

Series: Unsearchable Riches in Christ (Ephesians)

Text: Ephesians 5:15-17

Message #24 (March 4, 2007)

THE WISE AND THE FOOLISH

Introduction

1. To walk in wisdom is to live well. To the Hebrew way of thinking, wisdom was the skill of living well. While the Greeks saw wisdom as philosophical and intellectual, the Hebrews defined wisdom in terms of behavior. Throughout the Proverbs we read about the wise man and the fool. They are often placed in contrast. That theme is carried out in the NT.
2. In chapter four, Paul reminded us that we are to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we have been called. God has saved us and has instructed us to walk worthy of this privileged position. In fact, in chapter 5, Paul tells us that our walk should imitate our heavenly Father. The worthy walk is a walk in **unity**, for we belong to the Lord Jesus and are one body in Him. It is a walk in **purity**; therefore our lives should reflect the righteousness of Christ. It is a walk in **love**, reflecting what Jesus accomplished on the cross for us as a sacrificial love gift to the Father on our behalf; and it is a walk in **light**, remembering that God is light and we are to walk as children of light in a dark and perverted world. To walk with God is a walk in light. Today in the text we discover that the worthy walk is a walk in **wisdom**.
3. The world, which is separated from God and in the darkness, sees itself as wise while viewing believers as fools. God sees the world as fools while imparting His wisdom to believers. Paul makes this case in 1 Corinthians 1:23-25 *...but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.* Remember that it was God who said, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” Wisdom starts with God.
4. I do need to clarify something. Believers have the great potential of walking in wisdom because they are in Christ, but daily living out a life of wisdom is not always a reality.

The pressure of the world – the same world that has branded us as fools – is at work all around us to offer a worldly wisdom. We also struggle with the flesh, which is naturally bent toward foolishness. Surely we understand why Paul tells us to take great care in how we walk.

5. The outline for today is extremely simple; we will look at the foolish walk and the wise walk, trying to define and describe each. After we have done that, we will attempt to draw some application in regard to walking in wisdom. Let's do it.

I. The foolish walk

A. The foolish walk defined

1. Our life began in foolishness. Foolishness is woven into our basic human (sinful) nature. "The fool has said in his heart, there is no God." In the flesh, that's the way we live, caring nothing for God and practically living as if He did not exist. We are born with that bent, and without divine intervention, it continues throughout our lives! Solomon reminded us that foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child. It is in the heart of an unregenerate adult too.
2. There are shades of meaning in the Bible in defining foolishness.
 - a. Evilness – For example, fools mock at making amends for sin (Proverbs 14:9)
 - b. Irrational self-confidence – A fool is hot-headed and reckless (14:16), despises his mother (15:20), brings grief to his father (17:25) and finds no pleasure in understanding (18:2).
 - c. Irreverent emptiness (Psalm 14:1; 53:1) "The fool has said in his heart, there is not God."
 - d. Without thought or wisdom – Paul called the Galatians foolish because they abandoned the true Gospel for a false one. Jesus called the Pharisees foolish (Luke 11:40). Jesus even called the two disciples who were on the road to Emmaus, foolish, meaning thoughtless in their failure to recognize what happened as God's plan for redemption (Luke 24). Jesus called the Pharisees blind fools describing them as absolutely devoid of insight regarding who Jesus was. The virgins of the parable in Matthew 25 were foolish because they failed to secure oil before the bridegroom came. Paul told the Romans that certain people who claimed to be

wise became fools – the reason was that they traded the truth of God for a lie.

Ultimately the definition of a fool is one who is without God.

B. The foolish walk described (While Paul does not say that the foolish waste time and do not know the will of God, it is implied by the way that he describes the wise. So I think it is accurate to say that the foolish are wasters of time in the sense that their lives count nothing for God and eternity, and the foolish remain ignorant and unresponsive to the will of God).

1. In the use of time

a. Somewhere I found this: *I have only just a minute - Only 60 seconds in it. Forced upon me - can't refuse it. Didn't seek it, didn't choose it. But it's up to me to use it - To give account if I abuse it. Just a tiny minute; But eternity is in it.* Those outside of Christ don't see it like this.

b. Time may be precious to the unbeliever, but for an entirely different reason.

Rather than investing our time for the glory of God, time concerns look more like this: "I do what I must do so that I can do what I want to do." Leisure time is the goal of the world. **(Piper, *Don't Waste Your Life*, pp. 45-46).**

2. In relation to the will of God – This should be obvious. Since those who are foolish are lost, they care nothing for the will of God. Their perspective is essentially toward themselves. All of life is me-centered, what I want, what I deserve; "I did it my way." If it is all about me it cannot be about God or for His glory. If God enters the picture at all, He is the source for making my life more comfortable.

II. The wise walk (Though we began as fools, thankfully God has chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise. He took us in our foolish disobedience and made us wise unto salvation using His Word and His Spirit to quicken us (2 Timothy 3:15 - *and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus*). We advanced from caring nothing for God to developing a reverential fear for Him. Check these out: 1 Corinthians 1:30 – *He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.* Colossians 2:2-3 - *... to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is*

Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Ephesians 1:7-8 *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight.* We are the blessed recipients of God's gracious work – and some of that which we receive is His wisdom that we might walk worthy of Him, for His glory.

A. The wise walk defined

1. As above, wisdom comes when we trust Christ. Most who trust Christ were not even very wise in worldly wisdom when they came to Christ, but in gaining Christ, they gained His wisdom. And since He is the source of all true wisdom, it follows that we would confound the wisdom of the world.
2. Because we are in Christ we have among other things, His mind. That is our position in Christ. But it does follow that even though we are wise in position, we ought to be developing in wisdom throughout our life. That increase in wisdom comes from receiving instruction in the Word and being obedient to such Biblical instruction. Here Paul mentions two areas where true wisdom can be demonstrated.

B. The wise walk demonstrated

1. In the use of time – What do we do with our time? “Redeem the time”, or “making the best use of our time”, could be translated, “buy up the opportunity” or “buy up the season.” Our assignment is to use the time God has given to us – all of it – to show by means of our conduct and life, the power and glory of the gospel. That will cost us something in terms of time and effort but that is what it means to make the best use of our time. Consider Mark 1:21-34. All of that Jesus did in one day! Now listen to verse 35 - *And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.* Paul tells us to buy up every opportunity specifically because the days are evil. The more evil the day the more important it is to buy up the opportunity! Paul made a similar appeal to the church at Rome - *Besides this, you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and*

drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. When Jonathan Edwards was in his early twenties, he wrote for himself a number of resolutions by which he was determined to live his life. Resolution #5 was, “Resolved never to lose one moment of time, but improve it the most profitable way I possibly can. Resolution #17 – “Resolved, that I will live so, as I shall wish I had done when I come to die.” That’s a life characterized by redeeming the time!

2. In relation to the will of God(What is the will of God? That is often rather a mystery for many. How do we know the will of God? How can we know for sure if God wants us to do this or that or to go here or there or to be this or that? The simple answer is as follows. There are some things that the Bible clearly, categorically says are His will. Let me list them.
 - a. It is God’s will that people be saved (1Timothy 2:3-4). Since it is God’s will to save people and in order for them to be saved they need to hear the Word of God, it makes sense that we must be involved in making Christ known by sharing with others the Word and then praying that God’s Holy Spirit would bring these people to new life in Him. That’s the will of God for all of us and we need to be doing it.
 - b. In the next few verses in Ephesians (5:17-18) Paul tells us that it is God’s will that we be filled with or controlled by the Holy Spirit. That is the will of God for us (more about that next week).
 - c. Paul told the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 4:3) that it was God’s will that they live a life of holiness. He uses the word sanctification – which means a life that is set apart to live for Christ in a way that is acceptable to Him.
 - d. In that same book (1 Thessalonians 5:18), Paul said that it was God’s will that in everything we give thanks. That sounds pretty straightforward. This is the will of

God for us. How are we doing?

- e. Peter told his readers that the will of God for believers involved submitting to authority (1 Peter 2:13-15) ***Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good, you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.***

- f. Peter, later in his letter, told believers that it was the will of God to suffer for the sake of Christ (1 Peter 3:17) ***For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.*** That may not mean we will all suffer all the time, but if suffering comes we ought not to think it strange or somehow out of place for the believer in Christ. It is actually the will of God. So, it is God's that I be saved and sanctified and Spirit-controlled and thankful and submissive – even to suffering, but what about those basic decisions of life? What is the will of God for me in those things? If I am doing the will of God in the things that are clearly stated in Scripture, then I may do whatever I want in terms of those basic decisions of life – because what I want will be to glorify God and to please Him. And whatever those choices are, they will be pleasing to Him and will be His will for me!

Conclusion

1. It is time to walk the walk of wisdom – in how we use our time and in our desire and application of the doing the will of God. The days are evil and time continues to tick by. The other day I began ministry at age 21. I am now 54. Yesterday I was newly married. Today I live with a grandma! Tomorrow my life here on earth will be done. What am I doing?

2. God desires that we know and do His will. When we know and do His will, we are redeeming the time. Did you ever notice in the Gospels that Jesus was never in a hurry

and always did the Father's will? By contrast, I seem to always be in a hurry and seldom thinking about the Father's will in the midst of the rush!

3. I would not be wise this morning if I did not remind you who are outside of Christ that you need to trust Him. Jesus is God. He became a man. He came to earth to live among men, to keep perfectly the law. Though without sin, Jesus died for sinners. He became the redemption price for us. He withstood the full weight of the wrath of God against sin that we might be spared such judgment and be brought into a blessed relationship with Him. He has called us to recognize that we are foolish and sinful and in desperate need of divine intervention. We cry out to God to forgive us of our sins and to save us for His glory and He will! And then we have the pure pleasure of living for His glory – buying up every opportunity to do His will and thus to walk in wisdom! Do you know Christ? Are you walking in wisdom? Listen to these final three passages regarding believing Him and obeying Him and honoring Him: Luke 24:25 – *And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Galatians 3:1-3 – O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? James 3:13-17 - Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.*
4. May God help us today to walk in wisdom for the glory of Christ and for the good of His Church!