

Ephesians 14-11-09a

This is Sunday the 9th of November 2014, I almost said the 9th of Ephesians because my mental pot is stirring. The 9th day of November 2014, we are in Ephesians chapter 5, moving into the last half of the chapter where there is application made of the great content that Paul summarized and distilled using the conjunction therefore and the commands related to walking, peripateo. We had five walks and we had eight therefore's.

So we will be resuming this morning in the vicinity of verse 18. Let's take a moment to dedicate our time and our concentration to the study of God's Word under the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Father, it is always an astonishing thing to see the depth and the breadth of Your grace toward us.

We who have nothing, who can bring nothing before You, have been given the opportunities to serve and to become through Your grace so many things, to accomplish so much, to reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus. It is humbling and it is something that produces in us such gratitude and appreciation that You saw fit to be mindful of us and to visit us, not only with salvation but with opportunities to place us in this age and at this time with tremendous support from Your Word and from the presence of the Holy Spirit so that our lives moment by moment, day by day, can be an investment in eternal things. They have a meaning and a purpose.

They are circumscribed and defined by who we are in the Lord Jesus. We thank You for that. We thank You for the strength and the peace that You grant to us in those ways and through those provisions.

We thank You especially for our fellowship and the gifts that function to provide encouragement and blessing and a wonderful enjoyment of our time on this earth beyond circumstance and beyond the momentary pleasures that earthly things provide. We have a brotherhood and a fellowship in Christ that is just at its beginning. It will extend throughout all eternity.

We thank You for that. We thank You for this portion of Your Word and the truth that it contains, the power and the light that it can shed abroad in our hearts and lives. We pray that each one will find in this study this morning encouragement, strength, blessing, guidance and renewed enthusiasm for maximizing the potential that You have granted to us through the Lord Jesus, in whose name we pray, Amen.

Ephesians chapter 5, if you have it labeled as I do in your New King James, right under the chapter number, it says, Walk in Love. Well, you couldn't make a more nebulous statement in English than that. Walk in Love.

What does that mean? Is that like one of these comedy things where somebody is so blissfully in love that he walks into a signpost because he's not paying attention to where he's going? I'm in love and I clong, you know, you walk into a traffic light, walk out in the street and get smacked.

What does it mean to walk in love? Well, Paul has spent the first half of this chapter defining that and by quick way of review, in chapter 4 verse 1 he says, Walk worthy of the calling with which we have been called. Walk worthy of the calling.

Well that brings things down, we're not talking about romantic love, we're not talking about love for your dog or love for pizza, we're talking about that which is defined by our identity in Christ. In Him we are called. In Him we have an identity, a purpose, a mission.

Walk in that. Walk worthy of the calling. Secondly, do not walk with no purpose and no point.

Futility of mind. Most human beings are in this chapter 4 verse 17 mode. Even many Christians are walking with a self-described and self-discovered purpose.

It goes nowhere, it accomplishes nothing. It is futile. You are left with nothing in the bag at the end of it.

I have often thought about this. When I was a lieutenant and first got assigned to Fort Sill, I was a first lieutenant, was in the enlisted instruction branch and I was assigned to a teaching team that was headed by a bright, young army captain, Captain Gordon. Really cheerful guy, freckle faced.

He was married to a gal who was also an army captain and worked in another part of Fort Sill. One of the things I remember about him, in addition to him being an excellent team leader and a great guy to work with, is that way back then, and this would have been 1981, he had availed himself of what back then was a relatively new thing, which was the IRA, Individual Retirement Account. He and his wife had assigned a portion of their pay to automatically go in and he was trying to explain to me what a good deal it was to get this IRA thing set up.

He was trying to talk to me about taking a portion of your income and putting it into these investments and setting it aside for retirement. Well, I was 24 and I thought, retirement? Are you kidding me? That's like half a century away before I have to worry anything about retirement. So when I got my first lieutenant paycheck, well, I spent it on things that were interesting to me.

I got little chess machines and stereo equipment and put gasoline in my 12 miles per gallon travel awl and I bought Volkswagen bugs and bought parts for them and fixed them up and I just did the stuff that was meaningful to me at the time. Well, I don't have the travel awl, I don't have the motorcycle, I don't have the bug, I don't have, I don't think any of the stereo equipment left. I was living a largely, in the economic sense, futile existence.

It was for the moment, made good sense to me at the time, but it had no head for the future. I would love to find Captain Gordon now and discover what a wonderfully bountiful retirement that he and his wife are probably now enjoying because of his prudence, because of his looking ahead and thinking ahead and not being futile when it came to monetary compensation and what to do with it. He still lived in a nice house and had a lot of fun, drove a nice car, he and his wife

took trips and did things, but he was thinking ahead, had a long-term view.

This is the kind of thing that God encourages us, in fact commands us to do. Walk circumspectly, walk with an eye on the future, have some prudence, don't be like the Gentiles who walk in the futility of their minds. Now there are Gentiles who invest economically for the future, but that's mundane, that's momentary, that's in the now, it all ends at death.

You take nothing with you, you show up at the judgment with nothing. Do not be like the Gentiles who walk in the futility of their minds. To spend a day, to spend the rest of today, we're going to finish up church, we're going to fold up our Bibles, we're going to disperse, we're going to have some kind of noon day lunch, there's some football games on this afternoon, there's some chores that need to be done, there's some stuff we've kind of got mapped out on the schedule, before the end of the day I will do X. We have a choice, and if there's one thing this passage does, and we're going to see it both here and in a parallel passage this morning, if there's one big idea, this is it.

Stand by for the big idea. Here it comes, big idea, about to be spoken, pay attention. If you don't get anything else, later today, do you remember what the big idea was? Here's the big idea.

Life is a choice between two and only two things. This is what Paul is saying. It is either the light or it is darkness.

It is either worthiness or it is futility. There is no middle ground. You're not kind of worthy and kind of not.

It's not gray, it's not twilight, it's not dusk, it's not, well, it's sort of dark but I've got a flashlight. This passage and its parallels in the Word of God say it is all one or it is all the other. So, that makes it simple.

I like black and white. It's pretty easy to figure out which is which. I'm not big on 256 shades of gray.

Give me something clear. And you will notice that the contrast in this passage, beginning with that one in chapter 4 verse 17, not as the Gentiles. It doesn't say there's a big spectrum of Gentiles and some of them kind of get it and some of them kind of don't.

And some of them are close and some of them are far away. He takes all of the Gentiles, all of the godless. Gentiles is just a synonym for godless.

They walk in the futility of their minds. Their understanding is darkened. They are alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of what they do not know.

You say, well, how can they be held accountable for what they do not know? They can be held accountable because the knowledge has been offered and rejected. Can you hold somebody

accountable for being ignorant? I got held accountable for being ignorant. I was wandering around in an unfamiliar part of town, got tangled up in the fairground parking lot down there, trying to find my way out and made a wrong turn.

And I was in the fairgrounds in this cyclone-fenced-in parking with barbed wire on top. Couldn't find a way out. And I finally found one little opening in the corner and I pulled out onto a street.

And my wife and kids were down there somewhere out of gas. I was trying to find them. So I pulled out and I started driving along.

Weep, weep, weep, here come the lights. And I get a \$135 ticket, I think. It was \$135 or \$165 for speeding in a school zone.

I didn't know it was a school zone because I pulled out into the middle of the zone and I didn't see a sign. I was ignorant of the fact that I was in a school zone, so I was doing 20 in a 15. Five measly miles per hour and it's \$150 plus.

Now, am I accountable? I told the officer, officer, I didn't know this was a school zone. He said, well, there's a sign right there and I'm looking to try to find it. Well, it's in a forest of other signs.

Yes, there was a sign, but I was looking around for a stalled vehicle, trying to figure out what street I'm on. Can I find one? I didn't see the sign. I was ignorant.

Is it fair for God to hold the Gentiles accountable for their ignorance? Yes, because the sign is there. And I didn't stop to consider. I'm in a residential area.

I better find out what the speed limit is before I gun it looking to solve my emergency. I'm accountable. The knowledge is available and just if I don't avail myself of it, that doesn't excuse me from responsibility for it.

They are alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them. Why? Because of the blindness of their heart. Now, how did their heart get blind? How did their heart get blind? Born blind? That would be no accountability, right? Can you blind yourself? Can a father blind himself to the faults of his son as Isaac did with Esau? We can be blind to our own faults.

The heart is deceitful, desperately wicked. You shut your eyes, you're blind. You choose not to look, you're blind.

God is righteous, God is just, God is fair. If someone is held accountable, then it's their fault. So if their heart is blind, it's their fault.

Seeing they see and do not perceive. Hearing they hear and do not understand. They can turn.

Remember our passage coming up here, awake, arise, and Christ will give you light. Right? If you're in the dark, awake and arise. So this is a choice, and this is the big idea.

Everything is a choice. You can check, I can check, at any given moment, am I in the light or am I in the dark? Am I walking in light and in love and in wisdom, or am I walking in darkness and foolishness and futility? Any given point, any given activity, any given point of time, point of progress, episode of involvement in anything, you can stop and figure out, am I in the light or am I in darkness? Am I in wisdom or am I in futility? Am I in wisdom or non-wisdom? Am I in worth or futility? Those are the contrasts that Paul gives us here. And so the central idea in chapter 5, verse 2, is walk in love.

Christ loved us, gave himself for us, that's our example. It is selfless, it is beneficial to others, it is sacrificial to self, it is in the realm of and has the purposes of God's glory. This isn't just random acts of kindness.

Oh look, bum on the corner, I'll give him 20 bucks. That's not walking in love. It doesn't glorify God.

A guy walks around the corner and buys a bottle of Mogan David and chugs it down, how does that glorify God? It doesn't. We have to be circumspect as we walk. Walk as children of light, chapter 5, verse 8, walk circumspectly.

Interestingly, this section is very clearly marked off. You remember when we looked at those five things, it is sort of a chiasm. Look at those five things, if you've got them written down, number one is walk worthy, number five is walk circumspectly.

What fundamentally defines the walk that is worthy of our calling? That we're paying attention to what we're doing. It is circumspect, spectare, this is where we get spectacle, spectacles means spectator, this is watching. Circum is around, look around, be aware of your surroundings, situational awareness.

What's going on? What is the status of things? Look around. You cannot do the worthy walk if you do not analyze, if you do not pull up short and say, who am I, why am I here? Right? So those two things correspond. The worthy walk is a walk of awareness, circumspection, in some cases introspection, on what am I actually operating here? Am I just glibly rolling along with no attention or am I being circumspect? Am I examining myself to see if I'm in the faith? Within that, remember number two was do not any longer walk in futility of mind like the godless.

And number four, walk as children of light. You will not be in futility and emptiness and darkness if you are walking not just in the light but as a child of light. I'm not just in it, I am of it.

Do you see the difference? If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship because we're in the same area. This is more than being in the light. This is be of the light.

If you're a child of a thing, you partake of its nature and its essence. You're made of it in some

way, right? He doesn't say walk in the light. He could easily say what John says here in 1-7.

He says walk as children of light. And by the way, this is in the plural because this is something we can do not only individually but together. We as a group, we as families, we as a fellowship.

We as conjoined believers in the Lord Jesus, as members of his body. We do this together. This is a participation sport to walk as children of light.

This isn't one child walking home from school. This is a group of children walking. Walk as children of light.

This binds us together as much as it defines the way we walk. And right at the center, chapter 5, verse 2, walk in love. Well, we've seen that, and that's our context.

This is the center. This is the big mainmast of the ship that is the letter that we're studying, the book of Ephesians, the letter to Laodicea. That's what this is.

We're at the heart of it. This is the center post. This is the theme.

This is the thesis statement. Therefore, when you look at the therefore, you're going to find that they bracket this in the same way. And we saw those eight therefore.

Remember, there was a therefore in chapter 4, verse 1, right along with the worthy walk. Therefore, walk worthy. Our very last therefore, number 8, was in 5.17, which is, do not be unwise, but wise.

Isn't that the same as walk circumspectly? The section is so clearly marked off here from 4.1 to 5.17. Do not be unwise, but wise. And we saw that chiasm in the therefore last time. Walk worthy of your calling was the first.

Do not be unwise, but wise is the last. Be circumspect. Be aware.

Pay attention. Don't be thoughtless. If there's one adjective that would describe a lot of what goes on in our culture today, it is thoughtless.

It doesn't conclude. This is what postmodernism is. If you've read Gruthius and some of the other commentators on what's happening culturally, when you look at the big picture, what was modernism? What is postmodernism? Postmodernism doesn't draw logical conclusions.

It just goes with the flow. I hear your case, and I'm glad that that's your truth. It just doesn't compel me.

I'm not interested in your memes and your tropes. I'm not interested in your constructs. That's a construct that works for you, but I find that dusty and dry and dissatisfying.

What I like is what's coming through my earbuds right at the moment. I've got Jazzy D or somebody coming through my earbuds, and that's what makes it for me right now. I'm in the flow.

I'm in the moment. I am stimulated. That's all I need right now.

I have a species of peace. I'm not being troubled, so don't throw any harshness into my mellow sphere. I'm in the mellow sphere.

I'm listening to my favorite artist, cranking out the tunes, and all of this philosophical stuff. It's just too abstract. I'm in the moment here, and I'm having a good time, so don't bother me.

Thoughtlessness. It is the diametric opposite of what we are called to. We are called to be aware.

We are called to think. We are called to be a little bit skeptical. If you hear a report on the news, oh, scientists have done A, B, and C. Well, be a bit skeptical.

Look a little deeper. Don't read the press report. Find in the press report the reference to the study and see what the actual researchers are saying.

I cannot tell you how many times somebody has made the announcement, oh, the missing link has been found. Here's how fins turn to hands. Here is how non-life became life.

The press is looking for something that will sell papers or garner headlines or get hits on their website, and so they're going to exaggerate and try to condense and popularize a concept. And then you start reading the fine print and continued on, you know, read more, and you discover that it isn't anything near. It doesn't even begin to qualify for its own headline.

And it isn't what it said. Who knows that? People who construct this stuff know that 90% of people are just going to say, you know, I knew it. I knew evolution was true, and here's just more confirmation.

Boo on those Christians who think there's a God. Look at this. It's so obvious.

I mean, look, here's yet another scientific story. Go read it. Go research it and find out what it actually says, and it is not what it is advertised to be.

And the scientists in the study will say, when they get interviewed in some page 19 interview, I wish they hadn't written that headline because that goes way too far. That's not what we're saying. Our study is being misquoted and abused.

Yeah, we're not creationists, but you can't say that from our study. But it's a tiny voice. Only the circumspect, only those who are knowledgeable and who ferret out the truth by diligent investigation are going to know that.

God commands us to be those people. And it's fun because our life isn't all memorizing the next

scripture or quoting the next aphorism, you know, from a spiritual refrigerator magnet. You get to go look at the world.

What are people saying? You ought to love science. Science is great, especially good, solid science. That's what made the world we live in.

That's why your cell phone works. That's why your airplane flies. That's why your car drives.

The false pitting of science against faith is sad. It's terribly sad. And Christians let people get away with it.

There is no conflict. Hear me now. There is no, capital N, capital O, conflict between good science and faith.

None. There has yet to be any scientific observation that disproves anything the Bible says. In fact, over and over and over again, it confirms.

But you've got to get past these sloppy headlines. Christians are their own worst enemies, making false and fallacious arguments that don't hold up either. And we've got enough enemies in our own camp, we don't even have to go argue with, you know, the Hitchensons and the Dawkinsons of the world.

But if you are a circumspect walker, whether it is in the world of ideas or whether it is in the world of daily practical application, be in the light, be aware, know what you believe, know what the Bible says, and know what is out there in the world. Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. But it doesn't do you any good if you don't know that.

You can be standing there as a Marine with your .50 cal and a full box of ammunition, but if you don't know how to cock the weapon, it is not going to fire. If you don't know how to chamber the first round, if you don't know how to lay the belt in there, if you don't have a helper to feed that stuff, it's useless. I told you before, and I'm still greatly impressed by the fact that that one tiny little bracket on my van, it's an \$8 part, disables the entire vehicle.

It will not run without that. I was looking under the hood of Dan's truck the other night, you disconnect one wire, one little tiny wire, the whole thing is disabled. That's our knowledge.

That's being circumspect. If you're going to walk, you must be able to send signals. There's a little skinny nerve that connects your brain to your muscle contract switch.

Okay, leg. Flip out there and stick that foot down on the ground. Hey, other leg.

We're leaning forward now. Balance center. Let me know if I'm leaning too far, not leaning enough.

Arm, swing. Hey, back foot, pick up, go forward. There's a lot involved in it, and there is a great

amount of feedback involved in that.

It's the same. That's why Paul uses the verb to walk. Now, here's the thing.

We ended up in verse 15. See then, this is chapter 5, Ephesians, verse 15. See then, look you, be diligent to ensure that.

This is the gut check. See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. In the Bible, being a fool is not being a figure of fun.

It's not the court jester humiliating himself for laughs. A foolish one in the ancient world, and the word used here in Greek means someone who is doing something and they should know better. This is a failure to apply available wisdom.

It is foolish to cross the street without looking both ways. You know there's traffic. You know that the possibility exists, and you fail to it.

That's the kind of foolishness that is involved here. Common, conventional wisdom not being applied. That's why he's going to go on to say in verse 17, Do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

If you're doing things that are not in the will of the Lord, that's foolish. Why would you do that? You look at the record of the Old Testament, you think what is the matter with these Israelites? Seriously, you're going to set up an Asherah? God just gave you a great military victory, and you don't pull down the idols and get back to worship of God? He has just handed you peace and safety and relief from incursions and from thefts and from raiding bands coming down and taking your stuff. He's given you security.

He's given you the opportunity to live and dwell in safety and peace with your families, and you've still got the wooden Asherah set up down in the city square? You just want to pop one of these Old Testament guys and say, What are you thinking? Well, we should aim that hand at our own spiritual face, because this is what we do. When we do not walk circumspectly, do not be unwise, understand what the will of the Lord is. Then we get to verse 18, And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.

This is a favorite place for people to go and say, Oh, don't be a drunk, boo on the liquor store and so on. The pattern in this passage is to make a statement like this and then flesh it out, illustrate it, give material that says what it means. So we don't just stop at this verse and say, Well, be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit.

Okay, that's the lesson for today. The following verses are going to illustrate this. And it's really important to understand that because, look at verse 21, Submitting to one another in the fear of God, there are entire movements within Christianity based on this partial sentence.

Well, the key is humility. You've got to submit to everybody. Anybody that says anything in their faith, you've got to be submissive.

Be submissive. Somebody speaks up, we've got to take that into account. Be submissive to one another.

No. This submission isn't just blanket, everybody submit to everybody else. Anybody's wife should submit to me because I'm a husband.

No. My wife alone submits in the biblical sense of submission. And that is detailed.

When he says submitting to one another in fear of God in verse 21, that submission is defined and described in verses 21 and following. And by the way, the one who is in charge of the submitting one has a huge amount of responsibility. Look at verse 33.

Let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, let the wife see that she respects her husband. There is a lot of detail. There is a lot of granularity here and specificity on what this submission entails.

It's not just any old submission. I said clean up that mess. You didn't do it.

You're not submissive. It's not what it's talking about at all. Well, in the same way, when you back up here, see that you walk circumspectly not as fools but as wise.

He is describing the circumspect walk. When he says invest the time because the days are evil, don't be unwise, understand what the will of the Lord is. That defines and describes the circumspect walk.

What are you looking at when you are circumspecting? Where is the will of the Lord? All things are good but not all things are edifying. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with this particular thing, but what's the will of the Lord? The will of the Lord trumps the abstractions of what is legal. What is the will of the Lord? Find out what the will of the Lord is.

I could go play golf this afternoon, or I could clean up my garage this afternoon, or I could watch football this afternoon, or I could start working on next Friday night's Bible class this afternoon. Is there a law against any of those? Is there a right and wrong that I can litmus test those with and say, well, three of those are eliminated and I've got to study for class next Friday night. That's an easy one.

What is the will of the Lord? Well, it's not as easy as, oh, well, 2 Philistines 3 verse 5 says, thou shalt not watch football on Sunday, so I guess that one is right out. It's not that easy. Find out what the will of the Lord is.

Understand what the will of the Lord is. Did you know that part of the will of the Lord is to spend

some time in rest? It is not always time to work. The Lord Jesus took His disciples off by themselves to rest.

Let's go aside and rest a while. He Himself took time off from preaching and healing, went off by Himself. How did He refresh and restore His soul? He spent time with His Father.

He visited with His Father, went off by Himself, and just had conversations with His Father. It wasn't all agonizing, you know, great drops of sweat and blood prayer. Jesus enjoyed getting off by Himself and spending time in fellowship and communion with His Father in prayer.

That's one of the ways He rested and restored and refreshed His soul. It wasn't a drudge, it wasn't a necessity, it wasn't a, well, I've made a commitment, you know, 15 minutes every day in prayer. Jesus spent hours just relaxing and refreshing Himself at the oasis of the presence of His Father.

He loves His Father. It's always a refreshment. If you love somebody, it's refreshing to spend time with them.

It's restorative. It's up-building. Is it that way for us or can we not wait? Oh man, I'm glad when this is over because I've got stuff to do.

That's what He means when He says, do not be drunk with wine in which is dissipation. This has almost nothing to do with wine. Almost nothing.

Wine in the Bible, drunkenness in particular in the Bible, has an entirely different meaning. And that's what we're going to look at when we come back from the break. What does it mean when it says, do not be drunk with wine in which is dissipation? What is this dissipation? Because that's what drunkenness symbolizes.

This isn't a big declaration against alcoholism. Is that anywhere in the context? As Paul says, now a lot of you have got some really bad habits. Let me list them.

Too much alcohol. That's not what he's talking about. This is representative.

It is symbolic almost. Now, is it in fact a bad thing to engage in drunkenness? Absolutely. But don't say, well, I don't get drunk, so I don't have to pay attention to this passage.

There is a lot more going on here. And this word dissipation is one of the keys. But the structure of the passage is also a key.

And this is under walking circumspectly. What happens to drunks? How aware are they when they are driving? How quick are their reflexes and their responses? How situationally aware is a drunk? How in control of his faculties and his self-expression is a drunk? How easy is it for a drunk to hurt others around him? Well, anything. Hear me now.

Closing point for session one. Anything that produces those effects, that's what he's talking about here. It's not just alcohol.

Hey, lips that touch liquor will never touch mine. Liver would qualify as well. Yeah, that's the old thing.

Lips that touch liquor will never touch mine. Boo on liquor. No alcohol anywhere.

You missed the point if you think that's what this is about. Certainly. It's an area of great difficulty and problem.

But that's not what the passage is talking about. Anything that interferes with your circumspect walk by its imbalance, it is an excess. There is too much of it.

Anything that is done to excess is drunkenness, is excess, is dissipation. And it is going to be described here and described by way of contrast. So that's what we'll see when we come back from the break.