

Walking Circumspectly: Squirrels, Snakes, and Boards

Ephesians 5:15 (KJV), “*See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise...*” I’m not a big fan of the King James Version of the Bible. My preference away from it has more to do with antiquated language than perceived inaccuracies of translation. But in this particular verse (and a few others also, though for different reasons), I actually prefer the KJV to the more modern-language versions because it uses the word ***circumspectly***. None of the other major translations utilize this particular word; instead, they generally use words that convey the idea of “walking *carefully*”- which is OK, but not as good as it could be. Let me explain further.

Circumspectly is translated from two differing Greek terms: ***blepo***, means *to look or discern with the eye*; and ***akribos***, means *diligently, exactly, or accurately*. So, the literal meaning of *circumspectly* is that of ***looking carefully*** in order to be ***fully aware of your circumstances***. In more simple terms, it means to pay attention where you’re stepping, which in this case, refers to our *walk* of life. Perhaps an illustration will help.

There is nothing that will ruin a good squirrel hunt quicker than for someone in the group to see a snake, or hear one rattle. The reason this ruins the hunt is simple: instead of looking up into the trees where the squirrels are, everyone is now watching the ground where the snakes are! The squirrel hunters are now hunting snakes instead of squirrels, **but they’re walking circumspectly!** Every step, after seeing a snake, hearing one rattle, or even just hearing that someone nearby has seen one, will be taken only after a thorough examination the landing area.

If we further understand that Satan is “*that old serpent*” (Revelation 12:9) who “*beguiled Eve through his subtlety*” (2Corinthians 11:3), then need for *walking circumspectly* is readily apparent. Satan has filled the pathway of life with many dangers. Therefore, for one desiring to please God in his walk of faith, every step must be carefully taken only after a diligent examination of the area into which he’s stepping. To do otherwise, as our verse in Ephesians 5:15 indicated, is “*foolish*” indeed. The problem is that Satan often pays closer attention to our steps than do we.

There once was a sticky note stuck on the bottom of my computer screen on which I jotted a phrase, the source of which has been forgotten. The phrase was this: “falling through the cracks of my attention.” When building a floor, cracks (spaces) are put between the boards for a number of reasons, one of which is to cover more area with fewer boards. But this “stretching” of the wood also means an increased opportunity for things to fall through the cracks, or gaps, between the boards. Now think about our lives as that floor. We keep stretching the boards of our attention farther and farther apart in order to cover more area. But this also increases the opportunity for more and more things to “fall through the cracks of our attention.” Businessmen sometimes say that “the Devil is in the details” of their deals, but this preacher says “The Devil is also in the cracks between the boards of our attention!”

The less attention we pay to the steps we take on the boards of life on which we tread, the greater the opportunity Satan has to “bite” us. And the more we try to stretch the boards of our attention by creating bigger cracks between them, the less “*circumspectly*” we will walk! That is “*unwise*” indeed. Folks, “*walk circumspectly*” and give heed to Ephesians 5:17, “*So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is*”- there’s a Snake out there you know! (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)