

Ephesians 5:15–20 Consider carefully, then, how you walk, not as unwise people, but as wise people. ¹⁶Make the most of your time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷For this reason, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸And do not get drunk on wine, which causes you to lose control. Instead, be filled with the Spirit ¹⁹by speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (singing and making music with your hearts to the Lord), ²⁰by always giving thanks for everything to God the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, you’ve probably never heard the name Destin Sandlin. He has a youtube channel called “Smarter every day.” About 3 years ago he made what he calls a “backwards brain bike.” It’s a normal bike, except for one important difference: It’s rigged so that it turns left when you turn the handlebars right, and right when you turn them left. It’s backwards. You wouldn’t think it would be that hard to ride it, but it is. Long story short, a rider has to reprogram his or her brain in order to ride it, to relearn what any bike rider does naturally and without thinking. At least with this bike, it’s not like riding a bike. It took him 8 months to teach his brain to ride it — to turn right to go left, left to go right.

It’s a pretty good metaphor for what Paul is talking about in our text this morning — our walk of faith. So often that walk of faith runs opposite to the ways of this world. We have to reprogram our minds so that we are not walking in the unwise ways of this world, but as wise and enlightened people of God, living out our faith in the words and promises of our God.

Paul’s encouragement to us today is important because where Destin Sandlin no doubt had a few crashes, skinned his knees, got some bruises, for us, to get sucked into the ways of this world, to fall from faith, the consequences are eternal. Paul said in Romans 8:6 **The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.** So today St. Paul encourages us in our walk of faith by reminding us what the Lord’s will is for us, and that we always have a reason to give thanks.

He begins by encouraging us to *consider carefully* how we walk, literally how we walk around in our lives of faith. In this world, with our sinful flesh, it’s never easy. Like riding that backwards bike, it takes careful consideration. Why is that? Because this wisdom of God is all foolishness to the world and our flesh. **Make the most of your time**, Paul says. But

in this world often that turns out to be the same as people making the most of their vacations. As we walk through life it seems the questions most asked are: What do *I* want to do. What do *I* want to have. Like on vacation we look around and ask, “What is everyone else doing? What is everyone else having?” That’s what I want too!

So easily we find ourselves not walking as wise people, enlightened by the promises and blessings of our God, but as the unwise, the sin darkened people of this world, seeking after the same things, going about getting those things the same way. Slowly, subtly, and silently the devil, the word, and our sinful natures draw us away from walking by faith. Instead, more often than not, we walk about in our flesh, filling up on as much of the world as we can. That’s exactly what Paul is urging us to avoid — the *evil* of this world, of the sins that threatens your faith and could bring about your eternal doom.

No, Paul says to make the most of our time because if we don’t we will be swallowed up by the evils of this world. If we put off for tomorrow what we should be focusing on today, tomorrow might be too late. When it comes to your walk of faith, make the most of it *now*. And how does he say to do that? By **understanding what the Lord’s will is**.

The Lord’s will is not that we have everything that we ever want in this life. The Lord’s will is not that we never have any suffering or pain in this life. The Lord’s will for us is this: to know Jesus and be saved. To know him who left his home in heaven to give you and me a home we could never dream of, a home that because of our sins we were destined to be locked out of forever. He came from heaven to our earth and did the unthinkable: He was perfect. Kept God’s law perfectly. He considered carefully every day, ever hour, every minute, every second, every step how he walked, and did it all inline with God’s will — a feat no one has ever been able to do, and never will. He made the most of his time in this world not for himself, but for sinners, for you and me, to live for us, and then die in our place. Where we so often lose control, throw in the towel in our fight with sin, Jesus stayed the course, lived, suffered, died, and rose again, did it all for our salvation. Did it all to take our sins away and give us new life, a second chance on life based not on what we do, but on faith in what God has done for us in Jesus. The Lord’s will is this — that you believe in him, that you focus your life and everything you are not on

the foolishness and folly of this world, but on the wisdom of God that found away to save you, yes even you (and me) from our sins.

Everything that God does, everything that God allows in your life revolves around this one thing — to know Jesus and be saved. So consider carefully your walk of faith today that it might mirror God's will for you. Where you are today, what you are going through today, this week... view it from this perspective, "the Lord's will is that I know Jesus and be saved." See how that helps consider carefully the steps I take? If God gave up his Son for me, to save me from my sins, from death and the devil, to give me a home in heaven, can I trust him to lead and guide me every single day? Of course. Can I live my faith without fear of what I'm going to lose? Of course you can. Will I see more clearly the evils of this world that seek to destroy my faith and strive to stay away from them? I pray that you will.

Because it's scary to think how many things the devil will try to use against us, to draw us away from Christ, to weaken and ultimately destroy our faith. Paul focuses on one: **do not get drunk on wine, which causes you to lose control**, but if our lives are not centered on the Gospel, on what God has done for me, anything can cause my life to spin out of control.

And so Paul says, to avoid spinning out of control, **speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (singing and making music with your hearts to the Lord)**. In other words, be spiritual. We always hear how we are to let our light shine and we immediately think about letting it shine out there in the world. But how can we do that if we first don't let the light of Christ shine to each other? Live your faith, speak your faith, share your faith with one another. The more we do, the more our focus will be on spiritual things, making it not seem so odd running opposite the ways of the world.

Finally, Paul says, be filled with the Spirit, focus on Spiritual things by giving thanks to God for everything. Think about giving thanks to God as forming line or a spiritual string in your life or in your day back to him. A prayer before a meal — there's one 3 times a day. Or a prayer as you wake up in the morning, there's another. Or at night when you go to bed. Throughout the day as you give thanks for his blessings, expected or not, more and more spiritual strings connecting us back to God. The more and more we make a conscious effort to focus on the spiritual side of things,

the fewer chances our sinful flesh will have to draw us away from Christ weakening our faith. Instead, as we follow Paul's encouragement to give thanks to God for everything, that's a healthy habit that puts our sinful flesh in it's place and keeps the new man in us focused on God's words and promises as we walk in our faith to him.

It's a tough world we live in. Tougher still at times as Children of God. As we strive to consider carefully our walk in faith, it so often runs opposite the ways of the world. May we find strength and comfort in understanding the Lord's will for us. To believe in the one he has sent and know the salvation we have in him. That above all, gives us the reason and the faith to give thanks to God in any situation, making our walk in faith not something we really have to consider at all, but a natural, spiritual response to all God has done for us, and continues to do through his Holy Spirit. May he ever strengthen and sustain us as we walk every day closer to our heavenly home. In Jesus' name, amen.