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# How to Live Wisely

Life does not have to  
take you by surprise.  
The Bible clearly  
shows...



# **“How to Live Wisely”**

By Dr. Robert A. Cook



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Remember the war years? If you were a soldier who saw combat on enemy ground you learned the value of concentrated alertness.

*Watch out for the mines ... the traps ... the barbed wire ... the snipers ...*

The Apostle Paul applies this warning to spiritual warfare. He says:

*See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise (Eph. 5:15).*

The word "circumspectly" means to look around, to be alive, to be awake.

Yes, you can know the score. You don't have to be naive in order to be spiritual. Wisdom you can have: "The fear of the Lord (that combination of awe, respect and obedience) is the beginning of wisdom" -and you *can* have it.

Any time you bow your knees and your heart to God, you'll end up being wiser. James affirms this fact:

*"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally ... and it shall be given him" (Jas. 1:5).*

How will we recognize this kind of wisdom? Again, James tells us:

*"The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy" (Jas. 3:17).*

We are enjoined to be people who are in possession of this wisdom of God. The question now is: What is involved in living wisely?

In Ephesians 5:16-21 we find an answer to our question. It is couched in several verb forms, most of them being participles - words ending in "ing." (The exception in this series is the word "filled," which is part of the grouping but not a participle.)

To live wisely we are told in these verses to be:

*Wise in the use of time-"redeeming the time" (v. 16)*

*Wise in perception - "understanding" (v. 17)*

*Wise in equipment-"filled" (v. 18)*

*Wise in fellowship-"speaking ... singing" (v. 19)*

*Wise in expressing gratitude-"giving thanks" (v. 20)*

*Wise in submission—"submitting yourselves" (v. 21).*

Let us look at these divisions one by one.

## **Wise In The Use Of Time**

Redeeming the time.

The word "redeem" has overtones of something being obtained for the purpose of God's use.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is called our Redeemer. He bought us helpless souls out of the marketplace of sin, so that we can be "to the praise of the glory of his grace."

## **Time For Things To Be Done**

Learn to use your time with eternity in view. That viewpoint will transform your attitude toward even routine tasks. There are many things we do of necessity that are not inspiring in nature.

There is nothing religious about emptying the garbage, or scrubbing the kitchen floor, or diapering the baby. But if we think of using time for God, it puts the touch of God's glory on the commonplace.

The next time you have something to do that bugs you and bothers you (because, as the lady said about housework, "It's so daily," and you're tired of it and bored), look heavenward and say, "Lord Jesus, I'm going to do this for You." You'll be surprised, my friend, at the difference it will make in your own attitude and in the efficient quality of your work.

What wastes time?

Just plain daydreaming wastes time - sitting around, not doing much of anything. Television helps in that. Idle chatter is another time waster.

One of the things you must learn to do in managing your time is to prioritize the things that are before you in any given day. You know what the word "priority" means: To give first place, in sequence, to the things to be done.

I once asked a management consultant, "What do you mean by a priority?"

He said, "Make a list of the jobs and the people concerned with them. Start with who should drop dead last." Well, that says it quite succinctly, doesn't it?

So make your list. Start with the most important thing at the top. But before that, beloved, look up and say, "Dear Lord, sharpen my mind ... give me Your thoughts about this thing I'm about to do ... and help me to do it well, for Your glory." Then go from item to item in the same spirit of commitment and expectancy.

Often we waste time by doing something that is easy, but unimportant.

## **Time For People**

So far we've been talking about doing things and the time required to do them. Let me remind you that our human contacts-that likewise take time-are very important. The way we interact with other people, whether on a business, social, family or personal level, invariably calls for prime time. Every contact with another human being should be construed as an opportunity to use time for God.

Buy up the opportunities. Use them for eternal worth. That does not mean you will go around "being religious" all the time. It does mean that you can dedicate the whole of your day, every split second of it as they occur one after another, to your Lord and Saviour. In so doing, my friend, you will be a living sermon to the people around you, and I might add a very effective one.

## **Wise In Perception**

Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

The word "unwise" might be translated mindless, lacking in adequate mental content. It also can mean senseless, foolish, stupid. "Understanding" means, in present-day vernacular, getting it all together. What the writer is saying (in our everyday language) is this: Don't be mindless, blank, drifting lazily through life. Pay attention actively. Bring the precepts of the Word of God "all together" in every aspect of your daily living.

How is this to be done?

## Turn To The Word

Our blessed Lord said, "Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life and these are they which testify of me."

God never will lead you to do anything that contradicts His revealed truth.

You will save yourself hours of agonizing questions if you will simply look up what the Bible says about the subject that presently concerns you. For example:

**Situation:** You are in love with this boy. He is unsaved. Should you marry him?

**The Word:** *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6:14).*

**Situation:** Your children are unrestrained by discipline. You believe that even at young ages they should make their own choices and decisions.

**The Word:** *"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). God said of Abraham, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord ... that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken to him" (Gen. 18:19).*

But what do you do if the Bible does not speak specifically to a given problem? After reading the Word, and taking time to meditate on it, you seek by prayer that direction that you need for your particular case. James 1:5 says, *"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally ... and it shall be given him."*

## Talk To The Lord

Whatever your need, first read your Bible and study it. Next, get on your knees and pray about the problem in the light of the Word.

**Be specific.** I have found that this method works quickly and well. At one time I was faced with about six job options. Following the rule I have given you, I studied the Word for my own soul's sake, not seeking any formula. Then I got down on my knees and began to pray, listing the possibilities on a legal-size pad in columns under "pro" and "con." You would be surprised at how quickly the Lord screened out certain things and those options immediately dropped out of contention. Finally there was just one choice: I made it, and have been glad ever since.

## Take The Next Step

If you want to put your act together and really know God's will, first look into His Word. Second, talk to the Lord specifically. And third, do what you know now to be God's will. It's pretty hard to steer a truck that is standing still. It is impossible for God to guide you as long as you procrastinate about that initial step of faith. Don't just stand around, waiting and wondering and complaining. God leads you as you move. Do the thing (small though it may be) that you know now to be the will of -God. He will show you the next step. Take this example:

The Apostle Paul yearned to go far afield with the gospel, but doors were closed. Dr. Luke tells the story in Acts 16, about the movements of that little missionary party.

They had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia and were forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia.

So what did they do? They kept going!

*"After they were come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia. But the Spirit suffered [allowed] them not."*

But they kept on going!

*"They passed by Mysia and came to Troas, and a vision appeared to Paul in the night: There stood a man of Macedonia and prayed [pled with him] saying, come over into Macedonia and help us. After he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go [there's the action word] into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them" (Acts 16:6-10).*

The will of God is bound up with faith and obedience. As long as you are willing to obey God, a step at a time, He is willing to lead you. If the doors close, don't try to batter them down; go to the next one. Very simple! Very glorious!

You say: How do I know if I am really in God's will? The faithful Spirit of God will always tell you when you are either not praying in the Spirit or not acting in the Spirit. *"The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit,"* the Word says. You can depend upon it: He will do His work well.

We have seen that we are to be wise in the use of time and wise in understanding, that is,

spiritual perception. Now we come to a well known verse that has to do with inner spiritual equipment described by the word “filled,” and we are told to be wise in that area too.

## **Wise In Equipment**

Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit. Here are two commands. Let’s look at the negative one first: *“Be not drunk with wine.”*

I suppose none of us needs to argue the point that you ought not to get drunk. The excesses that accompany drunkenness are many: sadness, violence, selfishness, lust, and so forth. Paul says in effect, stay away from anything that leads to these things.

## **Personal Responsibility**

There is a resurgence in these days of social drinking among evangelicals -a trend that I personally deplore. I think this practice can do nothing but harm. First, it may lead a potential alcoholic to indulge-to his or her ultimate ruin. And second, it weakens the testimony of the individual Christian and of the church in the eyes of the world.

You may argue successfully that a glass of sherry before a meal (or a cocktail, or whatever) does you no harm. You may also point out that this practice has nothing to do with your salvation, and you would be right. But there could be someone across the table from you who is a potential alcoholic and by observing that one drink of yours he or she might be pushed right over the cliff into alcoholism and tragedy and death. I don’t think it’s worth paying that price, do you?

In the same sentence the apostle continues, *“Be filled with the Spirit.”* What are we to learn from that comparison?

When you partake of an alcoholic beverage, the alcohol immediately affects your higher brain centers that have to do with reasoning and judgment. (The centers governing motor impulses are affected secondarily.)

What the apostle is saying is this: Just as alcohol takes over the management of your reasoning and judgment and conduct, so let the Holy Spirit control the whole of you.

You remember that on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came to the baby church where a few believers were gathered together in an upper room. In a short time, great numbers had



come together who concluded, “*these men are full of new wine!*” In other words, they’re drunk! No, this was not the case, but they were under the complete control of the Holy Spirit.

## **The Spirit’s Work**

Let me stop here long enough to tell you that, in my opinion, the Holy Spirit does two things that can never be duplicated by human effort:

Number 1, *He produces Christian character*, and Number 2, *He gives power for witnessing*.

Look at the first result of this ministry.

In the book of Galatians, chapter 5, we have a list of qualities that are called “the fruit of the Spirit” - love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control. Only the Spirit of God can produce this “fruit.” Every kind of human attempt at spirituality can only produce a counterfeit. But exactly to the extent that your life is under the control of the Holy Spirit will these good qualities emerge.

Anything that is dependent upon human effort will be subject, in time, to weariness and stoppage on your part. Take a simple illustration.

We have all seen children (often our own!) who have been briefed before company came, lined up and lectured to and told, “It’s very important that you behave while Mr. So-and-so is here.”

The children are models of politeness for say an hour of that visit. Then they get tired of maintaining that respectable facade and they revert to type. They become a little more noisy, perhaps a quarrel erupts between two of them, and something is knocked over with a resounding crash. The process of being children is now back on track. They were exerting an effort to be well-behaved for a while, but finally they became their own selves when they gave up trying.

We grown-ups, like little children, try to approximate the qualifications, the characteristics, of the Christian life. For a while we may be able to put a good face on the matter. But then we get tired of trying, and at that point the whole effort is lost.

Instead of that ever-failing human attempt, you may have the continuing miracle of the indwelling Spirit of God. When you received the Lord Jesus as Saviour, at that point the Holy

Spirit came to live within you and to begin His work of transmuting the various-attributes of deity into your own personality-love, joy, peace, and the rest. No one but the Holy Spirit can accomplish this change.

The other thing that the Holy Spirit does that can never be duplicated is this: He gives power for witnessing. Our Lord Jesus said in Acts 1:8:

*“Ye shall receive POWER after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be WITNESSES unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the utter most part of the earth.”*

It is the Holy Spirit who gives the ability, the power, the authority, the dynamic that leads to fruitful witnessing for the Saviour.

I submit to you that in those early days after Pentecost, every time the apostles opened their mouths to speak about Jesus, their witness had power and there was an immediate reaction. In some cases the response was murderous in its intent. In other instances it was thoughtful and accepting. (“Men and brethren, what shall we do?”) But whenever the Lord’s representatives spoke of Him, they were filled with divine power and their witness issued in a verdict on the part of those who heard.

Now then, we come back to Paul’s command: “Be not drunk with wine ... but be filled with the Spirit.” When your life is controlled by the Spirit of God your character will be modified heaven-ward and your witness will be powerful.

The apostle gives us further insight into this matter of our walking wisely as the children of God.

## **Wise In Fellowship**

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

“Speaking to yourselves” has to do with Christian fellowship. You cannot be what is called a lone wolf, a recluse, and at the same time be as effective a witness for God as He wants you to be.

Granted that some of us are solitary by nature. We do not mix easily with a crowd. Others are

what we call gregarious; to be in the center of bustling human activity makes them happy. All right. Let's lay aside the fact that human beings do differ in their reactions to others, and there is no point in your attempting to be something that you are not.

But, my friend, you and I, no matter what our type of personality, need each other. There is something you can say or do - in your quietness or in your enthusiastic outreach - that is capable of making me a better person.

I have said sincerely to some of my friends, "After I have been with you, I want to be a better person."

Would you give a little thought today, beloved, to your contact with people, other Christians particularly? Would you ask yourself this question: What touch am I to have, by God's grace, on others-to encourage and strengthen them?

## **Strengthening One Another**

We need to get together as Christians, not simply because we like each other and enjoy companionship, although that may very well be true and ought to be. We also need to join our hearts for the purpose of sharing the things of God and thus strengthening each other in the faith.

How is this done? The apostle suggests several means: by psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, and the singing heart.

A psalm is the utterance of formal worship. The atmosphere of worship needs to pervade your life all week long, not just on Sunday. That does not mean that you will go to work singing "Holy, Holy, Holy" or "Unfold, Ye Portals Everlasting." There are situations that do not allow formal praise. The Scriptures do not teach that you must be officially religious. The Word does teach that when you contact others the presence of God should be so real to you that a bond is created based on Him and His Word.

So there you have the formula:

*Psalms - the Word of God.*

*Hymns - a worshipful expression of praise to God in music.*

*Spiritual songs - what we might call gospel music.*

*Heart melody - praise offered by us who cannot carry a tune.*

Remember, a happy singing heart is capable of limitless cheer to others. Some people have, as my friend Roy McCandless says, the gift of discouragement-they are gloomy by nature. But others possess such a wholesome and continuing touch with the Lord that their hearts sing for joy, and when you meet them that joy spills over.

Oh, cultivate a singing heart - full of the music of the redeemed! Why? Because if you have that kind of spirit within you, others will be benefited and God will be glorified.

## **Wise In The Expression Of Gratitude**

Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanks ... always ... for all things. Oh, that's a big order, isn't it? How can you be thankful for something that breaks your heart? How can you praise God for that occurrence that gives every evidence of being a tragedy?

Humanly, I don't think you can!

But in the enablement of the Holy Spirit, each of us can thank God for what He is doing sovereignly (though we may not understand it). We can thank Him because, beloved, we know that God will never ask any of us to do anything that is not good from His viewpoint of all-wisdom, and that He will not also help us to do.

Suppose I have a broken leg. Am I to shout, "Hooray! Look what's happened to me"?

No, I can't rejoice in the pain, the inconvenience, the disruption of my plans and the plans of others. But I can - honestly and sincerely - praise God because I know that He means this very circumstance to bring blessing into my life and the lives of others.

## **Give Thanks-To Whom?**

As I see it, God is not particularly eager to receive thanks, as such, from us. But He does want us to acknowledge who He is - God, the Almighty One. And gratitude to Him is the natural response to that perception and acceptance.

This truth is borne out in Romans 1 where a picture is painted of unregenerated humankind.

God's quarrel with the heathen is not that they are heathen, but that they refuse to give Him His rightful status as God and (consequently) they do not ever thank Him.

Look at Romans 1 :21: *"When they KNEW God, they glorified him not AS GOD."*

The preceding verse indicated that enough knowledge of God, in Nature and elsewhere has been available "from the foundation of the world" so that all men are "without excuse" in relation to God's commands.

The lesson is plain: Let God be GOD. Acknowledge His sovereignty, yield to His will, rejoice in His working. It is always "for good."

If you will do this, there will arise in your heart a lovely spirit of thankfulness with power to strengthen and heal.

## **Give Thanks-How?**

Remember, you cannot make yourself be thankful. The ability to give thanks to God for all things is the result of your letting the blessed Spirit of God work unhindered in and through you.

Let me ask you: Are you bitter about something today, even a little bit? (Who of us has not felt that way at some time or another?) Is there a relationship that has been fractured, a marriage that is breaking up, a tragedy that touches you or your family?

Just look up and say, "Dear Father, teach me to thank You even in things that are unpleasant or that break my heart."

Oh, I know, somebody will say, "Brother Cook, you don't know what I'm going through."

Of course I don't. How can I? I don't live inside your skin. You do.

And so it is you that feels the weight of whatever experience there is at this point. But I can lead you gently-and I'm trying to do that-to the place where you will look up and say, "God, I don't like this that is happening to me. I don't think that humanly I can take it. But please, for Jesus' sake, give me the spirit of thanks and praise to You" even in this."

**And He will!**

Years ago, when our children were young, I came home on one occasion after having preached as hard as I could in a very demanding series of meetings. I was bone tired and mentally exhausted.

Instead of the quiet renewal that I had yearned for, I came home to find that an accident had befallen one of the children - there was a broken bone to be tended to and things in the household were in bad shape.

I remember saying to the Lord, "Why did this have to happen now? I've been doing my best-giving out the Word, going for souls, sparing nothing. I come home dead tired and there is no rest in sight. Why?"

Right at this point the faithful Holy Spirit reminded me of this verse, "Giving thanks always for all things unto God, and the Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."

I stopped in my pacing, my praying and my complaining and looked up and said, "Dear Lord, I don't like this situation, but by faith I am going to thank You for what You are doing."

In that instant my heart was filled with sweetness and love for God and acceptance of the situation, so that I could once again think clearly, seeing exactly what to do next.

## **Give Thanks-In The Dark**

The miracle of the Christian life is that every experience that comes your way has upon it the touch of God. There are no accidents, no happenstances to those who belong to God by faith in Jesus Christ.

I often think of those five young men who were martyred in the South American jungle a good many years ago. The entire civilized world began (figuratively) clucking its tongue and saying, "What a pity! What a waste of young talent! Why didn't those fellows stay in the city, where they could be appreciated, and send someone else to the jungle?"

Yes, five choice young men were snatched from this life and taken to be with the Lord Jesus, their bodies later retrieved from the river and the sandbar at the jungle's edge.

Did God make a mistake in allowing this to happen? Oh, no. The full benefit of the combined sacrifice of those lives will never be known on earth. But already we can trace the result to hundreds of young people who have committed themselves to God for work on mission fields - all

because of the challenge of those laid-down lives.

Does God know what He is doing? Yes, He does! *“Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.”* He Himself said:

*“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end”* (Jer. 29:11).

The key to gratitude toward God is two-fold: First, realize that you have a loving Heavenly Father who knows what He is doing; and second, commit yourself to His will, even though you may not understand it.

## **Gratitude vs. Rebellion**

Note the words, *“Giving thanks unto God.”*

One of the essential components of sinful human nature is rebellion. The crowd demanding Jesus' crucifixion declared, *“We will not have this man to reign over us.”*

Going back further, consider the attitude of our first parents in the Garden of Eden. Simply expressed it was this: *“We think we can do better for ourselves by disobeying God - so why should we obey Him?”* Rebellion!

This is the devil's ancient lie, and he is still using it. Today that Satanic falsehood is called secular humanism. It is being taught in schools and colleges and universities in this country and around the world. It is a kind of godless religion that defies human nature, banishes God, and scorns every kind of absolute principle or heavenly law.

The essence of fallen human nature is rebellion, and the essence of the new nature - obtained through faith in Christ - is submission and obedience: *“giving thanks always for all things unto God.”* Contrary to the views of modern intellectuals, we are not dealing simply with forces of the universe, but with a Person who is God! He appeared to Abraham and said, *I am almighty God. Walk before me and be thou perfect. “He is everlastingly almighty God.”*

## Give Thanks For The Father

Now note the second phrase, *“unto God and the Father.”* Obviously, it is not two persons but two aspects of the divine character that are in view here: He is not only the Creator and Maintainer of the universe but He is also a loving Heavenly Father. To His followers Jesus spoke of Him as *“your father in heaven.”* He said that the pattern of their praying (and ours) needs to begin with an acknowledgment of the Father/child relationship: *“Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.”*

O beloved child of God, get hold of this. He is your Father.

Our Lord Jesus said concerning Him: *“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him” (Matt. 7:11)?*

Earlier in Matthew 7 Jesus draws a picture of loving, caring parents, and He does this by asking a series of questions: If your child wanted bread, would you give him a stone? If he was hungry for fish, would you offer him a viper instead? If he asked for an egg, would you give him a scorpion?

The answer, of course, is “No, no, no!” Why?

Because it is the nature of a true father to give good things to his children.

So what the apostle is saying in our text is clear. You have a Father in heaven. He cares for you. He is going to give you only that which is best for you. That being the case, you can honestly and sincerely thank Him for what He gives though you may not understand the reason for it, or relish the taste of the “medicine” at the time.

## Give Thanks For Jesus

Now look at the last phrase of our verse: *“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

What is it that connects you, a finite human being, with infinite providence and the compassion of the Heavenly Father? It is your relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ.

As your Savior He pleads your cause before a holy God. As your Redeemer He snatches you out of the slave market of sin and frees you to “stand fast in the liberty wherein Christ hath



made us free.”

Jesus is the One in whose merits you have the right to come into the very presence of a thrice holy God. He is the One who, by means of the Holy Spirit indwelling you, can produce the kind of life that honors and glorifies God.

If I am speaking in these pages today to someone who has never made the Lord Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior, please remember that all that it takes to establish this relationship is a call on your part.

*“Call unto me,”* God says, *“and I will answer”* (Jer. 33:3). *“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (Rom. 10:13).

In this moment, look up and ask the Lord Jesus Christ to become your Savior and Lord. Commit yourself to Him in faith and in love and see what He will do in transforming your life and making you indeed a happy child of God.

Thank God for Jesus! He makes all of this possible.

What is the next step in living wisely? You may feel that this is a shocker.

## **Wise In Submission**

Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

“Submitting” -that’s an interesting word. In the Greek it is *hupotasso*, “to place under,” or “to place in submission.” The implication here is that to submit is something you and I must do in relation to other people. We hear a great deal about one’s standing up for his rights, but not much about foregoing them. In our everyday arguments, how much of eternal significance is involved? How much is worth dying for? Not very much! But how do we go about this matter of submitting to other individuals?

After I had grown up and dared then to ask my father some questions never posed when I was younger, I said to him one day, “Pop, you have a very forceful personality. You call it your ‘positive nature.’ (And I chuckled.) How in the world did you and my mother get along so well, as everyone says was the case? Didn’t you ever quarrel?”

He thought a moment. “No, Boy, I don’t think we ever did quarrel. When I said or did anything that she disagreed with, she would explain to me, very carefully,

how she felt, and then she would add, 'Whatever you want, dear,' and I'd end up doing it her way."

There was a very wise lady.

Of course, not every "explanation" has that kind of result. But I can tell you this: The person who is willing to yield suffers far less trauma than the one who is not.

## **Submitting, Not Quibbling**

People say to me rather belligerently, "What do you want me to be, a doormat to be walked on?"

No, not that. I am only urging you to put in perspective the things that really count. There are some things you must not yield.

If someone asks you to give up your faith in Jesus, let that one stand you against a wall and shoot you before you will renounce allegiance to your blessed Lord. If someone suggests that you trim the truth on the job (or wherever) and lie in order to protect or benefit somebody, you must take your stand and say, "No, I'll tell the truth whatever happens."

But there are thousands of other issues in daily life that are not worth quibbling about. In dealing with these things, explain your point of view lovingly, clearly, and without heat. Then be willing for whatever outcome may follow. Remember this: Our individual concepts and our convenience can easily be sacrificed if it will mean another person will see Christ in us.

Submitting calls for a special kind of action. The willingness to go out of your way cheerfully to help other people, without being asked to do so, is one of the great trademarks of Christian faith in action. This may require you to take a back seat, to play second fiddle, to let the other person have his way - all to the end that Jesus Christ may be honored and glorified through your life.

## **The Ultimate In Submission**

Note the last words in our verse: "... in the fear of God." That is the wording in the King James Version. My Greek New Testament shows: "... in the fear of Christ."

The Lord Jesus is GOD, just as truly as is God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. The literal translation gives us a shade of meaning that someone has paraphrased this way: "Honor Christ

by submitting to each other.” How do you honor the Lord Jesus?

First, you honor Him by confessing Him as Savior and Lord:

*“If thou shalt CONFESS with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou SHALT BE SAVED” (Rom. 10:9).*

Second, you honor Him by obeying Him. Jesus said:

*“Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say” (Lk. 6:46)?*

You and I are not under each other’s command but under God’s authority. The result of this relationship is that the heavenward stance on our part - submission to our Lord - produces flexibility in our relationships with people.

The passage speaks of the “fear of God.” This is not craven, crawling, abject dread. You are not afraid of God in this sense. The meaning is, rather, that of holy respect and awe. When that condition obtains, the everyday contacts you have with people will reflect the perfections of the Lord Jesus Christ-perhaps in small but certainly significant ways.

This whole matter of submission rests upon the fact that God does appoint some people to lead and others to follow. First Peter, chapter 5, brings out this truth. After listing the qualifications of both “elders” and “younger” ones, and describing their duties, the writer adds:

*“Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility” (1 Pet. 5:5).*

What does that mean? It means:

First, that you realize that the person you are dealing with is the product of God’s creative skill and is therefore of infinite concern and value to God.

Second, that you are aware that you yourself cannot achieve God’s perfect will in your own life without a proper relationship to other people. Nobody- but nobody-is an island to himself. You need other people and you need God; this is the essence of humility.

Remember this: Our allegiance, first and always, is to God. That being the case, we consciously desire to adjust to people around us because they are precious to Him and because they are useful to our learning.

We make room, therefore, for differences of opinion, of procedure, and even of promotion.

Opinions: People see any given situation in a variety of ways. We need to respect the views of others.

Procedures also may differ. For example, to take our American concept of evangelism and seek to apply it in some other country may often result in failure. We need to be watchful lest we offend other believers by insisting on doing things in our way.

Finally, in this matter of our submitting to one another we need to make room for the other person's advancement.

Somebody comes to town, Pastor, and starts a work near yours. Soon he has more people in Sunday School than you have, more in the worship services. Your deacons say to you plaintively,

"Why can't we do as well as Pastor Blow down the street?"

It's pretty hard for you to pray for that pastor, isn't it? - hard to say, "God bless him."

Everything depends on who it is that you are serving. If it is God, then you make room in your thinking and in your attitudes for the other person to get a little more exposure than you do, a little more praise. Instead of saying, "Lord, get him out of my way," you learn to beseech the Father for His blessing on people who seem to be having it better than you are. You will be surprised what this kind of praying will do for the temperature of your own soul.

We have been talking about how to live wisely, following the formula that the Apostle Paul has given. We have seen that the rules relate to areas intensely practical, involving:

*Use of time*

*Development of perspective*

*Procurement of equipment*

*Expression of gratitude*

*Value of submission*

Our attention to these matters is to be constant, not sporadic: "See that ye WALK ... as wise" -not "race," not "fly," not "saunter" but WALK. Ours is a daily exercise, simple yet profound.

I pray that each of us, freshly aware of the dear Savior's nearness and the enablement of the faithful Holy Spirit, and with our hands in the Father's firm grasp, may learn more and more each day what a joy it is to walk wisely.

