

MEASURE TWICE: Wisdom Is Skill, Not Information

Ephesians 5:15-21 (NKJV)

Key Thoughts

1. **Wisdom is skill, not information:** Biblical wisdom is competence at living, not an accumulation of knowledge. God filled Bezalel with wisdom to cut jewels, carve wood, and work in gold (Exodus 35:30-33), and the religious leaders who knew the Old Testament best still crucified the Savior they had waited for. Verse 17 adds that understanding is not receiving new information but seeing how what you already have fits together.
2. **Careful because of a standard, not because of fear:** "Circumspectly" comes from circum, meaning around, and spectare, meaning to look. It means to look around yourself. A tightrope walker is careful because he is afraid of falling. A machinist is careful because the part has to match the specification. Paul is not calling for a nervous Christian life. He is calling for an accurate one.
3. **Buy the opportunity in front of you:** "Redeeming the time" is closer to buying the opportunity than reclaiming lost years. The hour will be spent whether you decide anything or not, so the real question is what you possess when it is gone. The days are evil, and that is precisely why the opportunity matters.
4. **The command is that the Spirit have all of you:** Every believer already has all of the Spirit from the moment of belief. Verse 18 commands the reverse, that the Spirit have all of the believer. Drunkenness is dissipation, a reckless waste of the very time God told us to invest, while the Spirit-filled life produces singing to one another and thanks to the Father in every circumstance.
5. **Submission is position, not value:** To submit is to arrange yourself under, and the form Paul uses means you do it to yourself. Nobody submits you. It is not obedience, which Paul assigns different words elsewhere, and it is not inferiority, because position is not value. God put all things under Christ's feet (Ephesians 1:22), and Christ reached that place by way of the form of a servant (Philippians 2).

Discussion Questions

1. Verse 15 calls us to "see" how we walk, which is a call to audit the ordinary day rather than the Sunday. If someone observed your Tuesday instead of your Sunday, what would they conclude about your walk?
2. The tightrope walker and the machinist are both careful, but one is governed by fear and the other by a standard. Which one better describes your obedience right now, and what would change if it were the other?
3. Read Exodus 35:30-33. God fills Bezalel with wisdom for cutting, carving, and metalwork rather than for scholarship. How does understanding wisdom as skill change what you have been asking God to give you?
4. In the illustration of the neighbor standing at the end of the driveway, the hour gets spent either way, but only one version costs you dinner, comfort, and the risk of an awkward conversation. What opportunity is in front of you right now that you have been declining because you did not want to pay for it?
5. Read Ephesians 5:19-20 alongside James 1:2-4. Paul says to give thanks always and for all things. Where is thanksgiving hardest for you, and what would it look like to give thanks there this week?
6. Paul says that to submit is to arrange yourself under, voluntarily, and that Christ reached the highest place by way of the lowest. Where is God asking you to place yourself under someone this week, and what is holding you back?

Applications

1. **Audit one ordinary day:** Choose one weekday this week and write down where the hours actually went. Compare that record against what you say you value, and name one hour you will buy back for something that lasts.
2. **Spend an hour you already own:** Identify one person God has placed in front of you and pay the price for the conversation this week. Accept in advance that it will cost you time, comfort, and the risk of being told to mind your own business.
3. **Give thanks in the hard place:** Name the circumstance you have been complaining about, and thank God the Father for it in the name of the Lord Jesus every day this week, asking the Spirit to produce the patience James promises.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for calling us out of darkness and giving us Your Spirit. Forgive us for mistaking information about You for skill at living for You, and for spending hours You gave us on things that will not last. Make us watchful of our own walk. Teach us to be careful the way a craftsman is careful, measured against Your Word rather than driven by fear. Fill us with Your Spirit, and let Him have all of us. Put songs of praise in our mouths and thanksgiving in our hearts even when the days are evil. And give us the humility of Your Son, who took the form of a servant and was exalted by way of it, so that we would gladly arrange ourselves under one another in the fear of God. In Jesus' name, amen.