

Ephesians 5:15-21

Ephesians  
*So You Want To Be Wise*

This past Wednesday the city of Boston was virtually shut down when devices were discovered in high profile places. The devices were a foot tall, had the image of a cartoon character, and contained wires and batteries.

As it turns out, the whole thing was a marketing ploy by the Cartoon Network. Officials in Boston weren't laughing though. Their whole city had been disrupted and almost \$750,000.00 had been spent in city monies.

The devices were planted in nine other cities, but with far less dramatic results. New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Atlanta, Seattle, Portland, Austin, San Francisco and Philadelphia all had the devices for the past few weeks. No bomb scares were reported in any of those locations.

We'll leave it to the courts to figure out who was ultimately responsible, but unfortunately at this point the Boston officials look a bit foolish for taking things to the extreme.

Obviously, this whole debacle could have been avoided if the Cartoon Network had gotten the proper authorization for the advertising campaign.

That's the way it is with wisdom and foolishness. The thing that makes the difference between the two is having the facts and acting on them. God freely uses the designation of "wise" and "foolish" to describe the people of the human race.

A wise man, might not be well educated, but he has built his life on the truths of God.

A fool might be very well educated. He might be highly acclaimed by the world. But he's built his house upon the sand. His life is built upon his own understanding of things apart from God.

And from the biblical perspective the more your thinking is in line with God, the wiser you are. The farther away from God's viewpoint you get, the more of a fool you become.

## Turn with me to Ephesians 5, Page 1041

In our passage for today God calls us to be wise and not live as fools. To know His truth and to act upon it. In 7 verses the Bible contrasts foolish footsteps and careful conduct. This is an extremely challenging passage, it's also an extremely convicting passage.

None of us would like to admit that we would ever act like a fool. We all like to think of ourselves as wise. And yet any time we sin, anytime we act in a way that is opposed to God or His truth, we are being foolish. And so this passage becomes a challenge to us all to lay aside foolishness and become truly wise individuals.

There are three characteristics of a truly wise individual found in Ephesians 5 verses 15 through 21, and the first one involves something we all have only a limited amount of, and that's time.

### *I. A Truly Wise Person Makes The Most Of His Time*

#### **Read verse 15-16**

The context of verses 15 & 16 is that they follow on the heels of a challenge for Christians to live as children of light.

Actually the preceding verses were more a challenge to stop living as if we were in darkness. Verse 14 said "Wake up sleepers! Don't participate in the darkness of the world system in which you live. Let the light of Jesus Christ shine through your life so that the darkness of this world will be illuminated and others can see the truth."

Now verse 15 builds upon that concept, to say "see then" or "see to it then, that you walk circumspectly." The word "walk" is a Hebrew type idea of moving through life and so the command is to live circumspectly.

The term that Paul used for his Greek readers, that's translated as "circumspectly" is the Greek word *akribos*. That's obviously the basis for our English word "acrobat" and it means "carefully" or "deliberately."

Picture an acrobat on the high wire, or performing some dangerous feat. They are not going to carelessly move through they're routine, haphazardly placing their feet to one side or another.

Every step, every move is planned and thought out. And now God's challenge is going to be "think and plan" out your life. Take every step of your life as if you had three people upon your shoulders and your walking across a high wire.

A wise person their life in a very very careful manner. They think before they act and speak. They're accurate in their steps. And to do anything less is to act like a fool before God.

Now, how does a wise person walk accurately? Verse 16, he redeems the time.

There are 3 nouns that the author of this letter, Paul, had to choose from in Koine Greek to describe the concept of time.

*Kronos* means a succession of moments one after another.

*Hora* means a time or period fixed by nature. (a season)

But these don't convey Paul's thought. So instead he used the word *kaipos* which means "a moment of time." A single moment of time.

A wise Christian is one who lives carefully redeeming every moment of time.

Imagine that you had a bank that credited your account with \$1440.00 a day. The thing is, you couldn't carry over a balance. You couldn't keep cash in your account, and finally every evening cancelled whatever part of the amount you had failed to use during that day.

What would you do if you had a situation like that? You'd draw out every cent wouldn't you?

Well, we all have that bank and it's called time. We don't get \$1440.00 a day but we do get 1440 minutes. 1440 *kaipos* - moments of time.

Every night whatever we've failed to invest for a good purpose is gone. There's no balance. There's no overdrafts. Each day the bank opens a new account with you and each night it burns the records of the day.

A wise person redeems those moments of time. Yesterday is a canceled check, tomorrow is a promissory note. Today is the only cash you have. Redeem it wisely.

Now how do you redeem time? What does it mean to redeem time? It obviously has to do with a wise use of time but why the word “redeem”?

When we were back in chapter 1 of Ephesians we studied the great doctrine of redemption. We saw that Jesus Christ, through his death, redeemed us from the penalty of sin. And the word translated “redemption,” or “to redeem,” meant to purchase in the slave market.

We were all sold under sin but Jesus Christ entered into the world, into the very slave market of sin itself and paid the price to set us free.

To redeem means to buy back. To take something back from someone else by paying a price.

Now, if we’re to redeem the time, what we are to do is to take the time out of the hands of another and use it for ourselves.

Actually, the word carries the connotation of “buying up completely.” Purchase all that it offers. Pay the necessary price in effort and exertion to make the most of your every moment.

In Galatians chapter 6, this word for “time” is translated “opportunity.”

Paul says, “buy out the time” we would say “use every opportunity to its fullest.” Don’t let your life go to waste.

And the opportunities that the Bible is speaking of here are opportunities to honor God with our life. It’s the opportunities we have to walk worthy of the calling where with we are called. To put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. To walk in love, and to walk as children of light.

A fool lets all those opportunities slip by.

Really there’s 2 types of fools that miss out on opportunities to glorify God with their lives.

On the one hand, there’s the foolish person who’s always waiting for a better opportunity.

I'm sure that most of you have had this experience, I know I have.

Maybe your at work, or out with friends, or doing something with other people who don't know Christ. And you know you should speak for the Lord but for some reason you put it off and put it off waiting for a better time. But the better time never comes and eventually you forever lose that opportunity to point someone to Christ.

God says, "Buy up that time. Don't let it go to waste."

Unfortunately, there's even a greater demonstration of a lack of wisdom than that one though. That's to not even be aware of the opportunity at all and so to let it slip by.

We need to be carefully living each moment with a goal of honoring Jesus Christ.

But then why should we redeem the time? Why do we need to be so careful to use our opportunities? Verse 16 tell us "because the days are evil."

The adjective translated "evil" means, "actively, viciously, wicked."

In the first century when this was written the days were evil, and so are ours. We live in a wicked day of terrorism, and immorality and godlessness.

Unless we buy up the opportunities they'll soon be gone. Evil days require believers to redeem opportunities, because this is what transforms evil days into good days.

To walk as fools is to be part of the evil. Unless we let our light shine moment by moment the darkness will prevail.

We're the only Jesus most people will ever see. We're the only Bible they will be confronted with.

Also, I think that part of the problem is that there's sometimes a wrong emphasis in our pre-tribulational, pre-millennial churches.

We believe that Jesus is coming back to get us before God judges the planet, and then we'll return with Him and He'll set up His Millennial kingdom.

Back before the world wars when the nations were becoming industrialized and science was beginning to bring a variety of benefits to mankind, many Christians were post millennial.

In other words, the thought that the return of Christ would be after the millennium and that man, through his great achievements, would usher in a golden age of peace.

Several of the older hymns, in our hymn book, take the view that the church would bring the millennium in through its efforts.

For example, “We’ve a song to be sung to the nations - that shall lift their hearts to the Lord, a song that shall conquer evil and shatter the spear and sword. For the darkness shall turn to dawning and the dawning to noon day bright and Christ’s great kingdom shall come to earth, the kingdom of love and light.”

Unfortunately, that’s poor theology. But it took a couple of world wars to convince people that we’re not going to bring peace to this world.

The Bible says, evil men and seducers will wax worse and worse, that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, a great apostasy.

But sometimes in our zeal to emphasize the fact that we can’t change the world, Jesus will have to return and accomplish that, we leave Christians with the idea that the days are evil so what’s the use?

Wickedness is all around us like a flood, so what could I possibly do to make a difference? I’ll sit back and wait for Jesus to come and straighten every thing out.

We’ll see that’s bad theology too. The days are evil and getting worse. We can’t change the whole world, but we can transform an evil home, an ungodly work place, a sinful campus. Even a nation!

All through the Bible you’ll find men and women who lived in dark evil days but they still managed to have an impact for God on those around them.

Think about guys like Joseph in Egypt or Daniel in Babylon. How easy it would have been for them to just go with the flow. To say “Hey, I’m just one person in the

just sit back and keep my mouth shut and stay out of trouble.”

Instead they brought up every opportunity to honor God.

They accurately walked as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation and God used them to change the face of empires. They weren’t fools.

Another thing I think of when I read this statement “the days are evil” is that God’s Spirit will not always strive with man.

The wickedness of the day is a testimony to the fact that this age of grace will soon be over. Even though there’s a lot of trouble spots in the world the focus keeps going back to the middle east.

The Bible tells us all about the end times and how they revolve around Palestine and that area of the world. The hatred of the Arab world for Israel, the constant flare ups, all points to the fact that God is brining his great plan from the ages to a close.

Someday soon Christ is coming back to take us away while the earth goes through the great tribulation. The rapture could take place at any time. It could be today.

And when we stand before the Lord that’s going to be it. There won’t be any more time to redeem. No more opportunities to buy up. We’ll all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. And we will be evaluated and some Christians will look back on their lives and say with regret “I played the fool.”

What does a truly wise person do?

*I. A Truly Wise Person Makes The Most Of Their Time*

*II. A Truly Wise Person Knows What The Will Of God Is*

## **Read 17**

God’s will for our lives is not some mysterious secret that God dangles in front of our faces but seems to always keep just out of our grasp. That’s how many Christians view God’s will.

According to this verse if you don't understand God's will your foolish. That means a wise person understands the will of the Lord.

It seems that the common view of God's will is that God has every step of our life planned out and if we get out of step with God's plan we will fail in our Christian lives.

Some Bible teachers even go so far as to say that there is one person in the world for you to marry. And if you happened to marry any one else your doomed to second best or even worse.

According to the US Census Bureau, as of this past Thursday at 2:40 PM, there was 6,573,593,424 people in the world. Considering , on average, about half those people are the opposite sex from you that makes finding the only one a pretty daunting task.

Fortunately, that's not what the Bible means when it speaks of the will of the Lord.

Here God is saying "The days are evil." We face daily temptation. Therefore we need to understand God's will."

If we don't understand God's will, we won't redeem the time.

If we don't understand God's will, we will act like fools. If we don't have that correct information.

But what is God's will?

it's interesting that God never promises to reveal every little detail of our lives to us. Some people wouldn't make a move without praying, examining their feelings, checking out circumstances and looking for some immediate guidance.

The Bible doesn't tell us to do all that. It doesn't contain any formulas for finding out God's will on every one of life's decisions. Instead God's will is found on the pages of the Bible.

Now occasionally there are some very exceptional circumstances in which we need specific direction from God, but those are few and far between. Understanding what the will of the Lord is doesn't mean that.

There are 5 things that are specifically said to be God's will for us. God's will is that



we be:

1. Saved II Peter 3:9
2. Spirit-filled Eph. 5:18
3. Sanctified I Thess. 4:3
4. Submissive I Peter 2:13 To government, home, church - authority
5. Thankful - I Thes. 5:18

If we are a believer, living a Holy Spirit controlled life in holiness and submission, being thankful to God in everything we'll be in God's will.

And when it comes to every day decisions we have the liberty to make the decisions which are in line with Scripture.

Psalm 37:4 says *Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.*

Some people think that means that if you delight yourself in the Lord He will give you whatever you want. Others interpret it to mean that God will put the desires within you. Actually when you come down to it, both are correct.

If your a believer in Christ, Holy Spirit controlled, have a commitment to holiness, submissive and thankful you are delighting yourself in the Lord. And that means that you will only want for your life what God wants. God will give you the right desires and then by his grace fulfill the desires in your life.

A wise believer understands the will of the Lord because he understands the word of God and puts it into practice.

There's a 3rd characteristic of a truly wise person given to us in this chapter.

- I. A Truly Wise Person Makes The Most Of Their Time*
- II. A Truly Wise Person Knows What The Will Of God Is*
- III. A Truly Wise Person Is Controlled By God The Holy Spirit*

### **Read verse 18**

Ephesians has already told us that we've have been "sealed" with the Holy Spirit and that we must not grieve the Holy Spirit. Now we're commanded to be filled

with the Spirit ,

All through this letter the challenge has been to walk a worthy walk. God's told us to walk in love, light, humility, unity and wisdom. We are to mimic God and put on the new man.

And if your like most of us I'm sure there are times you say I just can't do all that. I just don't have the energy to walk the worthy walk. It's always and uphill struggle to live in holiness.

And so here we're told how to tap into the power of God. This is our energy source. This is what will empower us to live as we should. *Be filled with the Spirit.*

Now we live in a day and age in which there's a great emphasis on the Holy Spirit. Some of that emphasis is good and some of it is bad.

For many years much of Christianity all but ignored the 3rd person of the trinity. Stuart Briscoe says most Christians were "binitarians" rather than "trinitarian". They talked about the Father and the Son but rarely mentioned the Holy Spirit.

Then the charismatic movement swept across our land and today there are many believers who act (as Briscoe calls them) like "pneumatic unitarian." In other words the Holy Spirit seems to be all they can talk about.

Now there are some positive things that came out of the charismatic movement and one of them has been to generate a renewed awareness of the Holy Spirit. It's wrong to be wrapped up with the Holy Spirit and reject the Father and the Son, but its just as wrong to only consider the Father and the Son to the exclusion of the Holy Spirit.

And so from a positive sense Bible believing Christians have had to rethink and explain their views of the Holy Spirit.

To be filled with the Spirit, is to be controlled by the Spirit. When we speak of someone who is filled with anger, or filled with fear, we mean someone who is controlled by an emotion.

God's pattern for Christian living is for every Christian to be controlled by the Holy Spirit.

Unfortunately, there's been a lot of confusion generated about what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Some assume that you must have some ecstatic experience and speak in tongues to be filled with the Spirit.

The designation "Spirit filled church" has even come to mean a church where supposed tongues speaking is practiced.

But this is a totally unbiblical definition. To be filled with the Spirit is very simply and very plainly to live your day-to-day life with God the Holy Spirit in the driver's seat of your life, on throne, running the show.

Grammatically speaking we have two commands and then 4 results in verse 18 - 21 of being controlled by the Spirit .

The first command is "do not be drunk" and the second is "be filled with the Spirit."

Drunkenness was a problem in 1st century Ephesus just like it is in our culture. I'm sure that that was partly the reason why Paul mentions it here. But I believe there's a unique comparison between drunkenness and the filling of the Spirit. There's a purpose behind this particular comparison.

For one thing, both are a state of being controlled by an influence within you. We say that a person who is drunk is under the influence. If you get a DUI it's "Driving Under The Influence." A Spirit filled Christian is definitely under the controlling influence of God the Holy Spirit.

Another similarity lies in the fact that a person who is under the influence of the Holy Spirit or distilled Spirits acts differently.

Alcohol affects a person's walk. It makes them stagger and sway. They can't walk a straight line for the traffic cop. The Holy Spirit affects a person's walk too. It's through the Holy Spirit that we walk a walk worthy of the calling by which we are called.

Wine causes men and women to talk differently. It slurs their speech and many times causes them to say things they would not normally have the courage to say.

When the Holy Spirit takes control of a life it changes a Christians speech as well.

Many times we don't have the boldness within ourselves to speak out for Jesus Christ but if we're controlled by the Holy Spirit He takes control of our lips as well as our life.

Of course there's also some very obvious differences as well as similarities between these two types of filling.

For one thing the Bible describes drunkenness as "dissipation." The word *asotia* means "debauchery."

I've had the opportunity to accompany a number of people to court and sitting there waiting is an eye-opening experience. On several occasions, every single person who went on trial was there because they had done something when they were drunk.

I remember one man was arrested walking down the street with a shirt and tie, socks and shoes, and nothing else on. Another was there because he refused to leave a burning building that he and some buddies accidently set on fire.

He was the only one who could walk. The others were so drunk they had to be carried out.

Another had pulled a knife on someone in a bar and he told the judge "well, it was a friend of mine and we were having a disagreement."

Alcohol dehumanizes. But the fullness of the Holy Spirit makes us more human. It conforms us to the image of the perfect man, Jesus Christ.

When we are filled with the Spirit we never do anything we'd regret. We never do anything improper or sinful but only what's good and righteous and true.

Solomon, who had been through it all and knew first hand, wrote *Wine is a mocker, Strong drink is a brawler, And whoever is led astray by it is not wise.*

A fool puts himself under the control of alcohol. A wise man puts himself under the control of the Holy Spirit.

And now notice in the last 3 verses God lists 4 beautiful results of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

**Read verse 19**

*The first is fellowship.*

Speaking to one another in Psalms and hymns and Spiritual songs is ministering to other people by what you say.

Speaking the truth of the word of God. Speaking things that will lift others up.

*The second result is worship.* If your filled with God then you have love, joy and peace in your life and a song in your heart and worship on your lips.

*A 3rd characteristic of a Spirit filled Christian is gratitude.*

**Read verse 20**

Giving thanks for all things isn't exactly a natural response, is it? It takes a supernatural working of God before we can do that. I know because this is one I wrestle with constantly myself.

And yet what a joy it is to just step back and rest in the power of the Holy Spirit and say "Thank you God, for my situation in life. Thank you, your a God that I can have complete confidence in."

*And the third result of being filled with the Spirit is submission.*

**Read verse 21**

I think this one the "acid test" of spirituality. This is a test of spirituality that Christians seldom apply but it will tell you quicker than anything else who's walking with the Lord and who isn't.

See, it isn't shouting "hallelujah" and punctuating all of your sentences with "praise the Lord" that demonstrates godliness, instead its submission to humility, gentleness, peacefulness, that shows the Spirit's control.

We all need to ask ourselves a very penetrating question this morning. Are we wise, or are we fools?

Truly wise people make the most of their time - they use it for eternal purposes.

Truly wise people discern the will of God. They know the Bible and they're serious about putting it into practice.

Truly wise people are controlled by the Lord. They're filled with the Holy Spirit.

You be wise in God's sight and the world may call you a fool. But remember the world in its wisdom can't even know God. So don't worry about how it judges you.

As Paul told Timothy, be wise and there is laid up for you a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give you on that day.