

Ephesians 5:15-20 "Be Careful To Be Filled And To Walk In The Spirit"

Ephesians 5:15-20 ¹⁵ Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of your time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; ²⁰ always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;

A number of years back there was a T.V. program called Hill Street Blues which was a cop show and it always started in a similar way. All the officers were sitting in the briefing room getting the assignments for their shift.

Their superior officer would give them information on what problems the previous shift had and new information on different criminals they were looking for. The camera would pan across the faces of these guys who invariably would quietly comment to each other on what was being said.

After all was said and done the briefing officer would dismiss the men, but just as everyone was getting up and moving toward the door the commander would stop everyone in their tracks with the phrase, 'hey, be careful out there.'

For the police it can be a dangerous world and great care must be taken to not only protect the public, but themselves as well. Great care must be taken to make sure they put into practice all of the things they've learned so they can do their job effectively without anyone getting hurt.

In our text this morning Paul is stopping all of us in our tracks as we go out into this world to represent our King and Lord and Savior as he says, "Therefore be careful how you walk..."

All of this is in the context of what we used to be outside of Christ.

EPH 5:8 "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light..."

Paul wants us to realize that there is always the temptation to go back and entertain the old nature. And yet he wants us to know that

we in Christ have a new nature and no longer belong to the one who kept us in the darkness of that old nature. We no longer must live as children of darkness, who spent our lives pursuing the sinful nature, rather we are to walk and live as children of light because that's who we are.

But if we don't take this life seriously and the obstacles the enemy places in our path, together with our own sinful desires, then we will not take care in walking as children of light. Like soldiers walking nonchalantly through a mine field we will find ourselves being placed in great danger of taking a fall or being put out of commission.

Paul equates being careful how we walk with being wise in our walk with Christ as opposed to being unwise. The word careful in the Greek carries the idea of being able to see and discern. It gives the idea that we scan the horizon looking for these dangers and obstacles. We are walking with our eyes wide open as we take each step.

PRO 14:8 "The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways, but the folly of fools is deception."

The way in which this carries over to our walk with Christ is that we approach each day of our lives realizing that there are real dangers which the enemy would try to utilize to cause us to stumble. He may utilize certain of our hot buttons which could tempt to us to sin. Your hot button could be anger, it could be impatience, it could be lust or whatever.

But unless you go about being careful of these temptations they may take you by surprise and before you know it you've been ensnared and your witness for Christ is not only hampered, your ability to be used by God is hampered as well, until we repent as we turn from sin and run back to our Father seeking to walk close by the side of our Savior, desiring to please Him.

Our Lord teaches us that this world is not our home. He has placed us here in a world which is hostile to the things of God. But we must still be wise in the way we represent our God. This is the warning Jesus gave His disciples in the gospel of Matthew.

MAT 10:16 "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes (wisdom employed) and as innocent as doves."

The analogy here of being shrewd as snakes is to employ the good characteristics of this particular animal. It's interesting that Jesus would use this animal since it is the very one who was used by Satan to deceive Eve in the garden.

The point our Lord makes is to be patient like a snake, to be attentive like a snake on the prowl. To be wise in choosing the place where a strike will be made and always being alert so that an opportunity will not be missed.

It has nothing to do with the negative qualities we place on such animals. Jesus is not giving us permission to somehow be underhanded as long as it's done for a godly purpose, which is why He adds, but be innocent as doves. There is no room for doing anything which could possibly dishonor our Lord and bring our walk with Him into question.

Paul then goes on in EPH 5:16 "making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil."

This is in connection with being wise in our walk with Christ. And let me just quickly add that wisdom is always connected to knowledge. But, wisdom takes that knowledge and uses it in a way that is consistent with the nature of the One giving that knowledge. In other words, our God has given us His word. That is revelation, that is knowledge about Himself.

But then we are to take that revelation of Himself and His will and obey it in a way that shows us to be followers of the truth. Solomon writes of wisdom in PRO 8:33 "Listen to my instruction and be wise; do not ignore it."

The implication is what James tells us in his letter. Do not be hearers of the word only who deceive themselves, but be doers of the word. (Jam.2:22)

But that wisdom will translate into the way we take advantage of the work God has for us as well.

EPH 5:16 "making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil."

The phrase, "making the most of every opportunity" is literally translated from the Greek as "redeeming the time". The idea is to "buy up every opportunity". (Klyne Snodgrass) And believe me when it comes to having the purchasing power to do this our Lord

has already told us in Eph.1:3, that He "has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."

If we're only waiting for these opportunities to come along we may never see them for what they are. Buying up every opportunity is actively going out there and seeing what can be purchased. It's kind of like the stock market. Unless you actively stay on top of what is out there to be purchased you miss a lot of great deals. Time is the vehicle through which we work in this world.

We have the exact same time that everyone else in the world has. There are only 24 hours in a day for everyone. One day time in this present world will end for each of us. We have a limited amount of time that we are born into this world with. And what Paul is saying is to take the time allotted to us by Christ and use it wisely because the days are evil.

One of the ways we use time wisely is in what Paul tells us in COL 4:5-6 "Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. 6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."

The reference here is in sharing our faith with unbelievers. There is a right way and a wrong way. Part of the right way is not only giving them the truth in our conversation but also the way we act toward them. Do we take a holier-than-thou attitude? Do we limit the amount of time we give them as though they aren't important? Do we go out of our way to listen to their concerns and fears?

The unbelieving world may be lost, but then so were all of us at one time. Someone took the time to lovingly give us the truth and care about us enough to meet our deepest need which is found only in Jesus Christ. That need is being delivered from the penalty and power of sin which separates us from our God and Creator.

Paul then goes back to contrasting wisdom and foolishness in light of this.

EPH 5:17 "Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is."

Essentially, Paul is saying that the Lord's will is wisdom. Not understanding the Lord's will is foolishness. Now, this does not mean that after seeking God in His word and not understanding certain things of the word that we are labeled fools. If that were the case we would all be foolish.

Paul's point is that after having been informed on what the Lord's will is according to His word and then not walking in that truth is most certainly foolishness, because it shows us to be walking, not as children of the light, but rather children of the world from which we've been delivered. Where's the wisdom in that?

Paul puts it this way in ROM 12:2 "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will."

We all need to make the effort to know what the will of God is. And the way in which God has ordained for this to take place is through His written word. If we are not in the word of God we will not know what His will is. This is why we study the Bible. This is why we come together to hear from God in His word. This is God's way of speaking to us. We need to be listening and then like Solomon says, "be wise; do not ignore it."

Back in our text Paul now says, "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit." (Eph.5:18)

This might seem like it's out of place and yet it's not. What Paul is doing here is what he's been doing all throughout this letter, and that is making contrasts between the natural man and his desires and the new man in Christ with the new life and new desires we have in Him.

He's not accusing these Ephesians of all being drunks any more than he was accusing them all of practicing immorality, impurity and greed back in verse 3. He's simply warning them of the kind of behavior which they all practiced outside of Christ and to be careful not to go back in that direction. "Do not be partakers with them" Paul says in verse 7.

So, what's the point here in verse 18? First of all, Paul is clearly stating what ungodly behavior is in getting drunk. Here the agent is wine, but it could be anything that has to do with not being in control because of substances we put in our bodies and that leads to ungodly behavior.

He says, "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery." In another translation the word for debauchery is dissipation. Oh, that helps. What in the world is debauchery or dissipation? Simply put it is wasteful living. It is a life which is indifferent to moral restraints. It is reckless behavior.

And as one commentator put it, "Drunkenness is symbolic of the height of folly, the loss of direction, and the waste of a life without God." (Klyne Snodgrass)

It's interesting too that nowhere in Scripture is drunkenness described in any context except of a moral conscious choice. This is why drunkenness is always described as sinful behavior. This is why drunkenness along with any other sin can be judged by God as personal sin with eternal ramifications. This is what Paul clearly tells us in Galatians.

GAL 5:19-21 "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; ***drunkenness***, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

If drunkenness is something other than sin than God is most certainly unfair in His punishment of such sin. This is why it is dangerous to lull people into thinking that drunkenness is a disease which excuses them of the responsibility to flee from such sin. Diseases cannot be forgiven. Sin can. And so the hope for anyone struggling with such sin is always found in Christ, first for the forgiveness of such sin, and then for the grace found in Christ to turn away from it to the glory of God.

This doesn't mean that someone who is addicted to alcohol is given two bible verses and told to see us in the morning. They need the love and the support of the Church. But they are not diseased, they are suffering the real physical effects of a moral choice which is sinful. And with the loving care of the Body of Christ these people too can find themselves more than conquerors in Christ.

But the contrast here is that drunkenness affects us one way, the filling of the Spirit affects us in an entirely different way and direction.

EPH 5:18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. ***Instead, be filled with the Spirit.***

What is being filled with the Holy Spirit? Well, it has everything to do with God doing a work in us. We cannot manipulate the Holy Spirit. The Spirit moves at His discretion, but He moves in conjunction with the will and word of God.

This is why we can be commanded to be filled with the Spirit here in our text. It's not as though Paul expects us to turn the Holy Spirit on and off like a faucet. Rather, he is telling us to be subject to the Spirit and His work in our lives. The way in which this is done is through the means the Holy Spirit uses.

The means the Holy Spirit uses is first through the life of a believer in Jesus Christ who is already indwelt with the Spirit of God. There is no life apart from being united to Christ through the working of the Holy Spirit.

ROM 8:9 "You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ."

What Paul is saying is that if you've placed your faith in Christ as Lord and Savior then you already have the Spirit of God who gives this life to us. The converse is true as well. If you haven't placed your faith in Christ you cannot have the Spirit of God and are therefore not one of His.

ROM 5:5 "And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."

And so for anyone to suggest that you can be a believer who the needs a second work done by God so we can *receive* the Holy Spirit for the first time just doesn't understand the way in which God works concerning His salvation.

Luke makes it clear in the first chapter of Acts that the Holy Spirit certainly works in our lives in a way to make us useful servants in the power of the Holy Spirit, but that is different from saying that we don't have the Spirit of God until that filling.

The risen Jesus says in ACT 1:8 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

These disciples had already been given the Holy Spirit when Jesus breathed on them which is recorded in the Gospel of John.

JOH 20:21-22 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." 22 And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

The filling of the Spirit, which is also referred to on occasion as the Baptism of the Spirit, is a work of God given to His people for works of service. Unfortunately, many believe this filling or baptism is meant to simply demonstrate the power of the Spirit through certain signs and wonders.

It is certainly true that God may choose to work in signs and wonders, but that is not the sole purpose of the filling of the Spirit as though God were putting on some sort of side show for the sake of showing His power in our lives.

The first time we see this after the resurrection of Jesus Christ is in ACT 2:4 "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."

Many people concentrate on the speaking in tongues, but this filling was designed to speak to the hearts of these people as the disciples were using this gift of tongues to declare God's greatness. And of course, Peter who was also filled with the Spirit that day preached the Gospel with boldness.

Later in Acts 4:8 Peter is filled again. At this time he is declaring Jesus Christ to the rulers in Israel. This filling gave him the power and the ability to approach the religious power base in Israel. We're not told that Peter sought this filling but rather that he was simply filled.

ACT 4:8 "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people!"

Part of the reason for him being filled without any apparent asking for such filling is that he was already about doing the work of Christ. Servants of the Most High God need the power of the Spirit to accomplish His work to His glory. For any servant of Christ willing to serve, the Spirit will most certainly fill us when He desires to use us, even when we least expect it. But it's something we most certainly should pray for as well.

Again, we see another filling after the first filling in Acts chapter 2.

ACT 4:31 "After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly."

After the apostle Paul was given life in Christ on the road to Damascus he was later touched by the Holy Spirit for works of service. He was already indwelt by the Spirit of God. But we read

in ACT 9:17 "Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord - Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here - has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

At that moment Paul was filled and yet this same Paul is filled again in ACT 13:9-10 "Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, 10 "You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord?"

The point is that the filling of the Spirit is a lifelong encounter with the Lord as He uses us and equips us for the task through this continual filling in our lives. But it's a filling which is in conjunction to our willingness to be used as we submit to Christ.

This is why it's so important to utilize the means the Holy Spirit has ordained as we study the word of God, as we seek the Lord in prayer, as we worship our God in spirit and in truth and as we fellowship with each other encouraging each other toward love and good deeds. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be strengthened by the Holy Spirit for the work the Spirit has for us.

But this filling will show itself as we are continually led by the Spirit through the means we just looked at. One of the major ways we see the work of the Spirit in our lives is not through someone speaking in tongues or utilizing the gift of prophecy or praying for someone and seeing the Spirit heal them.

The major way in which the Spirit is seen with power in our lives is through the fruit of the Spirit. This shows the world that we are in fact indwelt and filled so that we are found being imitators of Christ.

And so Paul says in EPH 5:19-20 "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

This is a work of the Spirit to where our hearts are overjoyed with our salvation as we encourage each other in that salvation. We speak to each other in a way that not only edifies each other but honors Christ as well.

"Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs."
Some have suggested that these are three ways of describing the same thing, namely godly communication. And that may be, but it should not go unnoticed that these three all have to do with the word of God. Many of the psalms were specifically written to be put to music.

The hymns spoken of here are not in reference to hymns we have today. Many of our hymns were written from the 16th century to the present, long after this word was written in Ephesians. But hymns in general are usually songs where "Jesus as Lord" is the focus of the song. This pattern is given to us in the book of Revelation.

REV 5:13 "Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

As far as spiritual songs, they could include any song which speaks of our experience with our risen Lord and Savior and brings Him glory through such a song. It's interesting that we are told to speak songs. But the idea here is not that we simply quote songs to one another. The point Paul is making is that the new song which Christ has placed in our hearts would be shared with those in the Body as it is paralleled in the songs we sing with our lips.

This is why Paul says in verse 19 that we make melody in our hearts to the Lord. This is not to suggest that our lives should be like the musicals back in the 30's and 40's, where a precious moment in the film turns into a musical number. We would really be seen as strangers in the earth.

Rather, our hearts are grateful and thankful to Christ to the degree that we lift our hearts to Him in praise as David did when he wrote the psalms to be sung. In fact, it's a great blessing to be going through your day and considering the love of Christ and then lift your voice to Christ in song. I don't necessarily mean breaking into a chorus in the middle of the grocery line, but singing and making melody in your heart to God. This is what Paul is conveying.

And as we're thankful to Christ for the forgiveness we have we will be much more prone to be patient with one another as we encourage each other's faith.

EPH 5:20-21 "always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."

We'll pick up here next week. But consider how we can encourage each other as we give thanks to God the Father for everything.

Let me close with an exhortation from the psalmist as he wrote to Israel to encourage them to join him in his praise and adoration of God in every situation.

PSA 34:1-3 "I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. 2 My soul will boast in the LORD; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. 3 Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together."