

Faith Is Action

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AWAKE! ARISE & SHINE!

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“Wherefore he saith, Awake you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light. See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise; Redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph.5:14-16).

I don’t believe we would get negative responses if we stopped people in the streets, who know nothing about God or the Bible, and ask them, *“Do you think the days we live in are evil?”* I think most, if not all, would say, *“Yes, and they’re getting worse all the time.”* This is why as Christians we are being strongly exhorted to awake from spiritual sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give us light. It also applies to sinners and unbelievers who do not know God, because they are *“dead in trespasses and sins”* (Eph.2:1). But Paul was primarily exhorting saints, and he is not talking about natural sleep.

Wake Up!

The Greek *EGEIRO* refers to a state of *inactivity and apathy*. A

Christian can be going through the motions of being a Christian, going to church and performing good works; yet be asleep spiritually, and not even know it. He has lost his sensitivity to the spiritual stimuli that keep him tuned into the moving of the Holy Spirit.

“Awake from the dead”: The root word in Greek—*NEKROS*—literally means *corpse*. Figuratively, it refers to someone who is *spiritually inactive, inoperative, and without power or life*. A disciple once came to Jesus, saying, *“I will follow you, but first let me go home and bury my father.”* Jesus answered: *“Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead”* (Mt.8:19-22). How can a dead person bury a dead person? A dead person can’t do anything. We understand Jesus wasn’t talking about an actual dead person, *but the spiritually dead*.

Unfortunately, this is the case with many Christians today. Jesus said in Matthew 24:12, one of the signs of the last days would be: *“And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.”* Iniqui-

ty is not only a specific sin, but the indwelling nature of sin—the *bent toward or tendency to sin* that keeps one sinning. The Greek word ANOMIA literally translates *without law or lawlessness*. It means there would be a departure from and disregard for God's laws, the Bible, and Folks, are we seeing this! It means *there is no restrainer*, which allows evil to *abound*. Christians become overwhelmed by the worsening evil everywhere, that has even crept into the church, and just let their hands fall to their sides as if in surrender. Their zeal and love for God's Word begin to wax cold. Note the old English word *wax*—it means there is a *progression*. With progression, you usually are not aware you are going through a process, until one day you look and think, *O wow, I used to be... but now I am...* You have fallen asleep spiritually.

Awake! Arise!

To *arise* means *to stand up*—not just to stand up on your feet in a physical sense, but to stand up *for* or *against something*. You stand *against* something antagonistic to what you're standing *for*. It is used in Matthew 24:7 where Jesus said, "*Nation shall **arise** against nation.*" It expresses *to be at war*. In this case, we are standing *for the light*. In Scripture *light* represents *truth*. There is antagonism here: The kingdom of darkness is at war with the kingdom of light. The powers of Satan are launching a campaign to

destroy people. Jesus said in John 10:10, "*The thief (meaning Satan) comes not but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy, but I have come that you might have life, and that you might have it more abundantly.*" There are people walking around, alive on the outside, but inside they feel dead, empty, confused, and rejected. Jesus said these are works of the devil; he's the one who puts this darkness on people.

Paul loved Ephesus. He stayed at this church longer than any other, three years, and unusual for him to stay so long in one place. When he was saying his goodbyes to the elders, he warned them: "*For this I know, after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.*" We know a wolf is a false prophet, teacher, or preacher. These enemies would come from *without*. He continued: "*Also of your own selves shall men **arise**, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them*" (Acts 20:29-31). Out of your own congregation, *within* the body of Christ, false teachers and preachers will *rise up against the truth*. We expect wolves to try to get in from *without*, but amongst the saints will arise wolves dressed in sheep's clothing, declaring *perverse teachings*. The word *pervert* or *perverse* describes something that is *twisted*, that has been *warped* from its normal, proper shape. Today the Gospel being preached in many churches across America is twisted, warped, and perverse, and "*changes*

the truth of God into a lie" (Rom.1:25). Paul said: "...*Because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. For this cause God shall send them a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie. That they all might be damned who believed not the truth*" (2Thes.2:10-12).

This is why Paul used such strong words in this letter: *Awake! Arise! Shine!* These are commands, and *awake* and *arise* are not the same thing. To *awake* is to come out of spiritual lethargy and apathy. It is to get a vision to see and a burden to act on what is going on in the spiritual realm, and not just sit comfortably in the church and look the other way while the forces of darkness are infiltrating the Church of God. It's why Jesus said, "*When I come, will I find faith in the earth?*" (Lk.8:18). He will find plenty of churches, but will He find churches that are preaching the truth and "*contending for the faith that was once delivered unto the saints*"? (Jude 3). Will He find churches walking in the light?

Arise & Shine!

Paul said in verses 8-11: "*For you were sometimes darkness, but now you are light in the Lord: walk as children of light. For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth; proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.*"

Reprove? You are not supposed to reprove people when they come to church! *They may not come back.* If you reprove people, they are not going to like you. But Paul said, "*But rather, reprove them. For it is a shame to even speak of those things which are done of them in secret*" (v.12). I have made up my mind, that with the strength God gives me in my body, for as long as He gives it to me, I am going to *arise* and sound the alarm, and preach the truth, no matter how unpopular it is. If there are only 10 people in church, I'm going to preach the truth. Sometimes preaching the truth means *reproof*. You can preach five Sundays in a row messages of how much God loves you, wants to bless you, and the sixth Sunday preach against sin, and people will say, "*I'm not going back to that church. All they preach on is sin!*" Well, if you only took a bath once every six weeks... you get the point, don't you?

If you say that you are children of light, then *walk as children of light*. Don't name the name of the Lord, if you're not going to walk as children of light. Don't say you are a child of God, if you are fellowshiping with the works of darkness. If you claim Jesus Christ, then walk according to His Word, that you might *prove* what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. You have the proof in the fruit you bear. When we *awake* out of spiritual apathy, and *arise* to take a stand for the truth—*Christ will give us light.*

He will enlighten us; He will shine His truth on us. The truth will enable us to stand up against the onslaught of the works of darkness.

The prophet Isaiah declared: *“Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon you, and his glory shall be seen upon you”* (Isa.60:1-2).

This was literally fulfilled in the Messiah, Jesus Christ. When we put it together with what Paul said in Ephesians, we see, truly, the darkness of evil has covered the earth and gross darkness its people. Gross darkness is the thickest, deepest, most impenetrable type of darkness, and spiritually it has covered the people’s hearts and minds. Paul said, *“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world (Satan) has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them”* (2Cor.4:3-4).

We must arise—*stand up against* this gross darkness. We can’t just throw up our hands and say, *“Well, that’s how it is today.”* When we stand up against it, God said, *“My light and my glory shall break forth upon you. You will be a light in darkness.”* Wherever the light shines, the darkness has to flee. Evil has to back off. John said in John 1:5, *“And the light shines in darkness, and the darkness **comprehended** it not.”* In

English it means *to perceive, to understand*, but the Greek KATALAMBANO also means *to overcome, to hold down*; this is the definition here. Read it: *“And the light shines in darkness, and the darkness **did not overcome** the light.”* The truth of God is shining, and the darkness of the lies of Satan cannot overcome the truth. Yes, he has launched a well-organized campaign to deny the truth, but he cannot overcome it; he cannot *hold the truth down*. Romans 1:18 tells us: *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in righteousness.”* The meaning: *who hold down the truth—who try to stifle the truth*. They will only reap chaos and trouble in their own lives, because God’s wrath is upon them. If they never accept the truth, it will get worse as they get older, but they will not change the truth of God’s Word. God gave His Word to men of old by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2Pet.1:21), and it has survived over 4000 years. Kingdoms have come, and kingdoms have fallen. Great men have come, and great men have fallen. Many things have come and gone, but the truth of God’s Word will stand forever. Jesus said, *“If my word falls on you, it will grind you to a powder”* (Lk.20:18).

The dichotomy of God’s Word: Those who believe and receive it will get its blessings, mercy, forgiveness, and healing. On the other hand, those who resist it will be destroyed. You

cannot resist God's Word and come out on top. God will deal with people for a long time, because He loves us. "*He would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.... He is not willing that any should perish, but all should come to repentance*" (1Tim.2:4, 2Pet.3:9). But He will not force anyone come to Him. One thing God gave us that He will never rescind is *free will*. Free will is not free will if you don't get to choose. He said, "*I set before you life and death, (light and darkness). Choose whom you will serve.*" We get to choose whom we will serve, but we don't get to choose the consequences. Sometimes I think, *Why don't You just make us serve You, God, because after all, heaven is the better destination.* But God will never violate your free will even if it were better for you if He did.

The Truth About Lies

Darkness is actually *the absence of light*. To get rid of darkness, you have to introduce light. You cannot have darkness without light, and you cannot have evil without good. There is no lie without the truth, because a lie is a twisting of the truth. We can only discern what is false by what is true and what is evil by what is good. Satan is the prince of darkness and the author of lies. Jesus said, "*He is a liar, and the father of lies, and there is no truth in him*" (Jn.8:44). In order for him to create lies, he has to know the truth to corrupt and contrast it. Darkness, evil, lies, and Satan

himself are hostile witnesses against the truth. A *hostile witness* is someone whose testimony proves a point he doesn't want to prove, because he doesn't want to agree with it. In court, the witness is called to the stand and swears to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. If he doesn't tell the truth, he can be charged with perjury. Because the truth will prove the case that he is against, if he tells the truth, he is actually a *hostile witness*, and this is noted by the questioning attorney.

Satan, through lying and producing evil in the world, seeks to deny the existence of God and the truth of His Word, but in actuality, he only proves it. As we said earlier, you will not get an argument if you ask people if evil exists. Just turn on the news every evening; there are more evil reports than good. This is evidence that God exists and good exists, because you can only measure evil against good. There has to be a standard to determine what is good, what people call *moral law*: *Thou shalt not kill, steal, lie, etc.*, and these are predicated on *biblical law*. If you have *moral law*, there has to be a *law giver*; who is God, and if there is a *law giver*, then He must be obeyed. When people don't want to obey His law—the Bible, they want to do away with it, which means they have to do away with God, the law giver, so they don't have to pay the consequences.

But without the law of God, there is no standard measure of good

and evil. You can only measure hate against love, and lies against truth. People will readily say that evil exists, but those same people will tell you that there is no God. A major reason—*If there was a God, there would not be all the evil in the world; there would not be all the bad things happening in the world.* That is their claim of proof why there is no God. When the fact is the very opposite: There would be *no good* if God didn't exist, and evil is defined in contrast to good. If there is no God, and there is no measure of good, where do we draw the line between what is good and what is evil? That is why we've come to the day Isaiah 5:20 foretold: "*Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil; that put darkness for light and light for darkness.*" This is what we are up against. Gross darkness has covered the land and the hearts of the people who are thoroughly deceived by it: "*They hate the good and love the evil*" (Micah 3:2).

One cause for this is people have *greatly undervalued sin*—*Sin is not as sinful as it used to be.* Today, we are told that God doesn't care if you're living in sin, and that He will not judge you for your sin. How did this happen? *Because people don't judge themselves for their sin anymore*—and don't you or I dare to judge them! When you tell them what the Bible says about their sin, the first words out of their mouths are, "*Don't judge me!*" Since they don't judge themselves for their sins,

they have reached the point where they believe God will not judge them for their sin. The result is: *They made God like themselves, and brought Him down to their level.*

Psalm 50 describes this very thing. In verses 16-20, God indicted the people for their sins, and also for *consenting to and partaking of the sins of thieves, adulterers, liars, and slanderers.* It could mean they were not necessarily committing the sins themselves, but were condoning it in others by not speaking out against it, or they were indirectly partaking in another's sin. For instance: "I know these are stolen goods, but I didn't steal them, so I'm going to buy them cheap. I'm saving some money. This thing costs 50 bucks, but I am only paying 20 for it. I know the guy stole it from somebody, *but I didn't steal it, and God is blessing me.*"

This is the kind of reasoning we have today, and even some Christians feel perfectly justified. I know Christians who know it is sinful and they would not live together not being married, but they let unmarried relatives cohabitate in their house. Let's see what God said in verse 21:

"These things you have done, and I kept silence; you thought I was all together such a one as thyself, but I will reprove you, and set them in order before your eyes." In another words, they thought because God was silent and didn't jump on their case, and didn't get on them about their sins, He was like them. They brought God down to their level.

They created God in the image of man when the Word says *we are created in the image of God*. We have to come up to God's level. We have to come up to His standard—His Word. When people say such foolish things as “*I don't think God would send you to Hell for that*” or “*I don't think God will care about you're doing that,*” they make God like themselves, *because they wouldn't send you to Hell—they wouldn't say you are sinning*, they bring God down to their unregenerate level. They wouldn't punish themselves for their sins, so they think *God won't punish me either*. There are numerous scriptures where people said that God did not see, or if He did, He did not care about their sin, so their consciences were no longer troubled. They made sin trifling and passed over it lightly.

When people minimize sin, they have a lack of understanding of *who God is*. He is a holy God; He is a righteous God, and a God of truth. It's one thing to debate people who actually know Scripture. You can get the Scriptures out, rightly divided, and show them where they've gone off the grid. What is frustrating are the people who say that *God would not do this*, and *God would not do that*, and they don't know two Scriptures. O, but they know what God would and would not do. Because *it's how they feel about it, and what they would do*, if they were God. But Hebrews 12:29 says, “*Our God is a consuming fire,*” and “*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the liv-*

ing God” (10:31).

My personal prayer is, “God, whatever You do, *please don't keep silent!* When I am messing up, please tell me! Don't let me think I am alright, or *I know I am not right*, but I'm getting away with it! *I'm getting by.*” Some hypocrites think because they are getting away with something, that it's okay with God. They think because a thunderbolt didn't come down and strike them, God's okay with it. Paul said, “*Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment* (in this life), *and some men they follow after*” (1Tim.5:24). When they stand before God, they will receive their full judgment. I would rather the Holy Spirit use somebody to preach me under the pew, until I feel like I want a hole to open up and I drop in. I would rather be in that miserable, uncomfortable state when the truth of God is penetrating my heart, the scales are falling from my eyes, and my spirit is opened to the truth, so I can acknowledge my sin and repent.

Christian Tightrope Walkers

We have discussed *awake, arise, and shine*. Now we must *walk*: “*See then that you walk circumspectly not as fools but as wise*” (vs.14). I like this word *circumspectly*. Most modern versions change it, but it's a curious word, and the Greek is **AKRIBOS**. The literal meaning is *perfectly, diligently*. In most places in the NT, it is translated *perfectly*. When used in the verb-action form, it means *to exer-*

cise extreme caution and care; to be precise, exact. In the context of Ephesians 5, it refers to hearing, heeding, and walking according to the Word of God.

Luke was especially fond of this word and used it often in the Book of Acts, always in reference to the Word of God being perfect, and receiving the Word and acting on the Word perfectly or diligently. I have to say, the liberty many preachers and teachers take today when they expound the Scriptures is dangerously out of balance. They really should be afraid to do so, because we are told to *walk in the Word circumspectly*.

Our English word *circumspectly* doesn't sound like AKRIBOS, because the NT was first translated from Greek into Latin, and this is the Latin word: CIRCUM means *around* and SPECTO means *to look*. The picture is walking *and* looking around. This is the way a Christian is to conduct his life and navigate his way through our perverse, wicked, and ungodly world. I took a pretty bad fall the other day, even though I'm always careful to watch where I am walking so I don't trip on a rock or pot hole. I was walking across a parking lot rimmed by pine trees, and the wind was blowing hard. Apparently, a pinecone blew off a tree right in front of me just as I took my step, and down I went. Thank God, I'm sore, but I didn't injure my back. This incident showed me that you can never be too careful, and you can never be too vigilant. It could have been worse. I

fell on asphalt and hit my elbow really hard, but I don't even have any bruises. If you are going to fall, that is the way to fall. I give the credit to *the angels who will bear you up with their own hands so you don't dash your foot against a stone*.

Demonstration for Audience

Note: At this point in the service, I had a volunteer from the audience demonstrate *circumspectly* by carefully walking across the front of the church, showing a Christian who's watching where he is going; the Lord is leading him, and he made it without stumbling. Then I placed four *obstacles* in the way: a boulder, tree stump, thorn bush, and sinkhole. This time I told him to *walk backwards*, but to keep *looking forward*. Right away he stepped on a tree stump and tripped. He got back up and kept walking backwards, but quickly tripped on a thorn bush, and down he went. Each time he got up and kept walking backwards, even picking up the pace, because he was in a hurry. Next he fell into a sink hole, and then he stumbled over the boulder. But he got up again, still walking backwards until he fell one last time into *the gates of Hell*. To walk *circumspectly*, you must look *where you are going*. If you are looking one way and walking another, you are going to stumble or even fall. God created us all with two eyes, and we're supposed to walk in the direction that we can see. You never walk opposite of the direction that you're looking. Go against

this principle, and you will keep stumbling.

Let's put it in the metaphorical sense: *What are you focusing on? Who are you looking to?* If you are looking to this world for your answers; if you are looking to the arm of flesh to help get you out of your problems; if you are looking to man to fix you and deliver you, you are going to go from one stumble to another, and from one fall to the other, sinking deeper and deeper. If you look to this world, full of evil and darkness, it will bring panic, fears, anguish, doubts, and misery. Christians who are always looking at the negative always falling in the pit. I don't necessarily mean *the pit of sin*—but the pit of depression, despair, and hopelessness. But when you walk, *"looking onto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith,"* you will have hope, joy, and His *peace that passes understanding* (Heb.12:2, Phil.4:7).

Are you looking to yourself? Some Christians are always looking introspectively, within themselves. That's a sure way to get hung up, because you may have problems within yourself from lies you have heard over your lifetime, from rejection and the emotional damage it brings. In which case, looking within yourself for answers will make you more despondent. *You have to look up and see God.* David said, *"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence comes my help; my help comes from the Lord"* (Ps.121:1).

God said in Isaiah 45:22: *"Look unto me.... and be ye saved. For I am God, and there is none else."* There is no other Savior. There is no other deliverer but Jesus. He created you, and He knows how you work, and how to mend you when you are broken. You can look at your problems and try to dissect them and analyze them, and all you will do is bring up all the bad emotions and hurts, rehearsing and reliving them, and falling into a sinkhole of despair.

Paul said, *"He is able to save to the utmost all those who come to God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them"* (Heb.7:25). Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30: *"Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my burden upon you, and learn of me.... For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."* Are you weary of your life? Burdened down with problems? Sometimes Christians allow themselves to be burdened down, because they let the devil put those things on them—God didn't do it.

Little Black Bundles

I read this true story by a Christian man whose mother, although saved and serving God, was always pessimistic and only saw the negative in things. He would get on her about it, telling her to stop complaining all the time, but she could not get delivered from her sense of negativity, and was always heavy and burdened. Then one morning she came to the

breakfast table with a big smile on her face; she was glowing happily. He couldn't believe the visible difference in her lighthearted countenance and demeanor. He said, "Mom, What got into you?" She told him of a dream she had the night before:

She was outside where she saw many people walking around on a large grassy area. She noticed they all carried black bundles on their backs. There was thousands of them lying everywhere on the grass. An evil person, whom she knew was Satan, kept dropping the black bundles on the ground, and the people were picking them up and putting them with the rest of their bundles, and were becoming weighed down. She was doing the same thing. Then in the distance she saw a man who was full of light walking amongst the people. When He talked to people, they would drop their bundles and start smiling. At some point, she realized it was Jesus. Then He came to her and said, "*I didn't give you these bundles you're carrying. These bundles are from your enemy, Satan. You're picking up and carrying what I never meant for you to carry. You need to throw these bundles down and never touch them with your finger again.*" Immediately, she fell to her knees, threw off all the bundles, and called upon Jesus. He reached out and touched her, and the light of His joy and peace and glory of God went through her being. When she woke up that morning, the heaviness was gone and the hopelessness and

despair she had carried so long. Her son said that she was happy and free for the rest of her life. *That can be you today, if you look to Jesus.*

Christian Tightrope Walkers

There is another element to the Greek word **AKRIBOS**. It has been brought into English as *acrobat*—and refers especially to tightrope walkers. In 2012, an American stuntman, Nick Wallenda of the famous Wallenda family who are known for their exciting, extraordinary high-wire tricks, performed a tightrope feat. He became the first person to cross Niagara Falls on a tightrope, right over one of its most dangerous spots. He was watched by an estimated billion TV viewers, and 125,000 people came to see him. It took him 25 minutes to cross an 1800 foot gap that separates Canada and the United States. He walked on a two inch thick steel cable, being buffeted by swirling clouds of spray, as 200 feet below him, the waves crashed over the precipice at 65 mph. All he had to balance himself was a 40 foot pole attached to a brace on his neck, because in tightrope walking, *balance is everything*. He had to leverage the pole whenever he leaned too far in one direction in order to straighten up and keep himself from falling.

God is a God of balance, and He doesn't want us out of balance in any area of our lives. It is essential that we remain vigilant and sober. You sure don't want to be a tightrope

walker if you are not sober. Whenever Scripture tell us to walk a certain way, it refers to one's whole life. There are many verses that instruct us how to walk. We are told to *walk in the Spirit* (Rom.8:1, Gal.1:16), to *walk worthy of our calling* (Eph.4:1, Col.1:10), *in truth and honesty* (Rom.13:13, 1Thess.4:12), *in love* (Eph.5:2), *in wisdom* (Col.4:5). All these are commands spoken in the *present tense* which denotes *continual action* in the daily life of a true Christian.

Redeeming the Times

“Walk circumspectly.... Redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (vs.16). The idea is to *buy back* every precious moment we spent in sin before our salvation. We can't go back in time and relive our past. Whatever we did in sin is history, and praise God, is under the blood. But we should take away from our flesh every moment possible we have now as children of God, and not waste them, frittering them away on carnality, or losing ourselves in regrets over past mistakes and failures. This only saps our strength, steals our vision, and devours more precious time. Each new day is a gift from God; that is why it is called *the present*, and we all get the same 24 hours.

God has given us everything we need to preach the Gospel effectively. *“He has given us all things that pertain unto our life and our godliness”* (2Pet.1:3). Paul said *“For we are his*

workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which he has before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph.2:10). The Greek word **POIEMA** refers to something designed by hand. We have been *designed* and *assigned* for a specific work. There are some singers, who as much as they would love to, cannot preach, and vice versa, and so on. We are all different, but we all bring something to the Body of Christ in divers ways, because *“God has dealt unto every one the measure of faith”* (Rom.12:3). He gave us divers gifts, and *He placed us in the Body as it has pleased Him* (1Cor.12:18). *“He has made us able ministers of the new testament”* (2Cor.3:6). We are capable and sufficient in our abilities to fulfill our assignments on earth, because we are *“thoroughly furnished unto all good works”* (2Tim.3:16).

But some of us came to Christ earlier in life, and none of us knows what our lifespan will be. This is why we must seize every day and make it count for Jesus. We have to redeem this day, because tomorrow is not promised to anyone. Daily we hear reports of people still in their prime who went to work like they always did, or to the grocery store, or the mall, and they were in an accident, or had a heart attack, or someone shot them dead. That is why must redeem the time *today*. David said that God has written every one of our days in His book before we were even born (Ps.139:16). We can be sure He allot-

ted to us all the days we would need to complete our work, but we can waste them doing our own thing, and run out of time to do His will.

I always pray, “Lord, give me enough time to finish my assignment.” I want to finish my assignment, and I want to finish it with excellence—not perfection—I can’t do that. None of us will reach perfection, but we can reach *excellence*. We can be excellent when we do *whatever our hands find to do with all our heart, and all our might, and all our strength, and we do it as unto the Lord, and not unto men* (Col.3:22-24). Will we make mistakes? Yes. We can all look back and say, “I wish I would have done it this way.” We learn from that, and we keep striving for excellence.

I want to be like Paul who said, “*That I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify of the grace of God*” (Acts 20:24). There was a time in his life when he said, “*I am in a strait betwixt two: Having a desire to depart to be with Christ, which is far better for me. But it is more needful to stay here*”—to help the churches keep growing (Phil.1:23-24). But the time came when he said, “*I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished by course, I have kept the faith*” (2Tim.4:6-7).

We have to stay ready, because we never know when it is our time. I believe as the coming of the Lord

approaches, time is elapsing exponentially: “*Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, and the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light*” (Rom.13:11-14).