



# THE OAKBRIDGE

Oakridge Community Church  
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## Wisdom from the Past—Octavius Winslow

From Pastor Seth



Last month, we looked at what Andrew Fuller had to say about the temptation facing many of the believers in his day. Really, the danger he saw then is the same menace we face now. Since the first promise of the Gospel in Genesis 3:15, God’s people have always needed to guard against our own tendency to get distracted from Christ. We too easily lose sight of His mission by the events taking place in the world around us. But how can we recognize when we are being distracted? What indicators signal to us that we are drifting from Christ? A man named Octavius Winslow offers us some guidance.

Octavius Winslow (also known as “The Pilgrim’s Companion”) was one of the greater-known English Nonconformist ministers of his time. He lived from 1808 to 1878. Many of his writings were meant to help believers learn how to live in the true freedom of the Gospel and how to discern what it means to walk in fellowship with the Holy Spirit. You can see that just by reading some of the titles of his more popular works: *The Work of the Holy Spirit; Help Heavenward; Soul Depths and Soul Heights; and No Condemnation in Christ Jesus*. In his book, *Soul Declension and Revival of Religion in the Soul*, Winslow addresses the topic of backsliding in the Christian life. Backsliding is the direct fruit of being distracted from Christ. He describes backsliding as the “decay of spiritual life and grace in the believer,” beginning with “the secret... and alarming departure from God.” In much of the book, Winslow offers practical help for the spiritual recovery of those who have “lost their first love” (Revelation 2:4). But before he gets to that, he begins by addressing one of the major hindrances to recovering from backsliding, which is the challenge of recognizing when it is happening.

Winslow points out “that no child of God ever recedes into a state of inward declension and outward backsliding, but by slow gradual steps.” He recognizes that “a process of spiritual decay may be going forward within the secret recesses of the soul, and not a suspicion or a fear be awakened in the mind of the believer.” In others words, more often than not, the beginnings of “soul declension” can be difficult to discern. In chapter 1, Winslow offers six marks he believes will be present when the soul is “declining” from the Lord. I found these to be very helpful, and very convicting.

1. **A weakening of the influence of God’s grace in the soul:** As Winslow makes clear, this is different than a decline in understanding God’s grace, or even believing in His grace. The decline is not a failure to comprehend the truth; it is the decline in a person’s experience of that truth’s power. “It is the loss of spiritual *enjoyment*, not of a spiritual *perception*” that will be “the symptom that betrays the true condition of the soul.” In this state of declension, “The judgment may lose none of its light, but the heart much of its fervor.” Though the mind assents to the truth of God’s Word, when someone is in this condition, “there will be no panting after conformity to Christ, no breathing after holiness, no resistance unto blood, striving against sin.” With a pen sharpened by deep spiritual experience, Winslow writes, “Oh, it is an alarming condition for a Christian man, when the heart contradicts the judgment, and the life belies the profession! —when there is more *knowledge* of the truth than *experience* of its power—more light in the understanding than grace in the affections—more pretension in the profession than holiness and spirituality in the walk.” “How this should lead a man . . . to pause, search his heart, examine his conscience, and ascertain the true state of his soul before God!”

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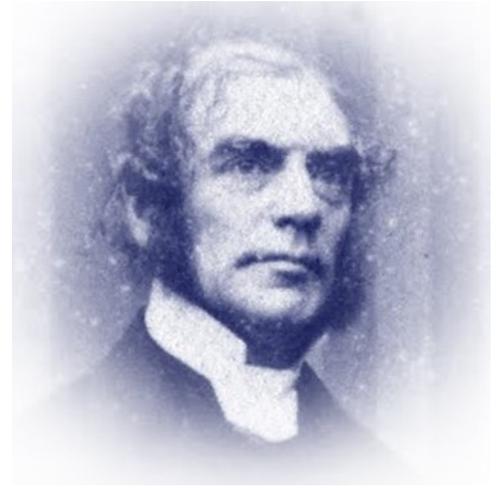
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# WISDOM FROM THE PAST— OCTAVIUS WINSLOW

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2. **A waning in our enjoyment of God in religious duties:** Here Winslow speaks of the reality many of us know far too well. We go through the motions of prayer, we work through our Bible reading plans, maintain family devotions, attend worship gatherings with other believers, and are even faithful in seeking to share Christ with the world around us. And yet, we find only little or no enjoyment of God in those activities. He writes, “When a professing man can proceed with his accustomed religious duties strictly, regularly, formally, and yet experience no enjoyment of God in them, no filial nearness, no brokenness or tenderness, and no consciousness of sweet return, he may suspect that his soul is in a state of secret and incipient backsliding from God.”



*Octavius Winslow*

3. **The decline of spiritual profit from reading God’s Word:** Winslow writes, “Again, when a professing man can read his Bible with no spiritual taste, or when he searches it, not with a sincere desire to know the mind of the Spirit [in order to have] a holy and obedient walk, but with merely a curious or literary aim, it is sure evidence that his soul is” moving away from the Lord. He continues, “[The Scriptures] may be read without a spiritual relish, or without being turned into prayer, without treasuring up in the heart and reducing to daily practice its holy precepts, its precious promises, its sweet consolations, its faithful warnings, its affectionate admonitions, its tender rebukes.” “Nothing perhaps more strongly indicates the tone of a believer’s spirituality, than the light in which the Scriptures are regarded by him.”

4. **Losing a sense of fellowship with God in prayer:** The health of our relationship with the Lord will be revealed in prayer. With piercing clarity, Winslow writes, “When a professing Christian can pray and yet acknowledge that he has no nearness to the throne, no touching of the scepter, no fellowship with God—calls him ‘Father’ without a sense of adoption—confesses sin in a general way, without any looking up to God through the cross—has no consciousness of possessing the ear and the heart of God, the evidence is undoubted of a declining state of religion in the soul.”

5. **Having few dealings with Christ:** How we relate to Jesus Christ, how we think, speak, feel about Him, is a true measure of our spirituality in the eyes of God. When we think little of the One who gives delight to the soul of God (Isaiah 42:1), how God-like can we truly be? “When the believer has but few dealings with Christ—his blood but seldom travelled to, his fullness but little lived upon—his love and glory scarcely mentioned, the symptoms of declension in the soul are palpable.”

6. **A loss or decline of love for other believers:** Or as Winslow states it, “An uncharitable walk towards other Christians, marks a low state of grace in the soul.” There is a direct correlation between loving Christ and loving His people. He writes, “It is because there is so little love to Jesus, that there is so little love toward his followers.” What, then, is the remedy? “The more entirely the heart is occupied with the love of Christ, the less room will there be for uncharitableness towards his saints. In proportion as the mind becomes spiritual, it rises above party distinctions and names,—it resigns its narrow and exclusive views, casts away its prejudices against other sections of the one church, and embraces in the yearnings of its Christian sympathy ‘all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.’ ” This kind of true love for Christ’s people will be present “where there is a deepening spirituality. And its absence marks a decay of grace, a waning of the life of God in the soul.”

These six signs are very helpful for discerning the beginnings of backsliding in our lives. What should we do if we see these marks present in our lives? We will look at what Winslow has to say about that next month.



# MARCH BIBLE READING

## *Discipleship Journal Bible Reading Plan*

*This Bible reading plan runs 25 days of the month  
which allows for catch-up days.*

<b>March 1</b>	Matthew 21:23–32	Romans 1:1–17	Psalms 48	Numbers 1–2
<b>March 2</b>	Matthew 21:33–46	Romans 1:18–32	Psalms 49	Numbers 3–4
<b>March 3</b>	Matthew 22:1–14	Romans 2	Psalms 50	Numbers 5–6
<b>March 4</b>	Matthew 22:15–33	Romans 3	Psalms 51	Numbers 7–8
<b>March 5</b>	Matthew 22:34–46	Romans 4	Psalms 52	Numbers 9–11
<b>March 6</b>	Matthew 23:1–12	Romans 5:1–11	Psalms 53	Numbers 12–14
<b>March 7</b>	Matthew 23:13–24	Romans 5:12–21	Psalms 54	Numbers 15–17
<b>March 8</b>	Matthew 23:25–39	Romans 6:1–14	Psalms 55	Numbers 18–20
<b>March 9</b>	Matthew 24:1–14	Romans 6:15–23	Psalms 56	Numbers 21–22
<b>March 10</b>	Matthew 24:15–35	Romans 7:1–12	Psalms 57	Numbers 23–25
<b>March 11</b>	Matthew 24:36–51	Romans 7:13–25	Psalms 58	Numbers 26–27
<b>March 12</b>	Matthew 25:1–13	Romans 8:1–17	Psalms 59	Numbers 28–30
<b>March 13</b>	Matthew 25:14–30	Romans 8:18–39	Psalms 60	Numbers 31–32
<b>March 14</b>	Matthew 25:31–46	Romans 9:1–18	Psalms 61	Numbers 33–36
<b>March 15</b>	Matthew 26:1–16	Romans 9:19–33	Psalms 62	Deuteronomy 1–3
<b>March 16</b>	Matthew 26:17–35	Romans 10	Psalms 63	Deuteronomy 4–5
<b>March 17</b>	Matthew 26:36–56	Romans 11:1–24	Psalms 64	Deuteronomy 6–8
<b>March 18</b>	Matthew 26:57–75	Romans 11:25–36	Psalms 65	Deuteronomy 9–12
<b>March 19</b>	Matthew 27:1–10	Romans 12:1–8	Psalms 66	Deuteronomy 13–17
<b>March 20</b>	Matthew 27:11–26	Romans 12:9–21	Psalms 67	Deuteronomy 18–21
<b>March 21</b>	Matthew 27:27–44	Romans 13	Psalms 68	Deuteronomy 22–26
<b>March 22</b>	Matthew 27:45–56	Romans 14	Psalms 69:1–18	Deuteronomy 27–28
<b>March 23</b>	Matthew 27:57–66	Romans 15:1–13	Psalms 69:19–36	Deuteronomy 29–31
<b>March 24</b>	Matthew 28:1–10	Romans 15:14–33	Psalms 70	Deuteronomy 32
<b>March 25</b>	Matthew 28:11–20	Romans 16	Psalms 71	Deuteronomy 33–34

# MARCH 2021

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>1</b>  7:00 p.m. - Deacons Meeting	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> 9:00 a.m. - Prayer Time 5:15 p.m. - Missions Committee Meeting 6:30 p.m. - Connecting in Prayer 7:30 p.m. - Elders & Deacons Mtg.	<b>4</b> 1:30 p.m. - Psalm 19 Care Group	<b>5</b> 6:30 p.m. - YOM Imprisoned for Christ Virtual Event	<b>6</b> 8:00 a.m. - Men's Ministry Study	
<b>7</b> 9:00 a.m. - Adult Sun. School 10:20 a.m. - Worship 12:30 p.m. - Emmaus Care Group	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> 9:00 a.m. - Prayer Time 6:30 p.m. - Connecting in Prayer 7:30 p.m. - Elders Meeting	<b>11</b> 7:00 p.m. - Conquering Through Christ Care Group	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> 9:00 a.m. - Women's Ministry Study
<b>14</b> DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME BEGINS 9:00 a.m. - Adult Sun. School 10:20 a.m. - Worship 12:30 p.m. - Damascus Care Group 4:00 p.m. - Taste & See Care Group	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> 9:00 a.m. - Prayer Time 6:30 p.m. - Connecting in Prayer	<b>18</b> 1:30 p.m. - Psalm 19 Care Group	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>21</b> 9:00 a.m. - Adult Sun. School 10:20 a.m. - Worship 12:30 p.m. - Emmaus Care Group	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> 9:00 a.m. - Prayer Time 6:30 p.m. - Connecting in Prayer 7:30 p.m. - Elders Meeting	<b>25</b> 1:30 p.m. - Psalm 19 Care Group 7:00 p.m. - Conquering Through Christ Care Group	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b> 9:00 a.m. - Adult Sun. School 10:20 a.m. - Worship 12:30 p.m. - Damascus Care Group 4:00 p.m. - Taste & See Care Group	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b> 9:00 a.m. - Prayer Time 6:30 p.m. - Connecting in Prayer	So let's learn, let's press on to know the Lord. His appearance is as sure as the dawn; And He will come to us like the rain, As the spring rain waters the earth. Hosea 6:3		



*Rejoice always;  
Pray without ceasing;  
In everything give thanks;  
For this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*  
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

### OCC Vision

The vision of Oakridge Community Church is to spread a joyful passion for the absolute, eternal supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things, to all peoples.

### OCC Mission

The mission of Oakridge Community Church is to glorify God by delighting in, declaring and displaying the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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### **OAKRIDGE COMMUNITY CHURCH**

610 County Road 5  
Stillwater, MN 55082

**Website:** [www.oakridgecommunity.org](http://www.oakridgecommunity.org)

**Email:** [churchoffice@oakridgecommunity.org](mailto:churchoffice@oakridgecommunity.org)