

ROCK GROUP BIBLE STUDY

August 8, 2003

Walk in Wisdom [Part 1]

Ephesians 5:15-21

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; 21 and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

Remember: Ephesians chapter 5 can be easily divided into three parts based off two words that form the structure of this chapter. In verses 1, 7, and 15, the word *therefore* [OUN] occurs, and it is followed shortly thereafter by the imperative form of the word *Walk*. So verse 1, 7 and 15 each begin a new thought. Remember that not all translations accurately render the Greek in this section. However the NASB does a very nice job of translating the Greek here.

Remember: The term *therefore* closely connects this section with what comes before and points backward emphasizing that since the old self has been laid aside and the new self put on then we should not walk as unwise (the old way), but as wise (the new way). We should not be imitators of the world (the old way), but be imitators of God (the new way). Since we have been saved/changed then we are to walk as wise.

Remember: The term walk is often used in Scripture to describe how the Christian should live out his daily life. Clearly throughout the book of Ephesians the idea of the Christian walk is highlighted. In 4:1 we are to walk in a manner worthy of our calling. In 4:17 we are not to walk as the Gentiles walk, but rather in righteousness and holiness in truth (4:24). In Ephesians 5:2 we are to walk in love. In verses 7-14 we are to walk as children of light rather than in darkness. This week in verses 15-21 we will see that we are not to walk as unwise men, but as wise.

Note: It is important to point out that Ephesians 5:15-6:9 are all one unit. These verses have one flow of thought. In Ephesians 5:15-21 there is the admonition to walk in wisdom. Verse 21 serves as a hinge verse as it aptly describes the particular aspect of being subject to one another. Paul then moves in 5:22-6:9 to apply that thought and give several illustrations of that subjection. So we will be discussing the idea of walking in wisdom for a few weeks.

· *As already mentioned, what admonition does Paul give the Ephesian believers in verse 15?*

Be careful how you walk, Not to walk as unwise men, but to walk as wise!

· *What does it mean to be careful?*

The term *Be* means "to look or observe," while the term *careful* has the basic meaning of that which is accurate and exact. Together they express the idea of carefully observing, examining and investigating with a great deal of alertness. Paul is calling the Ephesians to be alert and carefully see to it that they are walking in wisdom.

· ***What does it mean to be unwise? What does it mean to be wise?***

unwise : This term only occurs here in the scripture. It is a reference to folly in action and daily work. It pertains to not being wise as it literally means "*without wisdom*." It is likely referring to those who are unbelievers. It seems that there is a continual contrast being made throughout Ephesians 5 that we need to be living like believers not unbelievers. We need to be imitators of God rather than imitators of the world. Paul says in Titus 3:3, "*For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.*"

wisdom : This term means not just to have knowledge, but to have skill in living. It is taking our knowledge and putting it into action in our living. It is the application of knowledge. There are people who are book smart, but really struggle in putting that knowledge into action. We are not to just take in God's word as knowledge, but we are to put what we have learned from God's word into action. We are not to be book smart, but be living out God's commands. The thought might be the same as in Colossians 4:5, "*Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of every opportunity.*"

· ***According to verse 16 what kind of action demonstrates that one is walking in wisdom?***

One who is making the most of their time is demonstrating that they are walking in wisdom.

· ***What does it mean to make the most of your time?***

The term literally means "to buy" or "to buy back." It carries the idea of *redeem* and is thus sometimes translated "redeeming the time." It is drawn from the commercial language of the marketplace and its prefix denotes an intensive activity, a buying which exhausts the possibilities available. It seems better, then, to understand the expression as metaphorical, signifying to "make the most of the time." [O'Brien, p. 382] It is in the middle voice so it is indicating that we are to buy the time back for ourselves so that we can use it in the Lord's service. The picture here is making the most of every opportunity that we have to serve the Lord. Once the time has passed it is gone. We will never be able to buy that time back. Believers need to take advantage of every opportunity to serve God for His glory. Paul also emphasizes this in Galatians 6:10, "*while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.*"

· ***What reason does Paul give us to why we are to make the most of our time?***

The reason that Paul gives is that the days are evil. Paul may have had in mind the corrupt living that characterized most inhabitants in the city of Ephesus. The Christians were surrounded by heresy, idolatry and gross immorality. It may also be that Paul had in mind the fact that we are living in an evil age (cf. Galatians 1:4). As he stated in Ephesians 2:2 these days in the world are under the control of the prince of the power of the air who is opposed to God and His purposes. Since we have been transformed having put off the old self and put on the new self, we are to live differently. We are to be imitators of God rather than imitators of the world. We are to walk in love, as children of light and as wise making the most of every opportunity in this fallen world striving to live pleasing to God. How this is done is then highlighted by the following verses.

Paul now moves on to highlight how this is done. In so doing he gives two prohibitions with contrasting positive commands.

· ***What is the first prohibition given in verse 17 and what is the significance of this statement?***

Do Not Be Foolish! This is not a restatement of verse 15. There is a development in thought with a slightly different focus now on the Lord's will. This prohibition is an admonition not to act like the fool (Proverbs 10:18, 23) who is careless (Proverbs 14:26; 21:20) lacks understanding (Proverbs 17:18, and despises wisdom (Proverbs 1:22). The fool often described for us in Proverbs is one who refuses to acknowledge dependence on God, and acts foolishly and presumptuously. This person lacks discernment in practical living. Believers are exhorted to not live as the fool who fails to recognize God or fails to acknowledge dependence on God, but rather we are to do the opposite and strive to understand what the will of the Lord is.

· ***What is the contrasting positive command given by Paul in verse 17?***

Understand what the will of the Lord is! This is in the imperative and is thus a command. We should be striving to understand what the will of the Lord is. The idea is that we should be learning and growing and striving to comprehend the will of the Lord.

· ***How do we come to understand God's will?***

It is not through some existential experience such as a feeling or dreams or visions. It is not through worldly counsel or principles. It is only through God's Word!!!! In Genesis to Revelation God has told us everything He wants us to know. He has clearly revealed His will in the Bible. Therefore we need to be about the business of Reading God's Word; Meditating on God's Word; Memorizing God's Word; Studying God's Word; and Applying God's Word so that we can accurately understand what the will of the Lord is.

· ***What is the Lord's will for us?***

1. That we be Saved! (2 Peter 3:9)
2. That we be Spirit-filled! (Ephesians 5:17-18)
3. That we be Sanctified! (1 Thessalonians 4:3)
4. That we be Suffering! (1 Peter 2:20; 4:19)
5. That we be Submissive! (1 Peter 2:13-15)

John Mac Arthur says, "God's will is that you be saved, Spirit-filled, sanctified, submissive and suffering. God's Word makes all this clear. If you are doing all five of these basic things, then do whatever you want." When a believer is living according to these principles then they are living according to God's will. God gives us freedom to make other decisions (i.e. who to marry; which job to take, etc...) as long as they do not contradict His Word. Psalm 37:4 is often quoted in this regard, but also misunderstood. It says, "*Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart.*" If we are delighting ourselves in the Lord, then we will desire what He wants and thus He will give us the desires of our heart. This is not some sort of formula to achieve our own selfish desires. If we are striving to live pleasing to God then our desires will change. God's will is clearly revealed in His Word and we need to be about the business of understanding God's Word, so that we can understand God's will so that we can put it into practice in our lives and prove that we are walking as wise not unwise.

SMALL GROUPS:

· ***Are you making the most of your time (every opportunity), allowing God to use you and your time as He sees fit?***

· *What can you do to make better use of your time?*

· *Are you striving to better understand God's Will and if so how are you trying to understand God's Will better?*