

“Walk in Wisdom”

December 30, 2018

Ephesians 5:15-20

I. Introduction

With New Year’s Day just 2 days away, many magazines, TV programs, and internet sources are putting out special issues or programs recalling people and events that made news during the past year. Many of these special programs or articles include comments by experts predicting what they expect to see happen in the years ahead. Some even go as far as to make predictions covering 10 or 20 or even more years in the future. In the past a few of these predictions have proven accurate, while others couldn’t have been more wrong.

For example, back in 1967 experts predicted that by the turn of the century, technology would have taken over so much of the work we do that the average American work week would be only 22 hours long and we would work only 27 weeks a year. As a result, one of our biggest problems would be in deciding what to do with all our leisure time. As far as any of our lives are concerned today, that prediction certainly missed the mark. In fact, people seem to be busier than ever. Technology hasn’t shortened our work week at all—it seems to have made it worse. We’re always in a hurry. We have instant messaging, instant meals, instant weight loss and instant hair. We walk fast, talk fast and eat fast. Unless we make the effort, we seldom sit down to a meal together as a family. There never is enough time.

So here we are, 2 days away from 2019. How will this coming year be? Will we be as busy? Will we make better use of our time? If the Lord tarries, in 365 days from now, when 2019 is coming to an end, will we be looking back with joy or regret? Will we be looking at the future with anticipation or with dread? Today’s Scripture can be of help to us as we look forward to 2019. In these verses Paul tells us “How to walk in wisdom.”

II. How to walk in wisdom

A. We need to walk carefully.

1. Our time on this earth is limited. If we are going to walk in wisdom, Paul tells us that we need to walk carefully, i.e., we need to pay close attention to how we walk. We need to be careful because our time on this earth is limited. **Turn to Psalm 39:4-5.** In **Psalm 90:10** Moses wrote, “**The length of our days is seventy years-- or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away.**”

Now I realize that for some of you younger people, 70 or 80 years sounds like a long, long time. I can remember when I thought anyone over 40 was ancient. But no longer—40 years was a while ago! As the saying goes, “*time is relative.*” For example, for children waiting for Christmas, the passing of the 4

weeks of Advent seem to take an eternity. But for parents trying to get everything ready, those same four weeks seem to fly by.

In [verse 12 of Psalm 90](#) Moses prayed, “Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” Linda’s and my financial planner has planned on my living until I am 86 years old. That means I have 5110 more days left to live. But actually neither my financial advisor nor my doctor can guarantee how more days I will live—as an old ad said, there is no “end-of-date” stamped on the bottom of my feet. [Turn to James 4:13-17](#). James is telling us not to count on tomorrow because tomorrow may not come. Our time on this earth is limited and since it is limited, like rare jewels, our time is valuable, we need to walk carefully. We need to do the good we ought to do—in [John 9:4](#) Jesus said, “As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.”

2. We need to plan our days. Scripture also says that we need to plan our days. A foolish man doesn’t make plans; instead he allows himself to be blown around by everything and anything that comes his way. A wise man makes plans and prepares for the future and then isn’t driven by any unexpected happenstance. [Turn to Proverbs 6:6-11](#). [Proverbs 24:27](#) says, “Finish your outdoor work and get your fields ready; after that, build your house.” If we are going to walk wisely, we need to plan our days.

When a man builds a house, he first draws plans so he knows what he is doing. Yet, how many Christians plan their days so that they use their opportunities wisely? As we read in James, we cannot know what a day may bring, but it is also true that a planned life can better deal with unexpected events and can best use the time one does have.

B. We need to make the most of every opportunity. After telling us to walk carefully, Paul then wrote that we need to make “the most of every opportunity.” And then he gave a reason, “because the days are evil.” In other words, Paul is saying that we must not waste time.

Satan is a robber and a thief and one of the things he tries to rob from us is our time because time is a very precious commodity. Just think of the time wasted in sinning or even planning to sin. Think of the time wasted in gossiping or spreading rumors. Think about all the time wasted worrying about the consequences of the sins we have committed. All this is a waste of time and a victory for Satan!

But it isn’t only sin that makes demands on our time or wastes our time. Sometimes good things can make inappropriate demands on our time. [Turn to Luke 10:38-42](#). Was Martha doing a sinful thing by fixing a meal in the kitchen? Of course not. The problem was that she was so preoccupied with what she was doing that she didn’t have time for God who was right there in her living room. There are many warnings in the Bible about those who think they will always have time to do what they should. That’s the same problem that we face. We get so caught up in the here and now—in temporary things that we fail to deal with the eternal—things that will last forever and ever. This is why Paul wrote in [Galatians 6:9-10](#):

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

There are so many demands on our time, so many good things that need to be done. But there are only 8760 hours in a year. We need to choose wisely. We need to walk carefully. We, also, need to make the most of every opportunity. Paul then wrote that the third part of walking wisely is to understand what the Lord’s will is.

C. We need to understand what the Lord’s will is. When we look around at the results of all the evil around us and at the unending needs for evangelism and service to others in Christ’s name, it is easy to feel overwhelmed. We may be tempted to either give up and withdraw or become so involved that nothing is completed and we become burned out and discouraged because we are trying to work in the power of the flesh and not in the will of God. Trying to run ahead of God only puts us behind in His work—in His plan for us.

A foolish believer—the unwise believer—tries to function apart from God’s will. But to walk in wisdom means “**understanding the Lord’s will.**” This means using our minds to discover and then to do the will of God. God has a plan for each individual Christian—that’s what Paul meant in [Ephesians 2:10](#) where he wrote, “**For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.**” God has a plan and a purpose for your life. Through studying His Word, obeying the Holy Spirit and listening to Christian counsel, you can discover that plan and then walk accordingly.

Although God’s plans and directions for each individual believer are not found explicitly in Scripture, the general principles for understanding them are. God doesn’t promise to show us His will through visions, strange coincidences, or miracles. He doesn’t play a divine guessing game with us, seeing if we can somehow stumble onto His will like a small child finding an egg at an Easter egg hunt. But we can discover the will of God as He transforms our minds. [Romans 12:2](#) says, “**Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will.**” This transformation is the result of the Word of God, of prayer, of meditation, of worship, and of allowing the Holy Spirit to mold you from the inside out.

God gave you a mind and He expects you to use it. This means that learning His will involves studying His Word, gathering facts, examining them, weighing them and praying for His wisdom as we are told to do in [James 1:5](#): “**If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.**” But God doesn’t want us to simply know His will; He

wants us to understand His will and then do it. This is walking wisely. James 2:26 says, “Faith without deeds is dead.”

God’s first and primary will for every person is that he be saved and brought into the family and kingdom of God. In 1 Peter 3:9 we read that “He, i.e. God, is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” Paul wrote that God’s will is that we be filled with the Spirit. This applies to all Christians not just to a select few. The verb in Ephesians 5:18 really is “keep being filled,” i.e. “Do not get drunk on wine ... instead keep being filled with the Spirit.” This is a choice. It is an experience we should do continually and not just on special occasions.

And notice that we do not fill ourselves, but allow the Holy Spirit to fill us. To be filled with the Spirit means to be constantly controlled by the Spirit in our minds and emotions and will. Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:19-20 that when that happens we will “speak to each other with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music in your hearts to the Lord. Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

III. Conclusion

When I first sat down to work on this sermon, I thought about something many people make this time of year: New Year’s resolutions. But there’s a problem with them—important as some may be, most resolutions are broken within days of being made. What Paul is writing about is more significant than any resolution, it is so important that it must become part of each Christian’s life just like eating and sleeping. We must walk in wisdom. As Christians, Jesus is our example.

Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:21, “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps.” In Philippians 2:5 (NAS) we read, “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.” In John 4:34 Jesus said, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.” So what is your attitude? Where do your goals come from? Turn to 1 Peter 4:1-2. Is your highest goal to do the will of God? In Luke 9:24 Jesus said, “For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it.”

So what is God’s will for you in this coming year? Do you think He wants your mind so filled with worries and anxieties that you can’t think spiritual thoughts? Do you think He wants your calendar so crowded that you don’t have time for the *His* things? In our electronic age, we’re overloaded with many things. We are overloaded with commitments. Sometimes we feel like we will meet ourselves going or coming. We are overloaded with possessions. Our closets are full and our garages are overflowing. Many have gone into debt to pay for those things we “*simply must have.*” We are overloaded in the area of work. We get up early, fight traffic, and experience difficult working conditions because we have to if we are going to pay for all those possessions we’ve accumulated. We are overloaded with information. With the internet, smart phones, i-pads, Alexa, Siri, and Googol we are

connected to an information superhighway that uses up our time and bombards us with an overabundance of information.

All these things make demands on our time, but we need to walk carefully—our days are numbered. We need to make the most of the opportunities that God sends our way—we must not waste or misuse valuable time—time that we can never get back. We need to understand God’s will—God’s good and acceptable and perfect will for our lives so that the time and opportunities we have will be used in the best way possible. The best way to walk wisely, the best way to know God’s will is to study His Word—2 Timothy 2:15 says, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth, i.e., the Bible.”

As we begin a new year, I would challenge you to take time to study God’s Word. There are a variety of ways to study. You could come to Sunday School that meets at 9 am on Sunday mornings as we study books in the New Testament; you could come to the Wednesday night Bible study where we study books in the Old Testament; you could get copies of the Sunday morning sermon and go over them during the week; you could purchase a study Bible or Life Applications Bible or a Bible commentary and read the notes that go along with a particular paragraph or chapter. But study God’s Word, listen to the Holy Spirit, and see how “the Word of Truth” applies to your life.