

Pentecost 13
August 23, 2015

“Walking Each Step to Glorify Jesus”

EPHESIANS 5:15-20

Be very careful, then, how you live-- not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. ¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. ¹⁹ Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A few years ago Susan and I participated in a walk at Waller Park to honor the memory of a man who passed away from Alzheimer's. He was the father of our neighbor and a former university professor in San Diego. We wore special t-shirts that said "Bob's Buddies." There was something special about walking together in Waller Park to honor Bob and to be with hundreds of others who were also walking for their family members who had this disease.

The words we just read to you remind us that we are on a very special walk, a walk for Jesus who loved us and gave his life for us on the cross. Our Savior rescued us from eternal death and punishment. This will not be an easy walk because of the resistance and ridicule that comes from those who think we are foolish and strange for having being so obsessed with who Jesus is and what he has done to save us.

Imagine for a moment that you were a Christian living in the city of Ephesus at the time of the Apostle Paul. Every walk down the streets of the city and every visit to the market put you face to face with people absorbed with the worship of the goddess Diana. You walked face to face with people who flaunted openly and publicly the immorality that went with their false worship. Every step you took down the streets of that city reminded you of the terrible life you once lived when you also engaged in false worship and gross immorality.

So it is with you dear Christian. Your walk through life this coming week is not easy. It is not a walk in the park. It is a walk through this world surrounded by people who do not share your convictions regarding Jesus and what he has done for you. The Lord your God knows every step you take. Psalm 139 says the Lord is thoroughly acquainted with all our ways. It is truly amazing how a GPS device can measure each step you take by being connected to a satellite as it passes over the earth. It is even more amazing how your Lord and God observes each step you take and plans to use each step for his glory.

Today we want to speak to you on this subject **“Walking Each Step To Glorify Jesus.”** First we want to take a closer look at how we walk carefully and the we will see how we walk confidently

Walk carefully

"Be careful then, how you live-not as unwise but as wise, making most of every opportunity, because the days are evil." The Greek word that is used here for "live" can be literally translated "walk around." We have found that when we walk our neighbor there are some places where the side walk is raised because of tree roots. It is important to know where these places are to avoid falling and injuring yourself. When you get up there in years you are constantly being warned to be careful when you walk. You may even use a cane or walker to keep from falling.

Obviously Paul is not giving us advice on how to walk the sidewalks in our community or how to be careful in our walking when get older. He is giving us directions on how to get along in life. He tells us not to be unwise but to be wise. The unwise person might walk down the path of life and say, "There is no danger for me. I have no worries. I am strong." The wise person recognizes that dangers lurk with every step that is taken.

As some of you know I have a Bible study once a week with a group people at the Santa Maria Terrace, a residence for seniors. I see these people walking with canes and walkers. But what I also see is how dangerous it is for them to walk in their environment and live as a Christian. They are surrounded by elderly people who are strongly opposed to the Lord and his Word. The hard nose unbelievers present a challenge for the Christians living there. I also have noticed how these dear brothers and sisters in life struggle every day with discouragement that faces them on many fronts. The challenges these people face as they walk down the halls on their way to lunch or dinner are similar to the challenges our college students or high schools students who are beginning another year of school. If I stop to pick up some groceries, or whatever I do, I need to remember to be careful with every step I take in that store so that everything I do honors the name of Jesus. Even if I stand in line, because some person cannot find that penny in the bottom of the purse, I will not succumb to thinking bad thoughts about that person or even thinking that I am so much better than they are.

Paul tells us to make the most of every opportunity because the days are evil. This is something hard to grasp. It may appear to us that evil days provide few opportunities to glorify Jesus but the opposite is true. The Christians who witnessed the evil on the streets of Ephesus had multiple opportunities to bring the blessings they had in Christ to these people who were without hope. The same is also true of us.

You want to make the most of the opportunities as long as you have time. . The Greek word used here for making the most of the opportunity has the thought of buying something. If our local market is offering a super sale on choice cuts of New York steak, you want to make sure you buy this steak while the sale is on because next week the price will almost be doubled. There is only a certain amount of time in each day when we can walk around and let the world know about our Savior and the blessings we have in him. Each step is precious. Our God will not have angels stepping in to take the steps for us. He gives that opportunity and privilege to us.

"Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is." Understand what the will of the Lord is. I read about a young man who said to his pastor, "Pastor, I found God's will for my life." The pastor responded in a kind and loving way, "I never knew it was lost." There seems to be such pressure these days for Christians to find God's will for their lives as if somehow there is this very special, secret code that uncovers how we are

to walk. The fact is God's will is found here in his Word. God's Word gives direction on how we are to walk.

For example it says later in Ephesians five that husbands are to love their wives as much as Christ loves the church. Mom and Dad are working together in the kitchen to get the meal ready and the kids are hungry. It has been a long day for all. The children smile as Dad comes up behind Mom and puts her arms around her and kisses her on the cheek. Ephesians 6 says that children are to obey their parents in the Lord for this is right. Whether you are young or old obeying and honoring your parents is a God pleasing way for you to walk through this life out of love for Jesus who has rescued you and saved you. Walk the high road and listen to what Paul says earlier in this chapter, "But among you there must not even be a hint of sexual immorality."

And if you want to walk the high road, then watch out for the wine. "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead be filled with Spirit." It is a warm summer night in Ephesus. People are out in the streets in large numbers. Many are carrying idols with them, idols of their goddess Diana. Some are beginning to dance, wild and orgiastic dances that are fueled by wine. The drunken behavior leads to immoral behavior. People who have had too much to drink cannot walk in a straight line, and even worse they lower their morals and give into debauchery.

Instead Paul says, "be filled with the Holy Spirit." When we are filled with the Holy Spirit we will walk down the path of life giving praise and glory to Jesus in our thoughts and in our actions.

Walk confidently in the Holy Spirit

Here is how the Holy Spirit fills us."Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." When we sing to each other we sing confidently and boldly and joyfully. We thank the Lord for all the blessings that have come into our lives.

This past week I had the opportunity to visit with Earle and Anne Balgeman who moved back to Arroyo Grande. Earle is under hospice care. What a privilege it was to read to them from Psalm 103 with these well known words, "Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits- who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion."

We speak to each other in psalms. We sing to each other with hymns and spiritual songs. We don't gather around to sing songs that brag and boast about how great we are. We speak psalms and we sing hymns where we confess our sin before God. We speak songs and we sing hymns where we rejoice in the work that Jesus has done to completely remove our sin from us as far as the east is from the west. So we sing about Jesus and the Holy Spirit fills us. We sing about Jesus and we find strength to walk where our God wants us to walk.

If we are going to walk for Jesus in the steps we take this week, we need the strength that comes from God's Word. Colossians 3 says, "Let the Word of Christ, dwell in you richly as you teach admonish one another with all wisdom..." A little time each day in God's Word will keep you close to the all atoning sacrifice Jesus made on the cross for your sins. A little time each day will open our eyes to see just how far we have fallen short of God's glory and how amazing it is that Jesus completely paid the ransom price of our sin. As we sing to each other we sing about Jesus. As we step into the mine field of life we sing not in fear but because we are filled with the Holy Spirit and confident the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin. That little word "all" gives the courage to step out into each new day. It allows to give thanks to the Lord for his blessings even though we may be going through some rough patches in our lives.

You don't need a special t-shirt to walk for Jesus this week. You have something better. You his robe of righteousness you wear wherever you go. May the Holy Spirit bless your walking for Jesus in the week that lies before you. Amen.