

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series:	Ephesians		Pastor/Teacher
Number:	12		Joshua Walker
Text:	Ephesians 5:15-20		
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LIVE IN WISDOM BY LIVING IN THE SPIRIT

Live in Wisdom (5:15-17)

5:15: “Paul begins this new section of exhortation by appealing to his readers to give careful attention to how they conduct their day-to-day lives. He is eager for the transformation process to continue in their lives so that they will reflect their new nature in Christ.

“The conjunction ‘therefore’ [at the beginning of verse 15] does more than simply introduce a new section. It links the present set of exhortations to the immediately preceding paragraph, where Paul has warned against the dangers of a lack of moral vigilance. ‘Watch carefully’ contrasts sharply with the state of believers who are ‘sleeping’ and need to ‘get up’ (5:14). It may also reach further back to the many ways that Paul has sought to establish their new identity in Christ as the basis for their Christian conduct. Just a few lines earlier he exhorts them to walk as ‘children of light’ (5:8).”¹

5:15: “As has marked Paul’s exhortations many times previously, there is a behavior to put off from the old, Adamic existence (cf. 4:22) and one to put on in the Last Adam (cf. 4:24), which is marked by truth and righteousness (e.g., 4:25). Here in 5:15 the language is compressed and in effect summarizes what has gone before as rejecting a walk in folly and the need to substitute wisdom instead.”²

5:16: “The reason for taking full advantage of every occasion is that *the days are evil*. This temporal expression has been understood simply as a general description of the presence of evil in the world which has now become ‘widespread and arrogantly powerful,’ Paul’s language, given his eschatological perspective, suggests an additional nuance.”³

5:17: “When Paul says that the days are evil, he reflects a deep conviction shared with much of Judaism that God’s people presently live in an age characterized by an abundance of evil and dominated by powerful supernatural forces (Gal 1:4; Eph 2:2). The present evil era will continue until the Messiah comes and subdues the widespread rebellion against the authority and reign of God. This apocalyptic world view has its roots in Daniel, became widespread, and was characteristic of Judaism by the first century.”⁴

5:17: “The general exhortation of v. 15, which urges the Christian readers to be very careful how they live, is further explained by this second contrast: they are admonished not to be foolish but understand what the Lord’s will is. Although this exhortation is parallel to v. 15b (*not as unwise but as wise*), it is not simply a restatement of the former: there is a development of thought in v. 17 and a slightly different focus on the Lord’s will.”⁵

Living in the Spirit (5:18–20)

5:18: In verse 18, “the Holy Spirit is the content of the filling. The background of the ‘filling’ and ‘fullness’ language in Ephesians is the temple. Under the old covenant, the temple was filled with the glory of God (Isa 6:1; Ezek 43:5; 44:4. The *Shekinah* glory of God (as it was known by the later rabbis) is coextensive with God’s Spirit. Under the new covenant, believers have replaced the physical structure of the temple as the dwelling place of God’s Spirit (Eph 2:22; cf. 1 Cor 3:16–17; 2 Cor 6:16). The Spirit of God thus inhabits the lives of believers, and Paul wants this to happen in ever-increasing measures. The previous context (Eph 4:30) suggests that sinful behavior grieves the Spirit and by implication hinders the full reception of the Spirit. The context that follows (5:19–21) points to means by which the Spirit can fill the lives of believers.”⁶

5:19: “Paul probably used the combination of the three terms [(‘psalms, hymns, and songs’)] to command a variety of forms and musical styles in his multicultural churches, which are comprised of Jews and Greeks. He affirms Jewish forms (psalms) as well as Greek forms (hymns) in the worship of these communities.”⁷

5:20: “Christians filled by the Spirit will not only sing hymns to Christ but also offer regular thanksgiving to God the Father and the Son’s name for the riches which have been lavished upon them.”⁸

ENDNOTES

¹Arnold, Clint E., *Ephesians: Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Zondervan, 2010), 345.

²Baugh, S. M., *Ephesians: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary* (Lexham Press, 2016), 448.

³O’Brien, Peter T., *The Letter to the Ephesians: The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Eerdmans, 1999), 382-83.

⁴Arnold, *Ephesians*, 346-47.

⁵O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 383.

⁶Arnold, *Ephesians*, 340.

⁷Arnold, *Ephesians*, 354.

⁸O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 397.