

Eph 5:15–21

Read, the passage below...

Ask the Lord to open your eyes, that you may behold wonderful things from His Word (Ps 119:18), and that you would receive His Word with humility—putting it into practice in your daily life (Jas 1:21–22).

Passage:¹

- 15 Therefore ¹be careful how you ^awalk, not ^bas unwise men but as wise,
 16 ^{1a}making the most of your time, because ^bthe days are evil.
 17 So then do not be foolish, but ^aunderstand what the will of the Lord is.
 18 And ^ado not get drunk with wine, ¹for that is ^bdissipation, but be ^cfilled with the Spirit,
 19 ^aspeaking to ¹one another in ^bpsalms and ^chymns and spiritual ^dsongs, ^esinging and making melody with your heart to the Lord;
 20 ^aalways giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to ^{1b}God, even the Father;
 21 ^{1a}and be subject to one another in the ^{2b}fear of Christ.



5:15 unwise ... wise. The distinction between unwise and wise living is rooted in OT wisdom literature, where the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Job 28:28; Prov 1:7; 9:10). Wisdom is obeying God's revealed will (Deut 4:5–6; Pss 19:7; 119:98; Matt 7:24; Jas 3:13–17).

5:16 making the most of every opportunity. To do good works (2:10). See Col 4:5. **the days are evil.** This present age is controlled by the devil (2:2; 2 Cor 4:4). See note on 1:3.

5:17 understand. Goes beyond cognitive comprehension to applied knowledge (cf. Prov 2:1–9). **what the Lord's will is.** In Ephesians, it centers not so much on personal guidance for our immediate future but on God's saving plan to unify all things under the headship of Christ (1:9–10) and on our behavior in light of this grand vision of redemption.

5:18 Do not get drunk on wine ... be filled with the Spirit. Paul uses the present tense of these verbs to denote not a onetime experience but a consistent pattern of life that believers should cultivate. In essence, Paul wants believers not to come under the influence of wine but to allow the Spirit to take full control of their lives. The former "leads to debauchery" (cf. Prov 23:29–35; Rom 13:13); the latter leads to a life characterized by a series of participles in the Greek: speaking, singing, making music (v. 19), giving thanks (v. 20), and submitting (v. 21). **filled.** Greek *plēroō*. Paul's exhortation recalls earlier passages about being filled to the whole measure of the "fullness [Greek *plērōma*] of God" (3:19) and the "fullness [Greek *plērōma*] of Christ" (4:13). Together they present a picture of the church being filled with the presence of the triune God in much the same way as the OT temple was filled with the presence of God (see 2:21–22; 3:19 and notes).

5:19 speaking. The focus here is not to praise God but to "teach and admonish one another" (Col 3:16). **psalms, hymns, and songs.** Probably synonymous terms, indicating the use of every appropriate form that the Spirit prompts. **Sing and make music ... to the Lord.** Joyful worship of Christ.

5:20 in the name. On the basis of who Christ is and what he has done.

¹ Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible® (NASB), Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Comments taken from MacArthur, John F., Jr. *The MacArthur Study Bible: New American Standard Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006).



Context:

In 4:1, Paul exhorts believers to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which they have been called.” The following fifteen verses broadly develop the foundation and fellowship for such worthy living.

In 4:17, Paul transitions—looking back to what it is that we have been saved from. Our salvation takes place in a moment, but there is also a sense in which our salvation “works itself out” throughout the duration of our lives.

Living a worthy life, by definition, is living a life that is devoted to continual transformation—a process by which we lay aside the old life, and clothe ourselves with the newness that is ours in Christ.

In 5:7, Paul circles back to his earlier instruction from 4:17. Our lives are to be radically different to the world.

Our transformed testimony will shine a spotlight on the truth of the Good News of salvation in Christ.

Living in the world, while not being of the world, is central to God’s purposes for us. Our salvation and sanctification is of immeasurable worth to us, but God also intends to use our light-giving lives in a dark world.

- 5:15–21 supplies three main commands that begin to develop how we might “polish the lens of our light” so that we shine brightest for Him. List each of those commands.

i)

ii)

iii)

- What is the significance of the word “therefore” in v15? How should we understand the relationship between v15 and its immediate context?

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Exploring the Text:

As you answer the following questions, please take the time to read all the cross references at the end of the questions. These are provided to enrich your study experience.

- Paul says we should, “walk, not as unwise men...”
What is the common biblical term from someone who is “unwise?”

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- List some of the biblical characteristics of folly.

Ps 14:1, Rom 1:21–22

Pr 12:15

Pr 12:16

Pr 10:22, 14:9



Pr 1:7, 13:1, 15:2

Pr 12:1, 18:2

5. Biblically, what is the essence of wisdom? (Ps 111:10; Pr 9:10)

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6. What is the source and purpose of wisdom? (Deut 4:5-6; Ps 119:98-99; 2Tim 3:15)

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7. In the immediate context of Eph 5:15, what does it look like to be foolish and correspondingly, what does it look like to be wise?

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8. The second half Eph 5:16 gives the reason (or basis) for the first half of the verse. What does Paul mean/imply when he says that "the days are evil?" (2Thess 2:3; 1Tim 4:1-2; 2Tim 3:1,13; 2 Pet 3:3; 1Jn2:18; Jude 18) How then specifically, does the second half of the verse provide motivation for the first half of the verse?

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9. What is the will of God that we are supposed to understand in Eph 5:17? (Eph 1:9-10; Rom 12:2; 1Thess 4:3)

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10. In the context of Eph 5, why is drunkenness a sin? What does *debauchery* mean in this context?

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11. How should we understand the connection between *drunkenness* and being "*filled with the Spirit?*"

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12. Paul's instruction to "*be filled with the Spirit*" is a passive imperative, in other words we are commanded to let something be done to us. How can we ensure/promote the Holy Spirit's filling of us? (1Cor 12:13; Col 3:16)

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13. Why can we say that the command in Col 3:16 is the same as the instruction in Eph 5:18b?

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14. What are the five manifestations of what it looks like when someone is filled with the Spirit? (5:19–21)

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ii).....
iii).....
iv).....
v).....

15. The manifestations in vv19–21 can be divided into two categories? What are those categories?

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16. How do the actions of vv19–21 cause our lives to illumine the Good News of salvation in Christ?

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For Further Reflection:

17. Can you point out any of the characteristics of folly (from question 4) in your own life?

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18. How are you failing to redeem the time? What practical steps can you begin taking today so that you may better honour Christ through your use of time?

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Suggestion for Prayer:

Thank the Lord for His Holy Spirit who fills believers, enabling us to live in wisdom. Ask Him to expose folly in your life, and to grant you the desire to live for His glory, with whole-hearted commitment to His will, as it is revealed in His Word.

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Notes:

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