

Ephesians 5:14 For this reason it says, “Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you.”

The origin of the quotation within verse 14 is probably (1) a combination of different Old Testament passages comprised of verses such as Isaiah 60:1 (2) a hymn from the early church. Whatever the case, a child of darkness is a “*sleeper*” in need of an awakening (Ephesians 5:14; 1Thessalonians 5:4-6). He is “*dead*” (Ephesians 5:14) due to his sin nature inherited from Adam (Ephesians 2:1-3; Romans 5:17), but not so dead that he is a spiritual corpse (reference commentary associated with Ephesians 2:1). Only through accepting Christ, “*the light of the world*” (John 8:12; 9:5), does God make him a child of light (Ephesians 5:13b, 8).

Ephesians 5:15—Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise,

Paul wrote to his readers, “*be careful how you walk*”; for the unwise “*walk*” carelessly while the wise “*walk*” sensibly. Wisdom can be defined as “the ability to view life from God’s perspective,” or “the correct use of knowledge.” Only believers possess wisdom, receiving their first measure of wisdom at salvation (Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 9:10; 1Corinthians 1:30). Their wisdom is enlarged as they mature in the faith (Colossians 1:9)—even Jesus grew in wisdom (Luke 2:52). The value of wisdom is limitless (Proverbs 3:13-15), causing James to write:

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. (James 3:17)

Paul encourages his readers to walk wisely (Ephesians 5:15), for to walk otherwise is to play the fool (Proverbs 17:16). What benefit is gained from retaining the behavior we exemplified before believing (Titus 3:3)?

The following verses from Proverbs contrast the fool with those who walk uprightly: 10:8, 23; 12:15; 13:16; 14:16; 15:5; 17:10; 20:3; 24:7; 28:26; 29:11. The wisdom addressed in Proverbs 2 is profound as well.

Ephesians 5:16—making the most of your time, because the days are evil.

We should be “*making the most*” of our “*time*.” “*Making the most*” can also be rendered “redeeming,” meaning in this case “to buy back for one’s self.” “*Time*” can also be interpreted “season” or “opportunity.” Therefore, we are to “buy back for ourselves” every “opportunity” to be used of the Lord through a wise use of the seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, and years of our lives.

One of the greatest advantages of possessing wisdom (Ephesians 5:15) is the proper use of time (Ephesians 5:16). For example, only the wise can develop meaningful, low-maintenance relationships—where time is spent on productive activity rather than wrangling over differences. The wise can also view material possessions from God’s perspective, desiring what is needed rather than what is wanted. In fact, dividing the price of an item by your hourly wage reveals the number of hours required to possess it. The wise walk away when the time investment is excessive. Wisdom also allows its possessors to determine the source of a problem rather than waste precious time on surface (superficial) concerns. Hence, the unwise consume themselves with the fruit of a matter rather than discerning and discarding its root. “*Because the days are evil*” (Ephesians 5:16), to choose the “*excellent*” over the good (Philippians 1:10) is indispensable.

Wisdom is essential to detect the opportunities that cross our paths, for they are seasonal rather than continuous—confirmed vividly by Matthew 25:8-10 and John 9:4. Neither do we know the duration of our days on the earth. Thus, we should take advantage of every moment so we can say with Paul, “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course*” (2Timothy 4:7).

The “*days*” were “*evil*” (Ephesians 5:16) when this epistle was written, but they would worsen. The Romans severely persecuted Christians soon afterwards, many saints losing their lives. The church at Ephesus also “*left*” her “*first love*” (Revelation 2:4) and, sometime during the second century, ceased to exist. Will the church in America heed Paul’s warning and live—or will she lose her first love in the face of ever-increasing evil?

Ephesians 5:17—So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

The “*foolish*” can’t “*understand what the will of the Lord is.*” This privilege is reserved for the wise, who alone can perceive life from God’s perspective—the definition of wisdom.

While the Scriptures give God’s general will for our lives, the Holy Spirit reveals His specific will—but never in violation of the written Word. Wise counsel from godly men and women is also valuable, but it too must agree with the entirety of Scripture. God’s will is that we learn to walk in “*sanctification*” and holiness (1Thessalonians 4:3), for anything that would cause us to walk otherwise is sin:

For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; (1Thessalonians 4:3)

Our time is used wisely while walking in God’s will, for the Spirit’s ability to lead us to the proper place at the proper time is astounding.