

Ephesians 5:6-17 by Wayne Barber

PREVIOUS

Ephesians 5:6-14: THE POWER OF THE NEW GARMENT

NEXT

by Dr. Wayne Barber

The new garment is a brand new way of living, and Jesus Christ is the essence of that garment. Isn't it wonderful to know that when you received Christ, His Spirit came to live in your inner man, in your heart? It is the Spirit of Christ and He is in there to enable us, to empower us to be what we ought to be. That is what the Christian life is all about.

We have been talking about this new garment and being strengthened in the inner man by the Spirit of God. You know, it is not as easy as we preach it. We have Christ living in us. We know we are to be strengthened with power in the inner man. We know we have a new garment. But I tell you what, sometimes it is just difficult to put that garment on, isn't it? We are still human. Nobody has arrived. If you have struggles in putting it on at times, I just wanted you to know that I am in there with you. Those of you that have gone a little further than us, would you please help us out because there are difficult situations in making that choice to put on that new garment. No feelings go along with this. It is just a choice to put on the new garment of Christ.

The apostle Paul has been talking about the normal Christian life. I want to go back to chapter 3 briefly. In 3:14-21 we find that Paul says that living the normal Christian is experiencing God on a daily basis. Now understand what I am saying, this is the normal Christian life. This is not the deeper life. This is the normal Christian life, experiencing God on a daily basis. Verse 16-17 says we get to experience His power in the inner man as He strengthens us daily. How do you do that? By accommodating His presence. How do you make Jesus feel at home in your heart? Verse 17 says you do it by your faith. What does that mean? It means that I obey Him in His Word and as I am willing to obey Him, then He strengthens me in the inner man. You see, I am not going to be strengthened with power and experience His power until I am surrendered and accommodating His presence.

Secondly, He moves me into that higher ground and to experiencing His passion. That is in the last part of verse 17 on down through verse 19. We get to comprehend the love of Christ, but not only comprehend it, we get to experience it for ourselves. He says, "and to know the love of Christ." The word "**know**" means to know by experience, to experience it for yourself. His love for us and His love through us constrains us to love a world that is around us.

Then thirdly he moves us into the last part of verse 19 through 21. We need to experience His potential. Paul said **in order that**." That phrase, "in order that" is used twice in that verse. In other words it moves us up to a different level. In order that we might be filled to the fullness of God. What does that mean? It means to the point that all of God fills all of us. Folks, when you get to that level of life, you begin to live being filled to the fullness of God. The word "filled" means controlled. What fills a man controls a man. When you are filled to the fullness of God, you begin to walk into the potential of God. You begin to experience for yourself that which is the exceeding abundantly beyond all the things we could ask or even think. That is Chapter 3.

Then Paul gives us a different way of looking at it in chapter 4. In Ephesians 4:22 he says to take off the old man, the old garment. The word "take off" is the word that was used by the secular world at that time to mean "to take off a garment." Paul just baptizes it and uses it in the language of the Christian vocabulary. We take off the old. How do you take off the old? By putting on the new. All you have to do is say "Yes" to Jesus and it works itself out. You put on the new, Ephesians 4:24 says. It is like taking off a garment and putting on a garment. This new garment is a lifestyle. A garment is what people see. So therefore, when you are strengthened in the inner man, there is going to be a garment of righteousness in the outer where men can see. It is like living wearing a brand new set of clothes.

Then in Ephesians 5:1-2, he says to imitate God's love. Now the word "imitate" there in verse 1 is the word *mimetes*, that we get the word "mime" from. When somebody mimes they don't say anything, but they are so exaggerated in their actions, you know exactly what they are trying to say. Paul says, don't talk it, walk it. Live it. Wearing the new garment is living it, not talking about it. Live it out before others.

In Ephesians 5:3-10 he talks about the fact that this new garment is a garment of light. The old garment is a garment of darkness. That is why we are never to go back to it. Remember this, the Holy Spirit is the one who dresses us in the new and undresses us with the old. It is not us actually doing it. It is us saying "Yes" to Jesus and the Holy Spirit takes care of the exchanging there of garments.

So we come then to Ephesians 5:11. The old garment is a garment of darkness. The darkness breeds two things, as we saw in that passage. One is idolatry, and out of idolatry comes immorality. You see, when I put on the old garment, the one that doesn't fit anymore, I have stopped worshiping God. I have become idolatrous, and I am worshiping myself. When I worship myself in that idolatry, I am going to become immoral in my relationships. Whether they are sexual or not, they are going to be immoral

relationships. I am not going to be walking in love. I am no longer imitating the love of God.

I want us to talk now about the power of the new garment. I guess that is a good word for it, power, potential, the prospects of the new garment. I am going to call it the power of the new garment. When we put this new garment on, what can we expect? It is not us doing anything. It is the power within us. It is the Lord Jesus within us strengthening us in the inner man.

What I have been trying to do in Ephesians is show you that you can't disjoint this book and teach this part as if it is separate from the other part. Ephesians 3:14-21, the prayer, is the hinge of the whole book. It sums up everything from chapters 1, 2 and 3, and sets up everything from chapters 4, 5 and 6. You've got to keep relating it back. If you don't, you will try to do these things in your own energy and it doesn't work. But when I put on this new garment, which simply means I have said "Yes" to Jesus, I have now depended upon His Spirit to strengthen me with power in the inner man.

What can I expect? Three things. Let's read the text, verse 11 down through verse 14. He says, "And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. For this reason it says, 'Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'"

There are three things I want you to see about what we can expect in this new garment. It is not us, it is the garment. What can we expect? Number one, we can expect, when we put on this new garment, to have the power to refuse the deeds of darkness.

"Oh, I can't do it. I go to school and everybody is pagan around me. I just can't help it. They are all doing it, and I need to do it. I just can't say 'No.'"

Yes you can. The Spirit of God is in your life to help you say "No." He enables you to say "No" by saying "Yes" to the Lord Jesus Christ. God would never command us to put off something or to do something that He doesn't give us the ability and strength to do it with.

Verse 11 says again,

"do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness."

What are the deeds he is talking about? The unfruitful deeds of darkness. We are still in the context of immorality and idolatry. Don't forget that. He only stays in that area in this particular passage. To me there is a reason. When a person is idolatrous, that is the root of everything. That means he is no longer worshiping God. He is no longer depending upon God. So he stays in that context. How is it that we can be in this world but not of this world? How can we be among them, but not be partakers with them? Oh, we can and he is going to tell us how in just a moment.

If you go back to verses 3-5 we find out what those deeds are. Verse 3 says it is immorality. That means any illicit sexual activity with another person; homosexuality, incest, adultery or any kind of illicit sexual act with another person. Impurity covers all the bases. In other words, it is anything that is unclean. When you have defiled your body, whether it is with another person or not, it covers all those bases. Every bit of that comes out of the next word which is "greed." Greed, simply put, says,

"I am going to please myself. Like it or not, God, I am going to please myself."

Now that is the epitome of the old garment. That is the epitome of the old man.

Verse 4 says there must be no filthiness, silly talk or coarse jesting. Now he is still in the context of all this immorality. What does he mean? You see, a person who is going to be immoral with somebody or wants to be, will always test the waters by his words to see how far he can go. Coarse jesting means he has a hidden agenda, hoping they will pick up on it. Silly talk means he takes something that is shameful and makes it funny so it can be more acceptable. Then filthy talk is the bottom line. That is when it just comes right out and gets to the point of what he is looking for. Paul says these are deeds of darkness. These are the deeds of people with minds that have been darkened.

Ephesians 5:5 says that these people won't have an inheritance in the kingdom of God.

Verse 6 says,

"Let no one deceive you with empty words."

He is saying,

"There are going to be people who will try to pull you to their side."

Have you ever been around people like that? Maybe you are working with people right now and because of their jokes, because of their sick humor, because of the things that go on in that office, you have found yourself being pulled their way. He said there are

going to be people who are going to come along to deceive you with empty words because of these things. What things? The things he has mentioned in verse 3 and following. He says,

"the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them."

The word in verse 7 when it says, "Therefore be not partakers with them," is very similar to the word in verse 11. But there is a difference. "**Partakers**" means simply that you join in with somebody and do what they do. It may be a one-time thing, maybe a two-time thing or whatever. You just happen in a weak moment to come along side of them and you do what they do. But the word "don't participate" in verse 11 goes a step further. It means to share in common with. In one you are partaking of the deed. In the other it goes even further. You are beginning to absorb within you the very attitudes of the people that are around you. You are sharing in common with the people who are around you. Not only are you partaking in the deeds, but you are sharing things in common with people who wear garments of darkness. We are not to do that. We are to wear the garment of light. We have the power in that garment to refuse the deeds of darkness.

You see, we have been made holy. The word 'holy' means we are in a class all by ourselves.

Ephesians 1:1 says the letter is from Paul to the saints in Ephesus. It is not perfection, but you are put in a class all by yourself. You see, God is inherently holy. He is in a class all by Himself. There is nobody like Him. He is not just loving, He is all loving. He is not just faithful, He is all faithful. Now that He has set us apart and put His Spirit within us, we are in a class all by ourselves. Among human beings, we are in a class all by ourselves. So therefore, when we go out into the world, we have to have this garment on because only with this garment can we refuse what they are doing. We refuse the deeds of darkness when we wear the right garment. We have the power to do that. So we can be in the world, but not of the world. You see, a boat in water is by design. Water in the boat is disaster. We are not to have the water in us, we are to be in the water. We have to reach them for Christ, but not partake with them and not share in common the deeds of darkness. Only in the garment of Christ do we have the power to refuse the deeds of darkness.

There is something in this that really struck me. He says, "do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness." Now he didn't say that the darkness reeks of bad fruit. He says the darkness has no fruit at all. This is very important. What is fruit all about? Well, Jesus said fruit always causes us to recognize the tree. That is part of it. But He said something else. Fruit is that which brings benefit to others. He says in John 15 that we are to bear much fruit.

"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing."

Why are we to bear much fruit? You see when you put the right garment on, the garment of love, and refuse the deeds of darkness, the deeds that are going to come out of you are called fruit. That fruit is for the benefit of others. You see, a person with the right garment on, the garment of Christ, doesn't live for himself. He lives for others. The love that he has must spill out on other people.

But you see, a person who has the wrong garment on is living for his own self and is of benefit to nobody. It is a sad thing to see a Christian in the wrong garment because he is of use to anybody. He is living unto himself. He will not get in the Word of God. He has told God,

"I am going to do it my way, God. I am not going to listen to you. I am not going to obey you."

As a result, he is unfruitful. There is nothing in his life that anybody could benefit from whatsoever.

Well, secondly, he says we have the power to reprove the deeds of darkness. Now I like this. It's not us, but it is in the garment. I don't have the power, but the power is in me. The power is Jesus Christ. There is that power to reprove the deeds of darkness. He says in verse 11,

"And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness [You have the power to say "No" to them], but instead even expose them."

What does the word "**expose**" mean? The word "expose" is the word that means to reprove them, reprove them to the point that they are shamed at what they are doing. In other words, to bring such conviction on people, who are living with the wrong garment, living in the deeds of darkness, to where they become ashamed of the way they are living.

Now, he says in verse 12,

"for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret."

What in the world is Paul talking about here? Most people think he is saying that we should go downtown, get a big box, get on top of it and reprove the pagans for the works of darkness. Now wait a minute. Hold it. If that is what he is saying, why does he say they are done in secret? Somebody is doing them in secret and they are hidden. How do you know what they are to start with? Where

are you going to start? No, it doesn't fit the flow of this context. We preach the word of God, and the light of the Word exposes people. I don't think that is what Paul is talking about.

I think Paul is talking about something in line with what he said in verse 1. Don't talk it, walk it. He is saying,

"Since you now have a garment that is light, you don't reprove the world by what you tell them. You reprove the world by how you live."

It is my garment that exposes what is going on around me. If I am not wearing my garment, then what I say means nothing anyway. When I am wearing my garment, the garment of love, the garment that reaches out and cares about other people, the garment that speaks of the righteousness and the holiness of God, then that garment begins to reprove the people around me. By wearing the garment of light, we reprove those acts of darkness around us. Look at verse 13:

"But all things become visible when they are exposed (or reprov'd) by the light."

That little "the" is in the text. It is not me, not my garment as much, but it is the Christ who is in me. He is the essence of my garment. If Jesus is being Jesus in me, then the Jesus in me is going to show up others who are not wearing that garment, others who are participating in the deeds of darkness.

He goes on to say,

"for everything that becomes visible is light."

It says in King James, "For whatsoever doth make manifest is light." In other words, the only thing that can make something manifest is the light. Again it uses the definite article. So the light is in me. If I put on the garment, the power in that garment is not only the power to refuse the deeds of darkness. It is the power to expose them, to reprove the deeds of darkness.

Do you realize what an impact your life is making when you wear the right garment around the people that you work with? Do you realize the impact that your life is making with the people you associate with during the day, in a restaurant or wherever you go? Do you realize that garment of light is literally exposing deeds of darkness that are done in secret and is bringing them to light? People see you. Then they look at themselves and see the difference. They are even brought to shame because they don't live on a level that you live.

There is something about the garment. When you put the garment on, the light of the garment not only can refuse the deeds of darkness, but it will reprove the deeds of darkness to the point that people are even shamed by just your very presence among them. Wow! Is that what it means to be a saint in a class all by yourself, living holy, in the world but not of the world? That is exactly what it means to be a saint.

Thirdly, you also find the power in that garment to remove the deeds of darkness. Look at verse 14.

"For this reason it says [and the quote is out of Isaiah], 'Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'"

Most people think Paul is using that verse to say,

"This is God's plea to the whole world, 'Wake up and I'll shine on you. Once I shine on you, you can become light for other people.'"

I disagree with that. Looking at the context Paul is saying,

"You Christians, you see in Isaiah 60:1 when God spoke that, He spoke it to His people."

To me Paul is saying,

"God is saying the word to the church, 'Wake up! You are sleeping! Death is all around you. Darkness has enveloped you. Wake up. Let Jesus shine on you first and reprove you for the things wrong in your life. Then Jesus can shine through you and we can start seeing darkness dissipate because it is light that puts out the darkness.'"

Folks, when you walk into a dark room in the morning, you don't switch the darkness off and switch the light on. No, you just switch the light on and the darkness has to flee. Darkness does not put out light. Folks, darkness is not the problem, and it never has been the problem. The problem is no light. Christians are sound asleep. You don't have to go out on the street corner and get a box and tell the world. Live it! Your neighbors will see the difference. Your wife will see the difference. Everybody will see the difference. It is incredible when you put the garment on. It is incredible when you are strengthened in the inner man. Immediately people are affected. You don't even know it, but that light is penetrating the deeds of darkness and the world of evil. When you put on that

garment, it puts out darkness.

Ephesians 5:15-17: WALKING AS LIGHT IN THIS WORLD OF DARKNESS

by Dr. Wayne Barber
([Return to TOP of page](#))

We are getting to a very practical, very real part of Ephesians. Ephesians 5:15 tells us we are to be very careful as we walk. When we put on this new garment and walk out into a world penetrated by darkness, this garment, Christ in us, has the power to first of all refuse the deeds of darkness, secondly reprove the deeds of darkness, and thirdly remove the deeds of darkness. Light puts out darkness. Folks, when you put on the garment, when you are living what you have in Jesus Christ, it is a powerful weapon against the darkness that is residing in this world.

How then are we supposed to walk? Verse 15 says,

"Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise."

What does it mean to be careful as you walk? The word there means to be looking carefully. Now you can talk about being careful all you want, but this makes it a little more clear. There is a word in the Greek text that is not in the English translation. It comes right before the word "careful." It is the word *blepo*, which means to watch out, to be sensitive, to be aware, to be on the alert at all times.

When you walk out into this dark world, remember to be on the alert. Watch out. Be extra sensitive. We live in a world that is affected by darkness. Yet we are children of light. As a matter of fact, we have been made light. When you walk out into this world, be on the alert. Be sensitive. Be quick to pick up on that which God is saying.

The word "careful" in this verse is not the normal word for careful. It's the word over in Acts 18:25-26 that is translated "accurate, to be precise." It seems to me, according to the context of what we have studied, Paul is saying first of all,

"Go out and don't underestimate the power of darkness."

It is out there. It is after us. Remember, when you become a Christian, you stopped chasing sin and sin started chasing you. We live in a world where sin is pursuing us. When you go out, don't underestimate. Be accurate, precise, alert, aware, and on guard. But also, don't ever miss out on what you have in Jesus Christ. Not only be accurate in what you are facing, be accurate with what you have in order to face the darkness that is out there. You've got to have both sides. I've got to know my enemy. I've got to know who I am and whose I am in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's look at these verses to see if we can be encouraged on how to go out into this world that is programmed and affected by the darkness of sin. How can we as light live effectively and victoriously in this world? We are to be in it, but not of it. How do we do it?

In verse 15, first of all, we need to learn to apply what we know about the truth to our daily lives.

"Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise."

What does it mean to be **wise**? The Greek word, *sophos*, simply means a person who fears God. You don't see that in the Word. You think of it as a person who has a lot of wisdom. In other words, he knows how to take practical things and relate them to truth. He knows how to take God's Word and relate it to practical things. That is a wise man. It indicates a person who fears God, a person who is broken before God and has a reverential awe for the holiness of God. That is a wise man. You see, wisdom is the ability to take this book, everything we studied from Ephesians 1 to Ephesians 5:14, and relate it to every problem I am facing day by day. Every single practical problem I can relate the Word of God to if I have the wisdom which is from God. Wisdom is that divine ability.

People all the time say,

"The Word doesn't meet my problems. God doesn't understand the 20th century. I get into the Word of God, and it doesn't say a thing to me."

Oh yes, it does. The problem is, you are not surrendered. If a person is not willing to obey it, if a person is not willing to fear God and express that fear out of obedience, and I mean the right kind of fear, then that person is not going to have wisdom at all in his life.

Look in Proverbs 9:10. I want you to see where wisdom comes from. When you talk about a wise person, you are talking about a person who has a deep respect for the holiness of God. He says,

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

You mean to tell me I can study Ephesians, memorize it, quote the verses and still not be wise? That is exactly right. You see, until I

am surrendered to God's truth and to who He is as Lord of my life, there is not going to be any wisdom whatsoever to take His Word and relate it to my practical, every day problems that everybody faces.

He goes on to say,

"And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." Whew, the terms that are built in to a person who fears the Lord!

Paul says,

"Listen, you've got enough knowledge already. I have taught you enough. Now walk as wise men. Be surrendered to God who gave us the truth. Then let His truth, with wisdom, be mixed into your decisions of every day life."

So many people are not willing to submit to Christ. You know why? They don't fear Him. They fear everything but God. That is our problem, folks. We are not to fear. Jesus said, do not fear, do not fear, do not fear, over and over and over again in the New Testament. We fear Him. There is nothing else to fear. Perfect love casts out all that other kind of fear. We are to live a life of surrender, respecting His holiness, understanding that He has a claim over our life. As we are willing to do that, He gives us something you can't get anywhere else. He tells you how to take His Word and put it into practical, every day usage in the problems that you face.

Look with me in Colossians 1 where Paul says almost the same thing. Paul is praying in Colossians 1:9:

"For this reason also, since the day we heard of *it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding."

The word "filled" means controlled.

"Do you mean to tell me that what is in my head has to get into my heart?"

That's right. When I am filled with His wisdom and understanding and His will, it means I want only what He wants in my life. When I am willing to come to Him on that basis of surrender, He gives me the wisdom and the spiritual understanding. The word "**understanding**" simply means the ability to take the things going on in my life, take the Word of God, mix it together, and come up with the conclusion of what God wants as His will in the decisions I have to make every day in my life. So we walk as wise men. We don't just simply have truth in our heads that we can quote and beat people over the heads with it. We live that truth. We obey that truth and God makes us wise. He gives us the ability to relate all that knowledge to the practical aspects of our life.

Now look at what Paul does in verse 15. He compares the unwise with the wise. Now the word "**unwise**" is simply *asophos*, without this kind of wisdom. It doesn't necessarily mean he is not a believer. There are a lot of believers who don't have this wisdom because they are not bowed down to Jesus as Lord of their life. They don't love His Word. They don't love Him. They have a low view of salvation, a low view of Christ and a low view of God's Word. Now, when you do this, when you have that kind of view, you don't have that wisdom.

I want to tell you something, folks. It is one thing to have the Word of God in your head, but it is another thing to be obeying it. If you don't think enough of God and enough of His Word to bow down before Him, it is very obvious that you are not a very wise person and you probably have already been darkened in your understanding by this world and its influence on you because the Word of God plays no part of your every day thinking and your every day living. So first of all, we have to learn to apply what we already know about the truth of God. Apply it. Don't just memorize it and quote it. That is fine. But apply it and obey it. Do that as a wise person who fears God and has a reverential respect for Him and a reverential respect for His Word.

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR TIME

Secondly, you do that by making proper biblical choices moment by moment as you live out there in the world that is programmed by darkness. Look at verse 16:

"making the most of your time, because the days are evil."

Now the word for "time" is an interesting word. It is the word *kairos*. It means season or opportunity. Now we know something about a season. A season comes in, but we also know something else about a season. A season goes away. There is going to come a summer time. But we are going to move out of that season into a time of barrenness. All of a sudden the leaves fall off the trees and it is just brown and dry. A season begins but a season ends.

Paul is saying,

"Make the most of your time. If the season started when we received Christ, it is going to end when He comes

for us. We only have one season. We only have one opportunity. You don't get those choices over again."

Many of us have made unwise choices. Many of us have not applied truth in our life. Already we are feeling it because we are getting older. Paul is trying to tell these Ephesians,

"You had better wake up and get going, because you may not have that much longer. You only have one shot at it. Learn to make proper, biblically influenced choices in your life so that you can make the most of the time."

Making the most of the time means to redeem the time. To redeem the time means to purchase it. That is one thing that we all have in common. Every one of us has exactly the same amount of time. You've got 24 hours, and what you do with it is your business. You've got to make choices. But now wait a minute. He says,

"Redeem the time." What do you mean, "redeem the time"?

Purchase it. To purchase it, I have to have the collateral.

Not only do you have to have the collateral, you have to have the right kind of collateral if you are going purchase anything. So what is the collateral to purchase time? It is my choices. We have to understand this. Life is filled with one choice after another choice after another choice. It is not putting the garment on in the morning and thinking it is going to stay on you all day. You have to continue all day long to make those choices. What are those choices motivated by? They are motivated by what the Word of God has taught us. They are motivated by our respect of who God is. Now to be the right choice it has to be a choice that honors Christ and what His Word has to say. That is the way I purchase time. I have only got one time around, and I have to learn to make proper choices. How many choices did you make yesterday?

We have to learn that time is short. We only have one season. We only go around one time. Make those choices. Why? Because every time you choose, you are going to do something. That is called a deed and one day we will answer for those deeds at the Bema Seat of Christ. Are they wood, hay and stubble? What is wood, hay and stubble? They are stupid, fleshly, religious choices. Sometimes they are not even religious. What are precious stones? They are choices that were made based on God's Word and my willingness to do what He tells me to do. We are making those choices, moment by moment by moment.

Thirdly, we are to see to it that we never live the life of a fool.

That is a word that a lot of folks are offended by, but he uses it. Look at verse 17:

"So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

Now hang on with me a minute. The word for "fool" there is the word *aphron*. It comes from the word *phren*. It has the idea of a mind-set, that which enables you to make real conscientious, wholesome, sound decisions without that ability. Now in II Timothy, Paul uses that word but puts another prefix to it, *sophron*, which has the idea of having a saved mind. Let me explain it to you this way. When I got saved, when the Spirit came into my life, when He came in to strengthen me with power, He took my mind and flipped it from AM to FM. That is the frequency God is on. Before I got saved, I wasn't on that frequency. My mind was darkened and I couldn't think like God wanted me to think. But when I got saved, He saved my mind. Now, I have the ability to reason in God's Word. I have the ability to look at life. I have the ability in the Spirit of God to put things together and come up with wise decisions. But, before I got saved, I didn't have that. I was *aphron*. I was a fool.

Paul says,

"Don't live like you are a fool. You have ability. Use it. Don't live as if you don't know what to do. You do know what to do. Live as if you have a mind that has been made whole and has been made sound by what Christ has done in your life."

If a believer says, "I can't," he is really saying, "I won't." That is all there is to it. Somewhere, maybe for a while, there may be a gap to get him to that point, but at some point, there has been a departure. Only a fool would go out into a darkened world, not willing to apply truth, not willing to obey God. Only a fool who had everything for life and for godliness would go out into this world, not being alert, not being on guard, not watching carefully. That is the lifestyle of a fool. That means he can be deceived by anything that comes his way. His mind begins to darken just like it used to do and there is no ability any more to make the right kind of decisions.

I wonder how many of us have lived the life as if we were a fool when we knew better. Folks, this stuff is so practical but it has to live in your life. When you go out into this world, it is filled with darkness. Paul says to live and walk carefully as wise men. You know what to do. You've been in the Word. Obey Christ. Make those decisions that are motivated by what Christ has taught you and don't play the life of a fool. Only a fool would step out there in that arena without being armed with what God has given us in Jesus Christ. You see Jesus is our refuge.

"Understand what the will of the Lord is."

What is the will of the Lord? In the context of everything we have studied, it should be pretty clear. To be strengthened in the inner man by the Spirit of God, to accommodate Christ in your heart daily by your faith. That is the will of God. He says it a different way in verse 18:

"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit."

Do you know what that word "filled" is? It is a verb that is present tense, to be constantly, consistently, at every moment, at all times, under the control of the Holy Spirit of God. Why? Because we live in an evil world. We have been made light, but we must walk as children of light. This world is out to get us and the way it is going to get us is through the mind. If you won't get in the Word, folks, I am telling you, your mind has already been darkened. That is why you have allowed license to come into your life when it comes to sin in your heart. You can't do that when the truth has that light turned on inside. Don't live as a fool. We have minds that have been made whole by the Spirit of God.

In the Old Testament, there is a man by the name of Abner. Before Solomon's reign when the tribes split, there was already turmoil in the tribes of Israel. As a matter of fact, when Saul lost his kingship, that is when there began a real friction between the other tribes. Some of them were loyal to Saul and they were never going to bow to David. One of the biggest enemies that David had was a man by the name of Abner. He was the Commander in Chief for Saul's army. Abner immediately went and took Saul's son and crowned him king. He wasn't allowed to do that, but that is what Abner did. Already there is that tension and friction. God said that David was going to be king over all Israel. So the turmoil and the skirmishes began to take place and so David, being a wise man, said,

"I'll tell you what. Let's take 12 of my group and 12 from Abner's group. Joab is my Commander in Chief, and Abner is your Commander in Chief. Let's put them in a valley and let them fight it out. Whoever wins, gets the kingdom."

That's not bad. That would be good to do with the world, wouldn't it? Just have a real good knock down, drag out fight and whoever wins gets it. So Abner and his bunch get defeated. Obviously, God is providential in all that He does. David is going to be the king.

Well, Joab's brother is kind of aggressive and he doesn't realize the rules of the game. Once the thing was over, whether the guys are dead or not, it was over with. So this little fellow, Asahel, takes off after Abner. Abner is running from him and this guy is fleet of foot. He must be a young man and he is running behind him. He is going to go on and kill Abner. Abner is saying, "Get off my trail. Leave me alone." But the guy won't do it. The Scripture records that Abner stopped, took his spear and rammed it clean through him. Asahel was Joab's brother and under Jewish law at that time, Joab had a right to avenge the murder of his brother, even though it was not something premeditated. Abner goes to David and David says,

"Listen, I want you to go to Hebron."

Hebron was one of their cities of refuge. A city of refuge was a place that you could go and be protected when something happened like this that wasn't premeditated. It wasn't something you sat down and thought through. So Abner goes over to Hebron. Joab finds out that he is in Hebron, so Joab goes over and seeks to lure Abner out from under his protection, that city of refuge. It was where you wanted to run to. That is a picture of Christ in the Old Testament. It was good for as long as the High Priest lived. That is a beautiful picture, by the way. I am safe under the shield of Jesus as long as He is alive, and He is going to live forever, so I am pretty safe. When I am living in obedience to Him, I am not living like a fool, I am living like a wise man. I can walk out in the world and be protected under His shield. That doesn't mean physically, it means spiritually. I am always one with Him. Nothing can get to me that doesn't get by Him first. Stay under your shield. Stay in your refuge.

Joab got to the gates of the city. Now the gates of the city were no-man's land. Only a foolish man would leave the city of refuge and walk out there in the midst of the gates. Joab said,

"Hey, Abner. I just want you to know I forgive you. I came by to hug your neck."

You want to yell,

"No, Abner. Don't be stupid. Don't go out there."

Abner comes out from his place of refuge. Joab has a little small dagger. He walks up to him and says, "How are you doing?" and just kills him on the spot. They go to David and say, "David, Abner is dead. Joab killed him." David said, and it is quoted in II Samuel, "Should Abner die a fool's death!"

I told you that story for a reason. Folks, we have been pounding Ephesians. If you are not going to live it, you are going to reap the consequences of a person who is nothing more than a fool. If I know to bow to Him and I know what His truth has said, and walk out in that world that is penetrated by darkness refusing Jesus Christ as Lord of my life I have to face the consequences. You have only

one go around. Every choice you make will have a consequence to it. Paul is saying,

"Don't die the death of a fool."

Proverbs 30:5 says

"Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him."

Walk wisely out there, folks. We are in harm's way. Remember, we have an adversary and this whole world is programmed by darkness. But the beautiful thing is, we walk out as children of light. When we put on our new garment and let the Word of God get in our life, we can say,

"God, I am confused, let me know."

Then the Word of God gets in there and wisdom comes. We are able to make our decisions. We are able to choose the things God wants us to choose. Then we are going to frustrate darkness like it has never been frustrated until Jesus comes for His people.

Make choices based on the Word that is in your life and don't ever be found living like a fool. We know better. We have victory. We have everything that is necessary. I hope somehow that might encourage your life. We don't work toward victory, folks. We come from it. We have to learn how to appropriate it in our life.