that a person who has been transformed by grace must be wise.



Wisdom is not merely intellectual; rather, it is the ability to live well as God's people. Living well does mean that we understand who God is and who we are as his people – it includes a gospel centered intellect. Living well also means that we desire to honor God as his people – wisdom includes gospel-centered affections. Living well finally means that we are committed to walking worthy of our calling – wisdom includes a gospel-centered will. Thus, if we are going to walk wisely, we must know the gospel, delight in God because of the gospel, and be deeply committed to God because of the gospel.

In short, walking wisely means that we redeem the time. This figurative use of the word “redeem” describes the concept of making the best use of the limited time we have on this earth. Our time here is in need of redemption because the days are evil. The prince of this world exercises a level of control over these days because of sin. The evilness of this age is evident to all of us: this virus is infecting and killing people. Economic volatility has left many in vulnerable situations: those in America and around the globe. Spousal and children abuse is on the rise as is substance abuse. It is clear that this age is marked by evil. To be wise is to recognize this and to make the best use of our time on this planet.

Therefore, we are to walk wisely.



THE PRACTICE OF WISDOM (EPHESIANS 5:17-21)

“ *17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, 20 giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

Now that we know what wisdom is and that it is not optional, let's together as a church family learn how immensely practical it is. Paul describes the practicality of wisdom by comparing two sets of opposites in Ephesians 5:17-21.

1) We are not to be foolish but to understand the will of the Lord (18). Notice how Paul is comparing “foolishness” with “understanding.” Integral to us walking worthy of God's calling is a proper understanding of God's will. Understanding God's will begins with comprehending certain facts about God's will, but this is not the entirety of this concept. Understanding here is not mere knowledge, but it is knowledge that leads to a transformed will and



transformed desires. Likewise, in Mark 4:12, Jesus says that if the people that he is speaking with understood, then they would turn to God and be forgiven. Again, understanding is not mere intellectual comprehension, but intellectual comprehension that leads to pursuing God and receiving forgiveness. Walking wisely means that we understand – embrace – the will of God. A failure to do this is foolishness.

Although understanding God's will is not merely intellectual – it is more than that – it does include the intellect. Church family if we are going to walk worthy of our calling, we must know right theology. We must be striving to know God rightly. We call this loving God with our minds! The way we do this primarily is through the Scripture. God has revealed his will to his in a book. These are God's word. Let's think about that. The God of this universe has spoken to us, and those words have been recorded for us. Church family this is an occasion for great joy. Let's think of Abraham for a moment. We read about how God spoke to Abraham and promised him a Son in Genesis 12, 15, and 17, but the events between Genesis 12 and the birth of Isaac in Genesis 21 took place over 25 years! You and I do wait on a vision from God, like Abraham did. We have his book available to us always. We always have access to God's word, church family. Therefore, let's read it, know it, love it, and beg God to use it transform us.



Walking wisely means that we not be foolish, but that we understand God's will. This is the first set of opposites.

2) Walking wisely means that we do not to get drunk with wine but be filled by the Spirit (18-21). This is the second set of opposites. Church family, being drunk with alcohol is not behavior that fits our new life as God's people. A person gives themselves over to the dominion of alcohol when they get drunk. The alcohol controls them. This is why people are always ashamed of what they do when under the influence of substances – alcohol or drugs – they are not in control. These substances cannot occupy this place in the Christian life because this place belongs to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one who indwells believers and exercises control in our life so that we produce fruit that pleases God.

Now, it is true, being filled with the Spirit is essential to us walking in wisdom but notice how Paul describes this important process: “being filled with the Spirit.”

Although this is something essential to our Christian life, we do not have the power to accomplish it. We are filled with the Spirit; we do not do the filling. Let's rejoice in this amazing biblical truth: God gives us the grace to walk wisely and supplies us with the power we need to walk wisely!



Now, just as it is easy to determine if someone is filled with alcohol, it is easy to determine if someone is filled with the Spirit. Paul provides characteristics of a person who is filled by the spirit.

First, the Spirit filled person addresses one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs (19). Notice several significant details here. 1) If the Spirit is filling us, then our singing is not just about you and God. Paul says in verses 19, “Addressing one another.” When we sing there is a dimension to our worship that is horizontal – from me to you and from you to me. In other words, when you hear me sing in a moment the words to our new song “Christ our hope in life and death,” lyrics such as “What is our hope in life and death? Christ alone, Christ alone!” the goal is to evoke great confidence in you that regardless of our circumstances, Christ is our hope. There is a horizontal purpose to our worship; it emboldens us all to believe the gospel despite our circumstances. Therefore, church family, let’s be committed to sing for the joy of one another.

Second, the Spirit filled person sings and makes melody to the Lord with our heart (19). Here, we learn that although there is a horizontal aspect to our worship, there is also a vertical aspect between you and God. This is how we often think about our singing. Now, notice that our worship is with our heart. The idea here is that the



Spirit fills us so that our worship springs from our heart. Worship is first an internal reality – an internal delight and joy in God. This reality expresses itself in external expressions: one being singing. Church family, Spirit led worship is not merely moving our lips, lifting our voices, or meditating on words in our heart. Instead, the Spirit fills us with delight and joy which find expression in words, loud voices, and heart-felt meditation.

Third, the Spirit filled person gives thanks always and for everything to God in the name of the Lord Jesus (20). In Ephesians 5:3-5, Paul taught us that thanksgiving is the replacement for crude behavior such as sexual immorality and crude speech since crudeness focus on excessive indulging of self – getting more – while thanksgiving focuses our attention on the God who has given us good gifts. This attitude of not desiring more but thanking God for what he has given should characterize us always and for everything.

This is what the Spirit does, church family, and isn't this absolutely needed right now. Gratitude is needed right now, but if we are rooting our gratitude in our circumstances – we are thankful because our circumstances are pleasant, then we will not be grateful. We are not living amid pleasing circumstances; we are living amid difficult circumstances. Yet, the Spirit fills us in such a way that we are grateful always and for everything.



Now, this does not mean that we become thankful for evil and suffering – that is not what Paul means here. We are not to thank God for child abuse, adultery, or the fact that billions of people right now have never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. We should not be thankful for things God hates. Rather, we should always be thankful to God – not for our circumstances – always and for everything. The thankfulness aims to God, not circumstances.

Church family the Spirit enables this to be a reality in our life. Romans 8:28 speaks to this issue – God works all things out for our good – as does Genesis 50:20 which reminds us that what the devil and people mean for evil, God intends for good. Notice that when Moses says this in Genesis 50:20, he calls actions “evil.” Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery, and this was evil; it was not good. Yet, God worked it out for good. This is the idea. The Spirit fills us so that we recognize that God is in control of all things – even bad things – and that he works them out for our good. This reality cultivates thanksgiving always and for everything.

Church family let’s point out one other detail here that we have seen several times now in Ephesians: each person of the Trinity works for our good. Notice that it is the Spirit who fills us (18) to give thanks to God the



Father (20) in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (21). Although this season is incredibly difficult and although many of you have been and/or experiencing incredible pains right now, you can give thanks because the God of this universe is at work. He is transforming us to be wise amid evil days.

Fourth, and finally, the Spirit filled person submits to one another out of reverence for Christ (21). Submission is a very misunderstood term. Basically, the idea is to put oneself under the authority, or leadership, of another. This verse seems to indicate two ideas. 1) The general attitude of the church should be submission which necessitates humility and love rather than self-indulgence. 2) The more specific application in various life settings such as the home. We will discuss this in detail in the next two weeks. Basically, being filled with the Spirit leads to a deep love for one another that manifests itself in submission to proper authorities.



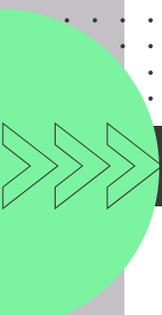
CONCLUSION

Church family walking worthy of our calling means that we walk wisely. Again, Paul emphasizes the other centeredness of the Christian life. We are to actively make the best use of our time which means that 1) we are not to be foolish, but we are to know the will of the



Lord, and 2) we are not to get drunk, but we are to be filled with the Spirit. Church family praise be to God that the Triune God who saves us also sanctifies us. He is at work in us during this difficult time, so let's work hard be wise this week.

Non-Christian friend, the gospel is really good news. It is the message of salvation. You see, outside of Christ, we are all lost, but Christ came to this earth and lived the life that you were called to live and died your death. If you would turn from your sins and trust that Jesus can save you through his death, then his righteousness would be given to you as a gift. This is the good news, so I ask that you turn from your sins today and trust that Jesus is your Lord.



LET'S PRAY

God, give us grace to walk in wisdom this week. Let us make the best use of our time by learning your will and by being filled with your Spirit for your glory and our joy. In Jesus name we pray, amen.