

# The Pearl of the Epistles – Ephesians

## Be Very Careful How You Live

### Ephesians 5:15-20

**Ephesians 5:15-20** *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, 16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. 18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; 19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; 20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;*

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#### Introduction

In the movie “Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade, Indiana Jones is faced with a life and death decision. He had many options to choose from and so a knight helps him by saying, “You must choose, but choose wisely.”<sup>1</sup> Of course Dr. Jones chooses wisely and in the end, he rides off into the sunset, literally.

The apostle Paul has been writing his heart out to the church at Ephesus. He has given the church many options to choose from and now he is tying the five chapters all together.

#### Walk Diligently

**Ephesians 5:15** *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,*

*The English word circumspect comes from the Latin, circirmpicio, which means to look everywhere; to be every way watchful, wary, and cautious, in order to avoid danger, discern enemies before they come too close. But the Hebrew word ακριβως signifies correctly, accurately, consistently, or perfectly. Therefore if you have received the truth, be careful of your conduct; walk by the rule which God has given you; do this in little as in great matters; exemplify your principles, which are holy and good, by a corresponding conduct; do not only profess, but live the Gospel. As you embrace all its promises, be careful also to embrace all its precepts; and behave yourselves so, that your enemies may never be able to say that ye are holy in your doctrines and profession, but irregular in your lives.<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, Steven Spielberg, Paramount Pictures, Lucasfilm, 1989

<sup>2</sup> Adam Clarke, Adam Clark’s Commentary on the Bible, SwordSearcher digital edition.

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Paul says with all the things I have written to you, take extraordinary effort to shield yourself against the many temptations that continually surround you. Then live, not as the people of the world live, indulging in irrational carnal desires and pleasures, but with discernment in every action with heavenly wisdom which brings about good judgment.

*The ability to understand and act wisely. Biblical wisdom involves morality—a wise person is a godly person (Prov 1:3; Hosea 14:9; Col 4:5; Rom 16:19). While the human traditions of false teachers appear wise, they cannot help one become a wise person.*

*Mystery cults promoted wisdom and knowledge, not the moral development of character. The gospel announces that God graciously reconciled all things to Himself through Christ (vv. 20–22). Even though the mystery cults and Paul’s letter to the Colossians share similar language (e.g., knowledge, mystery, and insight), the difference lies in the gospel’s ability to transform those who believe in it.<sup>3</sup>*

### **16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.**

The word *redeeming* means to go to market, purchase or buy up a possession, ransom or rescue from loss and then to set it free from its bondage. In this case it would mean not spending our time in wasteful pursuits, but to engage in every opportunity to glorify and honor God.

I don’t think I would have to debate anyone in this audience that our days are evil. Our times are dangerous, full of trials and temptations of every sort. I looked at the headlines for today and found:<sup>4</sup>

*WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. — One person was killed inside a Purdue University classroom Tuesday by a gunman who surrendered to a police officer within minutes of the attack, officials said.*

*NEW YORK — A New York father suspected of stabbing his wife and two young daughters to death at the weekend was arrested late Monday in Texas, police said.*

*VATICAN CITY — A Vatican Monsignor already on trial for allegedly plotting to smuggle \$26 million from Switzerland to Italy was arrested Tuesday in a separate case for allegedly using his Vatican bank accounts to launder money.*

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<sup>3</sup> Barry, J. D., Grigoni, M. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Mangum, D., & Whitehead, M. M. (2012). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Col 1:9). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

<sup>4</sup> MSN News, January 21, 2014

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*Attorneys: Church Documents Don't Go Far Enough. Attorneys for victims alleging sex abuse by priests say documents released by the Archdiocese of Chicago show church officials hid abuse and represent a step forward, but fall short of what attorneys wanted. (Jan. 21)*

*ROCKVILLE, Maryland — Two women killed two children while performing what they thought was an exorcism*

*McALLEN, Texas — A South Texas police chief said Monday that two Mexican citizens who were arrested at the border used account information stolen during the Target security breach to buy tens of thousands of dollars' worth of merchandise.*

**2 Corinthians 4:3-4** *But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

**Galatians 1:3-4** *Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:*

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The church, Christians, should actively do good as this present age is evil.

**17** *Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.*

Wherefore, takes the reader from the reference to evil days of verse 16 and brings the reader to the present day and says don't be unwise.

King Solomon spent a lot of time writing about wisdom; fifty-four times in the book of Proverbs and twenty-eight times in the book of Ecclesiastes.

**Proverbs 2:6** *For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.*

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Don't be unwise, the current time is morally bankrupt, therefore Christians must search out and clearly understand what the will of the Lord is in order to be wise.

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## Be Filled with the Spirit

**18** *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;*

The Apostle Paul now goes from the general to the specific, he immediately gives an example of what is and what is not in the will of God (v. 17). The Greek word *asōtia* translated excess in the KJV, literally means debauchery. Christians should not be filled with alcoholic beverages, as that is excess, because excess leads to moral corruption and overindulgence. Why not drink to excess?

*“because it will stimulate temporarily: it will energize the flesh, but then it will let you down and lead you in the direction of profligacy (decadence) and dissoluteness (degeneracy) and will finally eventuate in desperation and despair and delirium tremens.”<sup>5</sup> (decadence and degeneracy added by me)*

This is contrary to God’s will. Instead, God’s will is that Christians be filled with the Spirit. But what does it mean to be filled with the Spirit?

*“That is, they are to allow Him to fill them with God’s own life, character, and virtues. The analogy between these two moral states is this: a person filled with wine is under its influence; similarly, a Christian is filled with the Spirit when He controls his thoughts, attitudes, and actions.”<sup>6</sup>*

If you have ever seen a drunken man, you know that their actions are abnormal as they lose conscious control of their actions. The Apostle proclaims that they should “*be filled with the Spirit.*” Instead of the believer giving up control of their actions to alcohol, they should be under the control of the Spirit.

*“It may be more accurate to say that the Holy Spirit is the ‘Agent’ of the filling (cf. Gal. 5:16) and Christ is the Content of the filling.”<sup>7</sup>*

Why does the Apostle pick this illustration of drinking wine as the antithesis of being filled with the Spirit? This must have been a temptation and danger to which the church was exposed in Ephesus. Perhaps many were addicted to alcohol already. More than likely, Paul was referring to the festivals celebrated to Bacchus (Roman) or Dionysus (Greek), the god of wine.

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<sup>5</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed., Vol. 5, p. 265). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>6</sup> *King James Version study Bible* . (1997). (electronic ed., Eph 5:18). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>7</sup> Hoehner, H. W. (1985). Ephesians. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 640). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

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*Bacchus was the god of the grape harvest, winemaking and wine, of ritual madness and ecstasy. He was one of the primary gods worshipped in Ephesus in Roman times. The infamous celebrations of Bacchus, notorious for their sexual and criminal character, got so out of hand that they were forbidden by the Roman Senate.*

*The followers of Bacchus had a strong theology: The more wine they drank, the more Bacchus filled them and controlled them. They became like him. Therefore drunkenness was to be highly celebrated as a spiritual experience.<sup>8</sup>*

The Greek philosopher Plato (428 BC – 347 BC) is quoted as saying, “that while those abominable ceremonies in the worship of Bacchus continued, it was difficult to find in all Attica a single sober man.”

Being filled with the Spirit is much like filling your gas tank in your automobile. You and I know that you will not get very far down the road if you don't have much gasoline in your tank. Whenever Linda and I drive to Arlington, TX to see our kids and grandkids, we make sure we have plenty of fuel for the journey each and every time. In much the same way, we need to be filled with the Spirit of God each and every day. We should get in the habit of asking God to be filled with the Spirit on that day. You might have been filled with the Spirit last Sunday morning, but did you find yourself running a little dry during the week. Go to the filling station and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

### Be Filled with Song

**19** *Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;*

*Speaking to yourselves* – encouraging each other in order to educate, enlighten and promote virtue among yourselves. Looking at the tense of the words, Paul seems to compel the Ephesians, “You are to speak among yourselves”.

*The natural response to being filled with the Spirit of God (v. 18) seems to be breaking out with joy and praise in the form of singing in the form of psalms, hymns and singing.* The natural question would be, “What is the difference between these three forms of joyous praise.”

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.judydouglass.com/2011/05/holy-and-unholy-spirits-why-would-paul-say-that/>

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*psalms* – most likely these were the Psalms of David found in the Old Testament Psalter<sup>9</sup>. The Baptist church today does not sing the psalms.

*and hymns* – songs on a very high plain, composed by men and women to glorify God.

*and spiritual songs* – *Less formal than psalms or hymns. In my opinion, our Baptist Hymnal is comprised of the last two, hymns and spiritual songs but none of the psalms. Hymns would be like; “Immortal Invisible”, “A Mighty Fortress”, and “And Can It Be”. Spiritual songs would be like; “Praise the Lord”, “He Leadeth Me”, and “Amazing Grace.”*

*singing*– singing comes naturally from the heart. Sometimes we sing the blues and other times we sing happy melodies. Music is very powerful. I still remember singing my “ABC’s.” I was taught the books of the bible, in order, by a song. I can remember many bible stories today because they were set to a melody and sang them.

*and making melody in your heart* –melody is defined as; “a pleasing series of musical notes that form the main part of a song or piece of music”<sup>10</sup>. Paul’s use of the word melody comes from the Greek meaning to “touch or pluck.” The root meaning of melody includes the use of stringed musical instruments like a lyre, harp, violin, or piano where strings are touched or plucked.

*to the Lord* – We are to sing melodies of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs from the heart to the Lord. That is the focus of the all music; to the Lord who is worthy of praise. Therefore singing to the Lord is more than just “lip” service. It is music that erupts from the lips but is produced by the heart. This is a formal and solemn form of worship and can be considered to be a prayer put to melody. It is not mental praising of God, but rightly performed when the voice and heart are in total agreement. To sing songs with our lips and not with our hearts unto the Lord is just not right.

The Pulpit Commentary describes Christian Worship like this:<sup>11</sup>

*It is Pure - in striking contrast to the heathen festivities to other gods.*

*It is Spiritual – We are to make melody with our “heart.”*

*It is Emotional – Religion is not all feeling. It is based on convictions and it develops into actions.*

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<sup>9</sup> The Psalter also known as the Psalms, or Psalms of David is the Old Testament book that contains hymns and poems traditionally ascribed to King David. Virtually every aspect of worship—praise, thanksgiving, penitence, intercession—is covered in the Psalter.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/melody>

<sup>11</sup> The Pulpit Commentary, SwordSearcher Version 6, digital.

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*It is Joyous – Instead of gloomy rites and bloody sacrifices. Christians have music and song in their worship.*

*It is Vocal – It begins in the heart, but it does not remain hidden there.*

*It is Musical – We cannot make the service of praise too beautiful, because we should offer to God what is best in form as well as in substance.*

*It is Congregational – “Speaking one to the other.” It is mainly Paul’s intention that all the people should sing and that thus one should exhort and encourage another.*

*It is Addressed to God in Christ – “to the Lord.”*

### Be Filled with Thanks

**20** *Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;*

This is a part of worship that we should always relish and exercise. For the worship of God will ultimately end in thanksgiving to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Walk Diligently

Be Filled with the Spirit

Be Filled with Song

Be Filled with Thanks

*Robert C. Crowder*