**“LOOK CAREFULLY HOW YOU WALK”**

**Ephesians 5:15-21**

Brief word about mail out I will be sending out to member of Level Ground class – list of answered prayers, Revelation syllabus – I encourage your feedback. I am also going to be sending these same things and a letter to the 15 people on our extended class list. Pray for receptive hearts.

In our passage this morning, Paul contrasts the wise and the unwise. As we continue thru the practical application portion of Ephesians, we’ll explore further how we as believers are to live. Just to give you context, in our lesson last week we learned that we are to walk in love. We’re not to behave like the world. We are to walk as the children of light we are. The bottom line is that we should be different than the lost people around us.

As I was studying Paul’s line of reasoning here in Ch 5 I saw the first 14 verses (last week) kind of like an old fashioned tent revival meeting. Paul taught us the basics. There really was nothing new taught, nothing we hadn’t heard before. There was no new revelation. And yet in Paul’s audience, the 1st C church at Ephesus, there were some who, when they heard what Paul said, it was like they were hearing it for the very first time. They were convicted in their hearts that they weren’t living right, which is a main point of Paul’s letter. These individuals realized that they needed to turn to Jesus, either to get saved or to recommit their lives to Him. Verse 14 (that’s where we left off last week) is really an invitation – “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” Come to Jesus! Let Him meet you wherever you are and change your life! **I**

And so moving forward into our passage this morning, Paul is following this logical progression – now that you ARE saved, now that you’ve repented, now that you’re right with God – that’s the starting point of the Christian life – then, v 15, “Look carefully then how you walk…” Paul says, “from this point forward be careful how you live your life. Make the right choices. Spend your time wisely…” Paul says walk “…NOT as unwise, but as wise.” Paul’s being kind when he says “unwise.” Another word for an unwise person in the Bible is “a fool.” The Bible often contrasts a wise person from a fool. I want you to remember this picture because I’m going to come back to it a bit later as we delve into our passage in Ephesians. **I**

Before I do, however, I want to just briefly look at several verses from Psalms, Proverbs and the N.T. They’ll help us to better understand what Paul’s saying to us in Ephesians Ch 5.

Psalm 14:1: “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none who does good.”

Prov 1:7: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.” The wise fear God. They follow Him and obey what He says. The fools don’t. In fact, they despise God’s instruction.

Prov 10:23: “Doing wrong is like a joke to a fool, but wisdom is pleasure to a man of understanding.” Fools joke around about sin. They don’t take it seriously. By contrast wise people take pleasure in not sinning.

Prov 12:15: “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.” The fool doesn’t need advice. They know it all. The wise listen to advice. They realize that someone else just might know more.

Prov 12:23: “A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims folly.” **I**

Prov 13:16: “Every prudent man acts with knowledge, but a fool flaunts his folly.” Fools are proud of their sin. They have no shame.

Prov 14:1: “The wisest of women builds her house, but folly with her own hands tears it down.” Here you have an example of a wise woman who acts foolishly. The wise build up. Fools tear down. Fools tend to be destructive and often are self-destructive.

Prov 14:8: “The wisdom of the prudent is to discern his way, but the folly of fools is deceiving.” Fools are deceptive. They attempt to hide their foolish actions. The wise are discerning. They avoid folly altogether.

Prov 15:5: “A fool despises his father's instruction, but whoever heeds reproof is prudent.” Fools refuse to listen to anyone in authority over them. They’re rebellious. The wise, on the other hand, listen to reproof, to correction. They take it to heart.

Prov 17:10: “A rebuke goes deeper into a man of understanding than a hundred blows into a fool.” It doesn’t matter how many times you correct a fool; no matter how many times you punish them for doing what’s wrong – they’re not going to change. They don’t learn. The wise person, on the other hand, only needs to be rebuked once. **I**

Prov 22:15: “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.” Kids are foolish. They’re immature. They need to be trained to do what’s right. They need to learn what’s acceptable behavior. If they don’t, then they’ll grow up to be foolish, immature adults.

Prov 26:4: “Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself.” You can’t reason with a fool. They’re irrational. They have twisted thinking. They don’t understand or comprehend the truth.

In His Sermon on the Mount, Matt 7, Jesus contrasts the wise and the fool this way: “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.” The wise person builds his or her life on the solid foundation of Jesus Christ. The fool, on the other hand, builds their life on the shifting sands of this godless age.

In Matthew 25 Jesus gives the Parable of the Ten Virgins. Five were foolish. Five were wise. The wise were prepared. They had plenty of oil for their lamps to last all night. The foolish were tired, lazy and unprepared. The hour got late, the foolish virgins had to go into town to buy more oil for their lamps and when they did, they missed out on the wedding altogether.

One last one, 1 Cor 1:18: “For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” The fool sees the cross as foolishness. But we know better, don’t we? We see the cross as the power of God which leads to salvation.

So, there you have just a broad stroke contrasting some of the biblical differences between how wise people live and how fools live. It’s not just a difference in head knowledge or personal beliefs. It’s a difference in behavior. **I**

So, as we come to Ephesians Chapter 5, v 15 Paul says to us Christians, “You need to walk carefully, not as fools, but as wise people.”

READ Ephesians 5:15-21

[illustration of walking carefully]

The Greek word translated “carefully” in v 15 means, “with exactness.” You’re focused on what you are doing. Every step you take will be well thought out. You’ll be paying close attention to the details of your life. You fully understanding what the consequences are of a missed step. It’s in your best interests to walk carefully, isn’t it?

So then, in our day to day Christian lives, we are to walk wisely being very careful to stay on the right path. Paul says in v 16, “making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.” Make the most of the time you’ve been given. The writer of Hebrews talks about running “with endurance the race that is set before us.” (Heb 12:1) Our life is like a race. It has a definite length. It is predetermined by God. It has a beginning and an end. James describes our life as “a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.” (James 4:14) All we have is now. Yesterday’s gone. Whether good or bad it is what it is. There’s nothing we can do about it. Tomorrow may never come. No guarantee. All we have is right now.

Paul says, “the days are evil.” We’re living in an evil time. That was the case with the people of Ephesus back then. It’s the case with us here in Rockwall, Texas today. The days are evil. The sins Paul mentioned earlier in Ephesians Ch 5 – sexual immorality, impurity, greed, filthiness, foolish talk – these are rampant in our world. And things aren’t getting any better, are they? Second Timothy 3:13 says, “evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.” So then, given all that, what are we as Christians to do? Paul says in Gal 6:10, “as we have opportunity [limited time], let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.” It’s the same thing Paul said back in Eph 2:10: “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works…” So then, make the most of what little time you have left. There’s this sense of urgency in Paul’s words here.

Look at v 17: “Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” Yes, there is a sense of urgency, but we are to channel our activities so that they align with God’s will. What is God’s will? Let’s keep it simple. First, to get saved. We’ve done that. Second is mentioned in v 18, **I** “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but [HERE IT IS…] be filled with the Spirit,”

Remember Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians just before he started the practical application part of his letter? Ephesians 3:19 – “that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” And we said that this means you allow the Holy Spirit to take full control of every aspect of your life. If you’re saved and you’re filled with the Spirit, then you are right where God wants you to be! You are in God’s will. Everything else Paul mentions from verse 19 right on thru to the end of Ephesians will take care of itself. The natural biproduct of a spirit filled life is, v 19-20, a life filled with praise, joy, gladness, thankfulness and humility. ***[COMMENTS]***

Verse 21, “submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.” This is the key to the relationships Paul will be discussing next. Relationships between husbands and wives, children and parents, slaves and masters, employees and bosses. Every spirit-filled Christian, man, woman, boy, girl, young or old, is to be a humble, submissive person.

So, with all that said, let’s summarize our lessons these last few weeks: as Christians we are to walk in a manner worthy of our calling (4:1); to maintain our unity (4:3); to build up the body of Christ (4:12); to put off our old self, the way we were before we were saved (4:22); to put on the new self, new attitudes (4:24); to imitate God, be like Him (5:1); to walk in love (5:2); to walk as children of light (5:8); to walk carefully with a sense of purpose and focus (5:15); and to be filled with the Spirit (5:18).

Walk wisely! Can we do it? Paul says, “Absolutely!” But the days are short. The race is almost over. Let’s finish strong together. I want each of us to commit together to praying for each other this week.

Close by singing an old favorite from several churches I attended years ago – we used to sing this song all the time – Sweet, Sweet Spirit.