

Walk Or Stumble?

Joe Slater

When it comes to God and His word, it all boils down to a rather simple matter: *“Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the Lord are right; the righteous walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them”* (Hosea 14:9).

The “ways” (pathways, roadways, highways) of the Lord are His commands. “Walking” in them is a metaphor for obedience, whereas “stumbling” (falling) refers to alienation from God due to disobedience.

Israel had been anything but obedient. *“For you have stumbled because of your iniquity”* (14:1b). From its beginning the northern kingdom had thumbed its nose at the first two commandments prohibiting other gods and image-worship. During Hosea’s ministry, King Jeroboam’s golden calves were still worshiped at Dan and Bethel, along with various Baal gods whose shrines were on the high places.

Rather than relying on the Lord, Israel sought security through alliances with pagan nations. Rather than living godly lives, they robbed and murdered. Even the priests engaged in sexual immorality!

Israel’s only hope was to *“return to the Lord your God”* (14:1a). The good news for Israel and for us is that God is ready to forgive when His people return to Him. *“I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for My anger has turned away from him”* (14:4).

The not-so-good news is that only a tiny remnant of Israel returned, and even that was after a lengthy period in captivity. Let us not repeat their error! When we have stumbled, let us *“return to the Lord. Say to Him, ‘Take away all iniquity; receive us graciously’”* (14:2).

Walk or stumble? It’s your choice!

National Greatness

The Bible insists that there is a connection between the moral vigor of a nation and its survivability. The strength of any nation lies in the goodness of its people.

“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord” (Psalm 33:12).

“Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people” (Proverbs 14:34; Goodspeed’s translation has: “But sin is a people’s ruin”).

History is full of examples of nations which fell because they forgot God and failed to walk in His ways. Because of their national iniquity, God allowed Israel to fall to Assyria in 722 B.C. The wickedness of Assyria, in turn, led to its fall to the Babylonians in 612 B.C. The nation of Judah fell to these same Babylonians in 586 B.C., and, once again, God said it was because of sin. Mighty Babylon became so steeped in corruption that God overthrew it in 539 B.C. Eventually Rome, the mightiest empire the world had ever known, collapsed when its burden of wickedness became too great to bear.

And America? ? ? ?

Righteousness is America’s greatest defense; sin is our window of vulnerability. Do you love your country? Do you want something good for it? Then do all you can to help turn America’s heart back to God!

--Bobby Dockery (Fayetteville, AR) via Old Paths

As Alexis de Tocqueville once famously observed: “America is great because America is good. If America ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.”

PERFECT TEN

Trying to perform the perfect routine in gymnastics is like trying to perform the perfect routine in Christianity. Not all participants have the same strengths, and not all judges see the routine alike. Then the commentators add their thoughts to the discussion: "Oh no, they bobbed! The judges are not going to like that. There is going to be a huge deduction for that mistake." On rare occasions a perfect 10 is scored, but that again depends upon the judges.

It is going to be impossible to put together a perfect "10" in the eyes of all who watch and judge. Different people are looking for different things in Christians and Christianity. What might impress one set of judges, might not impress another. I can think of only one perfect "10" who ever walked the earth. His name was Jesus. He truly was without spot or blemish. It's too bad that so many don't accept him as such.

Our most trusted brothers and sisters in Christ are going to blow it on a few occasions. We are going to blow it. We might even think we are doing the best we can, but in someone's eyes it's not enough. Paul knew that his true examination would come from the Lord and not from men (I Corinthians 4:1-5). The scriptures speak often about putting your total trust and confidence in the Lord. *“Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, and he who believes in him will not be disappointed”* (I Peter 2:6).

One of the most disheartening experiences a new Christian can encounter is seeing all of the imperfections in his or her newfound brothers and sisters in Christ. They begin to focus on them and not the Lord. Put your total trust and confidence in the Lord just like the day you were baptized into Christ. Keep it there. Do your best to be your best, and let the author and perfecter of your faith (Hebrews 12:2) make up the difference.

--Roger Holm (Tijeras, NM)