

# Wise Walking, Ephesians 5:15-20

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"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise."

This is the fifth time Paul has used the word "walk" in this epistle. First, "walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called" (4:1); "no longer walk as the Gentiles do" (4:17); "walk in love" (5:2); "walk as children of light" (5:8) – and then our text, "walk ... as wise" (5:15). Like "conversation" in the KJV, "walk" today does not have the same significance it did when Paul wrote. "Walk" looks at manner of life, at what is habitual. It reflects the admonition of Galatians 6:9, "And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not."

Did your mother ever tell you, when you were going somewhere that necessitated crossing a street, "look both ways"? Sure she did; that was good advice from someone who cared. In like manner, Paul tells the Ephesians to walk "not as unwise but as wise" – look both ways.

To walk as wise, Paul says, don't waste time – "make the best use of the time." With the same words, He tells the Colossians to "walk in wisdom toward outsiders" (4:5). Jesus said "let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). We never know who is watching, so let your light shine: our "good works" may not only assist another, but also give glory to God.

In First Corinthians three Paul says that the wisdom of this world is "folly with God" (verses 18-19). James writes of the "wisdom from above" (3:13-17). To the Ephesians the choice is, understand the will of God – or be foolish. What does that say of those who have so much of the world's wisdom ... and so little of the will of the Lord? That, in spite of what they "know," ultimately they are "unwise" ("foolish," ASV; "fools," KJV). John wrote, whoever "does the will of God abides forever" (2 John 2:17). The question is, then, whose "will" are you doing?

Then, intoxicating beverages. Isn't Madison Avenue doing a great job of making that poisonous swill appear to be something that is essential, delightful and innocent? Homes wrecked and lives destroyed mean nothing, they have made intoxicants synonymous with "pleasure" and "sophistication."

Scripture says drunkenness is "debauchery." The American College Dictionary says debauchery is "seduction from virtue or morality. Excessive indulgence in sensual pleasures"; in defining "debauch" such words as "pervert," "depraved" and "corrupt" are used. God says, if you get drunk you are perverted, depraved and corrupt. Who wants

to stand before God in judgment, with those words in his resume?

Oh but, someone says, it is drunkenness, not drinking, that is prohibited. That is valid, if “drunkenness” does not require, first, the taking of a “drink.” One who has never taken a drink can never be drunk. Furthermore, how can one take the first step to drunkenness, debauchery, whose genuine desire is to see heaven? One who takes a drink has no idea where that will lead.

Immediately after the warning about drunkenness, Paul says “be filled with the Spirit.” In the face of scoffing from good friends and good Bible students, I believe that verse eighteen is a discussion of choices: “do not get drunk ... but be filled with the spirit.” Choosing drunkenness is choosing debauchery. Choosing to walk by the Spirit is choosing to be governed by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self- control. How else account for both drunkenness and the Spirit in one verse?

Finally, having instructed the Ephesians to be filled with the Spirit, he calls attention to one aspect of this, “addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart” (Colossians 3:16 has similar instruction)

The process of addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs involves “singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart.” There has been controversy since the seventh century about the introduction of instrumental music in worship. The simple answer is, we are told to sing and make melody to the Lord – and this is what we do.

We are told, however, that we have missed the point on the word translated “sing” – “psallo.” Lexicographers say this word means to twitch or twang or pluck, and the instrument to be twitched, twanged or plucked must be named – something that can be twitched, twanged or plucked. And surely their case would have been formidable, had not the Holy Spirit led Paul to name the instrument to be, twitched, etc. The instrument? Make “melody to the Lord with your heart” – your heart! No other instrument is involved. If the heart is not there, there is no acceptable worship.

A side note: we like to sing, but fear that sometime more emphasis is given to musical ability than to the One to whom we are making melody – “to the Lord.”