

INTRODUCTION

We’re taking a journey through the book of Ephesians verse-by-verse. Last week Billy Graham spoke to the Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta and he had just come from the hospital. When he spoke to the messengers of the convention he talked about a man he saw in the hospital skipping down hall. You know how Billy talks he said, “I asked that man, ‘Why are you skipping?’” He said, “The doctor told me to do it. He told me to take this medicine one day, skip a day, and then take the medicine the next day.” There are a lot of people who would like to come to certain passages of scripture and skip over them. We’ll be talking next week about “How to Redeem the Time” and make the most of every opportunity of life. The following Sunday we’ll talk about “How to Know God’s Will for Your Life,” because this talks about God’s will. We’ll be talking about “Don’t Be Drunk with Wine,” because the Bible talks about that and we’ll spend several weeks talking about “Be Filled with the Holy Spirit” and the evidences of being filled with the Holy Spirit. So it’s going to take us a long time as we carefully mine all the treasures of Ephesians, chapter 5.

In Ephesians 5:15 Paul says, “Be careful, then, how you live.” The word actually means “how you walk.” It is the Greek word *peripateo*, which means “to walk.” We get our word *peripatetic* which means “a walking teacher” from that. The New International version gives the meaning. It talks about your lifestyle. “Be careful then how you live — not as unwise” that’s a word for foolish “but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.” We are living in evil days, even the secular columnists point that out. I was reading an editorial from the New York Times some time ago and the editor was talking about how our American culture reads like a modern day soap opera. He said, “If someone had written down in a book the things that would happen in America, nobody would have believed it.” The truth is somebody has written all of it down in a book and it is called the Bible. The sad thing is—many people do not read it. But the Bible has already predicted that in the last days before Jesus comes back, perilous times are going to come. The world is going to get more and more evil. That’s why Paul says, “The days are evil.” As much as we would like to escape from the world and go move up to some Christian commune in the mountains and just praise the Lord, we are right in the middle of this world until Jesus comes back.

That’s like the mother who had three very active children all under age four and they just about drove her crazy. A friend of hers gave her a gift of a playpen. This mother wrote a thank you note and she said this. “Thank you so much for the wonderful playpen. I love it. I sit down in it in the middle of the living room and the kids can’t get to me for hours!” I think we all wish there were some place we could go where the worries and the pressures and the stress of this world would not bother us, but that’s just not going to happen. We are in this world and so the Bible says while you are in this world, be careful how you walk. Be careful how you live. That’s what we are going to talk about today. We are going to answer three very simple questions.

I. WHY WALK CAREFULLY?

Number one. Why should you walk carefully? It’s because there are a lot of traps out there. In April 1982, Argentine forces invaded the Falkland Islands in the southern Atlantic Ocean. Why anybody would argue over an island like that I don’t know. It’s just a piece of rock with a

population of 2,000. It rains 250 days out of the year, the average winter temperature is 37 degrees, and the average summer temperature is 42 degrees. It is an insignificant lump of rock. But the Argentine forces invaded and Britain said, “We’re not going to stand for that!” So, Britain went to war against Argentina and after six weeks of occupation, the Argentine army was forced out, but they left behind hundreds of land mines. They are still planted there to this day and the British don’t know where they are and the Argentineans won’t tell them where they are. So if you ever go to the Falkland Islands, I’m told the very first thing you’ll receive at the airport is a warning sheet about the land mines still left on the island. Be careful how you walk down there, because you could step on a mine and face terrible injury or death. That’s a great picture of how we as Christians are living in this evil world. You’d better be careful how you walk how you live because there are plenty of snares and traps out there for the Christian. Why?

1. The devil wants to destroy you

There are three reasons. Number one, the devil wants to destroy you. 1 Peter 5:8 says, “Be sober.” That means be serious. “Be vigilant.” That means be looking around carefully. “Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” There is a real devil. He is personally antagonistic toward God and toward you and he wants to destroy your life. He wants to destroy your marriage. The devil wants to destroy your family, your church, he would like to destroy our nation. He is against you. He is our adversary and if you’re not careful, he will destroy you. That’s why you need to walk very carefully. The devil cannot hurt you, but he can tempt you. Only as God allows him can he tempt you and the Bible says when we are tempted, we need to resist that temptation. So, the reason you walk carefully is because the devil wants to destroy you.

2. The world wants to defile you

Number two the world wants to defile you. That means “make you dirty.” James 1:27 says, “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and keep oneself from being unpolluted by the world.” The world wants to pollute you, defile you. When we say “the world,” we’re not talking about the world of *people* because the Bible says, “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.” We’re not talking about the world of nature. “The heavens declare the glory of God. The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof.” When we say, “the world” we’re talking about that Godless philosophy, that anti-Christian viewpoint that seems to rule the world. It’s what the Bible says in 1 John 2:15, where it says, “Do not love the world or anything in the world.” Then it talks about what they are, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. Don’t love those things. The world wants to draw you into its lifestyle. That’s why you walk carefully. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could all escape from the world? But we are in this world and the world wants to pull you astray and get you into their habits get you into its mindset and lifestyle.

Several years ago Cindy and I went with some of our friends from Alabama to New Orleans, Louisiana to the Sugar Bowl at the Superdome in New Orleans. It was the year Auburn University (for whom we were pulling) was playing the University of Michigan. I don’t know how, but we got our tickets right in the middle of a bunch of Michigan fans and Auburn was leading the game and the Michigan folks weren’t too happy about it. We were cheering for

Auburn at that time and a group of guys right behind us were drinking everything they could buy. They sold these big, old 64-ounce cups of beer and these guys had already had about half a dozen. About the third quarter, these guys behind us were really lit up like a fire and they were always bothering us by what they were saying. This old boy right behind me had just bought one of those cups full of beer and Michigan made a good play he jumps to his feet drops his cup of beer and guess what happened to it? It covered me from head to toe. I was flooded in beer. If you had met me that night and got a whiff, I probably would not be pastor of Green Acres Baptist Church. That's what the world is trying to do to you. They're trying to defile you to bring you into their lifestyle and that's why you have to walk very carefully. Watch what you get involved in.

3. Your flesh wants to defeat you

The devil wants to destroy you, the world wants to defile you, and number three your flesh wants to defeat you. When we say "flesh," what are we talking about? A few weeks ago we were studying from Ephesians about that old sinful nature, "How to Get Rid of Your Old Man." I talked about how Paul talked about carrying around a dead corpse on his back, which was a picture of your old sinful nature now that you're a Christian. Your flesh wants to cause you to sin and the flesh wants to defeat you and that's why you need to walk carefully.

Here's a bit of trivia. Who said, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."? Jesus. That's right. Jesus said that in the garden of Gethsemane. He told Peter, Andrew and James to stand there and pray and he went a ways further and then he fell down and prayed, "Father, take this cup from me. Not my will, but yours be done." Then, he goes back and he finds the disciples asleep and that's when he said, "Wake up guys. Can't you watch and pray for one hour?" And then he makes this statement, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." that's something Jesus recognizes and acknowledges about each of us. That our spirit may be willing, but the flesh literally is that which weakens us spiritually and so you must constantly fight against it. A lot of times your spirit wants to make you do some good things, but your flesh is fighting against it. I imagine there are more than two or three of you in this room who at one time in your life made a commitment that you wanted to spend some quality time alone with the Lord every morning. You know the absolute importance of a quiet time. Getting up and praying and reading your Bible. Maybe there was a time when you said, "I'm going to do it." And you set your clock a little bit earlier and the next morning when the alarm went off, your spirit said, "Okay, get up. It's time to do your quiet time," but your flesh says, "Don't you dare move. This bed is so soft and it is so warm. You don't want to become a religious fanatic, do you? You can pray anytime." There is a struggle between your flesh and your spirit. Maybe there was a time in your life when you looked in the mirror and you said, "Ugh!" and you decide you wanted to get God's temple, your body, in better shape and so you said, "I'm going to commit myself to an exercise program." That's the spirit saying "I'm going to get my body in good shape because it is the temple of the Holy Spirit." And your flesh fights against it. Your flesh says, "Here have another doughnut have another piece of pie. Sit on that couch and watch television. Don't exercise." There's this constant battle. That's why the Bible says, "You need to walk carefully."

The number two best-selling book of all time for many years was *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan. The number one best-selling book of all times is the Holy Bible. *Pilgrim's Progress*

was the number two best-selling book in history until *Peyton Place* surpassed it in the early 1960s. That’s disappointing, isn’t it? If you have never read *Pilgrim’s Progress*, you ought to read it. It’s an allegory of a Christian named Pilgrim, who is on a journey. In one scene he is walking down a narrow pathway and on either side of him is ferocious lions and tigers and he can only walk a very narrow pathway to stay out of the claws and the teeth of these wild animals. That’s a picture of the Christian life. As Jesus said, you must walk, “on that straight and narrow way” so you can avoid the pitfalls around you. Why do you need to walk carefully? The world the flesh and the devil are trying to trap you.

In Central and South America, people who build a nice home often have a cinderblock wall around their homes. In that region there is not much of a middle class. It’s the very rich and the very poor most of the time. I’ve seen a lot of these homes and they build a block wall around their property. When they come to the top row of the blocks, they’ll embed bottles and jars in the wet cement. Then after the mortar hardens they take a crowbar and break every one of those bottles until what you have are very sharp, razor-edged pieces of glass embedded in the tops of these walls. They do that because it deters thieves from climbing over the wall. Once I was in Mexico beside one of those walls (and I would never try to crawl over it), but I saw a cat jump up on the walls and without hardly paying any attention, just walk along as easy as you please, but you could tell he was having to walk very carefully. That again is a picture of how we as Christians must walk circumspectly carefully as we follow the Lord, Jesus because the world the flesh and the devil are out to get you.

II. HOW DOES A FOOLISH PERSON WALK?

Here’s question number two: How does a foolish person walk? If it’s important for us to walk carefully. Paul says in verse 15, “Do not walk as a fool or as an unwise person.” How does a foolish person walk? I’m very reluctant to call anybody a fool. Based on what Jesus said there in the Sermon on the Mount when he said, “If you call your brother a fool, you’ll be in danger of hell fire,” so I don’t go around calling people fools. But when the Bible says someone is a fool, I tend to agree. The Bible says in Psalm 14:1. It says, “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’” I may be speaking to some fools today on television or in person. You may have a PhD; you could even have an IQ of 140 or more. You could have built your own business. You could be independently wealthy and still be a fool according to what the Bible says. Because the Bible says being a fool has nothing to do with your intelligence it has nothing to do with your academic achievements. The Bible calls you a fool if you live as if there is no God.

1. A fool lives as if there is no God

Let me show you the way a fool lives. A fool lives as though there is no God. Literally this is not talking about atheism. There are very, very few pure, *professing* atheists like Madeleine Murray O’Hair a few people who go around and say, “There is no God.” However, there are many, many people who are *practicing* atheists. If you ask them if they believe in a God, they may say, “Oh, sure!” but they live as if there is no God. Psalm 14:1 is very interesting in the Hebrew grammar. It says, “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’” Notice he doesn’t say “in his head.” In the Hebrew language the words “there is” are absent. “No God,” is a picture of somebody who has a moral problem not an intellectual problem.

Have you ever sat down and had a wonderful meal, where you got second helpings and you just eat and eat until you can't eat another bite and then suddenly they bring out the dessert and it's strawberry shortcake? You look at it and you go "Oooooooh, no dessert." You're not saying the strawberry shortcake doesn't exist and you're not saying strawberry shortcake is not good. You are saying, "No dessert for me." That's what that verse literally means. It's a person who says, "No, thank you, God. No God for me." and the Bible says that person is a fool.

2. A fool lives as if there is no sin

How can you know if they really live as if there's no God? That leads to number two. A fool lives as if there is no sin and as if they will never have to give an account for their actions. There are a lot of people in the world today who say, "You Christians are so narrow-minded. You keep calling things in the Bible sin that everybody is doing these days." I've had people look me in the eyes and tell me they are living in sin and they don't feel any remorse about it whatsoever. They think everybody is doing it! a fool lives as if there is no sin. In fact the Bible says in Proverbs 14:9, "Fools mock at making amends for sin." In our culture we take sin and try to clean it up, make it look nice and respectable and acceptable. What the Bible calls "adultery" we call "a harmless affair" in our society. What the Bible calls "sodomy" we call a "gay lifestyle." Doesn't that sound nice? What we call "weakness" the Bible calls "wickedness." I think what's happened in the last thirty years in America is that we have redefined morality. No longer do we call sin "sin." That's the way the fool is.

3. A fool lives as if there is no judgement

Number three. Also a fool lives as if there is no judgment. He says, "No God and there's no sin and there will be no judgment. I will not have to give an account for what I do." The Bible says in Hebrews 9:27, "It is appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment." I can you of two things: You're going to die and you are going to face judgment. If the Lord tarries, Christians, you'll die and face judgment. A person without Jesus Christ today will die and face judgment. It is an irrefutable fact of the word of God. Death and judgment are sure.

There is a fable about a king. One of his favorite persons in his court was the jester. This court jester always acted the fool and was always sharing riddles with the king and the king was fairly affectionate toward this jester. The king was not feeling well and he went to the royal physicians who told him they didn't know what his problem was, but they didn't think he was going to live much longer so he should prepare to die. The king told them not to tell anybody and he wasn't going to tell anybody. He gathered his court around him and he began to give gifts to his favorite people. To the court jester he gave his golden scepter. He said to the jester, "Here, jester, I give you my golden scepter. Keep it until you find someone who is a bigger fool than you are then you give it to them." Then he said, "Jester I have a riddle for you. I am going on a journey. I don't know where I am going I don't know how long I'll be gone." The court jester said, "Have you made any preparations for this trip?" The king said, "No. I've not made any preparations for this trip." Then the jester got serious for once and he handed the scepter back to the king and he said, "King, you're going to die. And here take this scepter because he who would face death without making preparations is the biggest fool of all!"

There are thousands and seemingly millions in this world who are going to face death and they are not making any preparations. The prophet, Amos, said, "Prepare to meet God!" You are going to meet God and either you are going to meet him in joy and praise as a Christian or you are going to meet him in judgment. And a fool says, "There's no God there's no sin there's no judgment."

III. HOW DOES A WISE PERSON WALK?

The third question is this: How does a wise person walk? Because verse 15 says, "You should walk not as a fool, but wisely." To answer this question I want to go to the Old Testament and tell you a story about a guy named Enoch. When you are reading Genesis 4 and 5, it gets very interesting, because you have all these hard Hebrew names read like a Hebrew telephone directory. Oftentimes in Sunday School, people stumble over all those 16-cylinder, double-jointed words and names so I tell people when you are reading that just say, "hard name," and it goes like this. "Hard name" was the father of "hard name" and he died, and "hard name" was the father of "hard name" and he died. All these hard names to pronounce it goes on and on so and so was the father of so and so, and he died and he died and he died and suddenly you come to Genesis 5:24 it says, "Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away." The amazing thing about Enoch was he had such a relationship with God that he walked with God and he really didn't die he was just taken to heaven by God. How does a wise person walk? A wise person walks with God.

What does "walking with God" mean? It's like Jesus said, "Can two walk together unless they agree?" You have to agree with God that you are a sinner and you cannot save yourself, admit that he's the only source of salvation and also walking with somebody implies you have a relationship with them. This is talking about a personal relationship with the Creator of the Universe! Have you ever noticed other religions have such an impersonal picture of God? But the Bible teaches that you can have such a personal relationship with the Creator that you can walk with him. Isn't that amazing! It says in Genesis that Adam and Eve would walk with God in the cool of the evening and because sin entered their lives, that walk was disrupted, but through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ once again you and I can walk with God. That ought to be your desire seven days a week, to walk with God not one hour on Sunday morning, but seven days a week. What it means is God is always there. He's a part of your life. When you pray, you don't have to look to the backside of the universe to try to talk to him, he's as close as a brother. You are walking with God.

1. Walk with God because of your family

Why should you walk with God? For the same reason Enoch did. There are a couple of reasons Number one you should walk with God because of your family. Genesis 5:22 says, "After Enoch became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years." Apparently Enoch didn't necessarily have a great relationship with God, but after he became a father, he started walking with God. It is so important for parents to have a personal, dynamic relationship with God so you can influence your children. I know every parent in this room wants their children to turn out positively. You want them to be good Christians, good citizens. Your kids will not remember

one sermon you give to them, but they will remember whether or not you had a real walk with God, and they'll see that in you. Enoch said, "I have a little boy and his name is Methuselah and I have a responsibility to teach him about God and to let him know that God is personal and wants to have a relationship with me." So Enoch said, "I'm going to walk with God." Moms and Dads are you walking with God? When your children look at you, do they know that God is real? Do they know that you have a relationship with him? You do it for your family.

2. Walk with God because of your future

There's another reason and this is very, very interesting, so sit up and pay attention for just a moment. You want to walk with God because of the future, the same reason Enoch did. I venture to guess that probably 90% of you don't know what I'm about to share with you from the Bible. It will be something new and fresh and that's exciting. Enoch was the father of Methuselah. Methuselah was the father of Lamech and Lamech was the father of a guy named Noah! Everybody in this room knows the story of Noah and the ark, how the world had become so wicked that God sent judgment through a flood, and only Noah, his family and the animals he took on the ark survived. What does that have to do with Enoch? Enoch named Methuselah purposely. The name Methuselah literally means "when he dies, it will be sent" meaning the flood. In other words almost a thousand years before it happened, Enoch knew judgment was coming, so he named his little boy "when he dies, it will be sent" and so for his entire life whenever Methuselah met somebody, he said, "Hi. My name is 'when he dies, it will be sent.'" Every time somebody said the name Methuselah they said, "when he dies, it will be sent." What? Judgment. The flood. The year Methuselah died, the flood came and I happen to believe God's timing is so impeccable that the very day Methuselah died, the flood came. And I can prove it.

Write down the name Methuselah and right down beside it, write 182 years, because it says very clearly that Methuselah was 182 years when Lamech was born. Write down the name Lamech and beside his name write down 187

Methuselah (age at Lamech's birth)	182
Lamech (age at Noah's birth)	187
Noah (age when flood occurred)	+ 600
Methuselah's age at death	969

years, because the Bible says clearly Lamech was 187 years old when Noah was born. Write down Noah and beside his name write the number 600, because it says right there in chapter 5 that Noah was 600 years old the day the flood came! Okay Bible trivia time and you can answer out loud. I don't mind. Who was the oldest man who ever lived in the Bible? Answer: Methuselah. How old was he when he died? Answer: 969 years. You add up 182, 187, and 600 what do you get? Answer: 969. Why do you think Methuselah lived longer than anybody else in the Bible? Do you think it was just a quirk? No. It was God's long-suffering patience. It was God saying, "I'm going to give you almost a thousand years, Earth, to repent." and for a thousand years Methuselah went around saying, "When I'm dead, it's going to come," but mankind didn't repent and so sure enough the day Methuselah died, the flood came. Enoch saw that! That's why he named his son Methuselah, "when he dies, it will come." He looked in the future and he saw the judgment of the flood that was coming. That's why he walked with God because he knew it was utterly necessary to walk with God.

Not only did he see the flood 4,000 years ago, Enoch saw the Second Coming of Jesus Christ that hasn't even happened yet. Look at Jude 14 (that's the book right before Revelation) it says, "Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: 'See, the Lord is coming with

thousands upon thousands of his holy ones.” Let me tell you why you ought to walk with God. One reason is a very unselfish reason you ought to walk with God because of your family your friends they are looking at you and they need to see you walking with God, but the other reason is much more selfish. You ought to walk with God because you know what is going to happen. Jesus Christ is going to come back you and I are going to face judgment and if you don't prepare for that, you'll be saddened.

Bertram Russell was a 20th century philosopher and just before he died, this agnostic made this statement. He said, “The two biggest mistakes I've made in my life have both been mathematical. I miscalculated the brevity of life and I underestimated the length of eternity.” Pretty powerful! Have you miscalculated the brevity of life? It's going to be gone before you know it. Have you underestimated the length of eternity? You're going to have to stand before God Be prepared!

OUTLINE

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1. The devil wants to destroy you
2. The world wants to defile you
3. Your flesh wants to defeat you

II. HOW DOES A FOOLISH PERSON WALK?

A fool lives as if there is no

1. God
2. Sin
3. Judgement

III. HOW DOES A WISE PERSON WALK?

Walk with God because of your

1. Family
2. Future



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes