

“Going Forward”

I think I'm becoming a collector of phrases. The one currently on my mind is often used by businesses as they discuss a change of direction. “We used to do it this way, but this is how it will be done ‘going forward.’” In the old days we would have said, “from now on,” but this phrase works too. Actually, it gives rise to three interesting thoughts along spiritual lines.

First, we must be “going forward” in righteous living. Once one becomes a Christian, he or she cannot go back into the world. Granted, many have done just that. Jesus spoke of these in Luke 8:4-15 when He told and then explained the parable of the sower. The rocky soil and the thorny soil represent Christians who stop going forward. “They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.” Since it is the case that not being rooted in God's Word and getting caught up in the cares and riches and pleasures of this life are issues that lead one backward into sin, it is evident that these are actions that we must avoid if we want to please God and go forward toward heaven. II Peter 2:20-22 sounds a crystal clear warning against a Christian turning back to the world. As Jesus stated in Luke 9:62, “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” “Going forward,” a Christian should have the attitude of the apostle Paul who wrote, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:12-14).

Secondly, we must be “going forward,” but we must do so only as rapidly as the Word of God allows. Many try to get ahead of God in that they attempt to add to or take away from His Word. This they do despite Divinely inspired warnings to the contrary (Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18-19). The apostle John warned, “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.” (II John 9). The word “transgresseth” means “to go beyond.” As we are “going forward,” we must remember to “speak as the oracles of God.” (I Peter 4:11). Along the path to eternity we need a guide because we don't know the way. That guide is God's Word. To ignore this guide and put it behind us is to subject ourselves to certain perils that we will not know how to handle on our own. The safe and sound method of “going forward” is to be led by God through His written Word, the Bible.

Finally, whether we admit it or not or whether we like it or not, each us is actually “going forward” in respect to our time here on earth. With each tick of the clock we get that much closer to eternity. Solomon said, “man goeth to his long home.” (Ecclesiastes 12:5). When He walked the earth in human flesh, Jesus, recognizing the urgency of His mission and the swiftness with which time passes, said, “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.” (John 9:4). Paul wrote, “And that, 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, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.” (Romans 13:11,12). We are going forward whether we want to or not, but are we prepared for that which awaits us beyond this life? Judgment is a certainty (John 5:28-29; Matthew 25:31-46). Will we, “going forward” give attention to the welfare of our souls so that in the judgment we will hear, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant”? (Matthew 25:21).

Dear friend, you and I are both “going forward” in one way or another. The question is, are we going forward with God?

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