

(12-31-23)

**FORWARD, MARCH!:
ADVANCING IN A NEW YEAR!**

TEXT: 1 Chronicles 12:33 Of Zebulun, such as **went forth to battle**, expert in war, with all instruments of war, fifty thousand, **which could keep rank**: they were not of **double heart**.

2 Kings 17:33 They **feared the LORD, and served their own gods...**

41 So these nations **feared the LORD, and served their graven images**, both their children, and their children's children...

Hosea 10:2 Their heart is **divided...**

Record of Christian Work (1899):

"Backsliding is the subtlest, most pervasive and universal of sins. The very name expresses the ease with which it may be committed; it is simply slipping back...**The law of the Christian life is, Forward, march!...**"

"A backslider is one who is not today, quite so high up that slope as he has been. If he has ever known a better day of trust...of service; if ever before his life has been cleaner, sweeter, manlier, than it is to-day, he is a backslider..."

Hosea 6:3 Then shall we know, **if we follow on** to know the LORD...

Psalms 84:7 They go from strength to strength...

Philippians 3:13...this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and **reaching forth** unto those things which are before,

14 I **press toward the mark for the prize** of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

/The Primitive Church (Or Baptist) Magazine (May, 1858):

"*The Sleepy Christian*...is one of a far too numerous family, whose presence operates as a continual clog on the progress of the church...He is always in the way; and being too drowsy to advance with the church, he is too frequently found

blocking up the path..."

"He never wrestles, nor groans, nor weeps, before God...he either never knew the meaning, or never felt the power, 'The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force'...such a man is neither happy nor useful..."

"He is asleep **in the family**...In the one case it is an Eli, whose sons 'made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.' But in the other, it is an Abraham, to whom the Lord himself bears the honourable testimony, 'For I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon that which he hath spoken of him'..."

"The household of the one is loose, disorderly, and without control. The family wander hither and dither...the sleepy parent cares not to...keep them close and regular at the house of God...In that household the Bible is not a family Book...The children are trained up heathens, but with a Christian name."

"...he is asleep **in the church**...he is not one to 'go into the highways and hedges, to compel them to come in'..."

2 Timothy 2:3 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Proverbs 4:18 But **the path** of **the just** is as the shining light, that shineth **more and more** unto the perfect day.

Proverbs 4:19 The **way** of the **wicked** is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.

"A Witness and A Testimony" (May-June 1969):

"The Blessedness of The Unoffended:

"...blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." (Matt. 11:6).

"These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended." (John 16:1).

"One of the greatest perils of the Christian life lurks in **the common pathway** of

discipleship. It is the peril of being offended in Christ..."

"The fellowship to which the Gospel summons us inevitably brings a **constant** new and **humiliating** discovery of self; an unvarying **disturbance** of established order in our lives, as His will corrects and opposes our own..."

"And the danger is that we are apt to break down under the test and training of it all, to go back and walk no more with Him, to become, in fact, offended in Him."

"...Men have, in this way, unconsciously and imperceptibly put themselves far out of the range of Christ's ordinary influences; and have become, like the derelicts of the ocean, occasions of danger and disaster to countless other lives."

"But Christ, with that absolute frankness...combines welcome with warning as none other has ever done...By Him we come to know the Father, and by Him also we come to know ourselves..."

"He says: 'Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me'...[Meaning...] 'Blessed is he who does not find in Me any cause of stumbling; who can keep his feet in My ways; who is not tripped up by any obstacles in the path into which I have directed him'..."

"We are prepared to find [stumbling] in the world, in the opposition of the devil, in the proven insincerity of others - but *in Him!* This is surely the most startling of all His warnings."

"...that His own friends, those who really know Him, and have been admitted into the intimacies of fellowship with Him, should find cause of offence in Him is passing strange..."

"John the Baptist was languishing in prison on the shores of the Dead Sea as the outcome of a life of the utmost faithfulness. He had been tremendously loyal to Christ...and yet it had all ended in a dungeon."

"It seemed as though his faith, his self-restriction, his willingness to decrease that Christ might increase, had all been unrecognized and unvalued."

"...it [begins] with the disappointment of some hope, the failure of an expectation, the weariness of an unanswered prayer...as we brood over it, a sense of injustice

grows; a feeling that we have not been treated quite fairly by Christ, which becomes positive resentment. Until, after a while, His yoke becomes irksome...how many there are all around us of whose lives it is a true description!"

"There is first of all the severity of His requirements. When we first come to Christ the pathway seems to be strewn with roses..."

"But before long we discover that the conditions of companionship are severe. For instance, we find that a real separation from the world in spirit and purpose is entirely necessary to the maintaining of fellowship. We find that we cannot march to two tunes at once-and the world's strains are seductive indeed. We learn that we cannot keep step at the same time with Him and with popular opinion, with Him and the world, nor always with Him and the outward professing Church."

"And when this discovery is made, it often means that men are offended in Him. For His demand involves a costly disturbance in the regulation of home and business and social life, according to His order. It means possibly for some the relinquishing of a kind of popularity which exists only because of shameful silence regarding Him. It involves others in the severance of ties which have become a large part of their life...It means for all the end of self-indulgence... a dethronement in order to an enthronement."

"And when all this comes to be clearly apprehended, then it is that men are offended in Christ...men go back to walk no more with Him. Not because they do not understand Him, but because they have come to know Him too well!"

"You want, for instance, to do some great service and to fill some great sphere; but Christ's answer to your longing is to set you down to face the difficulties of a small work in a place where there is little, if any, recognition of your toil..."

"...you have asked the gift of rest...but the answer has come in the necessity for stern and continuous conflict. The fires of temptation blaze around you, not less, but far more fiercely than ever...Or, you have desired to have a life less burdened and strained, but His only response has been to impose other and heavier burdens upon you. And you are well-nigh offended in Him..."

"Now it will help us if we remember the simple fact, that He knows and does just what is best both for the development and repression of our lives. In reality, He is

only unsympathetic with our egotisms. He only seeks to destroy within us anything savouring of self-love, self-pride, and self-sufficiency, and to reproduce in us something of the beauty of His own character."

"Beyond these causes is yet another in **the slowness of His methods...**"

"Quite early we find that life is not a song, but rather a strife; that the grace of Christ is not a mere ecstasy but rather an energy which works painfully for righteousness in us; and that it takes all the watchfulness of which we are capable to occupy the ground already conquered, as well as to conquer fresh territory."

"How often we find in the slowness with which spiritual results are achieved a cause of offence in Christ...How hardly souls are wooed and won! How true it is that tares grow up with the wheat! How certain that he who goes forth bearing precious seeds, must needs weep as he goes!"

"Now it would not be difficult to bring instance upon instance to prove that, in spiritual work, when results are least visible they are often most real."

"But perhaps over and above these suggested causes of offence in Christ is the unreasonableness of His silences...For His purposes are vastly bigger than our prayers; and while His speech may be as silver, His silence is as gold. 'Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me'..."

Tozer, *Spiritual Perfection: Mediocre Christians Resist It!*:

"...they are not one inch farther up the mountain than they were on that day when the sun first arose on them in conversion...some are not even as far advanced...as they were a few years ago!..."

Hebrews 5:12 For when for the time **ye ought to be teachers**, ye have need that one **teach you again** which be **the first** principles...

6:1...let us go on unto perfection...

Matthew 28:19 Go ye therefore, **and teach** all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 **Teaching them** to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen

Daniel 12:3 And they that be wise **shall shine** as the brightness of the firmament; and they **that turn many to righteousness** as **the stars** for ever and ever.

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