

November 3, 2019

WALKING WISELY

Ephesians 5:15-21

INTRODUCTION

The church, in every generation, is challenged to distinguish herself from its current intellectual, spiritual and moral climate. Christianity is more than a religion; it is a way of life fueled by a way of thinking which is informed by the ethics of the Kingdom of God. Wisdom is more than knowledge. It is knowledge lived out in a life that consistently reflects the character of God and adoration of the Lord. The life is an exposition of what is actually known with foolishness being reflected in ungodliness and true wisdom in the virtues of forgiveness, self-control and love. What is needed in a world flooded with debauchery and dissipation is less talking about what we know and more knowledge expressed in holiness. Paul's words to the Ephesian Christians and the church as a whole is to walk circumspectly in this world by being filled with the Holy Spirit.

BE WISE (Ephesians 5:15-17)

The way of wisdom is a way that is cultivated, not simply by time, but through the Word of the Lord. When Paul tells the Ephesians to *pay careful attention...to how you live* (Ephesians 5:15) he was calling them to give intense thought to how their life reflects the gospel that had so changed them. The wisdom that Paul speaks of was Jewish in nature. For the Jews wisdom meant living in accordance to the truth and, as a result, living contrary to the ways and standards of this culture. Therefore, in each area of our lives Christians are to display with their actions an intentional repudiation of the foolishness of this world. The unwise are discerned in their way of life - a way that is characterized by rejection of the truth of the Word of God. In this context of darkness, it is imperative that the saints live decisively Christian with our minds and lives filled with and guided by the wonder and glory of the sovereign Lord. This demands that we consider every moment of the day as an act of worship because time – all of our days – belong to the Lord (Ephesians 5:16-17).

BE FILLED (Ephesians 5:18)

The call to be filled with the Holy Spirit is a teaching that is in contrast to the cultural norms of religious Ephesus. Oddly, in Ephesus, it was believed that in order to be in communion with their god one had to be drunk with wine. Therefore, drunkenness was not simply tolerated but was mandatory. Paul, knowing the temptation this might bring to some calls the Ephesian Christians to be drunk but with the Spirit. Drunkenness is the condition in which alcohol influences behavior and even speech. While drunkenness causes *reckless living* (Ephesians 5:18) – the living that brings harm to self, others and, spiritually speaking, our soul – to be filled with the Spirit is the call to have all of our life dictated by the Spirit of God. It is to be intoxicated with Him such that our lives reflect the values of kingdom of God and our ways are driven by glory. Therefore, we should not take Paul's language here to imply the extraordinary, miraculous aspects of the Spirit of God. Rather, Paul is speaking in terms of the wisdom the Spirit brings to bear upon us such that our living is a reflection of the ethics, norms and values of the holiness of God as well as our distinctiveness as being lights in the world. This ability to live for the Lord, being filled with the Spirit, is intimately tied to the Word of the Lord. Therefore, being filled with the Spirit is connected with the Word dwelling richly within us (Colossians 3:16).

BE GENUINE (Ephesians 5:19-21)

To be filled with the Spirit will bring about specific actions that are reflected within our covenant community. Paul lists three fruits of the filled Christian and they all are related to how we treat and deal with one another. The first is in connection to worshipful fellowship expressed in how we speak to and encourage one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19). These three reflect what takes place in the context of worship, the mutual encouragement of one another as we gather to sing praises to our glorious and common Lord. Psalms reflect the psalter of the Old Testament sung in in adoration of the works of the Lord; hymns speak to the portions of scripture that were sung in praise of Christ's Person and work (example, Philippians 2:5-11). Spiritual songs represent those songs, much like our current praise songs, that highlight specific theological themes. A second fruit is gratitude (Ephesians 5:20). This is to be demonstrated as a continual practice of giving thanks to the Father for Jesus Christ in all things – good or bad. A final fruit is that of mutual submission in the fear of the Lord (Ephesians 5:21), which is reflected in our humility and concern for the needs of others above our own needs (Philippians 2:3-4). This community aspect of being filled with the Spirit is an important factor to contemplate since being filled with the Spirit is always connected to our life with one another. We cannot be filled with the Spirit in private ways since His power and presence will always compel us to unity and to serve others within the local church as well as brothers and sisters in the universal church.