

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Watch How You Walk

by Dan Trygg

“Therefore watch carefully how you walk, not as unwise people, but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of your time (lit., ‘buying back’), because the days are evil. ¹⁷ On account of this, do not be unthinking, but understand (‘put-together’) what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not be-being-intoxicated with wine, for that is wastefulness, but be-being-filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord; ²⁰ always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; ²¹ and subordinating yourselves to one another in the fear/reverence of Christ.”

Ephesians 5:15-21

Do you see that “therefore”? That word ties this paragraph to the previous section. There, **Paul was exhorting us to come to be imitators of God, as beloved children.** We are to model our lives after our spiritual Father. We are to study His heart, His ways, and act as He does. **We are to walk in love, as Christ has loved us.** He gave Himself for us, even to the extent of laying His life down as a sacrifice to God. **He became a “fragrant aroma” by giving Himself in service to us as an expression of His love for His Father. We are to imitate that!** As we walk with Christ, He will *always* lead us in a triumphal procession (a ‘victory-parade’) manifesting the sweet fragrance of knowing Him, everywhere we go. **We are to carry the delightful aroma of Christ wherever we go, as we offer ourselves to God in the presence of other people** (2 Cor. 2:14,15). **People will notice.** Some will be drawn to Christ, but others will reject Him. **We are also to walk as “children of light”, because that is who we are!** God is light. In Him is no darkness at all (1 Jn. 1:5). As we were born from Him, **He put the light of His Spirit in us, to make visible the reality of His life within the earthly vessels of our bodies.** People should *see* the reality of His life radiating from ours (Eph. 5:7-14; 2 Cor. 3:17,18; 4:6,7). **This is our identity, heritage and purpose, to display and express the life of God to the world around us.**

Since that is true, we must live our lives with *that* as our purpose. **We are to watch carefully, because there are many things that would distract, defraud and divert us from our “Kingdom calling”.** Again, in the paragraph above, Paul had charged us to *no longer partner with those who are engaged in evil practices, or participate in the works of darkness. These things simply keep us from discovering who we really are.* They steal away our time, and keep us caught up in the “unfruitful works of darkness”. **All that the devil has to do is keep us preoccupied with these “lesser things”, and we will miss out on what is most important.** As Paul said in 2:1-3, we were used to living “according to the course of this world”, which is manipulated and influenced by the enemy. That is the default that we grew up with, and it is the propaganda being fed into our minds by our culture every day. **We need to stay sharp, and be circumspect, because the enemy wants to steal our time, energy and resources, and get us caught up in wasteful and meaningless activities.**

Therefore, we are to **watch carefully how we choose to live, ...not as unwise people, but as wise. What does “wisdom” look like? “...making the most of the time, because the days are evil.”** A wise person recognizes the significance and importance of the time. Time is passing, ...it is fleeting, ...our time here will run out. **A wise person will not just “spend” their time, ...they will “invest” their time.** They will live in such a way as to cause their moments and hours to be helpful and productive. They will “redeem” their time, by purchasing something *lasting, something eternal, with their temporal choices.*

The days are “evil” in the sense of being “unwholesome, sick, of bad quality, malignant, unhealthy”. **A wise person recognizes this reality, and chooses to live in a manner that is sound, healthy, and life-giving.** A wise person will not attempt to find life in a dead and death-producing world system. **A wise person will live to give life, ...to sow and spread the love, light and life of Jesus in the lives of those around them every day.**

“On account of this...”, ...**two things.** First, Paul exhorts us to not become “unthinking”. Again, this is an important realization. **It would be so easy to just mindlessly go along with the surrounding culture. That is what people are expecting.** They are expecting that we will see reality as they do, and that we will choose to pursue the same kinds of things that they are pursuing. In fact, if we decline to do so, ...**if we choose to live in a radically different way..., they will be surprised, and may even think we are strange.** The apostle Peter wrote that we are to no longer live our lives for fleshly desires, but for the will of God. We had lived in the ways of the unbelievers before, but now that we are following Christ, **“they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same outpouring of excesses, ...and they speak evil of you”** (1 Pet. 4:1-4). So, don’t mindlessly go along with what others are doing. No. **We need to be mindful. We are to be thoughtfully evaluating our lives in accordance with our faith.** We are to *apply our minds* to discern what God’s will and desire for us is. **The Greek word for “understand” the will of the Lord means “to send together”, like assembling the pieces of a puzzle.** It indicates that we must be attentive to our surroundings to

look for God's activity. **He will often reveal things to us in *partial glimpses***, confirmed by the Word, or by promptings of the Spirit or circumstances. **We need to “send together” these pieces to discern what God may be saying to us.**

Second, Paul exhorts us, “...and do not be-being-intoxicated with wine, in which is wastefulness, rather be-being-filled with the Spirit.” Can you see how this fits the context? These represent the two divergent paths:

(1.) The path promoted by the world, “stuffing your inner pain and pursuing sensual pleasure to medicate” (4:19), ...partnering with those who live this way, and participating in these “unproductive works of darkness” (5:3-12). This is an attempt to live without God, using sensual pleasure as a way to “cover” or “escape from” the inner emptiness of a soul without His life inside. **People who are “alienated from the life of God” try to “find life” in other ways, usually through self-gratification or self-aggrandizement.** They try to “feel better” through sensual pleasure, or they try to “feel important” by external accomplishments. But none of these activities will address the fundamental “hole in their soul”. **Or, (2.) The path that Jesus exemplified and advocated, “be-being-filled with the Spirit”.** Jesus had said that “it is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh profits nothing” (Jn. 6:63). The phrase translated as “gives life” literally means “makes alive”. **It is the Spirit who makes alive.** In 2 Cor. 3:6, Paul said that this was the distinctive of the New Covenant that Jesus established for us through His death. The Old Covenant was the Law. The Law was good, but it could not make alive those who tried to follow it. **In the New Covenant, we are born of the Spirit, ...and the Spirit makes us alive inside.** The Spirit in us is the fragrance of Christ placed within us. He is also the Spirit of glory, who places within us the light of God's life inside of us (1 Pet. 4:14; cf. 2 Cor 3:7-18). **Our ability to experience and display the life of Jesus comes from the Spirit. Being filled with the Spirit, and responding to His leading, enables us to fulfill our calling and purpose, ...and, we will feel ALIVE and ENERGIZED as we respond to Him.**

So, how are we filled with the Holy Spirit? First, let me say that this is the will of God. Being filled with and led by the Spirit is your birthright and calling as a child of God. In Acts 1, Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as “the promise of the Father (Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:4,5,8), and Peter said that gift of the Holy Spirit is for all who repent and identify with Jesus (Acts 2:38,39). So, if you are seeking the Holy Spirit, it is God's heart to give the Spirit to those who ask Him (Lk. 11:13). When you are asking to be filled with and led by the Spirit, you can be assured that this is God's heart for you. **Second, Paul lays out some very practical direction right here in this passage. There are five separate actions that the apostle delineates that go along with, or help you to open up to, the filling of the Spirit.** These are all participles in Greek (“-ing words” that emphasize ongoing continuous action). We are commanded to “be-being-filled with the Spirit” *by* doing these accompanying actions, or *as* we are doing them. **What are they?**

(1.) “Speaking to yourselves...”. The word for “yourselves” is referring to the people in the church. It is not “to yourself”, ...it is “to yourselves”. Some versions translate it as “to one another”, which emphasizes that interactive dynamic. I think the way it is written allows for *both* personal and group edification. The word for “speaking” can also mean to verbalize, which allows this to have a variety of expressions. **What are we to be speaking or verbalizing to one another (or ourselves), “...in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.”** **(2.) “Singing” and (3.) “Making melody in your hearts to the Lord”.** I tell people, **“Get your praise on!”** Notice the variety that Paul mentions. There are “psalms”, which could refer to the Biblical book of psalms, ...or could refer to instrumental music, because “psalm” is from the word that meant “to pluck”, referring to playing an instrument. **“Hymns”** refer to “songs of praise”. Usually these are focused on lifting up God Himself. **“Spiritual songs”** would cover other songs inspired by the Spirit, which direct your hearts to worship, or which build you up in your reverence and appreciation of God. Just think for a moment, ...what would it be like if people helped you focus on the Spirit by bringing up and voicing songs of praise and worship when you interacted with them? We are a culture that focuses on verbal ideas. Typically, we don't even share spiritual truths with each other, when we meet. What would it be like to have a whole group of people who come together with their praise on, ...with a song in their heart, and upon their lips? **(4.) “Giving thanks always on behalf of all”.** “Giving thanks” immediately brings our hearts and attention to focus on God. The word “all” could refer to the people, or to things. I think the phrase “on behalf of” or “for the sake of”, tends to focus more on people. Again, the purpose for our interaction is to build each other up. Praying and giving thanks on someone's behalf is definitely encouraging. **(5.) “Arranging yourselves under to one another in reverence of Christ”.** This is often misunderstood. To “arrange yourself under” means to “subordinate yourself to someone else”. It simply means to yield to their needs, or to put them before your own self-interest. This word is often translated as “be subject to one another”. The form of the word is a participle (an “-ing” word) implying an ongoing action. It also indicates that this is a voluntary choice. No one else is “subjecting you”. No one is demanding your obedience or service. You are choosing to take the role of the servant out of love and out of reverence for Christ. **We can immediately see the emotional impact of the mutual encouragement in words and song, and the praise and thanksgiving that lift our hearts to God. But this choosing to voluntarily put another before yourself is the very heart of Christ,** who came to serve, not to be served. It is the heart of the Holy Spirit, as well, who does not glorify Himself, but delights to glorify Jesus (Jn. 16:13,14). **The Spirit will honor those who honor Jesus in this way. He will come to fill the vessel emptied of self.**