

Notes: *Walk According to Wisdom (Eph. 5:15-17)*

Intro: It's common to refer to the Christian life as the "Christian walk." Paul has used this picture repeatedly (2:10; 4:1; 5:2, 8, etc.). Borrowing OT language (ex Ps 1:1) Jesus could do the same (Mt 7:13-14). The child of light has the light of Christ's life in him. He must aim at shining it before the world! One evidence of being a child of light is exercising wisdom in how we live. We must walk with wisdom so as not to grieve and quench the light of God's Spirit in us. How?

#1: Walk with *care* (15). The words imply that the Christian life requires care and thought about what we are doing. Judgment and discernment are necessary. Just mindlessly "going with the flow" is a surefire recipe for disaster. Everything worth doing requires thought, care, and deliberation (job, education, home and family, etc) and our spiritual lives are no different. Calvin: "Christians ought to live as if they were in a crowded theater, for they live under the eye of God and of the angels. Let them, I say, stand in awe of these witnesses, though they may be concealed from all mortals." This care requires "wisdom" to see the dangers and wisdom to know how to respond in a godly and biblically informed way. How? Revelation from God. Paul prayed earlier that God would "give the Ephesians a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ having the eyes of their hearts enlightened" (1:17-18). Wisdom is God's gift as his Spirit illumines our minds and hearts by prayerful meditation on his Word (1 Cor. 2:12-13). Worldly wisdom is based *entirely* on intuition and experience apart from the revelation of God's Word. Paul however encourages Spirit given wisdom through God's word (2 Tim. 2:7). Reverence for God. In the Scriptures, wisdom is always more than mere factual knowledge even if it is gleaned from God's revelation. We may possess great learning but little wisdom. Wisdom is the ability to skillfully and carefully translate knowledge into practical godly living. What is necessary for this process? Many things but chief among them is "the fear of the Lord" (Pr 9:10). This emphasis troubles many Christians. We feel that we must acknowledge this truth since it is in the Bible but we may feel uncomfortable thinking that fear of God is a healthy motivation for walking in godliness. Actually the problem represents a failure to distinguish between two kinds of fear—"servile" fear and "filial" fear. This is a familiar theme for members of Harvest but it is helpful to revisit it. Servile fear is the fear a slave feels towards a harsh and unyielding master who he wishes dead and whom he obeys out of compulsion. Before becoming Christians many feel such servile fear in the Lord's presence. Filial fear in contrast is that reverence, gratitude, and love which fills the heart of the child of God when he sees who God is and what he has done to save him. Filial fear is love for God which makes us ashamed of grieving him and happiest when we please him. The reason many lack this wonderful fear is because they know God's grace in the gospel so little! God is just yet he justifies the ungodly who believe. God is righteous yet he counts believing sinners righteous through faith in Christ. Our God is one of wrath yet he poured out his wrath upon his obedient Son to make those who deserve his wrath his much loved sons.

#2: Walk with *insight* (16). Why? Our circumstances demand it! The wise person evaluates his circumstances with insight. He recognizes the challenges (Pr 9:6). What does insight note? Our days are limited. The person of insight notes that he has a limited number of days and that time is too precious to waste (Ps 90:12). The phrase "making the best us of" translates a Greek verb which literally means "to redeem." "Redemption" comes from the market place. Redemption involves the liberation of something in jeopardy (such as a slave) by the payment of a price.

Paul uses this term elsewhere to say how Christ redeemed us from the curse of God's holy law by the price of his life (Gal 3:13). We must redeem our days from fruitless, vain, and empty pursuits by the price of God-given self-control gained by faith in God's promises. The fruit of the Spirit who is working in us includes self-control (Gal 5:23). Our days are evil. We have been delivered from the power of this evil age (Gal 1:4) but we are still exposed to its influences. Our age is obsessed with living for the "now" and turning a blind eye to eternity. Remind yourself that each day is one day nearer. Whitefield: "man is immortal till his work is done." Get on with what God has called you to.

#3: Walk with *understanding* (17). Paul refers to "the will" of the Lord repeatedly in his NT letters. He means more than understanding specifically what we must do. He also means we must understand who we are in communion with Christ and what we shall be by God's grace and power. Note his uses of "will" in chapter 1. Understand that according to God's "will": The Father predestined you to be his child (1:5). The Son redeemed you to be God's child (1:7-9). The Spirit indwells you so that you may live as God's child. (1:11-14). In each case we have received these blessings according to God's "will." The child of God wants to obey God in the particulars (job, marriage, etc.) because he is assured that God has predestined, redeemed, and called him to holiness.