

WALKING WISELY IN A WICKED WORLD – PART 1

I want to start off this morning like we did a couple of weeks ago—by **reading together** Psalm 19:11 as found on your outline: “Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.”

Psalm 19:11 has served as our over-arching theme because it reminds us **why** we should want to **know** what the Bible says—and **do** what the Bible says!

Reason #1? Because of the **warnings** God gives us! **Why** does God warn us?

Because He **loves us** and wants to **protect us** from that which will harm us!

Reason #2? Because God promises **great reward** to those that keep His Word! We should **want to** obey Him because of **Who He is** and what **He has done**, but we should also obey because He promises to **bless us** when we do! To sum up the verse, then, there is **protection** in the warnings—and **blessings** in obeying!

With the exception of last Sunday, lately we’ve been looking at some of **the blessings** God gives in obedience to Him, blessings like the **peace of God** that passes all understanding as found in Phil 4:7—and being like **a tree planted** by the rivers of waters as found in Psalm 1:3. This morning, I want us to consider **a warning** that God gives us through the apostle Paul found in the book of Ephesians. Please take your Bibles and turn to Ephesians 5; follow along as I read verses 15-20. There are obviously a **couple of warnings** in this passage, but I want to zero in on the one found in verse 16 “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”

1. The context (Big Picture) of our text

God used Paul to write quite a bit of the New Testament—13 of the 27 books and possibly 14 if he wrote Hebrews! Paul’s writings are in the form **of letters** to either individuals or churches. It is a fairly common pattern for him to **start** his letters by teaching doctrinal truth, then follow that up with **how we should** live based on that truth. This pattern is quite pronounced in the book of Ephesians. The first 3 chapters are **doctrinal** and teach many of the wonderful **blessings** we have in Christ. The last 3 chapters—4 thru 6—teach us **how we should live**.

--4:1 “I therefore,”—based on what I’ve already said—“the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye **walk worthy** of the vocation wherewith you are called,”

In essence, Paul is saying this—if you are a Christian, **live like one!** Walk worthy of your name!

--4:17 (mid) “...that ye henceforth **walk not** as other Gentiles walk.” Here he says, Don’t live like the unsaved!

--5:2 “And **walk in love**...”

--5:8 (end) “**walk as children of light**:”

--And 5:15—the verse I read earlier—“See then that ye **walk circumspectly**, not as fools, but as wise,”

Five times—in just two chapters—God through Paul tells us **how** we are to live in light of **who** we are! I mentioned earlier that we will be focusing on the warning found in vs 16: “redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” I’m not going **to just talk about** “redeeming the time,” though, because that isn’t the main point of verses 15-17! In fact, “understanding what the will of the Lord is”—as seen in vs 17—is equally important! The main point—and what we will **begin to** look at this morning—is this: **The key to living carefully in these evil days is to be wise...and redeem the time...and understand what the will of the Lord is.**

2. The command to live carefully

Vs 15 “See then that ye walk circumspectly...”

--“See then” is in the form of a command—and it is a command that we are to be **continually** doing. What does it mean? It means to “consider; to direct our attention to; to contemplate; to take heed to.”

--“Walk” refers to much more than the act of **moving from** point “A” to “point” B. It has to do with how **we live**. It has to do with what **we do**—and **how** we do it.

--“Circumspectly” is certainly not a word that we use on a day-to-day basis. It is found in our KJ Bibles only once, but the Greek word it comes from is used 9 times. It carries the idea of “carefully, with exactness.”

The command, then—although a bit clunky—is this: “Be continually being careful to live carefully!” In our day to day living, do we continually try to be careful to do things carefully? In some things we do! --**Good employees** try to do things the way they are supposed to be done. They don’t just “wing it”—they do it the way **the boss wants** them to!

Being careful to do things right doesn’t just apply to jobs and the workplace, though! --**Good students** try to do things the way their teachers want them done. **Good athletes** try to do things the way their coaches want them done. And even in **our hobbies**—where we don’t have a boss or coach—we still take great care to carefully do things the exact way they should be done!

--When Don works on his airplane, he tries to do things exactly the way they are supposed to be done.

--When guys tinker with cars...or load ammo...or tie lures onto their fishing line, they are careful to do it right.--When ladies cook...or sew...or can...or shop...or balance the check book, they **don’t do it** “any old way”—they try to do it **the right way!**

But the context is about living our life **for God**. It includes how we **work**...and what **kind of student** we are... and what **kind of teammate** we are...and how we approach **our hobbies** and how we tackle the sometimes-mundane **duties of life!** But it is **much more than** that! It also includes our goals...and plans...and priorities... and purpose...and how we use our time.

And sadly, far too many Christians are **really good** at being careful to do their jobs and hobbies with **exactness**—but put **little to no thought** or effort into living their life in a way that pleases God!

Next, let’s consider... **3. The characteristics of living carefully**

So how do we go about living our lives carefully? What are the characteristics? What commitments will we need to make in order to make this happen? I see three here in this passage:

A. Do not live the way a fool does!

Vs 15 “See then that ye walk circumspectly [carefully] not as fools...” **How** do fools live? Where do we start, right? Can’t spend a lot of time on this, but here are **two attitudes** that characterize a fool.

1) A fool lives as if there is no God. Psalm 14:1 “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.” Psalm 53:1 says the same thing. I find it interesting that the verse says it “in his **heart**”—and not “in his **head**.” It’s possible I could be wrong and that I’m reading too much into it, but here’s why—IMO—it does not say “The fool hath said in **his head**, There is no God.” Here it is—because **in their head** they know there is a God!

What makes me say that? **Rom 1:28** “And even as they **did not like to retain God in their knowledge**...” God was in their knowledge—they had a God-awareness; a God-consciousness—but they **refused to retain** that knowledge. In other words, they **suppressed it**. In **their head** they knew—but in **their heart** they made a conscious and willful choice to say “No”—I **will not** believe in God!

So a fool **makes a decision not to believe** in God. Based on that choice, they then feel they are not accountable to God and don’t have to listen to God. It doesn’t end there, though.

The natural consequence of living as if **there is no God** leads to this:

2) A fool lives as if they are God. Rom 1:22 “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools...” They don’t need God because they are—in their mind—smarter than God!

--Their **logic**—not God’s Word—is supreme.

--If it doesn’t make sense **to them**, it can’t be true—in their strange way of thinking. But in spite of them “professing themselves”—proclaiming themselves—“to be wise, they became fools.”

Notice **Rom 1:25** “Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and **worshipped and served the creature** more than the Creator,” Although it is true that they may worship other things—including idols made to false gods—often times they worship and serve themselves!

Quick question before we move on: Is it possible that **a believer** can choose to **live like** a fool? Of course it is! If it **wasn’t possible**, God wouldn’t give us the warning not to live that way!

What are the characteristics of living carefully? Characteristic #1? **Do not live as a fool does!**

Characteristic #2? B. Do live the way a wise man does!

How does a wise man live? Again, that could be a whole sermon in itself! Here are three marks of a wise man.

1) A wise man fears God. Psalm 110:10 “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom:” Pr 9:10 says same.

2) A wise man obeys God. Many of us are familiar with the children’s song about the **wise man** and the **foolish man**. I’m not going to sing it, but that song comes from Jesus’ words at the end of Matthew 7.

Mt 7:24 “Therefore whosoever **heareth** these sayings of mine, **and doeth them**, I will liken him unto a **wise man**, which built his house upon a rock:”

There is a **third** characteristic of the wise man, one that provides **the reason** that He fears God and obeys God. What is that reason?

3) A wise man considers his latter end!

Notice some of Moses’ parting words to God’s people before he died. **Deut 32:29** “O that they were **wise**, that they understood this, that they would **consider their latter end!**”

What is meant by “latter end?” It is more than just our **last days** at the end of our life. Moses was referring to the day **after** our **last day—judgment** day! He was referring to the day **we meet God!**

Is there such a day? There certainly is! In fact, there **are two**—one for **believers**, the other for **unbelievers!** I’ve said this a time or two before, but it bears repeating: there is **not one big judgment** where **everyone stands** before God and God decides who His children are and who are not!

God knows them that are His! **True believers**—those who have trusted Jesus as their Savior and have been born again—go to **one** judgment where they are rewarded for what they **did for God** after they became His child. **I Cor 3:14-15** “If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall **receive a reward**.¹⁵ If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall **suffer loss**: but **he himself shall be saved**; yet so as by fire.”

Unbelievers—those who think **their efforts** will get them to heaven, as well as those that think **Jesus is not enough** and that they need to “help” Him—will be at a **different** judgment. They will be judged for their **works—meaning their sins**—prior to being cast into the eternal lake of fire.

Revelation 20:12, 15 “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the **dead were judged** out of those things which were written in the books, **according to their works**.¹⁵ And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was **cast into** the lake of fire.”

Imagine **having every sin you’ve committed being pointed out**—and judged—by God. That happens to the unbeliever, but not the believer. The believer’s sins are gone—and will be remembered no more! Amen!

What about **you**? **Which judgment** will you be at? You will be judged; the Bible plainly states that. Heb 9:27

“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:” Are you ready for judgment day?

A wise man considers his latter end. Are **you** considering **yours**?

What are the characteristics—and commitments—of someone who is being careful to live carefully?

First, they will **not live** as a fool!

Second, they **will live** as a wise man.

Third, C. They will redeem the time

We see that in vs 16 “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”

What does it mean to “redeem the time?” To better understand what Paul means, it is best to look at the word “time” first. “Time” here does not refer to a **unit of time** like seconds or minutes or hours. Instead, it refers to an **opportunity or occasion**—like the right moment...or an opportune time to do something.

So what does it mean to “redeem” a moment...or occasion... or opportunity?

The Greek word that “redeem” is translated from is used here and 3 other places—all by the Apostle Paul.

Twice—in Galatians 3:13 & 4:5—it has to do with being redeemed from the **curse of the law**. The other two uses—here and in Colossians 4:5—it is in **reference to time**.

“Redeem” literally means to “buy up at the marketplace” and carries the idea of purchasing a slave in order to free him. Jesus **redeemed** us—He **purchased** our freedom from the penalty of being commandment-breakers—by dying in our place! So in addition to “buying or purchasing,” **redeem** also means to “deliver” or “rescue from loss.”

So how does “buying back” and “delivering” and “rescuing from loss” correlate with **opportunities**? Two ways, which are really two sides of the same coin.

1) First, we need to “free ourselves” from **unimportant** activities. Sometimes we fail to seize an **important** opportunity because we are bogged down doing **unimportant** things!

2) Second, we need to be **wise enough** to recognize what important opportunities are and take advantage of them! Here’s a few examples.

--I use to get wood from a neighbor. It was nice dry oak already on the ground—and a nice mixture of small stuff and bigger stuff. I got some from her, but she then **changed her mind** and said she wanted it left so the rabbits had a place to live. I missed an opportunity—and didn’t realize it—until it was too late!

--Last summer, Don and Art stumbled upon a “secret estate sale.” It wasn’t really a secret, but it wasn’t well advertised. Since no one was showing up, they were practically giving stuff away. Don and Art got ahold of me to “seize the moment,” but I didn’t go. They did, though, and got a few trailer loads of “goodies” if I remember right!

--I don’t **pass up** every good opportunity I have, though. Late last summer the river was low. I contacted the birthday boy—who I fondly call the “Bass master”—to see if he wanted to go fishing.

--Why? Am I afraid to go fishing myself? Obviously not!

--Does he do a lot of the heavy lifting when it comes to loading the canoe on and off the trailer? Nope!

--But...the ladies at the **minnow place** gives us a lot more minnows when he carries the bucket in! It’s not about that, though! It’s about the **opportunities to make memories** and build a relationship with my grandson! I don’t know how long that “window of opportunity” to do that will be open, so I’m seizing it.

We’re going to end here for today because I want to spend **more** time **next** time talking **about** time! One last thought, though, before we close.

Look at vs 14 (read). Commentators are not in total agreement as to **who**—or **what**—is being quoted; or what exactly the verse means—but many hold to this thought: It is an exhortation **to be saved!**

It is an encouragement to stop sleeping—to stop being **unaware of the danger** you are in—and wake up! It is an encouragement to “rise from the dead.” How can **we** do that? We can’t—but we can certainly see our need to get out from **under the death penalty** we are under and call upon Christ!

John 3:36 “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

If you are not saved—if you don’t have Christ...if you are counting on you and your good works to obtain forgiveness of sins and salvation—the wrath of God is abiding on you!

Don’t remain there! “Awake thou that sleepest!” Get up—trust Christ—seize the moment!

II Cor 6:2b “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

So what does God want you to do with what you heard this morning?

1) First, are you saved? Are you born again? Are you a child of God? Is your name written in the book of life?

--If not, you will meet God at the Great White Throne judgment.

--You will be found guilty—because we all are—and you will be condemned because you refused God’s way of forgiveness.

2) Second, for those of us who are saved, how is your life?

--Are you living like you are a child of God—or are you living like the unsaved?

--Don't live like a fool does—live like a wise man!

3) We'll talk about time more next time, but I would encourage you to pay attention to how you spend your time. Do you waste a lot of it doing unimportant things? If so, you won't have time for the important things!