

Sunday Sermon: August 19, 2018

Sermon Text: Ephesians 5:15-20

Sermon Theme: Be Careful How you Live. 1. Not Foolishly 2. Wisely

¹⁵ Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. ¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. ¹⁹ Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For most of our life, walking is something that we don't think about a whole lot. We learn how to walk when we are very little. As we grow up, we just continue to do it. Even when we are older and have aches and pains, we just keep going, putting one foot in front of the other. We just do it.

Something similar can be said about our walk of life. When we are younger, we learn how to live from our parents and then we live that way. As we walk through our life we don't think a whole lot about why we are living that way or doing the things we do. We just live one day after another.

Not thinking a whole about walking is fine. But not thinking during our walk of life is not good at all. As we grow up in the Word, part of that growth will be thinking about the way we walk in this world. As we focus on God's Word this morning, we will hear the Apostle Paul tell us to be careful how we live our lives as Christians, not foolishly, but wisely.

Paul's letters, his epistles, are great food for personal and congregational Bible Study. Many of the issues that he writes about are issues that help Christians of any time and in any place have a deeper faith and understanding of their Savior. They also teach us the proper response of thanks to Jesus for what he has done for us and gives to us.

Paul has an important message that is always the main point of his letters: Jesus is your one and only Savior from sin. He says in 1 Corinthians, **For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.** This message of Jesus the Savior who gives full and free forgiveness and the gift of eternal life is the most important message that sinful people like you and me need to here.

Paul uses the first three chapters of Ephesians to lay out that Gospel message of Jesus so clearly. Among these chapters and verses are one of the clearest presentations of our Savior's free and full forgiveness. **It is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works so that no one can boast.**

This message of salvation by grace through faith, of the forgiveness given by Jesus, not earned or deserved by us, is so different from anything that we hear in any other religion. It was different for the Ephesians and it's a different message for us.

This message of what Christ has done for us, is the reason that we as Christians live and walk carefully in this world in a way that is different from everyone else because Christ has given us so much.

There is a problem in the way that we live in this world. That problem is sin. The devil uses so many ways to tempt us. The devil even uses this message of free and full forgiveness to tempt us. The devil wants us to take this message of forgiveness for granted. He twists this wonderful message in so many dangerous ways

He wants us to think that since this is a free gift that we don't earn that it doesn't matter how we live. Maybe we think that since Jesus has forgiven our sins, our sins must not matter. We no longer see our sins as dangerous and separating us from God, instead they are not such a big deal, they are mistakes or missteps that are easily overlooked or taken care of. Maybe we think we're even allowed some sins. Even when we do realize we are living with sin in our life, we figure that since we are forgiven once, we can live any way we want, because we will always be forgiven again.

We fall into these temptations so and so often because we simply aren't being careful and we don't take the time to think about our life and how we are to live to thank the Lord by the way we live that life. Paul tells us to be careful how we live our lives, not in this foolish way where we do not pay attention to our faith and how you put that faith into action.

When we walk we usually have some idea of what is going on around us. Most of the time we avoid the hazards that are clear because we have eyes that see and ears that hear. However, there is a new set of internet videos going around that show people who are not paying attention when they walk. Usually these people are distracted by something, an accident, another person, usually a phone. These videos show these distracted people tripping over things, running into things, walking into traffic, because they are not paying attention where they are walking.

Maybe you have had an incident like that, where you have just lost focus, even for a moment and bumped into someone or ran into something too. When that happens we feel embarrassed and remind ourselves that we have to pay more attention.

It is so much more important to pay attention in our walk of life because the problems we face and the injuries to us can be much more severe than just embarrassment or some bumps and bruises. Losing our focus in life can mean our eternal life may be lost as well.

Paul warns us of two areas that are dangerous for us if we lose our focus and become distracted with them. Being lazy, not making the most the opportunities God gives us and drunkenness.

These are not the only 2 sins that we are to avoid. There are many other places where Paul goes into much longer lists. However, he uses these two specific sins because they highlight his point of watching out. If live foolishly and don't watch out it is so easy to lose our Christian focus and fall into these sins.

When you are lazy, you have no focus. Being lazy is often a lack of focus, a lack of drive to do the things you are supposed to do which are good for our faith. It is the opposite of being active and looking for opportunities to grow in faith or share the Gospel. Laziness often leads to sins of omission where we don't do the things that God wants us to do and tells God to do. We don't honor God by being in his house or at his altar. We don't honor God by taking time out of our life for his life-saving Gospel. We don't have time for the Lord because life is too hectic.

This laziness can lead us to fall down in sin because our faith is weak. We can fall away into unbelief because we have just been too lazy to hear the Word through which the Holy Spirit builds faith.

Drunkenness is similar because we are not doing what is good and right for our walk of faith in this life. God gives us a pretty simple mission in life. **Be ready to give an answer for the hope you have in Jesus.** Spread my Word. When a person is drunk they are not in control of their words or actions. They are not looking for opportunities to grow in faith or to spread the Word. When a person is drunk, there is a senselessness which can and often does lead to other sins.

Instead of being senseless or lazy, Paul tells us to live wisely knowing our Christian purpose and being watchful so that nothing takes us from our Savior and that purpose. Paul states our purpose in 2 Corinthians, **Christ love compels us, He died for all that those who live should not longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again.**

If you are doing some hiking and the trail marker says, *Danger, narrow trail ahead.* It is wise to slow down a little to make sure that you don't lose the trail or fall off of it. If there is a sign in the middle of the sidewalk that says, *Sidewalk ends* you would probably look for a place that you can walk safely.

Paul used the first three chapters of Ephesians to point out what Christ has done, the grace that he has in saving us. **Christ's love compels us.** It is Christ who loved us enough to live carefully, making sure that there was never any sin in his heart, in his words or in his actions. He did that so that we could be set free from the many sins that are in our hearts, in our words and in our action. It is through Christ that we have been forgiven every one of the sins that we commit. He gives us something to strive for in this world.

We don't strive for heaven. That is already ours through Jesus. Instead, we strive to live this life, wisely, in faith and thanks to our Savior.

This is what Paul is saying when he says: Be careful, live wisely. Live in a way that will build you and others up in faith. Take every opportunity to be in the Word so that your faith grows. Take opportunities to share your faith in Jesus with others. Be on the lookout be ready, not off guard, slow down, be careful look out so that you do not get caught up in sins that make you unprepared and unready.

It is often said, what you feel in your heart will come out of your mouth. That is very similar to what Paul says here. **Be filled with the Spirit. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,** When we are living wisely, the Holy Spirit is working as we hear that Gospel, to strengthen our faith. The Holy Spirit makes music to the Lord in our heart first. Then, as the joy of Christ fills our hearts, it will also overflow and be seen

by others as we **Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs....²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

In this life we strive for something, it is not heaven. We already have that. We strive to live wisely, being built up in faith yourself, so that you can build others up in their faith.

As we respond to the love of God this morning after the sermon, let's think about the many ways that we can live this life wisely. May our prayer be the same as the hymn writer: Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to thee, take my moments and my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise. Amen