

Name of Assembly: United Apostolic Church
Type of service: Bible Study
Date: October 26, 2021
Lesson: **GUARDRAILS**
Scripture Text: Ephesians 5:15-21

“¹⁵ See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, ¹⁶ Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; ¹⁹ Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; ²⁰ Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹ Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.” – Ephesians 5:15-21.

“¹⁵⁻¹⁶ So be careful how you act; these are difficult days. Don’t be fools; be wise: make the most of every opportunity you have for doing good. ¹⁷ Don’t act thoughtlessly, but try to find out and do whatever the Lord wants you to. ¹⁸ Don’t drink too much wine, for many evils lie along that path; be filled instead with the Holy Spirit and controlled by him. ¹⁹ Talk with each other much about the Lord, quoting psalms and hymns and singing sacred songs, making music in your hearts to the Lord. ²⁰ Always give thanks for everything to our God and Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²¹ Honor Christ by submitting to each other.” – Ephesians 5:15-21 (TMB)

INTRODUCTION

The **guardrail** is a system that is designed to keep vehicles from straying into dangerous or off-limit areas. Guardrails are needed in the following areas:

1. **Bridges** - a place where there is little margin for error.



2. **Medians** - when we are close to people driving in the opposite direction.



3. **Curves** - when we encounter unexpected changes in roadside conditions.



The interesting thing about Guardrails is that they are not located in the most dangerous place – that place is just beyond the guardrail. Rather, guardrails are in a place of safety, to keep us from moving into dangerous areas. Nobody argues the point and says, *“I don’t know why they put guardrails around the edge of the bridge. They need to take the guardrails off, because I could drive closer to the edge of the bridge if they would just move the silly guardrails.”*

We understand in driving that there needs to be some margin for error. Guardrails are our “margin for error.” The theory behind a guardrail is that you will do **less damage to your body, and even in some cases less damage to your car, if you hit a guardrail than if you hit what was on the other side of the guardrail, or if you went off the side of something that would cause damage to you or your car.** So, the whole idea is it’s okay to cause a little bit of damage to keep you from creating and experiencing a lot of damage, either to your physical body or to your car.

The highway isn’t the only place that we need guardrails. Some of our greatest regrets in life could have been avoided if we had constructed some guardrails in those areas of our lives.

DEFINING GUARDRAILS

In the context of this lesson, guardrails are standards that should be viewed in the following three categories:

1. **Bible standards** – the direct commands of Scripture.,
2. **Church standards** – places where our spiritual leadership applies biblical principles to contemporary issues,

3. **Personal standards** – our own guardrails prompted by the Holy Spirit, which may or may not apply to anyone else.

The intentions of these are to keep us from straying into dangerous or off-limit areas.

FUNCTIONS OF GUARDRAILS

- ⇒ Guardrails function as a **WARNING** signal.
- ⇒ There is **SOME** damage done when you hit a guardrail, but not nearly as much as if the guardrail wasn't there. Guardrails take the **IMPACT**, so that you have a small crash rather than a big crash.
- ⇒ Guardrails let us have “**conscience crashes**” instead of “**life crashes**” – they are “**instructive**” rather than “**destructive.**”
- ⇒ When you hit a physical guardrail, **you stop before you hit the ditch**; when you hit a moral guardrail **you stop before you commit SIN**.
- ⇒ We can all agree on the **ULTIMATE** danger areas, but without guardrails we have no way to keep from straying into them!

GUARDRAILS ARE NECESSARY FOR SUCCESS

Good fathers set up guardrails for their children, and our Heavenly Father does the same thing if we'll follow His prompting.

The culture of this world considers guardrails to be unnecessary and sadly many Christians feels that way too. This view is not just the height of stupidity it is very dangerous. However, we are not the first generation to face this issue, in Ephesians 5, the Apostle Paul gives a list of commandments and instructions that are hard-hitting:

¹ “Be ye therefore **followers of God**, as dear children; ² And **walk in love**, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savor. ³ But **fornication**, and **all uncleanness**, or **covetousness**, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; ⁴ Neither **filthiness**, nor **foolish talking**, nor **jesting**, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. ⁵ For this ye know, that no **whoremonger**, nor **unclean person**, nor **covetous** man, who

¹ “**Follow God’s example in everything you do** just as a much loved child imitates his father. ² **Be full of love for others**, following the example of Christ who loved you and gave himself to God as a sacrifice to take away your sins. And God was pleased, for Christ’s love for you was like sweet perfume to him. ³ Let there be **no sex sin, impurity** or **greed** among you. Let no one be able to accuse you of any such things. ⁴ **Dirty stories, foul talk**, and **coarse jokes**—these are not for you. Instead,

is an **idolater**, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the **wrath of God upon the children of disobedience**.

7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them.

8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: **walk as children of light**: **9** (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)

10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

11 And **have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness**, but rather reprove them. **12** For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret” – Ephesians 5:1-12.

remind each other of God’s goodness, and be thankful. **5** You can be sure of this: The Kingdom of Christ and of God will never belong to anyone who is **impure** or **greedy**, for **a greedy person is really an idol worshiper**—he loves and worships the good things of this life more than God. **6 Don’t be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins**, for the terrible wrath of God is upon all those who do them. **7** Don’t even associate with such people. **8** For though once your heart was full of darkness, now it is full of light from the Lord, and your behavior should show it! **9** Because of this light within you, you should do only what is good and right and true. **10** Learn as you go along what pleases the Lord. **11 Take no part in the worthless pleasures of evil and darkness**, but instead, rebuke and expose them. **12** It would be shameful even to mention here those pleasures of darkness that the ungodly do” – Ephesians 5:1-12 (TLB).

We can only keep these commands by submitting to the guardrails that are established in the **Word of God**, those that are established by your **Church leadership** and those that you have **personal established** because of the promptings of the Holy Ghost.

Here’s where Paul tells us how to do that:

⇒ **“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise”** - Ephesians 5:15.

- Be careful how you walk! Walking circumspectly is like walking through a yard where animals live – watch where you step!
- Not as unwise (careless), but as wise (careful). Don’t think “is it right or is it wrong?” – think “is it the WISE thing to do?”

⇒ **“Redeeming the time, because the days are evil”** - Ephesians 5:16

- Redeeming the time (“kairos”) – being intentional about how you live, because you are living in dangerous times and dangerous places.

⇒ **“Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is”** - Ephesians 5:17.

- The will of God is not some new personal interpretations of scriptures.
- Understand what God’s will is! How do you obey that command? By facing up to what we already know in our heart that God wants us to do!
- We must stop deceiving ourselves – just obey God’s prompting!

- “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” – Psalm 119:11.
- We know what is on the other side of this guardrail so we must be honest!
- All of us have the tendency to get as close to the line as possible. We say, “Is it a sin to ...?” but what we are really asking is, “How close can I get to sin without sinning?” That’s the wrong question!

⇒ “**And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit**” - Ephesians 5:18.

- Paul says, “Put up a guardrail!” Christians, don’t drink wine excessively because it leads to extreme indulgence and a loss of control. “Excess” literally means “un-wholeness.”
- This principle is not just about alcohol! ANYTHING that leads us TOWARD indulgence of the flesh or toward a lack of control of our appetites is wrong for us as Christians!
- Our Heavenly Father is against it for the same reason a good earthly father would be against it – he knows where it could lead us! (This is why our parents closely monitored our friendships when we were growing up.)
- ANY area in our lives where we tend to hand control over to someone or something else is an area where we need to have a GUARDRAIL!
- INSTEAD, “**be filled with the SPIRIT**” – God wants to be the preeminent influencer in our lives. That’s why we NEED to be FILLED with the Holy Ghost!

⇒ “**Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord**” - Ephesians 5:19

- Guardrails are also personal (and often private) convictions. This verse is about exhorting and encouraging YOURSELF to live as unto the Lord, even when no one else knows about your guardrail.
- Earlier in the lesson, I told you that **guardrails are standards that should be viewed in three categories**, namely, (1) Bible standards – the direct commands of Scripture, (2) Church standards – places where our spiritual leadership applies biblical principles to contemporary issues and (3) Personal standards – our own GUARDRAILS prompted by the Holy Spirit, which may or may not apply to anyone else.

Let’s briefly consider these categories:

⇒ **Bible standards – the direct commands of Scripture.**

- Many acts are specifically mentioned as being wrong in the Bible. One list of such things is found in Gal. 5:19-21: “¹⁹ *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,* ²⁰ *Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,* ²¹ *Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*”

- A similar list is also reference in Ephesians 5:3-7, “³ *But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;* ⁴ *Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.* ⁵ *For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.* ⁶ *Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.* ⁷ *Be not ye therefore partakers with them.*”
- As far as Christians are concerned, the things that have been mentioned in these two verses along with several other areas of scriptures settles the question. **There is no room for debate when the Bible clearly condemns these practices.**
- There are times that we find it difficult to decipher if a thing is expressly condemned in the Bible. This is when we must examine if the thing is **like things condemned in the Bible**. In Galatians 5:21 Paul includes the phrase “**and such like**” in completing the list of the **work of the flesh**.
- When we are uncertain about some matter, we should ask whether it is **like** any sins specifically mentioned. We might even compare it with the **fruit of the Spirit** mentioned in **Galatians 5:22-23**. Is the matter in question more like the “**fruit of the Spirit**” (that which is good) or the “**works of the flesh**” (that which is evil)?

⇒ **Church standards** – places where spiritual leadership applies biblical principles to modern-day issues.

- The implementation of Church standards is biblical. In fact, failure to have established standards that for the congregation is a dereliction of duty.
- Standards are designed to protect and provide guidance to all members, especially to new believers who do not yet understand our Scriptural lifestyle convictions. They are also implemented to help in achieving and maintain unity among the congregation.
- The early church was enjoined to seek perfection in church life by walking by the same rule and minding the same thing. “¹⁶ *Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.* ¹⁷ *Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample*” – Philippians 3:16-17. The congregation at Philippi had worked things out as for their faith and practice. Someone seeking to be perfect was instructed to walk in step with the rest.
- The early church also had “traditions,” which were a unified approach to cultural challenges. Church members were disciplined if they violated these traditions. “⁶ **Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.** ⁷ For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; ⁸ Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that

we might not be chargeable to any of you: ⁹ Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. ¹⁰ **For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.** ¹¹ **For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.** ¹² **Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.** ¹³ But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. ¹⁴ And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. ¹⁵ **Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother**” – 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15. The consequence for those who did not comply with these “**traditions**” was that they were brought under the discipline of the church. In the setting of the church at Thessalonica, the pressure from the culture in that day was to be lazy and not work to provide for oneself. The church took a position against that.

- The early church ordained elders who were responsible to maintain order in the churches. “¹² **And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;** ¹³ **And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.** ¹⁴ **Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men**” - 1Th 5:12-14.
- “**Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation... Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you**” – Hebrews 13:7, 17. The ultimate objective of **United Apostolic Church** is for all members to live the **Biblical standard of holiness**, fulfil the requirements of **true discipleship** and fulfill the **Great Go Mission**. In doing so, we will be among those who are found faithful at the glorious appearing of our great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.
- It is obvious to all of us that church authority can be abused. Last week we heard of the cultic practices of a supposedly religious group in Jamaica. It is alleged that two members of that group were offered sacrificial during their Sunday meeting. After this happened, we have heard of some strange demands that were made by the leader. Obviously, these were all signs of what was to happen.
- When there is church discipline that does not relate to holiness of life but is merely about maintaining control over members, then the leaders themselves will come under God’s judgment. Additionally, congregations must be careful not to become worshippers of religious leaders because when this happens, blindness and destruction will ensue. Consider this example of abuse of church authority from the early church. “⁹ **I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.** ¹⁰ **Wherefore, if I come, I will**

remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. ¹¹ Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God” – 3 John 1:9-11.

- In Jeremiah 35 we read about the Rechabites and their commitment to the standards that was set by Jonadab. “The word which came unto Jeremiah from the Lord in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying, ²Go unto the house of the Rechabites, and speak unto them, and bring them into the house of the Lord, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink. ⁵And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups, and I said unto them, Drink ye wine. ⁶But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever...⁸Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters; ¹²Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, ¹³Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith the Lord. ¹⁴The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me. ¹⁸And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you: ¹⁹Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.”

⇒ **Personal standards** – are our own guardrails prompted by the Holy Spirit, which may or may not apply to anyone else.

- These standards are specific to us because of our own personal struggles or because of a commitment that we have made to the Lord.
- Pastor Jones in one his sermons, shared with us about a brother who was at a social church event where cards were been played. When the brother was invited to play, he informed the others that he would not participate. Why? Prior to being saved he used to use cards to gamble, and he decided never play cards again.

⇒ **“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” - Ephesians 5:20.**

