

BE CAREFUL THEN HOW YOU LIVE

Devotional for August 19, 2018 based upon Ephesians 5: 15-20

In six verses the apostle Paul describes proper behavior for good living. He tells us to be careful how we live, and then he gives us three things that we must do. Be wise, be sober, and be thankful. It is a short list. But if we would just live our lives around these three things – being wise, being sober, and being thankful - what a difference that would make.

First, BE WISE. Paul says, "Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of every opportunity."

Wisdom. How do you gain wisdom? The Biblical author James says that if we ask God for the gift of wisdom, He will be more than happy to give it to us. But, as usual, we need to be careful what we ask for, because God usually gives the gift of wisdom not immediately, but instead over a long period of time. We cannot download the gift of wisdom. There is no app that we can add to our cell phones so that we can immediately have the gift of wisdom. Rather people usually gain wisdom only over time – from many hard knocks, by learning from many mistakes, and through many tough experiences in life.

Paul says, "Making the most of every opportunity." If we are not careful, we will miss out on many good opportunities. What good opportunities have you missed out on? What good opportunities are you missing out on right now? Every day we are bombarded with choices. We need the gift of wisdom to make the right and best choices.

And then Paul tell us why we need to be wise and to make the most of every opportunity. "Because the days are evil." Wise people know that there is much evil and many evil influences and evil influencers in the world. Wise people have the ability to judge and discern and they will choose what is true, right, lasting, and good. Wise people will seek to live according to the will of God.

Second, BE SOBER. Paul says, "Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit."

The Bible is not against drinking alcohol. It was not grape juice, but wine, that Jesus made out of water at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. The same apostle who told the Ephesians not to get drunk also told his young friend Timothy to drink not just water, but also a little wine, because of his many health, including stomach, ailments. And at

one of the most holy times in the life of our Lord Jesus – at the Last Supper – wine was served, and Jesus was the one who served it.

A little alcohol is not a bad thing, but people can make it into a bad thing. They can fill their lives with it. They can drown in its power. Paul tells us instead of filling our bodies with wine, to fill our lives with the Holy Spirit. For if we do, we will have life and we will have it abundantly.

Third, BE THANKFUL. Paul says, “Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Reminds me of the story of the man who went to his rabbi and complained, “Life is unbearable. There are nine of us living in one room. What can we do?” The old rabbi thought about it for a moment and then replied, “Bring your goat into the room with you.” The man was incredulous, but the rabbi insisted, “Bring your goat into the room with you. Do as I say and then come back in a week.” A week later the man came back looking even more distraught. “We cannot stand it,” he told the rabbi. “The goat is absolutely filthy.” The rabbi told him, “Now go back home and take the goat out, and then come back in a week.” A week later the man came back looking radiant. He explained to the rabbi, “Life is beautiful. We enjoy every moment of it – now that the goat is back outside and there are only nine of us in the house.”

It’s all a matter of perspective, isn’t it? We can be grateful, or we can be bitter. We can seek wisdom, or we can live as fools. We can be sober and learn what the will of the Lord is, or we can fill ourselves with wine.

It’s all a matter of how we live. We receive the consequences – the results – of the way we live. So Paul tells us, “Be careful how you live.”

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