

## Ephesians 5:15-21

### Walking in the Light of the Lord

As we come to our text today we find what some have called the "summary climax" of Paul's Christian ethical imperatives of **chaps. 4-6**. At the beginning of the paragraph, Paul uses the word "walk," which perfectly summarizes the Christian life of discipleship. The life of the believer is a pilgrimage, a walk, or a life, rooted in doctrine (**chaps. 1-3**), that is lived in union with Jesus Christ our Lord. If we wanted to state this in another way, we could say that what Paul means by "walking" is simply that we are to "become what we already are in Christ." Paul states this beautifully in **Col. 2:6**:

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk in Him

Notice the **two parts** of this wonderful declaration:

First, Paul declares what you have already received. You have been safely and securely united to Jesus Christ so that all His work is the basis of your entire salvation (**chaps. 1-3**). In other words, already now and on the future day of Judgment, when God looks at you He sees the blood atonement of Jesus Christ so that he considers all your sins completely forgiven and passed away. This is important for you to remember today that Jesus Christ not only died for your previous sins as an unbeliever, but he went to the cross to lay down his life for your sins as a Christian. But God also sees something else, which is often forgotten. He sees the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, who kept the entire Law of God for you so that when God the Father sees you united to Christ by faith alone He sees you as having already perfectly obeyed everything he has commanded. In other words, in Christ you are absolutely perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Now, the second part of that declaration of Paul is that having received Jesus Christ, now walk in Him. Live your life in the sphere of Christ which means that you live by faith in His strength, the power of the Holy Spirit, and not your own. It also means that by living in union with Him, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that the Spirit will produce the "fruit of the Spirit" in and through your life as a holy vessel so that you will walk in a manner that is consistent or comparable to the life of Christ.

Notice how the Gospel is the root and substance of your life. The Gospel has brought you life, but at the same time it is your life. You are always living and walking before God within the context of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This is why Paul has gone to such lengths in stressing the contrast of your life to the lives of unbelievers (**not, 4:17 [vv. 17-19; 5:3-5]; but, 5:1-2, 8**). There life is characterized by darkness and futility. Your life is the Light of the Lord Jesus and it is a life that is filled with joy and meaning in Christ (**5:14 -- vv. 8-9**). Therefore, as you live out your life of being awakened in the Light of Christ, be careful that you walk in a manner that is consistent with the Light of Christ.

Now as we come to **Eph. 5:15** Paul will explain further how we walk as children of the Light both generally with one another in the body of Christ (**vv. 15-21**) and specifically in three important areas that are part of our every day lives (each of them could be called our vocations):

1. Our vocation or calling as husbands and wives (**vv. 22-33**).
2. Our vocation or calling as parents and children (**6:1-4**).

3. Our vocation or calling as slaves and masters, or what we will see as having many parallels to our day-to-day employment or labor (**6:5-9**).

As we look at our passage this morning, we will find that everything that Paul is going to say in these three important areas of our lives is grounded in **5:21** "submit to one another in the fear of Christ" which is the result of our being **5:18** "be filled with the Holy Spirit."

As we look further at Paul's instructions on how we are to walk or how we are to become what we already are in Christ, we will see that that walk consists of three actions:

1. Being wise (**v. 15**)
2. Understanding what the will of the Lord is (**v. 17**) (**which is what is chaps. 4-6**)
3. And, being filled with the Holy Spirit (**v.18**), with four results (**vv. 19-21**):
  - a. speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs;
  - b. singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;
  - c. always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;
  - d. and being subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

Now in **v. 15**, Paul tells you to "be careful how you walk." The Old and New KJV says walk "circumspectly." Literally, what Paul says is that you are to watch carefully how you walk or live your life as a Christian. To "watch carefully" has the idea of something done accurately, precisely, or after close attention has been given. Paul stresses both the importance and urgency of how you walk as a believer.

**But why is it so important that we be careful how we walk? Why the urgency?**

**V. 16** -- As Christians you are to have a right understanding of the times, of the day that you are living in. You have been given the mind of Christ (**1 Cor. 2:16**) so that you may take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (**2 Cor. 10:5**). Therefore by God's Spirit you are not being conformed to this world, but you are being transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect (**Rom. 12:2**).

Having been awakened from the darkness by the Light of Christ you know realize that you are living in the last days (or what John calls "the last hour;" **1 Jn 2:18**) of the world and this present age, which covers the entire interadvental period. Paul told the Corinthians, "upon whom the end of the ages have come":

But this I say, brethren, the time has been shortened, so that from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none; 30 and those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though they did not possess; 31 and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it; for the form of this world is passing away (**1 Cor. 7:29-31; cf. 10:11**).

As Paul says, these last days are evil (**5:16; cf. Gal. 1:4; Rom. 8:18**). We have already seen in **chap. 2** that the lives of unbelievers who are passing away with this present age are under the control and bondage of demonic powers (**Eph. 2:1-3; cf. 1 Cor. 2:6-7**) and that Christ has wonderfully broken us free from those powers and delivered us into his kingdom of light (**5:8; cf. Col. 1:17**). However, Satan and his demonic armies are alive and well and constantly attack our assurance in the gospel. Therefore, we are to always be alert and awake in faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul tells you in **6:13**:

Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

Peter also tells us:

Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 But resist him, firm in *your* faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world (**1 Peter 5:8-9**)

Therefore, because we are living in the last hour when these evil days are opposed to us we are to be careful how we walk. Paul now tell us "how" we are to walk carefully by giving us three contrasts:

- a. not as unwise, but as wise (**v. 15**);
- b. not as foolish, but with understanding (**v. 17**)
- c. not as drunkards, but being filled with Holy Spirit (**v. 18**)

Now the **first two** seemed to be more generally parallel, while the third seems to be more specific how we live as wise men and women (next week).

Let's look at the first two together:

**vv. 15, 17a** -- Paul contrasts the unwise or fool [with] the wise who understands the will of the Lord. Contrasting the wise and the fool is the major theme of the book of Proverbs and some of the Psalms (**Ps. 1**).

The **Proverbs** begin (**1:1-7**):

"The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, To discern the sayings of understanding, 3 To receive instruction in wise behavior, Righteousness, justice and equity; To give prudence to the naive, 4 To the youth knowledge and discretion, 5 A wise man will hear and increase in learning, And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel, 6 To understand a proverb and a figure, The words of the wise and their riddles. 7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction."

**Proverbs 4:10-14:**

"Hear, my son, and accept my sayings, And the years of your life will be many. 11 I have directed you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in upright paths. 12 When you walk, your steps will not be impeded; And if you run, you will not stumble. 13 Take hold of instruction; do not let go. Guard her, for she is your life. 14 Do not enter the path of the wicked, And do not proceed in the way of evil men.

The unwise or fool is careless (**Prov. 14:26; 21:20**); lacks understanding (**Prov. 17:18**) and despises wisdom. Why? Because as Paul says, his life is disconnected from God and therefore he lives and walks as a fool in the futility of his mind (**Eph. 4:17-19**). His life is ultimately a waste and in the end it is deceitful.

But the wise understand what the will of the Lord is (**v. 17b**):

First, what is the "will of the Lord"? The will of the Lord is the center and focus of everything he has been doing throughout redemptive history: the glorious gospel of Jesus

Christ (**1:8-10**). Notice the connection between the wisdom of the Proverbs and the fulfillment and culmination of that wisdom in Jesus Christ in our passage:

**Proverbs 1:7** "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge." (cf. **Eph. 5:21**).

Truly, as Paul told the Corinthians (**1 Cor. 1:18-30**):

For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God . . . we preach Christ crucified, . . . [which is] the power of God and the wisdom of God . . . God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise . . . that no man should boast before God. 30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.

The Wisdom of the Proverbs is Jesus Christ. To have the wisdom of God is to rest your whole life in the person and work of Jesus Christ. He is the ultimate center and goal of the Father's deepest passion and love.

It was Paul's mission to bring the knowledge of the mystery of this will to the nations (**3:9-10**)

God is working through the preaching of the gospel so that you will be wise in the salvation from God's wrath to come and join with him in Christ as he sums up everything in his own Son. But you are "not fools" because we are somehow YOU are wiser than most. Rather, you are "not fools" because of God who according to His will predestined you to be in Christ (**v. 11; cf. v. 5**).

God wants you to understand his will in Christ. You understand it more and more through those gifts of pastors and teachers who are given to speak the truth of God's word in love in order to build up the body of Christ in love (**4:11-16**). You are to understand the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the means of grace. Paul even prayed that you would understand the gospel more and more (**1:17-19; 3:16-19**):

For this reason I . . . do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention *of you* in my prayers; 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you **a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him**. 18 *I pray that* the eyes of your heart **may be enlightened**, so that you may **know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints**, 19 and **what is the surpassing greatness of His power** toward us who believe.

For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father . . . that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 **may be able to comprehend** with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God.

**Why does Paul pray that you will understand more and more of the gospel of Christ?**

Because as you comprehend it in all of its various facets and in the depths of its wisdom then your life will be conformed more and more into his image so that you might walk in a manner that is worthy of the calling with which you have been called by performing the good works which God prepared beforehand that you should walk in them (cf. **Col. 1:9-12**).

**Amen. -SDG-**

by Robert A Lotzer

Ephesians 5:15-21 NA28

5:15	Βλέπετε οὖν ἀκριβῶς πῶς περιπατεῖτε μὴ ὡς ἄσοφοι ἀλλ' ὡς σοφοί, ἐξαγοραζόμενοι τὸν καιρὸν, ὅτι αἱ ἡμέραι πονηραὶ εἰσιν.	EXHORTATION (Inference)
b c		Manner (Negative) of 5:15a
5:16		Manner (Positive) of 5:15a
b		Means of 5:15a
5:17	διὰ τοῦτο μὴ γίνεσθε ἄφρονες, ἀλλὰ συνίετε τί τὸ θέλημα τοῦ κυρίου.	Negative of 5:17b   EXHORTATION
b		
5:18	καὶ μὴ μεθύσκεσθε οἴνῳ, ἐν ᾧ ἐστὶν ἄσωτία, ἀλλὰ πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι,	EXHORTATION (Negative)   Description of 5:18a
b c		EXHORTATION (Positive)
5:19	λαλοῦντες ἑαυτοῖς [ἐν] ψαλμοῖς καὶ ὕμνοις καὶ ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς, ἄδοντες καὶ ψάλλοντες τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν τῷ κυρίῳ, εὐχαριστοῦντες πάντοτε ὑπὲρ πάντων ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρί.	Result of 5:18c
b c		Means of 5:19a
d e		Result of 5:18c
f		Means of 5:19e
5:20		Result of 5:18c
b		Sphere of 5:20a
5:21	Ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ, *	Result of 5:18c   Manner of 5:21a
b		

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Ephesians 5:15-21 NASB

5:15	Therefore be careful [look carefully] [ACTIVE] how you walk [ACTIVE],	EXHORTATION (Inference)
b	not as unwise men	Manner (Negative) of 5:15a
c	but as wise,	Manner (Positive) of 5:15a
5:16	[by] making the most of [redeeming] [MIDDLE] your time,	Means of 5:15a
b	because the days are [ACTIVE] evil.	Ground of 5:16a
5:17	So then do not be [MIDDLE/PASSIVE] foolish,	Negative of 5:17b
b	but understand [ACTIVE] what the will of the Lord is [ACTIVE].	EXHORTATION
5:18	And do not get drunk [PASSIVE] with wine,	EXHORTATION (Negative)
b	for that is [ACTIVE] dissipation,	Description of 5:18a
c	but be filled [PASSIVE] with the Spirit,	EXHORTATION (Positive)
5:19	speaking [ACTIVE] to one another	Result of 5:18c
b	in psalms	
c	and hymns	Means of 5:19a
d	and spiritual songs,	
e	singing [ACTIVE] and making melody [singing praise] [ACTIVE]	Result of 5:18c
f	with your heart to the Lord;	Means of 5:19e
5:20	always giving thanks [ACTIVE] for all things	Result of 5:18c
b	in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;	Sphere of 5:20a
5:21	and be subject [PASSIVE] to one another	Result of 5:18c
b	in the fear of Christ.	Manner of 5:21a