

¹⁵ Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. ¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Use The Good Sense God Has Given You

- I. Make the most of opportunities
- II. Understand the Lord's will
- III. Speak to one another spiritually

Dearly Beloved of the Lord Christ,

Believing is everything and doing is nothing! We would all subscribe to this statement, if we are talking about how a person is saved. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone. Believing is everything. In regard to the word 'believing or faith' we mean that we believe what God in His holy Word has told us is true. He has told about His Son Jesus Christ – who He is and what He has done. We take the Gospel at face value. On the basis of this faith in Christ, God has justified us. He has declared us holy and righteous before Him and has assured us that we are His and heaven is our home.

However, all this did not take place in a vacuum. All this took place that we might be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in holy living. Look at it this way. The Easter message proclaims the Father's acceptance of What His Son came to do – to seek and saved that which was lost, all of us. The celebration of that completed saving work of Jesus can be illustrated by two children – a little girl bathed and dressed in a beautiful white dress and white shoes. Similarly a little boy bathed and dressed in a white suit and shoes. Both know that to play in the mud will soil the clean clothes they have been given to wear.

In reality there are many forces at work in the hearts and minds of those two children. There is the desire to remain clean – a goal they know is pleasing to their parents. On the other hand there is the enticement of the mud puddle. There may be others already in the puddle splashing about and having a good time. It really looks like fun. The children in the puddle keep calling for the two dressed in white to get into the puddle and experience the pleasure. But the two don't know what is mixed in with the mud. They do know that the mud will stain their clothes.

You, my dear friends, are those two children. You have been washed clean and pure by the blood of Jesus shed on the cross. You have been clothed in the white robes of Christ's righteousness. And you believe this. But the story doesn't end here does it? Our salvation is complete and it is ours by faith but we live on. How shall we then live? This is the question Paul addresses in our text. After confessing we are saved by faith alone – believing is everything – he goes on in his letter to the Ephesians to say that doing – how you live- is also extremely important as the expression of your faith. This should be obvious to all of us. In a very practical way Paul is saying, USE THE GOOD SENSE GOD HAS GIVEN YOU.

Listen to the Word of God. *Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.* In our illustration Paul is saying, "Watch out for the mud puddles!" Why? because the days are evil. There are mud holes all over. Be very careful how you live. Then look at how he goes on. *Not as unwise, but as wise, making the most of every opportunity.* We need to use the good sense God has given us. We would have no problem pointing out to the two little children dressed in white that they can't stand next to puddle and still expect not to get dirty. Even though they are not standing in it or playing in it, they can still have it splashed all over them.

Yet we sometimes think that we can look at that which is immoral and not be stained by it. We can think that we can flirt with sinful conduct and not get caught up in the sin. We can massage our lusts for material things without becoming a materialist. We think we can engage in all kinds of blogging and texting and remain free of gossiping.

What is it that common sense tells us? It tells us that to play cat and rat with the devil is to lose every time. Don't do it.

Paul does emphasize the positive, however. He tells us that as we walk very carefully we should make the most of every opportunity. When you are tempted or encouraged to get into the mud and play along, your resistance to the temptation is God-honoring. It is telling all who know you that there is a higher value in your life than satisfying your own selfish desires. Your giving the good

answer that Joseph gave to Potiphar's wife. "How can I do this wickedness and sin against God?" You are telling everyone that living outside of the will of God is not pleasure or fun but it is sin and it displeases God. It puts you on a collision course with judgment.

So use the good sense God has given you. Use the opportunities God gives you to honor Him; instead of shaming Him. We have these opportunities in every facet of our lives.

Of course, basic to making the most of every opportunity to honor God is knowing what God's will is. Listen to how the Apostle continues. *Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. ¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery.* Being foolish is the same as not using the good sense that God has given us. Paul uses a concrete example to illustrate his point. Do not get drunk on wine. Wine is a blessing from God. It was used in the ancient world as a medicine. Remember the Good Samaritan? He used wine to anoint the wounds of the man who had fallen victim to the thieves. Wine was used as a common table drink in a country where the water was not good. Adding wine to the water purified the water for drinking.

So the wine is not the problem. The misuse of it is. The miss use leads to debauchery. Debauchery is all the mud that hangs on a person who has splashed around in the mud hole of drunkenness. Engaging in the excesses of alcohol often leads to a loss of inhibitions. Words come out of the mouth of the drunken person which should never have been spoken. Wasteful spending, sexual immorality, breaking of promises, lying and abuse of family and others all have resulted from the misuse of wine.

There are excesses of many kinds. There is the excess of eating, the excess of work, the excess of various forms of entertainment, and excess in material possessions.

Don't be foolish, Paul says. Understand what God's will is. The word prudence comes to mind. Prudence means to understand the situation a person finds himself in and then make decisions that are wholesome and in accord with the will of God. How important it is to know God's commandments in making such wholesome decisions.

How would you fare if I would go down the isle this morning and ask each of you to recite the 10 commandments? Could you do it? What are you going to use as your guide for making moral and virtuous decisions, if you don't know the commandments. God intends for you to use this part of His revealed Word as a guide for your day to day living. These ten principles are the touchstone for moral living. They are ten commandments, not ten suggestions. Use the good sense God has given you. Review what you once knew so you understand what God's will is.

Finally, when you put into practice the good sense God has given you, you will recognize the importance of considering your own circumstances and those of others in a spiritual way. First, you can look into the mirror and see the redeemed and forgiven sinner that you are. You will see that you are precious in the eyes of your heavenly Father because He has spent the life of His own Son to buy you back from sin, Satan and the grave making you His own. You will also see the potential you have of offering your life as a living sacrifice to your living Savior.

What is more this is the way you are enabled to look at everyone else. Consider what Paul says here. Instead of being filled with wine he *says Be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in our heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

We can go back to the two little children dressed in white. How do we want them to treat each other? We certainly don't want them to push each other in the mud, do we? Rather we want to teach them that they are not in a contest against each other, but they are members of the same family. We would want to teach them that they should look out for each other. They should help each other and build each other up in confidence, in courage, in charity. Then our hymns and Psalms will have sincere meaning to those who hear them.

Remember, we are those children. We are those who are redeemed, renewed and forgiven. We have the spiritual songs to sing to each other and to our God. He is pleased as we do so. Amen.