

Ephesians 5:15–18 | “Wise Living in Evil Days”
Preached on October 19, 2025 by Pastor Matt Brown

Please turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 5:15–18 this morning, for we will be jumping right back into our study of Ephesians together. *[pauseee]*

Something that comes upon our minds as Christians from time-to-time in our day-and-age is this: ‘How can I live for Christ in a world that seems to be getting worse and worse?’ *[pause]*

It’s a hard thing to do when everything seems so bad and against God and His ways. *[pauseee]*

What will we need, what will our kids need, or our grandkids, or great-grandkids to live in an ever-increasingly, hostile and dark world?...

Paul’s answer: wisdom. *[pauseeee]*

A good example of wisdom in a dark time is Winston Churchill. *[pause]*

In the late 1930’s and early 1940’s, Nazi Germany had invaded multiple countries. *[pause]*

Not many countries were firmly standing up to Hitler’s advance, and many people didn’t know *what to do*. *[pauseee]*

Some wanted peace, no matter what, and so suggested that England make peace with Germany.

And that seemed like the easier solution, for it seemed like the safer, less costly path forward.

But Churchill knew that peace with Germany would only lead to horrific ramifications in the future. *[pauseee]*

So in wisdom, he chose to stand up and fight. *[pause]*

He rallied his country to stand firm, and eventually other countries joined the Allies, including the United States later. *[pauseee]*

The rest is history, and if Churchill didn’t wisely choose to stand firm, who knows what could have happened. *[pauseeee]*

That shows wisdom in a dark and difficult time.

When others were giving in or remaining quiet, Churchill wisely stood up and stood firm. *[pauseee]*

In a way, that illustrates what we are called to do in this dark and evil age that we live in—we are to live wisely. *[pause]*

Let me show you, as I READ the passage. *[READ 15–18]*

Once again, the big idea will be given up front, and it's this: we are to...

Take care to walk wisely!

Paul says in verse 15, "Look carefully then how you walk." [pauseeee]

To 'look carefully' means you need to pay attention, notice, and watch how you are living. [pause]

You can't be like a person covering their eyes and trying to walk around, for you will stumble, but you need to live a life with eyes wide open. [pauseeeee]

Ever try to walk in your living room in the dark?...

Your foot always finds its way on top of a Lego, or your knee always finds its way into a door frame. [pause]

So also, to live a life of faith you must 'be on the lookout,' and what are you to be on the 'lookout' for?...

To "look carefully...how you walk." [pauseeee]

This means that you must be *mindful* as to how you live. [pauseeee]

When you walk in the dark, you are careful as to where you step your foot...

Is there a Lego there? Is there a step coming? Is there a door frame? Am I safe to take a step? [pause]

So also, careful walking is alert and mindful living. [pauseeee]

This means that to live well as a Christian: it will take intentional, conscientious effort. [pauseeeee]

So many Christians act like their Christian life is one where their faith is like something that they can put on and then take off of a shelf. [pause]

They think, "OK, it's Sunday. Let me take my faith off of the shelf, for I'm going to church today."

And when they are done with Sunday, they put it back on the shelf, and then just live in default mode. [pause]

That's not how you ought to live!

Your faith should integrate and influence every single thing that you do—there is no "faith shelf." [pauseeeee]

There are myriads of Christians totally fine with complacency, and the same old routine and ways. *[pause]*

They are perfectly fine with their life the way it is, and have gotten so used to a default mode that there is no intentional, conscious effort as to how they could grow, mature, or change. *[pauseeee]*

There are some who have come to church week-in and week-out, they have heard sermon after sermon, but they leave and it's all the status-quo once again.

But that's not how the Christian life is to be lived—there is no room for complacency. *[pause]*

You can't sit idle nor be in cruise control in your Christian life and expect to be godly, for as Paul is telling us here: there must be an active "looking carefully" as to how you are living. *[pauseeee]*

A spiritually lackluster and lazy Christian is an unwise, immature Christian. *[pauseeee]*

We must not slack, but we need to be regularly reflecting upon our lives. *[pause]*

You should be thinking, "How am I doing? How am I living? What's failing? What's going well?"

"Am I showing the love of Christ more? Am I being wise? Am I content in the Lord? Am I thankful?" *[pauseeee]*

This reflection isn't meant to make you mope in guilt and shame for where you fail, but it's meant to prevent you from remaining idle and ineffective.

It's a part of living wisely for the Lord! *[pauseeee]*

A wise worker at the workplace isn't a lazy, idle worker, but one who is continually evaluating things and seeking to get better...

So also, in the Christian life, we need to be 'looking carefully' how we are living. *[pauseeee]*

So are you living mindfully as a Christian? *[pause]*

Are you on the lookout for how you can grow? *[pause]*

Are you aware of things that tempt you?

Do you perceive the spiritual dangers around you? *[pauseeee]*

It's when we are not careful that we can end up blending in with the culture or joining in with others in their sin.

But if we are on guard, then we can be more careful, so as to not give into those temptations. *[pauseeee]*

Paul goes on by saying, “Look carefully then how you walk, *not as unwise but as wise.*” [pause]

So a Christian can either live wisely in this evil age, or they can live foolishly—which will you choose? [pauseeee]

If you are mindful as to how you are living, then you are being wise, but if you sit idle or unaware, then you are being foolish.

So that means that alert, careful living *is* wise living—so which path have you been on lately? [pauseeee]

There are many Christians who could beat you in Bible trivia, but they don’t know how to live wisely.

But here we see that the Christian life isn’t all facts and trivia, but it’s also made up of wise, right conduct. [pauseeee]

So do you want to live a godly life? You must have wisdom!

As James writes, “Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.”¹ [pauseeee]

As I said last week: life is messy, it brings you a circumstance that is like a tangled web...

It is complicated and not always cut-and-dry, so you need wisdom to know what’s pleasing to the Lord. [pauseeee]

How often do you pray for wisdom to live for Christ? [pause]

Are you actively taking care as to how you live? [pause]

Be in the Word of God. Be with the people of God. Pray. Discern. Evaluate. Reflect. [pauseeee]

Now what’s a vital part of this wise, careful living?...

Paul says, “making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.” [pause]

So a vital part of wise living is *using your time well.* [pauseeee]

Oh, how we need this reminder in our day—the wasting of time is a common trait of our age! [pause]

There’s so much that can catch our attention, distract us, and waste our time. [pauseeee]

Now there’s nothing wrong with social media, but how much time is *wasted* on social media? [pause]

¹ James 3:13.

How much time is wasted watching TV for hours on end? *[pause]*

How much time is wasted on little, needless, shallow, worthless things?! *[pauseeee]*

This is not to say that there's no place for rest and leisure, for there is!

Appropriate amounts of rest and leisure is NOT wasting time, but it's caring for your body and mind, and can be done gratefully to God, enjoying things that He has given to you. *[pause]*

But what I'm talking about goes beyond that to when these things become *excessive*. *[pauseeee]*

What Paul is showing us is that wise living means wise time-management, and that means that if you waste large amounts of time, you are being foolish. *[pauseeee]*

Not many of us think that way when we waste time—we take it lightly, as no big deal, and just move on.

But how would it change things, if we remembered that time-wasting is foolish, and not living mindfully for the Lord? *[pauseeee]*

Now I don't think God wants us so concerned with our time that we worry and freak out when we waste one minute of time or something like that.

Rather, this is about your general way of life—are you a constant time-waster? *[pauseeee]*

You have to be conscientious and careful in order to not waste your time, for if you just sit back, it's easy to waste hours. *[pauseeee]*

I'm sure we have all caught ourselves doing this...

You sit back and mindlessly waste time, and then look up, and it's a couple hours later, and you say, "Wait?! How did *that* happen?! Where did the time go?" *[pause]*

But Christians are not to be time-wasters, but time-redeemers. *[pauseeee]*

That phrase, "making the best use of the time," is literally, "redeeming the time."

It's this image of buying back the time. *[pauseeee]*

The idea is that in these evil days, we must take the opportunities that we find and redeem them. *[pause]*

Amidst the darkness and evil of our day, we need to step up and do good in the circumstances that we find ourselves in.

Do not waste those prime opportunities that God has given to you, but *redeem* that time! *[pauseeee]*

Imagine you're at work, and there's some sort of emergency so that you can't really get much of your normal work done. *[pause]*

It's now the end of the work-day, and you have 30 minutes left. *[pause]*

You could waste that last 30 minutes, or you could make the best use of it, and get some stuff done. *[pause]*

That's the idea—amidst these evil days, do not waste your time, but utilize the time that you *do have* for the Lord! *[pauseeee]*

Let's say that your workplace is a place filled with filthy language and hurtful statements.

How could you wisely take opportunities to live for Christ there? *[pauseeee]*

By speaking up? *[pause]*

By pointing the conversation in a different direction? *[pause]*

We don't run away and isolate, but we step in and make the best use of the time that we have in these evil days. *[pauseeee]*

Take care to walk wisely, but *how* can we do this?

First...

I. God's will teaches us how to walk wisely.

Let's say that you need to walk through a room in the dark. *[pause]*

Doesn't it help you greatly to walk without getting hurt, if you know some things about what's in the room beforehand? *[pauseeee]*

As you are walking, you know that there's a table right there, a couch right there, usually a toy laying right there.

It's having some foundational knowledge of the room that helps you to walk wisely in the dark. *[pause]*

So also, we need to know some things to walk wisely in this dark world, and what do we need to know? God's will. *[pauseeee]*

Paul says in verse 17, "Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." *[pauseeee]*

Maybe you are sitting here this morning, and you hear all about how important it is to live wisely in this evil age. *[pause]*

You see the need to do so—you don't want to live foolishly, but it all seems daunting to you.
[pause]

You may be thinking, “But how will I *know* how to live because life is so complicated and messy?” [pause]

Here's the answer—wise living comes from knowing God's will. [pauseeeee]

Wise living doesn't come from culture or secular psychology.

Wise living doesn't come from your own feeble thoughts, but it comes from God. [pauseeeee]

God's wisdom is true wisdom, so no wonder we must *go to Him* to find how to live wisely!
[pause]

He has a way of life that He wants from us.

It's the way of life that He has determined and commanded, and so wants and desires from us.
[pauseeee]

So many people try to live their life according to their own wisdom, but then wonder why it ends up flopping and failing. [pause]

So many people try to live their life according to the wisdom of the world, and wonder why they end up unsatisfied and their life in ruins. [pause]

It's because in order to live wisely, we must understand what the will of the Lord is! [pause]

We must truly comprehend it.

And that means that we can't have a small knowledge of what God wants, but we must truly *understand* it. [pauseeeee]

Some Christians believe that we should just love and not to be worried about all that doctrine stuff.

But here is a clear verse showing us that knowledge of His will is vital to right, wise living.
[pause]

This means that you need to be *bathed* in the Word of God, for that is the primary place that we find God's will: through commands and principles found in Scripture. [pauseeeee]

How much are you in the Word of God throughout the week? [pause]

How much are you eager to hear the preaching of God's Word and attentive to it? [pauseeee]

Notice what else Paul says in verse 17, “Therefore do not be foolish, *but understand what the will of the Lord is.*” [pauseeee]

You could put it this way—folly is not knowing *or* not wanting to know the will of the Lord.
[pause]

If you disregard God’s Word, and seek to live in your own way, then you are being foolish.
[pause]

This is why Proverbs says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.”² [pauseeee]

You can’t disregard the source of wisdom and expect to live wisely. [pauseeee]

So many people try to live their lives with no regard for God, but it doesn’t end up being right, godly, wise living. [pause]

Others try to live moral lives by some vague moral standard, but this will not do, either...

You must go to the Lord to know how to live wisely in these evil days! [pauseeee]

Don’t be foolish, but keep going to Him.

Search His Word, pray for Him to show you what to do, and put everything through the filter of Scripture. [pauseeeee]

When you are faced with a difficult, complicated situation, and don’t know how to act, how often do you consider what the Bible says? [pause]

How often do you actually try to discern what the Lord would find pleasing? [pauseeeee]

We are learning how to live wisely, and we found that God’s will plays a vital, foundational part in that, but what else do we find?...

II. God’s Spirit empowers us to walk wisely.

Imagine a race car and a track. [pause]

You are the race car, who needs to race well on the spiritual track of life, and that’s like what we are to do: live rightly for the Lord. [pause]

We have just found out what the track is: the track is knowing God’s will...

It shows you the path that you must drive on to race well, and going off that track is foolish and leads nowhere good. [pause]

But there’s one more important thing that a race car needs to drive on that track and finish—it needs *fuel*. [pause]

² Proverbs 1:7.

The race car sitting on a track with no fuel does no good, for you can't actually *move along the track*.

You need something that empowers the car to move along the track. *[pause]*

Well what is it that you need to empower you in order to actually *do* the will of God? You need the Spirit. *[pauseee]*

That's where Paul goes next in verse 18, "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit." *[pauseeeee]*

So many Christians, as that race car, know the track well, which is important—they know God's Word in and out.

But they are missing something: the power. *[pause]*

By relying on themselves, they are like a race car trying to go on the track with no gas. *[pauseeee]*

So this is a super-important thing to always remember: you need the Spirit in order to live for the Lord. *[pause]*

You cannot live for God without God. *[pause]*

He gives us the path *and* the power! *[pauseeeee]*

Christian, you are not left alone to roll up your sleeves and live wisely for the Lord, aren't you thankful for that? *[pause]*

He doesn't lay out all of these things to do, and then say, "You're on your own, buddy!" *[pause]*

Fellow believer, our Lord is not like that...

His grace teaches *and* empowers, it instructs *and* enables. *[pauseeee]*

This means when living in a dark, messy world, we must not only ask the Lord, "What should I do?"

But we should be asking the Lord, "Please Lord, give me the strength and power to do it." *[pauseeee]*

In our circles, I think we are pretty good at seeking to know God's will as to how to live in our day. *[pause]*

We are searching the Scriptures to know how best to respond to things, which is great!

But I think we are lacking more on the 'power side' of humbly relying upon the Spirit to enable us to do what we find in the Scriptures. *[pauseeee]*

What does Paul say? “Be filled with the Spirit.” *[pause]*

Every believer has the Spirit as salvation, but to be ‘filled with the Spirit’ is something different from merely ‘having’ the Spirit. *[pauseeee]*

As we saw in a previous passage, we can grieve the Spirit,³ and now we see that we can be filled with the Spirit.

And so it’s how we yield to the Spirit, which determines how much we are filled by Him. *[pauseeee]*

If we keep pushing for our own way, then we won’t be filled as much, as if we let Him control and guide us.

So we must walk by the Spirit, being led by Him.⁴ *[pause]*

You must have a mentality of dependence, whereby you say things like, “Lord, fill me, control me, guide me, empower me.” *[pauseeee]*

You can’t live rightly in these evil days through your own power—it will not do.

You are not strong enough or able enough, but you need the Spirit—do you realize that? *[pause]*

So be filled with the Spirit by looking to and depending on Him to work in your life to empower you to live for Him. *[pauseeeee]*

Here Paul says something interesting, for he tells us that we are to be filled with the Spirit, and not with wine. *[pause]*

He says, “do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.” *[pause]*

So instead of being under the influence of alcohol, we are to be under the influence of the Spirit. *[pauseeee]*

The contrast between wine and the Spirit here seems to be saying this...

As you intentionally fill up more and more with wine, it influences your behavior, *so instead of that*, be intentionally filled more and more with the Spirit, so that He influences your behavior. *[pauseeee]*

So what are you letting to fill and influence you? *[pauseeee]*

We live in a dark world with evil all around us. *[pause]*

³ A reference to Ephesians 4:30.

⁴ A reference to Galatians 5:16–18.

Knowing how to live in such a world is not always easy, for temptations are strong, deception is prevalent, and the messiness of circumstances makes it all the harder. *[pause]*

What we need for ‘such a time as this’⁵ is to live wisely for the Lord—that’s how we can shine as lights in this dark world. *[pause]*

So we seek the wisdom of God and His will in the Word of God, filtering everything through it.

And we rely upon the Spirit filling us and so empowering us to live wise and godly lives in our day. *[pauseeee]*

So let’s not be careless and lazy in our Christian lives, but let’s watch how we live, making sure it’s done in wisdom. *[pause]*

Let’s not foolishly waste time, but redeem it.

And let’s not be filled with wine, but let’s be filled with the Spirit. *[pause]*

For we are those, who used to be in folly, darkness, and death, but now we have been graciously redeemed by Jesus Christ to be shining lights, filled with Spirit-given wisdom and life.

⁵ An allusion to Esther 4:14.