

*Sermon: Walking in the Light*  
*Text: Ephesians 5:15 – 20*  
*Date: August 16, 2009 AM*  
*Place: Jesup First UMC*

Walking! Be careful how you walk! Recently, I've been doing a lot of walking. In fact, since January 24, I have taken 1 million, 911 thousand steps. That means I've walked roughly 910 miles in the last seven months. And you know, it has been a lot of fun. Lori and I have walked in the morning; we've walked in the afternoon; and we've walked at night. And here's what I've learned: it's dangerous to walk at night. We've seen all kinds of critters in our neighborhood. We've seen deer, and turkeys, and owls, and rabbits, but Lori's favorite was the snake. Now, you'll have to understand that Lori's not a dancer, but I saw the best dance routine you ever want to see the night that snake crawled across her feet. And so, we've learned: you really need to be careful how you walk.

That's what Paul says in our scripture this morning. Back in chapter 4, verse 1, Paul tells the church at Ephesus: *"I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called."* And the whole second half of Paul's letter is spent fleshing that out, telling us how to lead a life worthy of the calling. And then, he comes to this passage and he writes: *"Be careful then how you live."*

Now, the really interesting thing about this text is that the word "live" can also be translated "walk." In fact, the New American Standard Version says: *"Be careful how you walk."* And you know that walking has become a way for the church to describe the Christian

life. I've heard some say, "*I've been walking with Jesus for most of my life.*" And what that means is: "*I've been a Christian*" or "*I've been living for Jesus most of my life.*"

And so, just as Lori and I have learned to be careful when we walk at night, because we don't know what critters we might run into, Paul says: "*Be careful when you're walking,*" "*Be careful as you live your life.*" When I was a teenager, one of daddy's favorite shows was *Hill Street Blues* and I'll always remember how the Police Sergeant ended his daily briefing. Do you remember? He's say: "*Now, be careful out there.*"

You see, as we go out to live for Christ – in our schools, in our businesses, in our homes – there's a lot of "stuff" out there. In fact, that's what Paul said in verse 16: "... the days are evil." Now, Jesus said the same thing in a slightly different way; He said: "Each day has enough trouble of its own." As we walk through life, there are a lot of pot holes and mud puddles. There are places where we can get tripped up and side tracked and broken down. "Be careful then how you live."

So, what is it that we need in order to "walk worthily" or to "walk carefully" down the pathway of life?

***First, we need understanding.*** Verse 17 says: "So don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do." This was a common theme for Paul. In Romans 12, Paul writes: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you might prove what is the good, perfect, and acceptable will of God." The Lord

wants us to know His will and His way. Jesus said: **“You will know the truth and the truth will set you free.”**

So, how do we gain this understanding? How do we know or understand the will of God? Well, we could be like the elderly couple who took a trip across country. As they went from place to place, every time they came to a cross roads, the old man would take out a quarter and flip it. So, one day, his wife said: “Honey, why do you keep flipping the coin?” He said: “Oh, that’s so I’ll know which way to go.” And then, they went a little further and he did it again, except this time he flipped that coin several times before striking out in a new direction. She said: “Honey, can I ask you, why you flipped the coin several times?” He said, “Well, it kept coming up heads and I didn’t want to go that way.”

Friends, we must be people of the Word. The Bible is God’s revelation of Himself. In His Word, God tells us everything we need to know about God and about His plan for us. We can know God’s will if we only read God’s Word. The Bible tells us how to live in relationship to God and how to live in relationship to others; it tells us how to love God and it tells us how to love others.

To live life worthily, we need understanding.

***Second, we need wisdom.*** Verse 15 says: **“So be careful how you live. Don’t live like fools, but like those who are wise.”** Wisdom! Now, what is that and how do we get it?

Well, first of all, wisdom is not knowledge. You can have all the education, all the book learning, in

the world and still not have wisdom. Secondly, wisdom is not “good ole common sense.” There are things that make a lot of sense to us that aren’t really wise at all. No. Wisdom is the ability to apply the truths of God to the issues of life. The Bible says: “The fool has said in his heart there is no God.” So it would seem that the heart of foolishness is to attempt to live our lives according to our own standards, by our own plans, and on our own strength with a blatant disregard for the presence and power of God.

Now, Paul tells us that one of the areas that we really need God’s wisdom is in the use of our time. Verse 16 says: “Making the best use of the time.” Now, what if at midnight every day of your life, an anonymous donor deposited \$86,400 into your checking account. Now, you can do anything you want to do with it, except save it. You have to spend it all; you can’t carry any over to the next day. What are you going to do with it? Well, the truth is: every day of your life God gives you 86,400 seconds. You can do anything you want to with it, but you can’t save it and you can’t carry it over to the next day. And how you spend the time you have makes all the difference in the world. You see, Paul was convinced that because the end was near, because Jesus was coming soon, the church needed to be careful how it spent its time. And that takes wisdom.

Our lives have become so busy. We’re too busy ... too busy for God! And it takes wisdom to discern the best use of our time, the best use of our talents, the best use of our treasures.

To live worthy of our calling, we need wisdom.

***Third, we need the Holy Spirit.*** Verse 18 says: ***“Don’t be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit.”*** You see, we’re not expected to live this life that we’ve been called to live on our own strength. We’ve been given the Holy Spirit, the indwelling presence of God Himself, as our strength, our comfort, and our guide.

You know, there are a lot of people in our culture that can’t seem to get through life without a little help. We are a substance abuse culture. For some, it’s alcohol. For some, it’s cocaine or heroin or methamphetamines. And it’s everywhere: downtown and right there in your neighborhood. Some seem to be looking for a way to escape and others seem to be looking for just a little something to “take the edge off.” But Paul says, “Don’t fall into that trap; instead, be continually filled with the Spirit. Let the Holy Spirit be the thing that takes the rough edges out of life at the end of the day. Let the Holy Spirit lead you and empower you.”

You see, friends, that bottle won’t give folks what they ultimately need. That needle won’t help people live a life worthy of their calling, but being filled with the Spirit will. Being filled with the Spirit will bring you a sense of inner joy and peace. Verse 19 says: ***“Sings psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves and make music to the Lord in your hearts. And give thanks to God the Father for everything.”*** Now, when I was out there doing my thing, the idea was where there’s some music and a bottle, there’s going to be a

party. But you know what I've learned? Where the Holy Spirit is it's party time.

To live worthy of our calling, we need the Spirit.

"Be careful then how you walk." So, let me ask you: how's your walk? Are you living a life worthy of your calling? There are at least three things we need in order to do that: we need understanding; we need wisdom; and we need the Holy Spirit.

You know what, friends? I know it's tough out there. I know it gets harder and harder every day to walk the walk, to live the life, but hold on! Keep on keepin' on. Because everything you need – knowledge and wisdom and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, everything you need to walk the walk has been made available to you through Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection. So, as you're living for Jesus, as you're walking along life's journey, trust Him. Trust Him!

**In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!**