

LIVE WISELY, BE SPIRITUAL!

Ephesians 5.17-20: Walking wisely means living a Spirit-filled life

Theme: Live wisely by living spiritually—filled with (controlled by) the Spirit of God, not anything else.

(Eph 5.17) Paul uses another "connecting word" to start us out this morning: "Wherefore..."

- Because the days in which we live are evil (v16b), we should walk circumspectly (v15; watchful, vigilant), and that means we need to vigilantly redeem the precious little time we have (v16a; or we'll find the evil of our days carrying us away!).
- "Wherefore...": (v17-18) We need to live wisely and that means living spiritually—filled with (controlled by) the Spirit, not anything else.

We are going to look at our passage of study this morning in two parts:

1. (v17) To be spiritual, we need to be wise and understand the will of God.
2. (v18) To be spiritual, we need to be "filled" and do the will of God.
 - (v19-20) And as we do the will of God, we can expect some very real, visible results in several areas of our lives.

I. (v17) To be spiritual, we need to be wise and understand the will of God.

A. Paul uses the same structure as before to teach us how to be spiritual: Put off and put on!

1. (Eph 4.22-24) Paul's "biblical counseling" model: Put off the old man (stop doing wrong!) and put on the new man (start obeying Scripture, doing what's right, and acting like Christ!).
 - a) (Eph 5.17) Paul says: "be ye not... but..." (put off, put on!).
 - b) (Eph 5.18) Paul says, "be not... but be..." (put off, put on!).
2. And remember the key to make these changes real and lasting: (Eph 4.23) Renew your mind through the Scripture!

B. First the Negative: (v17a) Don't be unwise!

1. (Mat 7.24-27) To be unwise (the opposite of wise) is to be a fool.
 - a) (v24) The wise person will hear and do the words of God.
 - b) (v26) The unwise fool will here the words of God, but will not obey them. He has some knowledge of what God wants, but he chooses not to do it—not to submit, not to obey.
2. The exhortation, therefore, in Ephesians 5.17 ("be ye not unwise") is two-fold:
 - a) First, in order to not be unwise (in order to be wise) we need to hear God's Word—we need to grow in our knowledge of Scripture (if you don't know it, how can you obey it?).
 - b) Second, in order to not be unwise (in order to be wise) we need need to do God's Word—we need to obey what Scripture says.
 - (1) And that brings us to the "positive" element of Paul's exhortation in Ephesians 5.17...
 - (2) We need to understand: Before we can do the will of God, we need to understand the Word of God, because that is where we find the will of God...

C. Now the Positive: (v17) Understand God's will!

1. To avoid be unwise fools—to actually be spiritual—we need understanding.
2. (1Cor 2.9-14, esp. vv12-14) Understanding the things of God is not natural; we need help and that mean's we need God's Spirit.

3. Wisdom (being wise—living according to God's will) in the Bible is result of three things:
 - a) Knowledge: You need to know God's will, and His will is found in Scripture. Wisdom will begin with a knowledge of the Bible.
 - b) Understanding: Intellectual information (knowledge alone) is not enough to make us wise.
 - (1) There are a lot of smart people that have a lot of information about the Bible.
 - (2) (1Cor 2.12-14) But if the Holy Spirit does not give them understanding, they'll never "get it"—they'll never understand what that Bible knowledge has to do with them personally and their lives practically.
 - (3) (Eph 1.17-18) That is why Paul prays for believers, that God would enlighten the eyes of our understanding.
 - This is a work of the Holy Spirit, therefore this is where true spirituality starts.
 - (4) But even knowledge and understanding are not enough to result in wisdom...
 - c) Choice: When you *know what* to do and when you *understand how* to do it...
 - (1) (Col 1.9-10) Wisdom comes when you *do* it.
 - (2) (Jam 3.13) Wisdom is living according to the Scripture you know and understand.
 - (3) Wisdom is *hearing* the Word of God (learning it, understanding it), and then *doing* it. To do otherwise is to be a fool—it is to be unwise.
 - *Doing* the will of God is what we see more in Ephesians 5.18, so let's review first...

D. [Review: v17] To be spiritual, we need to be wise and that means...

1. We need to always be growing in our *knowledge* of the Bible.
2. We need to always cultivate a humble, teachable attitude toward the Bible because our *understanding* of Scripture comes from the Spirit of God (and He will resist the proud).
3. And then we need to *live wisely* (not as unwise fools) by submitting and obeying what we know and understand of the Bible.
 - a) To hear God's Word and then not obey it (not do it) is to be unwise—it is to be a fool.
 - b) Remember:
 - (1) (v16) The days in which we live are evil and they will exert a continuous influence on us to pull us away from following God.
 - (2) (v17) "Wherefore..." we need to understand God's will in God's Word so that we can *do it*.
 - c) And doing the will of God is the focus of what Paul says in the following verse...

II. (v18-20) To be spiritual we need to be "filled" and do the will of God.

- Paul again addresses the negative first (what we need to "put off") and then he exhorts us to the positive aspect (of what to "put on").

A. First the Negative: (v18a) Be not drunk...

1. The contrast ("be not... but be...") helps us understand Paul's main point in the passage:
 - a) Be not drunk: Do not allow some "excess" in your life to control you.
 - The general principle here is this: (1Cor 6.12) We should not allow ourselves to be brought under the control of anything.
 - b) Rather, we should be filled with (controlled by) the Spirit of God. And that's Paul's point here.
 - c) However, in addition to Paul's "main point," this verse speaks directly to an issue that always needed clarifying in the church...

2. Alcohol: Biblical prohibitions, permissions, precepts, principals, patterns, and passages...
- a) (Eph 5.18) **Prohibition**: God, in Scripture, clearly prohibits drunkenness (the excessive use of alcohol—getting drunk—is expressly forbidden; it is sin).
 - b) (Deut 14.26) **Permission**: God, in Scripture, clearly permits the use of alcoholic beverages.
 - (1) (v22) Context: The passage gives the details of a part of the law concerning the tithe the Jews were required to pay to support and sustain their priests (it was a tax paid in food).
 - (2) (v23) Celebration: The time they paid their tithe was a time of celebration—they celebrated God's provision (remember Him in order to fear Him: God give the increase, or not!).
 - (3) (v24-25) Provision for travel: In the law about the tithe, God gave the Israelites a provision for those who could not feasibly transport the tithe of their increase because they lived too far away (from Jerusalem). He could sell the tithe and give the money to the priests.
 - (4) (v26) Celebration: With his money, the Israelite traveling to Jerusalem was expected to participate in the celebration. And God gave him permission to buy and drink alcohol.
 - (Ps 104.14-15) The Bible says wine "maketh glad the heart of man."
 - c) **Passages with Principles & Patterns**: Between these two extremes (the prohibition against drunkenness and the permission to drink alcohol), the Bible gives us a number passage that contain principles and patterns we should take into consideration...
 - (1) (Prov 20.1) Drinking alcohol is deceptive: It may start out innocent enough, but it will always have consequences.
 - (2) (Prov 23.29-35) Getting drunk is foolish—it's just plain stupid (lack of good sense).
 - (3) (Prov 31.4-5) Alcohol leads to a lack of discernment and a perversion of one's judgment, and God clearly warns those in leadership to not drink alcohol for just this reason.
 - (4) (Isa 5.11-14) Alcohol leads to suffering, even the suffering of hell (and notice in v12 how "parties" are mentioned as having music and alcohol; there is nothing new under the sun).
 - (5) (Isa 28.7-8) There is nothing clean in getting drunk and God says alcohol will lead to committing errors (especially among the leadership of His people).
 - (6) (Hab 2.15) Drinking and drunkenness often go hand-in-hand with sexual immorality.
 - (7) (Rom 14.21) Drinking alcohol will almost always result in offending a brother in Christ.
 - (8) (1Cor 5.11) God commands us to separate from anyone who calls themselves a "brother" (a Christian) and who is (or has the reputation of being) a drunkard.
 - (9) (1Cor 6.9-10) The excessive use of alcohol (drunkenness) will be severely judged by God.
 - (10) (1Pet 4.3-4) A true conversion to Christ will be a conversion from (among other things) the excessive use of alcohol.
 - d) **Pastors**: God gives some specific guidelines for pastors, elders, and leaders in the church with regard to the consumption of alcoholic beverages.
 - (1) (1Tim 3.3) The pastor/elder should not be "given" to wine (alcohol).
 - (a) This requirement goes beyond just saying he ought to be a drunkard.
 - (b) This requirement states, in essence, that to qualify for the office of pastor, a man must not have the reputation of being a drinker.
 - (2) Why is that?
 - (a) (Prov 31.4-5) Because alcohol will inevitably lead to a lack of discernment and perversion of judgment.
 - (b) (Rom 14.21) Because what a pastor allows in moderation, the brethren will do in excess (and the same can be said for fathers and sons: what a father allows in moderation, his children will take to excess).

(3) (1Tim 5.23) Pastor Timothy's use of wine reinforces this qualification.

(a) Paul had to *tell* (command) Timothy to drink a *little* wine.

i) Obvious implication: Timothy was not even permitting himself to drink even a *little* wine; he was avoiding it altogether!

ii) And he was avoiding wine even when the water he drank instead of the wine was making him sick! He took 1Timothy 3.3 pretty seriously.

(b) Paul prescribed the wine because of the water (it wasn't social drinking).

i) There are still many places in this world where you simply cannot drink the water because of bacteria and other contaminants that will make you sick.

ii) Timothy was getting sick because of the water, so Paul said to drink wine instead.

(c) The wine could have served one of two purposes:

i) It may have been unfermented wine (grape juice). If it was, then Paul was prescribing the wine (grape juice) to simply give Timothy a break from the water.

ii) It may have been fermented wine. If it was, then the wine would have served as an antiseptic against the bacteria in the water that was making Timothy sick. (The antiseptic benefit of wine is seen in the parable of the "good" Samaritan when, in Luke 10.34, he used wine to clean the beaten man's wounds.)

(d) Conclusion: Timothy's use of wine is a clear exception to the rule because Timothy was abstaining from alcohol, or even the appearance of such (even to his physical detriment).

e) **Predicament:** (1Thes 5.22) Can you, therefore, drink alcohol with a clear conscience before God?

f) **Personal Choice:** (1Cor 10.23-33) Alcohol is not a necessity of life, but it is given by God in His provision for us on this earth. Therefore He expects us to use it responsibly.

(1) Getting drunk is prohibited, but drinking alcohol is permitted.

(2) The Bible gives numerous principles and patterns related to alcohol, so we can be well informed about it.

(3) But the final decision is yours. And we are not to judge or condemn those who would drink alcohol (without getting drunk), nor are we to think we are more spiritual because we don't.

(4) And, before we make our personal choice, we should look at the other side of the coin...

- (Eph 5.18) Don't get drunk, but rather be filled with the Spirit...

[Continued in next message...]