Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Walking in Wisdom, Part 1
Scripture: Ephesians 5:15
Code: 1934

We come to Ephesians 5:15-17, three very short verses, however in the first service we only got through verse 15. You know it's always hard for me to preach my whole sermon when I get all filled up at some conference and lots of things come out and you know, believe it or not, people, I think I'm a better preacher than you know. And the reason I say that is because I've never really yet preached to you the sermon I plan. The ones I plan are good. The ones you get are mediocre, but that's because I never finish, see. I have great midpoints and tremendous conclusions that I never get to. All I have is long introductions because the conclusion I don't get to becomes the introduction for next week's message.

Let's look at verses 15 to 17, Ephesians 5:15-17. "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore, be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." Now beloved, there's no question in my mind but that we live in a world full of fools. It is a fool's world. In fact, every one born into this world comes in with a terminal state of congenital foolishness, otherwise known as the sin nature. That's how it is. Man is born a fool. Proverbs 22:15 says, "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child." Man is born in a state of foolishness. Now, you say, "What do you mean by that?" When we think of a fool we think of someone who does irresponsible acts, or who speaks irresponsible words, but the Bible defines a fool as one who exists apart from God. A fool is one who exists apart from God. A wise man is one who lives in accord with God's divine principles. That's biblical definition for those two concepts.

Man, then, is born separated from God. He is born a fool. He is born in a situation where God's wisdom is absent. Now let me tell you how that kind of works out. There are characteristics of foolishness and if you'll look with me at Psalms and Proverbs for a moment I'll try to show you some that may sum up. Much of the book of Proverbs deals with the fool. In fact, you need to do a very detailed study of all 31 chapters to have a comprehensive view, but let me see if I can just extract a few thoughts and also at least one from Psalms and try to paint for you a portrait of a fool.

First of all Psalm 14:1, gives us a basic definition for a fool. Psalm 14:1 says, "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God." All right? Now that's the beginning of it all and it isn't necessarily that this is only intellectual. This is what I would call practical atheism. Even though the fool may know in his mind intellectually there is a God, he lives as if there is not and that's why the next verse or the next line of the same verse says, "They are corrupt. They have done abominable works." In other words, this kind of atheism results in corruption. It is a practical atheism.

So the first thing that is characteristic of a fool is that he lives a life, which by its function denies God. It is an anti-God way of living and that is the way it is with people. They come into the world and they live anti-God life. They cannot know the things of God, in fact, to a fool, I Corinthians 2:14 says, "The things of God are" what, "foolishness." "The natural man understandeth not the things of God, they are foolishness to him." You see to a fool foolishness is wisdom and wisdom is foolishness.

And so the first characteristic of a fool is that he practically denies God. In other words, God has no binding force on him. The law of God does not bind the conscience of a fool. He is pragmatically atheistic. He lives apart from God.

The second thing: no man can live without a god. It isn't a question of do you worship; it is only a question of whom do you worship? Everybody bows somewhere. And so if there is no true God, man will inevitably substitute a false god, which in all cases will tend to be a god of his own creation, that is Proverbs 12:15. The second characteristic of a fool because he denies the true God he inevitably becomes his own god. Proverbs 12:15, says, "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes." And so he then becomes the one who determines truth and error. He then becomes the one who articulates for his own way of living right and wrong.

Now as a result of this, as a result of denying God, as a result of setting himself up as God, he will inevitably mock sin. He will mock sin. In 14:9 of Proverbs, "Fools make a mock of sin." "Fools make a mock of sin." He makes his own rules and he wants to justify his own behavior and he wants to make sure he's going to be all right in the end so he eliminates sin with its consequences. A fool then begins by practically living as if there was no God substituting himself as God and suggesting his own style of life and then denying that there is such a thing as sin because he cannot tolerate guilt.

Now, inevitably a fool goes one step further. Not only does he deny God in himself, become his own God in himself, mocks in himself, but he has a dramatic effect on other people because when he talks he always talks about his own opinions. Chapter 15:2, "The tongue of the wise uses knowledge aright, but the mouth of fools pours out foolishness." I mean let's face it, you got a bitter fountain you're going to get bitter water, right? You got a rotten tree you're going to get rotten fruit. And when a fool opens his mouth you're not going to get wisdom, you're going to get foolishness. And so this is talking not so much about his own attitude internally, but his effect, and so there is a propagation of foolishness. He denies God, he becomes his own god, he mocks sin and he speaks on his own authority. He generates his own opinions and that we see all around us. The world is full of the opinion of fools. Fools who have denied God in their living, who have become their own gods and who mock sin as to its reality and its consequences.

And then in Chapter 16 verse 22 of Proverbs it says, "That he is busy instructing others in the same foolishness." At the end of verse 22, "The instruction of fools is folly." "The instruction of fools is folly."

Here you have the picture of the unregenerate man as he is described as a fool. He is a fool because he denies God practically, he is a fool because he becomes his own god, the ultimate sin, he has broken the commandment of God, he is a fool because he mocks sin, he is a fool because he lives life based on his opinion, and he is a fool, in the greater sense, because he contaminates the rest of society with the same foolishness, which damns his own soul. He leaves it as a legacy to his own children, he leaves it as a legacy to his friends, he leaves it as a legacy to the classes of people that he teaches, he leaves it as a legacy to all those who fall under of the influence of his folly.

Now summing this up I think there is a good word in Proverbs Chapter 1 and this just sums it up very simply. Verse 7, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but, "here it is, "fools despise wisdom." Let me stop right there. That is the heart of the matter. You see, wisdom in Proverbs means living by divine standards. That's what it means, and it implies accepting divine truth. Wisdom implies that you accept divine truth and you live by it. It is living by divine standards, but a fool hates that. He rejects that. He despises that.

You say, "What happens to a fool?" What happens to one who denies God, substitutes himself, mocks sin, spins out his own opinions and contaminates others, who ultimately and in summary fashion rejects divine wisdom, does not live by divine standards? What happens to him? Look down at verse 20, Proverbs 1. "Wisdom cries outside, she utters her voice in the streets, she cries in the chief place of concourse in the openings of the gates in the city, she uttereth her words saying, 'How long, ye simple ones, will you love simplicity and scoffer delight in their scoffing, and fools hate knowledge?' Turn you at my reproof: behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you." In other words here is a great invitation, here is God, as it were, here is Christ in the New Testament in the streets of the city of Jerusalem crying out of wisdom, crying out of an invitation to the fools and the simpletons and the scoffers, but verse 24 says, "But because I have called and you refused; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all my counsel."

In other words, you have made it zero, you have rendered it useless and you would have none of my reproof, then I will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear comes, "When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come upon you, then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would have none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof. Therefore, shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices, for the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them." That is the end of it all. That is to die a fool.

Solomon said it in Proverbs 10:21, "Fools die for lack of wisdom." We hear and could hear more at grave after grave after grave, funeral after funeral after funeral. The words of David over dead Abner, "Died he as a fool dies," because men die as fools. They live; they die as fools, congenital, terminal

foolishness. You say, "What can be done about it?"

Well as we saw in Proverbs 1, wisdom cries out for people to turn. There is available wisdom. Solomon or the preacher of Ecclesiastes in Chapter 9:1, says, "The wise are in the hand of God," and to all generations and to every generation God reaches out His hand and offers to take men out of a kingdom of fools into a kingdom of the wise. Salvation is the only thing that can change this.

Now listen, in II Timothy 3:15, the apostle Paul was reminding Timothy of his heritage. This is what he said, "And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures," watch this, "which are able to make thee wise unto salvation." Now there's the key. Wisdom is found in the knowledge of scriptural truth, which brings salvation, you see. It is the saving act that brings wisdom. The only thing that can cause an individual to cease being a fool and become wise is salvation, salvation. When you became a Christian you became wise. When you became a Christian you stopped being a fool and became one of God's wise children. Now remember this: wisdom is not just head knowledge. Wisdom is not in the Greek sense.

The Greeks thought of wisdom as sophistries, sofas, just spinning off theories that had no relation to life, had no practical implication. Wise people were people who could spin off theories; they were intellectuals, philosophers. But that's Greek. The Hebrew mind never conceived of wisdom in theory. It only conceived of wisdom in behavior. And when you become a Christian it's not just a change in theory, though it is that, it is a change in what you know, but more it is a change in how you live, you see? You did not know God. You denied God. You put yourself up as God. You mocked sin. You spewed out your own opinion and you corrupted society. You become a Christian immediately you do know God. You take yourself off the throne and worship only Him. You confess sin; you don't mock it. "When you speak you speak the oracles of God," as Peter says. "And when you instruct others it is the divine truth that you speak." Big difference. You live a wise life at all. The apostle Paul is saying in our text is this: look if you used to be a fool, but you've been made wise in Christ, then for Christ's sake walk as wise. You see? It's the same message, people, we've been getting all through Ephesians. If this is who you are, then this is how you live, you see. He's been saying it all along. When you became a Christian you came out of foolishness into wisdom. It's another element of the worthy walk.

Look at Ephesians again at verse 1 of Chapter 4 and I'll remind you of what we've been saying every week to get our context straight. In the first three chapters of Ephesians Paul gives our position. He describes us. This is who you are. And then in verse 14 to 21 of Chapter 3, it's kind of a turn on; you put in the ignition and get going. In other words, this is who you are, now start your motor.

And then starting in Chapter 4 you begin to move, and when you move you walk, verse 1, worthy. This is the walk. Your ignition is in 14 to 21, and you're started and now you're moving in Chapter 4. And he says, here's how to walk. It's a worthy walk. And then he gives the ingredients of the worthy

walk. Verses 1 to 3 it's a walk in all lowliness, it's a humble walk. Verses 4 through 16, it's a unity walk. We are to build unity. Verse 13 nails that down. From Chapter 4:17-32, it's a different walk. We're not to walk as the Gentiles. From Chapter 5:1-7, it is a love walk. Chapter 5:8-14, it is a light walk, not darkness but light. And now 15 to 17 of Chapter 5, a wise walk. And what he's saying in all these is you're different. The world cannot walk humbly. It's a mad fight for everybody's rights. They don't know the meaning of humility. The world cannot in unity. It celebrates its differences, it exalts its disparities. It makes an entire structure based on difference, divergence, differing opinions. And the world can't love because it doesn't have the life of God and God is love, and apart from Him there's no real love. And the world can't know light because it is in itself a system of self-damning darkness. And, beloved, I would add that the world can't know wisdom because the wisdom of God is hidden from the mind of man.

Paul said it, "They're ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." It's incredible. I was sharing with a convention two weeks ago and I told them that if all of man's knowledge equaled one inch, if all that we know of man's knowledge from the beginning of recorded history to 1845, that entire sweep of history from the beginning of man's recorded history to 1845 equaled one inch, what we've learned from 1845 to 1945 would be three inches and what we've learned from 1945 to 1975 would be the height of the Washington Monument. We know a lot, but we don't know God's wisdom. Not our society, because the wisdom of God is unattainable to a fool.

But we as Christians, you see, we can be humble, we can walk in unity, we can walk different, we can walk in love, we can walk in light and we can walk in wisdom and the whole point Paul is making is you are these things so live it out. He's calling for a peculiar people. He's calling for us to be different and we have been crushed and shoved into the whole milieu of the world so we can hardly call ourselves distinct in this generation unless we get back to some of these basics.

I am literally appalled at what goes on in the church. I had a pastor tell me the other day they surveyed, this is an evangelical church not far from here, the pastor surveyed the people in their church and over 75 percent of all the married, the young married people, rather the premarital people that came for counseling, people that want to get married, over 75 percent of them admitted in a survey that they were living together before they were married.

You see we have fallen prey to the whole ugly system and Paul's letter comes ringing down the corridors of 1978 and it ought to be a rebuke to a church that has found itself married to the world. That's what he's trying to say, you're different. You are different. You are no fools. You are wise now walk as wise. Now a believer who walks in wisdom knows three things and that's the three-point outline that we're going to study today and next time.

He knows three things: he knows his life's principles, he knows his limited privileges, and he knows his Lord's purposes. To put it another way, he knows what the rules are for his life, he knows what

God has laid out. Secondly, he knows he has a limited time to fulfill it. And thirdly, he knows specifically what God wants him to do. It's a very simple statement, but it's one of the most profound in the entire books of Ephesians. He knows his life's principles, his limited privileges, and his Lord's purposes. These are the characteristics of a wise walking Christian.

Let's look just at the first one in verse 15. "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." Not a'sofas but sofas, two opposites. The wise person knows the principles that God has given for living, all right? The wise person, that's what he's saying. You know these things so walk by them. Now let me show you something. The first two words here are see then, and that takes us backwards. That's just like therefore. And you go back to verse 14 and you read this invitation: "Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Now that's an invitation to get saved.

Remember I told you last time that at the end of his message Paul gave an invitation in that little section there and that's it. And now he's saying look if you are those who have come alive from the dead, if you are those who have come awake from sleep, if you are those who are now in the light, not the darkness, then walk wisely. In other words it's based on what salvation did for you. Because you are saved you are to walk in wisdom.

Now I want you to hang on to that. That's a very important truth. He says, because you are saved you are to walk in wisdom. And somebody immediately might say, "Well now wait a minute. Just being saved you know you're so new and you don't know very much how can you walk in wisdom?" How could you say, "Now that you are saved walk circumspectly, not as fools, knowing the will of God?" Say man, don't you kind of grow into that? Aren't the wise people, the white hairs, the old saints, the people that have been saved a long time? I mean you can't get real wise right off the bat. Oh I think you've missed the point if you think that. He's saying here, "Since you are awake, alive, and in the light you can walk wisely."

You say, "John, do you mean that you get enough wisdom when you're saved to be able to be responsible for your whole life?" That's right. I believe that. I believe that the moment you're saved there's a deposit of wisdom in you that renders you absolutely responsible for your behavior. Let me show you why I say that. Look at I Corinthians 1:30, I Corinthians 1:30, you know there are some people who say, "Well what we need to do is get them saved and then later on they can recognize their sin and repent and get straightened out." There are people who believe that. No, I don't think so. I think what we'll see here will show you why we can't take that view. I Corinthians 1:30 says this: "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Now watch this: when you receive Jesus Christ, He was made unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption. All four of those things simultaneously became yours.

By the way isn't it interesting that wisdom, righteousness and sanctification precede what? redemption. It isn't that you're redeemed and later on you get wise and later on you get righteous and later on you get sanctified. You, at that moment of salvation, are wise, righteous, set apart, because you're redeemed. You see the order is tremendous there.

Beloved, I believe with all my heart that the moment you're saved the wisdom of God takes up residence in you and you become accountable. Listen to this one: Colossians 2:3, don't look it up, just listen, "Christ in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Did you get that? Where are the treasures and knowledge? In Christ, and you are in Christ. Consequently, Colossians 2:10 says, "You are complete in Him." The moment you come to Christ, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, comes. It's a whole gift within salvation.

You cannot have a salvation without wisdom, you cannot have a salvation without righteousness, you cannot have a salvation without sanctification and that's my complaint today with this kind of easy believism, cheap grace, quickie salvation. Everybody get born again and there's no real consideration of the reality of it, we just say if we can just get them to believe in Jesus and do some little deal then they're okay and later on we'll talk about righteousness and sanctification and wisdom. No! They're synonymous. Christ has made unto us these things. And I really believe that at the point of salvation you receive Him in whom are hidden the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Let me show you another verse that says the same thing and these are only samples. But Titus 2:11 is another good one. Titus 2:11, says this: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation has appeared to all men." Now we're talking about salvation here in this text, being saved, and we're talking about God's grace as applied in salvation and how it touches all those people who are redeemed. The all here would be somewhat qualified. Now this grace that brings salvation, verse 12 says, "Teaches us," now this is amazing, just the very saving grace teaches us some things, what, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, godly in this present age." Listen people salvation alone teaches that much. You can't say well I'm saved but I just don't know what it means. No, if you're saved the salvation itself teaches you to deny ungodliness, worldly lusts, live soberly, righteously, godly in this present age. That much you get when you're saved.

Now what I'm saying is this: that if you're redeemed, beloved, you possess wisdom. You don't have to wait until you've been saved ten years, five years, forty years, you don't have to wait. It's yours, but it's like that blessed dissatisfaction of the beatitude that we studied last Sunday night. It's like that hungering and thirsting after righteousness. You'll be filled, but within it there's a blessed dissatisfaction because no matter how much of God's wisdom you have there's always the hunger for what, for more.

And so the Bible promises that that's possible too. The Bible tells us we have all we need and yet there's more if we desire. We can reach out to more, further and further. Ephesians Chapter 1, we remember that the apostle Paul said when we first started out this letter that when God came into our lives we were redeemed through his blood. We received the forgiveness of sins, verse 7, "According to the riches of His grace, and He abounded toward us in all wisdom."

Right at the moment of salvation God abounded to us in all wisdom. No Christian is irresponsible for what he does. You're responsible. It was there granted to you. In fact, in I John 2:20, it says when you were saved, "You received an anointing from God and you know all things." It says in verse 27, that "We receive an anointing from God who teaches us all things," and we don't need to have human teachers telling us human philosophy because the very Holy Spirit of God teaches us to abide in Him all things. Listen, we have wisdom, people, and it is on that basis, you see, that we possess wisdom in salvation by Christ. We are no more fools, we are wise, and on that basis Paul says, "Walk as wise." Live it out. That's the point.

Now I'm not saying we shouldn't get more wisdom. We should, we should. We should grow in grace. We should grow in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We should be more and more conformed to the Lord Jesus Christ. We should allow the Spirit of God to transform us into His image. There should be an increasing wisdom. There should be an increasing godliness, but the principles are the same, the principles we know the Spirit of God works in our consciences. Even though you may not know all the things in the Bible, God's Spirit resident in you from the moment of salvation will convict and convince of righteousness and sin.

You say, John, "What if I want more wisdom?" And I hope you do. I hope you do. I hope you never, even though you're filled with God's wisdom from the moment of salvation, there's a sense in which you want more. You want to reach out for more. It's available to you. Why listen, the fear of the Lord is only the beginning of what of wisdom. It's only the beginning. There's so much more. You say, "How do I get more?" James 1:5, "If any man lack wisdom, let him," what's the next word, "ask." Let him ask. God will give it and He withholds none. You can have it. It's available. Ask. And the apostle Paul said that, "He warned every man and teach every man that he may present every man perfect in all wisdom."

Another good way to get it, not just ask, sit under somebody who’s got it, right? Study the Bible yourself. Study to show yourself approved under God. Gain wisdom from study. There's more, but you have enough to be responsible, so Paul says, "Don't claim ignorance. He who is wisdom is in you, therefore walk circumspectly."

Can I talk about that for a minute? Walk means daily conduct, daily pattern, daily life. This was always the Jewish concept, behavior, not theory. Look at the word circumspectly. Powerful word. Let me tell you what it means accurately, now get this or you'll miss the next ten minutes, accurately, carefully,

and exactly, that's what it means. To circumspect is to look carefully from side-to-side to be very alert to what is going on. You need to walk very alert. You're literally walking through a minefield in the world and you can't just go traipsing through it like you were lollygagging in a meadow full of daisies. You are walking walk in a system in the world that demands that you walk circumspectly, carefully, exactly, and accurately and that's precisely what our Lord Jesus meant in Matthew 7:13 when He said, "Narrow is the gate and narrow is the way." It is compressed; it is narrow and you must watch where you go.

I'll never forget when I was a kid up at Forest Home, I was walking across the river, the creek on a log and you really needed to walk carefully and watch where you were going to miss little pieces of branches that were sticking out of this old log. Somebody called to me and I had on my bathing suit and I didn't watch where I was walking and I hit my toe on a piece of a branch sticking out and I fell into a bush of nettles. That is nothing compared to what it is for a Christian to walk without searching exactly and carefully where he steps. A wise Christian is a careful individual. He follows with great care, meticulously charting his course watch according to life principles designed by God. He does not fall off into the nettles of the system. He does not stub his toe on the obstacle that Satan puts in his path. The NIV translates this, "Be very careful how you live." You have the wisdom. You are alive. You are arisen. You are in the light. You have God's wisdom resident now live that way. Similarly Paul says to the Philippians, "Let your conduct be as becometh the gospel of Christ." Your walk should match your position. You should be able to add to your position as Peter says, "You should add virtue and to virtue wisdom." Walk in wisdom.

Beloved, we are far too wise and far too accountable to walk like fools, but when a Christian sins, when a Christian falls into the garbage of the world that Paul has talked about in the past two or three sections of Ephesians, he plays the fool, you see. The fool needlessly, there's no excuse for that.

In Titus, Titus talks about it in Chapter 3 verse 3, and I want you to listen to this. This is tremendous. "For we ourselves also were once foolish." And that's true. Once we were and our foolishness manifested itself, he says, in disobedience, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures." Now that's the way a fool lives. He disobeys God. He is deceived about the truth. He serves his lusts. He's guided by his own desires and his pleasures. He lives for pleasure. "He lives in evil," it says, "and in envy and he is hateful, and he hates one another." That's the way we used to be as fools, "But after the kindness and love of God, our Savior, toward man appeared" there was a change, "not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to His mercy he saved us." And that was the change. "He saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. And He shed on us abundantly, this through Jesus Christ.

He justified us freely by His grace." And then he says this: since we've had this dramatic change we once were foolish and then this happened, listen to this: "This is a faithful saying and these things I will that you affirm constantly," every day, "that they who have believed in God might be, watch,

careful to maintain good works." You see the point? The transformation demands that we would care live our lives. In fact in the very next verse it says you'd better avoid the foolish, you'd better avoid the foolish.

There's no excuse for a Christian to lower himself to the level of the fool. Listen you are Solomon on the throne, you are the wisest of the wise. Why would you play the court jester? Even hypocritical Saul, when Saul was faced with being caught in his own sin, coward with his own guilt, and he cried out to David, "I have played the fool," I Samuel 26:21. And David himself in II Samuel 24 got to thinking he was pretty great, got to thinking the world didn't know how great he was, so he decided he'd number all the people and count up everybody and really make a big impression.

So he numbered everybody and he got his heart all puffed up and then God poured a conviction on his heart like hot oil and it just burned and II Samuel 24 says that, "His heart smote him after he'd numbered the people, and David said to the Lord, 'I've sinned greatly in what I have done and now I beseech Thee O Lord. Take away the iniquity of Thy servant, for I have done very foolishly." He played the fool.

Moses looked out to a people, a belligerent people, the people Israel who so many times had failed God and he says in Deuteronomy 32 in his song, "O foolish people and unwise." You know something? Christians play the fool. You know how you can play the fool? First way: two apostles on the road to Emmaus. Jesus appears beside them and they're moaning and groaning because their Lord is dead and he says to them, "Oh fools. Why slow of heart to believe all that was written." First way to be a fool is not believe. Just don't believe this book. Just don't take God at His word. You're a fool. And even Christians say, "Well I now the Bible says that, but I don't know if it will work." You can play the fool by not believing, so I say you can play the fool by disbelief.

Secondly, you can play the fool by disobedience. Galatians Chapter 3, Paul says to the Galatians, verse 1, "Oh foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth?" Who messed you up? You started out so well and then you got into this works stuff, see. So, you can play the fool by disbelief and by disobedience and you can play the fool by desire for the wrong things. In I Timothy Chapter 6 it says that if you desire money you will fall into many foolish and hurtful lusts. You desire the wrong things you play the fool. And further you can play the fool James says, Chapter 3:13-17 by doing the wrong things.

So it's a matter of disbelief, disobedience, desire, and doing the wrong things. He says, "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge? Let him show out of a good life his works with meekness and wisdom." A fool disbelieves, disobeys, desires the wrong thing, does the wrong thing. And you know it's a sad thing. You see so many Christians that way. This is incredible.

There are Christians who do not really take God at His word. They don't believe this book. They say that they do. They probably sign on the dotted line, but it has no implication in their life. They don't take God at his word. There are Christians who disobey and all Christians sometimes disobey. There are Christians who desire the things of the world. There are Christians whose life works do not manifest wisdom and Paul is saying this makes no sense. Why should Christians live as blind, ignorant, foolish people when we have wisdom? Jesus said it, our Lord said it in John 7:17, "If any man wills to do His will he shall know of the doctrine." If you really want to do God's will you'll never be in doubt. People say, "Well I'm such a new Christian." If you really want to know God's will you'll never be in doubt.

I love how Paul put it at the end of the book of Romans 16:19, he said, "I would have you wise unto that, which is good, and foolish concerning evil. If you got to be a fool at all be a fool about evil, will you? Don't study that. Don't get to the place where you're an expert on that. And so Paul is calling us to walk in wisdom.

Let me draw us together by saying this: It amazes me how devoted we are in our human society, in our world, to the stuff we think is important. I look at Communists, you know, who live in rigid conformity to certain things, and boy if they really believe that ideology, man they'll sell their souls and they'll get just get so narrow and they'll walk circumstantially, and they won't fowl up and they won't goof up, but boy they'll tow the mark, and I look at people in cults and sects and isms and chisms and all that other garbage that's going on and boy I'll tell you I see the Moonies, and the Mormons, and the Jehovah Witnesses and man they've got rigidity that's incredible, and they walk so circumspectly according to the principles dictated to them and they conform and if they tell them that they can't get married or they can't be with their wife, they separate them, some of these cults do, and they make them live in abstinence from physical relationships, and they give them weird diets, and they go on fasts, and they do all this stuff and man they conform to that stuff. And then I see the religionists, I'll never forget when I was a little kid seeing a guy lying on a bed of nails thinking that he was attaining something in a religious way because he was on a bed of nails, and you've seen the people run through the coals and you say to yourself, "Man this is tremendous self-discipline." And in our society today we've got people who are incredible about dieting and running and fasting. It's amazing the self-discipline.

I look back at my life a life full of athletics where I disciplined by body in ways that were just amazing. I look at it now and I can't believe I was that dumb. I withheld from myself all kinds of it's incredible. We've got so much discipline first off. I know people who can't bother to read the Bible every day, but man they'll run three miles. I know people who can't discipline themselves to feed on the word of God, but boy they can make themselves a diet that'll take two hours to prepare every meal. Of course, we're all bound to the shrine of the body.

There's a lovely young lady in our church, I was running one time out at the university, now and then I run, not all the time, but anyway Matt was playing football out there one day and practicing with his team he's on and so I was running around the track and I ran into her and she began to talk to me. She told me she ran 15 miles a day and she said she was a nationally ranked distance runner and we had a nice conversation. I was fascinated by this so she was telling me how Christ has just come into her life and changed her life here at Grace Church and Dr. Sam Brittan has such an impact on her life at the university there and she was really thrilled about Jesus Christ, just all new to her, really exciting. And she was devoted to running and discipline, boy, and she was going to run in the nationals and all this.

After I preached this morning at the first service, the same girl came up to me and she could hardly walk, and she has lost all the ability. She has some disease that they can't even trace and she can barely walk. And she said, "Do you have a minute I can talk to you?" I said, "Sure." She said, "Do you remember who I am." And I kind of looked and I knew I remembered but I couldn't remember the name. She told me and I as kind of surprised 'cause she looked different. She said, "You know this morning God spoke to me." She said, "I had all that discipline for running and when the running came to an end I didn't know what to do with the discipline." She said, "After the message this morning I know what to do with the discipline and that is to discipline my life to live according to His principles." She got the message. That's the priority of life. The wise Christian knows what pleases God, watches for Satan's traps, resists the devil, defeats temptation, is selective about behavior, and so he doesn't walk as a fool, asafas, but as wise. That's living by God's principles. And you know something? You'd better get at it, my friend, because the next verse says, "You have limited privileges." That's for next time. Let's pray.

Father we know that the pressure is on us to live according to your standards now because we must redeem the time for the days are evil. Father help us to walk that narrow path circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, applying that wisdom, which is granted to us in Christ. Father I pray for any who might be here who do not know Christ. Today they might step out of the foolishness of the world in sin into the wisdom of God by taking the gift of salvation. I pray, too, for Christians who have been playing the fool like Saul and David, Israel, and those on the Emmaus Road and like the Galatians and the rich. I pray, Lord, that all of us would be aware that you want us to walk as wise for Your glory for one and for our blessing for two. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2014 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).