



THE OAKBRIDGE

Oakridge Community Church
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Wisdom from the Past—Octavius Winslow From Pastor Seth



Last month, we saw some of the markers Octavius Winslow identified as evidences of “soul declension,” or backsliding in the Christian life, in his book titled *Personal Declension and Revival of Religion in the Soul*. This book was first published in 1841. During that time, Winslow believed that the church in the West was directing so much energy toward defending important Christian doctrines and increasing social action (Christian benevolence, as Winslow called it) that “few energies are left, and but little time is afforded, for close, faithful, and frequent dealing with the personal and spiritual state of grace in the soul.” Therefore, Winslow wrote this book to address what he believed to be the greatest need of the church during that time: the revival of a true, living, intimate, vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ in the hearts of His people. We can testify that this remains the greatest need for Christ’s people in our day as well.

Last month we looked at the six markers Winslow believed signal the presence of spiritual backsliding in the Christian heart: 1) A weakening influence of God’s grace in the soul. 2) A waning enjoyment of God in our religious duties. 3) A decline of spiritual profit from reading God’s Word. 4) Losing a sense of fellowship with God in prayer. 5) Having few dealings with Christ. 6) A decline in our love for other believers. This is by no means an exhaustive list of all the signal flags that accompany backsliding from God, but these six markers are very helpful in discerning the beginning stages of backsliding in the soul. The simple question that follows for someone who sees evidence of backsliding in his or her own soul is, “What can be done about it?”

Here again, brother Winslow offers helpful guidance in this book. He suggests seven steps for the believer to recover from a loss of love for and devotion to Christ.

1. **The first direction which we would give in the way of recovery is, *acquaint yourself thoroughly with the real state of your soul as before God.*** That is, labor to understand the state of your soul in God’s eyes. In Scripture, this is the first step that the Lord calls His wayward people to take on the road to repentance. Isaiah 1:5-15, before calling His people to “come reason together” with Him, He calls them to repent of their presumptuous attitude toward Him, and to realize their true state in His eyes. Jeremiah 2 contains much of the same, as the Lord calls His people to wake up and recognize how they have forsaken Him. “They did not say, ‘Where is the LORD. . .?’” (vs. 6). In verse 8, God says, “The priests did not say, ‘Where is the LORD?’ Those who handle the law did not know me.” In the clearest rebuke of their apostasy and insolence, the Lord says in verse 23, “How can you say, ‘I am not unclean, I have not gone after Baals’? Look at your way in the valley; Know what you have done”. No one can begin to turn back to the Lord without first having a clear understanding of where they currently are. Winslow wrote, “As the first step in conversion was to know yourself to be a lost, helpless, condemned sinner; so now, in your reconversion to God, you must know the exact state of your soul.” He encourages the reader to “be honest with yourself; let there be a thorough, faithful examination of your spiritual condition; let all disguise be removed, the eye withdrawn from the opinion of men, and the soul shut in with God. . . .” This is where recovery of true spirituality begins.
2. **The second step is, to *discover and bring to light the cause of the soul’s declension.*** Once a person recognizes the true state of their soul, the next step is seeking to understand how he or she got there. To deal with any problem, you have to understand the cause. This is the consistent aim of Christ’s testimony to the backsliding churches in Revelation 2-3. Whether he was addressing the church
(continued on page 2)

IN THIS ISSUE

Pastor Seth’s Article	1-2
Brother T	3
April Bible Reading	4
April Calendar	5

WISDOM FROM THE PAST— OCTAVIUS WINSLOW

(continued from page 1)

in Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, or Laodicea, in every situation Christ does the same thing: He directs their attention to the specific areas in these churches where the believers had begun to depart from Him. He calls them to recognize the forks in the road where they took the wrong way, and to return and pursue the path of obedience and faithfulness to Him. Though Winslow uses the illustration of Paul addressing the Galatians, he points out that it must be the same with us. He states, “Ye did run well; who did hinder you?—what stumbling-block has fallen in your way?—what has impeded your onward course?—what has enfeebled your faith, chilled your love, drawn your heart from Jesus, and lured you back to the weak and beggarly elements of a poor world?” “What is it? Is it the world, creature love, covetousness, ambition, presumptuous sin, unmortified corruption, the old leaven unpurged? *Search it out*. Rest not until it be discovered. Your declension is *secret*, perhaps the cause is *secret*, some spiritual duty secretly neglected, or some known sin secretly indulged. *Search it out*, and bring it to light.”

- 3. The next step in the work of personal revival, is, to take the cause of the soul’s declension immediately to the throne of grace, and lay it before the Lord.** Once the point of sinful departure from Christ is recognized, you must take it to God and deal with it *immediately*. “Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts,” for you may not have tomorrow (Hebrews 4:1, 6-7). Jesus demanded immediate action when He called upon sinners to follow Him (Mark 1:16-20, Luke 9:57-62). He expects no less from us. Not only must there be immediate action to deal with the sin, but as Winslow writes, “There must be no parleying with it, no compromise, no concealment: there must be full and unreserved disclosure before God, with aught (nothing) of palliation (modification) or disguise.” 1 John 1:8-10 makes clear that there is no forgiveness or cleansing of sin for those who deny the presence of sin in their lives. Sin must be acknowledged for what it is; it must be taken to the Lord and confessed before Him. This step toward revival of the soul is captured well in the words of Jeremiah 3:13: “Only acknowledge your guilt, that you rebelled against the LORD your God.” As sinners, our encouragement to do this comes from remembering that we are bringing our sins to the One who sits upon the *throne of grace*. The Lord Jesus, who has made full satisfaction for our sins, is the one who sits on that throne. His blood seals God’s promise of forgiveness for us. And for the sake of His Son, the Father delights to pour the riches of mercy and forgiveness upon those who humbly bring their sins before Him, confessing where they have erred, and hoping in His grace. Therefore, Winslow writes, “Let your sin be confessed in all its guilt, aggravation, and consequences. This is just what God loves—and open, ingenuous (honest) confession of sin.” There is no path toward revival of the soul without this.
- 4. Essentially connected with the discovery and the confession, there must be the entire mortification and abandonment of the cause of the soul’s secret declension.** As Romans 8:13 says, “For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” By the power of the Holy Spirit, once the cause of our backsliding is identified and confessed to the Lord, it must be ruthlessly cut out of our lives and radically abandoned. Winslow makes the point as well that this is not merely done in our outward actions and behavior, but must begin in the heart where the secret, hidden cause of our backsliding began. He writes, “Again, and yet again would we repeat it—there cannot possibly be any true, spiritual, and abiding revival of grace in a believer, while *secret sin* remains undiscovered and unmortified in the heart. True and spiritual mortification of sin is not surface-work: it consists not merely in pruning the dead tendrils that hang here and there upon the branch; it is not the lopping off of outward sins, and an external observance of spiritual duties; it includes essentially far more than this: it is a laying of the axe at the *root* of sin in the believer; it aims at nothing less than the complete subjection of the *principle* of sin; and until this is effectually done, there can be no true return of the heart to God.” Winslow continues, “Christian reader, what is the cause of thy soul’s secret declension? What is it that at this moment feeds upon the precious plant of grace, destroying its vigour, its beauty, and its fruitfulness? Is it an inordinate attachment to the creature? *mortify it*;—the love of self? *mortify it*;—the love of the world? *mortify it*;—some sinful habit secretly indulged? *mortify it*. It must be mortified, *root* as well as branch, if you would experience a thorough return to God. Dear though it be, as a right hand, or as a right eye, if yet it comes between thy soul and God, if it crucifies Christ in thee, if it weakens faith, enfeebles grace, destroys the spirituality of the soul, rendering it barren and unfruitful, rest not short of its utter mortification.”

We will return next month to consider the last three steps offered by Winslow.

BROTHER T



Active engagement in the work of missions has been a part of Oakridge Community Church from its founding. Christ's charge to evangelize and reach out to the lost with the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been part of our DNA for over 140 years, both on the home front, as well as in the work of foreign missions.

Shortly after the Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society was launched in 1943, Oakridge (then First Baptist Church, Stillwater) assumed partial support of some of their missionaries. We are thankful that this tradition has continued to be a part of church-life here in the years since. By the grace of God, Oakridge has been directly involved in the work of foreign missions in many places, including India, Argentina, Belgian Congo, Romania, Hungary, and Kenya just to name a few. The Missions Committee is grateful to announce that this year we are adding a new missionary family and a new country to the Gospel laborers we have been privileged to support: the family of "Brother T" in Africa. For security reasons, we cannot make Brother T's real name, identity, or specific location known publicly. But he and his family are on the frontline of foreign missions, working in a very dark, difficult, and dangerous place. In this month's issue of *The Oakbridge*, the Missions Committee would like to introduce you to Brother T as much as we can.

Having grown up in Africa, Brother T is very familiar with many of the issues plaguing Christ's church there. He also knows very well the regions where proclaiming the Gospel is dangerous and life-threatening work. We have been impressed by the boldness of the Holy Spirit in Brother T's ministry (Acts 4:31), despite the dangers that face him. His ministry proves that he is not ashamed of the Gospel (Romans 1:16). The Lord has used him to bring number of sinners to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he is actively involved in discipling them in the Word of God.

His testimony of salvation is enthralling. By the providence of God, Brother T became a trained geophysicist, landed work in Europe, and later, in America. While in the US, the Lord used *The Purpose Driven Life* to bring him to salvation, amazingly enough. Almost immediately, his burden to share the Gospel with others was so strong that he began driving for Uber and Lyft at night and on the weekends after his normal job as a geophysicist just so that he could meet lost people and tell them about Jesus. One Sunday morning at his home church, Brother T heard an American missionary give an in-person update on her ministry in Africa. He was pricked in his heart by her testimony. In his words, he thought to himself, "Since I am from Africa, why am I not doing that?" After a couple of years, Brother T became an ordained missionary through AIM.

We are grateful to have been introduced to this laborer through the friendship of an American missionary family working alongside him in Africa. Would you please join us in praying for Brother T, for his family, and for his ministry?

A few weeks ago, I asked if he would like to communicate anything specifically to the body of Oakridge. He said, "I pray that the Lord will bless your ministry, and all the brothers and sisters in Christ richly! As you have supported us, may the Lord richly bless all of you. I and my wife are so thankful for you [being] a partner with us for God's work in Africa. We would like to say thank you so much!!" What a joy it is to partner with another missionary family, laboring to see the name of Christ lifted high and honored in a foreign land! Please see the Mission's Board in the foyer for pictures of Brother T and his family.





APRIL BIBLE READING

Discipleship Journal Bible Reading Plan

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

April 1	Mark 1:1-8	1 Corinthians 1:1-17	Psalm 72	Joshua 1-2
April 2	Mark 1:9-20	1 Corinthians 1:18-31	Psalm 73	Joshua 3-5
April 3	Mark 1:21-34	1 Corinthians 2	Psalm 74	Joshua 6-7
April 4	Mark 1:35-45	1 Corinthians 3	Psalm 75	Joshua 8-9
April 5	Mark 2:1-12	1 Corinthians 4	Psalm 76	Joshua 10-12
April 6	Mark 2:13-17	1 Corinthians 5	Psalm 77	Joshua 13-14
April 7	Mark 2:18-28	1 Corinthians 6:1-11	Psalm 78:1-39	Joshua 15-17
April 8	Mark 3:1-19	1 Corinthians 6:12-20	Psalm 78:40-72	Joshua 18-19
April 9	Mark 3:20-35	1 Corinthians 7:1-16	Psalm 79	Joshua 20-21
April 10	Mark 4:1-20	1 Corinthians 7:17-40	Psalm 80	Joshua 22-23
April 11	Mark 4:21-41	1 Corinthians 8	Psalm 81	Joshua 24
April 12	Mark 5:1-20	1 Corinthians 9:1-12	Psalm 82	Judges 1-3
April 13	Mark 5:21-43	1 Corinthians 9:13-27	Psalm 83	Judges 4-5
April 14	Mark 6:1-13	1 Corinthians 10:1-13	Psalm 84	Judges 6-7
April 15	Mark 6:14-29	1 Corinthians 10:14-33	Psalm 85	Judges 8
April 16	Mark 6:30-44	1 Corinthians 11:1-16	Psalm 86	Judges 9
April 17	Mark 6:45-56	1 Corinthians 11:17-34	Psalm 87	Judges 10-12
April 18	Mark 7:1-23	1 Corinthians 12:1-13	Psalm 88	Judges 13-15
April 19	Mark 7:24-37	1 Corinthians 12:14-31	Psalm 89:1-18	Judges 16
April 20	Mark 8:1-13	1 Corinthians 13	Psalm 89:19-52	Judges 17-18
April 21	Mark 8:14-21	1 Corinthians 14:1-25	Psalm 90	Judges 19
April 22	Mark 8:22-30	1 Corinthians 14:26-40	Psalm 91	Judges 20-21
April 23	Mark 8:31-38	1 Corinthians 15:1-28	Psalm 92	Ruth 1
April 24	Mark 9:1-13	1 Corinthians 15:29-58	Psalm 93	Ruth 2-3
April 25	Mark 9:14-32	1 Corinthians 16	Psalm 94	Ruth 4

APRIL 2021

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p><i>Crown Him with many crowns, the Lamb upon His throne. Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns all music but its own! Awake, my soul, and sing of Him who died for thee, And hail Him as thy matchless King through all eternity.</i></p> <p><i>Crown Him the Lord of love! behold His hands and side— Rich wounds, yet visible above, in beauty glorified. All hail, Redeemer, hail! for Thou hast died for me, Thy praise and glory shall not fail throughout eternity.</i> <i>Matthew Bridges</i></p>				<p>1 1:30 p.m. - Psalm 19 Care Group</p>	<p>2 7:00p.m. - Good Friday Service</p>	<p>3 8:00 a.m. - Men's Ministry Study</p>
<p>4 RESURRECTION DAY 10:20 a.m. - Worship</p>	<p>5 7:00 p.m. - Deacons Meeting</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7 9:00 a.m. - Prayer Time 5:15p.m. - Missions Committee Meeting 6:30 p.m. - Connecting in Prayer 7:30 p.m. - Elders & Deacons Meeting</p>	<p>8 1:30 p.m. - Psalm 19 Care Group 7:00 p.m. - Conquering Through Christ Care Group</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>10 9:00 a.m. - Women's Ministry Study</p>
<p>11 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</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14 9:00 a.m. - Prayer Time 6:30 p.m. - Connecting in Prayer 7:30 p.m. - Elders Meeting</p>	<p>15 1:30 p.m. - Psalm 19 Care Group</p>	<p>16</p>	<p>17</p>
<p>18 9:00 a.m. - Adult Sun. School 10:20 a.m. - Worship 12:30 p.m. - Emmaus Care Group</p>	<p>19</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21 9:00 a.m. - Prayer Time 6:30 p.m. - Connecting in Prayer</p>	<p>22 1:30 p.m. - Psalm 19 Care Group 7:00 p.m. - Conquering Through Christ Care Group</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24 9:00 a.m. - Care Group Leaders Meeting</p>
<p>25 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</p>	<p>26</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28 9:00 a.m. - Prayer Time 6:30 p.m. - Connecting in Prayer 7:30 p.m. - Elders Meeting</p>	<p>29 1:30 p.m. - Psalm 19 Care Group</p>	<p>30</p>	

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

1 Peter 1:3-5



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.

OAKRIDGE COMMUNITY CHURCH

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