Careful Living in 2021

EPHESIANS 5:15-21

1-3-2021

"Walk circumspectly" = live your life carefully

IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR LIFE (and you should be), YOU MUST "WALK WISELY."

How can you have a wise walk? By being careful (cautious) in three areas:

I. BE CAREFUL HOW YOU USE TIME (REDEEM YOUR TIME (V. 16)

Cp. Col. 4:5 - "Walk in wisdom toward then that are without, redeeming the time."

A. KNOW ITS WORTH.

1. Time is valuable (precious)
2. Time is irreplaceable.

"Time" - 3 Greek words:

1. Aion - life span, long time, eternity
2. Chronos - a period of time

*** 3. Chairos - a point of time, a specific moment of time, an opportunity

B. KNOW ITS UNCERTAINTY

II. BE CAREFUL HOW YOU MAKE DECISIONS (KNOW GOD'S DESIRES) (v. 17)

III. BE CAREFUL THAT YOU ARE CONTROLLED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT (v. 18-21)

A. THE WRONG CONTROLLING INFLUENCE (v. 18a)

B. THE RIGHT CONTROLLING INFLUENCE (v. 18b)

C. RESULTS OF SPIRIT'S CONTROL (v. 19-21)

1. Inward evidence (v. 19)
2. Upward evidence (v. 20) (Thanksgiving to God)
3. Outward evidence (v. 21)

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INTRODUCTION: We only have one life in this present world. Most people live in the past, worry about the future, and forget about the present.

Ben Franklin - "Do you love life? Then don't waste time, because that is the stuff life is made of."

If you live 70 years, God would have given you 840 months, 3,640 weeks, 25,200 days, 604,800 hours, 36,288,000 minutes, 2,213,568,000 seconds.

You spend 5,256,000 minutes every ten years.

"Yesterday is history
Tomorrow is a mystery
Today is a gift
That's why it's called the Present!"

What are you doing with your life?

When asked what they are doing, many people answer: "Oh, I'm just killing time" --What did time ever do to us that we should murder it??!

Psalm 90:12 - "So teach us to number our days . . ."

Turn to Ephesians 5.

Paul having revealed to believers the riches that they have "in Christ" (ch. 1-3), then revealed that the believers' response should be that of a Godly walk.

1) "Walk worthy of vocation" (4:1); 2) "Walk not as other Gentiles" (4:18); 3) "Walk in love" (5:2); 4) "Walk as children of light" (5:8).

READ Ephesians 5:15.

"Walk circumspectly" = live your life carefully (- acrobat)

--A fool is not careful how he lives:

1. He utters slander (prov. 10:18)
2. His sport is doing mischief (Prov. 10:23)
3. He is right in his own eyes (12:15)
4. He despises parental instruction (15:5)
5. He is perverse in his lips (19:1)
6. He trusts in his own heart (28:26)
7. He walks in darkness (Eccles. 2:14)
8. He spends everything he has (Prov. 21:20)
9. His mouth feeds on foolishness (15:14)
10. He despises wisdom and instruction (1:7)

Wisdom:To the Greeks - facts, theoretical knowledge, knowledge for knowledge sake, human rationalization apart from God.

To God - "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10). Insight/knowledge that relates to life. Understanding put into Godly action. Skill at living life God's way.

IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR LIFE (and you should be), YOU MUST "WALK WISELY."

How can you have a wise walk? By being careful (cautious) in three areas:

I. BE CAREFUL HOW YOU USE TIME (REDEEM YOUR TIME (V. 16)

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A. KNOW ITS WORTH.

1. Time is valuable (precious)

"Redeem" = buy out; used of a market place; making the most of (ILLUS: taking advantage of an unbelievable sale at the store)

Don't lose it--use it.
Don't waste it--invest it
Don't neglect it--make the most of it!

2. Time is irreplaceable.

"Time" - 3 Greek words:
1. - life span, long time, eternity
2. - a period of time
***3. - a point of time, a specific moment of time, an opportunity

(Cp. Gal. 6:10 - "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto those who are of the household of faith.")

Can never go back (EX: once you hit your 20's, can never be a teenager again)

Time cannot be saved (it's either spent wisely or wasted)

Three things never return: 1) the spoken word; 2) the past life; 3) the neglected opportunity.

a. Redeeming the time, in context, involves: "Walking in love, walking in light."

b. Redeeming the time involves: Waking up! (Rom. 13:11-12)

c. Redeeming the time involves: Having a loose hold on perishable material (I Cor. 7:29-31)

d. Redeeming the time involves: constant moments of prayer (Eph. 6:18 - "Always" = lit. all the time)

*Sinful human nature is to procrastinate (think in terms of future) EX: "When I grow up . . ." "Someday I will . . ." "I have plenty of time."

*We tend to think in terms of huge chunks of time. Be concerned about the moments of time you have now! "Seconds make up minutes; and minutes, hours; and hours, days . . ."

B. KNOW ITS UNCERTAINTY

"Days are evil" (wicked)

NOTE: Paul could have said "short," but instead chose to say "evil."

Same word is used in Lord's prayer - "Deliver us from evil"

See Eph. 6:13 - "Evil day"

A few years later, the very city (Rome) where Paul penned these words was burned! Christians are blamed and made scapegoats by Nero. Blood ran deep (human torches). Not long after, Paul died a martyr's death there.

These are times of 1) struggle (Eph. 6:12 - "We wrestle not against flesh and blood . . ."); 2) Suffering (Phil. 1:29 - "For unto you it is given on behalf of Christ . . .")

We must seize opportunities!

"Boast not thyself of tomorrow . . ."

The clock of time is wound but once,
And no man has the power
To tell just when the hands will stop,
At late or early hour.
Now is the only time you own;
Live, love, toil with a will (doing God's will)
Place no faith in tomorrow,
For the clock may then be still.

Time is fleeting - Life = vapor, like grass that withers and flower that fades away.

Whatever you spend your time on, you are actually dying for (i.e. part of your life is given in exchange). If it isn't worth dying for, it isn't worth living for)

If we are God's servants and He is our Master, when we waste time, we are stealing and abusing our Master's (boss's) time.

You don't need more time; make better use of the time you have!
1) Make a time budget (schedule)
2) Make a priority list (what you are living for)

II. BE CAREFUL HOW YOU MAKE <u>DECISIONS</u> (KNOW GOD'S DESIRES) (v. 17)

"Wherefore" = knowing that the days are evil (you only have so many moments of opportunity), you can't afford to be foolish in the decisions you make.

"Unwise" = senseless (like Hebrew Christians who couldn't discern between good and evil or between good and best).

"Understanding" = perceiving (the ability to bring things together and see them in relation to one another). Does not just mean head knowledge.

"Will" = desire - Doing what God desires is only accomplished after salvation ("God is not willing . . .") and surrender (Rom. 12:1-2)

- Every decision is important.
- You are responsible for the decisions you make in life.
- Your decisions both reveal your character and form it.
- Your present circumstances are (in large part) a result of your past choices.
- The decisions you must make today may be a result of decisions you made in your past (Our choices can result in a vicious or victorious cycle)
- God is concerned about the details of your life. (He cares about the choices you make - Matthew 10:30)

Some Warnings about Decision Making:

1) Beware of making hasty decisions (Quick decisions)
2) Beware of making carnal decisions (Decisions when you are not close to God)
3) Beware of making self-serving decisions (out of selfish motives)
4) Beware of making unsure decisions (If its doubtful, its dirty)
5) Beware of making emotional decisions (without reason)
6) Beware of making faith-less decisions (throwing out “the fleece”)

How do I make wise decisions?

Ask yourself the following questions before making the choice:

1. Have I prayed to God about this decision?

Proverbs 3:5,6 - Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

2. Do I need Godly counsel (advice) about this decision?

Proverbs 12:15 - The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.

Pr 1:5 A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:

Pr 19:20 - Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.

3. Do I have a solid Bible reason to justify this decision?

Psalm 119:105 - Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

4. Which of my choices should be my priority?

Mt 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

5. Which of my choices would most please & glorify God?

Eph 5:10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

Make your decisions based upon what is right, not what is popular, or feels good.

6. What would be the long-term effects of my choice?

Pr 14:12 - There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

Don't made decisions based merely upon immediate results.

"Never sacrifice the eternal on the altar of the immediate" (Dr. Bob Jones Sr.)

7. Do I have peace about my decision?

Phil. 4:7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Concluding Remarks about God's will in your decisions:

- God's will is not a "bitter medicine"

Psalm 16:11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

- God never leads a person contrary to His Word

Psalm 119:35 - Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight.

- God only moves those who are in motion for Him; He does not steer parked cars

Acts 13:2 - As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

- God gives you the desire and ability to do whatever He wants you to do

Php 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

"Knowing God's will is life's greatest knowledge;
Doing God's will is life's greatest privilege" Dr. Bob Jones Sr

Although God does have a specific plan (will) for your life, this is not what you are to worry about finding.

God's will (desire) is for you to live what He has revealed in His Word.

What is God's will?

1. Sanctification (I Thes. 4:3)
2. Giving thanks (I Thes. 5:18)
3. Submission to government officials (I Pet. 2:13ff)

Knowing then <u>living</u> is what God expects from you (Eph. 6:6 - "...servants of Christ <u>doing</u> the will of God from the heart."

"God has given us a will with which to choose His will" (Phil. 2:12, 13)

"Out of the will of God, there is not such thing as success; in the will of God, there cannot be any failure."

"To know God's will (Bible) is man's greatest treasure; to do His will is life's greatest privilege."

III. BE CAREFUL THAT YOU ARE CONTROLLED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT (v. 18-21)

*This point is crucial (necessary) to obeying the other two points - time and the will of God.

A. THE WRONG CONTROLLING INFLUENCE (v. 18a)

"Be not drunk with wine"

"Wine" = Prov. 20:1 - "Wine is a mocker"
READ Prov. 23:29-35

Wine infers any external influence that controls you (rock music, drugs, bad habits, etc.)

"Excess" = wild and disorderly living produced

Cp. Tit. 1:6 - Pastor is not to be "accused of riot" (same word)

Cp. Luke 15:13 - Prodigal son "wasted his substance with riotous living"

Paul may be referring to people who worshipped a wine god called Dionysus. The worshippers felt that they were united, indwelt, and controlled by Dionysus, who "gave them special powers and abilities."

B. THE RIGHT CONTROLLING INFLUENCE (v. 18b)

NOTE: Contrasts:
1."Drunk" with "filled" (causes of influence)
2."Wine" with "Spirit" (source of influence)
3."Excess" with "speaking" etc. (outcome of influence)

It is amazing that we require abstinence from alcohol for church membership, but don't require Spirit-filled.

Cp. Pentecost (Acts 2)

"Filled" = to be completely filled with the result that what fills you controls you.

NOTE: Sin prevents filling--grieves Spirit.

Filling is . . .

1. Not a spiritual gift (Ephesians had <u>all</u> spiritual blessings [1:3] already but were commanded to be filled)
2. Not baptism or indwelling (all Christians are baptized in Spirit and indwelt, but not all are filled) (we are never commanded to <u>receive</u> the Spirit)
3. Present tense (continuous filling)
4. Passive imperative (God fills as believer yields)
5. Command (not to be filled is disobedience, sin) (it's not optional, just as commands to forgive, not be unequally yoked, etc.)
6. "Filling" = control for biblical living

It's <u>not</u> getting more of the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit getting more of you!

C. <u>RESULTS</u> OF SPIRIT'S CONTROL (v. 19-21)

1. <u>Inward</u> evidence (v. 19)

   a. Praise - psalms, hymns

   b. Joy - singing, melody
      Source - "in your heart"
      Object - "to the Lord"

2. <u>Upward</u> evidence (v. 20) (Thanksgiving to God)

   a. Continually - "always"

   b. Impartially - "On behalf of all (things)"

   c. "Through Christ"

3. <u>Outward</u> evidence (v. 21)

   a. "Subordinating" - taking proper place in rank

   b. "One another" - any and everyone in church without partiality

   c. Motive - "reverence for Christ"

CONCLUSION:

Are you walking wisely?

1) Do you have time to kill? How about working it to death??! (Look for opportunities to minister and glorify God)

2) Do you have choices to make? Why not seek God's desires?

3) Do you want a life that has purpose, meaning, joy, fulfillment, and eternal reward? Will you yield to the Holy Spirit, now and daily?

I have only just a minute
Just 60 seconds in it
Forced upon me--can't refuse it
Didn't seek it, didn't choose it
I must suffer if I lose it
Give account if I abuse it
Just a tiny little minute
But eternity is in it.

Determine to <u>walk wisely</u> from now on!