A photograph of a vast wheat field during harvest. The wheat stalks are golden-brown and densely packed, filling the lower two-thirds of the frame. The background shows a flat expanse of the field stretching to the horizon under a bright, warm, yellowish-gold sky. The overall lighting is soft and warm, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

Go!

Harvest with Jesus!



With the Lord's help,
this book was compiled in 2011
as the product of a small Christian school's effort
to prepare and send forth its young graduates
into God's world - for His glory.



*And he said to them,
"The harvest is plentiful,
but the laborers are few.
Therefore pray earnestly
to the Lord of the harvest
to send out laborers
into his harvest.*

Go!

*I am sending you
like lambs among wolves.
Luke 10:2-3 (ESV;GNB)*



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Go! Harvest with Jesus!



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Word of God



It's time to harvest with the Lord!

It is time to harvest with the Lord Jesus!

What a privilege! He said, **"The harvest is ready... Go! I am sending you..."** (Luke 10:2). With all my heart and being I say, "Yes, Lord, I'll go and harvest with You! Please lead me and use me according to Your will and for Your glory..."

There are few people who actually do this from day to day. Many say, "Yes," but never do it. They promise, but don't perform. They wish, but never work it out! Oh, may it be different with us! May God fill us with His Spirit - that we may be on fire for Him and serve Him only, every day; that we may know Him and love Him and worship Him and glorify Him always!

We live for one purpose only: to do God's will. With David we say: "I have come to do Your will, O God..." (Heb 10:7). His will is that we are harvesting with Him. There is nothing more important than that we do His will. We were made to do His will; we were saved to do His will; we were filled by His Spirit to do His will; we were educated and trained to do His will; we spent years with our parents and teachers and spiritual leaders, learning to do His will. So we say: **"Now then, do it!"** (2 Sam 3:18)

Commenting on the verse in Luke, A.B. Simpson, who was used by God to start *"The Christian and Missionary Alliance,"* said: "...it is harvest time. It is the time for reaping; the harvest time is always an urgent and a swiftly passing season. It will not wait our convenience. It must be reaped when it is ripe, or it will rot upon the field. This is the condition of the world today. It is ripe for the reapers of the kingdom or the pit. The mind and heart of the heathen world is awakening from the sleep of ages and is eagerly receiving new light from the progress of modern civilization, and it is just as ready to absorb the devil's lies as the Lord's truth. It is a crisis age. What we do we must do quickly..."

The harvest is ready!



The harvest is ready!

The Lord Jesus said, “Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest?’ I tell you, open your eyes and **look** at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.” (John 4:35)

The harvest is ready!

Approximately 70% of the people in the world do NOT know the Lord Jesus as their personal Saviour and Lord! This means that 4 billion people (4 000 000 000 people) are unsaved! **The harvest is ready!**

1 000 000 precious people commit suicide in the world every year!

There are more than 33 000 000 people in the world who are infected with HIV. Nearly 2 000 000 people die of AIDS every year, and between two and three million people get infected every year! In South Africa 10,5% of the total population are HIV positive, and the percentage is still increasing... In some areas, half of all the pregnant women are infected with HIV! **The harvest is ready!**

Of the 6500 people groups in the world, there are still 2500 unreached people groups in the world! They have never heard about the Lord Jesus Christ! **The harvest is ready!** *This is an emergency...*

In “The Missionary Emergency,” A.B Simpson urged us to look intelligently at the “field”. More than 100 years ago he said: “An intelligent conception of the needs of the world is the foundation of all true Christian work; but how little Christians, as a rule, know or even think about the great outlying world. How many could give an intelligent account of the needs of India, Africa or China? Our own little family circle or our church society absorbs our interest and is more to us than the millions who are perishing abroad. Our eyes are so limited that we cannot see beyond the bounds of our own denomination, and millions and millions of dollars are being wasted in multiplying churches, simply because we feel that we

should spread our particular sect, when whole nations are without even a single voice to proclaim the story of Christ and His salvation.”

“Lift up your eyes, beloved, upon the 400,000,000 of China, the 322,000,000 of India, the 180,000,000 of Africa, the 60,000,000 of Japan, all in heathen darkness. Lift up your eyes upon the 80,000 ministers of the Gospel in America, and the more than 1,000,000 of Christian workers for 110,000,000 of people, and then think of one missionary for every 400,000 heathen, and ask if this is right, if this is God’s plan for His house.”

“And then, the need is an immediate one. Say not, ‘There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest.’ The present generation must save the present generation. A celebrated missionary said that it would take three or four generations to reach the people of Africa, and it could only be done through the children. Our business is with the present generation. A thousand million souls must be saved within twenty-five years, or they never can be saved. **The fields are white, the doors are open, the needs are urgent.** Let us understand them. Let us study missionary geography under the burning light of the Holy Ghost, and God will so write on our hearts the names of these peoples, and tribes and tongues, that we cannot rest until we have gone to them with the message of salvation.”

Already more than 2000 years ago, the Lord Jesus said: “**I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.**” (John 4:35). What does this mean? It means that people are ready to be saved! It means that people are in need of salvation!





*"Look at the fields!
They are ripe
for harvest"*

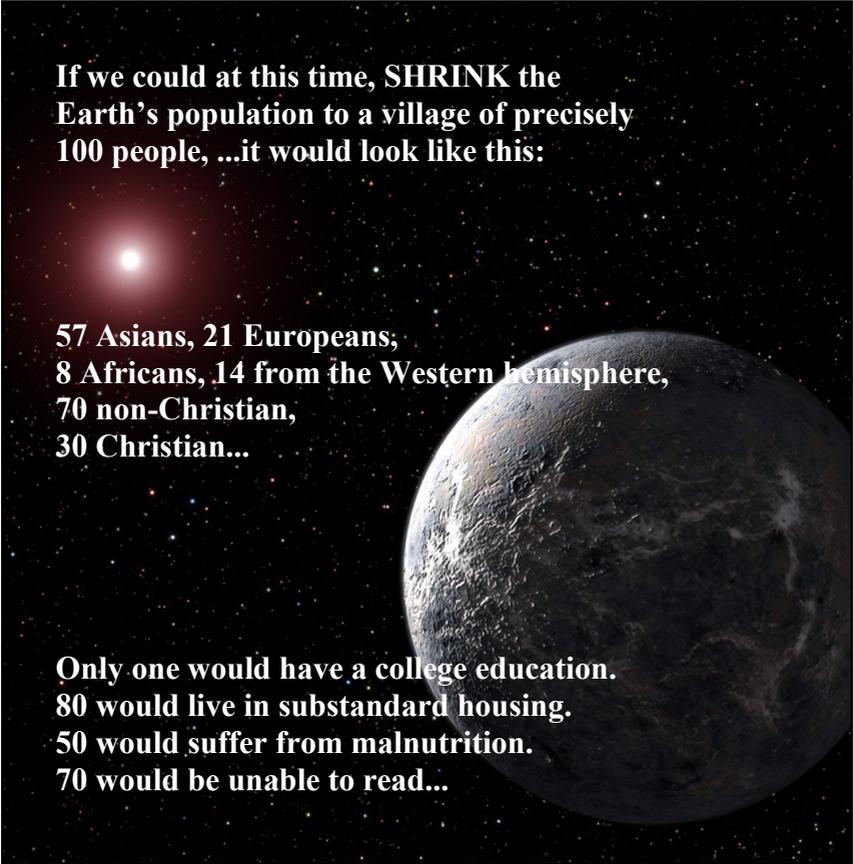




*2 Million precious people
DIE of AIDS every year!*

**“God so loved the world
that He gave His one and only Son,
that whosoever believe in Him
shall not perish,
but shall have eternal life”**

John 3:16



If we could at this time, SHRINK the
Earth's population to a village of precisely
100 people, ...it would look like this:

57 Asians, 21 Europeans;
8 Africans, 14 from the Western hemisphere,
70 non-Christian,
30 Christian...

Only one would have a college education.
80 would live in substandard housing.
50 would suffer from malnutrition.
70 would be unable to read...

I need to ask myself:
“What does God want ME to do?!”

7 Billion people!



The harvest is great!

The harvest is not only “ready,” it is “**great**,” it is “**plentiful**”... (Luke 10:2a). There is much to be done; there are many people to be reached; there are many people to be saved! Nearly HALF of the people on the earth have never even heard of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Millions of people live in spiritual darkness and deep unhappiness. They are bound by sin and self-centredness and spirits of evil, not knowing the Way out! They look like you and I; they work and laugh and use the modern-day technologies, but they are heading for hell...!

Though some of them still live in the jungles, with little clothes on their bodies, most live in concrete jungles or shanty town jungles, clothed in modern nakedness... Others appear happy and even “holy,” but are without Jesus. And the Word of God teaches us that those who do not have the Son do not have life! (1 John 5:12).



*Nearly half
of the people
on the earth
have never
heard of the
Lord Jesus!*

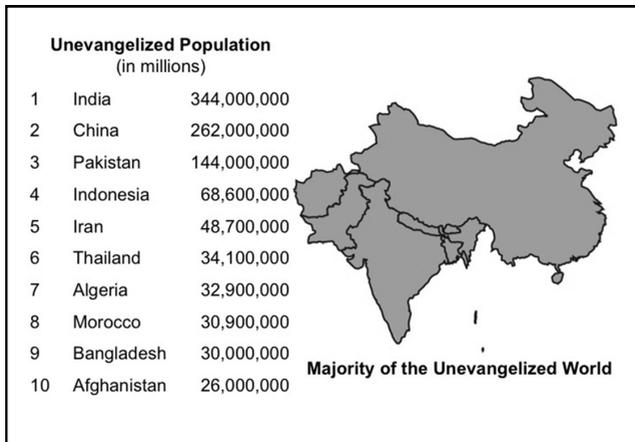
According to the Center for the Study of Global Christianity, **the state of the world** (the “harvest field”), as in the year 2011, is as follows:

- 🌐 **30%** of the world’s people live in countries where there is basically NO access to a Christian witness! Many of them have NO access to a Christian, a missionary, a church, or a Bible. These 1 600 000 000 people are UNreached and would need an outside witness to come and share Christ with them. We can refer to them as “UNexposed UNbelievers”. They really do not have any chance of hearing about Jesus!!
- 🌐 **30%** of the world’s people live in countries where there is access to a Christian witness *and* they describe themselves as “Christians”.

🌐 **40%** of the world's people live in countries where there's access to a Christian witness *and* they describe themselves as NOT "Christian". They may also be called "exposed unbelievers".

This means that 70% of the people in the world do NOT know the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior!!! This amounts to approximately 4 000 000 000 precious people (for whom the Lord Jesus died)!

The majority of un-evangelized people in the world live in the countries indicated below:



This is a tremendous challenge! The Lord Jesus said: “**Look!** ...the fields are ripe and ready to harvest!” (John 4:35; Ampl, CEV). Do you SEE it?! Does it challenge YOU?! Will you DO something about it?!

In “*The Challenge of Missions*” A.B. Simpson (1843-1919) describes how he thought the Lord Jesus saw the harvest. He said:

“Our Saviour’s emphatic language ...gives us a vivid view of the world’s harvest as He saw it. ‘The harvest truly is great.’ His words suggest to us that **it is harvest time**. It is the time for reaping; the harvest time is always an urgent and a swiftly passing season. It will not wait our conven-



**EVERY HOUR 7000 people
who did not trust Jesus
as their Saviour
go to HELL!**

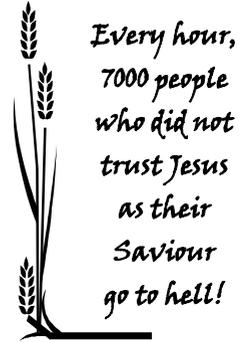


***2753 people died on 11 September 2001
during the terrorist attack
on the World trade Centre***

ience. *It must be reaped when it is ripe, or it will rot upon the field.* This is the condition of the world today. It is ripe for the reapers of the kingdom or the pit. The mind and heart of the heathen world is awaking from the sleep of ages and is eagerly receiving new light from the progress of modern civilization, and it is just as ready to absorb the devil's lies as the Lord's truth. *It is a crisis age. What we do we must do quickly.*

Then, too, the great reaper. Death, is moving down the generation at an awful rate. If these immortal souls are to hear of Jesus, they must hear at once. It is harvest time. Let the reapers be ready.

But again, the Master reminds us that **the harvest is great. It is of great extent.** *It is almost impossible to realize the vastness of earth's Christ-less millions. There is no arithmetic that can make the picture.* Let them march past us in four lines of moving men, two of them composed of Chinese, one of African, and one of Hindu. Let this column four deep march by us. It would take a generation for them to pass, and when they had gone a new generation would be marching at their heels, and so forever, four deep, they are marching past to judgment and darkness. *It is like a mighty city blotted out every twenty-four hours by a calamity greater than earthquake or flame.*



But **this harvest is great, not only in extent, but in value.** These are immortal souls capable of joy or woe. They were once made in the image of God and are destined to live forever. Under the influence of Divine grace they are capable of rising to the highest and noblest possibilities of goodness and usefulness. The humblest and most worthless of them was worthy of the sacrifice of Christ's life and the shedding of His precious blood. It is a mighty harvest. Better let all the wheat fields of America be blighted, better let a constellation go out into darkness, than that these souls should be lost.

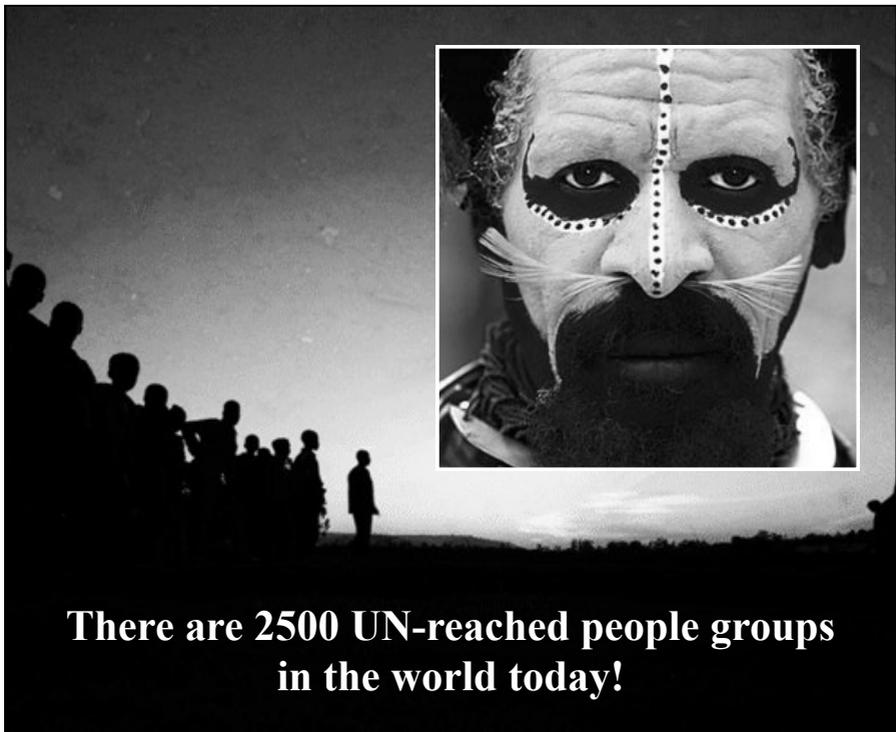
The harvest is also great in its difficulties. It is a task impossible to man. All the power of Satan, all the prejudices of race and caste, all the deep love of sin in the human soul, all the power of evil habit and natural corruption conformed by ages of degradation and strengthened by ten



thousand selfish and earthly motives, combine to hold men in the power of Satan and to lead them to reject the Gospel. Even if we had the missionaries and the means, the difficulties would still be immense. The work is superhuman. Properly to reach this vast harvest field, we need a missionary for every ten thousand men, and this would require the forces of one hundred thousand missionaries and fifty million dollars a year to sustain them. This would not be considered too great for human ambition and imperial power. The immediate evangelization of the world ought to have such an army and such equipment. And before such figures our feeble resources and limited means dwarf into insignificance. Our hearts fall back on God and are relieved when we hear the Master say 'Pray.' This is a task too great for us. God must undertake it..."

The harvest is great!!

Do we see it?! Do we feel it?! Do we do something about it?!



**There are 2500 UN-reached people groups
in the world today!**

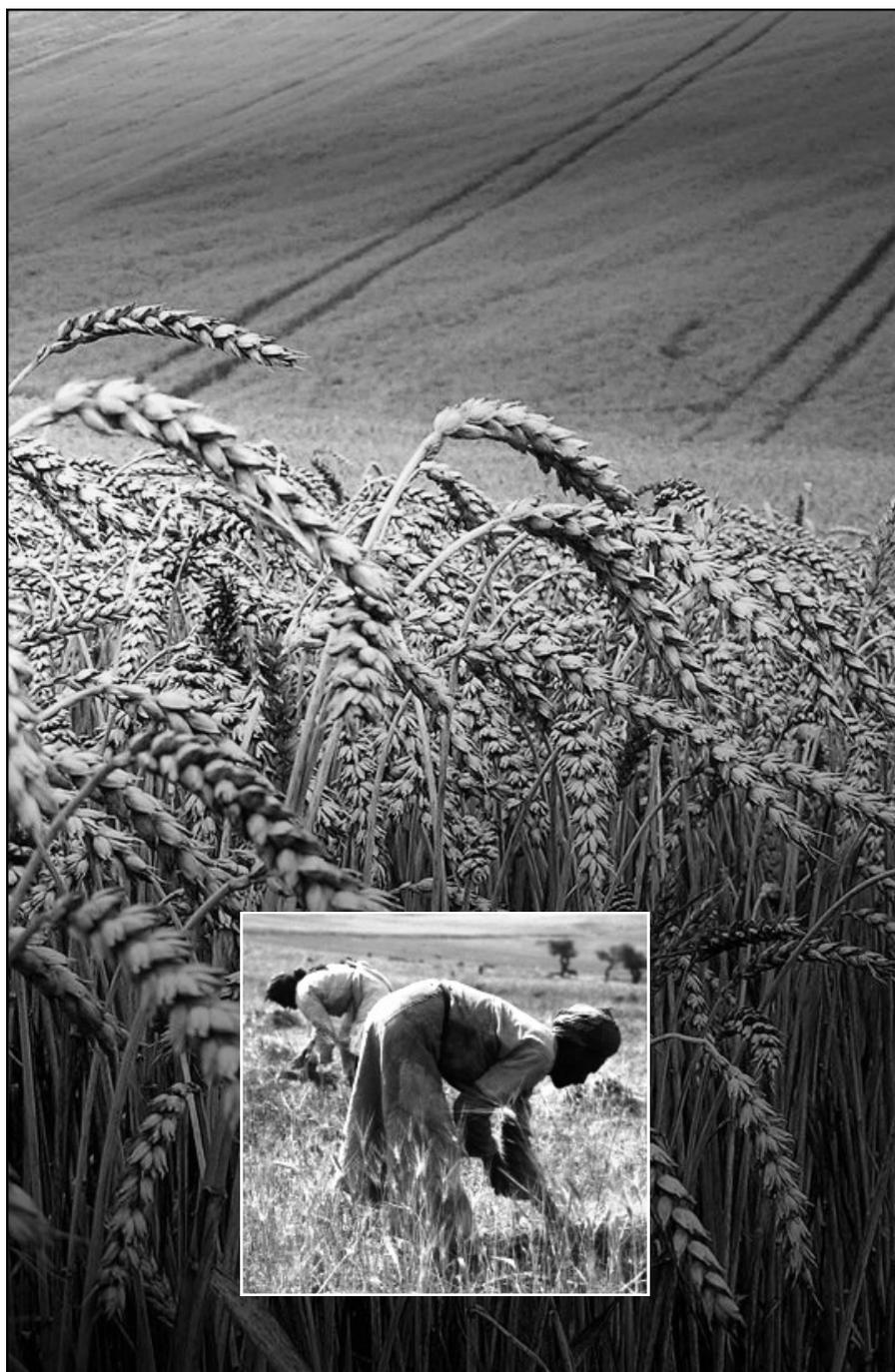


**NO CHRISTIANS
NO MISSIONARIES
NO SCRIPTURES
PRIORITY PEOPLE GROUPS**



*Precious people
without Christ
as their Saviour!*





The workers are few!

Despite the fact that the harvest is ready ...and great, the Word of God says: "...the workers are few"!!!! (Luke 10:2b)

There is **only ONE missionary for every 170 000 Hindu people in the world; ONE missionary for every 190 000 Buddhist people in the world; ONE missionary for every 340 000 Muslim people in the world; and ONE missionary for every 80 000 unreligious people in the world...!**

Oh, friends, is this possible?! **How** is this possible?!

Are there no Christians to go into Christ's harvest?!

Are there so few who see the harvest and hear His voice ...and GO?!

Where are the Christians who are sold out for the Lord Jesus?! Where are the Christians who love the Lord with all their heart and with all their strength and with all their time and with all their life?!

Where are they?!

Where are **YOU**?! Where am I?!

A.B. Simpson (1843-1919) was different from the majority of Christians - he was *there* where God needed him and wanted him; he was in Christ's harvest; he was busy day and night... He was plowing, planting, sowing, praying, weeping, waiting, watering, weeding, watching, harvesting, rejoicing, bringing in, and glorifying God!

In his book, "*The Challenge of Missions*," he speaks about the sad fact of **the lack of labourers**. He says:

"Again, the Master glances at the labourers and He tells us **they 'are few.'** ***They were few in His own day*** when twelve apostles and seventy disciples went forth on the first mission. ***They are still few***, although the numbers have increased. Instead of one missionary for every ten thousand human beings, there are vast provinces and destitute fields where it is one

missionary to half a million, and sometimes one missionary to several millions. This is not for lack of material, for the Church has millions of members in this country, and one volunteer out of every hundred members would give us from America alone a missionary army sufficient to evangelize the globe. But instead of one out of every hundred, we have about one out of every fifty thousand church members from this country in the foreign land. While the wealth of our people increases, and our Christian agencies are crowded with professional workers, **the mission fields are neglected** and even the workers that would go are hindered for lack of means. The Lord's heart aches as He cries: '*The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few.*' ..."

The mission fields are neglected by God's children!



Furthermore, more than 2000 years *after* the Lord Jesus said, "Go... and make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:19), **only 2.4% of our missionaries are going to the 1.6 billion people who have never had the chance to hear the good news of the kingdom!**

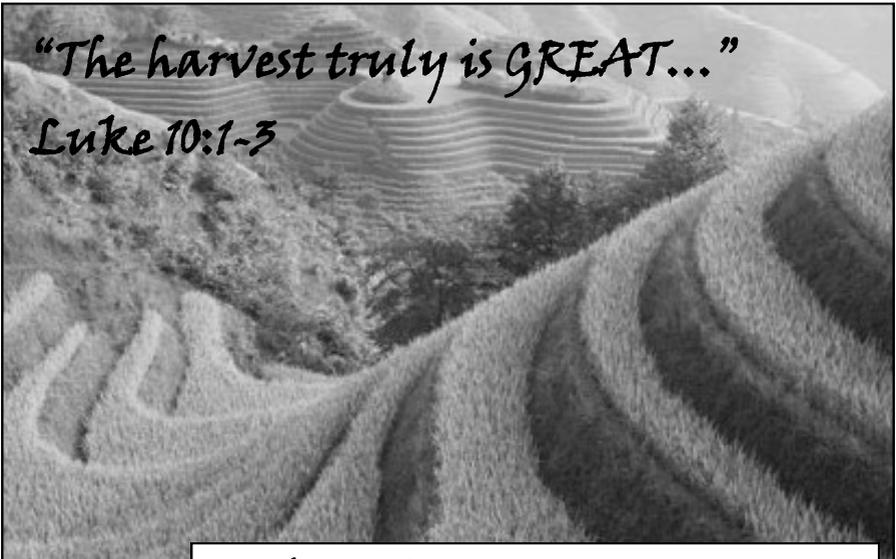
The Lord Jesus, the Lord of the harvest, told the story of a father who had two sons. The father said to each one of them individually: "**Son, go work in my vineyard**" (Matthew 21:28).

Dr Andrew Murray (1828-1917), who wrote the books "*The Key to the Missionary Problem*" and "*Working for God,*" commented on that important story as follows:

"The father had two sons. To each he gave the command to go and work in his vineyard. The one went, the other went not. **God has given the command and the power to every child of His to work in His vineyard, with the world as the field. The majority of God's children are not working for Him, and the world is perishing.**

Of all the mysteries that surround us in the world, is not one of the strangest and most incomprehensible this – that after 1800 years the very name of the Son of God should be unknown to the larger half of the human race.

Just consider what this means. To restore the ruin sin had wrought, God, the Almighty Creator, actually sent His own Son to the world to tell men



"The harvest truly is GREAT..."

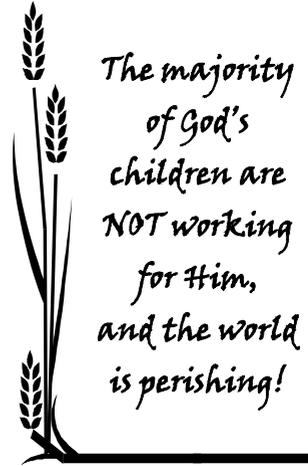
Luke 10:1-3

"...but the workers are FEW"



...pray
...NOW GO"

of His love, and to bring them His life and salvation. **When Christ made His disciples partakers of that salvation, and the unspeakable joy it brings, it was with the express understanding that they should make it known to others, and so be the lights of the world.** He spoke of all who through them should believe, having the same calling. **He left the world with the distinct instruction to carry the Gospel to every creature, and teach all nations to observe all that He commanded.** He at the same time gave the definite assurance that all power for this work was in Him, that He would always be with His people, and that by the power of the Holy Spirit they would be able to witness to Him to the ends of the earth. **And what do we see now? After 1800 years two-thirds of the human race have scarce heard the name of Jesus. And of the other third, the larger half is still quite ignorant as if they had never heard.**



Consider again what this means. All these dying millions, whether in Christendom or heathendom, have an interest in Christ and His salvation. They have a right to Him. Their salvation depends on their knowing Him. He could change their lives from sin and wretchedness to holy obedience and heavenly joy. Christ has a right to them. It would make His heart glad to have them come to Him and be blessed in Him. But they and He are dependent on the service of His people to be the connecting link to bring them and Him together. And yet what His people do is as nothing to what needs to be done, to what could be done, to what ought to be done.

Just consider again what this means. What a revelation of the state of the Church. **The great majority of those who are counted believers are doing nothing towards making Christ known to their fellow-men.** Of the remainder, the majority are doing so little, and that little so ineffectually, by reason of the lack of whole-hearted devotion, that they can hardly be said to be giving themselves to their Lord's service. And of the remaining portion, who have given themselves and all they have to Christ's service, **so many are occupied with the hospital work of teaching the sick and the weakly in the Church, that the strength left free for ag-**



“The great majority of those who are counted believers are doing NOTHING towards making Christ known to their fellow-men” - Andrew Murray





*EVERY
child of God
is to be
a worker
for God*

gressive work, and going forth to conquer the world, is terribly reduced. And so, with a finished salvation, and a loving Redeemer, and a Church set apart to carry life and blessing to men, the millions are still perishing.

There can be no question to the Church of more intense and pressing importance than this: What can be done to waken believers to a sense of their holy calling, and to make them see that to work for God, that to offer themselves as instruments through whom God can do His work, ought to be the one aim of their life?

The vain complaints that are continually heard of the lack of enthusiasm for God's kingdom on the part of the great majority of Christians, the vain attempts to waken anything like an interest in missions proportionate to their claim, or Christ's claim, make us feel that nothing less is needed than a revival that shall be a revolution, and shall raise even the average Christian to an entirely new type of devotion. No true change can come until the truth is preached and accepted, that the law of the kingdom is : Every believer to live only and wholly for God's service and work.

The father who called his sons to go and work in his vineyard did not leave it to their choice to do as much or as little as they chose. They lived in his home; they were his children, he counted on what they would give him, they time and strength. This God expects of His children. Until it is understood that each child of God is to give his whole heart to his Father's interest and work, until it is understood that every child of God is to be a worker for God, the evangelization of the world cannot be accomplished. Let every reader listen, and the Father will say to him personally: 'Son, go work in My vineyard.'

Why is it that stirring appeals on behalf of missions often have so little permanent result? Because the command with its motives is brought to men who have not



*EVERY
believer
is to live ONLY
and wholly
for God's service
and work!*



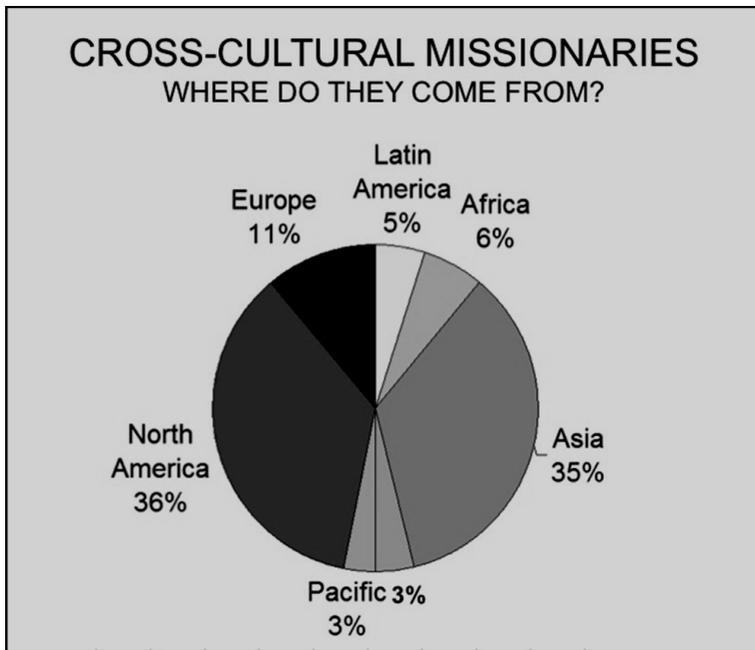
The workers are few!

learned that **absolute devotion and immediate obedience to their Lord is of the essence of true salvation.**”

If I am not absolutely devoted to the Lord and obedient to Him, there is NO evidence that I am saved!

The Lord Jesus said: “Go and make disciples of all the nations...” (Mat 28:19); and “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21). Did we obey Him? Do we obey Him?

Only 6% of all cross-cultural missionaries come from Africa! Where are the Christian missionaries from Africa, from South Africa?



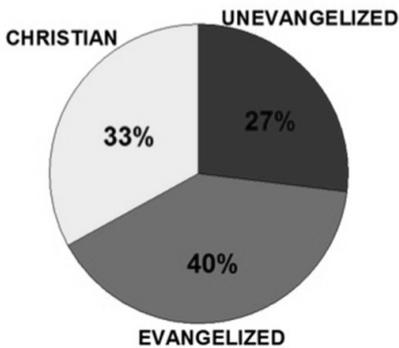
The “workers are few,” the missionaries are few!

Dr Hudson Taylor said: **“If you are not a missionary, then you are a mission field!”** This is still true, also today. It does not matter if you come from the city or from the rural area, if you come from an industrial-

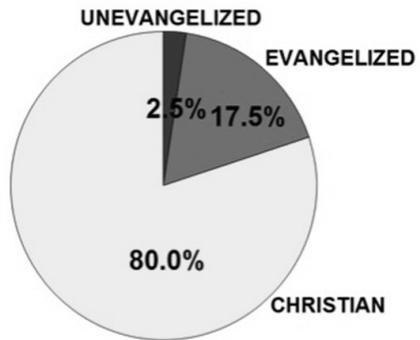
ized (post-modern) country or from an under-developed (traditional) country, **if you are not a missionary, you are a mission field!**

The sad reality of there being only a few workers in the Lord's harvest is made worse by the fact that, of these few, **only 2,5% of them are missionaries to people groups that are un-evangelized!**

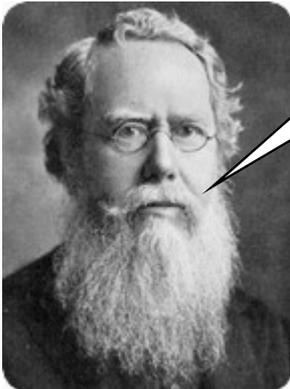
World Population



Foreign Missionaries



"If you are not a missionary, then you are a mission field!"



Dr Hudson Taylor, medical missionary for God in China (1832-1905).

*If you see 10 men
trying to lift a log, 9 of them
on the light end and 1 on the
heavy end, where will you
step in to help?*

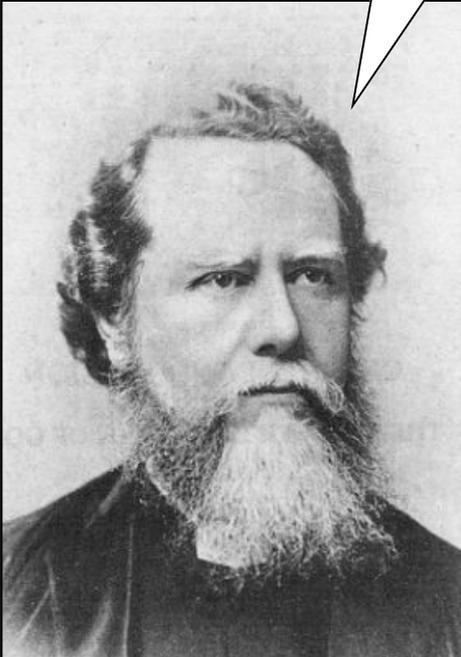
**...and what about
the mission field?!**



William Borden was a millionaire, who gave up ALL to become a missionary for Jesus to the Muslims in China. He died at the age of 26 years... He said:

No reserve
No retreat
No regret

*The
Great Commission
is not an option
to be considered,
it is a command
to be obeyed...!*



Dr Hudson Taylor -
missionary doctor
and founder of the
China Inland Mission -
for Jesus and for souls



Pray!

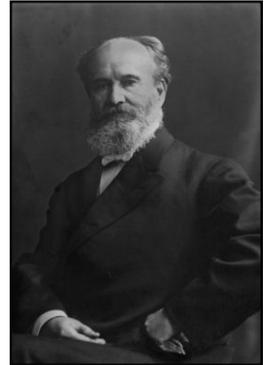
“So PRAY to the Lord of the harvest”

The Lord Jesus Christ

The words of the Lord Jesus are like a clear-flowing stream. He says: “The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; So PRAY to the Lord of the harvest to force out (send forth) and thrust laborers into His harvest...” (Matthew 9:37-38; KJV, Ampl.).

God wants us to PRAY. He commands us to PRAY!

In a message on “*Prayer and Missions*,” A.B. Simpson commented on these wonderful words. He said: “This passage is quoted twice in connection with the life of Christ. He seemed to have uttered this sentence several times...”



A.B. Simpson

II. *The great NEED of the work is suggested by the Master’s language respecting the PRAYER of the disciples.* ‘Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into the harvest.’ The force of this expression is lost in our translation. The Greek word for ‘send’ literally means ‘Thrust forth.’ It describes an emergency movement, an extensive and intensely rapid and earnest sending forth of labourers. It describes the great missionary movement in which many workers are suddenly called to the field and go forth with intense earnestness, enthusiasm, and power. It is just such a missionary movement as started forth from Pentecost, and as we have occasional intimations of the history of such great evangelistic movements as the labours of Colomba in Scotland, Anselm in Germany, the Moravian movement, Pastor Harms and Pastor Gossler, and one or two more aggressive missionary movements of these last days. The work of the China Inland Mission, the rise of The Christian and Missionary Alliance, and the Student Volunteers give some intimation of what such a movement might be under the direction of the Holy Ghost

if the Church of Christ were only aroused to a full realization of the need of the world, the opportunities of the time, and the urgency of the call. It is just such a movement as this that the Church of Christ and the heathen world needs. Nothing short of it can meet the awful destitution of the world and the apathy, indifference, and selfishness of the Church. It would be a great revival if such a crusade would be begun and sustained for a single decade on the part of all the consecrated children of God. It is not too much to say that the whole world might be occupied in half a generation and the Lord's coming hastened in our time. Such a thrusting forth implies the breaking down of barriers, the upheaval of old forms of thought and feeling, the breaking up of selfishness, stagnancy, conservatism, and the letting loose of the spirit of love and Christian enthusiasm amid all ranks and classes of the Church of God, to bring back the freshness, the self-sacrifice, and the supernatural power of the days of Pentecost. It would usher in an era of glory and spiritual quickening such as the Church has not witnessed since the days of Paul. **What a worthy object of prayer!** Let us ask God for something as large-hearted and magnificent in the name of Christ as the world is supplying in the name of commerce and enterprise. Many think nothing of investing tens of millions in vast speculations, great trusts, and selfish combinations. *Oh, for a missionary trust, a combination of idle capital and the elevated minds and glowing hearts of the Church of God to accomplish in a prodigious enterprise as much for God as Mammon is doing in a thousand directions for selfishness and pleasure! How small our Christian enterprise, how timid our expectations and efforts!* How we wonder when a man gives a few thousands to things incalculably more important that absorb hundreds of millions from the votaries of the world!

This thrusting forth will have two sides to it. It will involve on one hand a **great army of volunteers for the field** when men will pour out their lives for the evangelization of the nations as they poured out their lives once for our country and the freedom of our people.

It will also witness **the outpouring of money** in the spirit of magnificent giving and self-sacrifice; and it will not be called a strange thing for one man to take a whole province in China and give his tens of millions for its evangelization, for another to take Southeast Asia and become a trustee for its evangelization, for a syndicate of Christians to assume the responsibility of the evangelization of the heart of Africa and send forth their

equipped and consecrated pioneers, not by the tens but by the thousands, to occupy the land for Christ.

The language implies that it will need great power to accomplish such a movement. The whole bent of human nature is against it. *Selfishness will lead the workers to tarry at home and hoard their means for enterprises of profit and pleasure, but God can send such a tidal wave of love, power, and self-denial that will break up these icy barriers and pour, like the freshets of spring, in torrents of holy zeal, through every channel of Christian life and service.*

Oh, for such a day to dawn! Oh, for such a thrusting forth of labourers into the harvest! Oh, for the old Psalm to be fulfilled, 'The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it!' Oh, for such a baptism from on high! Then shall it be true, 'Thy people shall be willing (i.e. a free-will offering) in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou has the dew of thy youth.'



III. *Our Master indicates the SOURCE from which this need is to be supplied and this remedy provided.* ‘Pray ye the Lord of the harvest.’ *It is to come through BELIEVING PRAYER.* Such a movement as we have described is so much in advance of what we see, is so unspeakably greater than our feeble, timid and trifling attempts at the world’s evangelization, that no power is equal to it but God’s and no means can accomplish it but prayer. *As one passes even hastily over heathen lands, he becomes utterly oppressed with the massive and almost impenetrable barriers against the Gospel that confront him on every side; and as he looks upon the overwhelming millions under the power of superstition, sensuality, and grossest wickedness, with but here and there a feeble ray of holy light shining in the darkness, he cries almost in despair, ‘Who is sufficient for these things?’ Thank God there is one remedy, the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is equal to the need, and He can raise up just such a movement and send forth just such an army. Oh, that a few hearts might be filled with this Divine ambition to be God’s intercessors and remembrancers of such a blessing.*

1. *Prayer will send forth the workers and the right kind of workers.* It will reach them with a heavenly call, train them in the school of God,

send them to the right fields, and sustain them when they go.

2. **Prayer will supply the means.** God can reach the pocketbooks that we cannot. The Holy Ghost can take a hundred of our young, consecrated business men, who are ready to dedicate themselves and whatever wealth God may give them to this great enterprise, and then in a very few years, by the rapid turns of prosperity which lie back of hundreds of business careers, can load them with boundless wealth and make them His trustees for the greatest work in the world. Perhaps there are a hundred people reading these lines, who might, if God could only trust them with such a ministry, become possessed of unlimited resources for His cause and the spread of the Gospel. Yes, and God can touch those that are now possessed of wealth in ways that the petitioner may never see.

A few years ago in a New England town three women met one afternoon and prayed God to do something for foreign missions which would mark that hour in the history of its cause. That very afternoon a rich man in the same city made his will and left more than a million dollars to support the Gospel in heathen lands. These are things He loves to do, if He can but find people that will only trust Him, and whom He can fully trust.

3. **Prayer can remove the difficulties and open the doors of the mission field.** Prayer has opened almost every land to the Gospel in the last fifty years. It is but a little while since the principle mission fields of the world were practically closed. In a single generation we have seen India, China, Central Africa and South America, all prepared by the mighty hand of God's providence for the seed of the Gospel. Hudson Taylor has told us how, **through prayer**, the ship in which he was sailing to China, as it



was becalmed and drifting on a cannibal shore, was saved by prayer, through the breaking forth of a sudden breeze while the missionary prayed below and the captain un-reefed the sails above, and just as the savages were waiting for their prey, they saw the vessel turn and dash away from the perilous shore as if wafted by the very breath of God.

A missionary from China once told how a native Christian was about to be murdered by his elder brother because he insisted on giving a Christian

burial to his aged mother. **The native churches prayed**, and the faithful Christian stood firm. Suddenly the hand of God struck this wicked brother, and he died in fearful torment, declaring that the demons had come for his soul. A great awe fell on all the community because it was the hand of God.

Dr. Chamberlain tell us that in India, **through simple prayer**, he and a large party were saved in a jungle in the darkness of night, and they were supernaturally led to a place on the bank of the river where there

was no ferry or possible way of escape at ordinary times; but, just as they reached it they found that a ferry had been provided and held there by means that could not have been provided by man, and the boatmen were waiting, they knew not why, and they carried them safely across the swollen river from the jungle with its awful perils.



*Prayer
will send
forth...
the right
kind of
workers.*

The whole story of missions is full of the supernatural working of God in answer to His people's prayer. He is ready to go before us as literally as the pillar of cloud and fire moved before Israel in the wilderness of old. **All He asks of us is that we fully trust Him, and that we step forth in obedience to His will and in confidence in His care.**

4. **Prayer will break down the prejudices of the heathen and open their minds and hearts to the Gospel.** Dr. Mahan tells the story of the good minister in Ohio who in his last days used to pray almost constantly for the heathen world. He took the map of the world as his prayer book, and, kneeling down in his closet, he daily traversed the world, stopping at the different mission stations and praying for them, one by one. After he was gone, it was found from the missionary periodicals, that God's blessing had swept across these fields in great missionary revivals in exact accordance with the order of his prayer, and the blessing had traveled around the globe just behind the pillared cloud of the Holy Ghost as it went before in this good man's closet. It will be found some day, no doubt, that the wonderful revivals of Madagascar and the Sandwich Islands, the Telugu mission and the work in Northern India, and the outpourings of the Holy Ghost in China, were just the answer to some humble and perhaps unknown child of God who, **in the secret place of prayer**, had gone before bearing the censor of holy intercession and blow-

ing a trumpet of victorious faith around the walls of Jericho.

Beloved, LET US PRAY, let us ‘pray the Lord of the harvest,’ that in these last days He will revive Israel, make bare His arm, bring forth a great missionary crusade, and ‘thrust forth labourers into his harvest.’ ...”

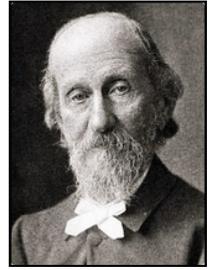


*Lord,
please send out*

workers in Your field!



Andrew Murray (1828-1917) was one of God's true men. He walked with God and was used by Him in revival in South Africa. He was known as a man in Christ, a man filled with the Holy Spirit, a man living in constant fellowship with the Lord, and a man of prayer... In one of his many books, called "*With Christ in the School of Prayer*," he wrote the following burning, life-giving words:



“Pray the Lord of the harvest”

or

Prayer provides Labourers.

“Then saith He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest.” - Matt. 9:37-38.

“THE Lord frequently taught His disciples that they must pray, and how; but seldom what to pray. This he left to their sense of need, and the leading of the Spirit. **But here we have one thing He expressly enjoins them to remember: in view of the plenteous harvest, and the need of reapers, they must cry to the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers.** Just as in the parable of the friend at midnight, He would have them understand that prayer is not to be selfish; so here it is the power through which blessing can come to others. The Father is Lord of the harvest; when we pray for the Holy Spirit, we must pray for Him to prepare and send forth labourers for the work.

Strange, is it not, that He should ask His disciples to pray for this? And could He not pray Himself? And would not one prayer of His avail more than a thousand of theirs? And God, the Lord of the harvest, did He not see the need? And would not He, in His own good time, send forth labourers without their prayer? Such questions lead us up to the deepest mysteries of prayer, and its power in the Kingdom of God. The answer to such questions will convince us that **prayer is indeed a power, on which the ingathering of the harvest and the coming of the Kingdom do in very truth depend.**

Prayer is no form or show. The Lord Jesus was Himself the truth; everything He spoke was the deepest truth. It was when (see ver. 36) ‘He saw the multitude, and was moved with compassion on them, because they were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd,’ that He called on the disciples to pray for labourers to be sent among them. He did so because **He really believed that their prayer was needed, and would help.** The veil which so hides the invisible world from us was wonderfully transparent to the holy human soul of Jesus. He had looked long and deep and far into the hidden connection of cause and effect in the spirit world. He had marked in God’s Word how, when God called men like Abraham and Moses, Joshua and Samuel and Daniel, and given them authority over men in His name, He had at the same time given them authority and right to call in the powers of heaven to their aid as they needed them. He knew that as to these men of old, and to Himself for a time, here upon earth, the work of God had been entrusted, so it was now about to pass over into the hands of His disciples. **He knew that when this work should be given in charge to them, it would not be a mere matter of form or show, but that on them, and their being faithful or unfaithful, the success of the work would actually depend.** As a single individual, within the limitations of a human body and a human life, Jesus feels how little a short visit can accomplish among these wandering sheep He sees around Him, and He longs for help to have them properly cared for. And so He tells His disciples now to begin and pray, and, when they have taken over the work from Him on earth, to make this one of the chief petitions in their prayer: That the Lord of the harvest Himself would send forth labourers into His harvest. The God who entrusted them with the work, and made it to so large extent dependent on them, gives them authority to apply to Him for labourers to help, and makes the supply dependent on their prayer.

How little Christians really feel and mourn the need of labourers in the fields of the world so white to the harvest. And how little they believe that our labour-supply depends on prayer, that prayer will really provide ‘as many as he needeth.’ Not that the dearth of labour is not known or discussed. Not that efforts are not sometimes put forth to supply the want. **But how little the burden of the sheep wandering without a Shepherd is really borne in the faith that the Lord of the harvest will, in answer to prayer, send forth the labourers, and in the solemn conviction that without this prayer fields ready for reaping will be left to perish.** And yet it is so. So wonderful is the surrender of His work into the

hands of His Church, so dependent has the Lord made Himself on them as His body, through whom alone His work can be done, so real is the power which the Lord gives His people to exercise in heaven and earth, that **the number of the labourers and the measure of the harvest does actually depend upon their prayer.**

Solemn thought! O why is it that we do not obey the injunction of the Master more heartily, and cry more earnestly for labourers?

There are two reasons for this. The one is: *We miss the compassion of Jesus*, which gave rise to this request for prayer. When believers learn that to love their neighbours as themselves, that to live entirely for God's glory in their fellow-men, is the Father's first commandment to His redeemed ones, they will accept of the perishing ones as the charge entrusted to them by their Lord. And, accepting them not only as a field of labour, but as the objects of loving care and interest, it will not be long before compassion towards the hopelessly perishing will touch their heart, and the cry ascend with an earnestness till then unknown: Lord! send labourers. The other reason for *the neglect of the command, the want of faith*, will then make itself felt, but will be overcome as our pity pleads for help. We believe too little in the power of prayer to bring about definite results. *We do not live close enough to God, and are not enough entirely given up to His service and Kingdom*, to be capable of the confidence that He will give it in answer to our prayer. O let us pray for a life so one with Christ, that His compassion may stream into us, and His Spirit be able to assure us that our prayer avails.



*The number of
the labourers
and the
measure of
the harvest
does actually
depend upon
their prayer.*

Such prayer will ask and obtain a twofold blessing. There will first be the desire for the increase of men entirely given up to the service of God. It is a terrible blot upon the Church of Christ that there are times when actually men cannot be found for the service of the Master as ministers, missionaries, or teachers of God's Word. As God's children make this a matter of supplication for their own circle or Church, it will be given. The Lord Jesus is now Lord of the harvest. He has been exalted to bestow gifts—the gifts of the Spirit. *His chief gifts are men filled with the Spirit.*

But the supply and distribution of the gifts depend on the co-operation of Head and members. It is just prayer will lead to such co-operation; the believing suppliants will be stirred to find the men and the means for the work.

The other blessing to be asked will not be less. **Every believer is a labourer**; not one of God's children who has not been redeemed for service, and has not his work waiting. **It must be our prayer that the Lord would so fill all His people with the spirit of devotion, that not one may be found standing idle in the vineyard.** Wherever there is a complaint of the lack of helpers, or of fit helpers in God's work, prayer has the promise of a supply. There is no Sunday school or district visiting, no Bible reading or rescue work, where God is not ready and able to provide. *It may take time and importunity, but the command of Christ to ask the Lord of the harvest is the pledge that the prayer will be heard: 'I say unto you, he will arise and give him as many as he needeth.'*



Solemn, blessed thought! this power has been given us in prayer to provide in the need of the world, to secure the servants for God's work. The Lord of the harvest will hear. Christ, who called us so specially to pray thus, will support our prayers offered in His name and interest. **Let us set apart time and give ourselves to this part of our intercessory work.** It will lead us into the fellowship of that compassionate heart of His that led Him to call for our prayers. It will elevate us to the insight of our regal position, as those whose will counts for something with the great God in the advancement of His Kingdom. It will make us feel how really we are God's fellow-workers on earth, to whom a share in His work has in downright earnest been entrusted. It will make us partakers in the soul travail, but also in the soul satisfaction of Jesus, as we know how, in answer to our prayer, blessing has been given that otherwise would not have come.

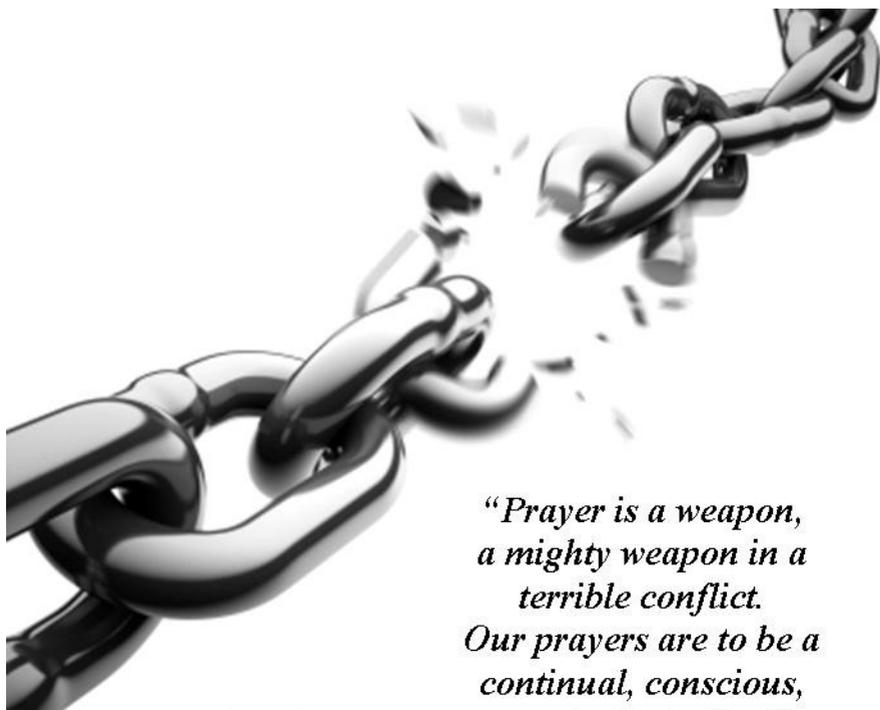
'LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

Blessed Lord! Thou hast this day again given us another of Thy wondrous lessons to learn. We humbly ask Thee, O give us to see aright the spiritual realities of which Thou hast been speaking. There is the harvest which is so large, and perishing, as it waits for sleepy disciples to give the signal

for labourers to come. Lord, teach us to look out upon it with a heart moved with compassion and pity. There are the labourers, so few. Lord, show us how terrible the sin of the lack of prayer and faith, of which this is the token. And there is the Lord of the harvest, so able and ready to send them forth. Lord, show us how He does indeed wait for the prayer to which He has bound His answer. And there are the disciples, to whom the commission to pray has been given: Lord, show us how Thou canst pour down Thy Spirit and breathe upon them, so that Thy compassion and the faith in Thy promise shall rouse them to unceasing, prevailing prayer.

O our Lord! we cannot understand how Thou canst entrust such work and give such power to men so slothful and unfaithful. We thank Thee for all whom Thou art teaching to cry day and night for labourers to be sent forth. Lord, breathe Thine own Spirit on all Thy children, that they may learn to live for this one thing alone—the Kingdom and glory of their Lord—and become fully awake to the faith of what their prayer can accomplish. And let all our hearts in this, as in every petition, be filled with the assurance that prayer, offered in loving faith in the living God, will bring certain and abundant answer. Amen.”





*“Prayer is a weapon,
a mighty weapon in a
terrible conflict.
Our prayers are to be a
continual, conscious,
earnest effort of battle,
the battle against whatever
is not God’s will”*

PT Forsyth





“If we are simply to pray as a pleasant, and enjoyable exercise, and know nothing of watching in prayer, and weariness in prayer, we shall not draw down the available blessing. We shall not sustain our missionaries, who are overwhelmed with the appalling darkness of heathenism; we shall not even sufficiently maintain the spiritual life of our own souls. We must serve God even to the point of suffering; each one must ask himself, ‘To what degree, at what point, am I extending, by personal suffering, by personal self-denial even to the point of pain, the kingdom of Christ?’” (Hudson Taylor)



“Go! I am sending you!”

We have seen that the Lord Jesus said that (1) the harvest is READY, (2) the harvest is GREAT, (3) the workers are FEW, and (4) that we must PRAY that the Lord will send out workers into His harvest... (Matthew 9:37-38; John 4:35; Luke 10:2).

But that is not all - He continued to say: **“GO! I am sending you...”!!!**
(Luke 10:3; GNB)

This is like an echo that sounds over the ages...

“GO! I am sending you!”

“GO! I am sending **you!**”

Have you heard it?

Have you responded to it?

Have you obeyed?!

Are you still obeying?!

We might have seen the need, we might have heard the call of the Lord, we might have prayed for the Lord to send out workers into His harvest, but is that all we've done...?!

Frank Houghton, who was the leader of the China Inland Mission some time after Hudson Taylor, felt it was not enough to pray, actually, **it was impossible to pray in the right way without also GOING**, without obeying...! In "*The Fire Burns on...*," he wrote the following poem:

Sincerity in Prayer

"Send forth more labourers!" - Praying so,
I heard the Master say,
"Whom shall I send, and who will go?"
And lo! I could not pray.

How can I plead that other men
His harvesters may be
Till I have answered Him again,
"Lord, here am I, send me"?

Frank Houghton

Have YOU said that to the Lord?

Oh, this is the only life to live—a life in God's will, a life of serving Him, a life of being His missionary in this dark world! What a privilege!

Oswald Chambers (1874-1917) said: **"When the call of God comes, begin to GO and never stop going no matter how many delightful resting places there may be on the way."**

He also said: "To study the teaching of our Lord in connection with the verb 'to go' would amaze us. How often do you hear in meetings the word 'go,' and how often do you hear the word 'get'? We emphasize 'get'; the New Testament emphasizes 'GO.' If you have escaped the edge of the sword, GO!"

Fanny Crosby (1820-1915) also heard God's call to "Go!"... Wanting to encourage others to also hear and GO into His harvest, she wrote the song "**Let us away**," which actually means: "**Let us GO!**"

Let us away, no longer delay,
Morning with joy is bright;
Let us away and labor today
Out in the fields so white.

*Onward, onward, bounding along,
Onward, onward, join the busy throng.
Shouting, singing, o'er the harvest plain;
Joyful, joyful, gather in the grain.*

Let us away, the message obey,
Jesus repeats the call;
Come with a will, our mission fulfill,
Haste to the work for all.

Refrain

Let us away, we cannot delay,
Harvest will soon be o'er;
Moments and hours, like beautiful flow'rs,
Soon will return no more.

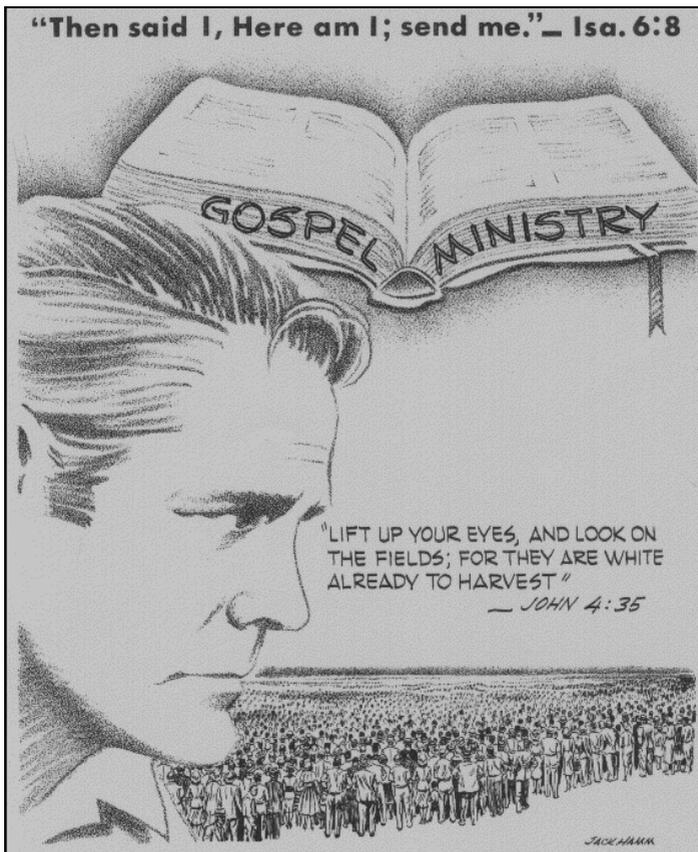
Refrain

Let us away, O let us away,
Lifting our eyes above;
Faithful and true our labor pursue,
Trusting a Savior's love.

Refrain



With the Lord's voice ringing in your heart, and Fanny Crosby's poem echoing that call, will you say: "Here am I, send me!"...?



"Here am I, send me..."

Such a response is music in God's ears! This what His heart longs to hear; this is what the many witnesses (in Hebrews 12) long to hear! Furthermore, we don't want to only SAY: "Here am I, send me," no, we want to actually GO and DO what He wants us to do in His harvest!!

Each one of us need to hear *individually*. Each one of us need to respond *individually*. Each one of us need to GO *individually*...

In response to the Missionary Conference that was held in New York in 1900 (picture on the right), Dr Andrew Murray wrote one of his most important books, which had a great impact on the world when it was released. Many Christians do not know it in our present day. The title of the book is the “*Key to the Missionary Problem.*” In it he writes that “*the missionary problem is a personal one...*,” an *individual* problem! It concerns each one of us *personally*! He put it as follows:

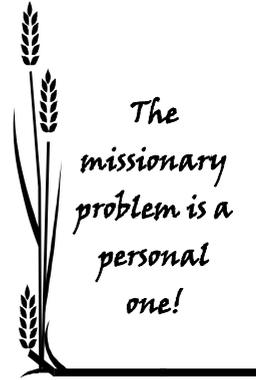


The 1900 Missionary Conference

“The missionary problem is a personal one. If the Church is really to take up its work, it is not enough that we speak of the obligation resting upon the present generation to make Christ known to every one. True education must always deal with the individual mind. To the general command must always be added to personal one. Nelson’s signal, ‘England expects every man to do his duty,’ was a personal appeal addressed to every seaman, not just his fleet. **As we seek to find out why, with such millions of Christians, the real army of God that is fighting the hosts of darkness is so small, the only answer is – lack of heart. The enthusiasm of the kingdom is missing. And that is because there is so little enthusiasm for the King.** Though much may be done by careful organization and strict discipline and good generalship to make the best of the few troops we have, there is nothing that can so restore confidence and courage as the actual presence of a beloved King, to whom every heart beats warm in loyalty and devotion.

The missionary appeal must go deeper and seek to deal with the very root of the evil. If there is no desire for soul-winning at home, how can the interest in the distant un-evangelized be truly deep or spiritual? There may be many motives to which we appeal effectively in asking for sup-

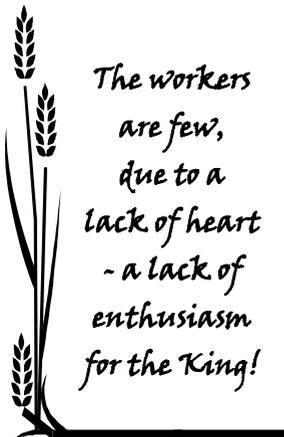
plies of men and money – the compassion of a common humanity, the alleviation of the evils of pagan people, the elevation of fellow-human beings in the scale of human life, the claims of our church or society. *But the true and highest motive is the only one that will really call forth the spiritual power of the Church, for the work to be done.*



If the missionary appeal to this generation to bring the gospel to every person is to be successful, the Church will have to gird itself for the work in a very different way from what it has been doing.

The most serious question the Church has to face just now – in fact, the only real difficulty of the missionary problem – is how she is to be awakened as a whole to the greatness and glory of the task entrusted to her and led to engage in it with all her heart and strength. The only answer to that question – the key to the whole situation – appears to be the simple truth: *The missionary problem is a personal one.* The Lord Jesus Christ is the Author and Leader of Missions. Whoever stands right with Him, and abides in Him, will be ready to know and do His will. It is simply a matter of being near enough to Him to hear His voice, and so devoted to Him and His love as to be ready to do all His will.

Christ's whole relation to each of us is an intensely personal one. He loves *me* and gave Himself for *me*. My relation to Him is an entirely personal one. He gave Himself a ransom for me, and I am His, to live for *Him* and *His* glory. He has breathed His love into my heart, and I love Him. He tells me that, as a member of His Body, He needs me for His service, and in love I gladly yield myself to Him. He wants nothing more than that I should tell this to others, prove to them how He loves, how He enables us to love, and how blessed is a life in His love.



The personal element of the missionary problem must be put in the foreground. Every missionary sermon or meeting must give the love of Christ the first place. If Christians are in a low, cold, worldly state, the first object must be to wait

on God in prayer and faith for His Holy Spirit to lead them to a true devotion to Jesus Christ. Will that be an apparent loss of time in not beginning at once with the ordinary missionary information and pleas? Ah, no – it will soon be made up. Weak believers, who are glad to hear and give, must be lifted to the consciousness of the wonderful spiritual privilege of offering *themselves* to Christ to live for His kingdom. They must be encouraged to believe that the Lord who loves them, greatly prizes their love, and will enable them to bring it to Him. They must learn that Christ's dying love asks for whole-hearted devotion, and that the more they sacrifice, the more will that love possess them. As definitely as we labour to secure the interest and the gifts of each individual, even more so must we labour to bring each one into contact with Christ Himself.

At first it may appear as if we are aiming too high. In many congregations the response may be very weak. Let the pastor give himself to study the missionary problem in this light. Let him put it to his people, clearly and perseveringly: **You have been redeemed to be the witnesses and messengers of Christ's love. To fit you for it, His love has been given you, and shed abroad in your heart. As He loves you, He loves the whole world. He wants those who know it to tell those who don't know it. His love to you and to them, your love to Him and to them, call you to do it. It is your highest privilege; it will be your highest happiness and perfection. As Christ gave Himself, give yourself wholly to this work of love.**"



God calls each one of us personally— **“Come!”**

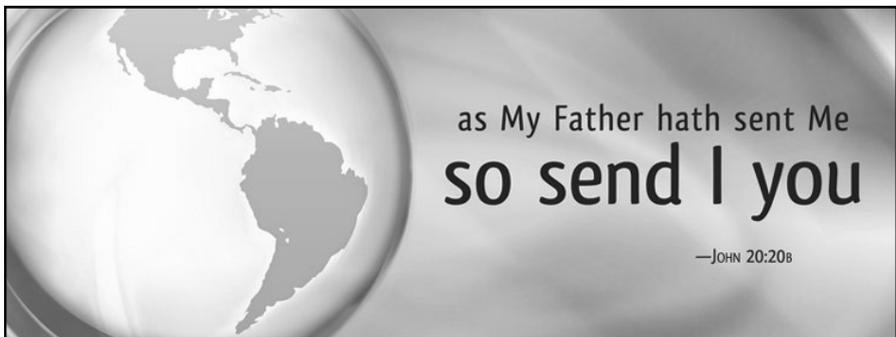
Then He commands each one of us personally— **“Go!”**



Each one of us need to respond, personally— **“Here am I, Lord, I’ll go and do Your will!”**

In *“Rising to the Call,”* Os Guinness says **“Calling is the truth that God calls us to himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion and dynamism lived out as a response to his summons and service.”**

We read in Mark 3:13-14, **“And He went up on the hillside and called to Him ...those whom He wanted and chose, and they came to Him. And He appointed twelve to continue to be with Him, and that He might send them out ...”**



So Send I You

*So send I you to labor unrewarded,
To serve unpaid, unloved, unsought, unknown,
To bear rebuke, to suffer scorn and scoffing,
So send I you to toil for me alone.*

*So send I you — to loneliness and longing,
With heart a-hungering for the loved and known;
Forsaking home and kindred, friend and dear one,
So send I you — to know my love alone.*

*So send I you — to leave your life's ambitions,
To die to dear desire, self-will resign,
To labor long and love where men revile you,
So send I you — to lose your life in mine.*

Margaret Clarkson experienced loneliness of every kind — mental, cultural, and spiritual — as she began teaching at a logging camp during the depths of The Great Depression in northern Ontario, Canada. She wrote these words of pain and suffering.

However years later she would see the “one-sidedness” of this hymn and compose a newer version — one that reflected her growth and rest in Christ.



*So send I you — by grace made strong
To triumph o'er hosts of hell,
O'er darkness, death and sin
My name to bear, and in that name to conquer
So send I you, my victory to win.*

Vulnerable but Victorious



Weak but Winning
THROUGH JESUS CHRIST!

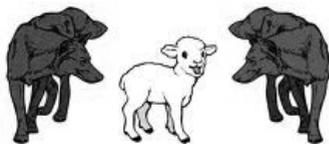
...like lambs in the midst of wolves!

When God sends us into His harvest, it is “**like lambs into the midst of wolves**” (Luke 10:3)... This means primarily that we go in **His attitude** (since He is “the Lamb of God”). It also means that we go in **His way**, that we go in **humility**, in **gentleness**, in **vulnerability**, in **dependence** upon the Shepherd, in **non-aggression**, in a **self-sacrificial** way, in being willing to quietly, humbly lay down our lives...

While it is equally true that a worker of God (in His harvest) works hard, and endures, and perseveres, and bravely fights against the flesh and temptations, and does not give in to passivity, ...and does aggressive, uncompromising spiritual warfare against the powers of darkness, ...his or her primary characteristic is that of **Christ's humility**.

One of God's servants put it as follows: “Now the Saviour's eye penetrates the future; He beholds the broader fields in which, after His death, the disciples are to be witnesses for Him. ...He shows His followers the conflicts they must meet; He reveals the character and plan of the battle. He lays open before them the perils they must encounter, the self-denial that will be required. He desires them to count the cost, that they may not be taken unawares by the enemy. Their warfare is not to be waged against flesh and blood, but ‘against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.’ Ephesians 6:12, R.V. They are to contend with supernatural forces, but they are assured of supernatural help. All the intelligences of heaven are in this army. And more than angels are in the ranks. The Holy Spirit, the representative of the Captain of the Lord's host, comes down to direct the battle. Our infirmities may be many, our sins and mistakes grievous; but the grace of God is for all who seek it with contrition. The power of Omnipotence is enlisted in behalf of those who trust in God.

'Behold,' said Jesus, **'I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves...'** Christ Himself did not suppress one word of truth, but He spoke it always in love. He exercised the greatest tact, and thoughtful, kind attention in



His intercourse with the people. He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul. He did not censure human weakness. He fearlessly denounced hypocrisy, unbelief, and iniquity, but

tears were in His voice as He uttered His scathing rebukes. He wept over Jerusalem, the city He loved, that refused to receive Him, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. They rejected Him, the Saviour, but He regarded them with pitying tenderness, and sorrow so deep that it broke His heart. Every soul was precious in His eyes. While He always bore Himself with divine dignity, He bowed with tenderest regard to every member of the family of God. In all men He saw fallen souls whom it was His mission to save.

The servants of Christ are not to act out the dictates of the natural heart. They need to have close communion with God, lest, under provocation, self rise up, and they pour forth a torrent of words that are unbecoming, that are not as dew or the still showers that refresh the withering plants. This is what Satan wants them to do; for these are his methods. It is the dragon that is wroth; it is the spirit of Satan that is revealed in anger and accusing. But God's servants are to be representatives of Him. He desires them to deal only in the currency of heaven, the truth that bears His own image and superscription. The power by which they are to overcome evil is the power of Christ. The glory of Christ is their strength. They are to fix their eyes upon His loveliness. Then they can present the gospel with divine tact and gentleness. And the spirit that is kept gentle under provocation will speak more effectively in favour of the truth than will any argument, however forcible.

Those who are brought in controversy with the enemies of truth have to meet, not only men, but Satan and his agents. Let them remember the Saviour's words, **'Behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.'** Luke 10:3. Let them rest in the love of God, and the spirit will be kept calm, even under personal abuse. The Lord will clothe them with a divine panoply. His Holy Spirit will influence the mind and heart, so that their voices shall not catch the notes of the baying of the wolves."



*Though we go like lambs,
we overcome...
by the blood of the Lamb!*





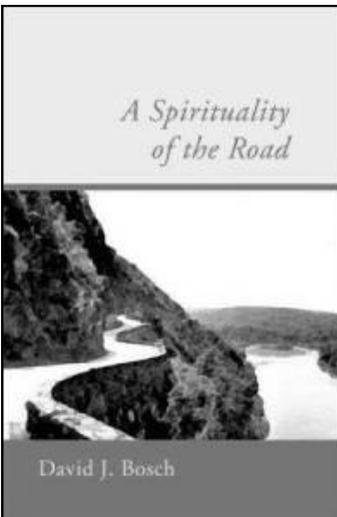
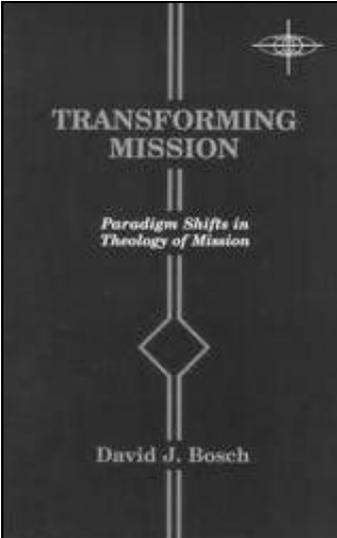
This teaches us clearly that the Lord does not send us out as big “heroes,” but rather as humble “lambs”...

David Bosch (1929-1992) was such a man. He served God as a missionary amongst the Xhosa people in rural South Africa for many years. He wrote (amongst others) two most amazing books on missions, called “Transforming Mission” and “A Spirituality of the Road.” Some think that he was martyred for Christ. In the last-mentioned book he talks about what it means to be like a “lamb” among wolves, referring to Paul’s ministry and letter to the Corinthians. He said:

The Courage to be Weak

2 Cor. 4:1-18; 5:11-17; 6:1-10; 12:6-10

In Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians a number of key concepts recur surprisingly often and with which the apostle characterizes his ministry and himself. The most important ones are: **weakness, ministry or service, suffering, and affliction.** They are all, in one way or another, synonyms. But then there are some other key concepts set off against those and used equally frequently by Paul in this letter – concepts such as power, joy, and boasting. On the letter to the Philippians has more references to joy than this one, whereas boasting and its related forms occur more times in 2 Corinthians than in Romans, Galatians, Philippians and 1 Corinthians taken together.



In this last chapter I intend to take a closer look at these two seemingly contradicting sets of concepts, asking ourselves what bearing they have on missionary spirituality.

No one has emphasized the weakness and the fragility of the missionary as clearly as Paul did in this letter. Nowhere has the disproportion between the magnitude of the missionary's task and goal and the flimsiness of his equipment been underlined more clearly. **True mission is the weakest and least impressive human activity imaginable, the very antithesis of a theology of glory.**

The important point to recognize here is that all this is so, not by accident but by definition. It is a necessary precondition for any authentic mission. In this Paul follows his Master. José Comblin stated it well: "He (Jesus) did not try to impress (people) with power. The typical messianism of his day was quite alien to him, and the supreme sign he gave to people was his own death. It was a visible manifestation of his complete inability to convince and dominate people by arguments based on the trappings of human cultures and human civilizations." Jesus was no Messiah in the popular sense, and in the final analysis this was the reason for His crucifixion.

The same issue of messianism was at stake in the controversy between Paul and his opponents in Corinth. He brings this out in a remarkable way in 2 Corinthians 6:8-10. ...it is normal for Paul's apostleship to be carried on under these conditions: **being unknown, dying, disciplined, in sorrow and poverty are the true marks of an apostle. Weakness is an authentic characteristic of the apostolic ministry.** Without the weakness which his opponents deride, there can be no real apostolic ministry and no true proclamation of Christ. **The church is not made up of spiritual giants; only broken men can lead others to the cross.** It is on men like Peter that Jesus builds His church. The possibility of change and conversion is based on humans being vulnerable; it does not, however, involve the vulnerability only of the one whom we would like to convert but also our own vulnerability as missionaries. Jesus revealed what sin is only because He Himself had been vulnerable; had He opted for invulnerability the true nature of sin would have remained hidden.

When we realize that Christians are weak, we usually react in one of

two ways. *I use my weakness as an excuse or I reject it and demand strength.* If I use weakness as an excuse I am not to blame for what is happening. God has caused me to be as weak as I am, therefore He is to be blamed if things go wrong. In fact, arguing this way, our weakness does not only become an excuse but a virtue. We are grateful for being weak because this relieves us of all responsibility; we may relax with a clear conscience.

The other human reaction is to reject the road of weakness and demand strength and power from God. One the disciples of Jesus arrived at a Samaritan village to make arrangements for Jesus and their friends to spend the night there. But, as Luke tells us, “The villagers would not have him because he was making for Jerusalem” (Luke 9:53). When James and John saw this they were furious and said to Jesus, “Lord, may we call down fire from heaven to burn them up?” (v. 54). They were unable to accept weakness as a true concomitant to discipleship. “Lord, give us strength, power!” they said.

Paul had a similar problem of which he tells us in 2 Corinthians 12. ***He takes his mask off and reveals his humanness.*** His readers can identify with him, for he does not try to put up a show. We do not know what the “thorn in the flesh” (v. 7) really was. But we do know that, for a long time, Paul was unable to reconcile himself to it. He regarded it as “Satan’s messenger” who had come to bruise him. So he thought he had every reason to beg the Lord to rid him of it. After all, the Lord has promised us victory over Satan!

It took Paul a long time to realize what this was all about. And here, in chapter 12, he puts it into words. He has, at long last, discovered that he needed the thorn in the flesh, even if it were Satan’s messenger! It would save him from being unduly elated (v.7)! It would prevent him from falling into the same trap into which his opponents had fallen. ***So now he has reached the point where he can accept God’s ruling: “My grace is all you need; power comes to its full strength in weakness” (v. 9).***

I believe that every one of us needs and in fact has his or her own “thorn in the flesh.” This could easily become such a form of masochism that we become so preoccupied with this “thorn” that our whole ministry becomes paralyzed. Unfortunately, this is exactly what happens

to some missionaries.

Paul, on the contrary, lets the whole matter rest, not wasting more time on it. He has accepted God's ruling. More than that, he has turned this enormous liability into an asset! For we hear him saying, *"I... prefer to find my joy and pride in the very things that are my weakness"* (v. 9). Instead of harassing God any further to remove the "thorn," he will boast about it.

These are the inescapable paradoxes of the Christian faith. Just as, in Jesus, the paradox of heavenly glory and the cross coexist, the paradoxes of power and weakness and of life and death coexist in the ministry and faith of the apostle. This enables Paul to say to the Corinthians, "for when I am weak, then I am strong" (12:10), an expression which Ernst Fuchs rightly refers to as "the most famous paradox in the entire New Testament." As Jesus died on the cross in weakness, yet now lives by the power of God, "we who share his weakness shall by the power of God live with him in your service" (13:14). *Hence Paul is "well content, for Christ's sake, with weakness, contempt, persecution, hardship, and frustration"* (12:10).

Apostolic ministry is always arduous and done in feebleness, a world where the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. That which his opponents reject is precisely what Paul chooses to be the centre of his message and his life: weakness, affliction, and self-denial.

The difference between Paul and his opponents, we have said, lies in the cross. Apostolic theology, says Kosuke Koyama, must be stigmatized theology. He compares the hands of the Crucified with those of Lenin and of the Buddha. If Jesus' hands were closed tight like Lenin's, theology would become ideology. If his hands were open, very much open, with symbolic webs between the fingers so as to be able to scoop up everybody, like the hands of the Buddha, theology would lose its quality of being a stumbling-block. But now his hands are neither open, nor closed; they are defenceless, and pierced through.

Will the world believe unless they can recognize the marks of the cross on us?

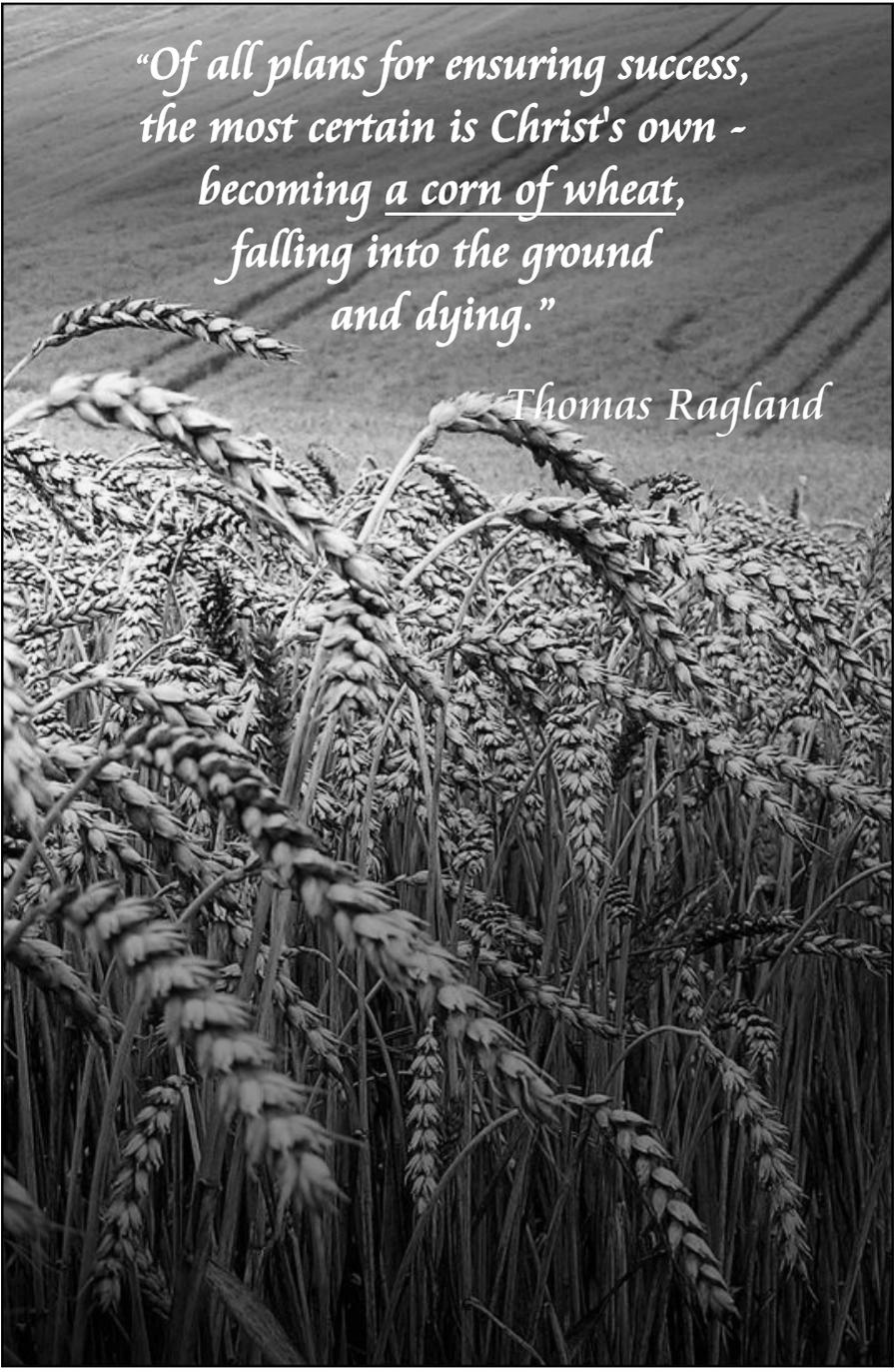
On the basis of the centrality of the cross Paul's ministry is character-

ized by modesty. *Such modesty does not, however, in any way exclude conviction, which is a difficult lesson for us missionaries to learn. We seem to think that modesty, non-aggression, being considerate and tolerant in our ministry imply a degree of haziness and even indulgence on our part. Conversely, if we believe that we can only proclaim the gospel on the basis of a clear conviction that it is the only saving message, we tend to go about in an arrogant and uncompromising way, even to the point of imposing ourselves and our message upon others.*

In 2 Corinthians Paul shows us a third way. Although going about in a humble, modest, and unassuming way, he leaves no doubt about his conviction that the message he proclaims involves a matter of life and death. This conviction becomes clear in the passage where he likens himself and his fellow workers to “incense offered by Christ to God.” He reveals the effect the fragrance of that incense has on those who are on the way to salvation, as well as on those who are on the way to perdition: “to the latter it is a deadly fume that kills, to the former a vital fragrance that brings life: (2:16). The apostolic ministry, however modest and weak, does not remain without effect. Nobody remains neutral; salvation itself is at stake here.

It is as true of the modern missionary, as it has always been of all the generations of missionaries since Paul, that we will not be able to cope with frustrations, disappointments, disillusionment, and shock unless we know that we belong where we are, and are able to draw courage from that knowledge. In Troas Paul had a vision of a Macedonian appealing to him and saying, “Come across to Macedonia and help us” (Acts 16:10). Yet upon arrival in Philippi, *no country orchestra or reception committee greeted him, rather a whip, and a cell in the local prison. Yet he persevered, with joy, for he knew: “This is where I belong!”*





*“Of all plans for ensuring success,
the most certain is Christ's own -
becoming a corn of wheat,
falling into the ground
and dying.”*

Thomas Ragland



Workers of God

Those of us who have lifted our eye, seen the harvest, heard God's call and command, ...and have prayed and obeyed to GO into His harvest, have become "workers of God"! This is an amazing privilege! With T.T Lynch (1818-1871) we say:

**Dismiss me not Thy service, Lord,
But train me for Thy will;
For even I in fields so broad
Some duties may fulfil;
And I will ask for no reward,
Except to serve Thee still.**

How many serve, how many more
May to the service come;
To tend the vines, the grapes to store,
Thou dost appoint for some;
Thou hast Thy young men at the war,
Thy little ones at home.

All works are good, and each is best
As most it pleases Thee;
Each worker pleases, when the rest
He serves in charity;
And neither man nor work unblest
Wilt Thou permit to be.

Our Master all the work hath done
He asks of us today;
Sharing his service, every one
Share too His Sonship may:
Lord, I would serve and be a son;
Dismiss me not, I pray.

Helen H. Jackson (1830-1885) had a burning desire and prayer to serve the Lord and to be a worker of God to her dying day. She wrote what is called “*A Last Prayer*,” expressing that desire as follows:



**Father, I scarcely dare to pray,
So clear I see, now it is done,
How I have wasted half my day,
And left my work but just begun.**

**So clear I see that things I thought
Were right or harmless were a sin;
So clear I see that I have sought,
Unconscious, selfish aims to win.**

**So clear I see that I have hurt
The souls I might have helped to save;
That I have slothful been, inert,
Deaf to the calls Thy leaders gave.**

**In outskirts of Thy kingdoms vast
Father, the humblest spot give me;
Set me the lowliest task Thou hast,
Let me repentant work for Thee.**

According to the Word of God, **if anyone cleanses himself, he will be a vessel fit for use by the Lord, ready for any good work** (2 Tim 2:21).

In “*The Normal Christian Worker*” Watchman Nee says that “a worker’s character must be suited to the character of the work...” He says a worker of God should be diligent, stable, a lover of men, a good listener, restrained in speech, not subjective, one who disciplines his body, having a mind to suffer, faithful in money matters, and loyal to the truth...

Charles Spurgeon and A.B Simpson also spoke very ably about (1) ***the kind of workers God wants***, (2) ***the attitude and spirit in which He wants them to work***, (3) ***what it means to be co-workers with God***, and (4) ***what it means to be spiritual farm workers with God***. These truths from their writings are shared in the following pages.



We start with Charles Spurgeon. In his book “*Counsel for Christian Workers*,” he writes about

The Kind of Workers God wants.

He says: “What kind of men does the Master mean to use?”

They must be *labourers*.

The man who does not make hard work of his ministry will find it very hard work to answer for his idleness at the last great day. A gentleman who wants an easy life should never think of occupying the Christian pulpit, he is out of place there, and when he gets there the only advice I can give him is to get out of it as soon as possible; and if he will not leave the position voluntarily, I call to mind the language of Jehu concerning Jezebel, ‘Fling her down,’ and think the advice applicable to a lazy minister. **An idler has no right in the pulpit. He is an instrument of Satan in damning the souls of men. The ministry demands brain la-**

bour; the preacher must throw his thought into his teaching, and read and study to keep his mind in good trim. He must not weary the people by telling them the truth in a stale, unprofitable manner, with nothing fresh from his own soul to give force to it. **Above all, he must put heart work into his preaching.**



*The
ministry
demands
brain
labour!*

He must feel what he preaches: it must never be with him an easy thing to deliver a sermon, he must feel as if he could preach his very life away ere the sermon is done.

There must be soul work in it, the entire man must be stirred up to effort, the whole nature that God has endowed him with must be concentrated with all its vigour upon the work in hand. Such men we want. To stand and drone out a sermon in a kind of articulate snoring to a people who are somewhere between awake and asleep must be wretched work. I wonder what kind of excuse will be given by some men at last for having habitually done this. To promulgate a dry creed, and go over certain doctrines, and expound and enforce them logically, but never to deal with man's consciences, never to upbraid them for their sins, never to tell them of their danger, never to invite them to a Saviour with tears and entreaties! What a powerless work is this! What will become of such preachers? God have mercy upon them! We want labourers, not loiterers. We need men on fire, and I beseech you ask God to send them. **The harvest never can be reaped by men who will not labour;** they must off with their coats and go at it in their shirtsleeves; I mean they must doff their dignities and **get to Christ's work as if they**

meant it, like real harvest men. They must sweat at their work, for nothing in the harvest field can be done without the sweat of the face, nor in the pulpit without the sweat of the soul.



*The preacher
...must put
heart work
into his
preaching!*

But what kind of labourers are required?

They must be men who will go down into the wheat. You cannot reap wheat by standing a dozen yards off and beckoning to it: you must go up close to the standing stalks; every reaper knows that. And you cannot move people's

hearts, and bring men to Christ, by imagining yourself to be a superior being who condescends wonderfully when he shakes hands with a poor man. There is a very genteel order of preaching which is as ridiculous as reaping with a lady's ivory-handled pocket knife, with kid gloves on; and I do not believe in God's ever blessing it. **Get among the wheat, like men in earnest! God's servants ought to feel that they are one with the people; whoever they are they should love them, claim kinship with them, feel glad to see them, and look them in the face and say, Brother.** Every man is a brother of mine; he may be a very bad one, but for all that I love him, and long to bring him to Jesus. Christ's reapers must get among the wheat.

Now, see what the labourer brings with him. It is a sickle. His communications with the corn are sharp and cutting. **He cuts right through,** cuts the corn down, and casts it on the ground. The man whom God means to be a labourer in his harvest must not come with soft and delicate words, and flattering doctrines concerning the dignity of human nature, and the excellence of self-help, and of earnest endeavours to rectify our lapsed condition, and the like. Such mealy-mouthedness may God curse, for it is the curse of this age. ***The honest preacher calls a sin a sin, and a spade a spade, and says to men, 'You are ruining yourselves; while you reject Christ you are living on the borders of hell, and ere long you will be lost to all eternity.*** There shall be no mincing the matter, you must escape from the wrath to come by faith in Jesus, or be driven forever from God's presence, and from all hope of joy.' **The preacher must make his sermons cut.** He is not to file off the edge of his scythe for fear it should hurt somebody. **The gospel is intended to wound the conscience, and to go right through the heart, with the design of separating the soul from sin and self, as the corn is divided from the soil. Our object is to cut the sinner right down, for all the comeliness of the flesh must be slain, all his glory, all his excellence must be withered, and the man must be as one dead ere he can be saved.** Ministers who do not aim to cut deep are not worth their salt. God never sent the man who never troubles men's consciences. Such a man may be an ass treading down the corn, but a reaper he certainly is not. We want faithful ministers; pray God to send them.





But then a labourer has only begun when he cuts the corn: much more is wanted. As he cuts, he lets the corn fall on to his arm, and then he lays it along in rows, but **afterwards he binds it together** and makes it into bundles that it may be ingathered. **So the labourer whom God sends into the field must be a gathering labourer; he must be one who brings God's people together, who comforts those that mourn, and picks up from the earth those who were cut down by the sharp sickle of conviction. He must bind the saints together, edifying them in their most holy faith.**

Remember also that the labourer's work is never done in harvest time till he sees the corn housed – until it is made into a stack or put into a barn, his toil is not over; and **the Christian minister, if God has truly anointed him to his work, never leaves caring for souls till they get to heaven.** He is like Mr. Greatheart, with Christiana and Mercy and the children; he goes with them from the City of Destruction, right up to the river Jordan; and if he could he would go through the river with them. It is his business to march in front with his shield to meet the dragons and giants with his sword, and protect the little ones. It is his to be tender to them as a shepherd with the lambs and a nurse with her children, for he

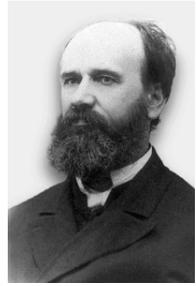
longs to present them at the last to his Master and say, 'Here am I, and the children that thou hast given me.'

We are to pray to the Lord, for it is the Lord's business. Only the Lord can send us the right men. He has a right to send whom he pleases, for it is his own harvest, and a man may employ whom he wills in his own field. It would be all in vain to appeal to anybody else. It is of no use to appeal to bishops to find us labourers. God alone has the making of ministers, and the raising up of true workers, and therefore the petition must be addressed to him. 'Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest.' The Lord's prayer, in its first three petitions, contains this prayer: 'Our Father which are in heaven, hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, in earth, as it is in heaven.' Does not that mean, 'Lord, send forth men who may teach this world to hallow Thy name, that they through Thy Spirit's power may be the means of making Thy kingdom come, and causing Thy will to be done in earth as it is in heaven.' *We ought to pray continually to the great Lord of the harvest for a supply of earnest labourers.*

And do you notice the expression used here, '**that he would send forth labourers**'? Now, the Greek is much more forcible, it is **that he would push them forward, and thrust them out**; it is the same word which is used for the expulsion of a devil from a man possessed. It takes great power to drive a devil out, it will need equal power from God to drive a minister out to his work. I always say to young fellows who consult me about the ministry, 'Don't be a minister if you can help it;' because, if the man can help it, God never called him, but if he cannot help it, and he must preach or die, then he is the man. **May the Lord push men out, thrust them out, drive them out, and compel them to preach the gospel; for unless they preach by a divine compulsion, there will be no spiritual compulsion in their ministry upon the hearts of others.** '*Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would thrust out labourers into his harvest.*' ..."



We look next at something written by A.B. Simpson, who was (though God) the founder of The Christian and Missionary Alliance movement. In “*The Challenge of Missions*” he describes the workers of God as men and women who have a spirit of solemn responsibility, a spirit of independence and self-sacrifice, a spirit of adjustment, adaption and single-hearted love for souls, ...and who exhibit a willing response. It reads as follows:



The Attitude and Spirit of Workers of God

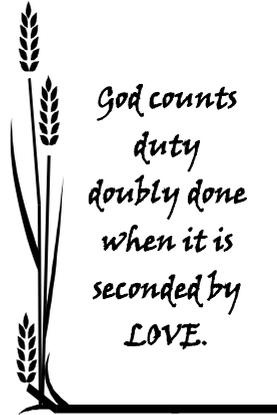
“1. **It is a spirit of solemn responsibility.** ‘Necessity is laid on me, yea, woe be unto me if I preach not the Gospel.’ This great trust of missions is not an optional matter. It is an imperative obligation, and to neglect it is to bring upon us a dreadful woe. This alone is the true starting point for every missionary appeal. ***God is not addressing the sympathy and compassion of His people chiefly, but their consciences. The obligation to give the Gospel to the heathen world in the present generation is absolute and irresistible.*** Every Christian owes it as a debt of common honesty that he shall give at least to one of the present generation of Christ-less men and women one chance for eternal life. The woe Paul felt may not be felt by you, but it is none the less real. It is a very awful thing to neglect this trust and you cannot do it without bringing upon yourselves the displeasure and judgment of God. Multitudes have suffered that woe without knowing its cause. ***This is why perhaps your work has not been prospered, your children have not been saved, your church has not been blessed, your life has been a disappointment, because your hand is stained with the blood of souls and your ears are deaf to the cry of the perishing and the last commandment of your Lord.***

2. **A Willing Response.** ‘If I do this thing willingly, I have a reward, but if not, necessity is laid upon me, yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel.’ The obligation was the same whether he accepted it or not, but he joyfully accepted it and willingly gave up his life to fulfil a sacred trust. ***God counts duty doubly done when it is seconded by love. While He bids us to go He waits for us to volunteer. He loves the services of devoted hearts and surrendered hands. Shall He have our willing offerings, our***

yielded lives and our glad response, 'Here am I, send me,' 'Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God'?

3. A Spirit of Independence and Self-Sacrifice.

Not only did Paul willingly respond to this call and take up this trust, but he went farther. He asked the privilege, as the highest proof of his love, to do it without charge and in a spirit of complete self-sacrifice. In the mere preaching of the Gospel he says there is no glory and no place for special reward. That is merely duty. If there is to be any glory there must be suffering, self-denial and sacrifice. Therefore, he asked the privilege of sacrificing that regular support to which he was entitled as a minister of the Gospel, and giving his whole life in unrequited labour at his own charges for God and men. In this he throws no reflection upon missionaries who accept the support of their brethren. Indeed, he argues for their right to such support. But as a matter of personal liberty he claims permission for himself to stand on a higher plane and to labour without earthly recompense. This may not be literally possible in all our lives, but surely it may represent any other form of sacrifice which we choose to gladly offer to the Lord. The Lord does not want it if it is not freely offered. It is no sin for you to enjoy in a moderate way the comfort and even luxuries which God may have given you in your station. You are the steward of your own means and He leaves you free to use them as you choose. ***But if God puts in your heart a love so great that it is a joy to give up comfort, ease and luxury and to endure toil, privation and even poverty, or at least to stoop to the simple necessities of life, that you may have more to give to send others unto the heathen fields, it is a very beautiful and acceptable offering and it will bring a distinct and eternal reward.*** Salvation is God's free gift, but glory is the reward of sacrifice and suffering. And so God gives opportunities for these higher planes of sacrificial service and only accepts them when the heart of His servants is constrained by the love that considers it a luxury to count all things but loss for Christ. ***Abraham's sacrifice on Mount Moriah was dear to God because it meant the giving up of all,*** and He forever signalized that spot. The poor widow's mite won the public and loving recognition of Jesus because it had in it this element of sacrifice and was her all. Mary's broken vase of precious ointment had something in it of infinitely more value



than its intrinsic worth. It was coloured by the crimson touch of sacrificial love. *And so God is waiting today not only for the tithes, but for the offerings. The tithes represent the standard of duty, but the offering the overflow of love.*

4. It is the spirit of adjustment, adaption and single-hearted love for souls.

‘For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without the law, as without law (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ), that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.’ *We see here a spirit so possessed with one supreme object to gain men for Christ that it sweeps over every other consideration in its overmastering purpose of love.*



*Possessed
with one
supreme
object to
gain men
for Christ!*

If it can better reach the slaves of Jamaica by stooping to their level, it leads the early missionaries of Jamaica to become slaves that it may win them. If it can better reach China by wearing Chinese dress and living in Chinese houses, it gives up the customs and comforts of civilization that it may gain some. If it can awaken confidence by eating Tibetan food, as one of our missionaries lately told us, it claims a miracle of grace and digestion and swallows the whole mixture with a smile of triumphant love. ...It goes with Livingstone to the hearts and homes of degraded Africa; with Paton and Hunt to the cannibals of Tana and Fiji. Or if the door must be slowly opened, the worker must

learn to wait as well as work, it sits down with Morrison in a factory in Canton, or with Carey at a printing press at Serampore, until the walls of Jericho fall down. It does not stand for mere doctrinal creeds, or church forms. *It does not waste its strength in planting a dozen denominational churches in every little town while whole nations are without a single missionary. But it counts the minor questions nothing compared with the sending of the Gospel and the saving of the lost. And here in the homeland it has that holy tact that seeks to make all classes, all ages, all activities bend toward the one great business of evangelizing the world.*”

(Mainly) from **“Missionary Ideals”** by Thomas Walker

“There is nothing in the world worth living for but doing good and finishing God’s work - doing the work that Christ did”

David Brainerd

“The evangelization of the heathen world...
is a desperate struggle with the prince of darkness,
and with everything his rage can stir up
in the shape of obstacles, vexations, oppositions, and hatred,
whether by circumstances or by the hand of man.”

Francois Coillard

“I know that I have opportunities of usefulness at home; nevertheless, in heathen lands there is gross darkness and scarcely any gleam of light.”

Thomas Ragland

“China is not to be won for Christ by self-seeking,
ease-loving men and women.

Those not prepared for labour, self-denial, and many discouragements
will be poor helpers in the work.

In short, the men and women we need are those who will
put Jesus, China and souls first and foremost in everything
and at all times.”

Hudson Taylor

“‘Agonia’ - that word so often on St Paul’s lips, what did it mean? Did it not just mean the thousand wearinesses... and deeper, the strivings, the travailings, the bitter disappointments, the ‘deaths oft’ of a missionary’s life?”

Robert Stewart

“I have but one candle of life to burn, and would rather burn it out where people are dying in darkness than in a land which is flooded with lights”

Anonymous Missionary

*“If we have a further end in view,
we do not pay sufficient attention to the immediate present;
if we realize that **OBEDIENCE IS THE END**,
then each moment as it comes is precious.”*

Oswald Chambers



We'll now look at what it means to be a co-worker with God in His harvest field. We read in 1 Corinthians 3:9 that "**we are laborers together with God**". This is an amazing and fearful and wonderful privilege. In his book, "*Service for the King*," A.B. Simpson comments on this verse. He does it under the chapter-title of

Partnership with God

"...**Our work for God is a great partnership. We are laborers together with God.**" When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He always declared that His work was done in partnership with His Father. 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' 'The Father that dwelleth in Me He doeth the works.' And He taught His disciples that their work must be in similar partnership with Him. 'He that believeth in Me the works that I do shall he do also.' And when He left them, Mark gives us this last picture of His ascension: 'He was received up to heaven and sat on the right hand of God and they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with

them, and confirming the word with signs following.’

Let us look at **the two sides of this partnership:**

I. HIS PART

1. **He pays our debts and establishes our credit.** He finds the firm insolvent and ruined, and not only so, but also criminal. And He pays all the old obligations and puts all His own credit to its account, making our standing as good as His own, even in the sight of God....

2. **He supplies all the resources and capital of the business.** He does not send us, like Pharaoh’s taskmasters, to work without materials, but He invests all the resources that we need, Himself. He does not even limit our capital, but says to us, ‘God is able to make all grace abound to you; so that ye always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work.’ We often see after the titles of business corporations the word ‘Limited.’ But there is no such condition upon our incorporation in the service of God. It is all grace, always, with all-sufficiency in all things, and unto every good work. Our service is not to be measured, therefore, by our natural talents, our narrow sphere, or any condition. We can draw of Him to any extent for His work....

3. **He entrusts to us the chief work of His kingdom.** He does not do it Himself and leave us simply to gather up the fragments, but He Himself does all that is difficult and trying, and leaves to us the joy of harvest. Down into the wild wilderness He came and cleaned the ground and prepared the soil with toil and pain; and then to us He left the delightful task of rearing the fruits and harvest of His husbandry. He is the strong vine, sending out its roots into the deep places of strength and life and supporting all the branches, but to us, the branches, He gives the joy and riches of bearing the fruit. He spent thirty-three years amid the shame and toil of the workshop, the judgment hall and the cross, and when it was over He had less than a thousand followers in all the world. And to His disciples He gave thousands of souls in the first month after His ascension. ‘Greater works than these shall they do,’ He says, ‘because I go to



My Father.’ To us He has given these greater works. Angels would be glad to do them, but mortals are privileged instead.

4. **He prepares the workers.** All true workers must be prepared. And the learning of a valuable business or art is no small advantage in secular affairs. *For His service our Master Himself prepares His workers.* ‘We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.’ We are made with a special view to this very thing, that we may be adapted to good works. Adaptation is necessary in everything. Without it the fish is lost on the land and the fowl in the sea and the quadruped in the air. Each has its natural element and action, and this is easy and spontaneous. The organ is adapted for music, and the orange tree for fruit bearing, and the rose for sweet perfume. To try to make a rose grow oranges, and an organ act as a locomotive, would be foolish and idle business. And so, *to expect an unregenerate soul to do Christ’s service is vain.* It succeeds as well as a blacksmith would at a surgical operation, or a ploughman at a fresco painting. Therefore, *Christ prepares His instruments.* He makes them for this very end. He puts into them the instincts, impulses and endowments that will lead them to choose, to love and to accomplish the results intended. And *He especially fits each one for the service assigned.* Fittingly framed together, they severally fulfill their respective relationships and spheres. *Each of us is created, regenerated and divinely educated for the very place we are called to fill. The great Author of our spiritual training and the source of our power is the Holy Ghost.* He is promised to every true servant of Christ as a ‘Spirit of power, of love and a sound mind.’ Without Him and His gifts we can do nothing acceptable to God or effectual with men. He must open to us the Scriptures, by which ‘the man of God is thoroughly furnished unto all good works.’ He must lead us into



the separation and sanctification in which we shall be ‘meet for the Master’s use and prepared unto every good work.’ He must reveal to us the things of God which are spiritually discerned and speak through us ‘in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,’ or our words shall be idle and vain. And He does prepare His ‘chosen vessels’ and his ‘polished shafts,’ and make them ‘mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.’

5. He not only prepares the instruments, but **He also**



prepares the works. Let us quote again from St. Paul: ‘Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before prepared that we should walk in them.’ **Our works are prepared for us, and we have but to walk in them.** This is an unspeakable comfort. We have not to make them, but to receive them and wear them as habits and garments. Just as in the drama the actors may have to wear a great many different costumes, but they do not need to make them. They are provided for the piece; they have only to put them on and wear them in the proper place. At one time it is the part of a workman, at another a merchant, at another a prince; but the proper robe for each is provided, and they have only to put it on and wear it. So the Lord Jesus prepares our work for us. At one time we need the garment of love, at another power, at another wisdom; now we must understand a human heart, again we must weep with a mourner, again we must warn a hardened heart, now we must cheer a depressed one; again we must lead it to the Saviour, or the Sanctifier, or the Healer; or yet again we must meet some perplexing issue or decide at some great turning point in life. But all is ready, laid up for us in Christ our Lord, and only needing to be transferred into our life in action and experience. ***So that in the service, as much as in the experience, it is not I, but Christ; not our works, but His works in us; we being but the pen, and He the Hand that guides it; we but the voice, He the Word that speaks by it; we but the vessel, and***

He the precious Living Water that fills it. This makes our work so easy.

It is spontaneous service, the overflow of the heart. John Bunyan says of his book; *'I wrote because joy did make me write.'* ***So Jesus says of true service in the Spirit: 'Out of His belly shall flow rivers of living water.'*** Most persons find their work a burden. ***The true servant of Christ finds the Lord carries both him and his burden, too.*** We begin our work for the Lord with great zeal and try to help the Lord and His cause. We feel at last that He needs not us or our eager impetuosity, and we are glad to lay the burdens of His work on Him. A little child insisted on carrying an armful of his father's books upstairs. The father told him the load was too heavy, but the little fellow insisted and started with his load. By and by they came tumbling down in confusion, and he burst into tears and stretched out his tired hands to his father for help. The father took him to his arms, and then lifted the books and carried them, too. **So He takes us and our service, and we serve Him best when we rest upon His breast and just let Him use us as He needs us and fills us.** The disciples thought they could keep and manage Him when they took Him from His weary toil and put Him on a pillow in the hinder part of the ship to sleep. But they were glad to put themselves in His care ere long and awake Him to save them from destruction. And such service is as strong as it is calm. It moves with the mighty tides of heaven. 'I labor,' Paul says concerning it, 'according to His working which worketh in me mightily.'

6. And He rewards the work and shares the recompense with us as fully as if we had done it all.

'He that reapeth receiveth wages and gathereth fruit unto life eternal.' I cannot tell you what that reward will be. But you and I know something of the joy of bringing a soul to Jesus even here. We know something of what it means to have someone meet us in after years and tell us how some word or prayer of ours had once helped or saved them. O, what will it be, there, to find them coming from the East and the West, bringing the souls they have won, and recognizing us as the instrument of all their blessing, while he shall say: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto these, ye have done it unto Me.' 'He shall make them sit down to eat, and shall Himself come forth and serve them.' 'They shall shine as the stars forever and ever.' They shall be rulers over many things and shall enter into the joy of their Lord. They shall share His



kingdom and His throne and be promoted to grander service through the millennial years. O, then we will not regret the nights of watching and days of toil, but wish we could have done and suffered more for so great and far-surpassing a recompense.

II. OUR PART

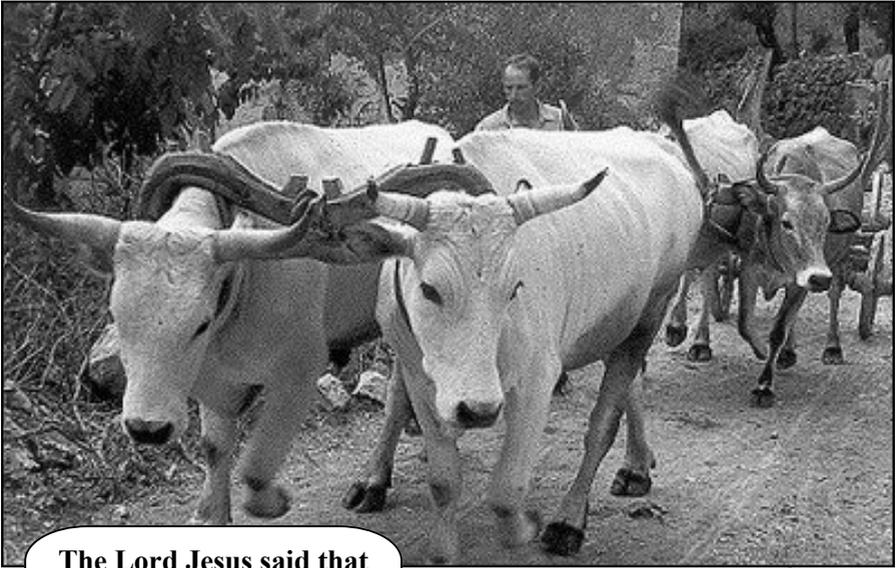
1. **To recognize the work as His.** A great deal of Christian work is our work, and He only is consulted and asked to help it. ***True Christian service is given to Him, and done as His and at His bidding, and under His absolute responsibility and ownership. It is not, What am I doing for the Lord? But, What is the Lord doing through me? Let us consecrate our work as well as ourselves.*** Then we shall not hear so much about our church, our connection, our cause, and our work, but like the men of old, shall ‘dwell with the King for His work.’

2. **To recognize the necessity and obligation of our co-working.** God could do without us. He could, by His direct omnipotence, Himself, do all He uses us to do. ***But He has appointed human agency in the salvation***



OUR part in the WORK is:

1. To recognize the work as HIS.
2. To recognize the necessity & obligation of our co-working.
3. To work in His way and plan.
4. To work in His strength.



The Lord Jesus said that we should take His yoke upon us (and work with Him). To be His co-workers is the best!



of men. He has arranged for the supply of the world with the Living Water by the pipes and channels of our hearts and hands. And, therefore, if we fail to do our part, there is a failure in the supply. What a grief it must be to Him to know that there is enough in the resources of redemption for all mankind, and that it cost Him His life-blood; and yet, *through the unfaithfulness of His servants, so many are left to perish without it.* We are members of Christ, and just as we have seen a large and generous heart and a gifted head hampered by a debilitated body, and hindered in carrying out its noble aims and purposes by paralyzed limbs, so often Christ looks in vain for hands and hearts to carry out His merciful and mighty plans for a lost world. He has so ordered it that His grace must reach others through us, and it is a great crime against His love as well as against the souls of men to fail to work together with Him.



It is a
great crime
to fail
to work
together
with Him.

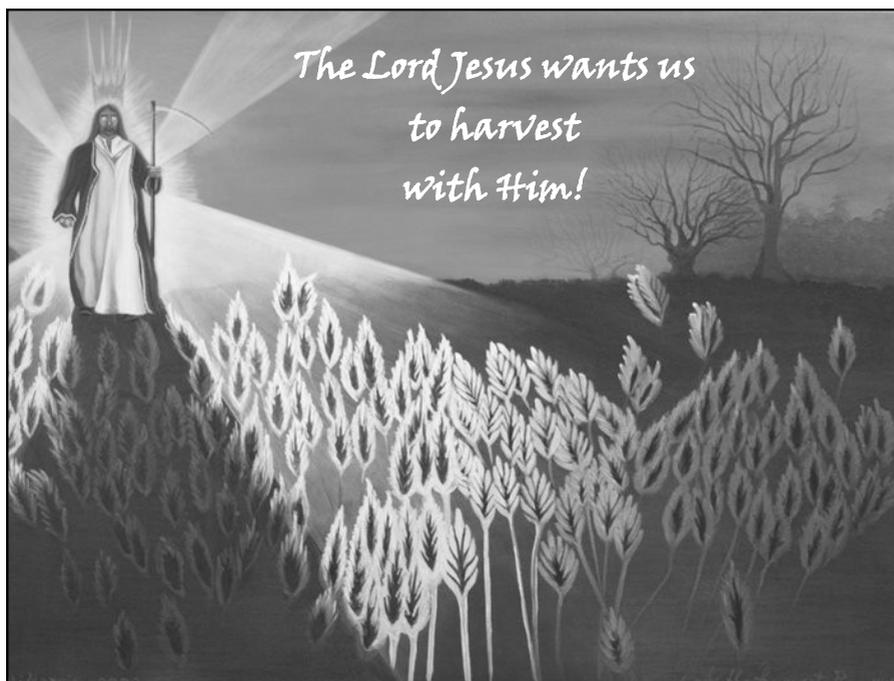
It is as great a crime as it would be for a generous benefactor to leave a large inheritance to the poor children of the city and deposit it with certain trustees for this end, and these trustees, instead of giving it to the persons for whom it was intended, should spend it on themselves and let the children starve in neglect. O, do we realize that we are His trustees, His representatives, His agents, His body, His hands, and feet, and voice, through whom He has condescended to work; and shall we not be true to our glorious Head and the trust that He has given us?

3. To work in His way and plan. *Much work is destroyed by being done in our way. He demands that if we build in His temple, we must build on His plan, on the foundation He has laid according to His specifications and with the materials He has supplied.*



Much work
is destroyed
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OUR way...

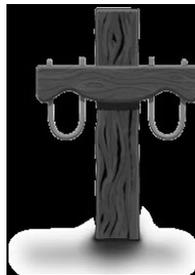
‘See that thou make all this according to the pattern showed thee in the mount.’ ‘Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.’ We often hear of some new religious ‘enterprise’ being started. The Church is not an ‘enterprise,’ but a divine temple, built of divine materials by the Holy Ghost through consecrated men and women. There is too much of man’s ‘enterprise’ about it. *Instead of the simplicity of the Gospel, the power of the Spirit, the agency of truth, faith and prayer, the*



personal holiness of a consecrated membership, the testimony of people separated from the world, the power of personal work for souls, an open door for the poor and lost, an aggressive work to reach the outcast and hopeless, the free and voluntary gifts of God's children, a full Gospel for spirit, soul and body, and a church of which a living Christ is the Life and Lord we have smart preachers and fashionable people, operatic choirs and ungodly trustees, church fairs and Sunday school theatricals, religious concerts and charity balls, splendid church edifices and vast religious endowments, pew rents which exclude the poor, philosophical essays which exclude the Gospel and the Saviour, culture and scholasticism which leave out the Holy Ghost, and a mass of man's machinery which leaves little room for the supernatural operation, or the power of the Living God. The work of the apostles was under the direction of the Holy Ghost. Natural gifts were not despised, but all was fused into the living fire of the Spirit of power and consecration. The planting of Christianity in the continent of Africa was wholly due to the obedience of Philip to the Holy Ghost, bidding him leave a great work in Samaria and go down into the desert. The result was the conversion of the Prince of

Ethiopia, and the first spread of the Gospel among the Gentile nations. The planting of the Gospel in Europe was also due to the obedience of Paul to the guidance of the Holy Ghost, forbidding him to preach in Asia and Bythinia, and calling him to Macedonia. The same God is with us still, and if we would let Him lead us, we should see the same glorious results.

4. To work in His strength. ...A touch of God's hand is worth a million human hands. A company of engineers were lifting an immense and costly obelisk to its pedestal in Alexandria. They had raised it aloft, almost to the level of the base. But it needed one inch more to clear and swing in upon its pediment. The ropes had been strained to their utmost tension and nothing more could be done, without lowering the whole pulleys and mechanism and commencing over. There was a moment of intense disappointment. Man's power could do no more. Suddenly a sailor's voice rang out clear and sharp: 'Wet the ropes.' In an instant the engineer understood the simple hint. The ropes were saturated with water from top to bottom. In a few moments the immense obelisk began to rise, slowly, surely, silently—it has reached the level of the base—it has passed it—it is swinging clear, it is settling in its place, the cords are loosed—it stands firm and steady on its foundation and a shout of cheers goes up from a thousand voices at the simple touch of power, that came forth from nature at a word. *So is the work of God; there is a limit where all our strength comes to an end. The might of a million men cannot go farther, but there is a secret place of power, and one whisper of faith will bring omnipotence so simply, so silently, so easily, yet so victoriously, that earth and heaven will shout the glad notes of praise forever. This is the secret of the work. 'Ye shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you and ye shall be witnesses unto Me to the uttermost part of the earth.'* It is the same old Gospel. Let us put it into our work as well as our souls and we shall find that He is All in all."





What it means to be a Spiritual Farm Worker for God (with God)

We'll now look at what it means to be a spiritual farm worker for God (with God). Once more, we turn to the words of Charles Spurgeon. His sermon on "*Farm Labourers*" follows:

"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry."—1 Corinthians 3:6-9.

I shall begin at the end of my text, because I find it to be the easiest way of mapping out my discourse. We shall first remark that the church is God's farm: "Ye are God's husbandry." In the margin of the revised version we read, "Ye are God's tilled ground," and that is the very expres-

sion for me. "**Ye are God's tilled ground," or farm.** After we have spoken of the farm we will next say a little upon the fact that the Lord employs labourers on his estate; and when we have looked at the labourers—such poor fellows as they are—we will remember that God himself is the great worker: "We are labourers together *with God.*"

I. We begin by considering that THE CHURCH IS GOD'S FARM.

The Lord has made the church his own by his sovereign choice. He has also secured it unto himself by purchase, having paid for it a price immense. "The Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." **Every acre of God's farm cost the Saviour a bloody sweat, yea, the blood of his heart. He loved us, and gave himself for us: that is the price he paid.** Henceforth the church is God's freehold, and he holds the title deeds of it. It is our joy to feel that we are not our own, we are bought with a price. The church is God's farm by choice and purchase.

And now he has made it his by enclosure. It lay exposed aforetime as part of an open common, bare and barren, covered with thorns and thistles, and the haunt of every wild beast; for we were "by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Divine foreknowledge surveyed the waste, and electing love marked out its portion with a full line of grace, and thus set us apart to be the Lord's own estate for ever. In due time effectual grace came forth with power, and separated us from the rest of mankind, as fields are hedged and ditched to part them from the open heath. Hath not the Lord declared that he hath chosen his vineyard and fenced it?

*"We are a garden wall'd around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground;
A little spot, enclosed by grace
Out of the world's wide wilderness."*

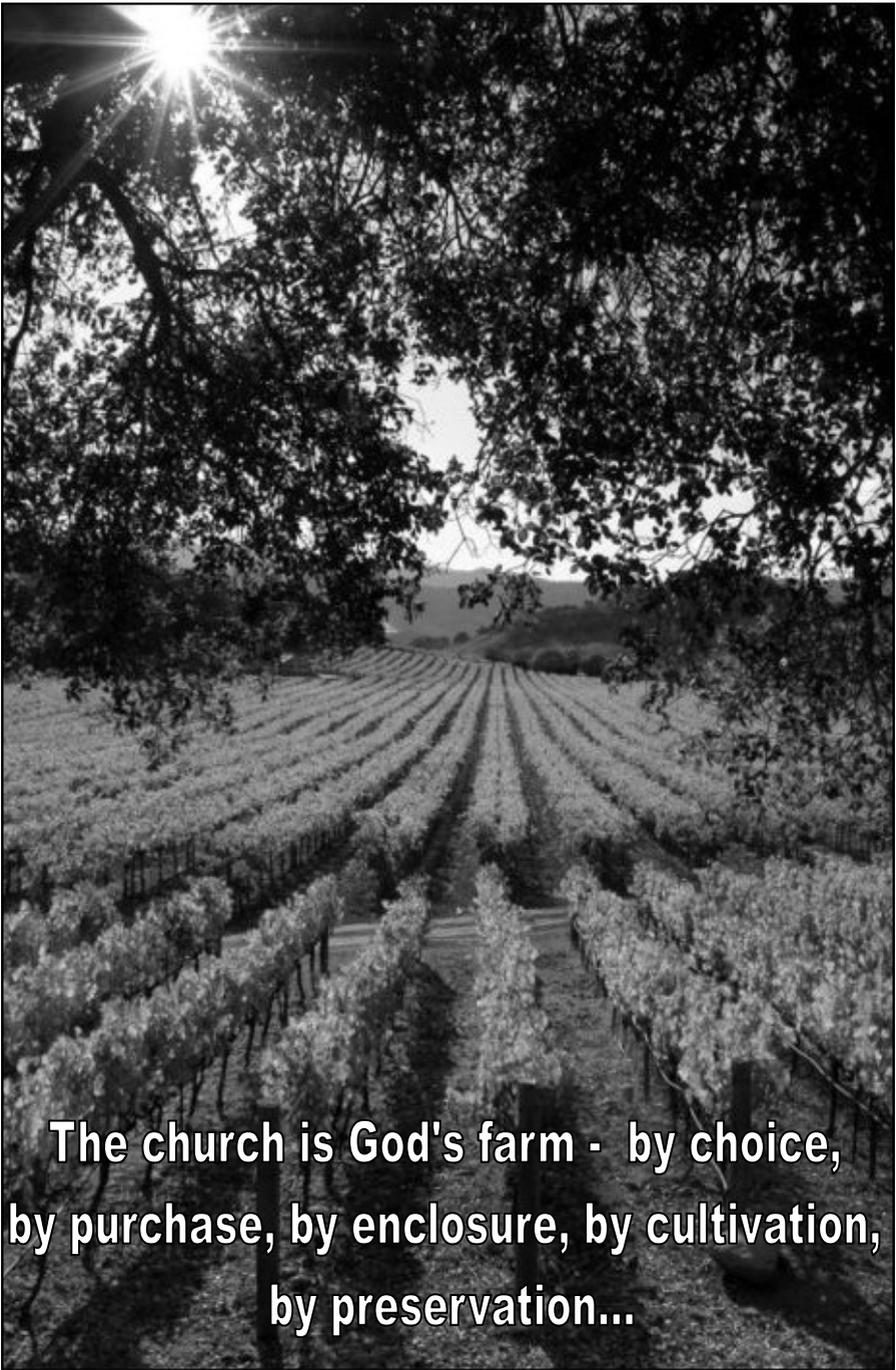
The Lord has also made this farm evidently his own by cultivation. What more could he have done for his farm? ***He has totally changed the nature of the soil: from being barren he hath made it a fruitful land. He hath ploughed it, and digged it, and fattened it, and watered it, and planted it with all manner of flowers and fruits.*** It hath already



brought forth to him many a pleasant cluster, and there are brighter times to come, when angels shall shout the harvest home, and Christ "shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."

This farm is preserved by the Lord's continual protection. Not only did he enclose it, and cultivate it by his miraculous power, to make it his own farm, but he continually maintains possession of it. "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." If it were not for God's continual power her hedges would soon be thrown down, and wild beasts would devour her fields. Wicked hands are always trying to break down her walls and lay her waste again, so that there should be no true church in the world; but the Lord is jealous for his land, and will not allow it to be destroyed. A church would not long remain a church if God did not preserve it unto himself. ...Hence God's farm remains a farm because he is ever in it to prevent its returning to its former wildness. Omnipotent power is as needful to keep the fields of the church under cultivation as to reclaim them at the first.

Inasmuch as the church is God's own farm, ***he expects to receive a harvest from it.*** The world is waste, and he looks for nothing from it; but we are tilled land, and therefore a harvest is due from us. Barrenness suits the moorland, but to a farm it would be a great discredit. ***Love looks for returns of love; grace given demands gracious fruit. Watered with the drops of the Saviour's bloody sweat, shall we not bring forth a hundred-fold to his praise? Kept by the eternal Spirit of God, shall there not be produced in us fruits to his glory?*** The Lord's husbandry upon us has shown a great expenditure of cost, and labour, and thought; ***ought there not to be a proportionate obedience, a harvest of holiness, a harvest of usefulness, a harvest of praise?*** Shall it not be so? ***I think some churches forget that an increase is expected from every field of the Lord's farm, for they never have a harvest or even look for one. Farmers do not plough their lands or sow their fields for amusement; they mean business, and plough and sow because they desire a harvest.*** If this fact could but enter into the heads of some professors, surely they would look at things in a different light; ***but of late it has seemed as if we thought that God's church was not expected to produce anything, but existed for her own comfort and personal benefit. Brethren, it must not be so; the great Husbandman must have some reward for his husbandry. Every field must yield its increase, and the whole estate must bring forth to his***



**The church is God's farm - by choice,
by purchase, by enclosure, by cultivation,
by preservation...**

praise. We join with the bride in the Song in saying, "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred."

But I come back to the place from which I started. **This farm is, by choice, by purchase, by enclosure, by cultivation, by preservation, entirely the Lord's.** *See, then, the injustice of allowing any of the labourers to call even a part of the estate his own.* ...The entire church belongs to him who has chosen it in his sovereignty, bought it with his blood, fenced it by his grace, cultivated it by his wisdom, and preserved it by his power. ***There is but one church on the face of the earth, and those who love the Lord should keep this truth in mind.*** Paul is a labourer, Apollos is a labourer, Cephas is a labourer; but the farm is not Paul's, not so much as a rood of it, nor does a single parcel of land belong to Apollos, or the smallest allotment to Cephas; for "Ye are Christ's." ***The fact is that in this case the labourers belong to the land, and not the land to the labourers: ...***

II. We have now to notice, as our second head, that THE GREAT HUSBANDMAN (THE GREAT FARMER) EMPLOYS LABOURERS.

By human agency God ordinarily works out his designs. He can, if he pleases, by his Holy Spirit get directly at the hearts of men, but that is his business, and not ours; we have to do with such words as these: "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." **The Master's commission is not, "Sit still and see the Spirit of God convert the nations;" but, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."** Observe God's method in supplying the race with food. In answer to the prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," he might have bidden the clouds drop manna, morning by morning, at each man's door; but he sees that it is for our good to work, and so he uses the hands of the ploughman and the sower for our supply. God might cultivate his chosen farm, the church, by miracle, or by angels; but in great condescension he blesses her through her own sons and daughters. ***He employs us for our own good; for we who are labourers in his fields receive much more good for ourselves than we bestow. Labour develops our spiritual muscle and keeps us in health.*** "Unto me," says Paul, "who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

Our great Master means that every labourer on his farm should receive some benefit from it, for he never muzzles the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn.

The labourer's daily bread comes out of the soil. Though he works not for himself, but for his Master, yet still he has his portion of food. In the Lord's granary there is seed for the sower, but there is also bread for the eater. However disinterestedly we may serve God in the husbandry of his church we are ourselves partakers of the fruit. It is a great condescension on God's part that he uses us at all, for we are poor tools at the best, and more hindrance than help.

The labourers employed by God are all occupied upon needful work.

Notice: "I have planted, Apollos watered." Who beat the big drum, or blew his own trumpet? Nobody. On God's farm none are kept for ornamental purposes. ...I do not believe that our God will ever pay wages to men who only walk about his grounds to show themselves. Orators who display their eloquence in the pulpit are more like gypsies who stray on the farm to pick up chickens, than honest labourers who work to bring forth a crop for their master. Many of the members of our churches live as if their only business on the farm was to pluck blackberries or gather wild flowers. They are great at finding fault with other people's ploughing and mowing; but not a hand's turn will they do themselves. Come on, my good fellows. Why stand ye all the day idle? The harvest is plenteous, and the labourers are few. You who think yourselves more cultivated than ordinary people, if you are indeed Christians, must not strut about and despise those who are hard at work. ...*Brethren, a labourer may work very hard at a whim of his own, and yet it may be all waste labour.* Some discourses do little more than show the difference between tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee, and what is the use of that? Suppose we sow the fields with sawdust, or sprinkle them with rosewater, what of that? Will God bless our moral essays, and fine compositions, and pretty passages? **Brethren, we must aim at usefulness: we must as labourers together with God be occupied with something that is worth doing.** "I," says one, "have planted": it is well, for planting must be done. "I," answers another, "have watered:" that also is good and necessary. See to it that ye can each bring in a solid report; but let



We must
be occupied
with
something
that is
worth doing.

no man be content with the mere child's-play of oratory, or the getting up of entertainments and such like.

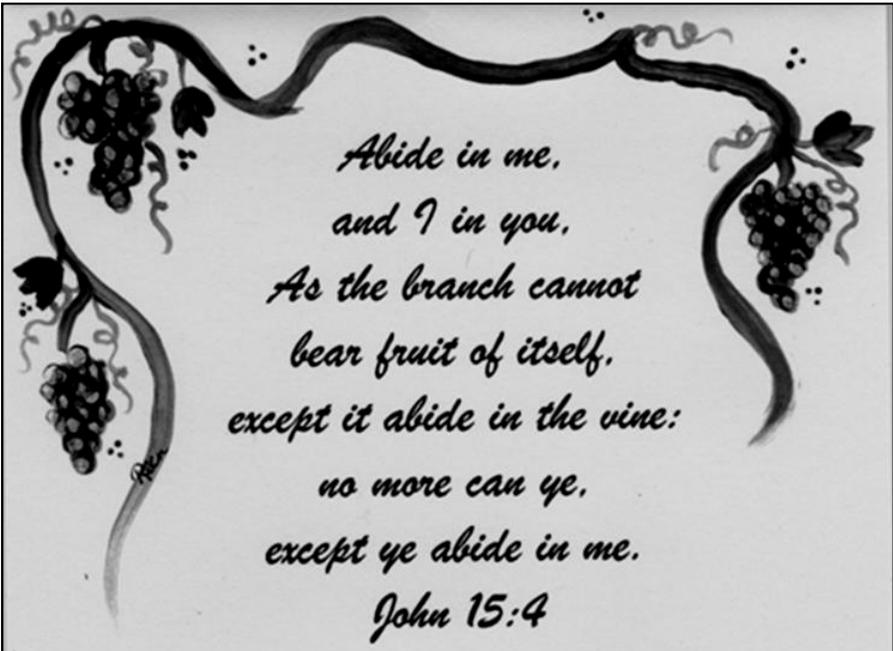
On the Lord's farm there is a division of labour. Even Paul did not say, "I have planted and watered." No, Paul planted. And certainly Apollos could not say, "I have planted as well as watered." No, it was enough for him to attend to the watering. No man has all gifts. How foolish, then, are they who say, "I enjoy So-and-so's ministry because he edifies the saints in doctrine; but when he was away the other Sunday I could not profit by the preacher because he was all for the conversion of sinners." Yes, he was planting; you have been planted a good while, and do not need planting again; but you ought to be thankful that others are made partakers of the benefit. **One soweth and another reapeth, and therefore instead of grumbling at the honest ploughman because he did not bring a sickle with him, you ought to have prayed for him that he might have strength to plough deep and break up hard hearts.**

Observe that, **on God's farm, there is unity of purpose among the labourers.** Read the text. "Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one." One Master has employed them, and though he may send them out at different times, and to different parts of the farm, yet they are all one in being used for one end, to work for one harvest. In England we do not understand what is meant by watering, because the farmer could not water all his farm; but in the East a farmer waters almost every inch of his ground. He would have no crop if he did not use all means for irrigating the fields. If you have ever been in Italy, Egypt, or Palestine, you will have seen a complete system of wells, pumps, wheels, buckets, channels, little streamlets, pipes, and so on, by which the water is carried all over the garden to every plant, otherwise in the extreme heat of the sun it would be dried up. **Planting needs wisdom, watering needs quite as much, and the piecing of these two works together needs that the labourers should be of one mind. It is a bad thing when labourers are at cross purposes, and work against each other, and this evil is worse in the church than anywhere else. How can I plant with success if my helper will not water what I have planted; or what is the use of my watering if nothing is planted?** Husbandry is spoiled when foolish people undertake it, and quarrel over it; for from sowing to reaping the work is one, and all must be done to one end. Let us pull together all our days, for strife brings barrenness.



**Father, please give
us wisdom to work
with You
in Your field...!**





*Abide in me,
and I in you.
As the branch cannot
bear fruit of itself,
except it abide in the vine:
no more can ye,
except ye abide in me.
John 15:4*



*Lord, without You
we can do nothing!*

We are called upon to notice in our text that **all the labourers put together are nothing at all.** "Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth." *The workmen are nothing at all without their master.* All the labourers on a farm could not manage it if they had no one at their head, and **all the preachers and Christian workers in the world can do nothing unless God be with them.** Remember that every labourer on God's farm has derived all his qualifications from God. **No man knows how to plant or water souls except the Lord teaches him from day to day.** All these holy gifts are grants



*All
the workers
can do
nothing
unless God be
with them!*

of free grace. All the labourers work under God's direction and arrangement, or they work in vain. They would not know when or how to do their work if their Master did not guide them by his Spirit, without whose help they cannot even think a good thought. All God's labourers must go to him for their seed, or else they will scatter tares. All good seed comes out of God's granary. If we preach, it must be the true word of God, or nothing can come of it. More than that, all the strength that is in the labourer's arm to sow the heavenly seed must be given by the Master. We cannot preach except God be with us. A sermon is vain talk and dreary word-spinning unless the Holy Spirit enlivens it. He must give us both the preparation of the heart and the answer of the tongue, or we shall be as men who sow the wind. When the good seed is sown the whole success of it rests with God. If he withhold the dew and the rain the seed will never rise from the ground; and unless he shall shine upon it the green ear will never ripen. **The human heart will remain barren, even though Paul himself should preach, unless God the Holy Ghost shall work with Paul and bless the word to those that hear it.** Therefore, since the increase is of God alone, put the labourers into their place. Do not make too much of us; for when we have done all we are unprofitable servants.

Yet, though inspiration calls the labourers nothing, it says **that they shall be rewarded.** God works our good works in us, and then rewards us for them. Here we have mention of *a personal service, and a personal reward*: "Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour." *The reward is proportionate, not to the success, but to the labour.*

Many discouraged workers may be comforted by that expression. You are not to be paid by results, but by endeavours. You may have a stiff bit of clay to plough, or a dreary plot of land to sow, where stones, and birds, and thorns, and travelers, and a burning sun may all be leagued against the seed; but you are not accountable for these things; **your reward shall be according to your work.** *Some put a great deal of labour into a little field, and make much out of it. Others use a great deal of labour throughout a long life, and yet they see but small result,* for it is written, "One soweth, and another reapeth"; but the reaping man will not get all the reward, the sowing man shall receive his portion of the joy. ***The labourers are nobodies, but they shall enter into the joy of their Lord.***

Unitedly, according to the text, the workers have been successful, and that is a great part of their reward. "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." Frequently brethren say in their prayers, "A Paul may plant, an Apollos may water, but it is all in vain unless God gives the increase." This is quite true; but another truth is too much overlooked, namely, that **when Paul plants and Apollos waters, God does give the increase. We do not labour in vain.** There would be no increase without God; but then we are not without God: when such men as Paul and Apollos plant and water, there is sure to be an increase; they are the right kind of labourers, they work in a right spirit, and God is certain to bless them. This is a great part of the labourers' wages.

III. So much upon the labourers. Now for the main point again. **GOD HIMSELF IS THE GREAT WORKER.**

He may use what labourers he pleases, but the increase comes alone from him. Brethren, you know it is so in natural things: the most skilful farmer cannot make the wheat germinate, and grow, and ripen. He cannot even preserve a single field till harvest time, for the farmer's enemies are many and mighty. In farming there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip; and when the farmer thinks, good easy man, that he shall reap his crop, there are blights and mildews lingering about to rob him of his gains. God must give the increase. If any man is dependent on God it is the farmer, and through him we are all of us dependent upon God from year to year for the food by which we live. Even the king must live by the produce of the field. God gives the increase in the barn and the hayrick; and in the spiritual farm it is even more so, for what can man do in this business? If

God is the Great Worker!



any of you think that it is an easy thing to win a soul I should like you to attempt it. *Suppose that without divine aid you should try to save a soul—you might as well attempt to make a world. Why, you cannot create a fly, how can you create a new heart and a right spirit? Regeneration is a great mystery, it is out of your reach.* "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." What can you and I do in this matter? It is far beyond our line. We can tell out the truth of God; but to apply that truth to the heart and conscience is quite another thing. *I have preached Jesus Christ with my whole heart, and yet I know that I have never produced a saving effect upon a single unregenerate man unless the Spirit of God has opened the heart and placed the living seed of truth within it.* Experience teaches us this. *Equally is it the Lord's work to keep the seed alive when it springs up. We think we have converts, and we are not long before we are disappointed in them. Many are like blossoms on our apple trees; they are fair to look upon, but they do not come to anything; and others are like*

the many little apples which fall off long before they have come to any size. He who presides over a great church, and feels an agony for the souls of men, will soon be convinced that if God does not work there will be no work done: we shall see no conversion, no sanctification, no final perseverance, no glory brought to God, no satisfaction for the passion of the Saviour, unless the Lord be with us. Well said our Lord, "Without me ye can do nothing."

Briefly I would draw certain practical lessons out of this important truth: the first is, ***if the whole farm of the church belongs exclusively to the great Master Worker, and the labourers are worth nothing without him, let this promote unity among all whom he employs.*** If we are all under one Master, do not let us quarrel. It is a miserable business when we cannot bear to see good being done by those of a different denomination who work in ways of their own. If a new labourer comes on the farm, and he uses a hoe of a new shape, shall I become his enemy? If he does his work better than I do mine, shall I be jealous? Do you not remember reading in the Scriptures that, upon one occasion, the disciples could not cast out a devil? This ought to have made them humble; but to our surprise we read a few verses further on that they saw one casting out devils in Christ's name, and they forbade him because he followed not with their company. They could not cast out the devil themselves, and they forbade those who could. A certain band of people are going about winning souls, but because they are not doing it in our fashion, we do not like it. It is true they have odd ways; but they do really save souls, and that is the main point. Instead of cavilling, let us encourage all on Christ's side. Wisdom is justified of her children, though some of them are far from handsome. The labourers ought to be satisfied with the new ploughman if their Master smiles upon him. ***Brother, if the great Lord has employed you, it is no business of mine to question his choice. Can I lend you a hand? Can I show you how to work better? Or can you show me how I can improve? This is the proper behaviour of one workman to another.***

This truth, however, ought to keep all the labourers very dependent. Are you going to preach, young man? "Yes, I am going to do a great deal of good." Are you? ***Have you forgotten that you are nothing?*** "Neither is he that planteth anything." A divine is coming brimful of the gospel to comfort the saints. If he is not coming in strict dependence upon God, he, too, is nothing. "Neither is he that watereth anything." Power belongeth unto

God. Man is vanity and his words are wind; to God alone belongeth power and wisdom. ***If we keep our places in all lowliness our Lord will use us; but if we exalt ourselves he will leave us to our nothingness.***

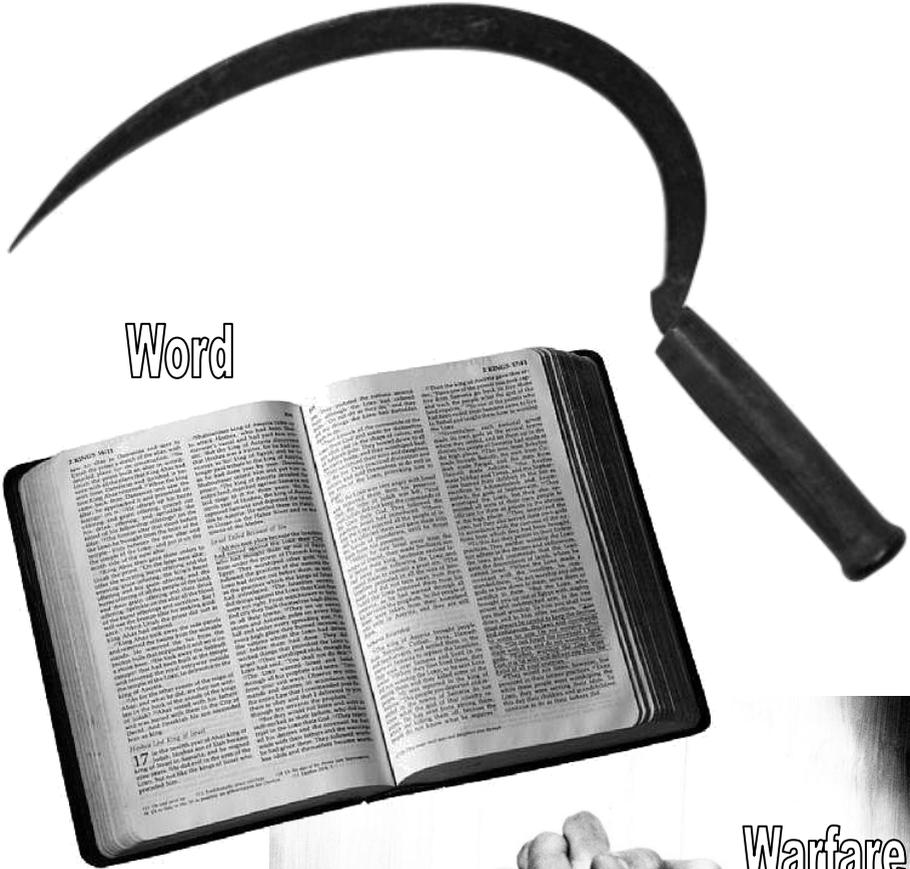
Next notice that this fact ennobles everybody who labours in God's husbandry. My soul is lifted up with joy when I mark these words, "For we are labourers together with God:" mere labourers on his farm, and yet labourers with him. Does the Lord work with us? We know he does by the signs following. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," is language for all the sons of God as well as for the great Firstborn. ***God is with you, my brethren, when you are serving him with all your heart. Speaking to your class concerning Jesus, it is God that speaks by you; picking up that stranger on the way, and telling him of salvation by faith, Christ is speaking through you even as he spoke with the woman at the well; addressing the rough crowd in the open air, young man, if you are preaching pardon through the atoning blood, it is the God of Peter who is testifying of his Son, even as he did on the day of Pentecost.*** But, lastly, **how this should drive us to our knees. Since we are nothing without God, let us cry mightily unto him for help in this our holy service. Let both sower and reaper pray together, or they will never rejoice together. If the blessing be withheld, it is because we do not cry for it and expect it.** Brother labourers, come to the mercy-seat, and we shall yet see the reapers return from the fields bringing their sheaves with them, though, perhaps, they went forth weeping to the sowing. To our Father, who is the farmer, be all glory, for ever and ever. Amen."



**Father, I have
come to do
Your will—glorify
Yourself!**

Work

Word



Warfare



Now that we have seen (1) *the kind of workers God wants*, (2) *the attitude and spirit in which He wants them to work*, (3) *what it means to be co-workers with God*, and (4) *what it means to be spiritual farm workers with Him*, we need to personally RESPOND. Washington Gladden put his response in the words of the following poem:

Service

**O Master, let me walk with thee
In lowly paths of service free;
Tell me thy secret; help me bear
The strain of toil, the fret of care.**

Help me the slow of heart to move
By some clear, winning word of love;
Teach me the wayward feet to stay,
And guide them in the homeward way.

**Teach me Thy patience; still with Thee
In closer, dearer company,
In work that keeps faith sweet and strong;
In trust that triumphs over wrong.**

In hope that sends a shining ray
Far down the future's broadening way;
In peace that only Thou canst give,
With Thee, O Master, let me live.

Each one of us is called to be a worker in God's field, a co-worker in God's harvest.

Thus far in this book we have (1) heard the Word of God about the harvest and the workers, and we have (2) learned about the Workers of God in His harvest-field... Now we turn our attention to (3) the Work of God in His harvest-field.



Work of God

The “work of God” is

the work that God does all the time, *and*
the work that He wants us to do for Him

and with Him...

The Lord Jesus said: “As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work” (John 9:4). The Christian who becomes a worker of God realizes that each new year is a door by which we reach new fields of service for God. William Olney put it like this:

What is a Year?

What is a year?

It is a door

By which we reach new fields

Of service for our God and fellow-men,

A door by which we can explore

Wide spheres of usefulness

Our world to bless,

And reap the sheaves God’s Word of witness yields.

It is a task

Set by the master of our souls,

A little part of our life’s work below;

And so we ask

The holy wisdom which alone controls

Our labour, teaching what and where to sow

That the year, at its end,

May show God’s glory and man’s profit blend.

We’ll first consider a sermon by Spurgeon on “What a worker of God can do”, as well as a sermon by Tauler on “How to work...”. Then we’ll look at each of the aspects of the “work of God” as it relates to farming and harvesting...

Work of God

Believe on Him!

Responding to God's call

Becoming a worker of God

Preparing the soil!

Ploughing!

Sowing Seed!

Dying to bring forth fruit...

Planting

Praying for rain!

Waiting for germination & growth...

Harrowing the field...

Weeding the field

Controlling the pests!

Watching & guarding the field!

Feeding & watering the field

Maintaining the fence...

Praying for growth & springing forth



Pruning
Harvesting!
Rejoicing!
Gleaning the fields
Eating while working
Resting
Gathering in the barn
Threshing...
Winnowing in the wind...
Sieving
Drying in sun
Selecting seed for sowing
Pounding!
Grinding!
Storing
Baking bread
Blessing bread
Breaking bread!
Feeding others & oneself...
For God's glory!

A sermon by Charles Spurgeon summarizes beautifully what the “work of God” consist of as a spiritual farm worker for God. He said:

What the Farm Labourers Can Do and what they Cannot Do

"And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."—Mark 5:26-29.

Here is a lesson for "labourers together with God." It is a parable for all who are concerned in the kingdom of God. It will be of little value to those who are in the kingdom of darkness, for they are not bidden to sow the good seed: "Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes?" But all who are commissioned to scatter seed for the Royal Husbandman (Farmer), will be glad to know how the harvest is preparing for him whom they serve. Listen, then, ye that sow beside all waters; ye that with holy diligence seek to fill the garners of heaven,—listen, and may the Spirit of God speak into your ears as you are able to bear it.



Charles Spurgeon

I. We shall, first, learn from our text **WHAT WE CAN DO AND WHAT WE CANNOT DO**. Let this stand as our first head.

"So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground:" this the gracious worker can do. "And the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how:" this is what he cannot do: seed once sown is beyond human jurisdiction, and man can neither make it spring nor grow. Yet ere long the worker comes in again:—"When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle." We can reap in due season,

and it is both our duty and our privilege to do so. You see, then, that there is a place for the worker at the beginning, and though there is no room for him in the middle passage, yet another opportunity is given him further on when that which he sowed has actually yielded fruit.

Notice, then, that **we can sow**. Any man who has received the knowledge of the grace of God in his heart can teach others. I include under the term "man" all who know the Lord, be they male or female. We cannot all teach alike, for all have not the same gifts; to one is given one talent, and

to another ten; neither have we all the same opportunities, for one lives in obscurity and another has far-reaching influence; yet there is not within the family of God an infant hand which may not drop its own tiny seed into the ground. There is not a man among us who needs to stand idle in the market-place, for work suitable to his strength is waiting for him. There is not a saved woman who is left without a holy task; let her do it and win the approving word, "She hath done what she could."



*We should
cast the holy
seed of
God's Word
wherever
we go...*

We need never quarrel with God because we cannot do everything, if he only permits us to do this one thing; for **sowing the good seed is a work which will need all our wit, our strength, our love, our care. Holy seed sowing should be adopted as our highest pursuit**, and it will be no inferior object for the noblest life. You will need heavenly teaching that you may carefully select the wheat, and keep it free from the darnel of error. You will require instruction to winnow out of it your own thoughts and opinions; for these may not be according to the mind of God. **Men are not saved by our word, but by God's word**. We need grace to learn the gospel aright, and to teach the whole of it. **To different men we must, with discretion, bring forward that part of the word of God which will best bear upon their consciences; for much may depend upon the word being in season.**

Having selected the seed, we shall have plenty of work if we go forth and sow it broadcast everywhere, for every day brings its opportunity, and every company furnishes its occasion. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand." "Sow beside all waters."

We can sow...!



Still, wise sowers **discover favourable opportunities for sowing, and gladly seize upon them.** There are times when it would clearly be a waste to sow; for the soil could not receive it, it is not in a fit condition. After a shower, or before a shower, or at some such time as he that hath studied husbandry prefers, then must we be up and doing. While we are to work for God always, yet there are seasons when it were casting pearls before swine to talk of holy things, and there are other times when to be silent would be a great sin. **Sluggards in the time for ploughing and sowing are sluggards indeed, for they not only waste the day, but throw away the year.** If you watch for souls, and use hours of happy vantage, and moments of sacred softening, you will not complain of the scanty space allowed for agency. Even should you never be called to water, or to reap, your office is wide enough if you fulfill the work of the sower.

For little though it seem to teach the simple truth of the gospel, yet it is essential. How shall men hear without a teacher? **Servants of God, the seed of the word is not like thistle-down, which is borne by every wind; but the wheat of the kingdom needs a human hand to sow it, and without such agency it will not enter into men's hearts, neither can it bring forth fruit to the glory of God. The preaching of the gospel is the necessity of every age; God grant that our country may never be deprived of it. Even if the Lord should send us a famine of bread and of water, may he never send us a famine of the word of God. Faith cometh by hearing, and how can there be hearing if there**

is no teaching? Scatter ye, scatter ye, then, the seed of the kingdom, for this is essential to the harvest.

This seed should be sown often, for many are the foes of the wheat, and if you repeat not your sowing you may never see a harvest. The seed must be sown everywhere, too, for there are no choice corners of the world that you can afford to let alone, in the hope that they will be self-productive. You may not leave the rich and intelligent under the notion that surely the gospel will be found among them, for it is not so: the pride of life leads them away from God. You may not leave the poor and illiterate, and say, "Surely they will of themselves feel their need of Christ." Not so: they will sink from degradation to degradation unless you uplift them with the gospel. No tribe of man, no peculiar constitution of the human mind, may be neglected by us; but everywhere we must preach the word, in season and out of season. I have heard that Captain Cook, the celebrated circumnavigator, in whatever part of the earth he landed, took with him a little packet of English seeds, and scattered them in suitable places. He would leave the boat and wander up from the shore. He said nothing, but quietly scattered the seeds wherever he went, so that he belted land. Imitate him wherever you go; **sow spiritual seed in every place that your foot shall tread upon.**



*Sow
spiritual seed
in every
place that
your foot
shall tread
upon.*

Let us now think of **WHAT YOU CANNOT DO.**

You cannot, after the seed has left your hand, cause it to put forth life. I am sure you cannot make it grow, for you do not know how it grows. The text saith, "And the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how." That which is beyond the range of our knowledge is certainly beyond the reach of our power. Can you make a seed germinate? You may place it under circumstances of damp and heat which will cause it to swell and break forth with a shoot, but the germination itself is beyond you. How is it done? We know not. After the germ has been put forth, can you make it further grow, and develop its life into leaf and stem? No; that, too, is out of your power. And when the green, grassy blade has been suc-

ceeded by the ear, can you ripen it? It will be ripened; but can you do it? You know you cannot; **you can have no finger in the actual process, though you may promote the conditions under which it is carried on.** Life is a mystery; growth is a mystery; ripening is a mystery: and these three mysteries are as fountains sealed against all intrusion. How comes it that there is within the ripe seed the preparations for another sowing and another growth? What is this vital principle, this secret reproducing energy? Knowest thou anything about this? ...Certainly this is true of the rise and progress of the life of God in the heart. It enters the soul, and roots itself we know not how. Naturally men hate the word, but it enters and it changes their hearts, so that they come to love it; yet we know not how. Their whole nature is renewed, so that instead of producing sin it yields repentance, faith, and love; but we know not how. How the Spirit of God deals with the mind of man, how he creates the new heart and the right spirit, how we are begotten again unto a lively hope, we cannot tell. The Holy Ghost enters into us; we hear not his voice, we see not his light, we feel not his touch; yet he worketh an effectual work upon us, which we are not long in perceiving. We know that the work of the Spirit is a new creation, a resurrection, a quickening from the dead; but all these words are only covers to our utter ignorance of the mode of his working, with which it is not in our power to meddle. We do not know how he performs his miracles of love, and, not knowing how he works, we may be quite sure that **we cannot take the work out of his hands. We cannot create, we cannot quicken, we cannot transform, we cannot regenerate, we cannot save.**

This work of God having proceeded in the growth of the seed, what next? **We can reap the ripe ears.** After a season God the Holy Spirit uses his servants again. As soon as the living seed has produced first of all the blade of thought, and afterwards the green ear of conviction, and then faith, which is as full corn in the ear, then the Christian worker comes in for further service, for he can reap. "When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle." This is not the reaping of the last great day, for that does not come within the scope of the parable, which evidently relates to a human sower and reaper. The kind of reaping which the Saviour here intends is that which he referred to when he said to his disciples, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." After he had been sowing the seed in the hearts of the Samaritans, and it had sprung up, so that they began to evince faith in him, the

We can reap...!



Lord Jesus cried, "The fields are white to harvest." The apostle saith, "One soweth, and another reapeth." Our Lord said to the disciples, "I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour." Is there not a promise, "In due season we shall reap, if we faint not"?

Christian workers begin their harvest work by watching for signs of faith in Christ. They are eager to see the blade, and delighted to mark the ripening ear. They often hope that men are believers, but they long to be sure of it; and when they judge that at last the fruit of faith is put forth, they begin to encourage, to congratulate, and to comfort. They know that the young believer needs to be housed in the barn of Christian fellowship, that he may be saved from a thousand perils. **No wise farmer leaves the fruit of the field long exposed to the hail which might beat it out, or to the mildew which might destroy it, or to the birds which might devour it. Evidently no believing man should be left outside of the garner of holy fellowship; he should be carried into the midst of the church with all the joy which attends the home-bringing of sheaves. The worker for Christ watches carefully, and when he discerns that**

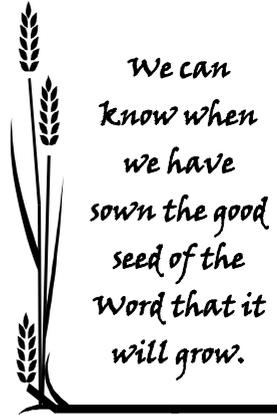
his time is come, he begins at once to fetch in the converts, that they may be cared for by the brotherhood, separated from the world, screened from temptation, and laid up for the Lord. He is diligent to do it at once, because the text saith, "immediately he putteth in the sickle." He does not wait for months in cold suspicion; he is not afraid that he shall encourage too soon when faith is really present. He comes with the word of promise and the smile of brotherly love at once, and he says to the new believer, "Have you confessed your faith? Is not the time come for an open confession? Hath not Jesus bidden the believer to be baptized? If you love him, keep his commandments." He does not rest till he has introduced the convert to the communion of the faithful. **For our work, beloved, is but half done when men are made disciples and baptized. We have then to encourage, to instruct, to strengthen, to console, and succour in all times of difficulty and danger. What saith the Saviour? "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."**

Observe, then, the sphere and limit of agency. We can introduce the truth to men, but that truth the Lord himself must bless; the living and growing of the word within the soul is of God alone. When the mystic work of growth is done, we are able to garner the saved ones in the church. For Christ to be formed in men the hope of glory is not of our working, that remains with God; but, when Jesus Christ is formed in them, to discern the image of the Saviour and to say, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without?" this is our duty and delight. **To create the divine life is God's, to cherish it is ours.** To cause the hidden life to grow is the work of the Lord; to see the uprising and development of that life, and to harvest it is the work of the faithful, even as it is written, "When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."

This, then, is our first lesson; we see what we can do and what we cannot do.

II. Our second head is like unto the first, and consists of **WHAT WE CAN KNOW AND WHAT WE CANNOT KNOW.**

First, what we can know. *We can know when we have sown the good seed of the word that it will grow; for God has promised that it shall do so.* Not every grain in every place; for some will go to the bird, and some to the worm, and some to be scorched by the sun; but, as a general rule, God's word shall not return unto him void, it shall prosper in the thing whereto he hath sent it. This we can know. And we can know that the seed when once it takes root will continue to grow; that it is not a dream or a picture that will disappear, but a thing of force and energy, which will advance from a grassy blade to corn in the ear, and under God's blessing will develop to actual salvation, and be as the "full corn in the ear." *God helping and blessing it, our work of teaching will not only lead men to thought and conviction, but to conversion and eternal life.*



We also can know, because we are told so, that *the reason for this is mainly because there is life in the word.* In the word of God itself there is life, for it is written—"The word of God is quick and powerful,"—that is, "living and powerful." It is "the incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever." It is the nature of living seeds to grow; and the reason why the word of God grows in men's hearts is because it is the living word of the living God, and where the word of a king is there is power. We know this, because the Scriptures teach us so. Is it not written, "of his own will begat he us by the word of truth"?

Moreover, the earth, which is here the type of the man, "bringeth forth fruit of herself." We must mind what we are at in expounding this, for human hearts do not produce faith of themselves; they are as hard rock on which the seed perishes. But it means this,—that as the earth under the blessing of the dew and the rain is, by God's secret working upon it, made to take up and embrace the seed, so the heart of man is made ready to receive and enfold the gospel of Jesus Christ within itself. Man's awakened heart wants exactly what the word of God supplies. Moved by a divine influence the soul embraces the truth, and is embraced by it, and so the truth lives in the heart, and is quickened by it. Man's love accepts the love of God; man's faith wrought in him by the Spirit of God believes the truth

of God; man's hope wrought in him by the Holy Ghost lays hold upon the things revealed, and so the heavenly seed grows in the soil of the soul. The life comes not from you who preach the word, but it is placed within the word which you preach by the Holy Spirit. The life is not in your hand, but in the heart which is led to take hold upon the truth by the Spirit of God. *Salvation comes not from the personal authority of the preacher, but through the personal conviction, personal faith, and personal love of the hearer.* So much as this we may know, and is it not enough for all practical purposes?

Still, there is a something **which we cannot know**, a secret into which we cannot pry. I repeat what I have said before: *you cannot look into men's inward parts and see exactly how the truth takes hold upon the heart, or the heart takes hold upon the truth. Many have watched their own feelings till they have become blind with despondency, and others have watched the feelings of the young till they have done them rather harm than good by their rigorous supervision. In God's work there is more room for faith than for sight. The heavenly seed grows secretly. You must bury it out of sight, or there will be no harvest.* Even if you keep the seed above ground, and it does sprout, you cannot discover how it grows; even though you microscopically watched its swelling and bursting, you could not see the inward vital force which moves the seed. Thou knowest not the way of the Spirit. His work is wrought in secret. "Explain the new birth," says somebody. My answer is, "Experience the new birth, and you shall know what it is." ...Cry mightily unto the Great Worker to do what thou canst not attempt to perform, that so, when thou seest men saved, thou mayest give the Lord all the glory evermore.

III. Thirdly, our text tells us **WHAT WE MAY EXPECT IF WE WORK FOR GOD, AND WHAT WE MAY NOT EXPECT.**

According to this parable **we may expect to see fruit.** The husbandman casts his seed into the ground: the seed springs and grows, and he naturally expects a harvest. I wish I could say a word to stir up the expectations of Christian workers; for I fear that many work without faith. If you had a garden or a field, and you sow seed in it, you would be very greatly surprised and grieved if it did not come up at all; **but many Christian people seem quite content to work on without expectation of result. This is a pitiful kind of working**—pulling up empty buckets by the year together.

Surely, I must either see some result for my labour and be glad, or else, failing to see it, I must be ready to break my heart if I be a true servant of the great Master. We ought to have expected results; if we had expected more we should have seen more; but a lack of expectation has been a great cause of failure in God's workers.



But we may not expect to see all the seed which we sow spring up the moment we sow it. Sometimes, glory be to God, we have but to deliver the word, and straightway men are converted: the reaper overtakes the sower, in such instances; but it is not always so.

Some sowers have been diligent for years upon their plots of ground, and yet apparently all has been in vain, at last the harvest has come, a harvest which, speaking after the manner of men, had never been reaped if they had not persevered to the end. ...It is ours to sow, and to hope for quick reaping; but still we ought to remember that "the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain," and so must we. *We are to expect results, but not to be dispirited if we have to wait for them.*

We are also to expect to see the good seed grow, but not always after our fashion. Like children, we are apt to be impatient. Your little boy sowed mustard and cress yesterday in his garden. This afternoon Johnny will be turning over the ground to see if the seed is growing. There is no probability that his mustard and cress will come to anything, for he will not let it alone long enough for it to grow. So is it with hasty workers; they must see the result of the gospel directly, or else they distrust the blessed word. Certain preachers are in such a hurry that they will allow no time for thought, no space for counting the cost, no opportunity for men to consider their ways and turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart. All other seeds take time to grow, but the seed of the word must grow before the speaker's eyes like magic, or he thinks nothing has been done. Such good brethren are so eager to produce blade and ear there and then, that they roast their seed in the fire of fanaticism, and it perishes. They make men think that they are converted, and thus effectually hinder them from coming to a saving knowledge of the truth. Some men are prevented from

being saved by being told that they are saved already, and by being puffed up with a notion of perfection when they are not even broken in heart. Perhaps if such people had been taught to look for something deeper they might not have been satisfied with receiving seed on stony ground; but now they exhibit a rapid development, and an equally rapid decline and fall. *Let us believingly expect to see the seed grow; but let us look to see it advance after the manner of the preacher,—firstly, secondly, thirdly: first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.*

We may expect also to see the seed ripen. *Our works will by God's grace lead up to real faith in those he hath wrought upon by his word and Spirit; but we must not expect to see it perfect at first.* How many mistakes have been made here. Here is a young person under impression, and some good, sound brother talks with the trembling beginner, and asks profound questions. He shakes his experienced head, and knits his furrowed brows. He goes into the corn-field to see how the crops are prospering, and though it is early in the year, he laments that he cannot see an ear of corn; indeed, he perceives nothing but mere grass. "I cannot see a trace of corn," says he. No, brother, of course you cannot; for you will not be satisfied with the blade as an evidence of life, but must insist upon seeing everything at full growth at once. If you had looked for the blade you would have found it; and it would have encouraged you. For my own part, I am glad even to perceive a faint desire, a feeble longing, a degree of uneasiness, or a measure of weariness of sin, or a craving after mercy. Will it not be wise for you, also, to allow things to begin at the beginning, and to be satisfied with their being small at the first? See the blade of desire, and then watch for more. Soon you shall see a little more than desire; for there shall be conviction and resolve, and after that a feeble faith, small as a mustard seed, but bound to grow. Do not despise the day of small things. Do not examine the new-born babe to see whether he is sound in doctrine after your idea of soundness; ten to one he is a long way off sound, and you will only worry the dear heart by introducing difficult questions. Speak to him about his being a sinner, and Christ a Saviour, and you will in this way water him so that his grace in the ear will become the full corn in the ear. It may be that there is not much that looks like wheat about him yet; but by-and-by you shall say, "Wheat! Ah, that it is, if I know wheat. This man is a true ear of corn, and gladly will I place him among my Master's sheaves." If you cut down the blades, where will the ears come from? Expect grace in your converts; but do not look to

see glory in them just yet.

IV. Under the last head we shall consider **WHAT SLEEP WORKERS MAY TAKE, AND WHAT THEY MAY TAKE**; for it is said of this sowing man, that he sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed springs and grows up he knoweth not how. *They say a farmer's trade is a good one because it is going on while he is abed and asleep; and surely ours is a good trade, too, when we serve our master by sowing good seed; for it is growing even while we are asleep.*

But how may a good workman for Christ lawfully go to sleep? I answer, first, he may sleep the sleep of restfulness born of confidence.

You are afraid the kingdom of Christ will not come, are you? Who asked you to tremble for the ark of the Lord? Afraid for the infinite Jehovah that his purposes will fail? Shame on you! Your anxiety dishonours your God. Shall Omnipotence be defeated? You had better sleep than wake to play the part of Uzzah. *Rest patiently; God's purpose will be accomplished, his kingdom will come, his chosen will be saved, and Christ shall see of the travail of his soul. Take the sweet sleep which God gives to his beloved, the sleep of perfect confidence, such as Jesus slept in the hinder part of the ship when it was tossed with tempest. The cause of God never was in jeopardy, and never will be; the seed sown is insured by omnipotence, and must produce its harvest. In patience possess your soul, and wait till the harvest comes, for the pleasure of the Lord must prosper in the hands of Jesus.*



Also take that sleep of joyful expectancy which leads to a happy waking. Get up in the morning and feel that the Lord is ruling all things for the attainment of his own purposes, and the highest benefit of all who put their trust in him. Look for a blessing by day, and close your eyes at night calmly expecting to meet with better things to-morrow. If you do not sleep you will not wake up in the morning refreshed, and ready for more work. If it were possible for you to sit up all night and eat the bread of carefulness you would be unfit to attend to the service which your Mas-

ter appoints for the morning; therefore take your rest and be at peace, and work with calm dignity, for the matter is safe in the Lord's hands. Is it not written, "So he giveth his beloved sleep"?

Take your rest because you have consciously resigned your work into God's hands. After you have spoken the word, resort to God in prayer, and commit the matter into God's hand, and then do not fret about it. It cannot be in better keeping, leave it with him who worketh all in all.

But do not sleep the sleep of unwatchfulness. The farmer sows his seed, but he does not therefore forget it. He has to mend his fences, to drive away birds, to remove weeds, or to prevent floods. He does not watch the growth of the seed, but he has plenty else to do. He sleeps, but it is only in due time and measure, and is not to be confounded with the sluggard's slumbers. **He never sleeps the sleep of indifference, or even of inaction, for each season has its demand upon him.** He has sown one field, but he has another to sow. He has sown, but he has also to reap; and if reaping is done, he has to thresh and to winnow. **A farmer's work is never done, for in one part or the other of the farm he is needed. His sleep is but a pause that gives him strength to continue his occupation.** The parable teaches us to do all that lies within our province, but not to intrude into the domain of God: in teaching to the ear we are to labour diligently, but with regard to the secret working of truth upon man's mind, we are to pray and rest, looking to the Lord for the inward power."

Sleeping, resting

in the Lord...





We'll next look at one of the sermons of Johannes Tauler (1300-1361), who was an outstanding man of God who lived in the 14th century. In this rare sermon we are shown **the different classes of workers of God**, and we are taught **how we must labour in the spiritual vineyard that it may bring forth good fruit**.

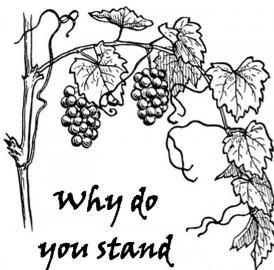
How to Work in the Spiritual Vineyard of God

Matt. 20:1 – *“The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.”*

“This householder went out early at the first hour, and again at the third and at the sixth hours, and hired labourers for a penny a day. But when it was quite late in the evening he went out again, and still found men standing idle. Then he said unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you.

Dear children, this householder signifies our Lord Jesus Christ; His house is the heavens, and this earth, and hell. He saw that all nature had gone astray, insomuch that **His lovely vineyard lay a barren waste**; and man, whom He had made to possess this fair and fruitful vineyard, had wandered far away from Him, and left this excellent vineyard to be untilled. But the Lord of the vineyard determined to invite men to return into this vineyard for which He had created him, and went out early to that end.

Dear children, in one sense Jesus Christ went out early from the divine bosom of the Father, and yet evermore dwells there. But in another sense, **He went out early in human nature, that He might hire us into His service, and bring us back again into His noble vineyard, and so there might be labourers to till it.** And He went out at the first hour, and also at the third, and sixth, and ninth hours. And at the eleventh hour He went out once more, and again found men standing idle, to whom he spoke roughly, saying, **Why stand ye here all the day idle?** Then they answered, No man hath hired us, Lord. These idle men whom no man hath hired are those who are ...not held in servitude to the world and the crea-



*Why do
you stand
here idle
all day?*

tures. There are some who are God's hired labourers, and these are in a higher sense free, and at large, and not held in servitude to the world or the creature. But these of whom we are now speaking are still standing idle, which ought not to be; that is, they are standing in apathy, cold, loveless, and devoid of grace; for so long as a man is not standing in the grace of God, he is standing alone in nature. And if such a man (were it possible, which it is not) were to fulfil all the good works which have ever been done in this world, he would still,

nevertheless, be living altogether idly, unprofitably, and in vain, and it would avail him nothing. Again, this going out early in the morning is a type of the dawning of the grace of God in the soul; for the morning is the end of the night, when the darkness vanishes, and the day-spring of grace arises in the soul of man, and God says, Wherefore stand ye here idle? Go ye into my vineyard, and what is right, that will I give you.

But **the men entered after a very unequal manner into the vineyard.**



One class are those who are mere beginners; these work in God's vineyard with outward acts, and bodily exercises, and self-imposed tasks, and are persuaded that they are accomplishing great good works with their fasting, watching, and praying; while they never look to the purity of their motives, but retain their love of earthly enjoyments, and their own likes and dislikes. And therefrom do spring up injustice, false judgment, and many faults; such as pride, earthly or spiritual, bitterness or enmity, and more of the like, that greatly hinder the outpouring of divine grace, if we allow these untoward dispositions to break forth in words or actions. Let one who has thus been building upon a false foundation give heed to himself, and watch how he may best condemn and destroy this inward falsehood, that it lead not to his own ruin, nor cause harm to those with whom he may hold converse.

A second class of men who have likewise entered into God's vineyard, are those who are above living for mere temporal things, and have also overcome their grosser sins, and have turned their minds towards higher things. Their life is spent in the rational practice of virtue; and in this they find such pleasure and delight, that they are contented with their condi-



tion, and miss the highest and sublimest truth; for they abide in the present sense of satisfaction, and do not pant to reach upward through and above this enjoyment to the eternal God Himself. For *our delight ought to be in God Himself, not in these gifts of His.*

But **the third class** of those who go into God's vineyard are truly noble and highly-favoured men, who in deed and truth rise above all creature things in God's vineyard; for *they seek and love nothing but simply God in Himself. They neither look to pleasure, nor to any selfish end, nor to that which is a mere outflow from God; for their inner man is wholly plunged in God, and they have no end but the praise and glory of God, that his good pleasure alone may be fulfilled in and through them and in all creatures.* Hence they are able to bear all things and to resign all things, for they receive all things as from God's hand, and offer up to Him again in simplicity of heart all that they have received from Him, and do not lay claim to any of His mercies. *They are like a river that flows out with every tide, and then again hastens back to its source. So do these men refer all their gifts back to the source whence they proceed, and*

flow back again unto it themselves likewise. For inasmuch as they carry all the gifts of God back unto their divine fountain, and do not claim any ownership in them, either for pleasure or advantage, and do not purpose this or that, but simply God alone, God must of necessity be their only refuge and stay, outward or inward.

But although this aim carry a man so completely out of himself, and be perfectly simple and directed to nothing but God, yet nature has some regard to herself, of which a man cannot be wholly bereft. Whether he choose it or no (this is a simple fact), he cannot but always desire to feel God's presence; and so too it is a natural instinct to wish to be happy. But this desire should be far from his strongest, and the least part of what he takes into the account in his purpose. (*And here I wish to rebuke all those religious persons who are leaning on their good works, and as it were keep a right of property in them, thinking themselves free to do or not to do them. For whenever they see or imagine any new undertaking or religious practice which can afford them inward or outward satisfaction, they give themselves to it with prayer, and striving, and weeping, and watching. And as long as they find pleasure in it, they cannot have enough of it; but if this sense of pleasure and interest passes away, their devotion passes away likewise, and they come to dislike their good and holy work, and then they grow lukewarm and careless, performing all they do without devotion. All this is owing to their not having had a single eye to God's glory. They have been prompted and sustained in their labour by the pleasure it has yielded them, and now this has fled. *For we must not seek enjoyment and sweetness in the gifts of God, either in holy exercises, or in words or works; but we must take delight in God alone, and not in his gifts.*)

...For I tell thee by that Truth, which is God Himself, if thou art ever to become a man after the will of God, everything must die in thee to which thou art cleaving, whether it be God's gifts, or the saints, or the angels, or even all that would afford thee consolation for thy spiritual wants: all must be given up. If God is to shine in on thy soul brightly, without a cloud, and accomplish His noble and glorious will in thee, thou must be free and unencumbered by all that affords thee comfort out of God.

...For a true and faithful servant of God shall be always pressing up-



ward to what is before him, not suffering himself to be held back by comfort or pleasure, joy or sorrow, wealth or poverty. Through all this he shall urge onward, till he come unto the infinite ocean of the God-head. And therein he shall be lost without his own knowledge, and dazzled by excess of light and love. There it shall be given him to know all that belongs to true perfection.

A good and devout man shall be like the labourer in the vineyard, who works all the day long, and nevertheless he must take food. But the labour is long and the meal barely lasts an hour, and he only takes it for the sake of the work. He must eat that he may work, and the nourishment he takes diffuses itself through every part of his body, continually supplying it with fresh strength, which again is consumed in his labour; and when it has been consumed with labour he eats again a little, that he may again consume it by working in the Lord's vineyard. So is it with a noble-minded man. When he feels an inclination in himself to enjoy God or His heavenly grace and what is thereof, let him for a little while seek and purpose his own good, but not longer than is needful for the nourishing of his soul, that he may consume his spiritual strength again in labour; and when it has thus been spent in the noblest of all ways, from a love flowing back unto God who has inspired it, then the man must go for re-

freshment again into the river of life that floweth out from the throne of God, that it may again bring forth in him the fruit of good works. All these spiritual men who thus know how to resign or to return again unto God, with their body and their spirits, the gifts that He has mercifully bestowed on them, with deep, humble self-renunciation, these do continually grow more able and more worthy to receive blessing from God. Where such admirable, god-like men are to be found, they are worthy, as none else are, to be fed with gold and silver and fine pearls, and the best that the world contains as



*Work all
day long
and take
spiritual
food...*

their heritage. But there is many a poor noble man of God, who has none of all these things; let such an one humbly cast himself on the all-powerful God and trust him utterly; without doubt thy heavenly Father will and must provide thee well, yea, wert thou hidden in a rock.

These exalted and most noble men are just like the wood of the vine, which is outwardly hard and black and dry, and good for no purpose whatever; and if we had never seen it before, we should think it of no use at all, and good for nothing but to be thrown into the fire, and burned. But in this dry wood of the vine, there lie concealed the living veins of sap, and power of yielding the noblest of all juices, and of bringing forth a greater abundance of fruit than any other sort of wood that grows. And thus it is with these beloved and lowly children, who are at all times and season plunged in God; they are outwardly in appearance like unto black rotten wood, seeming unto men dry and unprofitable. For there are many of these who are humble, nowadays remarkable for their fits, outward or inward, nor for any extraordinary works or sayings or exercise of devotion, and who move in the narrowest sphere; but living veins from the fountain of truth lie hidden within them, forasmuch as they have asked for no earthly heritage, but God is their lot and their portion, their life and their being.

Now the vine-dresser goes out and prunes the vine, lopping off the wild shoots; for it he neglected this, and suffered them to remain on the good stem, the whole would yield bad, sour wine. So likewise shall good men do: **they shall cut off from themselves all that is not according to**



God's order in their conduct or dispositions, likings or dislikings, and destroy it to the very root; thou shalt cut away all evil failings from thy heart, and it will do thee no harm, either in head or in hand, or any member. **But hold thy knife still, till thou hast really seen what ought to be cut off. If a vine dresser be not skilled in his art, he is as likely to crop off the good branches which bear the grapes as the wild shoots, and thus spoil the vineyard.** So it is with those who do not understand this spiritual art; they leave the roots of vice and evil dispositions alive in the heart, and hew and lop at poor nature, and thereby destroy this noble vineyard. Nature is in itself good and noble, why shouldst thou hew away aught that belongs to it? For I tell thee that when the time is come for it to yield fruit in a godly, blessed, devout like, then it will be seen that thou has spoiled thy nature.

After this the labourer binds up the vine, putting in stakes; he bends the upper branches down towards the earth, and fastens the vine to a strong framework, that I may have a support. This is a type of the sweet and holy life, the sacred example and sufferings of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, for these and nothing of our own should be a man's stay. For the higher powers of his reason shall be drawn down into due control, and he shall

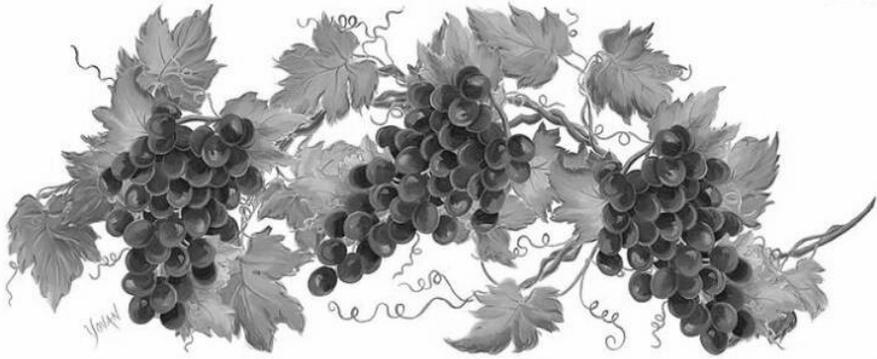


sink low in deep submissive humility before Our Lord, in truth and not with hypocrisy, with all his powers, outward and inward. For when both the appetites of the body, and the highest intellectual powers of the soul are thus trained and bound down, each in its own place, so that neither the senses nor the will, nor any faculty, is left too free and too proud, but they are at all times controlled and trained into due rightful order under the Divine will, and man's desire at all times, and in all things, is to be by the help and grace of God, to the utmost of his power, **outwardly and inwardly obedient to the Divine will**, without contradiction, in all that the Eternal God, our Heavenly Father, has determined in His eternal divine counsels; [and when all the powers humbly act in this way, in dependence upon God, whether they are exercised or kept in check, were it within the bounds of reasonable possibility that a man could be conscious of possessing all the good works, and all the heavenly graces of all mankind, and yet took none of all this unto himself, but, calling nothing his own, stood up destitute and bare, in free, simple love to God, as if all this goodness belonged to another, and not himself; Children, wherever such noble men may exist or live in this age of grace, in them may the Father of Heaven truly and absolutely accomplish His divine and mysterious work without any hindrance. And in him whose heart is not sincerely standing thus toward God, as to the guiding principle of his life, in him doubt not that this holy, divine birth cannot be truly brought to pass or be made fruitful.]



*Cut off
all that is
not of God's
order in my
life...!*

Afterward the vine-dresser digs about the stems of the vine, and roots out all noxious weeds. Thus shall a devout man dig about the soil of his own heart by close observation and testing of his own principles, to see whether there be aught for him to root out. And if he find anything, let him that moment pluck it up, however trifling or unimportant it may be, that the beams of the eternal and divine sun may penetrate the father into his very midst, shining with unobscured force, and fructifying his noblest powers. For thus the glorious sun draws the juices outward into the living vessels which lie hidden in the bark, and then the fair clusters begin to appear. Ah! Children, if man knew how so to tend his vine, that God's sun might shine in on and vivify his soul, what sweet, excellent,



delicious fruit would the eternal sun draw forth from him! For the lovely sun shines with all its fullness into him, and works within these precious clusters, and makes them flourish in sweetness and beauty. Their blossoms send forth a sweet and delicate fragrance, which dispels all poisonous vapours; neither serpent nor toad can endure their perfume, when the eternal divine sun shines direct among the branches, and through the clusters. The fruit is so entirely of God's producing, and flourishes in such beauty and richness, in pure looking up to God, whose rays draw forth from it such wondrous and delicious favour and perfume, that it needs must destroy the venom of the old serpent; yea, had all the devils in hell, and all the men on earth conspired together, they would not be able in the least to injure a thoroughly godly-minded and God-loving man, but the more they strive to injure him, the deeper he is rooted and the higher he is built up in God with all his powers...

And if such an admirable man, bearing his precious fruit, were to be cast down to the depths of hell, he must needs turn it into a kingdom of heaven, and God and eternal blessedness would exist in hell. And a man who should bear such fruit would not need to fear in anywise all the reproach that could be heaped upon him. **When we have no aim but God, nothing can part us from Him, or lead us astray.**

Now after that the vine has been well pruned, and its stem cleared of all weeds, the glorious sun shineth yet more brightly, and casteth his heat on the precious clusters, and these grow more and more transparent, and the sweetness begins to disclose itself more and more. And to such as man as we have described, all means of communication between God and his soul begin after a time to grow so transparent that the rays and glances of the divine sun reach him without ceasing, that is, as

often and as soon as he turns himself towards them in feeling and thought. This divine sun shines more brightly than all the suns in the firmament ever shone; and in its light all the man's ways, and works, and doings are so changed into its image, that **he feels nothing to be so true as God**, with a certainty that is rooted in the very midst of his being, yet is far above the sphere of his reason, and which he can never fully express, for it is too deep and too high above all human reason to be explored and understood.

After this the vine-dresser loves to strip off the leaves, that thus the sun might have nothing to hinder its rays from pouring on the grapes.

...Children, could we but truly stand in this holy of holies for an hour or a moment, it were a thousand times better and more profitable for us, and more pleasing and praiseworthy in the sight of the Eternal God, than forty years spent in our own self-imposed tasks.

That we may thus give place to God, [for Him to do His work in us, and die to all to which we ought to die, that we may live truly and only to that to which we ought to live, if this exalted work of God is to be accomplished in us and through us,] may He help us. Amen!"



Work of God...



Believing on Him!

Some people want to work for God. They may think that to work for God is to do something externally, but this is NOT so!! The Lord Jesus said, “**This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent**” (John 6:29;MKJV).

Our first and foremost “work” is to BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS!!!

On 10 October 1849 Charles Finney preached the sermon “**Faith the Work of God**,” based on this scripture. In it he made it clear that the work that God requires does NOT consist in the mere external doing of duties; it does not consist in “promoting our own self-interest”; “it is nothing done in obedience to custom”; it is “nothing done in obedience to the commandments of men”; it is “nothing done from sheer superstition”; it is “nothing done from a mere sense of duty, without faith or love”; it is “nothing done to obtain comfort”...

Finney then said in his sermon: “...**But what is this faith which is the work of God?** I answer, It is not a merely intellectual conviction. It is not opinion, or any set of opinions. It is not a mere speculation; nor a system of theology, however firmly or intelligently held; it is no merely intellectual state of mind. ...But **it is trust or confidence in the character of God**. There can be no such thing as a rational belief of what God says, only as we believe him to be trustworthy. We never have confidence in the declarations of any being only as we pre-suppose confidence in his character. **In faith therefore, we voluntarily cast ourselves upon and confide in the truthfulness, wisdom, love and power of God.**”

...Faith implies that you trust in Christ as sustaining to yourself all his revealed relations—as being of God made unto you wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption. You trust in the present sufficiency and fullness of his grace. You know it is adequate to meet and supply every want, and it is ready and at hand now. You see and believe that He can do for you all you need.

You also see in Christ provision made for all the future, so that you have no more occasion to be anxious for the future than for the present. In fact you believe in all his promises—taking every word of them as addressed to yourself, and as good for your present use. **You yield yourself up to his providence, assured that he pledges himself to make all things work together for good to his people. To his disposal, therefore, you yield up yourself entirely and most quietly for time and for eternity.** You know you can trust his wisdom, and you can cheerfully commit yourself to his safe conduct and preservation.”

So, there we have it:

***The greatest and first “work” is
to have FAITH in the Lord Jesus Christ,
to put my **TRUST** and **CONFIDENCE** in HIM,
to **RELY** on HIM,
to **LEAN ON HIM!*****

When I have **FAITH** in the Lord Jesus Christ, it will show itself by **WORKS** of faith... In other words: ***“works” follow “faith”...!***

George MacDonald (1824-1905) said that...

***“to BELIEVE in Him is
to give ourselves up to Him in obedience,
to search out His will
and DO it”!!!***

We read in the God’s Word that

Faith comes by hearing Him & hearing His Word (Rom 10:17)

Faith works! (Gal 5:6)

Faith works by love! (Gal 5:6)

Faith purifies the heart (Acts 26:18; Ampl)

Faith overcomes the world (1 John 5:4)

Faith obeys God! (Rom 1:5)

Responding to God's Call

The “work of God” is to believe in the Lord Jesus. To believe in the Lord Jesus is to OBEY Him, and to obey Him is to GO into His harvest field and work with Him, as He told us to do!!

The “work of God” is to **respond to God's call**, to respond to God's command! Have we done that?! Have YOU done that?!

The “work of God” is to constantly seek God's will and to do it, day by day, not my will!

Oswald Chambers said, “Beware of any work for God which enables you to evade **concentration on HIM**. A great many Christian workers worship their work. The one concern of a worker should be **concentration on God**, and this will mean that all the other margins of life, mental, moral and spiritual, are free with the freedom of a child—a worshipping child, not a wayward child...”

“...the only responsibility you have is to keep in living, constant touch with God, and to see that you allow nothing to hinder your co-operation with Him.”

He also said: “Today in Christian work we are suffering from a phase of spiritual dyspepsia that emphasises *doing*. The great thing *to do* is *to be* a believer in Jesus. With Jesus it is never ‘*Do, do,*’ but ‘*Be, be* and I will do through you.’ ...Occasionally it may happen in your life as a worker that all you have been trying honestly and eagerly to do for God falls about your ears in ruins, and in your utterly crushed and discouraged condition God brings slowly to your mind this truth—‘*I have been using your work as scaffolding to perfect you to be a worker for Myself; now arise, shake off the dust, and it shall be told you what you must do.*’...”

Will YOU arise today and say: **“Yes, Lord, I'll get up and do what You want me to do! I'll get up and go into Your harvest!”** ...?!



**He who SLEEPS in harvest
is a son who causes SHAME
- Prov 10:5**





here am I.
send me.



At harvest season
it's smart to work hard,
but stupid to sleep...

Prov 10:5

Becoming a Worker of God

You may think: “Responding to God’s call” and “Becoming a worker of God” is the same! But is it? It all depends on what is meant with “responding”...

Many, many people “respond” to God’s call by saying they’ll go, by getting up during a service to indicate their decision to go, by praying and even promising to God that they’ll go, by writing in their diary or journal that they’ll go, by starting to prepare themselves to go, by planning and planning and planning to go, ...but they never go, they never become workers of God in His harvest field!!

“Becoming a worker of God” means that you (and I) actually surrender ourselves to God to do His will and His work, ...and then **START TO DO IT!** It means that as we do God’s work, we become workers of God! You don’t become a swimmer by deciding to become a swimmer, or by just studying to become a swimmer, or by planning to become a swimmer, or by devoting yourself to become a swimmer, or just by praying to become a swimmer... No! you become a swimmer by starting to swim and then practically learning to swim better and better, thus becoming a swimmer! In the same way, to be part of the “work of God” you need to become a worker of God.

Will you do it?!

When?!

Today?! Now?!

**Here I am, Lord! I have
come to DO Your will!
Please help me...**





The terms “to work in His vineyard,” “to work in His harvest field” generally refers to working with God in the lives of men, women and children—that they may be saved and become fruitful and be like the Lord Jesus!

Preparing the soil!

Any farmer knows that it's of crucial importance to "prepare the soil" if you want a good harvest, if you want good fruit! This would mean that one removes all the big boulders (the rocks) that are scattered in the field, as well as the indigenous (natural) bushes and trees, as well as give attention to the chemical constitution of the soil (in terms of acidity, etc.), considering the particular type of crop one plans to plant and harvest... Certain chemicals and fertilizers may have to be worked into the soil, and a required water supply needs to be ensured (if at all possible), may it be in the form of terracing or canals or furrows or irrigation systems.

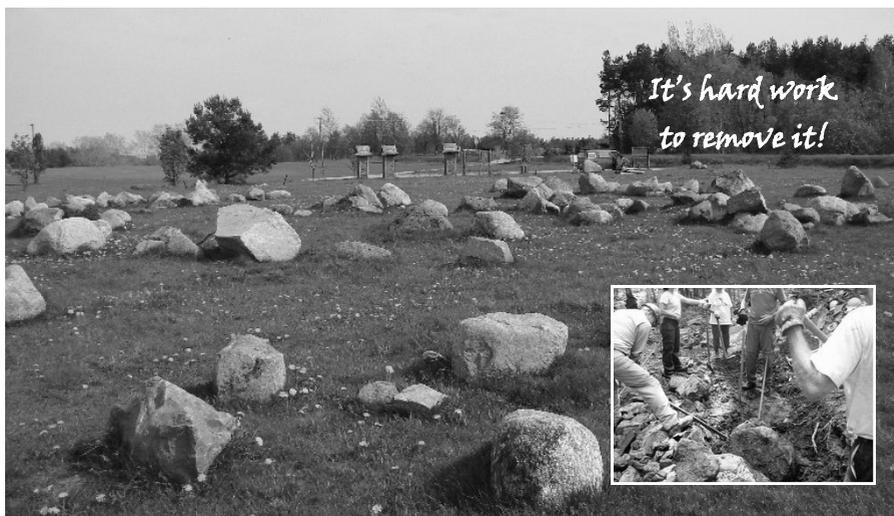
It is the same spiritually! To "prepare the soil" of our hearts, we need to remove the boulders of sin as well as all the things that grow "naturally" in our hearts. This means that even our "natural goodness," like natural kindness, natural love, natural patience, natural zeal (etc.) needs to get out and be replaced (ultimately) with that which comes from God's Seed!



Michael Catt, the pastor of the church whom the Lord used to produce the films "*Facing the Giants*," "*Flywheel*," "*Fireproof*" and "*Courageous*", wrote the following in his book "Prepare for Rain":

"In the movie *Facing the Giants*, Grant Taylor, a discouraged football coach at Shiloh Christian Academy, gets an unexpected spiritual lesson from Mr Bridges, a prayer warrior. When the coach tells Mr Bridges 'I just don't see God at work here,' the prayer warrior responds with a story:

'Grant, I heard a story about two farmers who desperately needed rain.



Both of them prayed for rain, but only one of them went out and prepared his fields to receive it. Which one do you think trusted God to send the rain?’

‘Well, the one who prepared his fields for it.’

‘Which one are you? God will send the rain when He is ready. **You need to prepare your field** to receive it.’

How do you prepare for rain? How do you cultivate the soil of your life in preparation for God’s outpouring? How do you break up the unproductive ground? How do you wait both expectantly and patiently for God to act?

I want God to send the rain. I want to see Him work in my life; I want to see revival in the church. I want to embrace all God has for me. When I read the stories of awakenings and revivals of the past, I long for that to happen in my church and my lifetime. I long for history to become present tense. **I want to prepare for rain and watch God send it.**





*Remove the boulders and rocks of SIN
One by one
until all is done
Then the good seed can come in!*

But I must admit there have been times that I felt as dry and discouraged as Grant Taylor and I didn't see God at work. He *was* working, though not in the way I expected. *God was preparing my heart for growth and revival by turning the plow in my life and uprooting things I didn't want to deal with. Like the parable of the sower in Matthew 13, the problem was not the sower or the seed, but the soil. My soil needed to be tilled.*



Apart from the other forms of preparation, the main way of "preparing the soil" is by **ploughing** it. We'll look at this in our next section.

Ploughing!

After removing the boulders from the field, the most important preparation of the soil is the PLOUGHING! God says in His Word:

“Plow your fields...”

Hosea 10:12; CEV

**“Break up your uncultivated ground,
for it is time to seek the Lord”**

Amplified Bible

**“Break up your fallow ground:
for *it is* time to seek the LORD,
till He come and rain righteousness upon you.”**

KJV

**“Why should I start at the plough of my Lord,
that maketh deep furrows on my soul?
I know He is no idle husbandman,
He purposeth a crop.”**

Samuel Rutherford





**Come ill, come well, the cross, the crown,
The rainbow or the thunder—
I fling my soul and body down
For God to plough them under.**

Amy Carmichael

We all know that if we want a good harvest, it's no use to just sow the seed, no, **we need to first PLOUGH the field**, and plough it WELL! This is hard work. It takes "blood, sweat and tears"... It requires a sense of purpose, passion and perseverance. It needs a certain degree of seriousness, desperation and determination. It needs the right kind of desire, decision, discipline, dependence upon God, and daily doing, ...until it's DONE! It may take many, many days to do it properly, but once we've put our hands to the plough, there's no looking back... The Lord Jesus said: "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back [*to the things behind*] is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62).



One of the men whom the Lord used by His Spirit to plough the hearts of thousands of people, during a time of revival, was Charles Finney. In his "*Revival Lectures*," Finney wrote **what it means to plough the field of one's HEART and HOW to do it**, practically (with God's help). Referring to God's words in Hosea where we read: "Break up your fallow ground: for *it is* time to seek the LORD, till He come and rain righteousness upon you" (10:12), he said:

"...Fallow ground is ground which has once been tilled, but which now lies waste, and needs to be broken up and mellowed, before it is suited to receive grain. I shall show...

I. WHAT IS IT TO BREAK UP THE FALLOW GROUND?

To break up the fallow ground, is to break up your hearts—to prepare your minds to bring forth fruit unto God. The mind of man is often compared in the Bible to ground, and the word of God to seed sown in it, and the fruit represents the actions and affections of those who receive it. ***To break up the fallow ground, therefore, is to bring the mind into such a state, that it is fitted to receive the word of God.*** Sometimes your hearts get matted down hard and dry, and all run to waste, till there is no such thing as getting fruit from them till they are all broken up, and mellowed down, and fitted to receive the word of God. It is this ***softening of the heart, so as to make it feel the truth***, which the prophet calls breaking up



“Break up your fallow ground...”

your fallow ground.

II. HOW IS THE FALLOW GROUND TO BE BROKEN UP?

*...If you mean to break up the fallow ground of your hearts, you must begin by looking at your hearts--examine and note the state of your minds, and see where you are. Many never seem to think about this. They pay no attention to their own hearts, and never know whether they are doing well in religion or not--whether they are gaining ground or going back--whether they are fruitful, or lying waste like fallow ground. **Now you must draw off your attention from other things, and look into this. Make a business of it. Do not be in a hurry. Examine thoroughly the state of your hearts, and see where you are--whether you are walking with God every day, or walking with the devil--whether you are serving God or serving the devil most--whether you are under the dominion of the prince of darkness, or the Lord Jesus Christ.***

To do all this, *you must set yourself at work to consider your sins. You*

must examine yourselves...

...Self-examination consists in looking at your lives, in considering your actions, in calling up the past, and learning its true character. Look back over your past history. Take up your individual sins one by one, and look at them. I do not mean that you should just cast a glance at your past life, and see that it has been full of sins, and then go to God and make a sort of general confession, and ask for pardon. That is not the way. *You must take them up one by one. It will be a good thing to take a pen and paper, as you go over them, and write them down as they occur to you. Go over them as carefully as a merchant goes over his books; and as often as a sin comes before your memory, add it to the list. General confessions of sin will never do. Your sins were committed one by one; and as far as you can come at them, they ought to be reviewed and repented of one by one. Now begin...*

SINS OF OMISSION

1. ***Ingratitude.*** Take this sin, for instance, and write down under it all the instances you can remember, wherein you have received favors from God, for which you have never exercised gratitude. ...Now go on your knees, and confess them one by one to God, and ask forgiveness..
2. ***Want (lack) of love to God.*** ...Now, God styles himself a jealous God; and have you not given your heart to other loves; played the harlot, and infinitely offended him?
3. ***Neglect of the Bible.*** Put down the cases, when for days, and perhaps for weeks--yea, it may be, even for months together, you had no pleasure in God's word. Perhaps you did not read a chapter, or if you read it, it was in a way that was still more displeasing to God.
4. ***Unbelief.*** Instances in which you have virtually charged the God of truth with lying, by your unbelief of his express promises and declarations. God has promised to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. Now, have you believed this? Have you expected him to answer? Have you not virtually said in your hearts, when you prayed for the Holy Spirit, "I do not believe that I shall receive it?" If you have not believed nor expected you should receive the blessing, which God has expressly prom-

ised, you have charged him with lying.

5. **Neglect of prayer.** Times when you omitted secret prayer, family prayer, and prayer meetings, or have prayed in such a way as more grievously to offend God, than to have neglected it altogether....

8. Your want **(lack) of love for the souls of your fellow-men.** ...You have stood by and seen them going right to hell, and it seems as though you did not care if they did.

9. Your want **(lack) of care for the heathen.** ...Do you retrench your style of living, and really subject yourself to any inconvenience to save them? Do you daily pray for them in your closet?

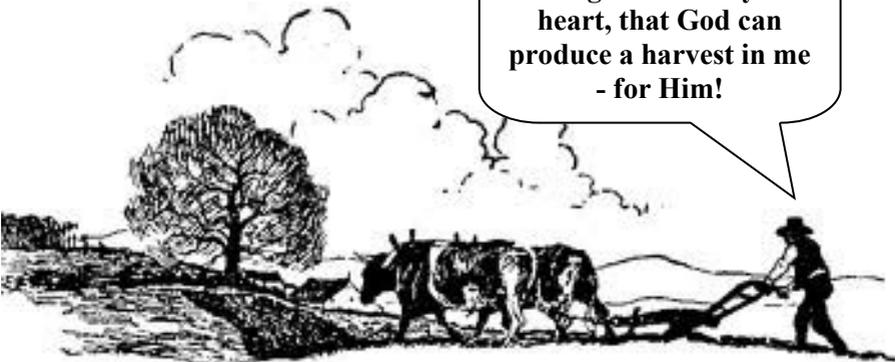
10. Your **neglect of family duties.**

11. **Neglect of social duties.**

12. **Neglect of watchfulness** over your own life. ... Where you have entirely neglected to watch your conduct, and have been off your guard, and have sinned before the world, and before the church, and before God.

13. **Neglect to watch over your brethren.** ...How little do you know or care about the state of their souls! ...How many times have you seen your brethren growing cold in religion, and have not spoken to them about it? ... You have seen them falling into sin, and you let them go on. And yet you pretend to love them. What a hypocrite!

I must also break up the fallow ground in my own heart, that God can produce a harvest in me - for Him!



14. *Neglect of self-denial.* There are many professors who are willing to do almost any thing in religion, that does not require self-denial. But when they are called to do any thing that requires them to deny themselves, O! that is too much. ... they are not willing to deny themselves any comfort or convenience whatever, for the sake of serving the Lord. ... Nor will they deny themselves the luxuries of life, to save a world from hell... From these we now turn to...

SINS OF COMMISSION

1. *Worldly mindedness.* What has been the state of your heart in regard to your worldly possessions? Have you looked at them as really yours--as if you had a right to dispose of them as your own, according to your own will? If you have, write that down. If you have loved property, and sought after it for its own sake, or to gratify lust or ambition, or a worldly spirit, or to lay it up for your families, you have sinned, and must repent.

2. *Pride.* Recollect all the instances you can, in which you have detected yourself in the exercise of pride. Vanity is a particular form of pride. How many times have you detected yourself in consulting vanity, about your dress and appearance? How many times have you thought more, and taken more pains, and spent more time, about decorating your body to go to church, than you have about preparing your mind for the worship of God? You have gone to the house of God caring more how you appear outwardly in the sight of mortal men, than how your soul appears in the sight of the heart-searching God. You have in fact set up yourself to be worshipped by them, rather than prepared to worship God yourself. You came to divide the worship of God's house, to draw off the attention of God's people to look at your pretty appearance. It is in vain to pretend now, that you don't care any thing about having people look at you. Be honest about it. Would you take all this pains about your looks if every body was blind?

3. *Envy.* Look at the cases in which you were envious at those who you thought were above you in any respect. Or perhaps you have envied those who have been more talented or more useful than yourself.

4. *Censoriousness.* Instances in which you have had a bitter spirit, and spoken of Christians in a manner entirely devoid of ... love...



God's PLOW is:

- ⇒ His Law
- ⇒ His Life
- ⇒ His Love



5. **Slander.** The times you have spoken behind people's backs of their faults, real or supposed, of members of the church or others, unnecessarily or without good reason. This is slander...

6. **Levity.** How often have you trifled before God, as you would not have dared to trifle in the presence of an earthly sovereign? You have either been an Atheist, and forgotten that there was a God, or have had less respect for him, and his presence, than you would have had for an earthly judge.

7. **Lying.** .. if you design to make an impression contrary to the naked truth, you lie. Put down all those cases you can recollect. Do not call them by any soft name. God calls them LIES, and charges you with LYING, and you had better charge yourself correctly.

8. **Cheating...**

9. **Hypocrisy.** ... How many times have you confessed sins that you did not mean to break off, and when you had no solemn purpose not to repeat them? Yes, have confessed sins when you knew you as much expected to go and repeat them as you expected to live.

10. **Robbing God.** Instances in which you have misspent your time, and squandered hours which God gave you to serve him and save souls, in vain amusements or foolish conversation, reading novels, or doing nothing; cases where you have misapplied your talents and powers of mind; where you have squandered money on your lusts, or spent it for things you did not need, and which neither contributed to your health, comfort or usefulness. ...

11. **Bad temper.** Write it all down.

12. **Hindering others from being useful.** Perhaps you have weakened their influence by insinuations against them. ... This is done sometimes by taking their time needlessly; sometimes by destroying Christian confidence in them. Thus you have played into the hands of Satan, and not only showed yourself an idle vagabond, but prevented others from working.

If you find you have committed a fault against an individual, and that individual is within your reach, go and confess it immediately, and get that out of the way. If the individual you have injured is too far off for you to go and see him, sit down and write him *a letter*, and confess the injury, pay the postage, and put it into the mail immediately. ...

Go thoroughly to work in all this. Go now. Don't put it off; that will only make the matter worse. Confess to God those sins that have been committed against God, and to man those sins that have been committed against man. Don't think of getting off by going round the stumbling blocks. Take them up out of the way. **In breaking up your fallow ground, you must remove every obstruction.** Things may be left that you may think little things, and you may wonder why you do not feel as you wish to in religion, when the reason is that your proud and carnal mind has covered up something which God required you to confess and remove. **Break up all the ground and turn it over. Don't balk it, as the farmers say; don't turn aside for little difficulties; drive the plow right through them, beam deep, and turn the ground all up, so that it may all be mellow and soft, and fit to receive the seed and bear fruit a hundred fold.**

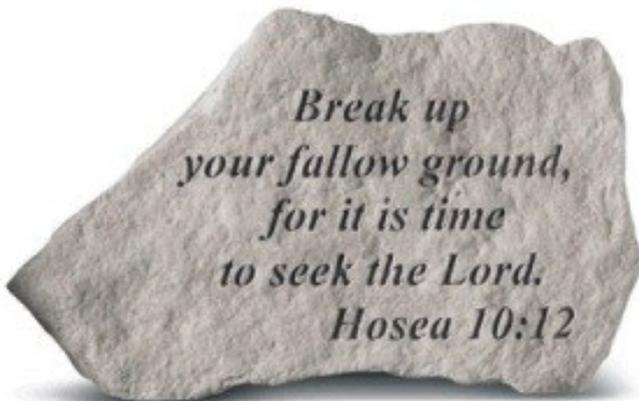
... Unless you do take up your sins in this way, and consider them in detail, *one by one*, you can form no idea of the amount of your sins. You should go over it as thoroughly and as carefully, and as solemnly, as you

would if you were just preparing yourself for the judgment.

As you go over the catalogue of your sins, be sure to resolve upon present and entire reformation. Wherever you find any thing wrong, resolve at once, in the strength of God, to sin no more in that way. It will be of no benefit to examine yourself, unless you determine to amend in every particular that you find wrong in heart, temper, or conduct.

...Set yourself to the work now; resolve that you never will stop till you find you can pray. You never will have the spirit of prayer, till you examine yourself, and confess your sins, and break up your fallow ground. You never will have the Spirit of God dwelling in you, till you have unraveled this whole mystery of iniquity, and spread out your sins before God. ***Let there be this deep work of repentance, and full confession, this breaking down before God, and you will have as much of the spirit of prayer as your body can bear up under.*** The reason why so few Christians know any thing about the spirit of prayer, is because they never would take the pains to examine themselves properly, and so never knew what it was to have their hearts all broken up in this way.

...And now, finally, ***will you break up your fallow ground?***”

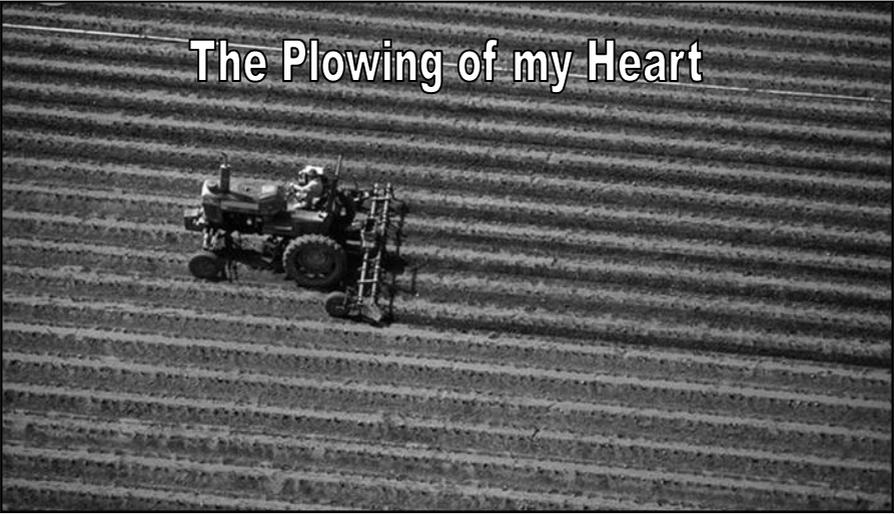




**Lord, I'll break up
my fallow ground
FOR YOU to use...!**



The Plowing of my Heart



This breaking up of the ground of my heart, this “**plowing**” of my heart, can be done:

- ◆ **By God Himself**, as He uses His Word, His Spirit, His providential dealings (which may include afflictions, trouble, hardship, suffering, sickness, etc.)...;
- ◆ **By others**, as God uses them to reveal His Law, His Life, His Love towards me;
- ◆ **By myself**, as I apply the Word of God to my life, accept the dealings of the Holy Spirit, surrender to God’s providential plowing of my heart (through the circumstances and events in my life), and as I confess my sins. The confession of my sins is both a result of a plowed heart (a broken heart) and a way of plowing my heart in God’s presence... It is important to focus on this tool of grace, this plow of God’s design—the confession of sins...

Confession of sins

True God-wrought conviction and contrition will so break and change my hardened heart that out of the heart will flow heart-rending, free, full and factual confession of my specific sins.

I see from the Word of God that the *confession of my sins should be free*,

full, frank, factual, from the heart, in front of another Christian (to God), include forsaking sin, faith in Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, and be fre-
quent:

FREE, voluntary (Psalm 32:5). Charles Finney (CF) said, "Confession... should be poured out *free* as water, full and thorough." "It must come as water out of a spring, freely" (Thomas Watson). Confession is not law, but grace; it is not to be forced, but free (and willing).

FULL (2 Kings 10:24; Ps 119:104). "It is vastly better to go to the bottom in the outset. Yes, go to the bottom, pour it all out, *all*, so thoroughly that neither man nor God can find anything more belonging to that subject. Do this, and there is hope for you" (CF). Further more, **all** the sins that were remembered and revealed by God, and written down, should be confessed one-by-one. Making this **list** helps one to be thorough in repentance and confession of these sins. "Go thoroughly to work in all this. Go *now*. Don't put it off; that will only make matters worse. Confess to God those sins that have been committed against God, and to man those sins that have been committed against man. Don't think of getting off by going round the stumbling blocks. Take them up out of the way. In breaking up your fallow ground you must remove **every** obstruction. Things may be left that you may think little things, and you may wonder why you do not feel as you wish to in religion, when the reason is that your proud and carnal mind has covered up something which God required you to confess and remove. Break up **all** the ground and turn it over..."(CF). In "*Sin and Temptation*", John Owen says, "**Full** also it must be. Reserves ruin confession. If the soul have any secret thought of rolling a sweet morsel under its tongue, of a bow in the house of Rimmon, it is like part of the price kept back, which makes the whole robbery instead of an offering. If there is remaining a little root of favoring any **ONE** lust or sin, of any occasion of or temptation into sin, let a man be as open, free, and earnest as can be imagined in the acknowledgement of all other sins and evils, the whole duty is rendered abominable." Joseph Alleine (in "*An Alarm to the Unconverted*") says, "**You cannot be married to Christ except you be divorced from sin**. Give up the traitor, or you can have no peace with heaven. **Keep not Delilah in your lap. You must part with your sins or with your soul : spare but one sin and God will not spare you. Your sins must die, or you must die for them**. If you allow one sin, though but a little, a secret one, though you may plead necessity, and have

a hundred shifts and excuses for it, the life of your soul must go for the life of that sin...”

FRANK. The confession of my sins should be candid, undisguised, outspoken, sincere, truthful, to the point, not beating about the bush, downright, just as it was or is. I should call a spade a spade. Finney says, “Confession, to be of any avail, should be *frank* and full, so as to give our brethren as full a view of our real character and needs as possible; so that they may understand, as far as may be, the worst of our case, and know how to present it before the Lord. If individuals will only half-confess, they will find that such confessions will do no good, but only harden their hearts. You must fully confess, and cover up no essential feature of your sin, if you expect to be restored.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer says, “*I must call my sins by name.*” The truth will set me free.

FACTUAL (Lev 5:5). This means giving the exact facts about my sins and guilt in the matter, without diluting it or shifting (or sharing) blame. “In true confession a man particularizes sin. A wicked man acknowledges he is a sinner in general. He confesses sin by wholesale... , whereas a true convert acknowledges his particular sins”(TW). In “*Revival Lectures*”, by Charles Finney, we read: “Look back over your past history. Take up your individual sins one by one, and look at them... It will be a good thing to take a pen and paper, as you go over them, and write them down as they occur to you. Go over them as carefully as a merchant goes over his books; and as often as a sin comes before your memory, add it to the list... General confessions of sin will never do. *Your sins were committed one by one; and as far as you can come at them, they ought to be reviewed and repented of one by one.*” This means: specific, factual confession of sins – one by one.

FROM THE FOUNTAIN, THE HEART (Ps 51:17). This is the crux of the whole matter. “Our *hearts* must go along with our confessions. The hypocrite confesses sin but loves it... (and) *loving of sin is worse than committing it*... Sound repentance begins in the love of God and ends in the hatred of sin” (TW). There’s no true confession of sin if my heart is not broken about it and changed (from loving that sin to abhorring it). If my heart is harboring sin, my lips’ confession of it will only aggravate my guilt and bondage to it. “The heart is that which the devil strives hardest for... In religion the heart is all. If the heart be not turned from sin, it is

no better than a lie: ‘her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly’ (Jer 3:10)” (TW), ...“in pretense”(NIV), ...“in a lie”(Hebrew). There’s no true confession without conviction of sin and contrition for sin. Openness without brokenness is not acceptable to God. David learned that “the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite **heart**, O God, you will not despise”, he said in Psalm 51:17.

FRONT OF another Christian (to God) (James 5:16; Jos 7:19). This is necessary, because

- 1) The **Word of God** tells us to do it;
- 2) We “need the **assurance** that God is not a phantom and that I do not simply forgive myself in the end. I receive this certainty through a fellow Christian. Without the presence of a flesh-and-blood confessor everything might be easily lost in pure reflection. It is quite treacherous if we find it easier to confess our sins before the Holy One than before a person who is no different from us”;
- 3) “All secret sins must come to **light**, if not now then at the last day. ‘For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ’ (2 Cor.5:10). Better now than later! As long as our sin remains hidden, it gnaws away at us and poisons us... The serpent must stick its head out of its hole in order for it to be clubbed”;
- 4) “The root of all sin is **pride**...Confession to another human being breaks this arrogance as nothing else can. The old, prideful Adam dies a disgraceful death in great agony...”(From “*Spiritual Care*”, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer); and
- 5) True convictions of sin and real brokenness **naturally** flow into openness and confession (even in front of another Christian). Thomas Watson says, “It is a sinful modesty in Christians that they are not more free with their ministers and other spiritual friends in unburdening themselves and opening the sores and troubles of their souls to them. If there is a thorn sticking in the conscience, it is good to make use of those who may help to pluck it out.” And as Duncan Campbell said, **“Calvary will never cover what you must uncover.”**

FORSAKING SIN (Proverbs 28:13) out of love to God and hatred for sin. In Isaiah 1:16 God says, “Cease to do evil”. “Origen (one of the early Greek fathers, who died in 254) calls confession the vomit of the soul whereby the conscience is eased of that burden which did lie upon it.

Now, when we have vomited up sin by confession we must not return to this vomit. ...A true turning from sin is a divorcing it, so as never to come near it any more” (Thomas Watson, in *“The Doctrine of Repentance”*).

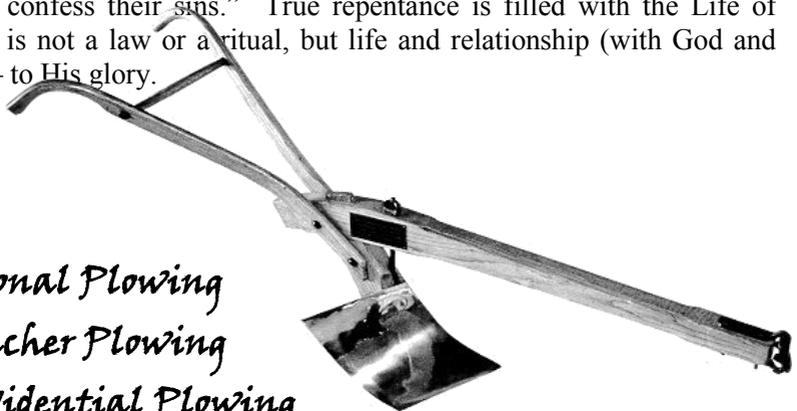
FAITH in the blood of Christ is needed, not in my confession (1 John 1; 1 Peter 1:18,19). Though I am not forgiven without confession, I am not forgiven because I confess my sins, but because of Christ’s sacrificial death on the Cross.

FREQUENT (1 John 1:7-9). In *“Principles of Christian Obedience”* Charles Finney says, “Confession of faults will promote our own humility. Humility is a willingness to be known and estimated according to our real character. While we are unwilling to confess we have no humility at all. Nothing is more directly calculated to deepen, perpetuate, and perfect humility than a full and **frequent** confession of our faults.” Luther said “that the Christian life could not be maintained without confession” (DB).

FATHER’S (parents’) sins (to a certain extent) need to be confessed and broken away from as well (Neh 9:2).

Together with Bonhoeffer we can say, “Confession is grace,” it is “the heart of spiritual care” and the heart of the human side of God’s way of fruitfulness and freedom from demonic bondage. This is extremely important to realize, emphasize and put into practice. Finney says, “We see... why so many are in bondage to sin. The fact is, they do not and will not confess their sins.” True repentance is filled with the Life of God. It is not a law or a ritual, but life and relationship (with God and others) – to His glory.

Personal Plowing
Preacher Plowing
Providential Plowing





Lord, whatever it takes, please break up the fallow ground of my heart and life!



My hand is on the plough, my faltering hand;
But all in front of me is untilled land.
The wilderness and the solitary place,
The lonely desert with its interspace.
What harvest have I but this paltry grain,
These dwindling husks, a handful of dry corn,
These poor lean stalks? My courage is outworn,
Keep me from turning back.
The handles of my plough with tears are wet.
The shears with rust are spoiled, and yet, and yet.
My God! My God! Keep me from turning back.



How a Preacher Ploughs

As God uses the “**Personal Ploughing**” (through the confession of personal sins) to break up my fallow ground, He also uses “**Preacher Ploughing**” to break up my heart.

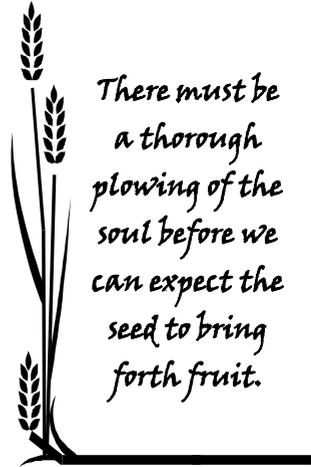
Charles Spurgeon, who was used by God to bring thousands of people to Christ, described this “Preacher Plowing” in his sermon entitled “*Plowing the Rock*.” In it he explains **HOW a minister of the Gospel labours to PLOW people’s hearts**. He said:

“...*MINISTERS LABOUR TO BREAK UP MEN’S HEARTS: the wise preacher tries by the power of the Holy Ghost to break up the hard clods of the heart, so that it may receive the heavenly seed.*”



Many truths are used like sharp ploughshares to break up the heart. Men must be made to feel that they have sinned, and they must be led to repent of sin. They must receive Christ, not with the head only, but with the heart; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness. There must be emotion: **we must cut into the heart with the ploughshare of the law. A farmer who is too tender-hearted to tear up and harrow the land will never see a harvest.** Here is the failing of certain divines, they are afraid of hurting anyone’s feelings, and so they keep clear of all the truths which are likely to excite fear or grief. They have not a sharp ploughshare on their premises, and are never likely to have a stack in their rickyard. They angle without hooks for fear of hurting the fish, and fire without bullets out of respect to the feelings of the birds. **This kind of love is real cruelty to men’s souls. It is much the same as if a surgeon should permit a patient to die because he would not pain him with the lancet, or by the necessary removal of a limb. It is a terrible tenderness which leaves men to sink into hell rather than distress their minds.** It is pleasant to prophesy smooth things, but woe unto the man

who thus degrades himself. Is this the spirit of Christ? Did he conceal the sinner's peril? Did he cast doubts upon the unquenchable fire and the undying worm? Did he lull souls into slumber by smooth strains of flattery? Nay, but with honest love and anxious concern he warned men of the wrath to come, and bade them repent or perish. **Let the servant of the Lord Jesus in this thing follow his Master, and plough deep with a sharp ploughshare, which will not be baulked by the hardest clods. This we must school ourselves to do. If we really love the souls of men, let us**



prove it by honest speech. The hard heart must be broken, or it will still refuse the Saviour who was sent to bind up the broken-hearted. There are some things which men may or may not have, and yet may be saved; but those things which go with the ploughing of the heart are indispensable; there must be a holy fear and a humble trembling before God, there must be an acknowledgment of guilt and a penitent petition for mercy; **there must, in a word, be a thorough ploughing of the soul before we can expect the seed to bring forth fruit...**”



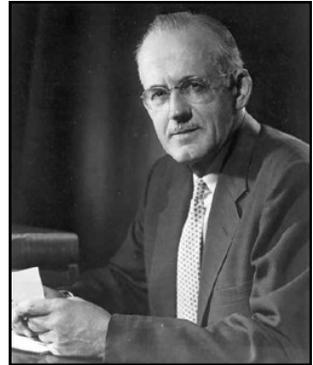
Miracles Follow the Plow

Break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you. (Hosea 10:12)

Two kinds of ground

Here are two kinds of ground: fallow ground, and ground that has been broken up by the plow.

The fallow field is smug, contended, protected from the shock of the plow and the agitation of the harrow. Such a field, as it lies year after year, becomes a familiar landmark to the crow and the blue jay. Had it intelligence, it might take a lot of satisfaction in its reputation; it has stability; nature has adopted it; it can be counted upon to remain always the same while the fields around it change from brown to green and back to brown again. Safe and undisturbed, it sprawls lazily in the sunshine, the picture of sleepy contentment. But it is paying a terrible price for its tranquillity: Never does it see the miracle of growth; never does it feel the motions of mounting life nor see the wonders of bursting seed nor the beauty of ripening grain. Fruit it can never know because it is afraid of the plow and the harrow.



In direct opposite to this, the cultivated field has yielded itself to the adventure of living. The protecting fence has opened to admit the plow, and the plow has come as plows always come, practical, cruel, business-like and in a hurry. Peace has been shattered by the shouting farmer and the rattle of machinery. The field has felt the travail of change; it has been upset, turned over, bruised and broken, but its rewards come hard upon its labours. The seed shoots up into the daylight its miracle of life, curious, exploring the new world above it. All over the field the hand of God is at work in the age-old and ever renewed service of creation. New things are born, to grow, mature, and consummate the grand prophecy latent in the seed when it entered the ground. Nature's wonders follow the plow.



*According to God's way of working:
Miracles follow the plow...!*



Two kinds of lives

There are two kinds of lives also: the fallow and the plowed. For examples of the fallow life we need not go far. They are all too plentiful among us.

The man of **fallow life** is contented with himself and the fruit he once bore. He does not want to be disturbed. He smiles in tolerant superiority at revivals, fastings, self-searchings, and all the travail of fruit-bearing and the anguish of advance. The spirit of adventure is dead within him. He is steady, “faithful,” always in his accustomed place (like the old field), conservative, and something of a landmark in the little church. But he is fruitless. The curse of such a life is that it is fixed, both in size and in content. To *be* has taken the place of to *become*. The worst that can be said of such a man is that he *is* what he *will be*. He has fenced himself in, and by the same act, he has fenced out God and the miracle.

The **plowed life** is the life that has, in the act of repentance, thrown down the protecting fences and sent the plow of confession into the soul. The urge of the Spirit, the pressure of circumstances and the distress of fruitless living have combined thoroughly to humble the heart. Such a life has put away defense, and has forsaken the safety of death for the peril of life. Discontent, yearning, contrition, courageous obedience to the will of God: these have bruised and broken the soil till it is ready again for the seed. And as always fruit follows the plow. Life and growth begin as God “rains down righteousness.” Such a one can testify, “And the hand of the Lord was upon me there.”

Two phases of religious history

Corresponding to these two kinds of life, religious history shows two phases, the dynamic and the static.

The dynamic periods were those heroic times when God’s people stirred themselves to do the Lord’s bidding and went out fearlessly to carry His witness to the world. They exchanged the safety of inaction for the hazards of God-inspired progress. Invariably the power of God followed such action. The miracle of God went when and where His people went; it stayed when His people stopped.



The static periods were those times when the people of God tired of the struggle and sought a life of peace and security. Then they busied themselves trying to conserve the gains made in those times when the power of God moved among them.

Bible history is replete with examples. Abraham “went out” on his great adventure of faith, and God went with him. Revelations, theophanies, the gift of Palestine, covenant and promises of rich blessings to come were the result. Then Israel went down into Egypt, and the wonders ceased for four hundred years. At the end of that time Moses heard the call of God and stepped forth to challenge the oppressor. A whirlwind of power accompanied that challenge, and Israel soon began to march. *As long as she dared to march, God sent out His miracles to clear the way for her. Whenever she lay down like a fallow field, He turned off his blessing and waited for her to rise again and command His power.*

This is a brief but fair outline of the history of Israel and of the Church as well. *As long as*



*As long as
they went
forth and
preached
everywhere,
the Lord
worked with
them...*



**God's
miracles
follow the plow!**



Ripe harvest!



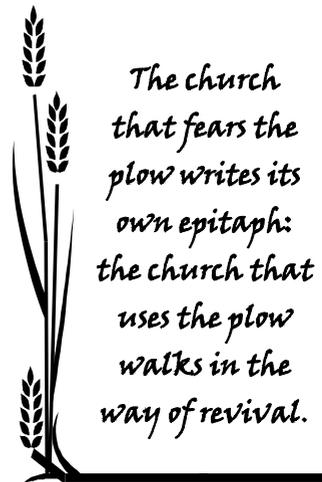
they “went forth and preached everywhere,” the Lord worked “with them ... confirming the word with signs following.” But when they retreated to monasteries or played at building pretty cathedrals, the help of God was withdrawn till a Luther or a Wesley arose to challenge hell again. Then invariably God poured out his power as before.

In every denomination, missionary society, local church or individual Christian this law operates. **God works as long as His people live daringly: He ceases when they no longer need His aid.** As soon as we seek protection outside of God, we find it to our own undoing. Let us build a safety-wall of endowments, by-laws, prestige, multiplied agencies for the delegation of our duties, and creeping paralysis sets in at once, a paralysis which can only end in death.

The power of God comes only where it is called out by the plow. It is released into the Church only when she is doing something that demands it. *By the word “doing” I do not mean mere activity. The Church has plenty of ‘hustle’ as it is, but in all her activities she is very careful to leave her fallow ground mostly untouched. She is careful to confine her hustling within the fear-marked boundaries of complete safety. That is why she is fruitless; she is safe, but fallow.*

Look around today and see where the miracles of power are taking place. Never in the seminary where each thought is prepared for the student, to be received painlessly and at second hand; never in the religious institution where tradition and habit have long ago made faith unnecessary; never in the old church where memorial tablets plastered over the furniture bear silent testimony to a glory that once was. *Invariably where daring faith is struggling to advance against hopeless odds, there is God sending “help from the sanctuary.”*

In the missionary society with which I have for many years been associated, I have noticed that the power of God has always hovered over our frontiers. Miracles have accompanied out advances and have ceased



when and where we allowed ourselves to become satisfied and ceased to advance. The creed of power cannot save a movement from barrenness. There must be also the work of power.

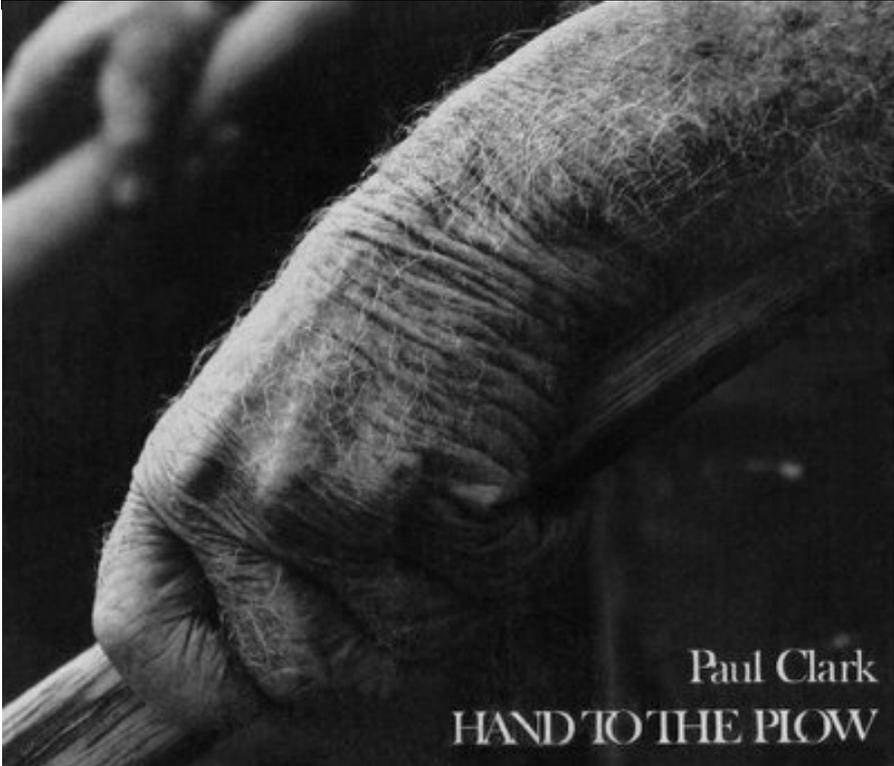
But I am more concerned with the effect of this truth upon the local church and the individual. Look at that church where plentiful fruit was once the regular and expected thing, but now there is little or no fruit, and the power of God seems to be in abeyance. What is the trouble? God has not changed, nor has His purpose for that church changed in the slightest measure. No, the church itself has changed.

A little self-examination will reveal that it and its members have become fallow. It has lived through its early travails and has now come to accept an easier way of life. It is content to carry on its painless program with enough money to pay its bills and a membership large enough to assure its future. Its members now look to it for security rather than for guidance in the battle between good and evil. **It has become a school instead of a barracks. Its members are students, not soldiers. They study the experiences of others instead of seeking new experiences of their own.**

The only way to power for such a church is to come out of hiding and once more take the danger-encircled path of obedience. Its security is its deadliest foe. The church that fears the plow writes its own epitaph: the church that uses the plow walks in the way of revival.”



“To keep our hand on the plow
while wiping away our tears
- that is Christianity”



Paul Clark
HAND TO THE PLOW

*My hand is on the plough, my faltering hand;
But all in front of me is untilled land.
The wilderness and the solitary place,
The lonely desert with its interspace.
What harvest have I but this paltry grain,
These dwindling husks, a handful of dry corn,
These poor lean stalks? My courage is outworn,
Keep me from turning back.
The handles of my plough with tears are wet,
The shears with rust are spoiled, and yet, and yet,
My God! My God! Keep me from turning back.*





**“Where the plow shall fail to go,
there the weeds will surely grow”**



**“Never stop the plow
to catch a mouse.”**

Charles Spurgeon

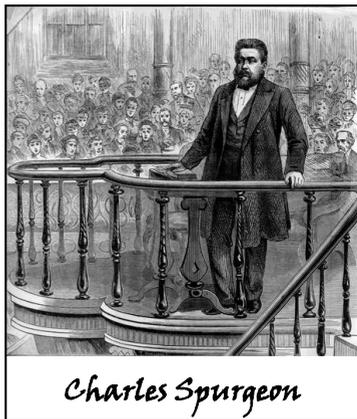
The Lord wants us to **plough with perseverance**, but He also wants us not just to plough, but to **advance from plowing to sowing and from sowing to reaping**—for His glory. Charles Spurgeon preached on this truth. He put it as follows:

The Ploughman

"Doth the plowman plow all day to sow?"—Isaiah 28:24.

Unless they are cultivated, fields yield us nothing but briars and thistles. In this we may see ourselves. Unless the great Farmer shall till us by his grace, we shall produce nothing that is good, but everything that is evil. ...Jesus says to all of us, "Ye must be born again." Unless God the Holy Spirit breaks up the heart with the plough of the law, and sows it with the seed of the gospel, not a single ear of holiness will any of us produce, even though we may be children of godly parents, and may be regarded as excellent moral people by those with whom we live.

Yes, and the plough is needed not only to produce that which is good, but to destroy that which is evil. There are diseases which, in the course of ages, wear themselves out, and do not appear again among men; and there may be forms of vice which, under changed circumstances, do not so much abound as they used to do; but human nature will always remain the same, and therefore there will always be plentiful crops of the weeds of sin in man's fields, and nothing can keep these under but spiritual husbandry (spiritual farming), carried on by the Spirit of God. You cannot destroy weeds by exhortations, nor can you tear out the roots of sin from the soul by moral suasion; something sharper and more effectual must be brought to bear upon them. God must put his own right hand to the plough, or the hemlock of sin will never give place to the corn of holiness. Good is never spontaneous in un-renewed humanity, and evil is never cut up till the ploughshare of almighty grace is driving through it.



Charles Spurgeon

The text leads our thoughts in this direction, and gives us practical guidance through asking the simple question, "**Doth the ploughman plough all day to sow?**" This question may be answered in the affirmative, "**YES, in the proper season he does plough all day to sow**"; and, secondly, this text may more properly be answered in the negative, "**NO, the ploughman does not plough every day to sow; he has other work to do according to the season.**"

**I. First, our text may be ANSWERED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE,—
"YES, the ploughman does plough all day to sow."**

When it is plowing time he keeps on at it till his work is done; if it requires one day, or two days, or twenty days to finish his fields, he continues his task while the weather permits. **The perseverance of the ploughman** is instructive, and it teaches us a double lesson. When the Lord comes to plough the heart of man he ploughs all day, and herein is his patience; and, secondly, so ought the Lord's servants to labour all day with men's hearts, and herein is our perseverance.

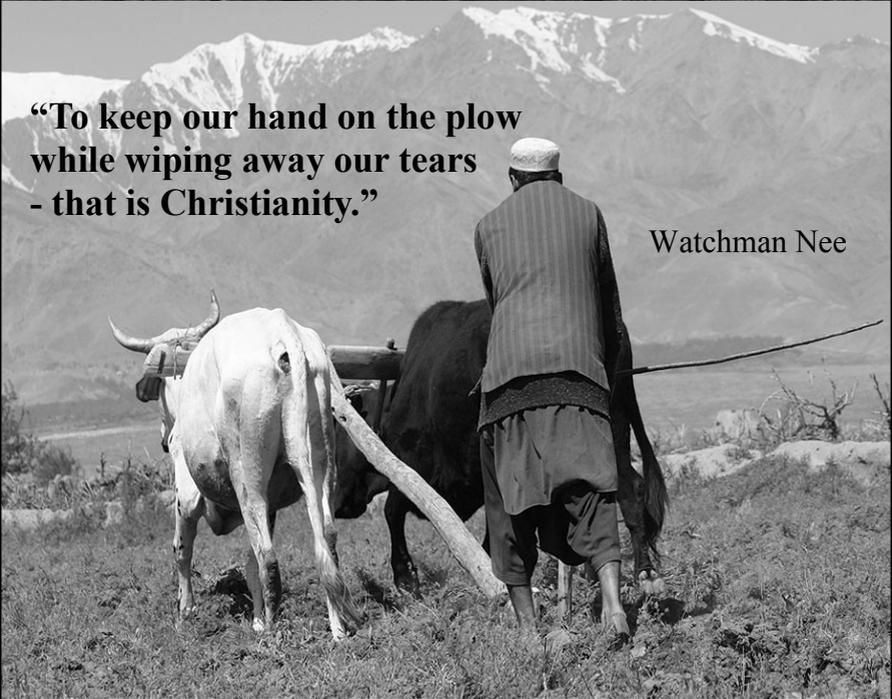
"Doth the ploughman plough all day?" So doth God plough the heart of man, and herein is his patience. The team was in the field in the case of some of us very early in the morning, for our first recollections have to do with conscience and the furrows of pain which it made in our youthful mind. When we were little children we woke in the night under a sense of sin; our father's teaching and our mother's prayers made deep and painful impressions upon us, and though we did not then yield our hearts to God, we were greatly stirred, and all indifference to religion was made impossible. When we were boys at school the reading of a chapter in the Word of God, or the death of a playmate, or an address at a Bible-class, or a solemn sermon, so affected us that we were uneasy for weeks. The strivings of the Spirit of God within urged us to think of higher and better things. ***Though we quenched the Spirit, though we stifled conviction, yet we bore the marks of the ploughshare; furrows were made in the soul, and certain foul weeds of evil were cut up by the roots although no seed of grace was as yet sown in our hearts.*** Some have continued in this state for many years, ploughed but not sown; but, blessed be God, it was not so with others of us; for we had not left boyhood before the good seed of the gospel fell upon our heart. Alas! There are many who do not thus yield to

Perseverant Plowing



**“To keep our hand on the plow
while wiping away our tears
- that is Christianity.”**

Watchman Nee



grace, and with them the ploughman ploughs all day to sow. I have seen the young man coming to London in his youth, yielding to its temptations, drinking in its poisoned sweets, violating his conscience, and yet continuing unhappy in it all, fearful, un-restful, stirred about even as the soil is agitated by the plough. In how many cases has this kind of work gone on for years, and all to no avail. Ah! And I have known the man come to middle life, and still he has not received the good seed, neither has the ground of his hard heart been thoroughly broken up. He has gone on in business without God: day after day he has risen and gone to bed again with no more religion than his horses, and yet all this while there have been ringing in his ears warnings of judgment to come, and chidings of conscience, so that he has not been at peace. After a powerful sermon he has not enjoyed his meals, or been able to sleep, for he has asked himself, "What shall I do in the end thereof?" **The ploughman has ploughed all day, till the evening shadows have lengthened and the day has faded to a close. What a mercy it is when the furrows are at last made ready and the good seed is cast in, to be received, nurtured, and multiplied a hundredfold.**

It is mournful to remember that we have seen this ploughing continue till the sun has touched the horizon and the night dews have begun to fall. Even then the long-suffering God has followed up his work—ploughing, ploughing, ploughing, ploughing, till darkness ended all. Do I address any aged ones whose lease must soon run out? I would affectionately beseech them to consider their position.

What! Threescore years old and yet unsaved? Forty years did God suffer the manners of Israel in the wilderness, but he has borne with you for sixty years. Seventy years old, and yet un-regenerated! Ah, my friend, you will have but little time in which to serve your Saviour before you go to heaven. But will you go there at all? Is it not growing dreadfully likely that you will die in your sins and perish for ever? How happy are those who are brought to Christ in early life; but still remember—

***"While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return."***

It is late, it is very late, but it is not too late. The ploughman ploughs all day; and the Lord waits that he may be gracious unto you. I have seen

Plowing with Patience...



many aged persons converted, and therefore I would encourage other old folks to believe in Jesus. I once read a sermon in which a minister asserted that he had seldom known any converted who were over forty years of age if they had been hearers of the gospel all their lives. There is certainly much need to caution those who are guilty of delay, but there must be no manufacturing of facts. Whatever that minister might think, or even observe, my own observation leads me to believe that about as many people are converted to God at one age as at another, taking into consideration the fact that the young are much more numerous than the old. It is a dreadful thing to have remained an unbeliever all these years; but yet the grace of God does not stop short at a certain age; those who enter the vineyard at the eleventh hour shall have their penny, and grace shall be glorified in the old as well as in the young. **Come along, old friend, Jesus Christ invites you to come to him even now, though you have stood out so long. You have been a sadly tough piece of ground, and the ploughman has ploughed all day; but if at last the sods are turned, and the heart is lying in ridges, there is hope of you yet.**

Plowing with Perseverance...



"Doth the ploughman plough all day?" I answer,—Yes, however long the day may be, God in mercy ploughs still, he is long-suffering, and full of tenderness and mercy and grace. Do not spurn such patience, but yield to the Lord who has acted towards you with so much gentle love.

The text, however, not only sets forth patience on God's part, but it teaches perseverance on our part. "Doth the ploughman plough all day?" Yes, he does; then if I am seeking Christ, ought I to be discouraged because I do not immediately find him? The promise is, "He that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." There may be reasons why the door is not opened at our first knock. What then? "Doth the ploughman plough all day?" When will I knock all day. It may be at the first seeking I may not find; what then? "Doth the ploughman plough all day?" Then will I seek all day. It may happen that at my first asking I shall not receive; what then? "Doth the ploughman plough all day?" Then will I ask all day. **Friends, if you have begun to seek the Lord, the short way is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Do that at once. In the name of God**

do it at once, and you are saved at once. May the Spirit of God bring you to faith in Jesus, and you are at once in the kingdom of Christ. But if peradventure in seeking the Lord, you are ignorant of this, or do not see your way, never give up seeking; get to the foot of the cross, lay hold of it, and cry, "If I perish I will perish here. Lord, I come to thee in Jesus Christ for mercy, and if thou art not pleased to look at me immediately, and forgive my sins, I will cry to thee till thou dost." When God's Holy Spirit brings a man to downright earnest prayer which will not take a denial, he is not far from peace. Careless indifference and shilly-shallying with God hold men in bondage. *They find peace when their hearts are roused to strong resolve to seek until they find.* I like to see men search the Scriptures till they learn the way of salvation, and hear the gospel till their souls live by it. *If they are resolved to drive the plough through doubts, and fears, and difficulties, till they come to salvation, they shall soon come to it by the grace of God.*



*Plow on
for the
love of Jesus
and
dying men.*

The same is true in seeking the salvation of others. "Doth the ploughman plough all day?" Yes, when it is ploughing-time. Then, **so will I work on, and on, and on. I will pray and preach, or pray and teach, however long the day may be that God shall appoint me, for—**

*"'Tis all my business here below
The precious gospel seed to sow."*

Brother worker, are you getting a little weary? Never mind, rouse yourself, and plough on for the love of Jesus, and dying men. Our day of work has in it only the appointed hours, and while they last let us fulfill our task. Ploughing is hard work; but as there will be no harvest without it, let us just put forth all our strength, and never flag till we have performed our Lord's will, and by his Holy Spirit wrought conviction in men's souls. Some soils are very stiff, and cling together, and the labour is heart-breaking; others are like the un-reclaimed waste, full of roots and tangled bramble; they need a steam-plough, and we must pray the Lord to make us such, for we cannot leave them untilled, and

therefore we must put forth more strength that the labour may be done.

I heard some time ago of a minister who called to see a poor man who was dying, but he was not able to gain admittance; he called the next morning, and some idle excuse was made so that he could not see him; he called again the next morning, but he was still refused; he went on till he called twenty times in vain, but on the twenty-first occasion he was permitted to see the sufferer, and by God's grace he saved a soul from death. *"Why do you tell your child a thing twenty times?" asked some one of a mother. "Because," said she, "I find nineteen times is not enough." Now, when a soul is to be ploughed, it may so happen that hundreds of furrows will not do it. What then? Why, plough all day till the work is done. Whether you are ministers, missionaries, teachers, or private soul-winners, never grow weary, for your work is noble, and the reward of it is infinite.* The grace of God is seen in our being permitted to engage in such holy service; it is greatly magnified in sustaining us in it, and it will be pre-eminently conspicuous in enabling us to hold out till we can say, "**I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.**"

We prize that which costs us labour and service, and we shall set all the higher value upon the saved ones when the Lord grants them to our efforts. **It is good for us to learn the value of our sheaves by going forth weeping to the sowing.** When you think of the ploughman's ploughing all day, be moved to plod on in earnest efforts to win souls. *Seek—*

*"With cries, entreaties, tears to save
And snatch them from the fiery wave.*

Doth the ploughman plough all day for a little bit of oats or barley, and will not you plough all day for souls that shall live for ever, if saved, to adore the grace of God, or shall live for ever, if unsaved, in outer darkness and woe? Oh, by the terrors of the wrath to come, and the glory that is to be revealed, gird up your loins, and plough all day.

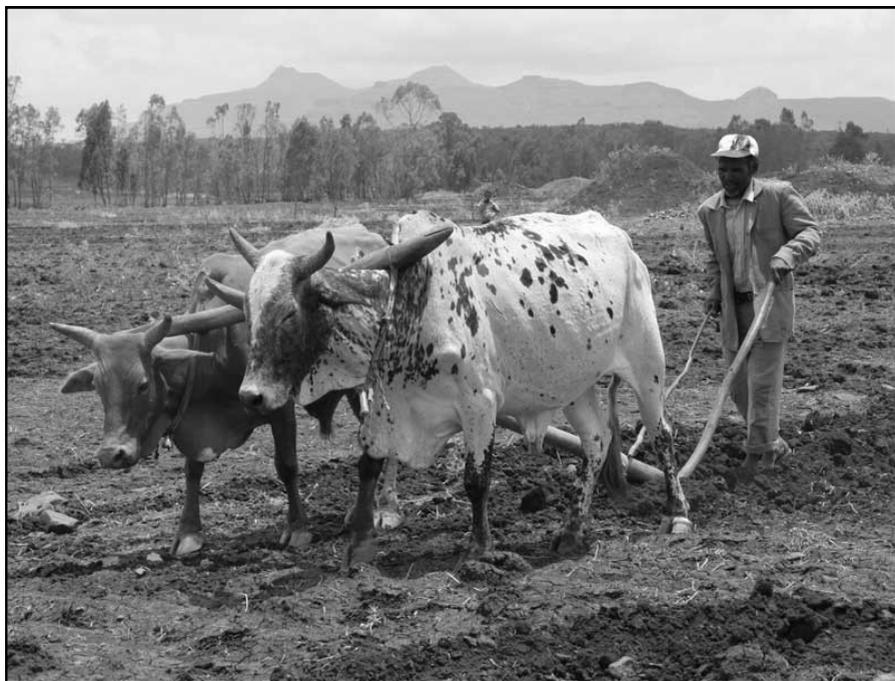
I would beg all the members of our churches to keep their hands on the gospel plough, and their eyes straight before them. "Doth the ploughman plough all day?" let Christians do the same. Start close to the hedge, and go right down to the bottom of the field. Plough as close to the ditch as you can, and leave small headlands. What though there are



*Plow on ...and on ...and on ...and on
With Jesus!*









Powerful Ploughing...



fallen women, thieves, and drunkards in the slums around, do not neglect any of them; for if you leave a stretch of land to the weeds they will soon spread amongst the wheat. *When you have gone right to the end of the field once, what shall you do next? Why, just turn round, and make for the place you started from. And when you have thus been up and down, what next? Why, up and down again. And what next? Why, up and down again. You have visited that district with tracts; do it again, fifty-two times in the year—multiply your furrows. We must learn how to continue in well doing. Your eternal destiny is to go on doing good for ever and ever, and it is well to go through a rehearsal here. So just plough on, plough on, and look for results as the reward of continued perseverance. Ploughing is not done with a skip and a jump: the ploughman ploughs all day. Dash and flash are all very fine in some things, but not in ploughing: there the work must be steady, persistent, regular. Certain persons soon give it up, it wears out their gloves, blisters their soft hands, tires their bones, and makes them eat their bread rather more in the sweat of their face than they care for. Those whom the Lord fills with his grace will keep to their ploughing year after year, and verily I say unto you, they shall have their reward. "Doth the ploughman plough all day?" Then let us do the same, being assured that one day every hill and valley shall be tilled and sown, and every desert and wilderness shall yield a harvest for our Lord, and the angel reapers shall descend, and the shouts of the harvest-home shall fill both earth and heaven.*



*In plowing,
the work
must be
steady,
persistent,
regular.*

II. But, now, somewhat briefly, THE TEXT MAY BE ANSWERED IN THE NEGATIVE. "Doth the ploughman plough all day to sow?" NO, he does not always plough.

After he has PLOUGHED he breaks the clods, SOWS, REAPS, and THRESHES. In the chapter before us you will see that other works of husbandry (farming) are mentioned. The ploughman has many other things to do beside ploughing. There is an advance in what he does; this teaches us that there is the like on God's part, and should be the

like on ours.

First, on God's part, **there is an ADVANCE in what he does. "Doth the ploughman plough all day?" No, he goes FORWARD to other matters.** It may be that in the case of some of you the Lord has been using certain painful agencies to plough you. You are feeling the terrors of the law, the bitterness of sin, the holiness of God, the weakness of the flesh, and the shadow of the wrath to come. Is this going to last for ever? Will it continue till the spirit fails and the soul expires? Listen: **"Doth the ploughman plough all day?" No, he is preparing for something else—he ploughs to sow.** Thus doth the Lord deal with you; therefore be of good courage, there is an end to the wounding and slaying, and better things are in store for you. You are poor and needy, and you seek water, and there is none, and your tongue faileth for thirst; but the Lord will hear you, and deliver you. He will not contend for ever, neither will he be always wroth. He will turn again, and he will have compassion upon us. He will not always make furrows by his chiding, he will come and cast in the precious corn of consolation, and water it with the dews of heaven, and smile upon it with the sunlight of his grace; and there shall soon be in you, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear, and in due season you shall joy as with the joy of harvest. O ye who are sore wounded in the place of dragons, I hear you cry, Doth God always send terror and conviction of sin? Listen to this,—"**If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land,**" and what is the call of God to the willing and obedient but this, "**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved**"? Thou shalt be saved now, find peace now, if thou wilt have done with thyself and all looking to thine own good works to save thee, and wilt turn to him who paid the ransom for thee upon the tree. The Lord is gentle and tender and full of compassion, he will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever. Many of your doubts and fears come of unbelief, or of Satan, or of the flesh, and are not of God at all. Blame him not for what he does not send, and does not wish you to suffer. His mind is for your peace, not for your distress; for thus he speaks—"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned." "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." He has smitten, but he will smile; **he has wounded, but he will heal;** he has slain, but he will make alive; therefore turn unto him at once and receive comfort at

Plowing and Sowing!



his hands. *The ploughman does not plough for ever, else would he reap no harvest; and God is not always heart-breaking, he also draws near on heart-healing errands.*

You see, then, that the great husbandman advances from painful agencies, and I want you to mark that **he GOES ON to productive work in the hearts of his people.** He will take away the furrows, you shall not see them, for the corn will cover them with beauty. As she that was in travail remembers no more her sorrow for joy that a man is born into the world, so shall you, who are under the legal rod, remember no more her sorrow for joy that a man is born into the world, so shall you, who are under the legal rod, remember no more the misery of conviction, for God will sow you with grace, and make your soul, even your poor, barren soul to bring forth fruit unto his praise and glory. "Oh!" says one, "I wish that would come true to me." It will. "Doth the ploughman plough all day to sow?"

You expect by-and-by to see ploughed fields clothed with springing corn; and you may look to see repentant hearts gladdened with forgiveness. Therefore, be of good courage.

You shall ADVANCE, also, to a joyful experience. See that ploughman; he whistles as he ploughs, he does not own much of this world's good, but yet he is merry. He looks forward to the day when he will be on the top of the big wagon, joining in the shout of the harvest home, and so he ploughs in hope, expecting a crop. And, dear soul, God will yet joy and rejoice over you when you believe in Jesus Christ, and you, too, shall be brimful of joy. Be of good cheer, the better portion is yet to come, press forward to it. *Gospel sorrowing leads on to gospel hoping, believing, rejoicing, and the rejoicing knows no end. God will not chasten all day, but he will lead you on from strength to strength, from glory unto glory, till you shall be like himself.* This then, is the advance that there is in God's work among men, from painful agencies to productive work and joyful experience.

But what if the ploughing should never lead to sowing; what if you should be disturbed in conscience, and should go on to resist it all? Then God will make another advance, but it will be to put up the plough, and to command the clouds that they rain no rain upon the land, and then its end is to be burned. *Oh! Man, there is nothing more awful than for your soul to be left to go out of cultivation;* God himself giving you up. Surely that is hell. He that is unholy will be unholy still. The law of fixity of character will operate eternally, and no hand of the merciful One shall come near to till the soul again. What worse than this can happen?

We conclude by saying that this advance is a lesson to us; for we, too, are to go forward. "Doth the ploughman plough all day?" No, he ploughs to sow, and in due time he sows. *Some churches seem to think that all they have to do is to plough;* at least, all they attempt is a kind of scratching of the soil, and talking of what they are going to do. It is fine talk, certainly; but doth the ploughman plough all day? You may draw up a large programme and



*Don't be
making
furrows
all day;
do get to your
sowing!*

promise great things; but pray do not stop there. *Don't be making furrows all day; do get to your sowing.* I fancy that those who promise most perform the least. Men who do much in the world have no programme at first, their course works itself out by its own inner force by the grace of God: they do not propose, but perform. They do not plough all day to sow, but they are like our Lord's servant in the parable, of whom he saith, "the sower went forth to sow."

Let the ministers of Christ also follow the rule of ADVANCE. Let us go from preaching the LAW to preaching the GOSPEL. "Doth the ploughman plough all day?" *He does plough: he would not sow in hope if he had not first prepared the ground.* Robbie Flockart, who preached for years in the Edinboro' streets, says,

"It is in vain to sew with the silk thread of the gospel, unless you use the sharp needle of the law." Some of my brethren do not care to preach eternal wrath and its terrors. This is a cruel mercy, for they ruin souls by hiding from them their ruin. If they must needs try to sew without a needle, I cannot help it; but I do not mean to be so foolish myself; my needle may be old-fashioned, but it is sharp, and when it carries with it the silken thread of the gospel, I am sure good work is done by it. *You cannot get a harvest if you are afraid of disturbing the soil, nor can you save souls if you never warn them of hell fire. We must tell the sinner what God has revealed about sin, righteousness, and judgment to come. Still, brethren, we must not plough all day. No, no, the preaching of the law is only preparatory to the preaching of the gospel. The stress of our business lies in proclaiming good tidings. We are not followers of John the Baptist, but of Jesus Christ; we are not rugged prophets of woe, but joyful heralds of grace.* Be not satisfied with revival services, and stirring appeals, but preach the doctrines of grace so as to bring out the full compass of covenant truth. Ploughing has had its turn, now for planting and watering. Reproof may now give place to consolation. We are first to make disciples of men, and then to teach them to observe all things whatsoever Jesus has commanded us. *We must pass on from the rudiments to the higher truths, from laying foundations to further upbuilding.*



*Let us
go from
preaching
the law to
preaching
the Gospel!*

And now, another lesson to those of you who are as yet hearers and nothing more. **I want you to go from ploughing to something better, namely, from hearing and fearing to BELIEVING.** How many years some of you have been hearing the gospel! Do you mean to continue in that state for ever? Will you never believe in him of whom you hear so much? You have been stirred up a good deal; the other night you went home almost broken-hearted; ***I should think you are ploughed enough by this time; and yet you have not received the seed of eternal life, for you have not believed in the Lord Jesus.*** It is dreadful to be always on the brink of everlasting life, and yet never to be alive. ***It will be an awful thing to be almost in heaven, and yet for ever shut out.*** It is a wretched thing to rush into a railway-station just in time to see the train steaming out; I had much rather be half-an-hour behind time. To lose a train by half-a-second is most annoying. Alas, if you go on as you have done for years, you will have your hand on the latch of heaven and yet be shut out. You will be within a hair's breadth of glory, and yet be covered with eternal shame. **O beware of being so near to the kingdom, and yet lost; almost, but not altogether saved. God grant that you may not be among those who are ploughed, and ploughed, and ploughed, and yet never sown.** It will be of no avail at the last to cry, "Lord, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. We had a seat at the chapel, we attended the services on week-nights as well as on Sundays, we went to prayer-meetings, we joined a Bible-class, we distributed tracts, we subscribed our guinea to the funds, we gave up every open sin, we used a form of prayer, and read a chapter of the Bible every day." All these things may be done, and yet there may be no saving faith in the Lord Jesus. Take heed lest your Lord should answer, "**With all this, your heart never came to me; therefore, depart from me, I never knew you.**" If Jesus once knows a man he always knows him. He can never say to me, "I never knew you," for he has known me as his poor dependent, a beggar for years at his door. Some of you have been all that is good except that you never came into contact with Christ, never trusted him, never knew him. Ah me, how sad your state! Will it be always so?

Lastly, I would say to you who are being ploughed, and are agitated about your souls, Go at once to the next stage of believing. Oh! If people did but know how simple a thing believing is, surely they would believe. Alas, they do not know it, and it becomes all the more difficult to them because in itself it is so easy. The difficulty of believing lies in there

being no difficulty in it. "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it?" Oh, yes, you would have done it, and you would have thought it easy too; but when he simply says, "Wash, and be clean," there is a difficulty with pride and self. If you can truly say that you are willing to abase your pride, and do anything which the Lord bids you, then I pray you understand that there is no further preparation required, and believe in Jesus at once. May the Holy Spirit make you sick of self, and ready to accept the gospel. The word is nigh thee, let it be believed; it is in thy mouth, let it be swallowed down; it is in thy heart, let it be trusted. With your heart believe in Jesus, and with your mouth make confession of him, and you shall be saved.



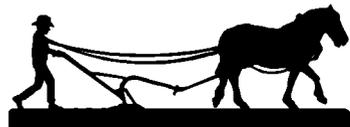
*May the
Holy Spirit
make you
sick of self,
and ready to
accept the
Gospel!*

A main part of faith lies in the giving up of all other confidences. O give up at once every false hope. I tried once to show what faith was by quoting Dr. Watts' lines:—

*"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On thy kind arms I fall.
Be thou my strength, and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all."*

I tried to represent faith as falling into Christ's arms, and I thought I made it so plain that the wayfaring man could not err therein. When I had finished preaching, a young man came to me and said, "But, sir, I cannot fall upon Christ's arms." I replied at once, "Tumble into them anyhow; faint away into Christ's arms, or die into Christ's arms, so long as you get there." Many talk of what they can do and what they cannot do, and I fear they miss the vital point. Faith is leaving off caning and cannot-ing, and leaving it all to Christ, for he can do all things, though you can do nothing.

"Doth the ploughman plough all day to sow?" No, he makes progress, and goes from ploughing to sowing. Go, and do thou likewise: sow unto the Spirit the precious seed of faith in Christ, and the Lord will give thee a joyous harvest."





The Discriminating Disciplines of God

(God's way of plowing)

"Doth the plowman plow continually to sow?" (Isa. 28:24)

In his book on "Spiritual Maturity," J. Oswald Sanders (who was a missionary in China) writes about **the wise, discriminating, purposeful way in which God ploughs every disciple's heart**. A summary of his message is as follows:

The Discrimination of God's Disciplines

He is discerning in their duration : Plowing

He is careful in their choice : Sowing

He is considerate in their moderation : Threshing

The Purpose of God's Disciplines

Personal—to cultivate the soul

Relative—to provide food for others

Ultimate—to prepare for heaven

With this brief overview in mind, let's consider how Oswald Sanders explains it further. He said:

"Let Him plow, He purposeth a crop." This reaction of Samuel Rutherford to the chastening which came to him, revealed a true insight into the Divine disciplines and an attitude calculated to benefit most from them. **The disciplines of life may be painful but they are never purposeless.** "I grant that all chastening considered in the light of the immediate present, seems to be fraught not with pleasure, but with pain; but **in the long run it yields a harvest of peace** to those who have been disciplined by it, **a harvest of righteousness**" (Heb.12:11, Way). **If we desire the harvest, we must welcome the discipline.**

...This “sweet parable” uses the methods of the farmer as typical of God’s dealings with the nations and, in a secondary application, with the church and its individual members... Isaiah highlights those qualities in God which give Him such a sure touch in His dealings with men. “For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him” (v.26)...



*If we desire
the harvest,
we must
welcome the
discipline.*

The skill of the farmer, his careful judgment in the three main processes of husbandry – plowing, sowing, harvesting – is but a reflection of the skill and wisdom of the God who instructed him. If the farmer shows such keen discernment and exercises such careful oversight of his crops, Isaiah argues, will the God who counselled him be less discriminating in the much more delicate task of producing a harvest from our lives?

THE DISCRIMINATION OF HIS DISCIPLINES

Although the heavenly Husbandman (Farmer) permits the plow-share and harrows of sorrow or suffering to tear through the lives of His children, they are always guided and controlled by a supremely skilful hand. His ultimate purpose, a harvest, is ever kept in view. The three principal processes of farming are employed by Isaiah to illustrate the wisdom God exercises in His character-training and tempering of the spirit.

Viewing the successive operations of **plowing**, **sowing** and **threshing** as suggestive of the disciplines of life, three truths emerge from this parable.

God is discerning in their DURATION.

“Does he who plows for sowing plow continually? Does he continually tear up and harrow his land?” (vv.23,24). Of course he does not. “His God doth instruct him to discretion and doth teach him” (v.26). **Plowing is only a means to an end. When the end is achieved his plowing ceases.** In the history of Israel God’s discernment can be seen. For four hundred and thirty years the plow of the Egyptian tyranny ripped through the stiff

soil of the Hebrew nation, an unpromising wilderness in which God saw possibilities of a rich harvest. **But there could be no harvest without plowing.** As soon as the discipline of the Egyptian taskmaster's whip had achieved its purpose it was removed. Not one day longer than was necessary to achieve the beneficent Divine purpose did He permit His people to writhe under the oppression of their masters. As soon as they were ready



to receive deliverance He led them into the rest and abundance and victory of Canaan. But only the severity of the discipline weaned them from Egypt.

The skilful farmer discriminates between one soil and another. Light and sandy soil requires only brief and light plowing. Stiff, sour clay requires totally different treatment if it is to produce a crop. It must be laid bare to the sun and drained. The plow must plunge deep into the subsoil, as deep as the share will go. Soil must be harrowed and harrowed again until the clods

are broken down and a fine tilth secured in which the precious seed will germinate and grow. **The farmer is discerning in the duration of his plowing.** He does not continually tear up and harrow his land. He deals with each soil according to its need. Is not this the explanation of the differing incidence of suffering and sorrow and trial? *The heavenly Husbandman can be trusted in the adaptation and timing and duration of the disciplines His love permits. We are safe in His hands.*

The discipline is always preparatory to blessing and can bring nothing but blessing when rightly received. *It is here that our responsibility lies.* Food not digested is a bane, not a blessing. *Disciplines not rightly received sour rather than sweeten the character.* To querulously ask "Why?" when the chastening stroke falls is in effect to charge the all-wise and all-loving God with caprice. *He does not rend the heart merely to demonstrate His power and sovereignty but to prepare for greater fruitfulness. He prunes every branch that does bear fruit to increase its yield. The discipline is purposeful. How do we react to God's plow? Does it soften, subdue, chasten us? Or does it harden and stiffen our resistance to His will? Does it sweeten or sour us?*

The farmer is discerning in the duration of his plowing...



Our reaction to family problems and financial reverses, to suffering and disappointment, to thwarted ambitions and disappointed expectations is all-important. If we submit, feeling that resistance is unavailing, that is better than continued rebellion. If we acquiesce in God's dealings, although without joy, that is higher ground. ***But it is when we embrace God's unexplained providences with a song that God is most glorified and we are most blessed.***

..Job experienced the tearing of the plowshare through his life, but his reaction silenced the adversary who designed to make capital against God out of his failure. Satan had no answer to Job's noble statement, "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." God's confidence in Job was abundantly vindicated.

"These little troubles (which are really so transitory) are winning for us a permanent and glorious reward out of all proportion to our pain. For we are looking all the time not at the visible things but at the invisible. The visible things are transitory. It is the invisible things that are really permanent" (1 Cor. 4:17-18, Phillips). ***It is when we turn our eyes away from the immediate and fix them on the ultimate that we are able to correctly interpret the disciplinary experiences of life.***

He is careful in their CHOICE.

"Does He not rather, after levelling the surface scatter the dill and sow cumin, put the wheat in rows, barley in the appointed places, and rye around the border? His God correctly instructs and teaches him" (vv.24-26, Berkeley Version). ***The prudent farmer exercises the finest discrimination both in the evaluation of his seed and in the selection of their situation. He is not haphazard in his methods. The more valuable seeds are given the most favourable position.*** The less valuable can fill in waste corners. Dill and cumin are small seeds used as a relish and therefore comparatively unimportant when compared with the essential wheat and barley. The farmer is always calculating what will pay him best and how he can get the maximum return from his land.

So it is with God. He never wastes His disciplines. He knows which will produce the most luxurious harvest. Each is carefully selected by infinite wisdom. He regards our lives as the seed plots of eternity and pays

attention not only to the seed but to the soil. The incidence and timing of His corrective dealings are meticulously correct. He who correctly instructs and teaches the farmer does not exercise less wisdom in His culture of a human heart. His selection is unerring, whether it be delay or denial, withholding or withdrawing, prosperity or adversity, joy or suffering. **He always has a crop in view.**

Are we less prudent than the farmer in our assessing of relative values and in deciding priorities? It is in this that success, both temporal and spiritual, lies. ***We reap what we sow. If the soil of our lives is sown with the trivial and the carnal, they will produce after their own kind. If on the other hand we sow the primary and the spiritual, there will be an abundant harvest of holiness and joy.***



*God never
wastes His
disciplines—
He always
has a crop in
view!*

He is considerate in their MODERATION.

“For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cumin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cumin with a rod. Bread corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen. This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working” (Isa. 28:27-29). ***The farmer has regard to the nature of the seed as well as its value and adapts his threshing technique accordingly. To treat each seed alike would irreparably damage some or leave others un-separated from the husk. He must apply exactly the correct length of time to achieve the end in view.*** Gentle tapping with a rod is sufficient for the dill but the wheat requires the *tribulum*, a heavy threshing-sledge. ***His intelligence and experience prevents the farmer from excess in his threshing method. As soon as the seed is separated from the restricting husk, the threshing process ceases.***

God exercises a similar discretion and moderation in the methods He adapts to produce the harvest in the lives of His children. He does not use the heavy *tribulum* (from which our word “tribulation” is derived) where a

light rod would achieve His purpose. His object is not the crushing, the destruction of the grain, but its purification and preservation. If He sends tribulation it is because no other means will produce the result. He employs no more force and for no longer than is necessary. **Fruitfulness is the end of all discipline. True spirituality welcomes tribulation if it will produce a richer harvest for God.** “I glory in tribulation,” said Paul, and he certainly knew what he was speaking of. Never was nature more sensitive than his, but seldom has a man experienced more of the chastening rod.

THE PURPOSE OF GOD’S DISCIPLINES

There is infinite variety in the dealings of God both in their character and their incidence. No two people are treated alike by Him. He recognizes the uniqueness of personality and this is reflected in His disciplinary method.

God’s dealings have a threefold purpose.

Personal – to cultivate the soul. What we are is much more important than the amount we do. God is supremely concerned with the development of Christ-like character. He purposes that every Christian should be “conformed to the image of his Son.” Even His Son could be brought to maturity in the human experience necessary for His office as High Priest only through suffering. There is no substitute. ***Where discipline is not applied, or goes unheeded, there is no harvest of personal holiness and likeness to Christ.***



It is recorded that when in His grace the Lord lavished kindness upon His people, the response was not gratitude but rebellion. “He made him to ride on the high places on the earth ... and he made him to suck honey out of the rock and oil out of the flinty rock; butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs ... with the fat of kidneys of wheat ... But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked” (Deut. 32:13-15).

Character is often unevenly developed. “Ephraim is a cake not turned,” said Hosea; a cake well done on one side and undercooked on the other. God is not content with a partial sanctification, with Christians who are overdeveloped in some respects but deficient in others. It is to correct this inequality that He applies the fires of testing to the underdeveloped side of our characters.

Relative – to provide food for others. “Bread corn is bruised” is the authorized Version rendering, and this is without doubt true, but it is not bruised in the threshing process or it would lose its value. The ASV is probably more accurate in its text. “Bread grain is ground; for he will not be always threshing it” (v. 28). The farmer does not needlessly crush the grain with the *tribulum*. ***Grain in the husk is useless for human consumption and the objective of threshing is to separate the grain from the husk, so that the grain may be ready for consumption.*** Once it is threshed, it goes through the bruising and grinding process.

*Bread corn is bruised! Shrink not, my soul,
From the plucking and the binding,
From the break and the grind;
The heart of God breaks, he doth make whole.
The corn unshelled and thrown aside
Cannot for man's sore need provide.*

Our Lord was “bruised for our iniquities” that he might become to us the Bread of Life to sustain us. “A disciple is not above his master, nor a servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord” (Matt. 10:24, 25). We should not wonder, then, that bruising is the price of a spiritual ministry.

Ultimate – to prepare for Heaven. This life is but the kindergarten of Heaven and God would have us master the elementary spiritual lesson that ***where there is no cross, there can be no crown. Where the yoke is not taken, the rest is not enjoyed.*** But we are slow scholars and the lesson has often to be learned over and over again.

“We cease to wonder so much at the care God takes of human character,” wrote Alexander Whyte, “and the cost He lays out upon it, when we think that ***it is the only work of His hands that shall last forever.*** It is fit,

surely, that the ephemeral should minister to the eternal, and time to eternity, and all else in this world that shall endure or survive this world; all else we possess or pursue shall fade and perish, our moral character shall alone survive. Riches, honour, possessions, pleasures of all kinds; death with one stroke of his desolate hand shall one day strip us bare to a winding sheet and a coffin of all the things we are so made to possess.”

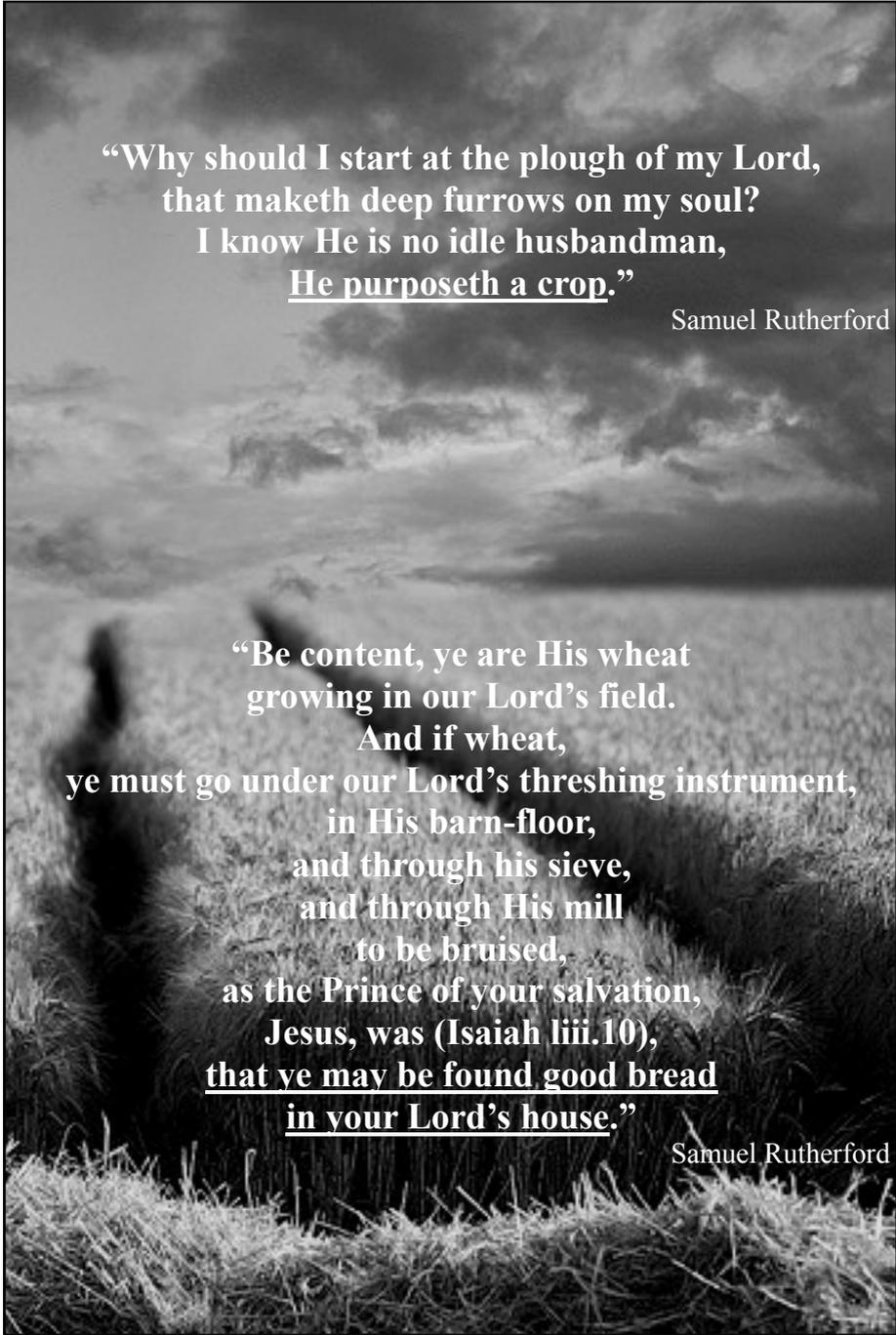
This ends the explanation by J. Oswald Sanders.

Whether we use the Personal Plow or the Preacher Plow or the Providential Plow, **to plow a STRAIGHT furrow** it is helpful to keep in mind both the near (the present) goal, as well as the distant (the future) goal. In “*Days of Heaven on Earth*,” A.B. Simpson put it as follows:

“If you have ever tried to plough a straight furrow in the country – we are sorry for the man who does not know how to plough and more sorry for the man who is too proud to want to know – you have found it necessary to **have two stakes in a line** and to drive your horses by these stakes. If you have only one stake before you, you will have no steadying point for your vision, and you can wiggle about without knowing it, making your furrows as crooked as a serpent’s coil. But if you have two stakes and ever keep them in line, you cannot deviate an inch from a straight line, and your furrow will be as an arrow speeding to its course.

This has been a great lesson to us in our Christian life. **If we would run a straight course, we find that we must have two stakes, the near and the distant. It is not enough to be living in the present, but it is a great and glorious thing to have a distant goal, a definite object, a clear purpose before us for which we are living, and unto which we are shaping our present.**”





**“Why should I start at the plough of my Lord,
that maketh deep furrows on my soul?
I know He is no idle husbandman,
He purposeth a crop.”**

Samuel Rutherford

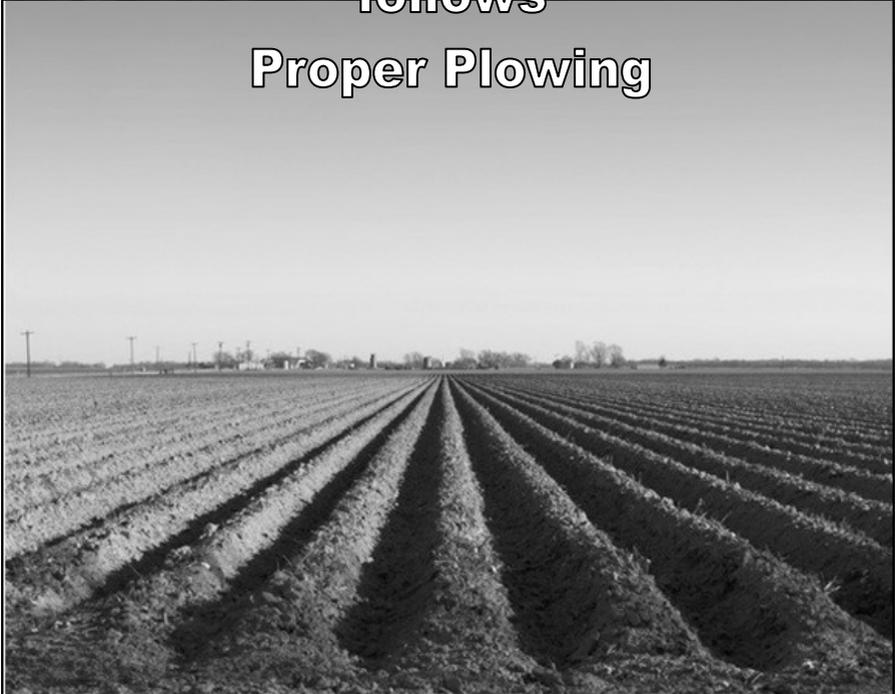
**“Be content, ye are His wheat
growing in our Lord’s field.
And if wheat,
ye must go under our Lord’s threshing instrument,
in His barn-floor,
and through his sieve,
and through His mill
to be bruised,
as the Prince of your salvation,
Jesus, was (Isaiah liii.10),
that ye may be found good bread
in your Lord’s house.”**

Samuel Rutherford



**Spiritual Sowing
follows**

Proper Plowing



Sowing Seed!

Every Christian is to be a sower of God's seed!

God wants us to sow the seed of His Word wherever we go!

Obviously, the fruit of that sowing depends much on the condition of the soil that receives the seed... That is why we first prepare the soil (by removing the boulders and by plowing it properly) *before* sowing the seed.

The Lord Jesus told a parable about the Sower, the Seed and the different Soils (Matthew 13). The following poem summarizes it:

The Sower

Ye sons of earth prepare the plough,
Break up your fallow ground;
The sower is gone forth to sow,
And scatter blessings round.

The seed that finds a stony soil
Shoots forth a hasty blade;
But ill repays the sower's toil,
Soon withered, scorched, and dead.

The thorny ground is sure to balk
All hopes of harvest there;
We find a tall and sickly stalk,
But not the fruitful ear.

The beaten path and highway side,
Receive the trust in vain;
The watchful birds the spoil divide,
And pick up all the grain.

But where the Lord of grace and power

Has blessed the happy field,
How plenteous is the golden store
The deep-wrought furrows yield!

**Father of mercies, we have need
Of thy preparing grace;
Let the same Hand that gives the seed,
Provide a fruitful place!**

God encourages us to **SOW the seed of His Word**, the seed of the Gospel, the seed of Christ. That is the only seed that can bring New Life, the Life of God in the soul of man...

Constance Barnett said: “An old Professor of Biology used to hold a little brown seed in his hand. ‘I know just exactly the composition of this seed. It has in it nitrogen, hydrogen and carbon. I know the exact proportions. I can make a seed that will look exactly like it. But if I plant my seed it will come to nought; its elements will be simply absorbed in the soil. ***If I plant the seed God made, it will become a plant, because it contains the mysterious principle which we call the ‘life principle’.***”

The Bible looks like other books. We cannot understand altogether its marvellous power. Planted in good ground it shows that it has the life principle in itself: it brings forth spiritual fruit.



To “**sow the seed**” of God’s Word (Luke 8:11) may mean that I:

- ◆ Speak the words of Jesus to people I meet (as He may lead).
- ◆ Write the words of Jesus to those I communicate with (via e-mail or sms or letter or other documents).
- ◆ Give the words of Jesus to others - as a tract or a pamphlet or a book, or best of all, a Bible.
- ◆ Share or preach the words of Jesus to those who are willing to hear it.
- ◆ Write the words of Jesus in cards, on wall posters or on websites.
- ◆ Sing the words of God to others...
- ◆ Act out the word of God in dramas or plays or skits...

In other words, “sow the seed” wherever I can, however I can, and whenever I can, with God’s help and blessing. In his poem “**Sow in the Morn Thy Seed**” James Montgomery (1771-1854) said:

**Sow in the morn thy seed,
At eve hold not thy hand;
To doubt and fear give thou no heed,
Broadcast it o’er the land.**

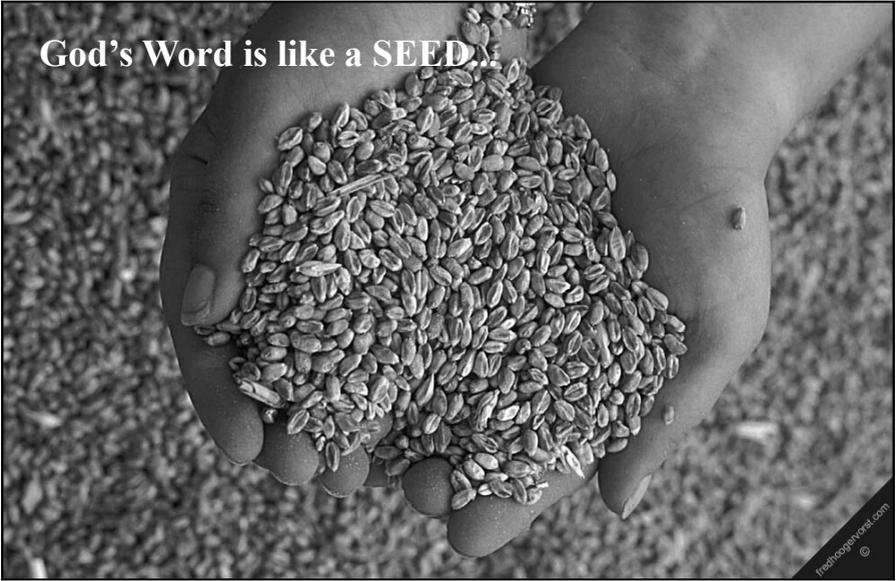
**Thou know’st not which may thrive,
The late or early sown;
God keeps His precious seed alive,
When and wherever thrown.**

And duly shall appear,
In living beauty, strength,
The tender blade, the stalk, the ear,
And the full corn at length.

Thou canst not toil in vain;
Cold, heat, and moist, and dry,
Shall foster and mature the grain
For garner in the sky.

Thence, when the glorious end,
The day of God is come,
The angels reapers shall descend,
And heav’n cry, “Harvest Home.”

God's Word is like a SEED



We read in [Isaiah 55:10-11](#), *“For as the rain comes down and the snow from heaven, and returns not thither, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, and gives seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”*

Referring to these words, Oswald Chambers, who was a blessed sower of God's precious seed, shared this truth:

Sowing Seed of Word

“...‘that it may give seed to the sower.’ **God’s word is as a seed.** The ‘seed-thought’ idea is one that preachers and evangelists need to remember. *We imagine we have to plough the field, sow the seed, reap the grain, bind it into sheaves, put it through the threshing machine, make the bread – all in one discourse. ‘For herein is the saying true, One sows, and another reaps’ (John 4:37) said our Lord. Let each one be true to the calling given him by God.* The truth is we don’t believe God can do His work without us. We are so anxious about the word, so anxious about the people who have accepted the word; we need not be, **if we**

have preached what is a word of God it is not our business to apply it, the Holy Spirit will apply it. Our duty is to sow the word, see that it is the word of God we preach, and not ‘peddle’ it with other things, and God says it will prosper in the thing whereto He sends it. In some

cases it will be a savour of life to life, in others a savour of death to death; but rest assured that no individual and no community is ever the same after listening to the word of God, it profoundly alters life. *The force and power of a word of God will work and work, and bring forth fruit after many days.* Hence the necessity of revising much of what we preach and what we say in meetings. God has not said that the relating of my experiences, of my insight into the truth, will not return to Him void; He says ‘My word shall not return to Me void.’ (Isaiah 55:11.) Every temptation to exalt the human, human experiences, human interests and blessings, will fall short; the only thing that prospers in God’s hands is His own word.



*Our duty
is to sow the
Word of God.
His Word
will NOT
return void!*

‘As the rain comes down from heaven, so shall My word be. Thank God for the sweet and radiant aspect of the falling of rain from heaven, after a time of drought it is almost impossible to describe its beauty; so when a word of God comes to a soul after a time of difficulty and perplexity, it is almost impossible to tell the ineffable sweetness of that word as it comes with the unction of the Holy Spirit.’

God’s Word is like the RAIN...



Steeped Seed

“They that Sow in Tears shall Reap in Joy.”

In “*Our Daily Homily, Psalms to Canticles,*” by F.B. Meyer, we read the following about this precious verse from Psalm 126:5...

“Some husbandmen steep their seed before they sow them. It is well when Christian workers steep their lessons and addresses with their prayers and tears. It is not enough to sow; we may do that lavishly and constantly, but we must add passion, emotion, tender pity, strong cryings and tears, if the second half of the text is to be fulfilled, and we reap in joy.

But what a promise is here! You have sown long and patiently among young or old, sometimes to the point of giving all up in despair; but to give up now would be to miss the harvest and guerdon of all your toils.

Be patient, persevere a little longer. God guarantees the harvest. He says, ‘You shall reap; you shall *doubtless* come again, bringing your sheaves.’ Even though you were to die, without reaping, yet in another world you would come again, bringing your sheaves.

We are all sowing tears – tears over our darling Absoloms, tears over our failures and mistakes, tears over our disappointed hopes. But **each tear overflowing from a consecrated soul is a seed-germ dropped into God’s keeping, and it shall have its reward.** He carefully gathers up our tears for His bottle. God is not unrighteous to forget. **He guards the buried seed, and stands sponsor for the harvest. No sigh, no tear, no prayer, inspired by the Spirit of God can positively be lost or unproductive. Like your Lord, you shall yet see of the travail of your soul, and be satisfied.**

*For while the tired wavelets, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.*



It was said that “at the time of the Nazi invasion of Poland, while people were fleeing, guns firing and shells bursting, a farmer was seen in his fields, busy sowing seed.”

‘How can you keep on working with war raging all around you?’ he was asked.

He replied, ‘I plough and I sow. If I don’t reap the harvest, another will. My granary may burn, but grain in the soil will be safe and grow.’

If we sow the incorruptible seed of God’s Word, we may be sure that His promise will be fulfilled: ‘My Word shall not return unto me void but shall accomplish that which I please and prosper in that where to I sent it.’ (Isa. 55:11)”

The Distribution of Literature

This precious Word-seeds of God can be sown through the distribution of literature (as was said already). This is one effective way *every* Christian can work for Christ in His harvest field (of the world)! In “*Sowing Gospel Seed*,” someone said:

**Oh, why not distribute some leaflets each day
To reach souls in darkness who’ve gone far astray?
They may find the Saviour, the True, Living Way.
Thou knowest not what seed shall prosper!**

To believers, the tracts may bring comfort and cheer,
Or rouse a seared conscience, or soothe needless fear;
Then scatter these messages both far and near.
Thou knowest not what seed shall prosper!

These small Gospel tracts you may easily secure,
They’ll bring blessings to you as you scatter them o’er.
They’ll bring blessing to others, for God’s Word is sure.
Thou knowest not what seed shall prosper!

In the same book we read:

“Any Christian may be a sower of Gospel seed.

A young man devoted each Lord’s day afternoon to distributing tracts in a public park. This he did for some weeks, but not seeing any visible results, **he became discouraged and stopped**. Some months later, he was walking in the same park, but not giving out any tracts, when a gentleman stopped him and said:

‘Are you the young man who used to give out Gospel tracts here?’

‘Yes, I am,’ he replied somewhat shamefacedly.

Where upon the man exclaimed, ‘I have been looking almost everywhere to find you. One of the Gospel tracts you gave me brought me to a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ as my own personal Saviour.’

The tract distributor can do the sowing but God gives the increase.

The American Tract Society publishes a little leaflet called, *Tracts and How to Use Them*, in which **ten rules for tract users** are given, as follows:

- Never distribute tracts without praying.
- Give tracts which are appropriate.
- Talk with your subject if possible.
- Always offer tracts with a smile.
- Don’t force tracts upon people.
- Use only attractive tracts.
- Keep your tracts in good condition.
- Use only positive, constructive tracts.
- Think up new ways to use tracts.
- Begin now to use a tract a day.”

Leonard Sheldrake related the following about Columbus and the **“Sowing of Seed”**:

“It is said of Columbus that he carried the seed of flowers and scattered them around wherever his vessel anchored. This simple act of the explorer may have seemed insignificant to his associates but it left for Co-

lumbus a perpetual monument of beautiful flowers of Spain, blooming hundreds of years after his death in distant lands. Seed has the capacity to reproduce itself and multiply from year to year and so the reward of the sower abides perpetually. The labour of the builder may crumble and perish but the sower of good seed has an everlasting compensation.

Some years ago it was necessary to find traces of an old family who once were influential in a certain community. An investigator went to the district to try to find some information about the family. He searched the records but could find no trace of them whatever. He visited the supposed site of their ancient mansion. Not a stone remained to tell its place. Disappointed in these attempts he accosted an aged man: 'Do you know anything of the Findernes?'

'Findernes!' was the reply, 'We have no Findernes here, but we have Findernes flowers.'

There was a clue. The old man led the way to a field where there were traces of an ancient terrace.

'There,' said he, pointing to a bank of garden flowers growing wild, 'there are Findernes flowers, brought by Sir Geoffrey Findernes from the Holy Land, and do what we will they will never die.'

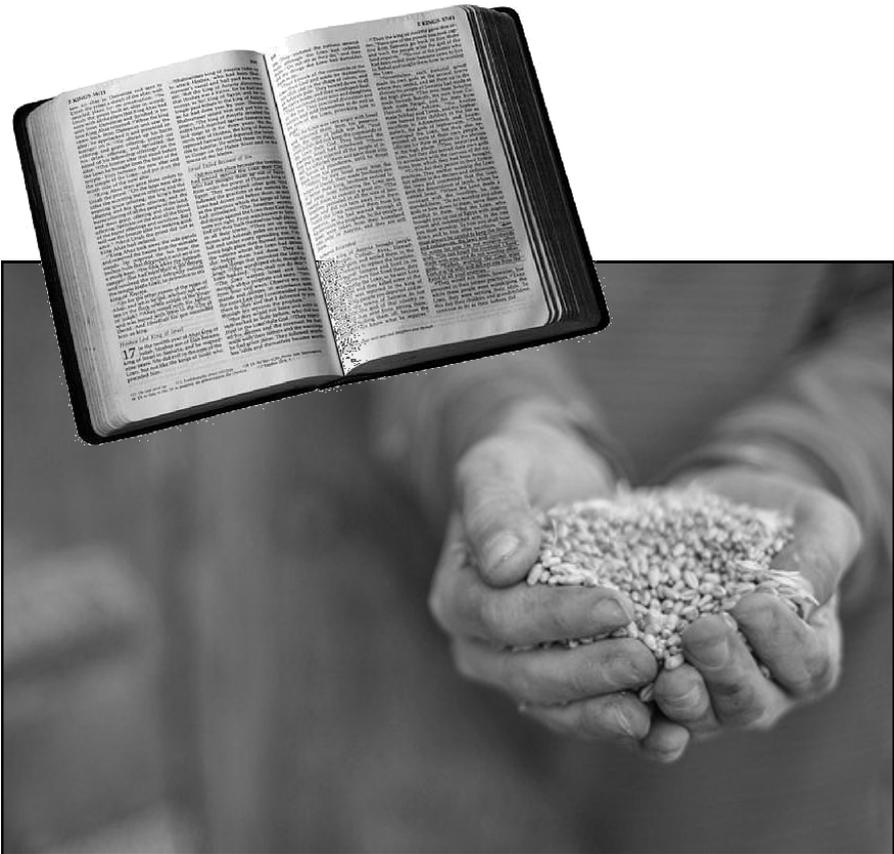
Sir Geoffrey Findernes left a more lasting memorial than that written in the church records of the village, and more lasting than the walls of the stately mansion which bore his name. He sowed seed from Palestine around his dwelling and when everything else of him was forgotten, the flowers of the Holy Land continued to grow and bloom, an undying monument to his memory.

No work is more noble or fraught with more blessed possibilities than the work of sowing the seed of the gospel. If you prayerfully scatter gospel tracts and preach Christ to others by lip and deed you will leave behind you, or carry with you, a more glorious reward than those who make millions or shape the destinies of nations. It is what you sow, not what you save that will leave the flowers of Palestine behind you and bless your memory.

The Lord Jesus called Himself a sower. He left no buildings of institutions behind Him to perpetuate His name. He did not organize His disciples into a fraternity. He merely sowed. He sowed the Word of God in the hearts of men and sowed Himself in the earth (John 12:24). He went forth in sorrow, 'bearing precious seed'. He wept, He sighed, He was weary with His journey. It was His sowing time. But what a harvest from that sowing! (John 12:24)"

To plant the seed of the Word of God is the best! As someone said:

***If you plant for a year, plant grain.
If you plant for ten years, plant trees.
If you plant for 100 years, plant men.
If you plant for Eternity, plant the Word.***





W. Phillip Keller (1920-2001) relates a practical experience of “Sowing the Seed” in his book “*Outdoor Moments with God.*” He makes it clear that the picture of physically sowing (and planting) seed is comparable to the spiritual sowing (and planting) of God’s seed in the lives of precious people...

Planting Peas

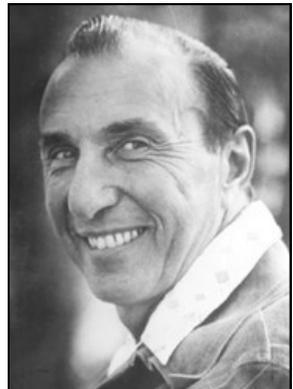
“The forecast for the day’s weather was rain and snow. But by breakfast golden sunshine streamed into our dining nook and all the outdoors pulsed with pure light.

It was a perfect morning to plant peas. **The seed had been soaked all night.** So the peas were plump and round, ready for the ground.

With painstaking care I prepared the smooth trenches where the seed would be sown in love and calm assurance. The soil was dark with humus, soft to the touch, and fragrant with the delicate aroma of fresh turned earth.

In fact there had never, ever been a garden in that particular spot before. It was a steep slope where only grass and wild weeds grew before. Now it was to be a garden.

I was actually working with a bit of virgin soil. Just the thought was a challenge of good cheer.



Phillip Keller

This ground was rich and friable, nourished with the decayed grass and leaves from nearby trees. There was a sweet solace in feeling its rich texture beneath my finger tips. It would become a suitable seed bed for the peas. There would be a bountiful crop in this bit of soil to nourish us well in the months to come.

Planting peas was not just a profound pleasure.

Planting peas was the step to deep satisfaction of soul.

Planting peas, done in calm confidence would give a crop.

Softly, surely, with a contented melody within, I covered the seed with special care. I did not wish to bruise or damage a single pea, each so plump and turgid, ready and eager to burst into a new plant growth.

There is always a bit of mystery, a gentle miracle in planting any seed. Our Master put it in these plain words.

“Unless a grain of wheat (or any seed) falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone, but if it dies (gives up its life), it bears much fruit.” (John 12:24)

So it is too for any person prepared to give up their life for others.

When the planting was done, I stood up tall and straight, stretching my back to the unfolding warmth of the sun. Its rays would soon warm the fresh turned soil. And under the quiet cares of April showers a glowing crop of peas would soon push up from this bit of barren ground.

Little did I ever dream that before this day was done there would come a couple of chances to plant a bit of my own life in the soft soil of some other souls. I had just put away the garden tools, washed my soiled hands, and sat down for a short rest when there was a knock at the door. A young man accompanied by a dear little girl had come distributing Jehovah’s Witness literature. I urged Ursula to invite them in. *Quietly but earnestly I was glad to share with them the joyous good news of Christ’s wondrous love and mercy to us.* They listened eagerly. The interlude was as satisfying as planting peas had been. We were caught up together in a joyous discussion of our Saviour’s deep desire to draw us to Himself, to deliver us from death, and to share His very life with us.

Ursula served them a sparkling cool drink of apple juice, along with cookies. They left us glad eyed, all smiles, promising to come back.

The day went on and supper was just ready to be served. A car pulled into the drive. There were four people, two old friends, along with a young couple from across the mountains. Supper was set aside. They were welcomed in and also served refreshments of fresh home-baked bread and sweet apple juice.

The young man and woman were also searching, **prepared souls to know more of Christ. Happily, eagerly, we let the miracle seed of our Father's grace and compassion fall into the friable soil of their souls. It was sown in good cheer, in laughter, in love, and in formidable faith. There would be a harvest here as well!**

This process was as sure as planting peas. All in one day!"





The Parable of the Sower

"And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable: a sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."—Luke 8:4-8.

The following sermon was preached by Charles Spurgeon. We'll look at some parts of that message:

"In our country, when a sower goes forth to his work, he generally enters into an enclosed field, and scatters the seed from his basket along every

ridge and furrow; but in the East, the corn-growing country, hard by a small town, is usually an open area. It is divided into different properties, but there are no visible divisions, except the ancient landmarks, or perhaps ridges of stones. Through these open lands there are footpaths, the most frequented being called the highways....

The preacher of the gospel is like the sower. He does not make his seed; it is given him by his divine Master. No man could create the smallest grain that ever grew upon the earth, much less the celestial seed of eternal life. **The minister goes to his Master in secret, and asks him to teach him his gospel, and thus he fills his basket with the good seed of the kingdom. He then goes forth in his Master's name and scatters precious truth.** If he knew where the best soil was to be found, perhaps he might limit himself to that which had been prepared by the plough of conviction; but **not knowing men's hearts, it is his business to preach the gospel to every creature**—to throw a handful on the hardened heart, and another on the mind which is overgrown with the cares and pleasures of the world. **He has to leave the seed in the care of the Lord who gave it to him, for he is not responsible for the harvest, he is only accountable for the care and industry with which he does his work.** If no single ear should ever make glad the reaper, the sower will be rewarded by His Master if he had planted the right seed with careful hand. ...Our duty is not measured by the character of our hearers, but by the command of our God. We are bound to preach the gospel, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear. It is ours to sow beside all waters. Let men's hearts be what they may the minister must preach the gospel to them; he must sow the seed on the rock as well as in the furrow, on the highway as well as in the ploughed field.

I shall now address myself to **the four classes of hearers** mentioned in our Lord's parable. We have, first of all, those who are represented by the **way-side**, those who are "hearers only"; then those represented by the **stony-ground**; these are transiently impressed, but the word produces no lasting fruit; then, **those among thorns**, on whom a good impression is produced, but the cares of this life, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the pleasures of the world choke the seed; and lastly, that small class—God be pleased to multiply it exceedingly—that small class of **good-ground** hearers, in whom the Word brings forth abundant fruit.



I. First of all, I address myself to those hearts which are like the WAY -SIDE—"Some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it." ...Would to God we could hope that our words would tarry with you, but we cannot hope it, for the soil of your heart is so hard beaten by continual traffic, that there is no hope of the seed finding a living root-hold. Satan is constantly passing over your heart with his company of blasphemies, lusts, lies, and vanities. The chariots of pride roll along it, and the feet of greedy mammon tread it till it is hard as adamant. Alas! For the good seed, it finds not a moment's respite; crowds pass and repass; in fact, your soul is an exchange, across which continually hurry the busy feet of those who make merchandise of the souls of men. You are buying and selling, but you little think that you are selling the truth, and that you are buying your soul's destruction. You have no time, you say, to think of religion. No, the road of your heart is such a crowded thoroughfare, that there is no room for the wheat to spring up...

...Oh! My hearers, your case is one that might make an angel weep! How sad to have the sun of the gospel shining on your faces, and yet to have blind eyes that never see the light. The music of heaven is lost upon

you, for you have no ears to hear. You can catch the turn of a phrase, you can appreciate the poetry of an illustration, but the hidden meaning, the divine life you do not perceive. You sit at the marriage-feast, but you eat not of the dainties; the bells of heaven ring with joy over ransomed spirits, but you live unransomed, without God, and without Christ. *Though we plead with you, and pray for you, and weep over you, you still remain as hardened, as careless, and as thoughtless as ever you were. May God have mercy on you, and break up your hard hearts, that his word may abide in you.*

We have not, however, completed the picture. The passage tells us that the fowls of the air devoured the seed. ...Plenty of evil ones are ready to take away the gospel from the heart. *The devil himself, that prince of the air, is eager at any time to snatch away a good thought. And then the devil is not alone—he has legions of helpers.* He can set a man's wife, children, friends, enemies, customers, or creditors, to eat up the good seed, and they will do it effectually. Oh, sorrow upon sorrow, that heavenly seed should become devil's meat; that God's corn should feed foul birds!

O my hearers, if you have heard the gospel from your youth, what wagon-loads of sermons have been wasted on you! ...What shall I do for you? Shall I stand here and rain tears upon this hard highway? Alas! My tears will not break it up; it is trodden too hard for that. Shall I bring the gospel plough? Alas! The ploughshare will not enter ground so solid. What shall we do? O God, thou knowest how to melt the hardest heart with the precious blood of Jesus. Do it now, we beseech thee, and thus magnify thy grace, by causing the good seed to live, and to produce a heavenly harvest.

II. I shall now turn to the second class of hearers:—"And some fell upon a ROCK; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture." You can easily picture to yourselves that piece of rock in the midst of the field thinly veiled with soil; and of course the seed falls there as it does everywhere else. It springs up, it hastens to grow, it withers, it dies. None but those who love the souls of men can tell what hopes, what joys, and what bitter disappointments these stony places have caused us. We have a class of hearers whose hearts are hard, and yet they are apparently the softest and most impressible of men. While other men see nothing in the sermon, these men weep. Whether you preach the



Rocky field...

terrors of the law or the love of Calvary, they are alike stirred in their souls, and the liveliest impressions are apparently produced. Such may be listening now. They have resolved, but they have procrastinated. ...Have we not thousands of hearers who receive the word with joy? They have no deep convictions, but they leap into Christ on a sudden, and profess an instantaneous faith in him, and that faith has all the appearance of being genuine. When we look at it, the seed has really sprouted. There is a kind of life in it, there is apparently a green blade. We thank God that a sinner is brought back, a soul is born to God. But our joy is premature: they sprang up on a sudden, and received the word with joy, because they had no depth of earth, and the self-same cause which hastened their reception of the seed also causes them, when the sun is risen with his fervent heat, to wither away. ...Everything has become new to them. And all this is on a sudden. We enquire when the good work began. We find it began when it ended, that is to say, **there was no previous work, no ploughing of the soil, but on a sudden they sprang from death to life, as if a field should be covered with wheat by magic.** Perhaps we receive them into

the church; but in a week or two they are not so regular as they used to be. We gently reprove them, and they explain that they meet with such opposition in religion, that they are obliged to yield a little. Another month and we lose them altogether. The reason is that they have been laughed at or exposed to a little opposition, and they have gone back. And what, think you, are the feelings of the minister? He is like the husbandman (farmer), who sees his field all green and flourishing, but at night a frost nips every shoot, and his hoped-for gains are gone. The minister goes to his chamber, and casts himself on his face before God, and cries, "I have been deceived; my converts are fickle, their religion has withered as the green herb."...

III. I shall briefly treat of the third class, and may the Spirit of God assist me to deal faithfully with you. "**And some fell among THORNS**; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it." Now, this was good soil. The two first characters were bad: the wayside was not the proper place, the rock was not a congenial situation for the growth of any plant; but this is good soil, for it grows thorns. Wherever a thistle will spring up and flourish, there would wheat flourish too. This was fat, fertile soil; it was no marvel therefore that the husbandman dealt largely there, and threw handful after handful upon that corner of the field. See how happy he is when in a month or two he visits the spot. The seed has sprung up. True, there's a suspicious little plant down there of about the same size as the wheat. "Oh!" he thinks, "that's not much, the corn will out-grow that. When it is stronger it will choke these few thistles that have unfortunately mixed with it." *Ay, Mr. Husbandman, you do not understand the force of evil, or you would not thus dream! He comes again, and the seed has grown, there is even the corn in the ear; but the thistles, the thorns, and the briars have become intertwined with one another, and the poor wheat can hardly get a ray of sunshine.* It is so choked with thorns every way, that it looks quite yellow: the plant is starved. Still it perseveres in growing, and it does seem as if it would bring forth a little fruit. Alas, it never comes to anything. With it the reaper never fills his arm.

We have this class very largely among us. These hear the word and understand what they hear. They take the truth home; they think it over; they even go the length of making a profession of religion. The wheat seems to spring and ear; it will soon come to perfection. Be in no hurry, these men and women have a great deal to see after; they have the cares of a large



concern; their establishment employs so many hundred hands; do not be deceived as to their godliness—they have no time for it. ...Now they have too much instead of too little, for they have riches, and they are too wealthy to be gracious. "But," says one, "they might spend their riches for God." Certainly they might, but they do not, for riches are deceitful. They have to entertain much company, and chime in with the world, and so Christ and his church are left in the lurch.

Yes, but they begin to spend their riches, and they have surely got over that difficulty, for they give largely to the cause of Christ, and they are munificent in charity; the little blade will grow, will it not? No, for now behold the thorns of pleasure. Their liberality to others involves liberality to themselves; their pleasures, amusements, and vanities choke the wheat of true religion: the good grains of gospel truth cannot grow because they have to attend that musical party, that ball, and that soiree, and so they cannot think of the things of God. I know several specimens of this class. I knew one, high in court circles, who has confessed to me that he wished he were poor, for then he might enter the kingdom of heaven. He has said to me, "Ah! Sir, these politics, these politics, I wish I were rid of them, they are eating the life out of my heart; I cannot serve God as I would." I

know of another, overloaded with riches, who has said to me, "Ah! Sir, it is an awful thing to be rich; one cannot keep close to the Saviour with all this earth about him."

Ah! My dear readers, I will not ask for you that God may lay you on a bed of sickness, that he may strip you of all your wealth, and bring you to beggary; but, oh, if he were to do it, and you were to save your souls, it would be the best bargain you could ever make. If those mighty ones who now complain that the thorns choke the seed could give up all their riches and pleasures, if they that fare sumptuously every day could take the place of Lazarus at the gate, it were a happy change for them if their souls might be saved. A man may be honourable and rich, and yet go to heaven; but it will be hard work, for "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." God does make some rich men enter the kingdom of heaven, but hard is their struggle. Steady, young man, steady! Hurry not to climb to wealth! It is a place where many heads are turned. Do not ask God to make you popular; they that have popularity are wearied by it. ***Cry with Agur—"Give me neither poverty nor riches." God give me to tread the golden mean, and may I ever have in my heart that good seed, which shall bring forth fruit a hundredfold to his own glory.***

IV. I now close with the last character, namely, **the GOOD GROUND.** **Of the good soil,** as you will mark, we have but one in four. Will one in four of our hearers, with well-prepared heart, receive the Word?

The ground is described as "good": not that it was good by nature, but it had been made good by grace. God had ploughed it; he had stirred it up with the plough of conviction, and there it lay in ridge and furrow as it should lie. When the gospel was preached, the heart received it, for the man said, "That is just the blessing I want. Mercy is what a needy sinner requires." So that ***the preaching of the gospel was THE thing to give comfort to this disturbed and ploughed soil. Down fell the seed to take good root. In some cases it produced fervency of love, largeness of heart, devotedness of purpose of a noble kind, like seed which produces a hundredfold. The man became a mighty servant for God, he spent himself and was spent. He took his place in the vanguard of Christ's army, stood in the hottest of the battle, and did deeds of daring which few could accomplish—the seed produced a hundredfold.*** It fell into an-



other heart of like character;—the man could not do the most, but still he did much. *He gave himself to God, and in his business he had a word to say for his Lord; in his daily walk he quietly adorned the doctrine of God his Saviour*,—he brought forth sixty-fold. Then it fell on another, whose abilities and talents were but small; *he could not be a star, but he would be a glow-worm*; he could not do as the greatest, but he was content to do something, however humble. The seed had brought forth in him tenfold, perhaps twentyfold. How many are there of this sort here? *Is there one who prays within himself, "God be merciful to me a sinner"? The seed has fallen in the right spot. Soul, thy prayer shall be heard. God never sets a man longing for mercy without intending to give it.* Does another whisper, "Oh that I might be saved"? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou, even thou, shalt be saved. Hast thou been the chief of sinners? Trust Christ, and thy enormous sins shall vanish as the mill-stone sinks beneath the flood. Is there no one here that will trust the Saviour? Can it be possible that the Spirit is entirely absent? That he is not moving in one soul? Not begetting life in one spirit? We will pray that he may now descend, that the word may not be in vain."

This sermon by Charles Spurgeon taught us so beautifully about the Great Sower (the Lord Jesus Christ), the Good Seed (of God's Word), the Good Soil, as well as the Bad Soil...

We'll now look at another sermon by Spurgeon that helps us to see what is "the Principal Wheat", the MAIN THING we need to focus on sowing and cultivating...



The Principal Wheat

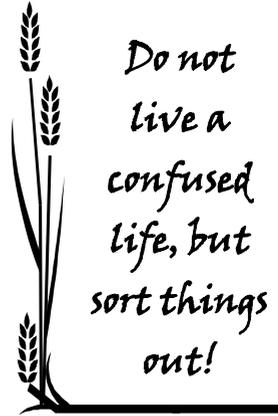
A sermon by Charles Spurgeon

"The principal wheat."—Isaiah 28:25.

The prophet mentions it as a matter of wisdom on the part of the husbandman (the farmer), that **HE KNOWS WHAT IS THE PRINCIPAL THING TO CULTIVATE, and makes it his principal care.** The text, with the connection, runs thus,—"*Does not the husbandman cast in the principal wheat?*" He does not go to the granary and take out wheat, and cummin, and barley, and rye, and fling these about right and left, but he estimates the value of each grain, and arranges them in his mind accordingly. He does not think that cummin, and carroway, which he merely grows to give a flavour to his meal, are of half such importance as his bread-corn; and, though rye and barley have their values, yet he does not reckon that even these are equal to what he calls "the principal wheat." **He is a man of discretion, he arranges things; he places the most important crop in the front rank, and spends upon it the most care.**

Here let us learn a lesson. Do keep things distinct in your minds—not

huddled and muddled by a careless thoughtlessness. Do not live a confused life, without care and discretion, running all things into one; but sort things out, and divide and distinguish between the precious and the vile. See what this is worth, and what the other is worth, and set your matters in rank and order, making some of them principal, and others of them inferior. I suggest to you young people especially that, in starting life, you say to yourselves, "What shall we live for? There is a principal thing for which we ought to live, what shall it be?" Have you turned over that ques-



tion, or have you gone at it hit or miss? What are you living for? What is your principal aim? ...Shall coin be your principal corn? Or will you choose a life of pleasure—"A short life and a merry one," as so many fools have said to their great sorrow? Is it in dissipation that your life is to be spent? Are thistles to be your principal crop? ...Search and see what is worthy of being the principal object in life; and, when you have found it out, then beseech the Holy Spirit to help you to choose that ONE THING, and to give all your powers and faculties to the cultivation of it. The farmer, who finds that wheat ought to be his principal crop, makes it so, and lays himself out with that end in view: learn from this to have a main object, and to give your whole mind to it.

This farmer was wise, because he counted that to be principal which was the most needful. His family could do without cummin, which was but a flavouring. Perhaps the mistress might complain, or the cook might grumble, but that did not signify so much as it would do if the children cried for bread. They certainly must have wheat, for bread is the staff of life. It is bread that strengtheneth man's heart, and therefore the farmer must grow wheat if he does not grow anything else. *That which is necessary he regarded as the principal thing. Is not this common sense?* If we were wisely to sit down and estimate, should we not say, "To be forgiven my sins, TO BE RIGHT WITH GOD, to be holy, to be fit to live eternally in heaven, is the greatest, the most needful thing for me, and therefore I will make it the principal object of my pursuit." A creature cannot be satisfied unless he is answering the end for which he is created; and the end of every intelligent creature is first, TO GLORIFY GOD,

and next, TO ENJOY GOD. What a bliss it must be to enjoy God himself for ever and ever. Other things may be desirable, but this thing is needful.

A competence of income, a measure of esteem among men, a degree of health—all these are the flavouring of life, but to be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation is life itself. Jesus Christ is the bread by which our soul's best life is sustained. Oh, that we were all wise enough to feel that **TO BE ONE WITH CHRIST is the one thing needful; that TO BE AT PEACE WITH GOD is the principal thing; that to be brought into har-**

mony with the Most High is the true music of our being. Other herbs may take their place in due order, but grace is the principal wheat, and we must cultivate it.



This farmer was wise, because he made that to be the principal thing which was the most fit to be so.

Of course, barley is useful as food, for nations have lived on barley bread, and lived healthily too; and rye has been the nutriment of millions: neither have they starved on oats, and other grains. Still, give me a piece of wheaten bread, for it is the best staff for life's journey. This farmer knew that wheat was the most fitting food for man, and so he did not put the inferior grain, which might act as a substitute, into the prominent place; but he gave his wheat the preference. He did not say, "the principal barley," or "the principal rye," much less "the principal cummin," or "the principal fitches," but "the principal wheat."

And what is there, brethren, that is so fit for the heart, the mind, the soul of man, as to know God and his Christ. Other mental foods, such as the fruits of knowledge, and the dainties of science, excellent though they may be—are inferior nutriment and unsuitable to build up the inner manhood. *In my God and my Saviour, I find my heaven and my all.* My soul sits down to a crumb of truth about Jesus, and finds great satisfaction in living upon it. The more we can know God, and enjoy God, and become like to God, and the more Christ is our daily bread, the more do we perceive the fitness of all this to our new-born natures. O beloved, make that to be your principal object which is the fittest pursuit of an immortal mind.

*"Religion is the chief concern
Of mortals here below;
May I its great importance learn,
Its sovereign virtue know!"*

*"More needful this than glittering wealth,
Or aught the world bestows;
Not reputation, food, or health,
Can give us such repose."*

Moreover, **this farmer was wise, because he made that the principal thing which was the most profitable.** Under certain circumstances, in our own country, wheat is not the most profitable thing which a man can grow; but, ordinarily, it is the best crop that the earth yields, and therefore the text speaks of "the principal wheat." Our grandfathers used to rely upon the wheat stack to pay their rent. They looked to their corn as the arm of their strength; and though it is not so now, it always was so of old, and perhaps it may yet be so again. Anyhow, the figure holds good with regard to true religion. That is the most profitable thing. I am told that rich men find it very hard to get hold of anything which yields five per cent



The Principal Wheat *to cultivate in my field,
the Principal Thing to cultivate in my life is:*

- ◆ To be right with God
- ◆ To glorify God
- ◆ To enjoy God
- ◆ To be one with Christ
- ◆ To know God and to make Him known!



nowadays; but *this blessed fear of the Lord is an extraordinarily profitable investment, for it does not yield a hundred per cent or a thousand per cent, but a man begins with nothing and all things become his by faith.* Being freely discharged of our sins, we are by overflowing grace greatly enriched, so that we number among our possessions heaven itself, Christ himself, God himself. All things are ours. *Oh, what a blessed crop to sow! What a harvest comes of it! Godliness is profitable for the life that now is, and for that which is to come. Godliness is a blessing to a man's body, it keeps him from drunkenness and vice; and it is a blessing to his soul, it makes him sweet and pure. It is a blessing to him every way. If I had to die like a dog, I would like to live like a Christian.* If there were no hereafter, yet still, for comfort and for joy, give me the life of one who strives to live like Christ. There is a practical everyday truth in the verse—

*"'Tis religion that can give
Sweetest pleasures while we live;
'Tis religion must supply
Solid comfort when we die."*

Only that religion must not be of the common sort; it must have for its root a hearty faith in Jesus Christ. See ye to it. Our religion must be either everything or nothing, either first or nowhere. Make it "the principal wheat," and it will richly repay you.

II. Secondly, the husbandman (the farmer) is a lesson to us because **HE GIVES THIS PRINCIPAL THING THE PRINCIPAL PLACE.** I find that the Hebrew is rendered by some eminent scholars, "*He puts the wheat into the principal place.*" That little handful of cummin for the wife to flavour the cakes with he grows in a corner; ...The barley he sets in its plot, and the rye in its acre; but if there is a good bit of rich soil—the best he has—he appropriates it to the principal wheat. **He gives his choicest fields to that which is to be the main means of his living.**

Now, here is a lesson for you and for me. **Let us give to true godliness our principal powers and abilities. Let us give to the things of God our best and most intense thought.** I pray you, do not take religion at second hand from what I tell you, or from what somebody else tells you;

but think it over. **Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the word of God. The thoughtful Christian is the growing Christian. Remember, the service of God deserves our first consideration and endeavour. We are poor things at our prime, but we ought to give the Lord nothing short of our best.**

God would not have us serve him heedlessly, but he would have us use all the brain and intellect and mind that we have in studying and practising his word. "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace." "Meditate upon these things. Give thyself wholly to them." If your mind is more clear and

active at one time than at another, then sow the principal wheat. If you feel more fresh and more inclined to think at one time of the day than at another, let your mind then go towards the best things.

Be sure, also, to **yield to this subject your most earnest love.** *The best field in the little estate of manhood is not the head, but the heart; sow the principal wheat there. Oh, to have true religion in the heart; to love what we know—intensely to love it; to hold it fast as with the grip of life and death—never to let it go!* The Lord says, "My son, give me thy heart," and he will not be contented with anything less than our heart. Oh, when your zeal is most burning, and your love is most fervent, let the warmth and the fervency all go towards the Lord your God, and to the service of him who has redeemed you with his precious blood. Let the principal wheat have the principal part of your nature. Towards God and his Christ also turn your most fervent desires. When you enlarge your desire, desire Christ; when you become ambitious let your ambition be all for God. Let your hunger and your thirst be after righteousness. Let your aspirations and your longings be all towards holiness, and the things that shall make you like to Christ. Give to this principal wheat your principal desires.

Then **let the Lord have the attentive respect of your life.** Let the principal wheat be sown in every action. If we are truly Christians we must be as much Christians outside the church as in it. We shall try to make our eating and our drinking, and everything we do, tend to the glory of God. Draw no line between the secular and the religious part of your conduct,



*Let us give
to the things
of God
our best
and most
intense
thought...*

but let the secular be made religious by a devout desire to glorify God in the one as much as in the other. *Let us worship God in the commonest duties of life, even as they do who stand before his throne.* So it ought to be. Let us sow the principal wheat in all the fields of our conversation, in business, in the family, among our friends, and with our children. May we each one feel, "For me to live is Christ. I cannot live without Christ, or for anything but Christ." Let your whole nature yield itself to Jesus, and to none else.

We should give to this principal wheat our most earnest labours. We should spend ourselves for the spread of the gospel. A Christian man ought to lay himself out to serve Jesus. I hate to see a professing man zealous in politics and lukewarm in devotion; all on fire at a parish vestry, and chill as winter when he comes to a prayer-meeting. Some fly like eagles when they are serving the world, but they have a broken wing in the service of God. This should not be. If anything could rouse us up, and make the lion within us roar in his strength, it should be when we confront the foes of Jesus or fight in his cause. Our Lord's service is the principal wheat, let us labour most in connection with it.

This, I think, should also take possession of us so as to lead to our greatest sacrifices. *The love of Christ ought to be so strong as to swallow up self, and make sacrifice our daily joy.* For Christ's name's sake we should be willing to endure poverty, reproach, slander, exile, death. Nothing should be dear to a Christian in comparison with Christ. Now, I will put it to you whether it is so or no. Is the love of Jesus the principal wheat with us? Are we giving our religion the chief place or not? I am afraid some people treat religion as certain gentlemen treat an off-hand farm; they put a bailiff into it, and only give an eye to it now and then. Their minister is the bailiff, and they expect him to see to it for them. These off-hand farms are losing concerns. Look at these half-and-half brethren. They have religion? Certainly. But they are like the man of whom the child spoke at the Sunday-school. "Is your father a Christian?" said the



*Our Lord's
service is the
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let us labour
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with it.*

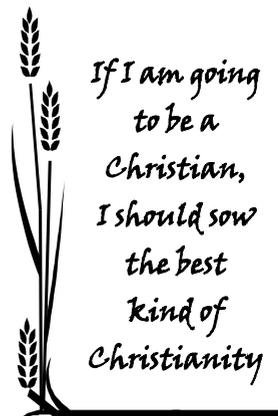
teacher. "Yes," said the child, "but he has not worked much at it lately." I could point out several of this sort, who are sowing their wheat very sparingly, and choosing the most barren patch to sow it in. They profess to be Christians, but religion is a tenth-rate article on their farm. Some have a large acreage for the world, and a poor little plot for Christ. They are growers of worldly pleasure and self-indulgence, and they sow a little religion by the roadside for appearance sake. This will not do. God will not thus be mocked. If we despise him and his truth we shall be lightly esteemed. *O come let us give our principal time, talent, thought, effort to that which is the chief concern of immortal spirits. May we imitate the husbandman who gives the principal wheat the principal place in his farm.*

III. Let us learn a third lesson. THE HUSBANDMAN SELECTS THE PRINCIPAL SEED-CORN WHEN HE IS SOWING HIS WHEAT.

When a farmer is setting aside wheat for sowing, he does not choose the tail corn and the worst of his produce, but if he is a sensible man he likes to sow the best wheat in the world. Many farmers search the country round for a good sample of wheat for sowing, for they do not expect to get a good harvest out of bad seed. The husbandman is taught of God to put into the ground "the principal wheat." Let me learn that if I am going to sow to the Lord and to be a Christian, I should sow the best kind of Christianity.

I should try to do this, first, by believing the weightiest doctrines. I would believe not this "ism," nor that, but the unadulterated truth which Jesus taught; for a holy character will only grow by the Spirit of God out of true doctrine. ...I shall mainly preach the doctrine of the precious blood and the glorious truths of substitution and atonement. These doctrines are the principal wheat, and therefore these shall have my choice.

Next to that, we ought to sow the noblest examples. Many men are dwarfed because they choose a bad model to start with. They imitate dear old Mr. So-and-so till they grow wonderfully like him with the best of him left out. A minister happens to be of a gloomy turn of mind,



and he preaches the deep experience of the children of God, and in consequence a band of good people think it their duty to be melancholy. Why need they fall into a ditch because their leader has splashed himself? We should never copy any man's infirmities. ...

We should sow the best wheat by seeing that we have the purest spirit. Alas! How soon do spirits become soiled by self or pride, or dependency or sloth, or some earthly taint. But what a grand thing it is to live the spirit of Christ. May we be humble, lowly, bold, self-sacrificing, pure, chaste, and holy.

And, then, there is one more mode of sowing selected seed. **We should endeavour to live in the closest communion with God.** A dear brother prayed just now that we might have as much grace as we were capable of receiving, and that God would bring us into such a state that we might not hinder him in anything which he willed to do by us. This is a good prayer. It should be our desire to rise to the highest form of spiritual life. If you sow this principal wheat, get the best sort of it. There is a spirit and a spirit; and there are doctrines and doctrines; the best is the best for you. O young men, if you mean to have piety, go in for it thoroughly. Do not sneak through the world as if you were ashamed of your Lord. If you are Christ's show your colours. Rally to his banner, gather to his trumpet call, and then stand up, stand up for Jesus. If there is any manhood in you, this great cause calls for it all; exhibit it, and may the Spirit of God help you so to do.

IV. Fourthly, **THE HUSBANDMAN GROWS THE PRINCIPAL WHEAT WITH THE PRINCIPAL CARE.** Some critics say that the proper translation is that the husbandman **plants his wheat in rows.** It is said that the large crops in Palestine in olden time were due to the fact that they planted the wheat. They set it in lines, so that it was not checked or suffocated by its being too thick in one place, neither was there any fear of its being too thin in another. The wheat was planted, and then streams of water were turned by the foot to each particular plant. No wonder, therefore, that the land brought forth abundantly.

We should give our principal care to the principal thing. Our godliness should be carried out with discretion and care. Brethren, are we careful enough as to our religious walk? Have you ever searched to the bottom of

your profession? Why do you happen to be members of a certain church? Your mother was so. Well, there is some good in that reason, but not enough to justify you in the sight of God. I pray you judge your standing. If any Christian minister is afraid to urge you to this duty I stand in doubt of him. I am not at all afraid. I beg you to examine all that I teach you, for I would not like to be responsible for another man's creed. Like the Bereans, search and see whether these things be according to Scripture or not. One of the greatest blessings that could come upon the church would be a searching spirit which would



*You serve a
precise God,
therefore
serve Him
precisely!*

refer everything to the Holy Scriptures. If they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them. **Do your service to God as carefully as the eastern farmer planted his wheat, when he set it in rows with great orderliness and exactness. You serve a precise God, therefore serve him precisely.** He is a jealous God, therefore be jealous of the least taint of error or will-worship.

Take care, also, that you water every part of your religion, as the farmer watered each plant. Pray for grace from on high that you may never be parched and dried up. Perform to your faith, to your hope, to your love, and to all the plants that are in your soul every other service which the husbandman renders to his wheat. **Give grace your principal care, for it deserves it.**

V. With this I close. Do this, because **FROM THIS YOU MAY EXPECT YOUR PRINCIPAL CROP.** If religion be the principal thing, you may look to religion for your principal reward. The harvest will come to you in various ways. **You will make the greatest success in this life if you wholly live to the glory of God.** Success or failure must much depend upon the fitness of our object. It is of no use my attempting to sing, for I shall never be able to conduct a choir. I could not succeed in that, but if I preach, I may succeed, for that is my work. Now you, Christian man, if you try to live to the world you will not prosper, for you are not fitted for it. Grace has spoiled you for sin. If you live to God with all your heart you will succeed in it, for God has made you on purpose for it. **As he made the fish for the water, and the birds for the air, so he made the**

believer for holiness, and for the service of God; and you will be out of your element, a fish out of water, or a bird in the stream, if you leave the service of God. The Eastern farmer's prosperity hinges on his wheat, and yours upon your devotion to God. It is to Godliness that you must look for your joy. Is there any bliss like the bliss of knowing that you are in Christ, and are the beloved of the Lord? It is to your religion that you must look for comfort on a sick and dying bed, and you may be there very soon.

In the world to come what a crop, what a harvest will come of serving the Lord! What will come out of all else? What but mere smoke? A man has made a million of money, and he is dead. What has he got by his wealth? A man's fame rings throughout the earth as a great and successful warrior, and he is dead. What has he as the result of all his honours? To live to the world is like playing with boys in the street for halfpence, or with babes for bits of platter and oyster shells. Life for God is real and substantial, but all else is waste. Let us think so, and gird up our loins to serve the Lord.

May the divine Spirit help us to sow "the principal wheat," and to live in joyful expectation of reaping a happy harvest according to the promise, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."



DYING to bring forth fruit...

*“Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and DIES,
it remains only a single seed.*

But if it DIES, it produces many seeds...”

The Lord Jesus Christ (John 12:24)

“Life has to DIE before it can MULTIPLY”

Festo Kivengere

This is a law of God’s kingdom! Life out of death! All that is pleasing to God and fruitful to Him has gone through death! In ministry to the Lord and in service in His kingdom, He accepts only that which is resurrection



Cathrine Spibkerud Photography

life, that which have died and been brought back to life (through Him)... This is both a crisis experience and a continuous experience for all God's children (who want to bear fruit for His glory). Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) preached the following sermon about this very important truth. The title of his sermon was:

The Corn of Wheat Dying To Bring Forth Fruit



"And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."—John 12:23-25.

Certain Greeks desired to see Jesus. These were Gentiles, and it was remarkable that they should, just at this time, have sought an interview with our Lord. ...They desired to be introduced to him, and to have a few words of instruction from him.

...Now, too, that the Greeks were come, our Lord speaks somewhat of his glory as approaching. "The hour is come," saith he, "that the Son of man should be glorified." He does not say "that the Son of man should be crucified," though that was true, and the crucifixion must come before the glorification; but the sight of those first-fruits from among the Gentiles makes him dwell upon his glory. Though he remembers his death, he speaks rather of the glory which would grow out of his great sacrifice.

Remember, brethren, that Christ is glorified in the souls that he saves. As a physician wins honour by those he heals, so the Physician of souls gets glory out of those who come to him. When these devout Greeks came, saying, "Sirs, we would see Jesus," though a mere desire to see him is only as the green blade, yet he rejoiced in it as the pledge of the harvest, and he saw in it the dawn of the glory of his cross.

I think, too, that the coming of these Greeks somewhat led the Saviour to use the metaphor of the buried corn. ...In our text, dear friends, we have two things upon which I will speak briefly, as I am helped of the Spirit.

First, we have profound doctrinal teaching, and secondly, we have practical moral principal.

First, we have **PROFOUND DOCTRINAL TEACHING.**

Our Saviour suggested to his thoughtful disciples a number of what might be called doctrinal paradoxes.

First, that, **glorious as he was, he was yet to be glorified.** "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified." Jesus was always glorious. ...I should not speak incorrectly if I were to say that Christ was really as to his moral nature never more glorious than when throughout his life on earth he was obscure, despised, rejected, and yet the faithful servant of God, and the ardent lover of the sons of men. The apostle says, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," in which he refers not only to the transfiguration, in which there were special glimpses of the divine glory, but to our Lord's tabernacling among men in the common walks of life. ...He was a glorious Christ, and yet he had to be glorified.

A second paradox is this,—that **his glory was to come to him through shame.** He says, "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified," and then he speaks of his death. The greatest fullness of our Lord's glory arises out of his emptying himself, and becoming obedient to death, even the death of the cross. It is his highest reputation that he made himself of no reputation. His crown derives new luster from his cross; his ever living is rendered more honourable by the fact of his dying unto sin once. ...It is on the cross, it is from the cross, it is through the cross that Jesus mounts to his throne, and the Son of man has a special honour in heaven to-day because he was slain and has redeemed us to God by his blood.

The next paradox is this,—**Jesus must be alone or abide alone.** Notice the text as I read it: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die," and so gets alone, "it abideth alone." The Son of man must be alone in the grave, or he will be alone in heaven. He must fall into the ground like the corn of wheat, and be there in the loneliness of death, or else he will abide alone...

...Without his people Jesus would have been a shepherd without sheep; surely it is not a very honourable office to be a shepherd without a flock. He would have been a husband without his spouse; but he loves his bride so well that for this purpose did he leave his Father and become one flesh with her whom he had chosen. He clave to her, and died for her; and had he not done so he would have been a bridegroom without a bride. This could never be. His heart is not of the kind that can enjoy a selfish happiness which is shared by none. If you have read Solomon's Song, where the heart of the Bridegroom is revealed,

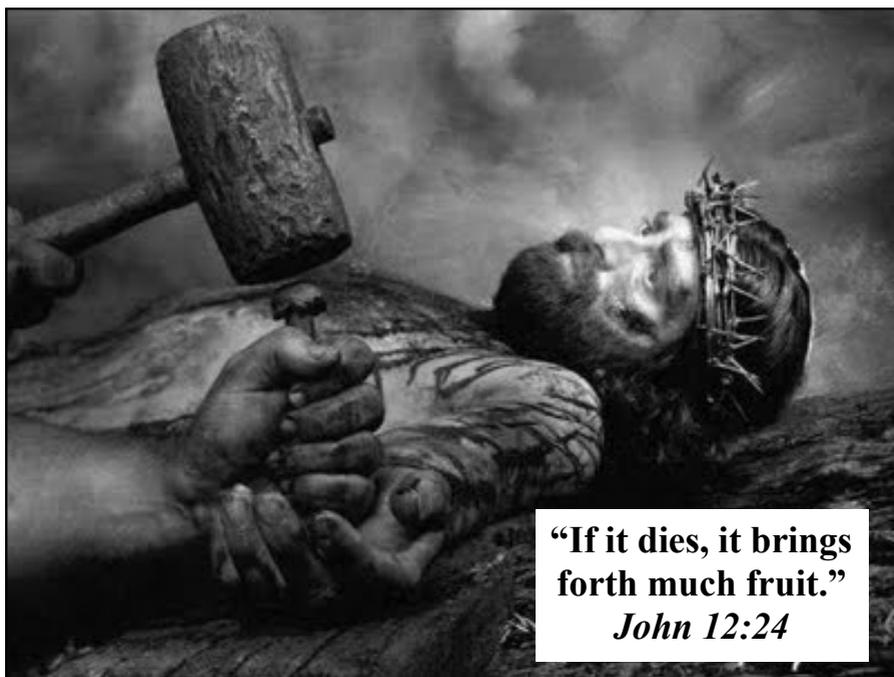
you will have seen that he desires the company of his love, his dove, his undefiled. His delights were with the sons of men. ...He draws all men unto him, and for this cause he was lifted up from the earth. Yet must this great attractive man have been alone in heaven if he had not been alone in Gethsemane, alone before Pilate, alone when mocked by soldiers, and alone upon the cross. If this precious grain of wheat had not descended into the dread loneliness of death it had remained alone, but since he died he "bringeth forth much fruit."



*The Lord
Jesus had to
DIE
to give
LIFE
to others!*

This brings us to the fourth paradox,—**Christ must die to give life.** "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit": **Jesus must die to give life to others.** ...The grain of wheat when it is put into the ground dies; do we mean that it ceases to be? Not at all. What is death? It is the resolution of anything possessing life into its primary elements. With us it is the body parting from the soul; with a grain of wheat it is the dissolving of the elements which made up the corn. Our divine Lord when put into the earth did not see corruption, but his soul was parted from his body for a while, and thus he died; and unless he had literally and actually died he could not have given life to any of us.

Beloved friends, this teaches us where the vital point of Christianity lies, Christ's death is the life of his teaching. See here: if Christ's preaching had been the essential point, or if his example had been the vital point, he could have brought forth fruit and multiplied Christians by his preaching, and by his example. But he declares that, except he shall die,



**“If it dies, it brings
forth much fruit.”**
John 12:24

he shall not bring forth fruit. ...If his teaching and living had been the way in which spiritual life could have been bestowed, without an atonement, why did not the Saviour prolong his life on earth? But **the fact is that no man among us can know anything about spiritual life except through the atonement. There is no way by which we can come to a knowledge of God except through the precious blood of Jesus Christ, by which we have access to the Father.** ...Not one of us could have been quickened into spiritual life except Christ himself had died and risen from the dead.

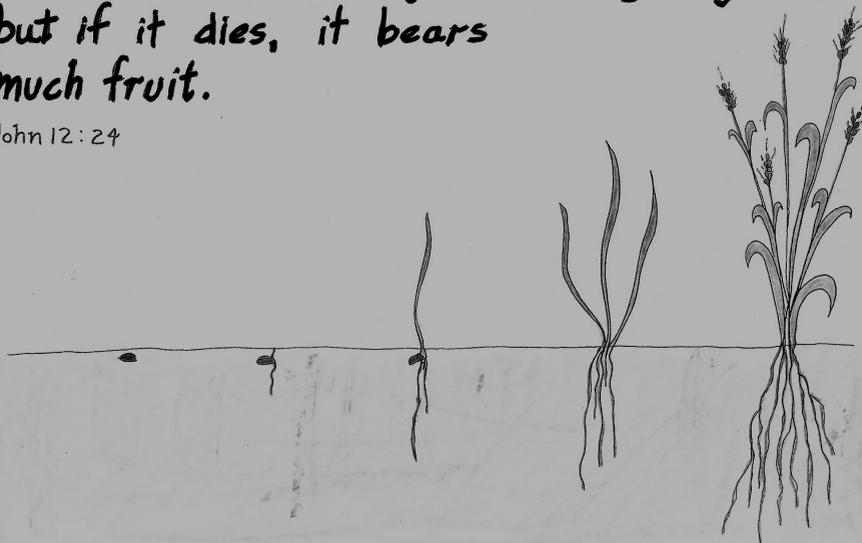
Brethren, all the spiritual life that there is in the world is the result of Christ's death. We live under a dispensation which shadows forth this truth to us. Life first came into the world by a creation: that was lost in the garden. Since then, the father of our race is Noah, and life by Noah came to us by a typical death, burial, and resurrection. Noah went in unto the ark, and was shut in, and so buried. In that ark Noah went among the dead, himself enveloped in the rain and in the ark, and he came out into a new world, rising again, as it were, when the waters were assuaged. That is the way of life to-day. **We are dead with Christ, we are buried with**

Christ, we are risen with Christ; and there is no real spiritual life in this world except that which has come to us by the process of death, burial, and resurrection with Christ. Do you know anything about this, dear friends?—for if you do not, you know not the life of God. You know the theory, but do you know the experimental power of this within your own spirit? Whenever we hear the doctrine of the atonement attacked, let us stand up for it. Let us tell the world that while we value the life of Christ even more than they do, **we know that it is not the example of Christ that saves anybody, but his death for our sakes.** If the blessed Christ had lived here all these nineteen hundred years, without sin, teaching all his marvelous precepts with his own sublime and simple eloquence, yet he had not produced one single atom of spiritual life among all the sons of men. **Without dying he brings forth no fruit.** If you want life, my dear hearer, you will not get it as an unregenerate man by attempting to imitate the example of Christ. You may get good of a certain sort that way, but you will never obtain spiritual life and eternal salvation by that method. **You must believe on Jesus as dying for you.** You have to understand that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleans us from all sin. When you have learned that truth, you shall study his life with advantage; but unless you recognize that the grain of wheat is cast into the ground, and made to die, you will never realize any fruit from it in your own soul, or see fruit in the souls of others.

One other blessed lesson deep divinity is to be learnt from our text: it is this,—**since Jesus Christ did really fall into the ground and die, we may expect much as the result of it.** "If it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." ...I look for a day when the knowledge of the glory of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, when kings shall fall down before the Son of God, and all nations shall call him blessed. "It is too much to expect," says one; "missions make very slow progress." I know all that, but missions are not the seed: all that we look for is to come out of that corn of wheat which fell into the ground and died: this is to bring forth much fruit. When I think of my Master's blessed person as perfect Son of God and Son of man; when I think of the infinite glory which he laid aside, and of the unutterable pangs he bore, I ask whether angels can compute the value of the sacrifice he offered? God only knows the love of God that was manifested in the death of his Son, and do you think that there will be all this planning and working and sacrifice of infinite love, and then an insignificant result? It is not like God that it should be so. **The**

Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

John 12:24



me, for any man, except by dying into it. Have you a fine-spun righteousness of your own? It must die. Have you any faith in yourself? It must die. The sentence of death must be in yourself, and then you shall enter into life. The withering power of the Spirit of God must be experienced before his quickening influence can be known: "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it." You must be slain by the sword of the Spirit before you can be made alive by the breath of the Spirit.

Next, **we must surrender everything to keep it.** "He that loveth his life shall lose it." Brother, you can never have spiritual life, hope, joy, peace, heaven, except by giving everything up into God's hands. You shall have everything in Christ when you are willing to have nothing of your own. You must ground your weapons of rebellion, you must drop the plumes of your pride, you must give up into God's hand all that you are and all that you have; and if you do not thus lose everything in will, you shall lose everything in fact; indeed, you have lost it already. A full surrender of everything to God is the only way to keep it. Some of God's people find this literally true...

Next, **we must lose self in order to find self.** "He that hateth his life shall keep it unto life eternal." **You must entirely give up living for yourself, and then you yourself shall live. The man who lives for himself does not live;** he loses the essence, the pleasure, the crown of existence; **but if you live for others and for God you will find the life of life.** "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." There is no way of finding yourself in personal joy like losing yourself in the joy of others.

Once more: **if you wish to be the means of life to others, you must in your measure die yourself.** "Oh," say you, "will it actually come to death?" Well, it may not, but you should be prepared for it if it should. Who have most largely blessed the present age? I will tell you. I believe we owe our gospel liberties mainly to the poor men and women who died at the stake for the faith. Call them Lollards, Anabaptists, or what you will, the men who died for it gave life to the holy cause. ...They fell into the ground and died, and the "much fruit" abides to this day. The self-sacrificing death of her saints was the life and increase of the church. If we wish to achieve a great purpose, establish a great truth, and raise up a



great agency for good, it must be by the surrender of ourselves, yea, of our very lives to the one all-absorbing purpose. Not else can we succeed. There is no giving out to others, without taking so much out of yourself. He who serves God and finds that it is easy work will find it hard work to give in his account at the last. **A sermon that costs nothing is worth nothing; if it did not come from the heart it will not go to the heart. Take it as a rule that wear and tear must go on, even to exhaustion, if we are to be largely useful. Death precedes growth.** The Saviour of others cannot save himself. We must not, therefore, grudge the lives of those who die under the evil climate of Africa, if they die for Christ; nor must we murmur if here and there God's best servants are cut down by brain exhaustion: it is the law of divine husbandry that **by death cometh increase.**

And you, dear friend, must not say, "Oh, I cannot longer teach in the Sunday-school: I work so hard all the week that I—I—I"—shall I finish the sentence for you? **You work so hard for yourself all the week that you cannot work for God one day in the week. Is that it?** "No, not quite so, but I am so fagged." Very true, but think of your Lord. He knew what weariness was for you, and yet he wearied not in well doing. You will never come to sweat of blood as he did.

Come, dear friend, will you be a corn of wheat laid up on the shelf alone? Will you be like that wheat in the mummy's hand, unfruitful and forgotten, or would you grow? I hear you say, "**Sow me somewhere.**" I will try to do so. Let me drop you into the Sunday-school field, or into the Tract-lending acre, or into the Street-preaching parcel of land. "But if I make any great exertion it will half kill me." Yes; and if it shall quite kill, you will then prove the text, "If it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Those who have killed themselves of late in our Lord's service are not so numerous that we need be distressed by the fear that an enormous sacrifice of life is likely to occur. Little cause is there just now to repress fanaticism, but far more reason to denounce to self-seeking. **O, my brethren, let us rise to a condition of consecration more worthy of our Lord and of his glorious cause, and henceforth may we be eager to be as the buried, hidden, dying, yet fruit-bearing wheat for the glory of our Lord.** Thus have I merely glanced at the text; another day may it be our privilege to dive into its depths."



Life



The Soul-winner's Secret

"If it die ...much fruit" John 12:24

*There is no field without a seed.
Life raised through death is life indeed.
The smallest, lowliest little flower
A secret is, of mighty power—
To die—it lives—buried to rise—
Abundant life through sacrifice.
Would'st thou know gain? It is through loss;
Thou can'st not save but by the Cross.
A corn of wheat, except it die,
Can never, never multiply.
The glorious fields of waving gold,
Through death are life a hundred-fold.
Thou, who for souls dost weep and pray,
Let not hell's legions thee dismay—
This is the way of ways for thee,
The way of certain victory.*

M.W. Booth

Another poem, taken from the book "*Fruitful Living*," by Jessie Penn-Lewis, also speaks about the need to DIE to multiply:

"If it DIE..."

*"If it die," oh, hear the message
Falling from thy Lord.
"If it die," much fruit it beareth,
'Tis thy Saviour's word.*

*Would'st thou see life work in others
Thou thyself must die.
Fall into the ground, be buried,
Low in darkness lie.*

But He leaves thee not in darkness,
Light shall greet thine eyes,
And in glad new life and glory
He shall bid thee rise.

Does thou crave to tread the pathway
And His life to share?
As thou passeth through death's gateway
He will meet thee there.

Thou shalt learn the blessed secret.
He shall live that dies,
From a life poured out in secret
Shall a harvest rise.

Freda Hanbury-Allen

George MacDonald said:

“You will be dead so long as you refuse to die.”

*“If we do not die to ourselves,
we cannot live to God,
and he who does not live to God
is dead.”*





Thomas Gajetan Ragland (1815-1858) served the Lord as a missionary in South India. In “*Ragland, Spiritual Pioneer*,” Amy Carmichael describes his brief but beautiful and fruitful life. He “was the first Englishman to camp among the people of India as a missionary of Christ.” He was used by the Lord to reach many Indian people for Christ. He had a burning love for Jesus and for the people he was called to serve. He was “**God’s corn of wheat**.” Writing to young men who were interested in

missions, he said:

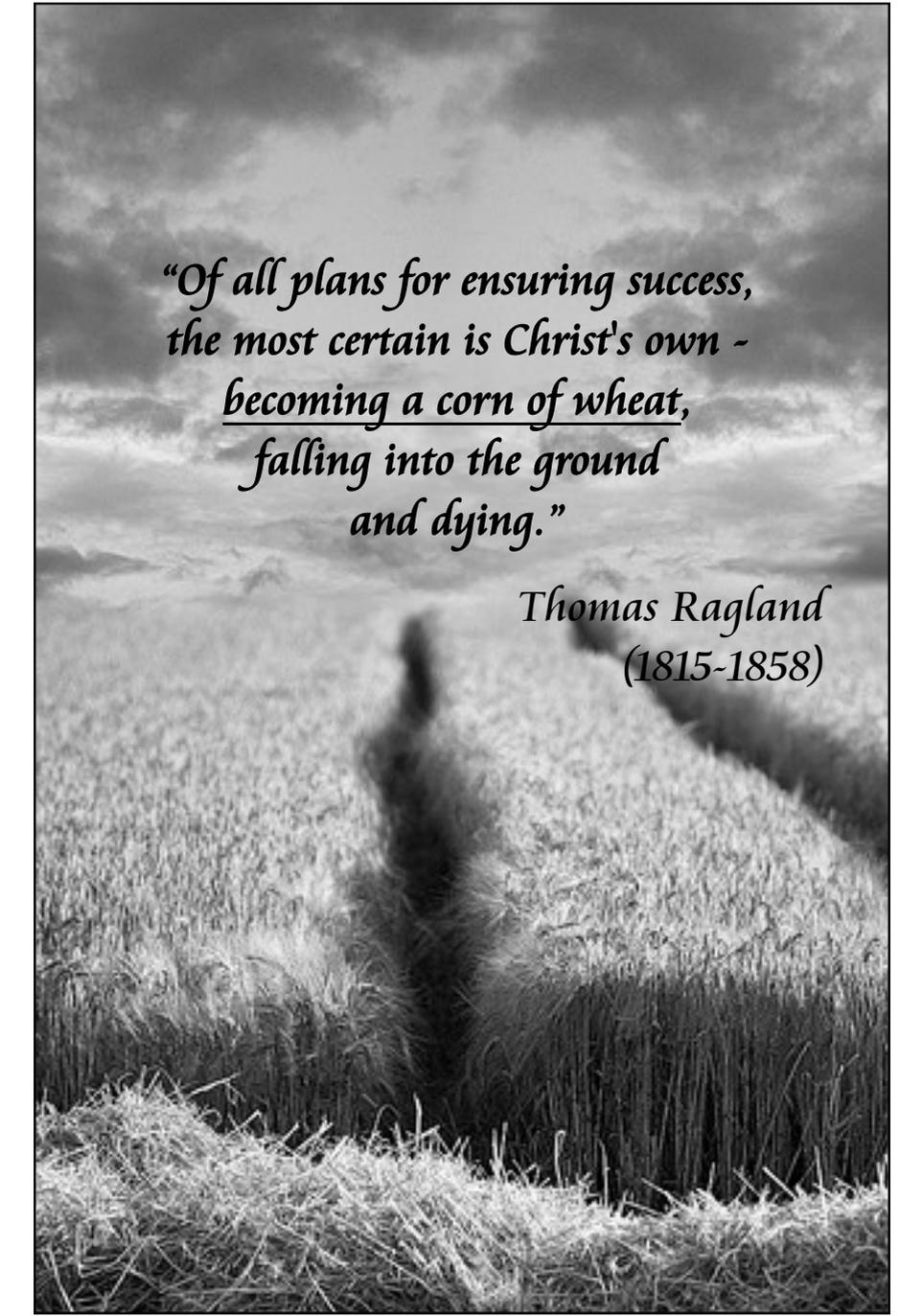
*“Were all Christ's dear servants
only made willing to be as corn of wheat
to fall into the ground and die,
I should be content and thankful.”*

*“Of all qualifications for mission work,
and every other,
Charity (love) is the most excellent.”*

*“Of all methods of attaining to
a position of usefulness and honour,
the only safe and sure one is
to fit ourselves for it by purging our hearts
from vain-glory, worldliness and selfishness.”*

*“Of all plans for ensuring success,
the most certain is Christ's own -
becoming a corn of wheat,
falling into the ground and dying.”*

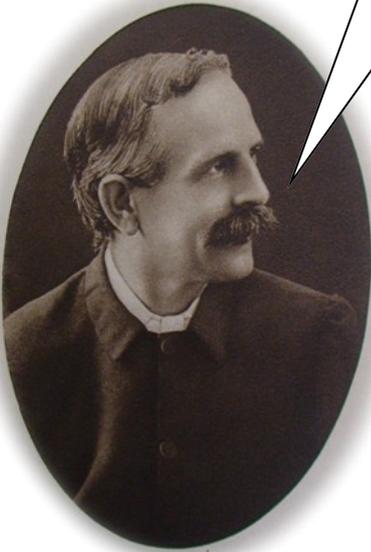
Thomas Ragland



*“Of all plans for ensuring success,
the most certain is Christ's own -
becoming a corn of wheat,
falling into the ground
and dying.”*

*Thomas Ragland
(1815-1858)*

*What the ground offers
to the corn of wheat is
not the rapture of welcome,
but only a quiet place
into which it may fall
and DIE...*



Thomas Walker (1859-1912),
of Tirunevelli, South-India.

“He gave all his strength to **the one work of saving souls**; or, going deeper, to the fulfilment of **his one ambition to be a corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying**. Upon the eve of his last journey, a fortnight before the final sowing, a friend sounded him upon an ecclesiastical question and his relation to it; his reply is remembered: “*I have not changed my life purpose: ‘Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and DIE, it abideth alone; but if it DIE, it bringeth forth much fruit.’...*”

Planting

W. Phillip Keller (1920-2001) relates a practical experience of planting peas in his book “*Outdoor Moments with God.*” He makes it clear that the picture of physically planting (or sowing) seed is comparable to the spiritual planting (or sowing) of God’s seed in the lives of precious people...

Planting Peas

“The forecast for the day’s weather was rain and snow. But by breakfast golden sunshine streamed into our dining nook and all the outdoors pulsed with pure light.

It was a perfect morning to plant peas. **The seed had been soaked all night.** So the peas were plump and round, ready for the ground.

With painstaking care I prepared the smooth trenches where the seed would be sown in love and calm assurance. The soil was dark with humus, soft to the touch, and fragrant with the delicate aroma of fresh turned earth.

In fact there had never, ever been a garden in that particular spot before. It was a steep slope where only grass and wild weeds grew before. Now it was to be a garden.

I was actually working with a bit of virgin soil. Just the thought was a challenge of good cheer. This ground was rich and friable, nourished with the decayed grass and leaves from nearby trees. There was a sweet solace in feeling its rich texture beneath my finger tips. It would become a suitable seed bed for the peas. There would be a bountiful crop in this bit of soil to nourish us well in the months to come.

Planting peas was not just a profound pleasure.

Planting peas was the step to deep satisfaction of soul.

Planting peas, done in calm confidence would give a crop.



Softly, surely, with a contented melody within, I covered the seed with special care. I did not wish to bruise or damage a single pea, each so plump and turgid, ready and eager to burst into a new plant growth.

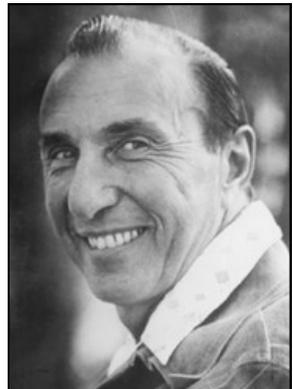
There is always a bit of mystery, a gentle miracle in planting any seed. Our Master put it in these plain words.

“Unless a grain of wheat (or any seed) falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone, but if it dies (gives up its life), it bears much fruit.” (John 12:24)

So it is too for any person prepared to give up their life for others.

When the planting was done, I stood up tall and straight, stretching my back to the unfolding warmth of the sun. Its rays would soon warm the fresh turned soil. And under the quiet cares of April showers a glowing crop of peas would soon push up from this bit of barren ground.

Little did I ever dream that before this day was done there would come a couple of chances to plant a bit of my own life in the soft soil of some other souls. I had just put away the garden tools, washed my soiled hands, and sat down for a short rest when there was a knock at the door. A young man accompanied by a dear little girl had come distributing Jehovah’s Witness literature. I urged Ursula to invite



Phillip Keller

them in. *Quietly but earnestly I was glad to share with them the joyous good news of Christ's wondrous love and mercy to us.* They listened eagerly. The interlude was as satisfying as planting peas had been. We were caught up together in a joyous discussion of our Saviour's deep desire to draw us to Himself, to deliver us from death, and to share His very life with us. Ursula served them a sparkling cool drink of apple juice, along with cookies. They left us glad eyed, all smiles, promising to come back.

The day went on and supper was just ready to be served. A car pulled into the drive. There were four people, two old friends, along with a young couple from across the mountains. Supper was set aside. They were welcomed in and also served refreshments of fresh home-baked bread and sweet apple juice.

The young man and woman were also searching, **prepared souls to know more of Christ. Happily, eagerly, we let the miracle seed of our Father's grace and compassion fall into the friable soil of their souls. It was sown in good cheer, in laughter, in love, and in formidable faith. There would be a harvest here as well!**

This process was as sure as planting peas. All in one day!"



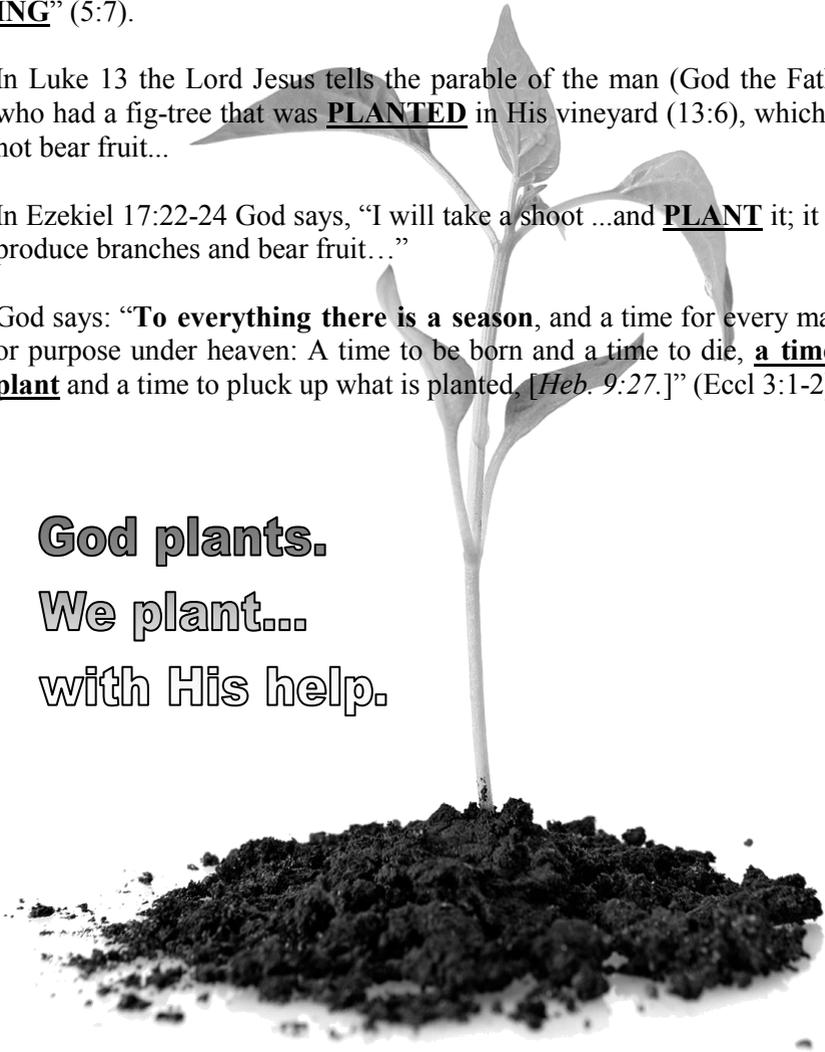
There are many different examples of PLANTING in the Word of God. We read of God planting vines, planting a fig-tree, planting other trees, and planting people! For instance, in Isaiah 5 we read that the Lord “had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones, and **PLANTED it with choice vines**; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes...” (5:1-2). It was called “**his pleasant PLANTING**” (5:7).

In Luke 13 the Lord Jesus tells the parable of the man (God the Father) who had a fig-tree that was **PLANTED** in His vineyard (13:6), which did not bear fruit...

In Ezekiel 17:22-24 God says, “I will take a shoot ...and **PLANT** it; it will produce branches and bear fruit...”

God says: “**To everything there is a season**, and a time for every matter or purpose under heaven: A time to be born and a time to die, **a time to plant** and a time to pluck up what is planted, [*Heb. 9:27.*]” (Eccl 3:1-2)

God plants.
We plant...
with His help.









"Ask rain from the Lord
who gives showers of rain"

Zech 10:1



Praying for rain!

Rain is needed for a good harvest!

Spiritually speaking, “rain” means “*God’s blessing from above.*” It refers to *the work of the Holy Spirit* in a person’s life... Without rain, without water, things dry up and die!

The Lord Jesus, the lord of the harvest, gives us a **PROMISE of rain.** We’ve learned that we need to **PREPARE for rain** and not just recognize the need for rain and passively wait for it. This means we need to prepare the soil, plough the ground, sow the seed, etc. Now we learn that we also need to **PRAY for rain!** *We need to PRAY that the Spirit of God may work!*

In “*Rain from Heaven,*” Arthur Wallis explained it as follows:

“Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that *times of refreshing* may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus.” (Acts 3:19-20)

Here revivals are well described as 'times of refreshing ... from the presence of the Lord'. Here in brief is the three-fold purpose of God for his people. It begins with repentance and turning to God; then, *times of refreshing*; and finally, the return of Christ. Here then, is solid New Testament ground for seasons of blessing before Christ comes back. Peter had just witnessed the age of the Spirit being ushered in with the Pentecostal showers. He now tells us that this age is to be marked up to the promised return of Christ, with such *'times of refreshing'*.

To the oriental mind, time of refreshing would suggest **the coming of the rain after the long dry season.** Rain is a continual picture throughout Scripture of **the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.** Before the Israelites had entered their inheritance, Moses described to them the land of Canaan, 'The land which you are going over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water by the rain from heaven... And if you will OBEY

My commandments ...to LOVE the Lord your God, and to SERVE Him with all your heart and with all your soul, **He will give the rain** for your land in its season, *the early rain and the later rain, that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil.*' (Deut 11:1, 13-14)

This reminds us that Israel's harvest was dependent on the rain, and the rain in turn was dependent on Israel loving and obeying God.

The rainy season usually commences in the land of Israel about the end of October with *light showers* that soften the ground. It continues with *heavy intermittent falls* often lasting two or three days throughout November and December. These *heavier falls*, called the former or early rain, soften the soil for ploughing and sowing. *Lesser showers* then continue intermittently, for at no point during the winter do they completely cease. Then throughout April and early May the *heavy showers* return. This was known as the latter or later rain, meaning the rain of ingathering, for it served to swell the grain for the harvest.

The similarity between this rainy season and the age of the spirit is striking. We see in the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus, when multitudes heard the message of the kingdom, the first soft showers that heralded the time of rain.

These told all those 'looking for the consolation of Israel' that the long season of drought was over, and that the time of ... had come. At the outset of His ministry Jesus said, 'You shall see greater things than these,' (John 1:50) and at its conclusion, 'Greater works than these will (you) do.' (John 14:12) Those heavy showers of the former rain commenced to fall at Pentecost, when God poured out His Spirit in fulfilment of Joel's prophecy. Outpouring continued throughout that first century, gradually diminishing in power and frequency as faith and spirituality declined.

Through the ensuing centuries the showers continued here and there, now and again, though the heavier downpourings of revival were few and far between. Since the Reformation there have been more distinct and frequent. Jesus Himself told us 'The harvest is the close of the age,' (Matt.13:39) that is, the time of His return. ***Surely then we are in the time of the latter rain, when the fruit of the earth is being prepared***

for the final harvest.

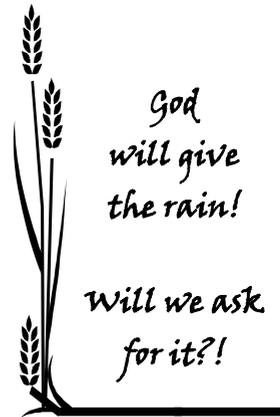
In striking confirmation of this is the exhortation of James:

‘Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. **Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it until it receives the early and the later rain.** You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. (Jas. 5:7-8)

In using the illustration of the farmer, he, too, likens the coming of the Lord to harvest time. But waiting for the harvest involves waiting for the early and later rain that precedes it, and helps produce it. Interpreting the analogy, waiting in expectation for the coming of the Lord means waiting in expectation for the promised outpouring that will surely usher it in.

All this lends great weight to that word of one of the last Old Testament prophets Zechariah, '**Ask rain from the Lord in the season of the spring (or latter) rain, from the Lord ...who gives them showers of rain.**' (Zech. 10:1;RV)

Just as there is a season for the latter rain, so there is a time for the latter day outpouring of the Spirit. I believe that God is showing an increasing number of His children that that time is now. If we are not sure, let us seek Him for revelation; if we are, then let us heed this word of counsel. **Though it is the season for the promised rain, we are not to fold our arms and wait passively for it to come; we are to call on the Lord to send it.** It could well be that this latter rain, when it is manifested in its fullness, will prove to be a world-wide outpouring, exceeding anything that the church in its long history has ever seen.”



Waiting for and Expecting Germination and Growth...

God says we need to WAIT patiently for the harvest... We read in James 5:7-8, “*So be patient, brethren, [as you wait] till the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits expectantly for the precious harvest from the land. [See how] he keeps up his patient [vigil] over it until it receives the early and late rains. So you also must be patient. Establish your hearts [strengthen and confirm them in the final certainty], for the coming of the Lord is very near.*”

This patient WAITING is not a passively doing of nothing, no, it is rather an active trust in God, an eager expectation from God, a doing of His will as far as it is known, and a purposeful praying for God to work. Andrew Murray (1828-1917) said in “*Working for God*” that:

- ◆ “Waiting brings the needed strength for working.”
- ◆ “Waiting on God secures the working of God for us and in us, out of which our work must spring.”
- ◆ “Waiting on God lies at the root of all true working for God.”
- ◆ “Working for God must be the fruit of all true waiting on Him.”
- ◆ “God’s work can only be done in God’s strength, by God Himself working in us.”
- ◆ “Continual waiting on God as being one of the first and essential conditions of successful work.”
- ◆ “It is only as God works for me, and in me, that I can work for Him.”
- ◆ “All His work for me is through His life in me.”
- ◆ “He will most surely work, if I wait on Him.”
- ◆ “All His working for me, and my waiting on Him, has but one aim, to fit me for His work of saving men.”

This seems to me that, in life, there is this work of waiting on God.

Frances Ridley Havergal described it as follows in one of her poems:

**Now, the sowing and the weeping,
Working hard and waiting long;
Afterward, the golden reaping,
Harvest-home and grateful song.**

Now, the pruning, sharp, unsparing,
Scattered blossom, bleeding shoot!
Afterward, the plenteous bearing
Of the Master's pleasant fruit.

Now, the plunge, the briny burden,
Blind, faint gropings in the sea;
Afterward, the pearly guerdon
That shall make the diver free.

Now, the long and toilsome duty
Stone by stone to carve and bring;
Afterward, the perfect beauty
Of the palace of the King.

Now, the tuning and the tension,
Wailing minors, discord strong;
Afterward, the grand ascension
Of the Alleluia song.

Now the spirit conflict-riven,
Wounded heart, unequal strife;
Now, the training, strange and lowly,
Unexplained and tedious now;
Afterward, the service holy,
And the Master's "Enter thou!"

We read in 1 Corinthians 15:58, "***Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.***"

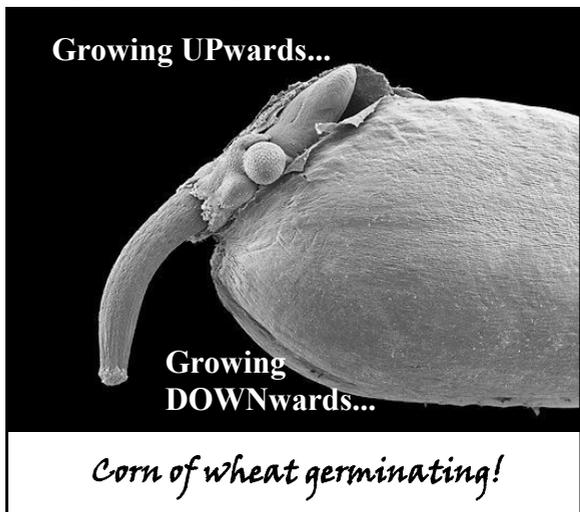
We may expect to see fruit on our labour in the Lord, because the Lord says "that in the Lord your labour is NOT in vain..."! Spurgeon com-

mented on this verse in his “Counsel for Christian Workers” as follows:

Wait & Expect to see Germination and Growth and Fruit on your Labour in the Lord!

“Do you not think that at times our getting lax in Christian work arises from our being very low in grace? As a rule, you cannot get out of a man that which is not in him. You cannot go forth yourself to your class and do your work vigorously if you have lost inward vigour. *You cannot minister before the Lord with the unction of the Holy One if that unction is not upon you. If you are not living near to God and in the power of God, then the power of God will not go forth through you to the children of your care; so that I think we should judge, when we become discontented and downhearted, that we are out of sorts spiritually. Let us say to ourselves, ‘Come! My soul! What aileth thee? This faint heart is a sign that thou art out of health. Go to the great Physician, and obtain from him a tonic which shall brace thee. Come, play the man. Have none of these whims! Away with your idleness! The reaping-time will come, therefore thrust in the plough.’*

Perhaps, however, the work itself may suggest to us a little more excuse for being weary. It is hard work to sow on the highway, and amidst the thorns – hard work to be sowing good seed upon the rock year after year. Well, if I had done so for many years, and was enabled by the Holy Ghost, I would say to myself: ‘I shall not give up my work because I have not yet received a recompense in it, for I perceive that in the Lord’s parable three sowings did not succeed, and yet the one piece of good round paid for all. Perhaps I have gone through my



three unsuccessful sowings, and now is my time to enjoy my fourth, in which the seed will fall upon good ground.’ It is a pity, when you have had some years of rough work, to give all up *now*. Why, now you are going to enjoy the sweats of your former labour. It would be a pity, just when you have mastered your class, and prepared the way for a blessing, for you to run away from it. There is so much less of difficulty for you to overcome by as much as you have already overcome. He who has passed so many miles of a rough voyage will not have to go over those miles again: do not let him think of going back. To go back, indeed, in this pilgrimage were shameful: and as we have no armour for our back, it would be dangerous. **Putting our hand**



*In due
season we
shall reap,
if we
faint not!*

to this plough and looking back will prove that we were unworthy of the kingdom. If there be a hundred reasons for giving up your work of faith, there are fifty thousand for going on with it. Though there are many arguments for fainting, there are far more arguments for persevering. Though we might be weary and do sometimes feel so, let us wait upon the Lord and renew our strength, and we shall mount up with wings as eagles, forget our weariness, and be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

We have abundant encouragement in the prospect of reward. ‘**In due season we shall reap, if we faint not.**’

The reaping time will come. *Our chief business is to glorify God by teaching the truth whether souls are saved or not;* but still I demur to the statement that we may go on preaching the gospel for years and years, and even all our lifetime, and yet no result may follow. They say, ‘Paul *may* plant and Apollos *may* water, but God giveth the increase.’ I should like them to find that passage in the Bible. In my English Bible it runs thus: ‘I (Paul) have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.’ There is not the slightest intent to teach us that when Paul planted and Apollos watered, God would arbitrarily refuse the increase. ***All the glory is claimed for the Lord, but honest labour is not despised.*** I do not say that there is the same relation between teaching the truth and conversion as there is between cause and effect, so that they are invariably connected;



but I will maintain that it is the rule of the kingdom that they should be connected, through the power of the Holy Ghost. Some causes will not produce effects because certain obstacles intervene to prevent.

A person may teach the gospel in a bad spirit; that *must* spoil it. A person may teach only part of the gospel, and he may put that the wrong way upwards. God may bless it somewhat, but yet the good man may greatly retard the blessing by the mistaken manner in which he delivers the truth. Take it as a rule that the truth of God prayed over, spoken in the fear of the Lord, with the Holy Spirit dwelling in the man who speaks it, will produce the effect which is natural to it. As the rain climbs not up to the skies, and the snowflakes never take to themselves wings to rise to heaven, so neither shall the Word of God return unto him void, but it shall accomplish that which he pleases. *We have not spent our strength in vain. Not a verse taught to a little girl, nor a text dropped into the ear of a careless boy, nor an earnest warning given to*

an obdurate young sinner, nor a loving farewell to one of the senior girls, shall be without some result or other to the glory of God. And, taking it all together as a mass, though this handful of seed may be eaten of the birds, and that other seed may die on the hard rock, yet, as a whole, the seed shall spring up in sufficient abundance to plentifully reward the sower and the giver of the seed.

We know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord. Go to your classes with this persuasion, 'I shall not labour in vain, or spend my strength for naught.' **'According to your faith, so be it unto you.'** Take a little measure, and you shall have it filled with the manna of success, but take a great omer, and in its fullness you shall have abundance. **Believe in the power of the truth you teach. Believe in the power of Christ about whom you speak. Believe in the omnipotence of the Holy Ghost, whose help you have invoked in earnest prayer. Go to your sowing, and reckon upon reaping.**

'Let us not be weary, for we shall reap.' *We shall reap. It is not, 'We shall do the work, and our successors shall reap after we are gone.' We ought to be very pleased even with that, and no doubt such is often the case. But we shall reap too. Yes, I shall have my sheaves, and you will have yours. The plot which I have toiled and wept over shall yield me my sheaves of harvest, and I shall personally gather them. I shall reap. 'I never thought much of myself as a teacher,' says one, 'I always feel that I am hardly competent, and I notice that the superintendent has only trusted me with the little children; but I am so glad to hear that I shall reap. I shall reap. I shall have a dear little one, saved in the Lord, to be my portion.' I pray you, if you have never reaped yet, begin to hope. You teachers who are always punctual, I mean: of course, if you do not come in time, you do not care whether you reap or not; but I speak to punctual teachers, I speak also to earnest teachers for if you are not earnest you will never reap: you punctual, earnest, prayerful teachers shall reap. Some teachers do not go in for reaping, and they will not enjoy it. But I am speaking now to real, hard-working, earnest Sunday School teachers who give their hearts to it, and yet have seen no results. According to the text, you shall reap. Come, my persevering comrades, let us not be discouraged: 'In due season we shall reap,' even we. You shall have your share with others. Though you feel as though you must give it up, you shall yet reap.*

After sowing all this while, do not cease from labour when reaping time is so near. If I were a farmer, if I did give up my farm, it should be before I sowed my wheat, but if I had done all the ploughing and the sowing, I should not say to my landlord, ‘There are six weeks and then cometh harvest, and I desire to let another tenant come in.’ No, no. I should want to stop and see the harvest gathered and the wheat taken to market. I should want to have my reward. *So wait for your recompense, especially you that have been discouraged. ‘In due time we shall reap, if we faint not.’ We who have thought least of our service, and perhaps have exercised least faith, and endured most searchings of heart and most groaning and crying before the Lord, we also ‘in due season shall reap, if we faint not.’*”

Father, I believe that my
labour in the Lord is
NOT in vain!!
Thank You for Your Word. I
believe Your promise!



Our work for God includes **the work of WAITING**—(1) waiting for God to equip me and guide me into His harvest, (2) waiting for God to work in the hearts and lives of the persons He brings across my path, (3) waiting for God to work in revival amongst His children... In his book “*Heart Cry for Revival*,” Dr Stephen Olford calls this last point the “WAIT” of Revival. He explains it as follows:



The “WAIT” of Revival

“A Greek church father known as Clement, born about A.D. 150, informs us that **James and his brother Jude were farmers**. That explains why James so often uses vivid illustrations from a farmer's life. He speaks, for instance, in the verses before us, of the rain of seedtime, and the rain of ripening harvest. The first fell in Judea about the middle of October, after the seed was sown, and the second towards the end of April, when the ears were filling and ripening for harvest. Without those two rains the earth would have been unfruitful.

What a glorious illustration this is of the final harvest before the heavenly Husbandman returns for the precious fruit of the earth. The fact that “the latter rain” is yet to fall gives me great confidence in believing that the church is yet to witness revival – even though concurrently with it the world will grow more wicked, defiant and meet for divine judgment.

The “**latter rain**” of revival suggests:

I. THE **PROMISE** OF GOD IN RELATION TO REVIVAL

“...the husbandman ... hath long patience ... until he receives the early and latter rain” (vs.7). It is both interesting and instructive to observe that God has promised the “**early and latter rain**” in terms of **physical fulfilment**. *When the children of Israel were about to enter the land of Canaan, God said through Moses: “... I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy*

corn, and thy wine, and thine oil” (Deuteronomy 11:11-14). It is quite clear from this passage and a number of others, that the harvest was dependent upon the rain, and that the rain was promised by God, contingent upon obedience. When the nation followed God, there was rain, harvest and plenty. On the other hand, when there was a departure from the way of righteousness, then there was drought, famine and distress. We are all familiar with the story of Elijah who was commanded to pray that it might not rain, and we read in the very chapter before us: “...it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit” (James 5:17-18). **Thus God taught His people that His purpose for them was “the early and latter rain” - if only they would be obedient to His Word.**

But what had been true in the physical life of God's ancient people had been equally true in the spiritual life of all His people, Jew and Gentile. **The promise of “early and latter rain” has a spiritual fulfilment.** “Behold, the husbandman waiteth ... until he receive the early and latter rain” (vs. 7). During Old Testament times the rain of revival fell again and again at such periods of spiritual awakening and renewal as are indicated throughout the history of the Jews. But when we come to the New Testament, it can be clearly shown that **Pentecost was the historical and spiritual commencement of the fall of the “early rain.”** Indeed, such was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in those days that in little more than thirty years the whole of the civilized world was evangelized for Christ and the ground prepared for the final harvest.

Since then the rain of blessing has not entirely ceased. Like the occasional showers that continue to fall from October through to the latter rain of April, in Palestine, there have been notable downpours of revival throughout the history of the church. Particularly has it been so since the Reformation. But now we await the final outpouring, “the latter rain.” It is quite evident from our text that this is going to precede the coming of the Lord and, therefore, coincide with the final harvest. The Lord Jesus explained in the parable of the tares that “...the harvest is the end of the world ...” (Matthew 13:39-41). And then He will come with His sickle to reap the precious fruit of the earth. (See Revelation 14:14-16).

If this be so, then before our Saviour returns we must expect the promised

rain of harvest. O that it might begin to fall soon! If we believe that God's promise concerning the second advent that He will honour His promise concerning "the latter rain" of revival.

In the second place, I want you to notice that "the latter rain" of revival suggests:

II. THE PURPOSE OF GOD IN RELATION TO REVIVAL

"Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it. ...Be ye also patient; ...for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (vss. 7-8). The purpose of God in relation to revival is two-fold: first, to hasten the day of harvest. " ...the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth ..." (vs. 7). The holy Scriptures and the story of revivals show that the greatest harvesting periods in history have been always characterized by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. That there is a great harvest to reap is beyond dispute. The Master in His day said, "The harvest is truly plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:37-38). And again: "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest" (John 4:35).

If these words carried a sense of urgency about them nearly two thousand years ago, what about today – with the shrinkage of the globe, the explosion of population, and the advanced media of communicating the gospel? The only lack, and vital lack, is the pouring out of the Spirit in revival. All our efforts, otherwise, however modern, scientific and advanced, are worthless.

God's purpose in revival is to hasten the day of harvest and also to hasten the day of heaven. "...for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (vs. 8). The Apostle Peter expresses the same thought when he exhorts believers to "Look for and hasten the coming of the day of God" (II Peter 3:12), *marginal rendering*).

It is one of the functions of the Holy Spirit in the believer to make him homesick for heaven. Paul puts it this way: "But we all, with open face

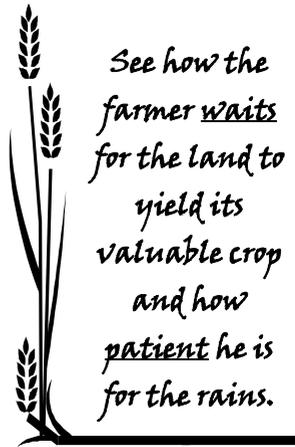
beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (II Corinthians 3:18). ***The more the Holy Spirit fills and transforms us, the more we become like Jesus and are fitted for heaven.***

If the early rain is necessary for the germination of the seed, the latter rain is needful for the fructification of the same. If the church would only experience a season of revival, we would see transforming changes take place with amazing rapidity.

One more thought suggested by the “latter rain” is that of :

III THE PATIENCE OF GOD IN RELATION TO REVIVAL

“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it. ...Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (vss. 7-8). The quality of patience is a divine virtue. The word signifies long-suffering and suggests brave endurance of afflictions and the refusal to give way under them, even under pressure. ***Patience is that holy self-restraint which enables the sufferer to refrain from hasty retaliation. Patience has nothing whatsoever to do with indifference, apathy or stoicism.*** Since God has promised and purposed revival, He patiently waits for it, regardless of circumstances in the world and conditions in the church. In like manner the believer is to exercise patience. ***In fact, where there is no patience in relation to***



revival, there is no prayer for revival, and therefore no faith in God's promise and purpose in revival. So James draws attention to the patience of God in order that the believer might do two things: ***the first is to emulate extended patience.*** “Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (vs. 8). God is patient; the Lord Jesus is patient; the Holy Spirit is patient; the prophets of old were patient. Concerning the latter, James says, “Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and



of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy” (vss. 10-11).

James exhorts, “Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (vs. 8).

The two fold secret of maintained patience is intercession and expectation. The word for “stablish” in the Septuagint is the same as that which is used for the bolstering or holding up of Moses' hands (Exodus 17:12). **Patience for revival can only be bolstered up by prayer.** Then there is the spirit of expectation which should characterize every truly born-again soul. For the Apostle Peter reminds us that we are begotten ...unto a living hope (I Peter 1:3). If we have the hope and believe God's promise, we cannot but patiently await the glorious fulfilment of revival and the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So we are to emulate extended patience – as seen in God Himself and as reproduced in the saints who have left us an “...example of suffering affliction, and of patience” (vs. 10). But the patience of God is also designed **to deprecate exhausted patience.** “Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door” (vs. 9).

The word “grudge” means to “grumble, murmur, or complain.” Under the pressure of opposition, persecution and tribulation we can soon exhaust our patience – unless we are drawing heavily on the resources of God. At such times as these we fall victims to the sin and spirit of grumbling, murmuring, and complaining. We blame God for not answering our prayers for revival, and then we criticize one another for being hindrances to blessing, without recognizing all the while that we are under condemnation ourselves. The Word says that to grumble is to be condemned. Let us never forget that “...the judge standeth before the door” (vs. 9)...

Let us see to it then that we never exhaust our patience and become a grumbling people. For unbelief and grumbling the children of Israel were all barred (save two men) from the promised land of blessing. It is possible to be by-passed by revival even when it comes. God save us from such a tragedy!

So we have observed that “***the latter rain***” of revival suggests to us the ***promise, purpose and patience of God in relation to revival.*** O that we might be given the patience for the latter rain of revival which made John Newton write:

**Saviour, visit Thy plantation,
Grant us, Lord, a gracious rain!
All will come to desolation,
Unless Thou return again.**

**Keep no longer at a distance,
Shine upon us from on high,
Lest, for want of Thine assistance,
Every plant should droop and die.**

Surely once Thy garden flourish'd!

Every part look'd gay and green;
Then Thy Word our spirits nourish'd;
Happy seasons we have seen!

But a drought has since succeeded,
And a sad decline we see;
Lord, Thy help is greatly needed,
Help can only come from Thee!

Where are those we counted leaders,
Fill'd with zeal and love and truth -
Old professors, tall as cedars,
Bright examples of our youth?

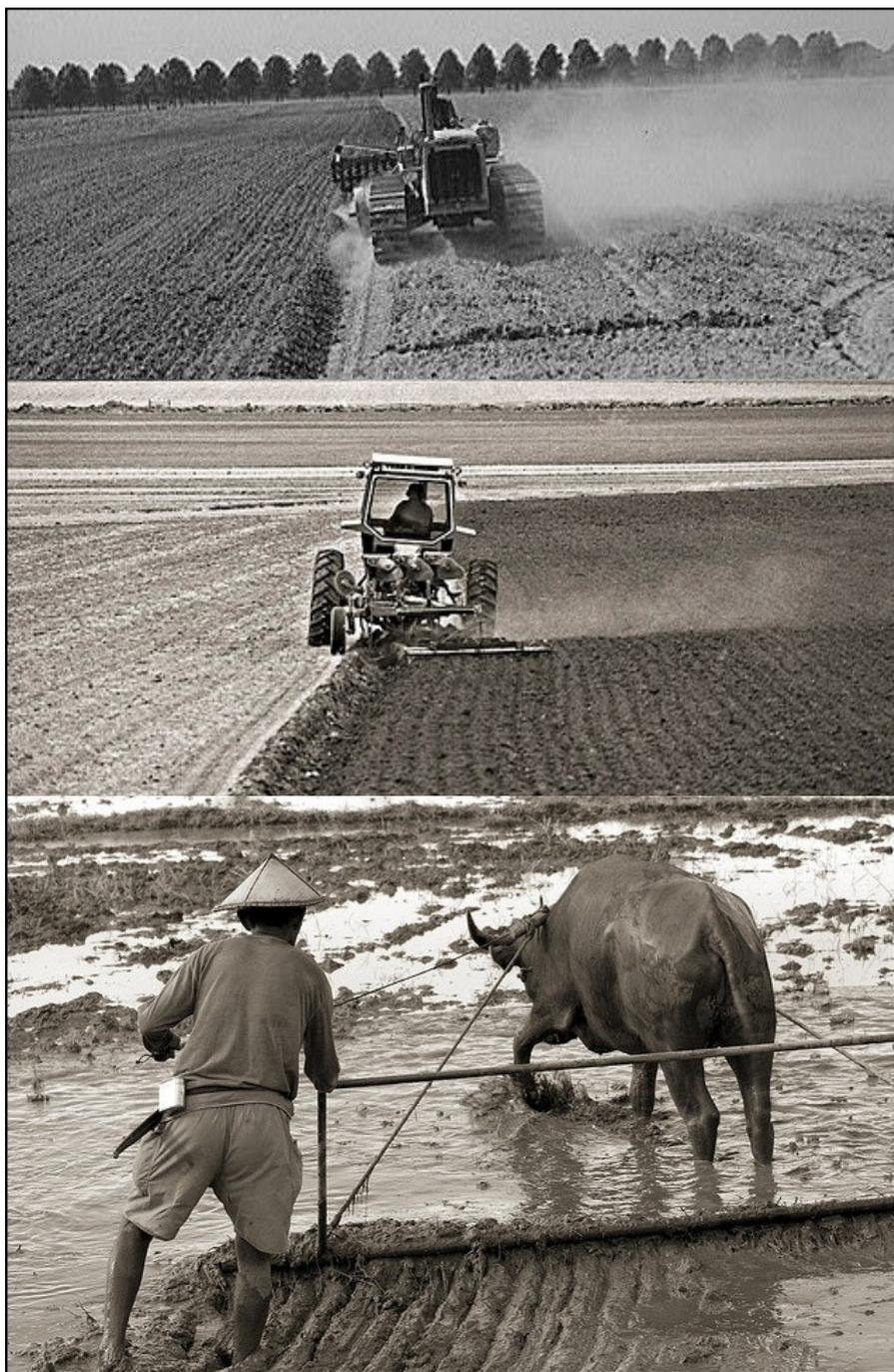
Some, in whom we once delighted,
We shall meet no more below;
Some, alas! We fear are blighted.
Scarce a single leaf they show.

Younger plants – the sight how pleasant!
Cover'd thick with blossoms stood;
But they cause us grief at present,
Frosts have nipp'd them in the bud!

Dearest Saviour, hasten hither;
Thou canst make them bloom again;
Oh, permit them not to wither,
Let not all our hopes be vain!

**Let our mutual love be fervent,
Make us prevalent in prayers;
Let each one esteem'd Thy servant
Shun the world's bewitching snares.**

**Break the tempter's fatal power,
Turn the stony heart to flesh;
And begin, from this good hour,
To revive Thy work afresh.**



Harrowing the field...

Harrowing can be done before and after the sowing of the seed. The ultimate purpose of harrowing is better reception of the seed in the soil, better germination of the seed, and better sprouting of the fresh shoots...

“In agriculture, **a harrow** is an implement *for breaking up and smoothing out the surface of the soil*. In this way it is distinct in its effect from the plough, which is used for deeper tillage. Harrowing is often carried out on fields **to follow the rough finish left by ploughing operations**. The purpose of this harrowing is generally to break up clods (lumps of soil) and to provide a finer finish, a good tilth or soil structure that is suitable for seedbed use. Such **coarser harrowing may also be used to REMOVE WEEDS and to COVER SEED after sowing**. Harrows differ from cultivators in that they disturb the whole surface of the soil, such as to prepare a seedbed, instead of disturbing only narrow trails that skirt crop rows (to kill weeds).” (Taken from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harrow_\(tool\)...](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harrow_(tool)...))

Harrowing is “a method for shallow cultivation of soil and care of agricultural crops. ...**Harrowing protects the soil from rapid drying and improves its air and water penetrability, which facilitates the intensification of beneficial microbiological processes and accumulation in the soil of nutritive substances absorbed by the plants**. ...Harrowing *before the sowing* of spring crops is done **to level the surface of the field**. Harrowing *after sowing* is used **to destroy weed sprouts and to BREAK UP the soil CRUST before the appearance of shoots and around the shoots**. (Revolving hoes or latticed harrows are best used for this purpose.)

On fallow fields and in preparing the soil under cultivation for winter crops, harrowing is used to level the surface of the field and **to PRESERVE MOISTURE in the soil**. ...Harrowing overdried or overmoist soil may be harmful. An increase in the speed of cultivation provides better friability but increases pulverization of the soil. Harrowing across the plowing or diagonally to it provides better friability and leveling of the

surface. Indicators of high-quality harrowing are a well-crumbled surface layer of soil and a low degree of pulverization, a level field surface, and a maximum number of destroyed weed sprouts.” (Taken from The Great Soviet Encyclopedia, 1979).

In summary, we can say that **HARROWING** is light ploughing, or shallow ploughing, which is used to

- ➔ ***Smoothen and soften the surface of the soil***, thus finally preparing the soil to receive the seed better...
- ➔ ***Remove weeds*** that appeared after the seed was sown...
- ➔ ***Retain moisture*** better in the soil...
- ➔ ***Break up the soil crust before the appearance of shoots*** and around the shoots...

Spiritually speaking, it may refer to that working of God through His servants, which helps to prepare the hearts of people to receive God’s Word more readily and more fruitfully. It is not the rough applying of the law of God to bring deep conviction primarily (as when spiritual “ploughing” is done), but rather the necessary, though more superficial, applying of the law of God—to help break up the minor hindrances in the hearts and minds and consciences of people.

It may also refer to the faithful, careful follow-up that is made by a servant of the Lord after he or she has sown the seed of God’s Word and Gospel into the hearts of people, to ensure that “weeds” of doubt and lies and mis-information and discouragements from many angles do not spring up and stifle the growth of God’s seed.

This follow-up “harrowing” also helps to maintain the “moisture” of the atmosphere and the continued working of the Spirit of God in that person’s mind, heart and conscience...

We read in Isaiah 28:24, “Does he who plows for sowing plow continually? Does he continue to plow and **harrow** the ground after it is smooth?” The answer is, “No, there is a time for plowing, a time for sowing, and a time for harrowing...” We need to make sure that we walk closely with the Lord (as His servants and farm-workers), so that He can use us as He may choose and as the need is before us—either to plow, or sow, or harrow, or pray, or harvest, or whatever. ***HE can and should direct our hearts and heads and hands in His service!***

Harrowing with Him!



Weeding the field

The work of weeding is a very important work! It is a constant work. You cannot stop it at any stage and not suffer loss...

Weeds grow “naturally,” as a result of sin that entered the world and the nature of men and women. For instance, it is natural to be self-centred, to be selfish, to be proud, to be seeking your own benefit, to be self-sensitive, to be self-righteous, to be seeking self-gratification!

Weeds can also come become of the working of evil spirits, planting seeds of sin, seeds of doubt, seeds of rebellion, seeds of laziness, seeds of impurity, seeds of disobedience, etc.

Using the hoe of God’s Word, we need to daily deal with weeds in our own lives and with the weeds that spring up in the fields the Lord gave us to labour in (like in our families, our work, or ministry, our church, etc.).



Dr Herbert Lockyer tells a story of “Weeds and Fences,” in relation to weeds that can grow in a church. He said:

“There was a certain preacher who was reputed to be very wise in the settlement of church difficulties, so much so that all churches within reach, when in trouble, sought his counsel. This preacher, while living in the town, was the fortunate owner of a farm in the country, which was operated by a manager who lived on the premises. One day the preacher wrote two letters, one a letter to a church which had sought his advice in time of trouble, and the other letter to his farm manager. Having the two letters completed, he put each into the wrong envelope, with the result that *the farmer received the advice meant for the church, and the church that intended as direction for operating the farm.*

When the letter came to the church, it was opened by the senior elder, and the church assembled to hear the preacher-counsellor’s wisdom. The



WEEDING
is WORK
of great
WORTH!



Weeding...

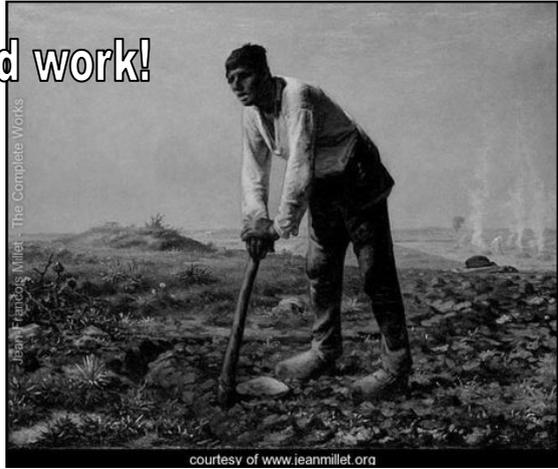
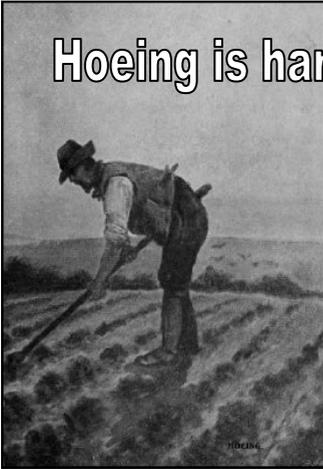
**I MUST
keep out the
weeds!**



Hoeing...



Hoeing is hard work!



elder addressed the meeting to this effect:

Our brother whose counsel we sought has replied to our letter evidently in parabolic form, for this is his letter: ‘**KEEP DOWN THE WEEDS: KEEP UP THE FENCES: AND KEEP A SHARP LOOK-OUT FOR THE OLD BLACK BULL.**’ Having read the letter, the elder continued, ‘My brethren, it is not difficult to interpret this parable. *The weeds are causes of dissension, and we are advised therefore to see to it that no root of bitterness is allowed to grow up among us.* The fences are undoubtedly intended to represent church discipline. The garden of the Lord must be separate from the world, and all that would injure the Lord’s plants must be excluded. Therefore we must keep up the fences. Then, of course, my brethren, you will readily recognize who is meant by the big, black bull. That can be no other than the devil himself. *What we are admonished to do, therefore, is to keep down all causes of possible dissension, maintain strict discipline, and always be on the alert to resist the approach of the devil.* If we follow this advice, no doubt the garden of the Lord will prosper.’

After all, is it not possible that the preacher’s letter to the manager of his farm was exactly the advice that the church, and every other church, too, required?”

May the Lord help us to KEEP OUT THE WEEDS from our hearts and lives and “fields” for Him!



Controlling the pests!

There are MANY different kinds of PESTS that can make the crop sick and cause the harvest to fail. To constantly check, and as quickly as possible CONTROL these pests, is of great importance!

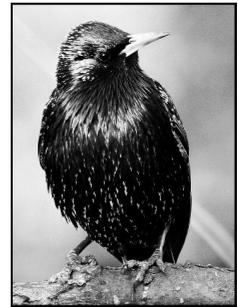
Micro-organisms (bacteria, viruses and fungi) may infect the leaves or the roots of the young plants; worms may invade the root system or the fruits or eat the leaves; locusts may devour and completely destroy a crop; rats and mice may do much damage; birds may eat the seeds or the immature fruits, insects may feast on the leaves or flowers; fungi may rot and weaken the plants; ants may eat the plant or effect the roots; weevils are very destructive, and monkeys or baboons may damage or eat the fruits or vegetables...

In “*Revolution in World Missions*,” K.P. Yohannan says: “**RATS eat or spoil 20 percent of India’s food grain every year.** A recent survey in the wheat-growing district of Hapur in north India revealed an average of



ten rats per house.

Of the 1982 harvest of cereals in India, including maize, wheat, rice, millet and so on—a total of 134 million metric tons—the 20 percent loss from rats amounted to 26.8 million metric tons. The picture becomes more comprehensible by imagining a train of boxcars carrying that amount of grain. With each car holding about 82 metric tons, the train would contain 327 000 cars and stretch for 3 097 miles...”



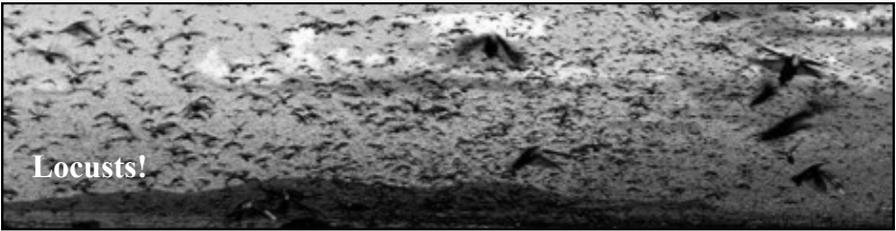
Swarm of BIRDS!



Weevil emerging from wheat grain...!

SCIENCEPHOTOLIBRARY

Locusts!



It is a big battle to control all the pests that may damage or destroy the crop!

The same applies to the battle that we face to control and conquer the spiritual pests that attack our souls, and the pests that attack our family members, and the pests that attack our fellowship (cell-group or church), and the pests that attack in our areas of professional responsibility (at work), and the pests that attack our society... It is clear that a few things are essential for victory. **We need to:**

- ⇒ **Be wide awake and watchful.**
- ⇒ **Be diligent.**
- ⇒ **Be preventative in your approach.**
- ⇒ **Be active and respond immediately to danger signs.**
- ⇒ **Be exact in making the right diagnoses and then**
- ⇒ **Be specific in the treatment of the disorder (the pest; disease).**
- ⇒ **Be decisive in the treatment—in other words, be aggressive and not half-hearted in the treatment.**
- ⇒ **Be thorough in the treatment.**
- ⇒ **Be ruthless and merciless in the eradication of the pest!**

Our AIM is to have a healthy harvest that glorifies the Lord!



A beautiful, clean harvest for Him!

*With the Lord's help,
we want to prevent
and control and conquer
all the PESTS
that may attack
the harvest!*



Other Problems

There are also other problems that may bring damage to the harvest, like heavy rain storms, hail, fire, frost or snow, severe drought, wind storms, tornados or hurricanes... **These highlight the fact that we need to PRAY that the Lord of the harvest will PROTECT the harvest, supernaturally!**



PRAY for God's protection!

Watching & Guarding the Field!

Apart from watching and guarding the field from the pests that may attack it, we also need to watch and guard against **OTHER ENEMIES** of the harvest!

Here we think especially of **ANIMALS**, like baboons, cattle, goats, and wild boar (that can do a lot of damage to rice fields in Asia, for instance). But we also think of **THIEVES** - people who do not own the harvest, but who want to have it for themselves, and not for Him who is the Lord of the harvest! This is particularly sad and sickening!

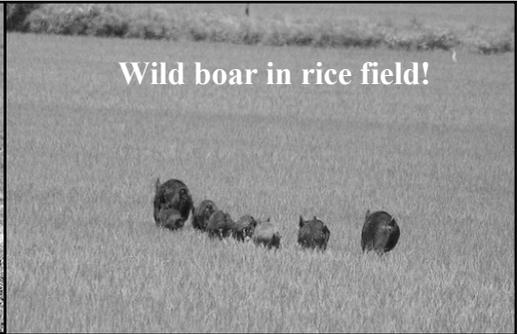


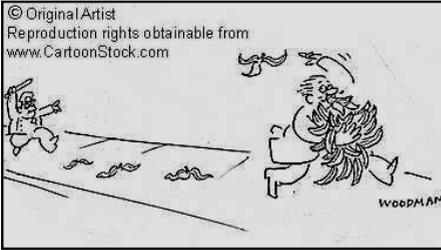
**Watchtower in Nepal,
against monkeys**



**Watchtower in Meghalaya,
North-East India**

We read in [Isaiah 5:1-2](#), “Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; **he built a watchtower in the midst of it...**” This is to watch against the enemies approaching, be it at day or at night...





There are people who steal of the crops; they take for themselves what belongs to the Lord of the harvest! Such thieves can do a lot of damage and bring about great losses!



Spiritually speaking, this refers to workers of God (children of God) who work in His field, seeking to harvest souls and lead people to Christ, ...only to find that **they win the hearts of people to THEMSELVES, instead of to Christ!** **They steal people's hearts!** They steal people from Christ! This is very sad, but it happens. Oswald Chambers said: "*The servants of God in the Bible never stole hearts to themselves, but handed them over to God...Oh for that man of God who will hand over to God the hearts God has called through him!... Down on your face, down in the dust, oh man of*



God, if those arms clasp you, and that heart rests on you! If that longing, loving heart awakens and finds you instead of God, what a passion of despair will blight you with the curse of solitariness and silence!" This should never be ignored!

Feeding & Watering the Field

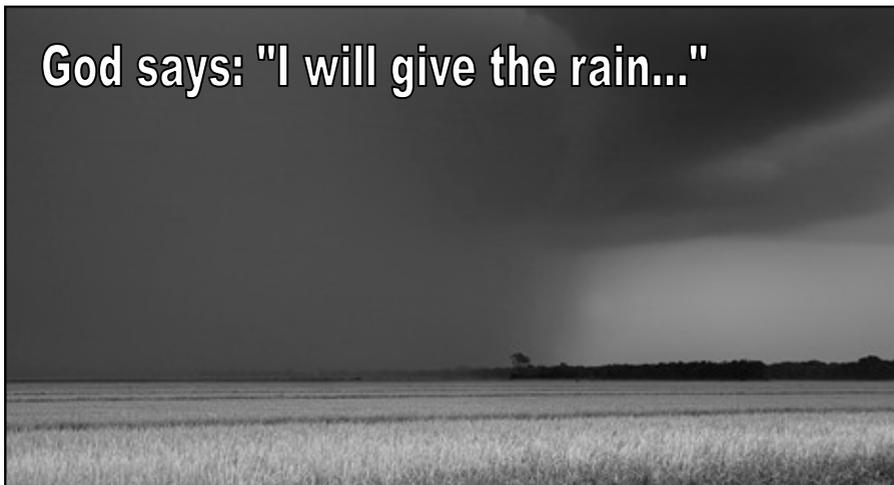
The Lord wants His fields to be well watered and well-fed, so that there will be a good harvest.

He told this parable: “A certain man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it, but did not find [any]. So he said to the vinedresser, See here! For these three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree and I find none. Cut it down! Why should it continue also to use up the ground [to deplete the soil, intercept the sun, and take up room]? But he replied to him, Leave it alone, sir, [just] this one more year, **till I dig around it and put manure [on the soil]. Then perhaps it will bear fruit after this; but if not, you can cut it down and out.**” (Luke 13:6-9)

It shows the importance of **DIGGING** and the PUTTING of FERTILIZER (**FOOD**) for the plants... He said HE will do that! God often digs around our roots and exposes things to the light. He also constantly feeds us with good food from His Word and through His servants. He is looking for a good harvest!

Furthermore, HE promised to also provide **WATER** for the land! We need never be dry spiritually! His Living Water is always available, provided we are thirsty and obedient and trusting in Him... We read in Deuteronomy 11, “**But the land which you enter to possess is a land of hills and valleys which drinks water of the rain of the heavens, A land for which the Lord your God cares; the eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. And if you will diligently heed My commandments which I command you this day --to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your [mind and] heart and with your entire being—I will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil. And I will give grass in your fields for your cattle, that you may eat and be full. Take heed to yourselves, lest your [minds and] hearts be deceived and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, And the Lord's anger be kindled against you, and**

God says: "I will give the rain..."



He shut up the heavens so that there will be no rain and the land will not yield its fruit, and you perish quickly off the good land which the Lord gives you. Therefore you shall lay up these My words in your [minds and] hearts and in your [entire] being, and bind them for a sign upon your hands and as forehead bands between your eyes. And you shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall write them upon the doorposts of your house and on your gates, That your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the heavens are above the earth. For if you diligently keep all this commandment which I command you to do, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, and to cleave to Him—Then the Lord will drive out all these

nations before you, and you shall dispossess nations greater and mightier than you. Every place upon which the sole of your foot shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness to Lebanon, and from the River, the river Euphrates, to the western sea [the Mediterranean] your territory shall be. There shall no man be able to stand before you; the Lord your God shall lay the fear and the dread of you upon all the land that you shall tread, as He has said to you. Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse—The blessing if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you this day; And the curse if you will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you this day to go after other gods, which you have not known.” (Deuteronomy 11:11-28).

While God promises water and food and fertilizer and digging in OUR lives, to ensure that OUR hearts will be good soil for His seed and bear good fruit, ...He also wants US to be co-workers with Him—in providing water and food and fertilizer and digging to other “fields” (people) around us!!

The question is: *“Do we water other fields (other people’s lives)? Do we feed other fields? Do we fertilize and stimulate the growth of other fields?” “Do we?!”*





Furthermore: *“Are WE watered and fed and fertilized by the Lord continually ourselves?!”*





To feed and water these fields take

Very hard work
Continued, maintained work
Thorough, careful work
Diligent work
Visionary work
Daily work
Persevering, prayerful work!



Miracles follow the hoe!





“No man ever did the best work who copied another. Let every man work out the thing that is in him! Who, according to the means he has, great or small, does the work given him to do, stands by the side of the Saviour, is a fellow worker with him.” - George MacDonald.



Maintaining the fence...



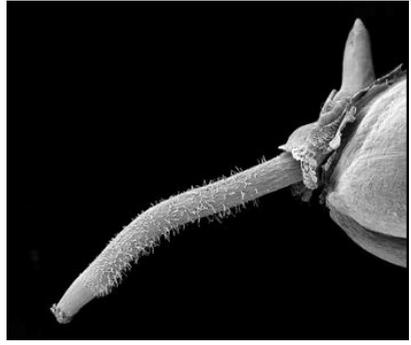
Rice-fields in Sri Lanka...

Once more, we find our example in God. Reading Isaiah 5:1-6, we see that **God's vineyard had a HEDGE, a WALL, a FENCE around it!** We all need such a fence! Without a fence, an enemy may come in and damage or destroy the harvest! This does not apply to cattle and goats and pigs entering a harvest field or garden only, but it also applies to human beings...

When our "walls" are broken down or our "fence" is broken, even if it's just at ONE place, sin can come in and damage or destroy one's life! When our "boundaries" are not in place, we may allow people or demons to cross an invisible line, an invisible "boundary," and bring harm and heartache and "hell" to our lives... That's why it's so important to maintain the fence—both in our own lives and in the lives of those we've come to serve or "harvest" for the Lord!

God has given each person a "fence", a "wall". We can say He gave each person a natural **physical immunity**, a natural **mental immunity**, *and* a **spiritual immunity**. Microbes cannot enter and do what they like in a body, unchallenged; thoughts cannot have their own way in a person's mind, no, they can and must be controlled; and ...demons can also NOT just take hold of a person's spiritual being as they wish. God does not allow that. He has put a "**hedge**", a wall, a "circle of protection" around each person (especially His children). See Job 1:10, Isaiah 5:1-7, Psalm 139:5, Ps 34:5, Zech 2:5, Proverbs 26:2, Numbers 23:23, 1 John 5:18, and Luke 10:19. This does not mean that a child of God is untouchable.

In the human body, the skin is part of the body's immune mechanism. When a **wound** breaks the integrity of the skin, bacteria can enter and cause infection, disease and even death (as with tetanus). In the same way, demons will try to cause a break in our mental and spiritual wall of immunity against them. Once they succeed in opening a door, making a gap or opening or wound... they enter in, get a foothold, obtain "ground" and get a hold on the person. An opening or wound not taken to God becomes a way for evil spirits to enter and bring bondage in a person's life! If they can't enter by storm (*force*), they'll try by stealth (*fraud*)...as happens with our physical body too. While some germs enter through trauma, others enter by the person swallowing them himself (e.g., in contaminated water). The person's **own choice** led to the microbes entering, even unknowingly. The same can happen spiritually too.



A Corn of Wheat Dying + Germinating!



Praying for Growth & Springing Forth

“...the Lord appointed to each his task:...” (1 Co 3:5b; Ampl),

“I planted the seeds, Apollos watered them, but

God made them sprout and grow.

What matters isn't those who planted or watered, but

God who made the plants grow.”

(1Co 3:6-7; CEV)

We can plough and plant, water and weed, ...but it is only God Who makes to GROW!! He is God! He is the Lord of the harvest!

Since God is the only One to give growth, **we need to PRAY for Him to do that!** He says: “I will yet *for* this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do *it* for them...” (Eze 36:37; KJV)

So we pray: “*Father-God, may You cause the seed of Your Word to germinate in their hearts! May You make Your Word to grow in them, through the working of Your Holy Spirit! Holy Father, may You cause the seed of Your Life to sprout in their hearts and spring forth into the sunlight of Your glory...! Amen.*”

Frances Ridley Havergal wrote the following prayer-poem about GROWING:

GROWING

Unto him that hath, Thou givest
Ever “more abundantly.”
Lord, I live because Thou livest,
Therefore give more life to me;
Therefore speed me in the race;
Therefore **let me grow in grace.**

Deepen all Thy work, O Master,
Strengthen every downward root,
Only do Thou ripen faster,
More and more, Thy pleasant fruit.
Purge me, prune me, self abase,
Only let me grow in grace.

Jesus, grace for grace outpouring,
Show me ever greater things;
Raise me higher, sunward soaring,
Mounting as on eagle-wings.
By the brightness of Thy face,
Jesus, let me grow in grace.

Let me grow by sun and shower,
Every moment water me;
Make me really hour by hour
More and more conformed to Thee,
That Thy loving eye may trace,
Day by day, my growth in grace.

Let me then be always growing,
Never, never standing still;
Listening, learning, better knowing
Thine and Thy most blessed will.
Till I reach Thy holy place,
Daily let me grow in grace.

Like Frances Havergal, *we pray for growth in grace* in ourselves (firstly), but we also pray for growth in grace in the people we come into contact with daily, and even those whom we do not see or may never see on earth...





We turn once more to one of the sermons of Charles Spurgeon. It is based on Luke 13:18-19, *“Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.”*

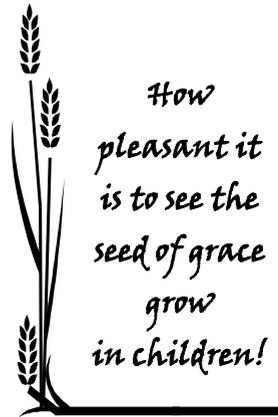
THE GROWTH OF A HARVEST

“A very wonderful thing it is, that the seed should grow. If we did not see it every day, we should be more astonished at the growth of seed than at all the wonders of magicians. **A growing seed is God’s abiding miracle.** You see a piece of ground near London covered with a market-garden, and after a few months you go by the place, and you see streets, and a public square, and a church, and a great population. You say to yourself, “It is remarkable that all these houses should have sprung up in a few months.” Yet that is not at all so wonderful as for a ploughed field to become covered four feet high with corn, and all without the use of wagons to bring the material, or tools to work it up into a harvest. Without noise of hammer, or the ringing of trowels; without handiwork of man, the whole has been done. **Wonder at the growth of grace. See how it increases, deepens, strengthens! Growth in grace is a marvel of divine love.** That a man should repent through the Gospel, that he should

believe in Jesus, that he should be totally changed, that he should have a hope of heaven, that he should receive power to become a child of God – these are all marvellous things; and yet they are going on under our eyes, and we fail to admire them as we should. The growth of holiness in such fallen creatures as we are is the admiration of angels, the delight of all intelligent beings.

To the sower this growth was very pleasing. How pleasant it is to see the seed of grace grow in children!

Do you not remember when you first sowed mustard-and-cress as a boy, how the very next morning you went and turned the ground up to see how much it had grown. How pleased you were when you saw the little yellow shoot, and afterwards a green leaf or two! So is it with the true teacher – he is anxious to see growth, and he makes eager enquiry for it. What he expected is taking place, and it is most delightful to him, whatever it may be to others.



Next, having started growing, it became a tree: says, “It waxed a great tree.” It was great in itself; but the greatness was seen mainly in comparison with the size of the seed. The growth was great. Here is the wonder: not that it became a tree, but that, being a mustard seed, it should become “a great tree.” Do you see the point of the parable? It was only a word spoken – “Dear boy, look to Jesus.” Only such a word, and a soul was saved, its sin was forgiven, its whole being was changed, a new heir of heaven was born. Do you see the growth? A word produces salvation! A grain of mustard seed becomes a great tree! A little teaching brings eternal life.

A boy was about as wild as any roamer of our streets: a teacher knelt by his side, with his arm about the lad’s neck. He pleaded with God for the boy, and with the boy for God. That boy was converted, and as a youth in business he was an example to the work-room; as a father, he was a guide to his household; as a man of God, he was a light to all around; as a preacher of righteousness, he adorned the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things. There is much more which I might easily picture; but you can

work it out as well as I can. **All that is to be desired may spring out of the simple talk of a humble Christian with a youth. A mustard seed becomes a great tree; a few words of holy admonition may produce a noble life.**

This great tree became a shelter: “the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.” Mustard in the East does not grow very large indeed. The commonest kind of it may be found eight or ten feet high; but there is a kind which will grow almost like a forest tree, and there probably were some of these latter trees in the sheltered region wherein our Lord was speaking. A mustard which grew here and there in Palestine was of surprising dimensions. When the tree grew, the birds came to it. Here we have **unexpected influences.** **Think of it. That man took a mustard seed which you could hardly see if I held it up. When he took the mustard seed, when he put it into his garden, had he any thought of bringing birds to that spot? Not he. You do not know all you are doing when you are teaching a child the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. When you are trying to bring a soul to Christ, your action has**



“You do not know all you are doing when you are teaching a child the way of salvation by Jesus Christ.”

ten thousand hooks to it, and these may seize on innumerable things. Holy teaching is the opening of a well, and no one knows all the effect which the waters will produce on that spot. There seems no link between sowing a grain of mustard seed and birds of the air; but the winged wanderers soon made a happy connection. There may seem no connection between teaching that boy and the reclaiming of cannibals in New Guinea; but I can see a very possible connection. Tribes in Central Africa may have their destiny shaped by your instruction of a tiny child. When John Pounds bribe an urchin with a hot potato to come and learn to read the Bible, I am sure John Pounds had no idea of all the ragged-schools in London; but there is a clear line of cause and effect in the whole matter. A hot potato might be the coat-of-arms of the Ragged-school Union. When Nasmyth went about from house to house visiting in the slums of London, I do not suppose that he saw in his act the founding of the London City Mission and all the Country Town Missions. **No man can tell the end of his beginnings, the growth of his sowings. Go on doing good in little ways, and you shall one day wonder at the great results. Do the next thing that lies before you. Do it well. Do it unto the Lord. Leave results with His unbounded liberality of love; but hope to reap at least a hundred fold.**

How many fowls came and roosted under that one mustard tree I do not know. How many birds in a day, how many birds in a year, came and found a resting place, and picked the seeds they loved so well, I cannot tell. When one person is converted, how many may receive a blessing out of him none can tell. Now is the day for romances: our literature is drenched with tales religious or irreligious. What stories might be written concerning benefits bestowed, directly and indirectly, by a single godly man or woman! When you have written a thrilling story upon the subject, I can assure you I can match it with something better still. One single individual can scatter benedictions across a continent, and belt the world with blessing.

But what is that I hear? I see this mustard tree – it is a very wonderful tree; but I not only see, I hear! Music! Music! The birds! The birds! It is early morning, the sun is scarcely up – what torrents of song! Is that the way to produce music? *Shall I sow mustard seed, and reap songs?* I thought we must buy an organ, or purchase a violin; or by some wind or stringed instrument come at music; but here is a new plan altogether. Ne-

**“When you teach children
the Gospel of the Lord Jesus,
you are sowing the music of heaven.”**



buchadnezzar had his flute, harp sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music; but all that mingled sound could not rival the melody of birds. **I shall sow mustard seed now, and get music in God's own way. When you teach children the Gospel of the Lord Jesus, you are sowing the music of heaven. Every time you tell the tidings of pardon bought with blood, you are filling the choirs of glory with sweet voices, which, to the Eternal Name, shall day and night, trill out songs of devout gratitude. Go on, then, if this is to be the result. If even heaven's high harmonies depend upon the simple teaching of a ragged-school, let us never cease from our hallowed service.**

Nowadays people want ten per cent for their money. Hosts of fools are readily caught by any scheme, or speculation, or limited liability company, that promises to give them immense dividends! **I should like to make you wise by inviting you to an investment which is sure. Sow a mustard seed, and grow a tree. Talk to Christ, and save a soul: that soul saved will be a blessing for ages, and a joy to God throughout eternity.**"



The Children for Christ

Dear Lord, I do not ask
That Thou shouldst give me
Some high work of Thine,
Some noble calling, or some wondrous task.
Give me a little hand to hold in mine;
Give me a little child to point the way
Over the strange, sweet path that leads to Thee.
Give me a little voice to teach to pray;
Give me two shining eyes Thy face to see.
The only crown I ask, dear Lord, to wear
Is this: That I may teach a little child.
I do not ask that I may ever stand
Among the wise, the worthy or the great;
I only ask that softly, hand in hand,
A child and I may enter at the gate.

Author Unknown



Here is **another amazing sermon by Charles Spurgeon**, in which he describes the beauty and reality of the beginning of God’s gracious working in people (especially young people) and how we are to respond to it, personally, and as co-workers of God.

SPRING IN THE HEART

“You send abundant rain on the plowed fields and soak them with water; you soften the soil with showers and cause the young plants to grow.” - Psalm 65:10 (GNB)

“Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly; thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof.”—Psalm 65:10 (KJV).

Though other seasons excel in fullness, spring must always bear the palm for freshness and beauty. We thank God when the harvest hours draw

near, and the golden grain invites the sickle, but we ought equally to thank him for the rougher days of spring, for these prepare the harvest. April showers are mothers of the sweet May flowers, and the wet and cold of winter are the parents of the splendour of summer. God blesses the springing thereof, or else it could not be said, "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness." There is as much necessity for divine benediction in spring as for heavenly bounty in summer; and, therefore, we should praise God all the year round.

Spiritual spring is a very blessed season in a church. Then we see youthful piety developed, and on every hand we hear the joyful cry of those who say, "We have found the Lord." Our sons are springing up as the grass and as willows by the watercourses. We hold up our hands in glad astonishment and cry, "Who are these that fly as a cloud and as doves to their windows?" In the revival days of a Church, when God is blessing her with many conversions, she has great cause to rejoice in God and to sing, "Thou blessest the springing thereof."

I intend to take the text in reference to individual cases. **There is a time of springing of grace**, when it is just in its bud, just breaking through the dull cold earth of unregenerate nature. I desire to talk a little about that, and concerning the blessing which the Lord grants to the green blade of new-born godliness, to those who are beginning to hope in the Lord.

I. First, I shall have a little to say about THE WORK PREVIOUS TO THE SPRINGING THEREOF.

It appears from the text that **there is work for God alone to do** before the springing comes, and we know that **there is work for God to do through us** as well.

There is work for us to do. *Before there can be a springing up in the soul of any, there must be ploughing, harrowing, and sowing. There must be a ploughing, and we do not expect that as soon as ever we plough we shall reap the sheaves. Blessed be God, in many cases, the reaper overtakes the ploughman, but we must not always expect it. ***In some hearts God is long in preparing the soul by conviction: the law with its ten black horses drags the ploughshare of conviction up and down the soul till there is no one part of it left unfurrowed. Conviction****

goes deeper than any plough to the very core and centre of the spirit, till the spirit is wounded. The ploughers make deep furrows indeed when God puts his hand to the work: the soil of the heart is broken in pieces in the presence of the Most High.

Then comes the sowing. Before there can be a springing up it is certain that there must be something put into the ground, so that after the preacher has used the plough of the law, he applies to his Master for the seed-basket of the gospel. Gospel promises, gospel doctrines, especially a clear exposition of free grace and the atonement, these are the handfuls of corn which we scatter broadcast. Some of the grain falls on the highway, and is lost; but other handfuls fall where the plough has been, and there abide.

Then comes the harrowing work. *We do not expect to sow seed and then leave it: the gospel has to be prayed over. The prayer of the preacher and the prayer of the Church make up God's harrow to rake in the seed after it is scattered, and so it is covered up within the clods of the soul, and is hidden in the heart of the hearer.*

Now there is a reason why I dwell upon this, namely, that I may exhort my dear brethren who have not seen success, not to give up the work but to hope that they have been doing the ploughing, and sowing, and harrowing work, and that the harvest is to come. I mention this for yet another reason, and that is, by way of warning to those who expect to have a harvest without this preparatory work. ***I do not believe that much good will come from attempts at sudden revivals made without previous prayerful labour.*** A revival to be permanent must be a matter of growth, and the result of much holy effort, longing, pleading, and watching. ***The servant of God is to preach the gospel whether men are prepared for it or not; but in order to large success, depend upon it there is a preparedness necessary amongst the hearers.*** Upon some hearts warm earnest preaching drops like an unusual thing which startles but does not convince; while in other congregations, where good gospel preaching has long been the rule, and much prayer has been offered, the words fall into the hearers' souls and bring forth speedy fruit. **We must not expect to have results without work.** ***There is no hope of a church having an extensive revival in its midst unless there is continued and importunate waiting upon God, together with earnest labouring, intense anxiety, and hopeful expectation.***

But there is also a work to be done which is beyond our power. After ploughing, sowing, and harrowing, **there must come the shower from heaven.** "Thou visitest the earth and waterest it," says the Psalmist. **In vain are all our efforts unless God shall bless us with the rain of his Holy Spirit's influence.** *O Holy Spirit! Thou, and thou alone, workest wonders in the human heart, and thou comest from the Father and the Son to do the Father's purposes, and to glorify the Son.*

Three effects are spoken of. First, we are told **he waters the ridges.** As the ridges of the field become well saturated through and through with the abundant rain, so God sends his Holy Spirit till the whole heart of man is moved and influenced by his divine operations. The understanding is enlightened, the conscience is quickened, the will is controlled, the affections are inflamed; all these powers, which I may call the ridges of the heart, come under the divine working. It is ours to deal with men as men, and bring to bear upon them gospel truth, and to set before them motives that are suitable to move rational creatures; but, after all, it is the rain from on high which alone can water the ridges: there is no hope of the heart being savingly affected except by divine operations.

Next, it is added, "**Thou settlest the furrows,**" by which some think it is meant that the furrows are drenched with water. Others think there is an allusion here to the beating down of the earth by heavy rain till the ridges become flat, and by the soaking of the water are settled into a more compact mass. Certain it is that the influences of God's Spirit have a humbling and settling effect upon a man. He was unsettled once like the earth that is dry and crumbly, and blown about and carried away with every wind of doctrine; but as the earth when soaked with wet is compacted and knit together, so the heart becomes solid and serious under the power of the Spirit. As the high parts of the ridge are beaten down into the furrows, so, the lofty ideas, the grand schemes, and carnal boastings of the heart begin to level down, when the Holy Spirit comes to work upon the soul. Genuine humility is a very gracious fruit of the Spirit. ***To be broken in heart is the best means of preparing the soul for Jesus.*** "A broken and a contrite hear, O God, thou wilt not despise." Brethren, always be thankful when you see high thoughts of man brought down; this settling the furrows is a very gracious preparatory work of grace.

Yet again, it is added, "***Thou makest it soft with showers.***" Man's heart is naturally hardened against the gospel; like the Eastern soil, it is hard as iron if there be no gracious rain. How sweetly and effectively does the Spirit of God soften the man through and through! He is no longer towards the Word what he used to be: he feels everything, whereas once he felt nothing. The rock flows with water; the heart is dissolved in tenderness, the eyes are melted into tears.

All this is God's work. I have said already that God works through us, but still it is God's immediate work to send down the rain of his grace from on high. Perhaps he is at work upon some of you, though as yet there is no springing up of spiritual life in your souls. Though your condition is still a sad one, we will hope for you that ere long there shall be seen the living seed of grace sending up its tender green shoot above the soil, and may the Lord bless the springing thereof.

II. In the second place, let us deliver A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SPRINGING THEREOF.

After the operations of the Holy Spirit have been quietly going on for a certain season as pleaseth the great Master and Husbandman, then there are signs of grace. Remember the apostle's words, "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." Some of our friends are greatly disturbed because they cannot see the full corn in the ear in themselves. They suppose that, if they were the subjects of a divine work they would be precisely like certain advanced Christians with whom it is their privilege to commune, or of whom they may have read in biographies. Beloved, this is a very great mistake. ***When first grace enters the heart, it is not a great tree covering with its shadow whole acres, but it is the least of all seeds, like a rain of mustard seed. When it first rises upon the soul, it is not the sun shining at high noon, but it is the first dim ray of dawn. Are you so simple as to expect the harvest before you have passed through the springing-time? I shall hope that by a very brief description of the earliest stage of Christian experience you may be led to say, "I have gone as far as that," and then I hope you may be able to take the comfort of the text to yourselves: "Thou blessest the springing thereof."***

What then is the springing up of piety in the heart? We think it is first seen in ***sincerely earnest desires after salvation.*** The man is not saved, in

his own apprehension, but he longs to be. That which was once a matter of indifference is now a subject of intense concern. Once he despised Christians, and thought them needlessly earnest; he thought religion a mere trifle, and he looked upon the things of time and sense as the only substantial matters; but now how changed he is! He envies the meanest Christian, and would change places with the poorest believer if he might but be able to read his title clear to mansions in the skies. ***Now worldly things have lost dominion over him, and spiritual things are uppermost.*** Once with the unthinking many, he cried, "Who will show us any good?" but now he cries, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me." Once it was the corn and the wine to which he looked for comfort, but ***now he looks to God alone.*** His rock of refuge must be God, for he finds no comfort elsewhere. His holy desires, which he had years ago, were like smoke from the chimney, soon blown away; but ***now his longings are permanent, though not always operative to the same degree.*** At times these desires amount to a hungering and a thirsting after righteousness, and yet he is not satisfied with these desires, but wishes for a still more anxious longing after heavenly things. These desires are among the first springings of divine life in the soul.

"The springing thereof" shows itself next in prayer. It is prayer now. Once it was the mocking of God with holy sounds unattended by the heart; but now, though the prayer is such that he would not like a human ear to hear him, yet God approves it, for it is the talking of a spirit to a Spirit, and not the muttering of lips to an unknown God. His prayers, perhaps, are not very long: they do not amount to more than this, "Oh!" "Ah!" "Would to God!" "Lord have mercy upon me, a sinner!" and such-like short ejaculations; but, then, they are prayers. "Behold he prayeth," does not refer to a long prayer; it is quite as sure a proof of spiritual life within, if it only refers to a sigh or to a tear. ***These "groanings that cannot be uttered," are amongst "the springings thereof."***

There will also be manifest ***a hearty love for the means of grace, and the house of God. The Bible, long unread, which was thought to be of little more use than an old almanack, is now treated with great consideration;*** and though the reader finds little in it that comforts him just now, and much that alarms him, yet ***he feels that it is the book for him, and he turns to its pages with hope.*** When he goes up to God's house, he listens eagerly, hoping that there may be a message for him. Before, he attended



"Thou blessest the springing thereof"
Psalm 65:10



God sees it!



worship as a sort of pious necessity incumbent upon all respectable people; but *now he goes up to God's house that he may find the Saviour*. Once there was no more religion in him than in the door which turns upon its hinges; but now he enters the house praying, "Lord, meet with my soul," and if he gets no blessing, he goes away sighing, "O that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat." This is one of the blessed signs of "the springing thereof."

Yet more cheering is another, namely, that *the soul in this state has faith in Jesus Christ, at least in some degree*. It is not a faith which brings great joy and peace, but still it is a faith which keeps the heart from despair, and prevents its sinking under a sense of sin. I have known the time when I do not believe any man living could see faith in me, and when I could scarcely perceive any in myself, and yet I was bold to say, with Peter, "*Lord, thou knowest all thing, thou knowest that I love thee.*" What man cannot see, Christ can see. Many people have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but they are so much engaged in looking at it that they do not see it. If they would look to Christ and not to their own faith, they would not only see Christ but see their own faith too; but they measure their faith, and it seems so little when they contrast it with the faith of full-grown Christians, that they fear it is not faith at all. Oh, little one, if thou hast faith enough to receive Christ, remember the promise, "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." Poor simple, weak-hearted, and troubled one, look to Jesus and answer, Can such a Saviour suffer in vain? Can such an atonement be offered in vain? Canst thou trust him, and yet be cast away? It cannot be. It never was in the Saviour's heart to shake off one that did cling to his arm. However feeble the faith he blesses "the springing thereof." The difficulty arises partly from misapprehension and partly from want of confidence in God. I say misapprehension: now if like some Londoners you had never seen corn when it is green, you would cry out, "What! Do you say that yonder green stuff is wheat?" "Yes," the farmer says, "that is wheat." You look at it again and you reply, "Why, man alive, that is nothing but grass. You do not mean to tell me that this grassy stuff will ever produce a loaf of bread such as I see in the baker's window; I cannot conceive it." No, you could not conceive it, but when you get accustomed to it, it is not at all wonderful to see the wheat go through certain stages; first the blade, then the ear, and afterwards the full corn in the ear. Some of you have never seen growing grace, and do not know anything about it. When you are newly

converted you meet with Christians who are like ripe golden ears, and you say, "I am not like them." True, you are no more like them than that grassy stuff in the furrows is like full-grown wheat; but you will grow like them one of these days. *You must expect to go through the blade period before you get to the ear period, and in the ear period you will have doubts whether you will ever come to the full corn in the ear; but you will arrive at perfection in due time. Thank God that you are in Christ at all. Whether I have much faith or little faith, whether I can do much for Christ or little for Christ is not the first question; I am saved, not on account of what I am, but on account of what Jesus Christ is; and if I am trusting to him, however little in Israel I may be, I am as safe as the brightest of the saints.*

I have said, however, that mixed with misapprehension there is a great deal of unbelief. I cannot put it all down to an ignorance that may be forgiven: for there is sinful unbelief too. O sinner, why do you not trust Jesus Christ? Poor quickened, awakened conscience, God gives you his word that he who trusts in Christ is not condemned, and yet you are afraid that you are condemned! This is to give God the lie! Be ashamed and confounded that you should ever have been guilty of doubting the veracity of God. *All your other sins do not grieve Christ so much as the sin of thinking that he is unwilling to forgive you, or the sin of suspecting that if you trust him he will cast you away. Do not slander his gracious character. Do not cast a slur upon the generosity of his tender heart. He saith, "'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.'" Come in the faith of his promise, and he will receive you just now.*

I have thus given some description of "the springing thereof."

III. Thirdly, according to the text, THERE IS ONE WHO SEES THIS SPRINGING. *Thou, Lord—thou blessest the springing thereof.*

I wish that some of us had quicker eyes to see the beginning of grace in the souls of men; for want of this we let slip many opportunities of helping the weaklings. If a woman had the charge of a number of children that were not her own, I do not suppose she would notice all the incipient stages of disease; but when a mother nurses her own dear children, as soon as ever upon the cheek or in the eye there is a token of approaching sickness, she perceives it at once. I wish we had just as quick an eye, be-



God sees it!

cause just as tender a heart, towards precious souls. *I do not doubt that many young people are weeks and even months in distress, who need not be, if you who know the Lord were a little more watchful to help them in the time of their sorrow. Shepherds are up all night at lambing time to catch up the lambs as soon as they are born, and take them in and nurse them; and we, who ought to be shepherds for God, should be looking out for all the lambs*, especially at seasons when there are many born into God's great fold, for tender nursing is wanted in the first stages of the new life. *God, however, when his servants do not see "the springing thereof," sees it all.*

Now, you silent, retired spirits, who dare not speak to father or mother, or brother or sister, this text ought to be a sweet morsel to you. Thou blessest the springing thereof," which proves that *God sees you and your newborn grace. The Lord sees the first sign of penitence. Though you only say to yourself, "I will arise, and go to my Father," your Father hears you. Though it is nothing but a desire, your Father registers it.* "Thou puttest my tears into thy bottle. Are they not in thy book?" He is watching your return; he runs to meet you, and puts his arms about you, and kisses you with the kisses of his accepting love. O soul, be encouraged with that

thought, that up in the chamber or down by the hedge, or wherever it is that thou hast sought secrecy, God is there. *Dwell on the thought, "Thou God seest me."* That is a precious text,—"*All my desire is before thee;*" and here is another sweet one, "*The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy.*" He can see you when you only hope in his mercy, and he takes pleasure in you if you have only begun to fear him. Here is a third choice word, "*Thou wilt perfect that which concerneth me.*" Have you a concern about these things? Is it a matter of soul-concern with you to be reconciled to God, and to have an interest in Jesus' precious blood? It is only "the springing thereof," but he blesses it. It is written, "*A bruised reed he will not break, and the smoking flax he will not quench, till he bring forth judgment unto victory.*" There shall be victory for you, even before the judgment-seat of God, though as yet you are only like the flax that smokes and gives no light, or like the reed that is broken, and yields no music. *God sees the first springing of grace.*

IV. A few words upon a fourth point: WHAT A MISERY IT WOULD BE, IF IT WERE POSSIBLE, TO HAVE THIS SPRINGING WITHOUT GOD'S BLESSING!

The text says, "Thou blessest the springing thereof." We must, just a moment, by way of contrast, think of how the springing would have been without the blessing. Suppose we were to see a revival amongst us without God's blessing. It is my conviction that there are revivals which are not of God at all, but are produced by excitement merely. If there be no blessing from the Lord, it will be all a delusion, a bubble blown up into the air for a moment, and then gone to nothing. We shall only see the people stirred, to become the more dull and dead afterwards; and this is a great mischief to the church.

In the individual heart, if there should be a springing up without God's blessing, there would be no good in it. Suppose you have good desires, but no blessing on these desires, they will only tantalize and worry you; and then after a time, they will be gone, and you will be more impervious than you were before to religious convictions; for, if religious desires are not of God's sending, but are caused by excitement, they will probably prevent your giving a serious hearing to the Word of God in times to come. *If convictions do not soften they will certainly harden.* To what extremities have some been driven who have had springings of a certain

sort which have not led them to Christ! Some have been crushed by despair. They tell us that religion crowds the madhouse: it is not true; but there is no doubt whatever that religiousness of a certain kind has driven many a man out of his mind. ***The poor souls have felt their wound but have not seen the balm. They have not known Jesus. They have had a sense of sin and nothing more.*** They have not fled for refuge to the hope which God has set before them. Marvel not if men do go mad when they refuse the Saviour. It may come as a judicial visitation of God upon those men who, when in great distress of mind, will not fly to Christ. I believe it is with some just this—you must either fly to Jesus, or else your burden will become heavier and heavier until your spirit will utterly fail. This is not the fault of religion, it is the fault of those who will not accept the remedy which religion presents. A springing up of desires without God's blessing would be an awful thing, but we thank him that we are not left in such a case.

V. And now I have to dwell upon THE COMFORTING THOUGHT THAT GOD DOES BLESS "THE SPRINGING THEREOF." I wish to deal with you who are tender and troubled; I want to show that God does bless your springing. He does it in many ways.

Frequently he does it by the cordials which he brings. You have a few very sweet moments: you cannot say that you are Christ's, but at times the bells of your heart ring very sweetly at the mention of his name. The means of grace are very precious to you. When you gather to the Lord's worship you feel a holy calm, and you go away from the service wishing that there were seven Sundays in the week instead of one. By the blessing of God the Word has just suited your case, as if the Lord had sent his servants on purpose to you: you lay aside your crutches for awhile, and you begin to run. Though these things have been sadly transient, they are tokens for good.

On the other hand, if you have had none of these comforts, or few of them, and the means of grace have not been consolations to you, I want you to look upon that as a blessing. ***It may be the greatest blessing that God can give us to take away all comforts on the road, in order to quicken our running towards the end.*** When a man is flying to the City of Refuge to be protected from the man-slayer, it may be an act of great consideration to stay him for a moment that he may quench his thirst and



run more swiftly afterwards; but perhaps, in a case of imminent peril, it may be the kindest thing neither to give him anything to eat or to drink, nor invite him to stop for a moment, in order that he may fly with undiminished speed to the place of safety. The Lord may be blessing you in the uneasiness which you feel. Inasmuch as you cannot say that you are in Christ, it may be the greatest blessing which heaven can give to take away every other blessing from you, in order that you may be compelled to fly to the Lord. You perhaps have a little of your self-righteousness left, and while it is so you cannot get joy and comfort. ***The royal robe which Jesus gives will never shine brilliantly upon us till every rag of our own goodness is gone. Perhaps you are not empty enough, and God will never fill you with Christ till you are.*** Fear often drives men to faith. Have you never heard of a person walking in the fields into whose bosom a bird has flown because pursued by the hawk. Poor timid thing, it would not have ventured there had not a greater fear compelled it. All this may be so with you; your fears may be sent to drive you more swiftly and more closely to the Saviour, and if so, I see in these present sorrows the signs that God is blessing "the springing thereof."

In looking back upon my own "springing" I sometimes think God blessed me then in a lovelier way than now. Though I would not willingly return to that early stage of my spiritual life, yet there were many joys about it. ***An apple tree when loaded with apples is a very comely sight; but give me, for beauty, the apple tree in bloom. The whole world does not present a more lovely sight than an apple blossom. Now, a full-grown Christian laden with fruit is a comely sight, but still there is a peculiar loveliness about the young Christian.*** Let me tell you what that blessed-

ness is; you have probably now a greater horror of sin than professors who have known the Lord for years; they might wish that they felt your tenderness of conscience. You have now a graver sense of duty, and a more solemn fear of the neglect of it than some who are further advanced. You have also a greater zeal than many: you are now doing your first works for God, and burning with your first love; nothing is too hot or too heavy for you: I pray that you may never decline, but always advance.

And now to close. I think there are three lessons for us to learn. First, let older saints be very gentle and kind to young believers. God blesses the springing thereof—mind that you do the same. Do not throw cold water upon young desires: do not snuff out young believers with hard questions. While they are babes and need the milk of the Word, do not be choking them with your strong meat; they will eat strong meat by-and-bye, but not just yet. Remember, Jacob would not overdrive the lambs; be equally prudent. Teach and instruct them, but let it be with gentleness and tenderness, not as their superiors, but as nursing fathers for Christ's sake. God, you see, blesses the springing thereof—may he bless it through you!

The next thing I have to say is, fulfill the duty of gratitude. Beloved, if God blesses the springing thereof we ought to be grateful for a little grace. If you have only seen the first shoot peeping up through the mould be thankful, and you shall see the green blade waving in the breeze; be thankful for the ankle-deep verdure and you shall soon see the commencement of the ear; be thankful for the first green ears and you shall see the flowering of the wheat, and by-and-by its ripening, and the joyous harvest.

The last lesson is one of encouragement. If God blesses "the springing thereof," dear beginners, what will he not do for you in after days? If he gives you such a meal when you break your fast, what dainties will be on your table when he says to you, "Come and dine"; and what a banquet will he furnish at the supper of the Lamb! *O troubled one! Let the storms which howl and the snows which fall, and the wintry blasts that nip your springing, all be forgotten in this one consoling thought, that God blesses your springing, and whom God blesses none can curse. Over your head, dear, desiring, pleading, languishing soul, the Lord of heaven and earth pronounces the blessing of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Take that blessing and rejoice in it evermore. Amen.*"

Pruning

Pruning is painful, but productive!

**“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener...
every branch that does bear fruit He prunes
so that it will be even more fruitful.”**

John 15:2

Frances Havergal put it like this:

*Now, the pruning, sharp, unsparing,
Scattered blossom, bleeding shoot!
Afterward, the plenteous bearing
Of the Master's pleasant fruit.*

All God's servants who were fruitful for Him went through the pruning process! When Oswald Chambers went through it, he wrote the following poem about “cutting off” what God wants to be pruned:

**“Cut it off.” My heart is bleeding,
And my spirit's wrung with pain,
Yet I hear my Jesus pleading,
“Cut it off or all is vain.”**

**So I've stopped my ears in terror
Lest self-pity make me quail,
Lest at last I take the error
And God's purpose thwart and fail.**

**I am bowed to death in sadness,
For the pain is all too great,
But the dear Lord must find pleasure
In the way He maketh straight.”**



Andrew Murray, who was used by God in revival in South Africa, and who lived in the Boland (where there are many vineyards), wrote about “The Pruning Knife” in his book “The True Vine” as follows:

The Pruning Knife

“Already ye are clean because of the word I have spoken unto you.”—John 15:3.

What is the pruning knife of this Heavenly Husbandman? It is often said to be affliction. By no means in the first place. How would it then fare with many who have long seasons free from adversity; or with some on whom God appears to shower down kindness all their life long? No; **it is the Word of God that is the knife**, sharper than any two-edged sword, that pierces even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and is quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. It is only when affliction leads to this discipline of the Word that it becomes a blessing; the lack of this heart-cleansing through the Word is the reason why affliction is so often unsanctified. Not even Paul's thorn in the flesh could become a blessing until Christ's word, "My strength is made perfect in weakness," had made him see the danger of self-exaltation, and made him willing to rejoice in infirmities.

The Word is God's pruning knife. Jesus says, "Ye are already clean, because of the word I have spoken unto you." How searchingly that word had been spoken by Him, out of whose mouth there went a sharp two-edged sword, as He had taught them: *Except a man deny himself, lose his life, forsake all, hate father and mother, he cannot be My disciple, he is not worthy of Me.* Or, as He humbled their pride, or reproved their lack

of love, or foretold their all forsaking Him. From the opening of His ministry in the Sermon on the Mount to His words of warning in the last night, His word had tried and cleansed them. ***He had discovered and condemned all there was of self; they were now emptied and cleansed, ready for the incoming of the Holy Spirit.***

It is as the soul gives up its own thoughts, and men's thoughts of what is religion, and yields itself heartily, humbly, patiently, to the teaching of the Word by the Spirit, that the Father will do His blessed work of pruning and cleansing away all of nature and self that mixes with our work and hinders His Spirit. Let those who would know all the Husbandman can do for them, all the Vine can bring forth through them, seek earnestly to yield themselves heartily to the blessed cleansing through the Word. Let them, in their study of the Word, receive it as a hammer that breaks and opens up, as a fire that melts and refines, as a sword that lays bare and slays all that is of the flesh! The word of conviction will prepare for the word of comfort and of hope, and the Father will cleanse them through the Word.

All ye who are Branches of the True Vine, each time you read or hear the Word, wait first of all on Him to use it for His cleansing of the Branch. Set your heart upon His desire for more fruit. Trust Him as

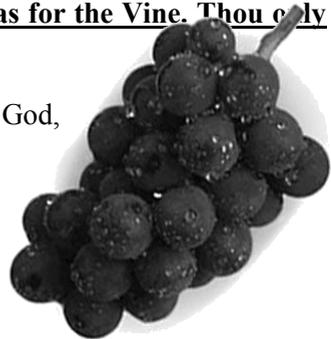




Husbandman to work it. Yield yourselves in simple childlike surrender to the cleansing work of His Word and Spirit, and you may count upon it that His purpose will be fulfilled in you.

Father! I pray Thee, cleanse me through Thy Word. Let it search out and bring to light all that is of self and the flesh in my religion. Let it cut away every root of self-confidence, that the Vine may find me wholly free to receive His life and Spirit. O my Holy Husbandman, I trust Thee to care for the Branch as much as for the Vine. Thou only art my hope.⁷

This is indeed the prayer of every true child of God, every little branch in Jesus, every co-worker in His vineyard... May He be glorified, though much fruitfulness!



“I have sent you to harvest”

John 4:38a (ISV)



Harvesting!



“I have sent you to harvest”

John 4:38a (ISV)

*“Jesus said to them, My food (nourishment) is to do the will (pleasure) of Him Who sent Me and to accomplish and completely finish His work. Do you not say, It is still four months until harvest time comes? Look! I tell you, **raise your eyes and observe the fields and see how they are already white for harvesting.** Already the reaper is getting his wages [he who does the cutting now has his reward], for he is gathering fruit (crop) unto life eternal, so that he who does the planting and he who does the reaping may rejoice together. For in this the saying holds true, One sows and another reaps. **I sent you to reap a crop for which you have not toiled.** Other men have labored and you have stepped in to reap the results of their work.” (John 4:34 –38)*

After the ploughing, and the sowing, and the harrowing, and the waiting, and the watching, and the weeding, and the praying, and the pruning, and the watering, and the feeding, and the waiting still more, and the praying still more... comes the harvesting! Then we see the worth of it all...

**O God, wert Thou plowing
Thy profitless earth
With the brave plough of Love,
And the sharp plough of Pain?
But hark to the mirth
Of wheat field in harvest!
Dear Plower, well worth
That plowing, this yellow-gold grain.”**

Amy Carmichael
Valley of Vision

To “**harvest**” is to be used by God in

‡ **Bringing people to Christ;**

‡ **Helping people to come to surrender themselves and their**

sins completely to Jesus;

- † *Accompanying people to the place where they are saved by trusting the Lord Jesus fully and only;*
- † *Leading people to a place where they are born again by the working of God's Spirit;*
- † *Assisting people to come to dying to their old life (of sin and self) and receiving the new Life of Christ as an In-dwelling. Living Reality;*
- † *Leading people to repentance and faith in God.*
- † *Bringing people to the end of themselves ...and the beginning of God's Life in them, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the working of the Holy Spirit.*

It is very important that we follow the Lord of the harvest in this! WE are the farm-hands, HE is the LORD of the harvest! **He needs to lead us to those fields that are ripe and ready for harvesting...** If we try to “harvest” souls when they are not “ready”, we may spoil the ultimate harvest and lose a soul!

If the field is NOT ready for harvesting, if the person is not “ready” for repenting and receiving the Lord, **we need to hear from God what we are to do**—to plough, or to sow, or to harrow, or to pray, or to water, or to feed, or to wait...?!

Writing on “*How to work for the cure of souls*,” Oswald Chambers said the Christian worker who is right with God should:

1. “***Rely every moment on the Holy Spirit*** to direct you as to what to say in the case of every person that comes...”
2. “***Live among human facts***, men and women, not theories... keeping in contact with people...”
3. “***Ransack this old Book*** from cover to cover in the most practical way you know... Keeping in contact with the revelation facts in God's Book; live amongst them, and ask God how to apply them...” “See that you get into this Book”...

John Wesley (who was used by God as a very fruitful harvester) said: **“You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work.** It is not your business to preach so many times; but to save as many souls as you can; to **bring as many sinners as you possi-**

bly can to repentance, and with all your power to build them up in that holiness, without which they cannot see the Lord.”

Remember, the purpose is to harvest with Jesus, to harvest for Him, not just to plough and sow and water! Charles Spurgeon said: **“If I never won souls, I would sigh till I did. I would break my heart over them if I could not break their hearts. Though I can understand the possibility of an earnest sower never reaping, I cannot understand the possibility of an earnest sower being content not to reap. I cannot comprehend any one of you Christian people trying to win souls and not having results, and being satisfied without results.”**

Oh, this is our heart cry—that everyone who reads these words may have a passion for Jesus Christ and (as a result of that) a passion to share Him with others, that they too may be saved!!

If I never won souls, I would sigh till I did. I would break my heart over them if I could not break their hearts. Though I can understand the possibility of an earnest sower never reaping, I cannot understand the possibility of an earnest sower being content not to reap. I cannot comprehend any one of you Christian people trying to win souls and not having results, and being satisfied without results.



Charles Spurgeon

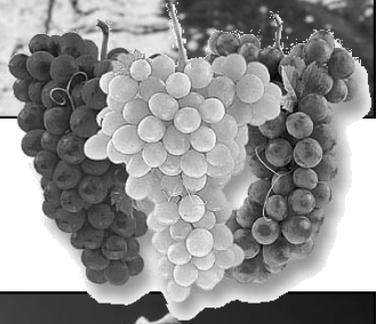


The harvest is ready and I am harvesting!





*I must work
before it's
NIGHT...!*



Phillip Keller was an ardent soul-winner and harvester with Jesus. He shares beautifully about firstfruits in his book *“Outdoor Moments with God”* in the chapter called:

Firstfruits

“Because of a rather cool and unusually rainy season, some of the local fruit has been slow to ripen. But at dawn yesterday I felt a compelling urge to go in search of **the first apricots**, my favourite summer fruit.

I invited my wife to accompany me on this little escapade. We both needed a break from the steady work load of the week. So a wee adventure of this sort could inject real pleasure into our quest. For **I love to harvest my own fruit off the tree**.

It was a cool, still morning with giant cloud systems climbing the crests of the mountain ranges. The country roads were virtually empty of traffic, and the car cruised along as quietly as a cougar running on rock outcrop.

We were far, far out on remote rangeland when I spotted a lone, wind-blown apricot tree standing sturdy in the corner of a fence by the road. It bore **golden fruit**. We pulled off onto a patch of gravel, and I hurried over to pick up the first fallen fruit lying in the grass and weeds.

The luscious, golden apricots literally exploded with rich juice between my lips. Here, standing out in the wide sweep of the open range, was a solitary tree unattended by any man. It had not been fertilized, had never been pruned, and had never had any chemical sprays upon its blossoms or branches. **This was pristine, pure, perfect fruit distilled from wild sod, warm sunlight, and sparse rainfall in this untamed site.**

For me, as a rather rough mountain man, this was a moment of supreme satisfaction, of pure pleasure, and of deep delight. For in a special sense one of those “beautiful bonuses” my Father so often imparts to my life.

Finding these firstfruits in such a simple but joyous way is in reality a mini-miracle bestowed with grace and generosity by my Father’s gentle hand. **I am not a man to look for sensational or spectacular demonstrations of divine power.** A taste of wild apricots on a remote range is

enough.

We pushed on further into the hills. A wild, as yet untamed, river cut its winding course between the rugged ranges. We followed its valley and came to a small, cute log cabin. Beside it stood a magnificent apricot tree laden with **rich, red fruit**.

A line of fresh laundry blew in the breeze. So I was sure someone was home. Sure enough, the lady of the log cabin was up in the branches of a huge cherry tree gleaming the last of this year's black cherry crop. She was an affable soul, all smiles, with dancing eyes.

Quickly she came down from her perch and greeted us warmly. The fact was, her laden apricot tree was grafted to several varieties of which the brilliant red fruit were **peachcots**, a brand new fruit to us. Only a few of the first ripe fruits had fallen. Of these only a few were fit to gather for her grandchildren. The rest were left as a banquet for the deer.

Very quickly we discovered that lovely spirit of goodwill which draws our Father's children together in the lovely bonds of His family. We were there only a few minutes, for she was a busy lady, but they were memorable moments of intense joy, like jewels spilled into this still, gentle morning.

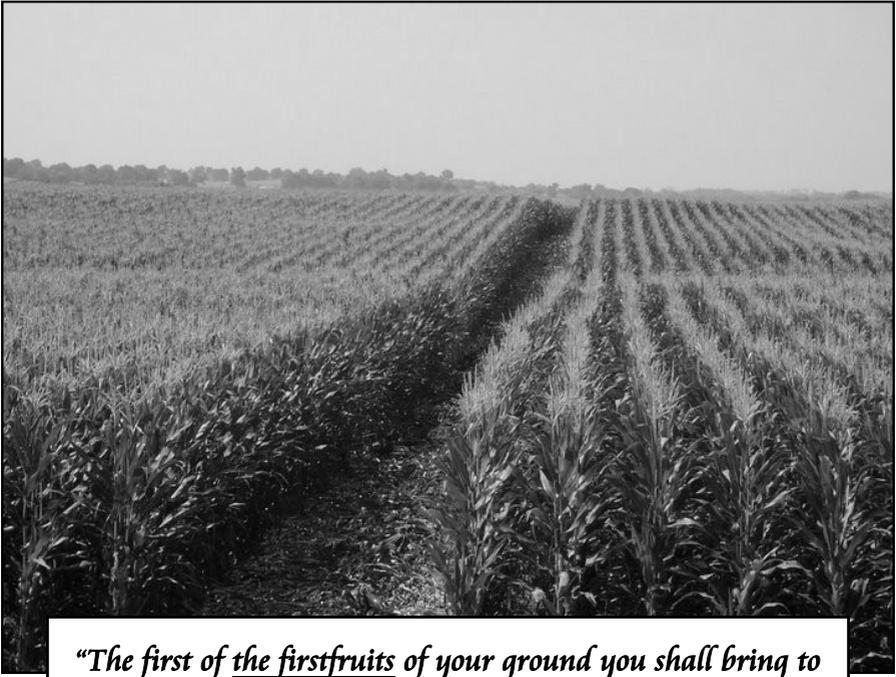
We parted as friends who had known each other for much, much longer than time could tell. I presume that is what it will be like in the next life when all of us who truly love our beloved Friend and Lord, Christ Himself, meet for the first time in the wondrous warmth of His presence.

Just as we were leaving, we exchanged names, almost as an afterthought. **Then, in a supreme gesture of goodwill, she gathered up the apricots and peachcots, first fallen from her tree, and pressed them upon us with pure pleasure shining in her eyes.**

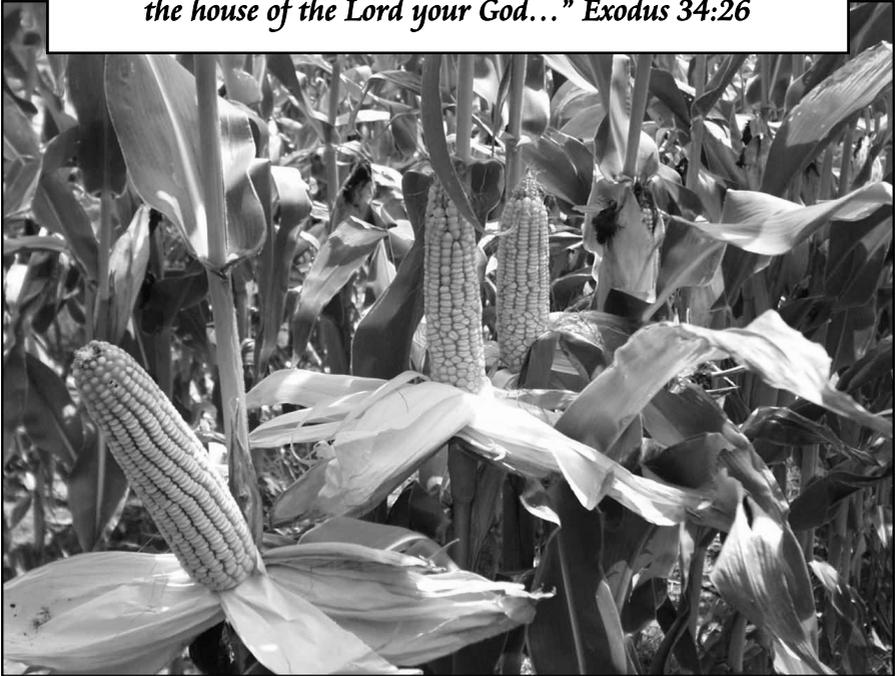


**We came home singing. What a memorable morning!
Firstfruits.**

Firstfruits!"



“The first of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring to the house of the Lord your God...” Exodus 34:26



All for Jesus!



Just as sweet and as precious it was for Phillip Keller to discover and enjoy the firstfruits of those golden apricots, and the rich red apricots, as well as the peachcots, *with the Lord*, ...in the same way there is an inexplicable sweetness and preciousness that accompanies the harvesting of the firstfruits of souls in one's life or in a year or at a new work or in a new neighbourhood or at a new spiritual harvest field, just opened for us by the Lord!

David Wilkerson was an eager lover of the Lord and a lover of souls. He extended his harvest field (of his small congregation) to the backstreets and allies of gang-infested New York City in 1958. He harvested richly amongst the drug addicts, the prostitutes, the gangsters, the teenagers... He was used by the Lord of the harvest to start the world-wide Teen Challenge ministry, as well as the World Challenge, Inc. He became the founder pastor of Times Square Church in New York City in 1987. We now focus on a crucial message written and preached by him on 2 May 2005:



*Nicky Cruz and
David Wilkerson*

IT'S HARVEST TIME

*By David Wilkerson
May 2, 2005*

Dearly Beloved

TO CHRIST BE ALL GLORY, HONOR AND PRAISE.

May I give you a short word, which I believe is from the mind of Christ through the Holy Spirit? It has to do with what I believe is one of the greatest needs in the church today. It is a word every believer ought to hear. This is the word: ***Growing numbers of Christians are no longer fully satisfied with Christ. He is being dethroned by what the Lord him-***

self called thorns. He defined thorns as *the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in*. Christ said these are the thorns that choke the Word and cause it to become unfruitful.

I ask you, is the Lord more on your mind than a year ago? Do you spend more time in his presence than a year ago? Is your passion for him growing or withering? Many of those who once were so passionately in love with Christ now run about pursuing their own interests. They're burdened down with stress and problems, chasing after riches and the things of this world. They have grown cold or lukewarm, and they have less and less time for Jesus. The Lord and his church now get only an hour of their time, on Sunday mornings.

Jesus said, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered" (John 15:6). In other words, that person is drying up, no longer drawing life from the true vine. *Yet he is deceived by thinking all is well, because he still speaks the language of the intimacy he once enjoyed with Christ.* Riches and the things that are necessary in life are not evil in themselves. And all of us face cares and troubles in this life. *The sin comes in the time and energy we spend in pursuing these things, at the expense of neglecting Christ.*

Dear saints of God, one day soon we all will stand before our blessed Christ to face his judgment seat. We will see him face to face. *I want to stand in his presence as a fruitful son, not ushered into his presence as a lukewarm, withered, estranged, thorn-choked servant. I hear the Holy Spirit calling the Lord's people back to their first love. Back to hungering and thirsting for more of Christ. Back to spending quality time in his presence. Back to loving his Word. Back to casting all cares upon him. Back to depending on him for guidance.*

Christ desires intimacy with his bride. He yearns after his beloved to return to him with love and obedience. I humbly submit this short message to you, trusting the Holy Spirit will stir your heart and draw you closer to himself.

Your prayers and support are greatly appreciated.
Love in Christ. His bondservant,
DAVID WILKERSON

IT'S HARVEST TIME

“When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, **The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest**” (Matthew 9:36–38).

Jesus declared, **“The fields are ripe, and the harvest plentiful. It’s time to begin reaping.”** At that moment, the great, final spiritual harvest began. It started as a harvest among the Jews and Gentiles of Jesus’ generation. And this same harvest is going to last until Christ returns. As I read this passage, I wonder: *what did Jesus see in his time that caused him to say, “The harvest is ready, so now is the time to reap”?* Did he see a spiritual awakening in Israel? Was there revival in the synagogues? Were priests turning back to God? Were scribes and Pharisees being convicted? *What evidence was there that the harvest was ripe?*

The Gospels don’t reveal much evidence of any spiritual move toward God. If anything, they show the opposite. Jesus was mocked in the synagogues. The nation’s spiritual leaders rejected him, questioning his integrity and divinity. One religious crowd tried to throw him over a cliff. And Christ himself upbraided Israel’s cities for not repenting at his message: “Woe, Chorazin! Woe, Bethsaida! Woe, Tyre and Sidon! Woe, Capernaum!”

As for the multitudes, they were embroiled in chaotic despair. Scripture tells us, “When he saw them...they were distressed and downcast, like sheep without a shepherd.” Here was a society that was fearful, stressed out, depressed. The people ran about wildly, like scattered sheep, looking for help anywhere they could find it. Yet it was at this very point of great distress that Christ declared, “The fields are ripe, and the harvest is plentiful.”

Do you think Jesus’ words about a ripe harvest apply today? Where do we see evidence that fields are white and ready to be reaped? Are nations repenting? Is there a great stirring in our so-



ciety? And is the organized church waking up? Are religious leaders hungering for revival, seeking Christ anew? Is there a cry for holiness in this generation? With few exceptions, I don't see any such things happening. Yet, none of these is what moved Jesus in his time.

Rather, he was moved by the sad conditions he saw on every side.

Everywhere he looked, people were overwhelmed with distress. In fact, as Christ gazed out over Jerusalem, he wept. His tears were over the hardness and spiritual blindness he saw. Here were a people headed for judgment, with no peace, only fear and depression. And he prophesied over this scene, "Your house will become desolate." Jesus actually gives us a picture of what the last days would look like. Now, this period began at his ascension, and it will end only when he comes again. We're getting very close to that point now. And Jesus described it to his disciples when they asked him what signs to look for. They wanted to know the condition of things as the very last days were approaching. Christ answered by speaking of famines, earthquakes, tribulations, nations divided. False prophets and false christs would deceive many and lead multitudes astray. Believers would be hated for even mentioning Christ's name. And the love of many would grow cold, with some falling away because of the bold increase of sin and lawlessness. "Upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Luke 21:25–26).

In short, Jesus is describing here the most anxious, depressed, stressed-out generation of all time. So, are his prophecies happening even now, before our eyes? Think about it: this generation is full of anxiety and worry. Multitudes are fearful as they watch incredible disasters unfold: hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, mudslides, tornados. Entire nations tremble with fear over the threat of terrorism. And heart failure is the number-one killer in the world today. False religions, false prophets, false christs are leading many astray. Millions are turning to Islam, with nation after nation infiltrated by Islamics. You would have to be in total denial if you didn't see that everything that can be shaken right now is being shaken.

In the midst of all this upheaval and turmoil, I hear Jesus' words: "The fields are white. The harvest is plentiful."

I'm convinced he's telling his church, "*People are ready to hear. This is the time to believe for a harvest. Now is the time for you to start reaping.*"

Christ is the Lord of the harvest. And if he declares the harvest is ready, we must believe it. It doesn't matter how wicked this generation becomes. It doesn't matter how powerful Satan seems to have grown. Our Lord is saying to us, "Stop focusing on the difficulties around you. Instead, raise up your eyes. It's time for you to see that the harvest is ready." Jesus understood man's heart, knowing we forget God in times of prosperity. Christ knew that in times of distress and calamity, people are forced to face eternity. Suffering, fear and hard times ripen people for hearing and receiving the gospel.

Consider the context of his words: "When he saw the multitudes... because they fainted... *then* saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous" (Matthew 9:36–37, italics mine). This truth has been demonstrated throughout the history of God's people. Moses reprimanded his generation, saying, "God led you. He increased your numbers. And he greatly blessed you, giving you green fields, honey, butter, milk, sheep, oil, fruit. But you grew rich and rebelled. You lightly esteemed the Rock of your salvation, and forsook him." "But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxed fat...thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation" (Deuteronomy 32:15).

Scripture tells us Israel was brought low after this. Yet, in their distress, they called upon the Lord, and he delivered them: "**Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses**" (Psalm 107:6, italics mine). Consider also David's testimony: "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me. **In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God:** he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears" (Psalm 18:4–6, italics mine).

Trouble, distress and perplexity have always birthed a cry for help.

This has been the pattern throughout the centuries. You remember what

happened after the twin towers in New York fell: churches were packed. Prayer meetings were held in Yankee Stadium. Congressional leaders gathered on the steps of the Capitol in Washington, praying and singing, “God Bless America.” For a season, God was the talk of the nation. Fear and distress had made people think about finding truth.

And that sums up the law of the harvest: THE DARKER THE DAYS, THE WHITER THE HARVEST.

In Indonesia and Sri Lanka, radical Islamics had refused to allow any outsiders into their territory. But after the tsunami disaster, many opened their doors to Christian relief workers. Why? *God saw fields that were white and ready to be harvested. The fact is, no country is closed to Christ. And no people are unreachable. No religious power on earth can stop the harvest. That’s why Jesus tells us not to fear, even though mountains may fall into the sea.*

Think about the cataclysmic events of recent world history. The Communists in Russia thought they had rid their country of God. But Jesus had said to them, “All you did was help the harvest.” Christ is alive and well in Russia today. China also tried to outlaw God, only to ripen a harvest of



millions of believers. Recently, the Ukraine fell out of corrupt hands, and is being led by a man who speaks of Christ. The New York Times now calls Belarus the most Communist-dominated nation on earth, yet Christians there are praying their country is next. God has seen all these fields as ready for reaping!

This same principle was true throughout Israel's history. When Moses told Pharaoh, "Let my people go," it was because God had announced harvest time. The moment had come for Israel's deliverance from captivity. But Pharaoh responded, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go" (Exodus 5:2). Pharaoh represents Satan's demonic system, including false religions and oppression that hold people under bondage. Before Israel could be delivered, the powers of darkness had to be shaken. So God struck Egypt with nine natural calamities. Yet those nine disasters only hardened Pharaoh's heart.

Finally, there came a calamity so devastating, everyone in Egypt — from the rulers down to ordinary citizens — knew this wasn't just nature out of control. It was God speaking. The Lord had sent an angel of death. And in one night, the eldest son in every Egyptian family died. Pharaoh's son was included among them. The very next day, Israel paraded out of Egypt. Here was the harvest that came just before judgment.

Centuries later, when Jesus announced the ripe harvest in Jerusalem, he knew judgment was about to come. Years hence, Titus and his army would invade the city, and 1.2 million people would be killed. Many would be hung on crosses, and the city itself would be burned to the ground. This is why Jesus warned his generation, "**You say there are four months before harvest. But I'm telling you, the harvest has to begin now. You have to be about the will of God, because the greatest calamity is at your door. I'm commissioning you now to finish my work. The time to start reaping is today.**"

How did Jesus describe the calamity that was to come? "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:21). Yet, before that calamity came, it would be time for the harvest.

The concept of “harvest” was central to the church-growth movement of the 1980s. More than two decades ago, church-growth experts began focusing on new methods to bring in the harvest. They declared, “The church is no longer relevant to modern society. It’s too traditional, too out of touch, and needs to be updated. We have to become more contemporary. We can no longer afford to think in small terms.” So the 1980s were proclaimed to be “**The Decade of Harvest**.” And out of this mentality was born the “seeker sensitive,” mega-church movement. Almost overnight, huge churches began to spring up all over the country. Many such churches suddenly had congregations numbering in the thousands or ten thousands. Some built huge campuses resembling shopping malls, including restaurants and other conveniences.

What was called “narrow thinking” was now replaced by corporate thinking. The people’s morals were no longer to be challenged. *Instead, the church was to become “need-centered,” ministering to people’s needs as they stated them on surveys. Worship services incorporated the latest technologies, “contemporizing” the music and offering theatrical productions. Pastors illustrated their sermons with film clips from the most recent movies, some of them R-rated. It looked as if the great harvest was underway.*

But the “Decade of Harvest” proved to be building on the wrong foundation. A pastor named William Chadwick had led a church that thrived on these principles. But over time, he grew convicted about being so numbers-focused. He authored a book titled *Stealing Sheep*, in which he cites some alarming statistics. The most remarkable figure was that, **in ten years’ time, there was no appreciable growth among evangelical churches.** Instead, mega-churches were made up mostly of transfers from smaller churches. People came for the exciting new contemporary worship and the programs catering to baby boomers. Many of these “switchers” were Pentecostals. Worse, the mega-church movement had an awful effect on smaller churches. These didn’t have the resources to compete with huge churches, which offered all kinds of bells and whistles with their need-centered programs. Slowly, smaller churches’ numbers dwindled, and many ended up shutting their doors.

A recent study by the respected Barna Research Group shows that the church isn’t just stagnating, it’s growing worse. One alarming fact is

that fewer baby boomers are attending church than before. Simply put, the church-growth movement has ended up going backward instead of forward. Finally, there is one statistic that startles me more than any other. That is, **only a minute number of Christians has ever won a soul to Christ.** This brings Jesus' words up to date that "the laborers are few."

In every city where I travel nowadays, pastors ask me how to build a strong, growing church. As I look around their city, I see poor neighborhoods, teeming with downtrodden people bound by sin. **I know that God has promised to empower us as ministers, if we would only go into these nearby harvest fields to reap the souls.** You can build a great church with those poor and weak who are being set free from Satan's bondage.

Years ago, I found the harvest to be ripe in the ghetto. It happened when I went to the neighbourhoods where gang leaders, drug addicts, poor widows, alcoholics and prostitutes lived. Now, many of the most powerful soul-winners I know are former gang members like Nicky Cruz. All over the world, they're winning multitudes to Christ.

Imagine a scenario on the last day Jesus spent on the earth. Suppose that just before Jesus ascended — as he envisions the church and the harvest prior to his return — he foresees a falling away. His soul is grieved, because he sees rampant backsliding. Instead of reaping a white harvest, his people spend their time and energy seeking worldly success and material things.

So Jesus says to the Father, "They won't get the harvest in. All the white fields lay dormant. I'm going to send a host of angels to do the reaping." The Father agrees, and suddenly thousands of celestial beings appear on the earth, glowing with supernatural radiance.

What a sight this would be: otherworldly beings, clothed in glory, speaking in churches and in public. You see them interviewed by newspaper reporters, on the radio and on TV. They talk of the Cross, the Resurrection, the Ascension, Christ's love, and a final judgment to come. And they speak with such eloquence and conviction that everyone is enthralled. They're like so many Jonahs, wooing and warning the world.

Now suppose that after a short time, these same radiant angels become enthralled with the world around them. They're taken in by fine foods, material goods, wealth and security. And soon they start striving for success, fame and fortune. Before long, they become jealous of each other, showing anger, pride, envy and covetousness.

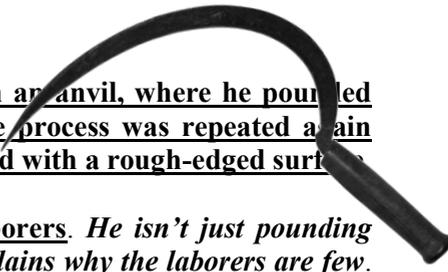
In other words, they become just like the church today! I ask you, how much influence would they have on the world? How could they expect to bring in a harvest, being so caught up in worldliness? Their testimony would be discounted. And they would be drained of all spiritual power, going about discouraged, fearful and doubting.

Tell me, why would anyone want my gospel, if they saw me in this kind of state, stressed out and joyless? Why would they believe my message, “Jesus is sufficient, my everything, my constant supply,” if I’m always fearful and worried, with no peace? No one would listen to a word I said. Instead, they’d wonder, “What difference is your Christ? He doesn’t seem to be much of a physician, if you’re always in this kind of condition.”

Beloved, our countenance counts. Listen to what Christ says of his bride, in the Song of Solomon: “O my dove...let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely” (Song of Solomon 2:14). Christ is saying to us, in essence, “**I want to see your smile.**” Does that describe your countenance?

There is no supposing why we don’t experience a great harvest of souls. Jesus made it plain: “The harvest is ripe, but the laborers are few.” Yet, **why are there so few laborers?** Churches today are packed with believers who claim Christ is their very life. Millions of dollars are spent on building worship centers everywhere. *The truth is, if we’re not capable of reaping souls — if our lives don’t reflect the transforming power of the gospel we preach — then we have discounted ourselves as laborers. Our walk with Christ should offer proof to the world that God’s promises are true.*

As laborers, we are the harvest instruments in the Lord’s hand. In the days of Christ, such an instrument was a SCYTHE, a long, curved, single-edged blade with a long handle. It was forged by a blacksmith,



who put it into a fire, then placed it on an anvil, where he pounded and bent it into shape. Then the whole process was repeated again and again, until the cutting edge was filed with a rough-edged surface.

The parallel is clear: **God is forging laborers.** *He isn't just pounding away at sin. And this forging process explains why the laborers are few.* The majority of churchgoers are like the thousands who volunteered to go with Gideon in the Old Testament. God saw fear in many of them, knowing they wouldn't endure the fire, the pounding, the hard times. And out of the thousands who followed Gideon, only three hundred were chosen.

The same thing happens today. **Those who are truly called to harvest are called to endure the refining, shaping fires and the continual hammering. Yet not many do.** The disciples were empowered by God in their mission. Where did the disciples start their ministry?

According to this passage, Jesus sent them to the distressed, the poor, those who were bowed down with sin, bondages and life-controlling habits. I think of the Teen Challenge drug and alcohol rehabilitation ministry, with its 500 centers worldwide.

And I think of scores of other reapers who have gone to other countries and seen miracles of salvation as they've ministered to the neediest, poorest, most devil-bound people. *They're starting to reap exactly where Jesus started his harvest: among the lost sheep, the captives, the broken-hearted, the prisoners, the lepers, the blind, the poor, those who mourn, those with a spirit of heaviness, those who are distressed and disconcerted.*

Consider Paul's words: "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not...that no flesh should glory in his presence" (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).

Dear saint, Jesus knew what we were going to face in these last days: a generation steeped in sin far more than any other...stress and loneliness

such as has never been experienced by man...financial disasters, rampant divorce, militant homosexuality, immorality that would bring a blush to even the worst sinners just thirty years ago.

This is why Christ seeks laborers who have submitted to the fires and forgings. He wants a people who'll stand before the world and proclaim: "God is with me! Satan can't stop me. Just look at my life. I've been through fire after fire, pounded again and again. But I've come through it all more than a conqueror through Christ, who lives in me. What I have preached has worked for me. I am living proof Jesus is all-sufficient!"

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Lord of the Reapers hear our lowly pleading
Thine are the fields that stand all harvest-white,
Thine is the love that human souls are needing,
Ere falls the dusk that deepens into night.

Oft have we prayed with longing and beseeching,
Fruit for our toil and glory for Thy Cross,
Yet slow the reaping, slow the task of reaching,
Far distant souls whose distance is their loss.

Oft have we asked for some rewarding token,
Only to know our toil was not in vain,
And for a patient love to lead the broken,
Lives of the lost to an eternal gain.

Soon o'er our harvest field the twilight stealeth
Low on its margin stands the solemn sun;
Rising to Thee the reaper's prayer appealeth,
Grant us full sheaves before the day is done.

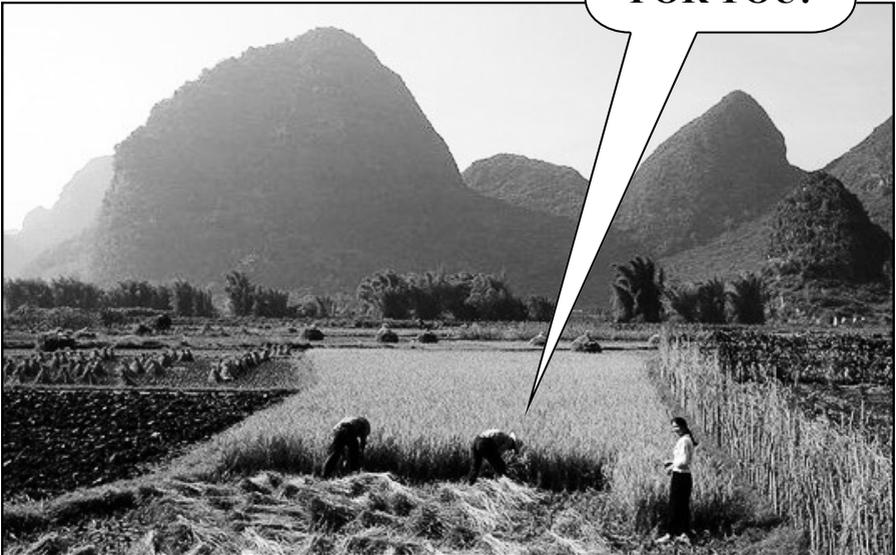
So when Thy Morning floods the land with glory,
God will it be to meet and see Thee then!
Learn all the triumphs of Thy love's sweet glory,
Lord of the reapers! Hope of sinful men!

Frederic Goldsmith French.





**Oh Lord,
we want
to harvest
FOR YOU!**





*Work
while it is day,
night is coming
when no-one
can work!*





"Lord of the Harvest, Hear"

Lord of the harvest, hear
Thy needy servants' cry;
Answer our faith's effectual prayer
And all our wants supply.

On Thee we humbly wait,
Our wants are in Thy view.
The harvest, truly, Lord, is great,
The laborers are few.

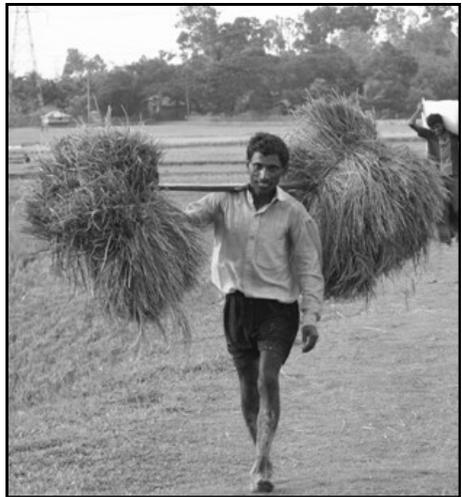
Anoint and send forth more
Into Thy Church abroad
And let them speak Thy Word of Power
As workers with their God.

Oh, let them spread Thy name,
Their mission fully prove,
Thy universal grace proclaim,
Thine all-redeeming love!

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)



The Joy of Harvest!



Rejoicing!

**“He that goeth forth and weepeth,
bearing precious seed,
shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,
bringing his sheaves *with him*.”**

Psalm 126:6

There is great JOY in leading people to Jesus! There is great JOY in working in His harvest field! There is great JOY in seeing God save and change people! Charles Spurgeon preached the following sermon on:

The Joy of Harvest

"They joy before thee according to **the joy in harvest**."—Isaiah 9:3.

The other day I kept the feast with a company who shouted "Harvest Home." I was glad to see the rich and poor rejoicing together; and when the cheerful meal was ended, I was glad to turn one of the tables into a pulpit, and in the large barn to preach the gospel of the ever-blessed God to an earnest audience. My heart was merry in harmony with the occasion, and I shall now keep in the same key, and talk to you a little upon the joy of harvest. Londoners forget that it is harvest time; living in this great desert of dingy bricks we hardly know what a wheat-ear is like, except as we see it dry and white in the window of a corn-dealer's shop; yet let us all remember that there is such a season as harvest, when by God's goodness the fruits of the earth are gathered in.

WHAT IS THE JOY OF HARVEST which is here taken as the simile of the joy of the saints before God? I am afraid that to the more selfish order of spirits the joy of harvest is simply that of personal gratification at the increase of wealth. Sometimes the farmer only rejoices because he sees the reward of his toils, and is so much the richer man. I hope that

with many there mingles the second cause of joy; namely, **gratitude to God that an abundant harvest will give bread to the poor, and remove complaining from our streets.** There is a lawful joy in harvest, no doubt, to the man who is enriched by it; for any man who works hard has a right to rejoice when at last he gains his desire. *It would be well if men would always recollect that their last and greatest harvest will be to them according to their labour. He that soweth to the flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, and only the man that soweth to the spirit will of the spirit reap life everlasting. Many a young man commences life by sowing what he calls his wild oats, which he had better never have sown, for they will bring him a terrible harvest. He expects that from these wild oats he will gather a harvest of true pleasure, but it cannot be: the truest pleasures of life spring from the good seed of righteousness, and not from the hemlock of sin. As a man who sows thistles in his furrows must not expect to reap the golden wheat sheaf, so he who follows the ways of vice must not expect happiness. On the contrary, if he sows the wind he will reap the whirlwind. When a sinner feels the pangs of conscience he may well say, "This is what I sowed." When he shall at last receive the punishment of his evil deeds he will blame no one but himself: he sowed tares and he must reap tares.* On the other hand, **the Christian man,** though his salvation is not of works, but of grace, will have a gracious reward given to him by his Master. **Sowing in tears, he shall reap in joy.** Putting out his talents to interest, he shall enter into his Master's joy, and hear him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." The joy of harvest in part consists of the reward of labour; may such be our joy in serving the Lord.

The joy of harvest has another element in it, namely, that of **gratitude to God for favours bestowed.** We are singularly dependent on God; far more so than most of us imagine. When the children of Israel were in the wilderness they went forth every morning and gathered the manna. Our manna does not come to us every morning, but it comes once a year. It is as much a heavenly supply as if it lay like a hoar-frost round about the camp. If we went out into the field and gathered food which dropped from the clouds we should think it a great miracle; and is it not as great a marvel that our bread should come up from the earth as that it should come down from the sky? The same God who bade the heavens drop with angels' food bids the dull earth in its due season yield corn for mankind. Therefore, whenever we find that harvest comes, let us be grateful to God,

and let us not suffer the season to pass over without psalms of thanksgiving. I believe I shall be correct if I say that there is never in the world, as a rule, more than sixteen months' supply of food; that is to say, when the harvest is gathered in, there may be sixteen months' supply; but at the time of harvest there is not usually enough wheat in the whole world to last the population more than four or five months; so that if the harvest did not come we should be on the verge of famine. We live still from hand to mouth. Let us pause and bless God, and let the joy of harvest be the joy of gratitude.

To the Christian it should be great joy, by means of the harvest, to receive an assurance of God's faithfulness. The Lord has promised that seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, shall never cease; and when you see the loaded wagon carrying in the crop you may say to yourself, "God is true to his promise. Despite the dreary winter and the damp spring, autumn has come with its golden grain." *Depend upon it, that as the Lord keeps this promise he will keep all the rest. All his promises are yea and amen in Christ Jesus:* if he keeps his covenant to the earth, much more will he keep his covenant with his own people, whom he hath loved with an everlasting love. *Go, Christian, to the mercy-seat with the promise on your lip and plead it. Be assured it is not a dead letter. Let not unbelief cause you to stammer when you mention the promise before the throne,* but say it boldly—"Fulfill this word unto thy servant on which thou hast caused me to hope." Shame upon us that we so little believe our God. The world is full of proofs of his goodness. Every rising sun, every falling shower, every revolving season certifies his faithfulness. Wherefore do we doubt him? If we never doubt him till we have cause for it we shall never know distrust again. Encouraged by the return of harvest, let us resolve in the strength of the Spirit of God that we will not waver, but will believe in the divine word and rejoice in it.

Once more. To the Christians, in the joy of harvest there will always be **the joy of expectation.** *As there is a harvest to the husbandman (farmer) for which he waiteth patiently, so there is a harvest for all faithful waiters who are looking for the coming and the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The mature Christian, like the ripe ear of corn, hangs down his head with holy humility. When he was but green in the things of God he stood erect and was somewhat boastful, but now that he has become full of the blessing of the Lord he is hum-*

bled thereby, and bows himself down; he is waiting for the sickle, and he dreads it not, for no common reaper shall come to gather Christ's people—he himself shall reap the harvest of the world. The Lord leaves the destroying angel to reap the vintage and to cast it into the wine-vat to be trodden with vengeance; but as for the grain which he himself has sown, he will gather it himself with his own golden sickle. We are looking for this. We are growing amongst the tares, and sometimes we are half afraid lest the tares should be stronger than ourselves and choke the wheat; but we shall be separated by-and-by, and when the corn is well winnowed and stored in the garner, we shall be there. It is this expectation which even now makes our hearts throb with joy. We have gone to the grave with precious sheaves that belonged to our Master, and when we were there we thought we could almost say, "Lord, if they sleep they shall do well. Let us die with them." ***Our joy of harvest is the hope of being at rest with all the saints, and for ever with the Lord.*** A view of these shadowy harvests upon earth should make us exceedingly glad, because they are the image and foreshadowing of the eternal harvest above.

So much about the joy of harvest; but I hasten onward. **WHAT JOYS ARE THOSE WHICH TO THE BELIEVER ARE AS THE JOY OF HARVEST?** *It is a common notion that Christians are an unhappy people. It is true that we are tried, but it is false that we are miserable. With all their trials, believers have such a compensation in the love of Christ that they are still a blessed generation, and it may be said of them, "Happy art thou, O Israel."*

One of the first seasons in which we knew a joy equal to the joy of harvest—a season which has continued with us ever since it commenced—was **when we found the Saviour, and so obtained salvation.** You recollect for yourselves, brethren and sisters, *the time of the ploughing of your souls.* My heart was fallow, and covered with weeds; but on a certain day the great Husbandman came and began to plough my soul. Then black horses were his team, and it was a sharp ploughshare that he used, and the ploughers made deep furrows. The ten commandments were those black horses, and the justice of God, like a ploughshare, tore my spirit. I was condemned, undone, destroyed, lost, helpless, hopeless,—I thought hell was before me. Then there came a cross ploughing, for when I went to hear the gospel it did not comfort me; it made me wish I had a part in it, but I feared that such a boon was out of the question. The choicest prom-



The greatest joy is to
lead someone to Jesus!



ises of God frowned at me, and his threatenings thundered at me. I prayed, but found no answer of peace. It was long with me thus. *After the ploughing came the sowing.* God who ploughed the heart made it conscious that it needed the gospel, and the gospel seed was joyfully received. Do you recollect that auspicious day when at last you began to have some little hope? It was very little—like a green blade that peeps up from the soil: you scarce knew whether it was grass or corn, whether it was presumption or true faith. It was a little hope, but it grew very pleasantly. Alas, a frost of doubt came; snow of fear fell; cold winds of despondency blew on you, and you said, "There can be no hope for me." But what a glorious day was that when at last the wheat which God had sown ripened, and you could say, "I have looked unto him and have been lightened: I have laid my sins on Jesus, where God laid them of old, and they are taken away, and I am saved." I remember well that day, and so no doubt do many of you. O sirs! *No husbandman ever shouted for joy as our hearts shouted when a precious Christ was ours, and we could grasp him with full assurance of salvation in him. Many days have passed since then, but the joy of it is still fresh with us.* And, blessed by God, it is not the joy of the first day only that we look back upon; it is the joy of every day since then, more or less; for our joy no man taketh from us; still we are walking in Christ, even as we received him. Even now all our hope on him is stayed, all our help from him we bring; and our joy and peace continue with us because they are based upon an immovable foundation. We rejoice in the Lord, yea, and we will rejoice.

The joy of harvest generally shows itself by the farmer giving a feast to his friends and neighbours; and, usually, **those who find Christ express their joy by telling their friends and their neighbours how great things the Lord hath done for them.** The grace of God is communicative. A man cannot be saved, and always hold his tongue about it: as well look for dumb choirs in heaven as for a silent church on earth. If a man has been thirsty, and has come to the living stream, his first impulse will be to cry, "Ho! Every one that thirsteth!" *Do you feel the joy of harvest, the joy that makes you wish that others should share with you? If so, do not repress the impulse to proclaim your happiness. Speak of Christ to brothers and sisters, to friends and kinsfolk;* and, if the language be stammering, the message in itself is so important that the words in which you couch it will be a secondary consideration. Tell it, tell it out far and wide—that there is a Saviour, that you have found him, and that his blood

can wash away transgression. Tell it everywhere; and so the joy of harvest shall spread o'er land and sea, and God shall be glorified.

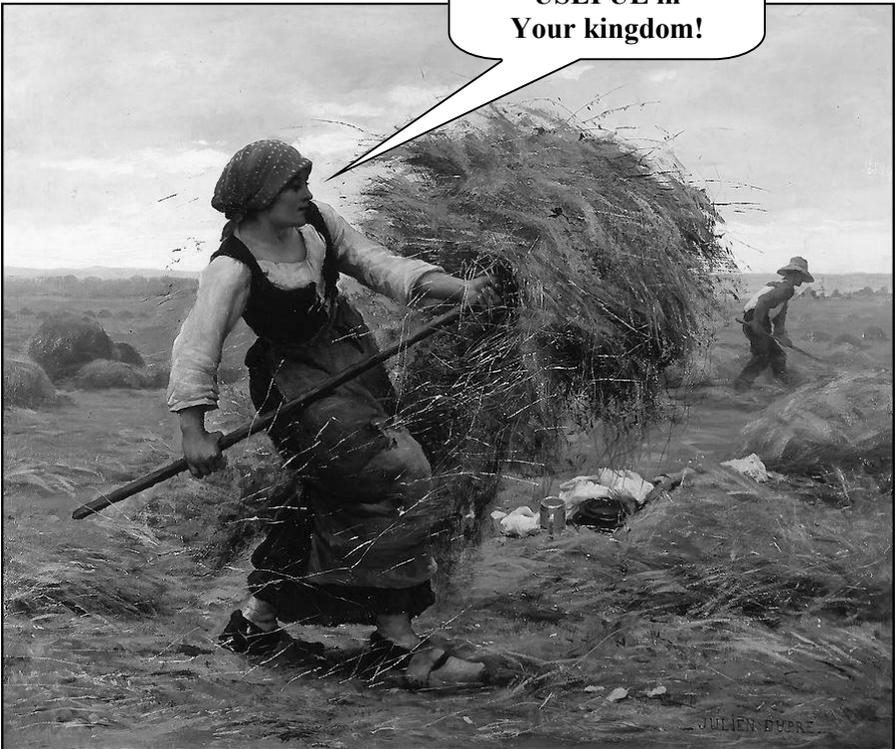
We have another joy which is like the joy of harvest. We frequently have it, too. It is **the joy of answered prayer**. I hope you know what it is to pray in faith. Some prayer is not worth the words used in presenting it, because there is no faith mixed with it. "With all thy sacrifices thou shalt offer salt," and the salt of faith is needful if we would have our sacrifices accepted. Those who are familiar with the mercy-seat know that prayer is a reality, and that the doctrine of divine answers to prayer is no fiction. Sometimes God will delay to answer for wise reasons: then his children must cry, and cry, and cry again. They are in the condition of the husbandman who must wait for the precious fruits of the earth; and when at last the answer to prayer comes, they are then in the husbandman's position when he receives the harvest. Remember Hannah's wail and Hannah's word. In the bitterness of her soul she cried to God, and when her child was given to her she called it "Samuel," meaning, "Asked of God"; for, said she, "For this child I prayed." He was a dear child to her, because he was a child of prayer. Any mercy that comes to you in answer to prayer will be your Samuel mercy, your darling mercy. You will say of it, "For this mercy I prayed," and it will bring the joy of harvest to your spirit. If the Lord desires to surprise his children he has only to answer their prayers; for the most of them would be astonished if an answer came to their petitions. I know how they speak about answers to prayer. They say, "How remarkable! How wonderful!" as if it were anything remarkable that God should be true, and that the Most High should keep his promise. Oh for more faith to rest upon his word! And we should have more of these harvest joys.

We have another joy of harvest in ourselves **when we conquer a temptation**. We know what it is to get under a cloud sometimes: sin within us rises with a darkening force, or an external adversity beclouds us, and we miss the plain path we were accustomed to walk in. A child of God at such times will cry mightily for help; for he is fearful of himself and fearful of his surroundings. Some of God's people have been by the week and month together exposed to the double temptation, from without and from within, and have cried to God in bitter anguish. It has been a very hard struggle: the sinful action has been painted in very fascinating colours, and the siren voice of temptation has almost enchanted them. But when at





**Thank You, Lord
that I can be
USEFUL in
Your kingdom!**



last they have got through the valley of the shadow of death without having slipped with their feet; when, after all, they have not been destroyed by Apollyon, but have come forth again into the daylight, they feel a joy unspeakable, compared with which the joy of harvest is mere childish merriment. Those know deep joy who have felt bitter sorrow. As the man feels that he is the stronger for the conflict, as he feels that he has gathered experience and stronger faith from having passed through the trial, he lifts up his heart, and rejoices, not in himself, but before his God, with the joy of harvest. Brethren beloved, you know what that means.

Again, there is such a thing as the joy of harvest when we have been rendered useful. The master passion of every Christian is to be useful. There should be a burning zeal within us for the glory of God. When the man who desires to be useful has laid his plans and set about his work, he begins to look out for the results; but perhaps it will be weeks, or years, before results will come. The worker is not to be blamed that there are no fruits as yet, but he is to be blamed if he is content to be without fruits. A preacher may preach without conversions, and who shall blame him? But if he be happy, who shall excuse him? It is ours to break our own hearts if we cannot by God's grace break other men's hearts; if others will not weep for their sins it should be our constant habit to weep for them. When the heart becomes earnest, warm, zealous, God usually gives a measure of success, some fifty-fold, some a hundred-fold. When the success comes it is the joy of harvest indeed. I cannot help being egotistical enough to mention the joy I felt when first I heard that a soul had found peace through my youthful ministry. I had been preaching in a village some few Sabbaths with an increasing congregation, but I had not heard of a conversion, and I thought, "Perhaps I am not called of God. He does not mean me to preach, for if he did he would give me spiritual children." One Sabbath my good deacon said, "Don't be discouraged. A poor woman was savingly impressed last Sabbath." How long do you suppose it was before I saw that woman? It was just as long as it took me to reach her cottage. I was eager to hear from her own lips whether it was a work of God's grace or not. I always looked upon her with interest, though only a poor labourer's wife, till she was taken away to heaven, after having lived a holy life. Many since then have I rejoiced over in the Lord, but that first seal to my ministry was peculiarly dear to me. It gave me a sip of the joy of harvest. If some-

body had left me a fortune it would not have caused me one hundredth part of the delight I had in discovering that a soul had been led to the Saviour. I am sure Christian people who have not this joy have missed one of the choicest delights that a believer can know this side heaven. In fact, when I see souls saved, I do not envy Gabriel his throne nor the angels their harps. It shall be our heaven to be out of heaven for a season if we can but bring others to know the Saviour and so add fresh jewels to the Redeemer's crown.

I will mention another delight which is as the joy of harvest, and that is, **fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ**. This is not so much a matter for speech as for experience and delight. If we try to speak of what communion with Christ is, we fail. Solomon, the wisest of men, when inspired to write of the fellowship of the church with her Lord, was compelled to write in allegories and emblems, and though to the spiritual mind the Book of Canticles is always delightful, yet to the carnal mind it seems a mere love song. The natural man discerneth not the things that be of God, for they are spiritual, and can only be spiritually discerned. *But, oh, the bliss of knowing that Christ is yours, and of entering into nearness of communion with him.* To thrust your hand into his side, and your finger into the print of the nails; these be not everyday joys; but when such near and dear communings come to us on our highdays and holydays, they make our souls like the chariots of Ammi-nadib, or, if you will, they cause us to tread the world beneath our feet and all that earth calls good or great. *Our condition matters nothing to us if Christ be with us;—he is our God, our comfort, and our all, and we rejoice before him as with the joy of harvest.*

I have no time to enlarge further; for I want to close with one other practical word. Many of us are anxiously desiring a harvest which would bring to us an intense delight. Of late, divers persons have communicated to me in many ways the strong emotion they feel of pity for the souls of men. Others of us have felt a mysterious impulse to pray more than we did, and to be more anxious than ever we were that Christ would save poor perishing sinners. We shall not be satisfied until there is a thorough awakening in this land. We did not raise the feeling in our own minds, and we do not desire to repress it. We do not believe it can be repressed; but others will feel the same heavenly affection, and will sigh and cry to God day and night until the blessing comes. This is the sowing, this is the ploughing,



Thank You, Lord!



this is the harrowing—may it go on to harvesting. I long to hear my brethren and sisters universally saying, "We are full of anguish, we are in agony till souls be saved." The cry of Rachel, "*Give me children, or I die,*" is the cry of your minister this day, and the longing of thousands more besides. As that desire grows in intensity a revival is approaching. *We must have spiritual children born to Christ, or our hearts will break for the longing that we have for their salvation. Oh for more of these longings, yearnings, cravings, travailings! If we plead till the harvest or revival comes we shall partake in the joy of it.*

Who will have the most joy? Those who have been the most concerned about it. You who do not pray in private, nor come out to prayer-meetings, will not have the joy when the blessing comes, and the church is increased. You had no share in the sowing, therefore you will have little share in the reaping. You who never speak to others about their souls, who take no share in Sunday-school or mission work, but simply eat the fat and drink the sweet—you shall have none of the joy of harvest, for you do not put your hands to the work of the Lord. And who would wish that idlers should be happy? Rather in our zeal and jealousy we feel inclined to say, "Curse ye Meroz, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." If you come to the help of the Lord by his own divine Spirit, you shall share the joy of harvest. Perhaps none will have more of that joy than those who shall have the privilege of seeing their own dear ones brought to God. Some of you have children who are a trial to you whenever you think of them; let them be such a trial to you that they drive you to incessant prayer for them, and, if the blessing comes, why should it not drop on them? If a revival comes, why should not your daughter yet be converted, and that wild boy of yours be brought in, or even your grey-headed father, who has been sceptical and unbelieving—why should not the grace of God come to him? And, oh, what a joy of harvest you will have then! What bliss will thrill through your spirit when you see those who are united to you in ties of blood united to Christ your Lord! Pray much for them with earnest faith, and you shall yet have the joy of harvest in your own house, a shout of harvest home in your own family.

Possibly, my hearer, you have not much to do with such joy, for you are yourself unsaved. Yet it is a grand thing for an unconverted person to be

under a ministry that God blesses, and with a people that pray for conversions. It is a happy thing for you, young man, to have a Christian mother. It is a great boon for you, O unconverted woman, that you have a godly sister. These make us hopeful for you. Whilst your relations are prayerful, we are hopeful for you. May the Lord Jesus be yours yet. ***But, ah! If you remain unbelieving, however rich a blessing comes to others, it will leave you none the better for it. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land"; but there are some who may cry in piteous accents, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."*** It has been remarked that those who pass through a season of revival and remain unconverted are more hardened and unimpressed than before. I believe it to be so, and I therefore pray the divine Spirit to come with such energy that none of you may escape his power. May you be led to pray,

*"Pass me not, O mighty Spirit!
Thou canst make the blind to see;
Witnesser of Jesus' merit,
Speak the word of power to me,
Even me.*

*"Have I long in sin been sleeping,
Long been slighting, grieving thee?
Has the world my heart been keeping?
Oh forgive and rescue me,
Even me."*

Oh for earnest, importunate prayer from all believers throughout the world! If our churches could be stirred up to incessant, vehement crying to God, so as to give him no rest till he make Zion a praise in the earth, we might expect to see God's kingdom come, and the power of Satan fall. As many of you as love Christ, I charge you by his dear name to be much in prayer; as many of you as love the Church of God, and desire her prosperity, I beseech you keep not back in this time of supplication. The Lord grant that you may be led to plead till the harvest joy is granted.
...If you scatter little you shall have little, if you pray little you shall have little favour; but if you have zeal and faith, and plead much and work much for the Lord, good measure, pressed down and running over, shall the Lord return into your own bosoms. If you water others with drops you shall receive drops in return; but if the Spirit helps you to pour out rivers of living water from your own soul, then floods of heavenly grace shall

flow into your spirit. ***God bring in the unconverted, and lead them to a simple trust in Jesus; then shall they also know the joy of harvest. We ask it for his name's sake. Amen.***



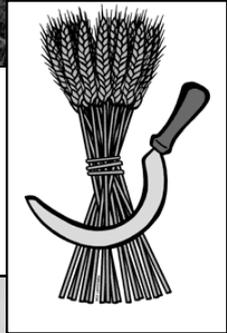


Amazing harvest!





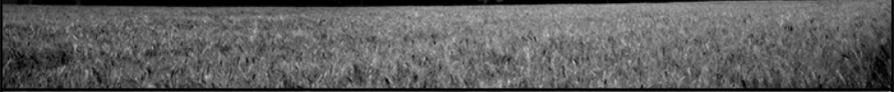
“The stamp of the worker gripped by God is that, slowly and surely, one here and another there is being won for God.” - Oswald Chambers







God calls young & old to harvest!





*Gleaning
behind the harvesters!*

Gleaning the fields

“She said, ‘Please let me glean
and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.’
She went into the field and has worked steadily
from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter.”
Ruth 2:7

“**Gleaning** is the act of **collecting leftover crops** from farmers' fields after they have been commercially harvested or on fields where it is not economically profitable to harvest. Some ancient cultures promoted gleaning as an early form of a welfare system.” According to the Word of God, “farmers should leave the corners of their fields un-harvested, and they should not attempt to harvest any left-overs that had been forgotten when they had harvested the majority of a field.” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gleaning>)

Gleaning is picking up the drop-outs and the leftovers of a harvest—that which have fallen by the way-side or on the field... It's a picking up, a harvesting of what “fell through”, but doing it one-by-one!

Spiritually speaking, this is a very important ministry in God's harvest fields!! There are so many dear people who attend crusades or services and either “go to the front” during an altar-call or “don't go to the front”, but somehow want to, but don't... and ...are still not saved!! Some even “said a sinner's prayer” but are still not saved...

Oh, may the Lord raise up many spiritual Ruths, who will say to the Lord of the harvest: “Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters...” and will go into the field and work steadily... (Ruth 2:7).

“**Your Mission**” was President Lincoln's favourite song, one which he encored repeatedly when sung at a Sunday School Convention in Washington, in 1864. It was written by Ellen M. Gates. Two of the stanzas are as follows:

**If you cannot in the harvest
Garner up the richest sheave,
Many a grain, both ripe and golden,
Oft the careless reapers leave;
Go and glean among the briers
Growing rank against the wall,
For it may be that the shadows
Hide the heaviest wheat of all.**

**Do not, then, stand idly waiting
For some greater work to do;
Fortune is a lazy goddess,
She will never come to you.
Go and toil in My vineyard,
Do not fear to do or dare;
If you want a field of labour,
You can find it anywhere.**

This is a great encouragement to all of us! Especially to those of us who may think: “I cannot harvest well as so-and-so does”, or “I am not strong to harvest with the other harvesters...”, or “I am just a woman”..., or “I am just a child”, ...or “I am just a young person”... No! All of us can work in the Lord’s harvest. If we don’t harvest in front, we can glean at the back (quietly, behind the harvesters)...! One gets the impression that the Lord Jesus was often “gleaning” along the wayside! Let us follow Him and Ruth in gleaning with all our hearts, humbly, perseveringly, tirelessly—through His strength!

This spiritual gleaning is done one by one...

**Then “One by One” I’ll seek them, Lord,
If Thou wilt make my heart
A throne of burning flaming love,
Holy in every part.
With faith that trusts and hope that waits,
And love that conquers on,
Jesus, I’ll seek and find and plead,
And lead them “One by One.”**

This is my prayer, Lord Jesus!

Gleaning in God's fields!





**We can all
GLEAN for
Jesus in His
fields!**

The Lord used Charles Spurgeon as a great harvester, but also as a very wise gleaner in His harvest fields! He had the ability to speak to those who were “almost” saved, or those who were “so near and yet so far” from God, or to those who “tried, but failed” to find the Lord fully. He even wrote at least two books that dealt with this matter. The books are called “Around the wicked gate” and “All of grace”. Here we’ll look at one of his sermons on this important topic of spiritual gleanings...



Spiritual Gleaning

"Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not."

Ruth 2:15

“Country friends need no explanation of what is meant by gleaning. I hope the custom will never be banished from the land, but that the poor will always be allowed their little share of the harvest. I am afraid that many who see gleaning every year in the fields of their own parish are not yet wise enough to understand the heavenly art of spiritual gleaning. That is the subject which I have chosen on this occasion, and my text is taken from the charming story of Ruth, which is known to every one of you. I shall use the story as setting forth our own case, in a homely but instructive way. In the first place, we shall observe that there is **a great Husbandman (a great Farmer)**: it was Boaz in Ruth's case, it is our heavenly Father who is the Husbandman in our case. Secondly, we shall notice **a humble gleaner**: the gleaner was Ruth in this instance, but she may be looked upon as the representative of every believer. And, in the third place, there is **a gracious permission** given to Ruth: "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not," and the same permission is spiritually given to us.

I. In the first place, the God of the whole earth is A GREAT HUSBANDMAN (a great FARMER).

This is true in natural things. As a matter of fact all farm operations are carried on by his power and prudence. Man may plough the soil, and sow the seed; but as Jesus said, "**My Father is the husbandman.**" He appoints the clouds and allots the sunshine; he directs the winds and distributes the dew and the rain; he also gives the frost and the heat, and so by various processes of nature he brings forth food for man and beast. **All the farming, however, which God does, is for the benefit of others, and never for himself.** He has no need of any of our works of husbandry. If he were hungry, he would not tell us. "The cattle on a thousand hills," says he, "are mine." The purest kindness and benevolence are those which dwell in the heart of God. Though all things are God's, his works in creation and in providence are not for himself, but for his creatures. This should greatly encourage us in trusting to him.

In spiritual matters God is a great husbandman; and there, too, all his works are done for his children, that they may be fed upon the finest of the wheat. Permit me to speak of the wide gospel fields which our heavenly Father farms for the good of his children. There is a great variety of these fields, and they are all fruitful; for "the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew." Deut. 33:28. **Every field which our heavenly Father tills yields a plentiful harvest, for there are no failures or famines with him.**

1. One part of his farm is called **Doctrine field**. What full sheaves of finest wheat are to be found there! He who is permitted to glean in it will gather bread enough and to spare, for the land brings forth by handfuls...

...Grow in grace and in the knowledge of your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Everything taught in the word of God is meant to be the subject of a Christian's study, therefore neglect nothing. Visit the doctrine-field daily, and glean in it with the utmost diligence.

2. The great Husbandman has another field called **Promise field**; of that I shall not need to speak, for I hope you often enter it and glean from it. Just let us take an ear or two out of one of the sheaves, and show them to you that you may be induced to stay there the live-long day, and carry home a

rich load at night. Here is an ear: "*The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed.*" Here is another: "*When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.*" Here is another; it has a short stalk, but a heavy ear; "*My strength is sufficient for thee.*" Another is long in the straw, but very rich in corn: "*Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*" What a word is that!—"I will come again." Yes, beloved, we can say of the Promise field what cannot be said of a single acre in all England; namely, that it is so rich a field that it could not be richer, and that it has so many ears of corn in it that you could not insert another. As the poet sings:

*"What more can he say, than to you he hath said,—
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?"*

Glean in that field, O ye poor and needy ones, and never think that you are intruding. The whole field is your own, every ear of it; you may draw out from the sheaves themselves, and the more you take the more you may.

3. Then there is **Ordinance field**; a great deal of good wheat grows in this field. The field of Baptism has been exceedingly fruitful to some of us, for it has set forth to us our death, burial, and resurrection in Christ, and thus we have been cheered and instructed. It has been good for us to declare ourselves on the Lord's side, and we have found that in keeping our Lord's commandments there is great reward. ...However, we will pass on to the field of the Supper, where grows the very best of our Lord's corn. What rich things have we fed upon in this choice spot! Have we not there tasted the sweetest and most sustaining of all spiritual food? ..."He was known of them in the breaking of bread."

4. The heavenly Husbandman has one field upon a hill, which equals the best of the others, even if it does not excel them. You cannot really and truly go into any of the other fields unless you pass into this; for the road

to the other fields lies through this hill farm; it is called **Fellowship and Communion with Christ**. This is the field for the Lord's choicest ones to glean in. Some of you have only run through it, you have not stopped long enough in it; but he who knows how to stay here, yea, to live here, shall spend his hours most profitably and pleasantly. It is only in proportion as we hold fellowship with Christ, and communion with him, that either ordinances, or doctrines, or promises can profit us. **All other things are dry and barren unless we are enjoying the love of Christ, unless we bear his likeness, unless we dwell continually with him, and rejoice in his love.** I am sorry to say that few Christians think much of this field; it is enough for them to be sound in doctrine, and tolerably correct in practice; they care far less than they should about intimate intercourse with Christ Jesus, their Lord, by the Holy Ghost. I am sure that if we gleaned in this field we should not have half so many naughty tempers, nor a tenth as much pride, nor a hundredth part so much sloth. This is a field hedged and sheltered, and in it you will find better food than that which angels feed upon: yea, you will find Jesus himself as the bread which came down from heaven. ***Blessed, blessed field, may we visit it every day.*** The Master leaves the gate wide open for every believer; let us enter in and gather the golden ears till we can carry no more. Thus we have seen the great Husbandman in his fields; let us rejoice that we have such a great Husbandman near, and such fields to glean in.



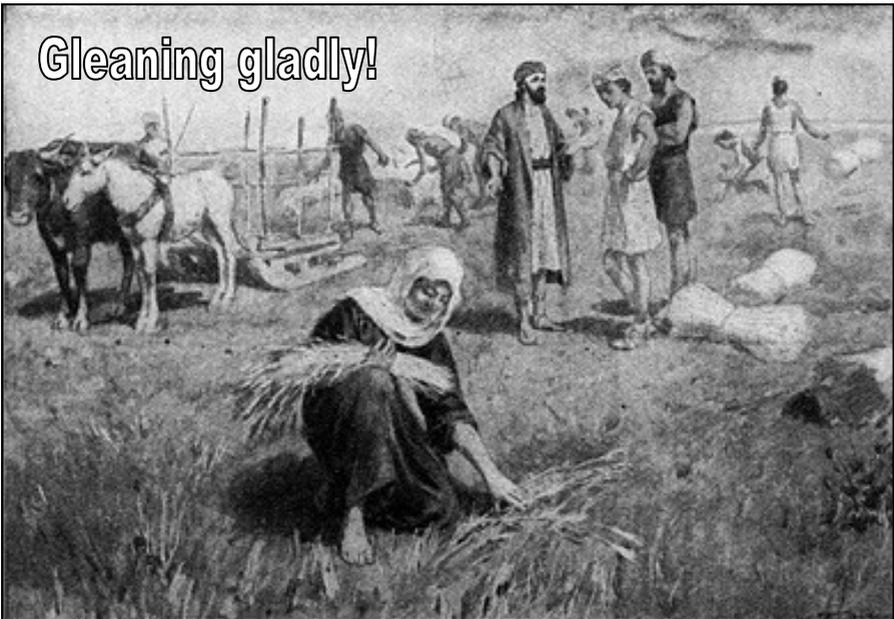
Ruth is an example of what every believer should be in God's fields!

II. And now, in the second place, we have a **HUMBLE GLEANER**. Ruth was a gleaner, and may serve as **an illustration of what every believer should be in the fields of God.**

1. **The believer is a favoured gleaner, for he may take home a whole sheaf, if he likes: he may bear away all that he can possibly carry, for all things are freely given him of the Lord.** I use the figure of a gleaner, because I believe that few Christians ever go much beyond it, and yet they are free to do so if they are able. Some may say, Why does not the believer reap all the field, and take all the corn home with him? I answer that he is welcome to do so if he can: for no good thing will the Lord withhold from them that walk uprightly. If your faith is like a great wagon, and you

can carry the whole field of corn, you have full permission to take it. Alas, our faith is so little that we rather glean than reap; we are straitened in ourselves, not in our God. May you all outgrow the metaphor, and come home, bringing your sheaves with you.

2. Again, we may remark, that **the gleaner, in her business has to endure much toil and fatigue**. She rises early in the morning, and she trudges off to a field; if that be closed, she hastens to another; and if that be shut up, or gleaned already, she hurries further still; and **all day long, while the sun is shining upon her, she seldom sits down to refresh herself, but still she goes on, stoop, stoop, stoop, gathering the ears one by one. She returns not to her home till nightfall**; for she desires, if the field is good, to do much business that day, and she will not go home until she is loaded down. Beloved, so let each one of us do when we seek spiritual food. **Let us not be afraid of a little fatigue in the Master's fields**: if the gleaning is good, we must not soon weary in gathering the precious spoil, for the gains will richly reward our pains. I know a friend who walks five miles every Sunday to hear the gospel, and has the same distance to return. Another thinks little of a ten miles' journey; and these are wise, for to hear the pure word of God no labour is extravagant. To stand in the aisle till ready to drop, listening all the while with strained attention, is a toil



Gleaning humbly...



Ruth and Naomi, by Judith Mehr, © 1992 Judith Mehr

which meets a full reward if the gospel be heard and the Spirit of God bless it to the soul. **A gleaner does not expect that the ears will come to her of themselves; she knows that gleaning is hard work. We must not expect to find the best field next to our own house, we may have to journey to the far end of the parish, but what of that? Gleaners must not be choosers, and where the Lord sends the gospel, there he calls us to be present.**

3. We remark, next, that **every ear the gleaner gets she has to stoop for.** Why is it that proud people seldom profit under the word? Why is it that certain "intellectual" folk cannot get any good out of our soundest ministers? Why, because they must needs have the corn lifted up for them; and if the wheat is held so high over their heads that they can hardly see it, they are pleased, and cry, "Here is something wonderful." They admire the extraordinary ability of the man who can hold up the truth so high that nobody can reach it; but truly that is a sorry feat. ***The preacher's business is to place truth within the reach of all, children as well as adults; he is***

to let fall handfuls on purpose for poor gleaners, and these will never mind stooping to collect the ears. If we preach to the educated people only, the wise ones can understand, but the illiterate cannot; but when we preach in all simplicity to the poor, other classes can understand it if they like, and if they do not like, they had better go somewhere else. ***Those who cannot stoop to pick up plain truth had better give up gleaning. For my part, I would be taught by a child if I could thereby know and understand the gospel better:*** the gleaning in our Lord's field is so rich that it is worth the hardest labour to be able to carry home a portion of it. Hungry souls know this, and are not to be hindered in seeking their heavenly food. ***We will go down on our knees in prayer, and stoop by self-humiliation, and confession of ignorance, and so gather with the hand of faith the daily bread of our hungering souls.***

4. Note, in the next place, that **what a gleaner gets she wins ear by ear; occasionally she picks up a handful at once, but as a rule it is straw by straw.** In the case of Ruth, handfuls were let fall on purpose for her; but she was highly favoured. The gleaner stoops, and gets one ear, and then she stoops again for another. Now, beloved, where there are handfuls to be got at once, there is the place to go and glean; but if you cannot meet with such abundance, ***be glad to gather ear by ear.*** I have heard of certain persons who have been in the habit of hearing a favourite minister, and when they go to another place, they say, "I cannot hear anybody after my own minister; I shall stay at home and read a sermon." Please remember the passage, "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." Let me also entreat you not to be so foolishly partial as to deprive your soul of its food. If you cannot get a handful at one stoop, do not refuse to gather an ear at a time. If you are not content to learn here a little and there a little, you will soon be half starved, and then you will be glad to get back again to the despised minister and pick up what his field will yield you. That is a sorry ministry which yields nothing. Go and glean where the Lord has opened the gate for you. Why the text alone is worth the journey; do not miss it.

5. Note, next, that **what the gleaner picks up she keeps in her hand; she does not drop the corn as fast as she gathers it.** *There is a good thought at the beginning of the sermon, but the hearers are so eager to hear another, that the first one slips away. Towards the end of the sermon a large handful falls in their way, and they forget all that went before in their eagerness to retain this last and richest portion.* The sermon

is over, and, alas, it is nearly all gone from the memory, for many are about as wise as a gleaner would be if she should pick up one ear, and drop it; pick up another, and drop it, and so on all day. The net result of such a day's work in a stubble is a bad backache; and I fear that all our hearers will get by their hearing will be a headache. **Be attentive, but be retentive too. Gather the grain and tie it up in bundles for carrying away with you, and mind you do not lose it on the road home.** Many a person when he has got a fair hold of the sermon, loses it on the way to his house by idle talk with vain companions. I have heard of a Christian man who was seen hurrying home one Sunday with all his might. A friend asked him why he was in such haste. "Oh!" said he, "two or three Sundays ago, our minister gave us a most blessed discourse, and I greatly enjoyed it; but when I got outside, there were two deacons discussing, and one pulled the sermon one way, and the other the other, till they pulled it all to pieces, and I lost all the savour of it." Those must have been very bad deacons; let us not imitate them; and if we know of any who are of their school, let us walk home alone in dogged silence sooner than lose all our gleanings by their controversies. **After a good sermon go home with your ears and your mouth shut. Act like the miser, who not only gets all he can, but keeps all he can. Do not lose by trifling talk that which may make you rich to all eternity.**



*Gleaning
means
getting food
and
winning
souls!*

6. Then, again, **the gleaner takes the wheat home and threshes it.** It is a wise thing to thresh a sermon whoever may have been the preacher, for it is certain that there is a portion of straw and chaff about it. Many thresh the preacher by finding needless fault; but that is not half so good as threshing the sermon to get out of it the pure truth. Take a sermon, beloved, when you get one which is worth having, and lay it down on the floor of meditation, and beat it out with the flail of prayer, and you will get bread-corn from it. **This threshing by prayer and meditation must never be neglected.** If a gleaner should stow away her corn in her room, and leave it there, the mice would get at it; but she would have no food from it if she did not thresh out the grain. Some get a sermon, and carry it home, and allow Satan and sin, and the world, to eat it all up, and it becomes unfruitful and worthless to them. But he who knows how to flail a sermon well, so as to clear out all the wheat from the straw, he is it that

makes a good hearer and feeds his soul on what he hears.

7. And then, in the last place, **the good woman, after threshing the corn, no doubt winnowed it.** Ruth did all this in the field; but you can scarcely do so. You must do some of the work at home. And observe, she did not take the chaff home; she left that behind her in the field. It is a prudent thing to winnow all the discourses you hear so as to separate the precious from the vile; but pray do not fall into the silly habit of taking home all the chaff, and leaving the corn behind. ...Follow the opposite rule; drop the straw, and retain the good corn. Separate between the precious and the vile, and let the worthless material go where it may; you have no use for it, and the sooner you are rid of it the better. Judge with care; reject false teaching with decision, and retain true doctrine with earnestness, so shall you practice the enriching **art of heavenly gleaning.** May the Lord teach us wisdom, so that we may become "rich to all the intents of bliss;" so shall our mouth be satisfied with good things, and our youth shall be renewed like the eagle's.

III. And now, in the last place, here is **A GRACIOUS PERMISSION GIVEN:** "*Let her glean among the sheaves, and reproach her not.*"

Ruth had no right to go among the sheaves till Boaz gave her permission by saying, "Let her do it." For her to be allowed to go amongst the sheaves, in that part of the field where the wheat was newly cut, and none

Gracious gleaning...



...by His permission.

of it carted, was a great favour: but Boaz whispered that handfuls were to be dropped on purpose for her, and that was a greater favour still. Boaz had a secret love for the maiden and even so, beloved, it is because of our Lord's eternal love to us that he allows us to enter his best fields and glean among the sheaves. His grace permits us to lay hold upon doctrinal blessings, promise blessings, and experience blessings: the Lord has a favour towards us, and hence these singular kindnesses. We have no right to any heavenly blessings of ourselves; our portion is due to free and sovereign grace.

I tell you the reasons that moved Boaz's heart to let Ruth go among the sheaves. The master motive was because he loved her. He would have her go there, because he had conceived an affection for her, which he afterwards displayed in grander ways. So the Lord lets his people come and glean among the sheaves, because he loves them. Didst thou have a soul-enriching season amongst the sheaves the other Sabbath? Didst thou carry home thy sack, filled like those of Joseph's brothers, when they returned



from Egypt? Didst thou have an abundance? Wast thou satisfied? Mark; that was thy Master's goodness. It was because he loved thee. Look, I beseech thee, on all thy spiritual enjoyments as proof of his eternal love. Look on all heavenly blessings as being tokens of heavenly grace. It will make thy corn grind all the better, and eat all the sweeter, if thou wilt reflect that eternal love gave it thee. *Thy sweet seasons, thy high enjoyments, thy unspeakable ravishments of spirit are all proofs of divine affection, therefore be doubly glad of them.*

There was another reason why Boaz allows Ruth to glean among the sheaves; it was because **he was her relative**. This is why our Lord gives us choice favours at times, and takes us into his banqueting-house in so gracious a manner. He is our next of kin, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. **Our Redeemer, our kinsman, is the Lord Jesus**, and he will never be strange to his own flesh. It is a high and charming mystery that our Lord Jesus is the Husband of his church; and sure he may well let his spouse glean among the sheaves; for all that he possesses is hers already. Her interests and his interests are one, and so he may well say, "Beloved, take all thou pleasest; I am none the poorer because thou dost partake of my fullness, for thou art mine. Thou art my partner, and my choice, and all that I have is thine." *What, then, shall I say to you who are my Lord's beloved? How shall I speak with a tenderness and generosity equal to his desires, for he would have me speak right lovingly in his name.* Enrich yourselves out of that which is your Lord's. Go a spiritual gleaning as often as ever you can. Never lose an opportunity of picking up a golden blessing. Glean at the mercy-seat; glean in private meditation; glean in reading pious books; glean in associating with godly men; glean everywhere; and if you can get only a little handful it will be better than none. You who are so much in business, and so much penned up by cares; if you can only spend five minutes in the Lord's field gleaning a little, be sure to do so. If you cannot bear away a sheaf, carry an ear; and if you cannot find an ear, pick up even a grain of wheat. Take care to get a little, if you cannot get much: but gather as much as ever you can.

Just one other remark. *O child of God, never be afraid to glean. Have faith in God, and take the promises home to yourself.* Jesus will rejoice to see you making free with his good things. His voice is "Eat abundantly; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." Therefore, if you find a rich promise, live upon it. Draw the honey out of the comb of Scripture, and live on its sweetness. *If you meet with a most extraordinary sheaf, carry*

it away rejoicing. You cannot believe too much concerning your Lord; let not Satan cheat you into contentment with a meagre portion of grace when all the granaries of heaven are open to you. Glean on with humble industry and hopeful confidence, and know that he who owns both fields and sheaves is looking upon you with eyes of love, and will one day espouse you to himself in glory everlasting. Happy gleaner who finds eternal love and eternal life in the fields in which he gleans!"

Spiritual Gleaning of Souls!

While all of what we've read is true, let's turn our focus now to the matter of SPIRITUAL GLEANING as it applies to WINNING SOULS, to leading people to Christ... "Spiritual gleaning of souls" refers to those activities where:

- ✠ *We seek to pick up, one-by-one, those who have fallen...*
- ✠ *We are out of the lime-light, in the shadows, and work behind the scenes—to seek and see and save those who were “missed out” in the evangelistic efforts that were made on a bigger scale by the church or an organization...*
- ✠ *We look out for those who were there when God worked in a meeting, but somehow they didn't “go through” or were “left behind” or worse still, were “dropped” by the other laborers of God...*
- ✠ *We humbly bow down to the level of the “cut down” stalk—that was “cut” but not gathered in...! This often happens at meetings and crusades and in life, in general...*
- ✠ *We seek to identify those dear people who were accidentally (or on purpose) left out, ignored, despised, marginalized, rejected, sidelined, looked-down-upon, “dropped,” or even trampled on... To personally pick them up and gather them in for the Lord of the harvest, the Lord Jesus Christ!*
- ✠ *We work humbly, tirelessly, simply, on a small scale, but purposefully—with our eyes on God and on the individuals persons He may lead us to...*

Mrs Cowman was a missionary (a harvester in God's fields) in the Far-East. Together with her husband, Charles Cowman, they were used to reach many people for Christ, and to GLEAN gloriously, in simplicity. She wrote the following about GLEANING:

GLEANING

*I could not do the work the reapers did,
Or bind the golden sheaves that thickly fell;
But I could follow by the Master's side,
Watching the marred face I loved so well.
Right in my pathway lay many a ripened ear,
Which I would stoop and gather joyfully;
I did not know the Master placed them there,
Handfuls of purpose that He left for me.*





Thank You, Lord!



Eating while working

“Let the elders who perform the duties of their office well be considered doubly worthy of honor..., especially those who labor faithfully in preaching and teaching.

For the Scripture says,

You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain,

and again, The laborer is worthy of his hire. [*Deut. 25:4; Luke 10:7.*]

1Ti 5:17-18 (Ampl)

While the Lord is please with hard work done in His will, He also wants those who work in His harvest to eat well, to be well nourished, and not to starve—physically and spiritually. It is our responsibility as co-workers with God in His harvest fields to make sure that we feed ourselves sufficiently and appropriately—so that we’ll have the necessary strength to work well, for Him!

This is done through having a quality Time Alone with God daily, where we eat His Word and pray and think and listen to Him. It is also done through attending the meetings of the believers, worshipping God together, praying together, listening to God’s Word and having fellowship (in Christ). Reading godly devotional books or biographies, as well as listening to audio-messages, etc., also helps.

Charles Spurgeon spoke about this in his sermon “Mealtime in the Cornfields”...

Mealtime in the Cornfields

"And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left."—Ruth 2:14.

We are going to the cornfields, not so much to glean, as to rest with the

reapers and the gleaners, when under some wide-spreading oak they sit down to take refreshment. We hope some timid gleaner will accept our invitation to come and eat with us, and will have confidence enough to dip her morsel in the vinegar. May all of us have courage to feast to the full on our own account, and kindness enough to carry home a portion to our needy friends at home.

I. Our first point of remark is this—that **GOD'S REAPERS HAVE THEIR MEALTIMES.**

Those who work for God will find him a good master. He cares for oxen, and he has commanded Israel, "**Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.**" Much more doth he care for his servants who serve him. "**He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant.**" **The reapers in Jesus' fields shall not only receive a blessed reward at the last, but they shall have plenteous comforts by the way. He is pleased to pay his servants twice: first in the labour itself, and a second time in the labour's sweet results.** He gives them such joy and consolation in the service of their Master that it is a sweet employ, and they cry, "We delight to do thy will, O Lord." Heaven is made up of serving God day and night, and a foretaste of heaven is enjoyed in serving God on earth with earnest perseverance.

God has ordained certain mealtimes for his reapers; and he has appointed that one of these shall be when they come together to listen to the Word preached. If God be with ministers they act as the disciples did of old, for they received the loaves and the fishes from the Lord Jesus, and then they handed them to the people. We, of ourselves, cannot feed one soul, much less thousands; but when the Lord is with us we can keep as good a table as Solomon himself, with all his fine flour, and fat oxen, and roebucks, and fallow-deer. When the Lord blesses the provisions of his House, no matter how many thousands there may be, all his poor shall be filled with bread. I hope, beloved, you know what it is to sit under the shadow of the Word with great delight, and find the fruit thereof sweet unto your taste. Where the doctrines of grace are boldly and plainly delivered to you in connection with the other truths of revelation; where Jesus Christ upon his cross is always lifted up; where the work of the Spirit is not forgotten; where the glorious purpose of the Father is never despised, there is sure to be rich provision for the children of God.

Often, too, our gracious Lord appoints us mealtimes in our private readings and meditations.

Here it is that his "paths drop fatness." Nothing can be more fattening to the soul of the believer than feeding upon the Word, and digesting it by frequent meditation. No wonder that men grow so slowly when they meditate so little. Cattle must chew the cud; it is not that which they crop with their teeth, but that which is masticated, and digested by rumination, that nourishes them. We must take the truth, and turn it over and over again in the inward parts of our spirit, and so shall we extract suitable nourishment therefrom. My brethren, is not meditation the land of Goshen to you? If men once said, "There is corn in Egypt," may they not always say that **the finest of the wheat is to be found in secret prayer? Private devotion is a land which floweth with milk and honey; a paradise yielding all manner of fruits;** a banqueting house of choice wines. Ahasuerus might make a great feast, but all his hundred and twenty provinces could not furnish such dainties as meditation offers to the spiritual mind. Where can we feed and lie down

in green pastures in so sweet a sense as we do in our musings on the Word? Meditation distils the quintessence of joy from the Scriptures, and gladdens our mouth with a sweetness which excels the virgin honey. Your retired periods and occasions of prayer should be to you refreshing seasons, in which, like the reapers at noonday, you sit with the Master and enjoy his generous provisions. The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain was wont to say that when he was lonely, and his wallet was empty, his Bible was to him meat, and drink, and company too: he is not the only man who has found a fulness in the Word when

all else has been empty. During the battle of Waterloo a godly soldier, mortally wounded, was carried by his comrade into the rear, and being placed with his back propped up against a tree, he besought his friend to open his knapsack and take out the Bible which he had carried in it. "Read to me," he said, "one verse before I close my eyes in death." His comrade read him that verse: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you;" and there, fresh from the whistling of the bullets, and the roll of the drum, and the tempest of human conflict, that believing spirit enjoyed such holy calm that ere he fell asleep



*The finest of
the wheat is
to be found
in secret
prayer!*

in the arms of Jesus he said, "Yes, I have a peace with God which passeth all understanding, which keeps my heart and mind through Jesus Christ." Saints most surely enjoy delightful mealtimes when they are alone in meditation.

Let us not forget that there is one specially ordained mealtime which ought to occur at least once in the week—I mean the Supper of the Lord.

There you have literally, as well as spiritually, a meal. The table is richly spread, it has upon it both bread and wine; and looking at what these symbolize, we have before us a table richer than that which kings could furnish. There we have the flesh and the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereof if a man eat he shall never hunger and never thirst, for that bread shall be unto his everlasting life. Oh! the sweet seasons we have known at the Lord's Supper. If some of you knew the enjoyment of feeding upon Christ in that ordinance you would chide yourselves for not having united with the Church in fellowship. In keeping the Master's commandments there is "great reward," and consequently in neglecting them there is great loss of reward. Christ is not so tied to the sacramental table as to be always found of those who partake thereat, but still it is "in the way" that we may expect the Lord to meet with us. "If ye love me, keep my commandments," is a sentence of touching power. Sitting at this table, our soul has mounted up from the emblem to the reality; we have eaten bread in the kingdom of God, and have leaned our head upon Jesus' bosom. "He brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love."

Besides these regular mealtimes, there are others which God gives us, at seasons when, perhaps, we little expect them.

You have been walking the street, and suddenly you have felt a holy flowing out of your soul toward God; or in the middle of business your heart has been melted with love and made to dance for joy, even as the brooks, which have been bound with winter's ice, leap to feel the touch of spring. You have been groaning, dull, and earthbound; but the sweet love of Jesus has enwrapped your heart when you scarce thought of it, and your spirit, all free, and all on fire, has rejoiced before the Lord with timbrel and dance, like Miriam of old. I have had times occasionally in preaching when I would fain have kept on far beyond the appointed hour, for my overflowing soul has been like a vessel wanting vent. Seasons, too, we have had on our sick beds, when we would have been content to be sick always if we could have had

our bed so well made by tender love, and our head so softly pillowed on condescending grace.

Our blessed Redeemer comes to us in the morning, and wakes us up by dropping sweet thoughts upon our souls; we know not how they came, but it is as if, when the dew was visiting the flowers, a few drops had taken pity upon us. In the cool eventide, too, as we have gone to our beds, our meditation of him has been sweet; and, in the night watches, when we tossed to and fro, and could not sleep, he has been pleased to become our song in the night.

God's reapers find it hard work to reap; but they gain a blessed solace when in one way or another they sit down and eat of their Master's rich provisions; then, with renewed strength, they rise with sharpened sickle, to reap again in the noontide heat.

Let me observe that, while these mealtimes come we know not exactly when, there are certain seasons when we may expect them. The Eastern reapers generally sit down under the shelter of a tree, or a booth, to take refreshment during the heat of the day. And certain I am, that when trouble, affliction, persecution, and bereavement, become the most painful to us, it is then that the Lord hands out to us the sweetest comforts. We must work till the hot sun forces the sweat from our faces, and then we may look for repose; we must bear the burden and heat of the day before we can expect to be invited to those choice meals which the Lord prepares for true labourers. When thy day of trouble is hottest, then the love of Jesus shall be sweetest.

Again, these mealtimes frequently occur before a trial. Elijah must be entertained beneath a juniper tree, for he is to go a forty-days' journey in the strength of that meat. You may suspect some danger nigh when your delights are overflowing. If you see a ship taking in great quantities of provision, it is probably bound for a distant port, and when God gives you extraordinary seasons of communion with Jesus, you may look for long leagues of tempestuous sea. Sweet cordials prepare for stern conflicts.

Times of refreshing also occur after trouble or arduous service. Christ was tempted of the devil, and afterwards angels came and ministered unto him. Jacob wrestled with God, and afterwards, at Mahanaim, hosts of an-

gels met him. Abraham fought with the kings, and returned from their slaughter, and then it was that Melchisedec refreshed him with bread and wine. After conflict, content; after battle banquet. When thou hast waited on thy Lord, then thou shalt sit down, and thy Master will gird himself and wait upon thee.

Let worldlings say what they will about the hardness of religion, we do not find it so. We own that reaping for Christ has its difficulties and troubles; but still the bread which we eat is of heavenly sweetness, and the wine which we drink is crushed from celestial cluster—

*"I would not change my bless'd estate
For all the world calls good or great;
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner's gold."*

II. Follow me while we turn to a second point, **TO THESE MEALS THE GLEANER IS AFFECTIONATELY INVITED.** That is to say, the poor, trembling stranger who has not strength enough to reap, who has no right to be in the field except the right of charity—the poor, trembling sinner, conscious of his own demerit, and feeling but little hope and little joy, is invited to the feast of love.



In the text the gleaner is invited to come. "At mealtime, come thou hither." We trust none of you will be kept away from the place of holy feasting by any shame on account of your dress, or your personal character, or your poverty; nay, nor even on account of your physical infirmities. "At mealtime come thou hither." I knew a deaf woman who could never hear a sound, and yet she was always in the House of God, and when asked why, her reply was that a friend found her the text, and then God was pleased to give her many a sweet thought upon it while she sat with his people; besides, she felt that as a believer she ought to honour God by her presence in his courts, and by confessing her union with his people; and, better still, she always liked to be in the best of company, and as the presence of God was there, and the holy angels, and the saints of the Most High, whether she could hear or no, she would go. If such persons find pleasure in coming, we who can hear should never stay away. Though we feel our unworthiness, we ought to be desirous to be laid in the House of God, as the sick were at the pool of Bethesda, hoping that the waters may be stirred, and that we may step in and be healed. Trembling soul, never let the temptations of the devil keep thee from the assembly of worshippers; "at mealtime come thou hither."

Moreover, she was bidden not only to come but to eat. Whatever there is sweet and comfortable in the Word of God, ye that are of a broken and contrite spirit are invited to partake of it. "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners"—sinners such as you are. "In due time Christ died for the ungodly"—such ungodly ones as you feel yourselves to be. You desire to be Christ's. You may be Christ's. You are saying in your heart, "O that I could eat the children's bread!" You may eat it. You say, "I have no right." But the Lord gives you the invitation! Come without any other right than the right of his invitation.

*"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream."*

But since he bids you "come," take him at his word; and if there be a promise, believe it; if there be an encouraging word, accept it, and let the sweetness of it be yours.

Note further, that she was not only invited to eat the bread, but to dip her morsel in the vinegar. We must not look upon this as being some

sour stuff. No doubt there are crabbed souls in the church, who always dip their morsel in the sourest imaginable vinegar, and with a grim liberality invite others to share their misery with them; but the vinegar in my text is altogether another thing. This was either a compound of various juices expressed from fruits, or else it was that weak kind of wine mingled with water which is still commonly used in the harvest-fields of Italy and the warmer parts of the world—a drink not exceedingly strong, but good enough to impart a relish to the food. It was, to use the only word which will give the meaning, a sauce, which the Orientals used with their bread. As we use butter, or as they on other occasions used oil, so in the harvest-field, believing it to have cooling properties, they used what is here called "vinegar." **Beloved, the Lord's reapers have sauce with their bread; they have not merely doctrines, but the holy unction which is the essence of doctrines; they have not merely truths, but a hallowed delight accompanies the truths.** Take, for instance, the doctrine of election, which is like the bread; there is a sauce to dip it in. When I can say, "He loved me before the foundations of the world," the personal enjoyment of my interest in the truth becomes a sauce into which I dip my morsel. And you, poor gleaner, are invited to dip your morsel in it too. I used to hear people sing that hymn of Toplady's, which begins—

*"A debtor to mercy alone,
Of covenant mercy I sing;
Nor fear, with thy righteousness on,
My person and offering to bring."*

The hymn rises to its climax in the lines—

*"Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven."*

I used to think I should never be able to sing that hymn. It was the sauce, you know. I might manage to eat some of the plain bread, but I could not dip it in that sauce. It was too high doctrine, too sweet, too consoling. But I thank God I have since ventured to dip my morsel in it, and now I hardly like my bread without it. I would have every trembling sinner partake of the comfortable parts of God's Word, even those which cavillers call "high



doctrine." Let him believe the simpler truth first, and then dip it in the sweet doctrine and be happy in the Lord.

I think I see the gleaner half prepared to come, for she is very hungry, and she has nothing with her; but she begins to say, "**I have no right to come, for I am not a reaper; I do nothing for Christ; I am only a selfish gleaner; I am not a reaper.**" Ah! **But thou art invited to come.** Make no questions about it. Boaz bids thee; take thou his invitation, and approach at once. "*But,*" you say, "*I am such a poor gleaner; though my labour is all for myself, yet it is little I win by it; I get a few thoughts while the sermon is being preached, but I lose them before I reach home.*" I know you do, poor weak-handed woman. But still, Jesus invites thee. Come! Take thou the sweet promise as he presents it to thee, and let no bashfulness of thine send thee home hungry. "*But,*" you say, "*I am a stranger; you do not know my sins, my sinfulness, and the waywardness of my heart.*" But Jesus does, and yet he invites you. He knows you are but a Moabitess, a stranger from the commonwealth of Israel; but he bids you come. Is not that enough? "*But,*" you say, "*I owe so much to him already; it is so good of him to spare my forfeited life, and so tender of him to let me hear the gospel preached at all; I cannot have the presumption to be an intruder, and sit with the reapers.*" Oh! but he bids you. There is more presumption in your doubting than there could be in your believing. He bids you. Will you refuse Boaz? Shall Jesus' lips give the invitation, and will you say him nay? Come, now, come. Remember that the little which Ruth could eat did not make Boaz any the poorer; and all that thou wantest will make Christ none the less glorious or full of grace. Are thy necessities large? His supplies are larger. Dost thou require great mercy? He is a great Saviour. I tell thee that his mercy is no more to be exhausted than the sea is

to be drained. Come at once. There is enough for thee, and Boaz will not be improverished by thy feasting to the full. Moreover, let me tell thee a secret—Jesus loves thee; therefore is it that he would have thee feed at his table. If thou art now a longing, trembling sinner, willing to be saved, but conscious that thou deservest it not, Jesus loves thee, and he will take more delight in seeing thee eat than thou wilt take in the eating. Let the sweet love he feels in his soul toward thee draw thee to him. And what is more—but this is a great secret, and must only be whispered in your ear—he intends to be married to you; and when you are married to him, why, the fields will be yours; for, of course, if you are his spouse, you are joint proprietor with him. Is it not so? Doth not the wife share with the husband? All those promises which are "yea and amen in Christ" shall be yours; nay, they all are yours now, for "the man is next of kin unto you," and ere long he will take you unto himself for ever, espousing you in faithfulness, and truth, and righteousness. Will you not eat of your own? "Oh! but," says one, "how can it be? I am a stranger." Yes, a stranger; but Jesus Christ loves the stranger. "A publican, a sinner;" but he is "the friend of publicans and sinners." "An outcast;" but he "gathereth together the outcasts of Israel." "A stray sheep;" but the shepherd "leaves the ninety and nine" to seek it. "A lost piece of money;" but he "sweeps the house" to find thee. "A prodigal son;" but he sets the bells a-ringing when he knows that thou wilt return. Come, Ruth! Come, trembling gleaner! Jesus invites thee: accept the invitation. "At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar."

III. Now, thirdly—and here is a very sweet point in the narrative—**BOAZ REACHED HER THE PARCHED CORN.** She did "come and eat." Where did she sit? Note well that she "sat beside the reapers." She did not feel that she was one of them, but she "sat beside" them. Just like some of you who do not come to the Lord's Supper, but sit and look on. You are sitting "beside the reapers." You fear that you are not the people of God; still you love them, and therefore sit beside them. If there is a good thing to be had, and you cannot get it, you will sit as near as you can to those who do get it. "She sat beside the reapers."

And while she was sitting there, what happened? Did she stretch forth her hand and take the food herself? No, it is written, **He reached her the parched corn.** *Ah! That is it. None but the Lord of the harvest can*



Jesus Eating with his Disciples by James Tissot

hand out the choicest refreshments of spiritual minds. I give the invitation in my Master's name, and I hope I give it earnestly, affectionately, sincerely; but I know very well that at my poor bidding none will come till the Spirit draws. No trembling heart will accept divine refreshing at my hand; unless the King himself comes near, and reaches the parched corn to each chosen guest, none will receive it. How does he do this? By his gracious Spirit, he first of all inspires your faith. You are afraid to think that it can be true that such a sinner as you are can ever be "accepted in the Beloved"; he breathes upon you, and your faint hope becomes an expectancy, and that expectation buds and blossoms into an appropriating faith, which says, "Yes, my beloved is mine, and his desire is toward me."

Having done this, the Saviour does more; he sheds abroad the love of God in your heart. The love of Christ is like sweet perfume in a box. Now, he who put the perfume in the box is the only person that knows how to take off the lid. He, with his own skilful hand, opens the secret blessing, and sheds abroad the love of God in the soul.

But Jesus does more than this: he reaches the parched corn with his own



hand, when he gives us close communion with himself. Do not think that this is a dream; I tell you there is such a thing as speaking with Christ to-day. As certainly as I can talk with my dearest friend, or find solace in the company of my beloved wife, so surely may I speak with Jesus, and find intense delight in the company of Immanuel. It is not a fiction. We do not worship a far-off Saviour; he is a God nigh at hand. His word is in our mouth and in our heart, and we do to-day walk with him as the elect did of old, and commune with him as his apostles did on earth; not after the flesh, it is true, but after a real and spiritual fashion.

Yet once more let me add, the Lord Jesus is pleased to reach the parched corn, in the best sense, when the Spirit gives us the infallible witness within, that we are "born of God." A man may know that he is a Christian beyond all question. Philip de Morny, who lived in the time of Prince Henry of Navarre, was wont to say that the Holy Spirit had made his own salvation to him as clear a point as a problem demonstrated in Euclid. You know with what mathematical precision the scholar of geometry solves a problem or proves a proposition, and with as absolute a precision, as certainly as twice two are four, we may "know that we have passed from death unto life." The sun in the heavens is not more clear to the eye than his present salvation to an assured believer; such a man could as soon doubt his own existence as suspect his possession of eternal life.

Now let the prayer be breathed by poor Ruth, who is trembling yonder. Lord, reach me the parched corn! "Show me a token for good." "Deal bountifully with thy servant." "Draw me, we will run after thee." Lord, send thy love into my heart!

*"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,
With all thy quickening powers,
Come, shed abroad a Saviour's love,
And that shall kindle ours."*

There is no getting at Christ except by Christ revealing himself to us.

IV. And now the last point. After Boaz had reached the parched corn, we are told that "**SHE DID EAT, AND WAS SUFFICED, AND LEFT.**" So shall it be with every Ruth. Sooner or later every penitent shall become a believer, every mourner a singer. There may be a space of deep conviction, and a period of much hesitation; but there shall come a season when the soul decides for the Lord, and cries, "If I perish, I perish. I will go as I am to Jesus. I will not play the fool any longer with my buts and ifs, but since he bids me believe that he died for me, I will believe it, and will trust his cross for my salvation." Whenever you shall be privileged to do this, you shall be "satisfied." "She did eat, and was sufficed." Your head shall be satisfied with the precious truth which Christ reveals; your heart shall be content with Jesus, as the altogether lovely object of affection; your hope shall be filled, for whom have you in heaven but Christ? Your desire shall be satiated, for what can even your desire hunger for more than "to know Christ, and to be found in him." You shall find Jesus charm your conscience, till it is at perfect peace, he shall content your judgment, till you know the certainty of his teachings; he shall supply your memory with recollections of what he did, and gratify your imagination with the prospects of what he is yet to do.

"She was sufficed, and left." Some of us have had deep draughts of love; we have thought that we could take in all of Christ, but when we have done our best, we have had to leave a vast remainder. We have sat down with a ravenous appetite at the table of the Lord's love, and said, "Nothing but the infinite can ever satisfy me," and that infinite has been granted us. I have felt that I am such a great sinner that nothing short of an infinite atonement could wash my sin away, and no doubt you have felt the same; but we have had our sin removed, and found merit enough and to spare in

Jesus; we have had our hunger relieved, and found a redundance remaining for others who are in a similar case. There are certain sweet things in the word of God which you and I have not enjoyed yet, and which we cannot enjoy yet; and these we are obliged to leave for a while, till we are better prepared to receive them. Did not our Lord say, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now"? There is a special knowledge to which we have not attained, a place of intimate fellowship with Christ which we have not yet occupied. There are heights of communion which as yet our feet have not climbed—virgin snows of the mountain of God untrodden by the foot of man. There is yet a beyond, and there will be for ever.

A verse or two further on we are told what Ruth did with her leavings. It is very wrong, I believe, at feasts to carry anything home with you; but she was not under any such regulation, for that which was left she took home and gave to Naomi. So it shall be even with you, poor tremblers, who think you have no right to a morsel for yourselves; you shall be allowed to eat, and when you are quite sufficed, you shall have courage to bear away a portion to others who are hungering at home. I am always pleased to find the young believer beginning to pocket something for others. When you hear a sermon you think, "My poor mother cannot get out to-day; how I wish she would have been here, for that sentence would have comforted her. If I forget everything else, I will tell her that." Cultivate an unselfish spirit. Seek to love as you have been loved. Remember that "the law and the prophets" are fulfilled in this, to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and your neighbour as yourself. How can you love your neighbour as yourself if you do not love his soul? You have loved your own soul; through grace you have been led to lay hold on Jesus; love your neighbour's soul, and never be satisfied till you see him in the enjoyment of those things which are the charm of your life and the joy of your spirit. Take home your gleanings for those you love who cannot glean for themselves.

I do not know how to give you an invitation to Christ more pleasantly, but I would with my whole heart cry, "Come and welcome to Jesus." I pray my Lord and Master to reach a handful of parched corn of comfort to you if you are a trembling sinner, and I also beg him to make you eat till you are fully sufficed."



Serving one another...



Resting...



Resting...

“She has been working since early morning and has just now stopped **to rest for a while** under the shelter.”

Ruth 2:7 (GNB)

**Resting in the Lord while working,
and resting from working,
are both used by God to refresh and strengthen us
for working with Him!**

God made the heart in an amazing way! The heart of a person beats (contracts) 60-80 times per minute, about 100 000 times in one day and about 35 million times in a year. During an average lifetime, the human heart will beat more than 2.5 billion times. This is amazing!

The contraction phase is called systole. Relaxation of the heart muscle precedes contraction. The relaxation phase is called diastole. ***During diastole (when the heart muscle relaxes), the heart is filled with blood, which is pumped to the whole body during systole. Without diastole, without resting, the heart would have blood to pump to the body. Without resting, the heart would not be functioning as a pump any more. Without diastole, without resting, we cannot survive! In other words, the heart needs to contract AND relax all the time, intermittently, to function well!***

In the same way, in life, **we need to work AND rest all the time, intermittently**... This applies to our life—physically, mentally, spiritually, and socially. It also applies to working in God’s harvest fields!

If we want to work well for God (in His harvest field) we need to learn how and when to REST in Him as well.... and how and when to work!

The Lord Jesus said: ***“Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Mat 11:28), then we’ll take His yoke (and work with Him! (v29)***

Jean S. Pigott wrote the following, beautiful poem about RESTING:

**Jesus, I am resting, resting,
In the joy of what Thou art;
I am finding out the greatness
Of Thy loving heart.
Thou hast bid me gaze upon Thee,
And Thy beauty fills my soul,
For by Thy transforming power,
Thou hast made me whole.**

Refrain (after each stanza)

*Jesus, I am resting, resting,
In the joy of what Thou art;
I am finding out the greatness
Of Thy loving heart.*

O, how great Thy loving kindness,
Vaster, broader than the sea!
O, how marvelous Thy goodness,
Lavished all on me!
Yes, I rest in Thee, Belovèd,
Know what wealth of grace is Thine,
Know Thy certainty of promise,
And have made it mine.

Simply trusting Thee, Lord Jesus,
I behold Thee as Thou art,
And Thy love, so pure, so changeless,
Satisfies my heart;
Satisfies its deepest longings,
Meets, supplies its every need,
Compasseth me round with blessings:
Thine is love indeed!

**Ever lift Thy face upon me
As I work and wait for Thee;
Resting 'neath Thy smile, Lord Jesus,
Earth's dark shadows flee.
Brightness of my Father's glory,
Sunshine of my Father's face,
Keep me ever trusting, resting,
Fill me with Thy grace.**

*Thank You, Lord,
that I can rest in You!*





Gathered on the field



Gathering in the barn

Once the sickle of the harvester has cut down the stalks of wheat (for instance), it is **GATHERED** (1) on the field, then (2) on the wagon (or cart or truck), and then (3) in the barn... In the same way, once the sickle of God's Spirit has cut people down and brought them low, they are **GATHERED** with others who have gone through the same experience under God's hand. They are gathered on the field, on the wagon, and ultimately in the barn (which is comparable to the church of God)... We'll look at this aspect of harvesting with God more closely now. Looking at the loaded wagon on the harvest field, Spurgeon said the following:

The Loaded Wagon

"...as a cart is pressed that is **full of sheaves**." - Amos 2:13.

"We have been into the corn-fields to glean with Boaz and Ruth; and I trust that the timid and faint-hearted have been encouraged to partake of the handfuls which are let fall on purpose for them by the order of our generous Lord. We go to-day to the gate of the harvest-field with another object—to see the wagon piled up aloft with many sheaves come creaking forth, making ruts along the field. We come with gratitude to God, thanking him for the harvest, blessing him for favorable weather, and praying him to continue the same till the last shock of corn shall be brought in, and the husbandmen everywhere shall shout the 'Harvest Home.'

What a picture is a wagon loaded with corn of you and of me, as loaded with God's mercies! From our cradle up till now, every day has added a sheaf of blessing What could the Lord do for us more than he has done? He has daily loaded us with benefits. Let us adore his goodness, and yield him our cheerful gratitude."

In the book "*God's Harvest: The Nature of True Revival*," I.D.E. Thomas says: "We saw that the Scripture depict a revival as an extraordinary harvest in which the sovereign initiative of God is the key element—the



Gathered on vehicles...



plowman shall *overtake* the reaper (Amos 9:13). We considered how God's people should prepare themselves for this work—*at the gate*. Finally we saw that the precise work of harvesting involves—*on the field*—and that the unchanging task of the church is to plough and sow and reap—the normal processes of securing a harvest which God also graciously uses to add to his Church.

Let us now consider the final aspect of the picture given by Amos (9:13), the purpose of God in this harvest—that is, what the end-product is intended to be. What is to be gathered *into the barn*?

...the church is a fellowship of regenerate men and women 'which he purchased with his own blood' (Acts 20:28), 'called out from' the world, and standing over and against it... However, ...God not only calls out his people *from* the world but calls them to go *into* the world... as 'salt and light'...They are to influence its life and standards through their Christ-like characters and witness to the truth and power of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8)...

What kind of people are such men and women meant to be? ...The purpose of God for his people is **to make them holy**: 'You shall be holy, for I am holy' (1 Peter 1:16)..." This is the "wheat in the barn"...

Oswald Chambers goes further and explains that the wheat must be made "broken bread" to feed others, and not just stay "in the barn", in the church!!! We'll look at this in pages to follow, later. Now, we'll consider the "wheat in the barn"...

Wheat in the Barn

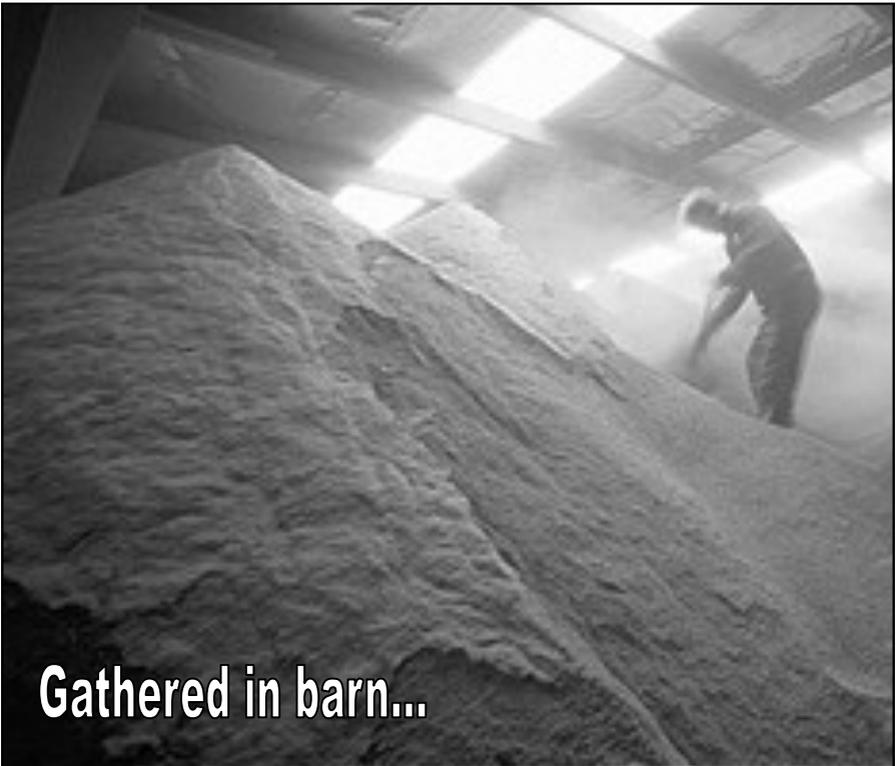
"Gather the wheat into my barn."—Matthew 13:30.

"Gather the wheat into my barn." Then the purpose of the Son of man will be accomplished. He sowed good seed, and he shall have his barn filled with it at the last. Be not dispirited, Christ will not be disappointed. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." He went forth weeping, bearing precious seed, but he shall come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

"Gather the wheat into my barn": then Satan's policy will be unsuccessful. The enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, hopeful that the false wheat would destroy or materially injure the true; but he failed in the end, for the wheat ripened and was ready to be gathered. Christ's garner shall be filled; the tares shall not choke the wheat. The evil one will be put to shame. ...At this time I will keep to my text, and preach from it almost word by word. It begins with "**but**," and that is **A WORD OF SEPARATION.**

Here note that the tares and the wheat will grow together until the time of harvest shall come. It is a great sorrow of heart to some of the wheat to be growing side by side with tares. The ungodly are as thorns and briars to those who fear the Lord. How frequently is the sigh forced forth from the godly heart:—"Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" A man's foes are often found within his own household; those who should have been his best helpers are often his worst hinderers: their conversation vexes and torments him. It is of little use to try to escape from them, for the tares are permitted in God's providence to grow with the wheat, and they will do so until the end. Good men have emigrated to distant lands to found communities in which there should be none but saints, and alas! sinners have sprung up in their own families. The attempt to weed the ungodly and heretical out of the settlement has led to persecution and other evils, and the whole plan has proved a failure. Others have shut themselves away in hermitages to avoid the temptations of the world, and so have hoped to win the victory by running away: this is not the way of wisdom. The word for this present is,—*"Let both grow together"*; but there will come a time when a final separation will be made. Then, dear Christian woman, your husband will never persecute you again. Godly sister, your brother will heap no more ridicule upon you. Pious workman, there will be no more jesting and taunting from the ungodly. *That "**but**" will be an iron gate between the god-fearing and the godless: then will the tares be cast into the fire, but the Lord of the harvest will say, "Gather the wheat into my barn."*

This separation must be made; for the growing of the wheat and the tares together on earth has caused much pain and injury, and therefore it will not be continued in a happier world. We can very well suppose that godly men and women might be willing that their unconverted children should



Gathered in barn...



dwell with them in heaven; but it cannot be, for God will not have his cleansed ones defiled nor his glorified ones tried by the presence of the unbelieving. ***The tares must be taken away in order to the perfectness and usefulness of the wheat.*** Would you have the tares and the wheat heaped up together in the granary in one mass? That would be ill husbandry with a vengeance. They can neither of them be put to appropriate use till thoroughly separated. ***Even so, mark you, the saved and the unsaved may live together here, but they must not live together in another world. The command is absolute,—"Gather the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn."*** Sinner, can you hope to enter heaven? You never loved your mother's God, and is he to endure you in his heavenly courts? You never trusted your father's Saviour, and yet are you to behold his glory for ever? Are you to go swaggering down the streets of heaven, letting fall an oath, or singing a loose song? Why, you know, you get tired of the worship of God on the Lord's day; do you think that the Lord will endure unwilling worshippers in the temple above? The Sabbath is a wearisome day to you; how can you hope to enter into the Sabbath of God? You have no taste for heavenly pursuits, and these things would be profaned if you were permitted to partake in them; therefore that word "but" must come in, and you must part from the Lord's people never to meet again. Can you bear to think of being divided from godly friends for ever and ever?

That separation involves an awful difference of destiny. ***"Gather the tares in bundles to burn them."*** I do not dare to draw the picture; but when the bundle is bound up there is no place for it except the fire. God grant that you may never know all the anguish which burning must mean; but may you escape from it at once. It is no trifle which the Lord of love compares to being consumed with fire. I am quite certain that no words of mine can ever set forth its terror. They say that we speak dreadful things about the wrath to come; but I am sure that we understate the case. What must the tender, loving, gracious Jesus have meant by the words, "Gather the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them"? See what a wide distinction between the lot of the Lord's people and Satan's people. Burn the wheat? Oh no; "Gather the wheat into my barn." There let them be happily, safely housed for ever. Oh, the infinite distance between heaven and hell!—the harps and the angels, and the wailing and gnashing of teeth! Who can ever measure the width of that gulf which divides the glorified saint, white-robed and crowned with immortality, from the soul which is

driven for ever away from the presence of God, and from the glory of his power? It is a dreadful "but"—that "but" of separation. I pray you, remember that it will interpose between brother and brother,—between mother and child,— between husband and wife. "One shall be taken and the other left." And when that sword shall descend to divide, there shall never be any after union. ***The separation is eternal.*** There is no hope or possibility of change in the world to come.

But, says one, "That dreadful 'but'! Why must there be such a difference?" The answer is, Because there always was a difference. The wheat was sown by the Son of man: the false wheat was sown by the enemy. There was always a difference in character:—the wheat was good, the tares were evil. This difference did not appear at first, but it became more and more apparent as the wheat ripened, and as the tares ripened too. They were totally different plants; and so a regenerate person and an unregenerate person are altogether different beings. I have heard an unregenerate man say that he is quite as good as the godly man; but in so boasting he betrayed his pride. Surely there is as great a difference in God's sight between the unsaved and the believer as between darkness and the light, or between the dead and the living. There is in the one a life which there is not in the other, and the difference is vital and radical. Oh, that you may never trifle with this essential matter, but be really the wheat of the Lord! ***It is vain to have the name of wheat, we must have the nature of wheat.*** God will not be mocked: he will not be pleased by our calling ourselves Christians while we are not so. ***Be not satisfied with church membership; but seek after membership with Christ. Do not talk about faith, but exercise it. Do not boast of experience, but possess it. Be not like the wheat, but be the wheat.*** No shams and imitations will stand in the last great day: that terrible "but" will roll as a sea of fire between the true and the false. Oh Holy Spirit! Let each of us be found transformed by thy power.

II. The second word of our text is "gather,"—that is A WORD OF CONGREGATION. What a blessed thing this gathering is! I feel it a great pleasure to gather multitudes together to hear the gospel; and is it not a joy to see a house full of people, on week-days and Sabbath-days, who are willing to leave their homes and to come considerable distances to listen to the gospel? It is a great thing to gather people together for that; but the gathering of the wheat into the barn is a far more wonderful business. Gathering is in itself better than scattering, and I pray that the Lord

Jesus may ever exercise his attracting power in this place; for he is no Divider, but "unto him shall the gathering of the people be." Has he not said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me"?

..."Gather the wheat." The saints will be found in all ranks of society. ...To me it is a charming thought that they will come from all the ages. Let us hope that our first father Adam will be there, and mother Eve, following in the footsteps of their dear son Abel, and trusting in the same sacrifice. We shall meet Abraham and Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses, and David, and Daniel, and all the saints made perfect. What a joy to see the apostles, martyrs, and reformers! I long to see Luther, and Calvin, and Bunyan and Whitefield. ...I do not know how that will be, but I have not much doubt that we shall have fellowship with all the saints of every age in the general assembly and church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.

No matter when or where the wheat grew, it shall be gathered into the one barn; gathered never to be scattered; gathered out of all divisions of the visible church, never to be divided again...

In the text there is next **A WORD OF DESIGNATION**. I have already trespassed upon that domain. "*Gather the wheat.*" Nothing but "the wheat" must be placed in the Lord's homestead. Lend me your hearts while I urge you to a searching examination for a minute or two. **The wheat was sown of the Lord. Are you sown of the Lord? Friend, if you have any religion, how did you get it? Was it self-sown? If so, it is good for nothing. The true wheat was sown by the Son of man. Are you sown of the Lord? Did the Spirit of God drop eternal life into your bosom? Did it come from that dear hand which was nailed to the cross? Is Jesus your life? Does your life begin and end with him? If so, it is well.**

The wheat sown of the Lord is also *the object of the Lord's care*. Wheat needs a deal of attention. The farmer would get nothing from it if he did not watch it carefully. Are you under the Lord's care? Does he keep you? Is that word true to your soul,—"I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day"? Do you experience such keeping? Make an honest answer, as you love your soul.

Next, *wheat is a useful thing, a gift from God for the life of men*. The false wheat was of no good to anybody: it could only be eaten of swine,

and then it made them stagger like drunken men. Are you one of those who are wholesome in society,—who are like bread to the world, so that if men receive you and your example and your teaching they will be blessed thereby? Judge yourselves whether ye are good or evil in life and influence.

...One thing is true of the wheat—that it is the most dependent of all plants. I have never heard of a field of wheat which sprang up, and grew, and ripened without a husbandman's care. Some ears may appear after a harvest when the corn has shaled out; but I have never heard of plains in America or elsewhere covered with unsown wheat. No, no. There is no wheat where there is no man, and there is no grace where there is no Christ. We owe our very existence to the Father, who is the husbandman.

...Our last head, upon which also I will speak briefly, is A WORD OF DESTINATION. "*Gather the wheat into my barn.*" The process of gathering in the wheat will be completed at the day of judgment, but it is going on every day. From hour to hour saints are gathered; they are going heavenward even now. *I am so glad to hear as a regular thing that the departed ones from my own dear church have such joy in being harvested. Glory be to God, our people die well. The best thing is to live well, but we are greatly gladdened to hear that the brethren die well; for, full often, that is the most telling witness for vital godliness. Men of the world feel the power of triumphant deaths.*

...To the wheat the barn is the place of security. It dreads no mildew there; it fears no frost, no heat, no drought, no wet, when once in the barn. All its growth-perils are past. It has reached its perfection. It has rewarded the labour of the husbandman, and it is housed. Oh, long-expected day, begin! Oh, brethren, what a blessing it will be when you and I shall have come to our maturity, and Christ shall see in us the travail of his soul!

I delight to think of heaven as his barn; ...It is the homestead of Christ to which we shall be carried, and for this we are ripening. It is to be thought of with ... We wish to be going home ourselves to the heavenly Father's house and its many mansions; but concerning the departed we rejoice before the Lord as with the joy of harvest. "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."..."

Threshing...!



Threshing...

Threshing is a merciless art and part of harvesting.

*"For the fitches are not threshed with a **threshing** instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cumin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cumin with a rod. Bread corn is bruised; because he will not ever be **threshing** it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen."—Isaiah 28:27-28.*

Charles Spurgeon's sermon on these verses are as follows:

Threshing

The art of husbandry (farming) was taught to man by God. He would have starved while he was discovering it, and so the Lord, when he sent him out of the Garden of Eden, gave him a measure of elementary instruction in agriculture, even as the prophet puts it,— "***His God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him.***" God has taught man to plough, to break the clods, to sow the different kinds of grain, and to thresh out the different orders of seeds.

The Eastern husbandman could not thresh by **machinery** as we do; but still he was ingenious and discreet in that operation. ***Sometimes a heavy instrument was dragged over the corn to tear out the grain.*** This is what is intended in the first clause by the "threshing instrument," as also in that passage, "I have made thee a sharp threshing instrument having teeth." When the corn-drag was not used, they often turned the heavy solid wheel of a country cart over the straw. This is alluded to in the next sentence: "Neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cumin." They had also flails not very unlike our own, and then for still smaller seeds, such as dill and cumin, they used a simple staff or a slender switch. "The fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cumin with a rod."

This is not the time or place to give a dissertation upon threshing. We find every information upon that subject in proper books; but the meaning of the illustration is this—that **as God has taught husbandmen to distinguish between different kinds of grain in the threshing, so does he in his infinite wisdom deal discreetly with different sorts of men. He does not try us all alike, seeing we are differently constituted. He does not pass us all through the same agony of conviction: we are not all to the same extent threshed with terrors. He does not give us all to endure the same family or bodily affliction; one escapes with only being beaten with a rod, while another feels, as it were, the feet of horses in his heavy tribulations.**

Our subject is just this. Threshing: **all kinds of seeds need it, all sorts of men need it.** Secondly, **the threshing is done with discretion,** and, thirdly, **the threshing will not last for ever;** for so the second verse of the text says: "Bread corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen."

I. First, then, WE ALL NEED THRESHING. Some have a foolish conceit of themselves that they have no sin; but they deceive themselves, and the truth is not in them. The best of men are men at the best; and being men, they are not perfect, but are still compassed about with infirmity. *What is the object of threshing the grain? Is it not to separate it from the straw and the chaff?*

About the best of men there is still a measure of chaff. All is not grain that lies upon the threshing floor. All is not grain even in those golden sheaves which have been brought into our garner so joyfully. Even the wheat is joined to the straw, which was necessary to it at one time. *About the kernel of the wheat the husk is wrapped, and this still clings to it even when it lies upon the threshing-floor. About the holiest of men there is something superfluous, something which must be removed. We either sin by omission or by trespass. Either in spirit, or motive, or lack of zeal, or want of discretion, we are faulty.* If we escape one error, we usually glide into its opposite. If before an action we are right, we err in the doing of it, or, if not, we become proud after it is over. *If sin be shut out at the front door, it tries the back gate, or climbs in at the window, or comes down the chimney. Those who cannot perceive it in themselves are frequently blinded by its smoke.* They are so thoroughly in the water

that they do not know that it rains. So far as my own observation goes I have found out no man whom the old divines would have called perfectly perfect; *the absolutely all-round man is a being whom I expect to see in heaven, but not in this poor fallen world. We all need such cleansing and purging as the threshing-floor is intended to work for us.*

Now, *threshing is useful in loosening the connection between the good corn and the husk.* Of course, if it would slip out easily from its husk, the corn would only need to be shaken. There would be no necessity for a staff or a rod, much less for the feet of horses, or the wheel of a cart to separate it. *But there's the rub: our soul not only lieth in the dust, but "cleaveth" to it. There is a fearful intimacy between fallen human nature and the evil which is in the world; and this compact is not soon broken. In our hearts we hate every false way, and yet we sorrowfully confess, "When I would do good, evil is present with me." Sometimes when our spirit cries out most ardently after God, a holy will is present with us, but how to perform that which is good we find not. Flesh and blood have tendencies and weaknesses which, if not sinful in themselves, yet tend in that direction. Appetites need but slight excitement to germinate into lusts.* It is not easy for us to forget our own kindred and our father's house even when the king doth most greatly desire our beauty. Our alien nature remembers Egypt and the flesh-pots while yet the manna is in our mouths. We were all born in the house of evil, and some of us were nursed upon the lap of iniquity, so that our first companionships were among the heirs of wrath. That which was bred in the bone is hard to get out of the flesh. *Threshing is used to loosen our hold of earthly things and break us away from evil. This needs a divine hand, and nothing but the grace of God can make the threshing effectual.* Something is done by threshing when the soul ceases to be bound up with its sin, and sin is no longer pleasurable or satisfactory. Still, as the work of threshing is never done till the corn is separated altogether from the husk, *so chastening and discipline have never accomplished their design till God's people give up every form of evil, and abhor all iniquity.* When we shake right out of the straw, and have nothing further to do with sin, then the flail will lie quiet. It has taken a good deal of threshing to bring some of us anywhere near that mark, and I am afraid many more heavy blows will be struck before we shall reach the total separation. From a certain sort of sins we are very easily separated by the grace of God early in our spiritual life; but when those are gone, another layer of evils comes into sight, and the work has to

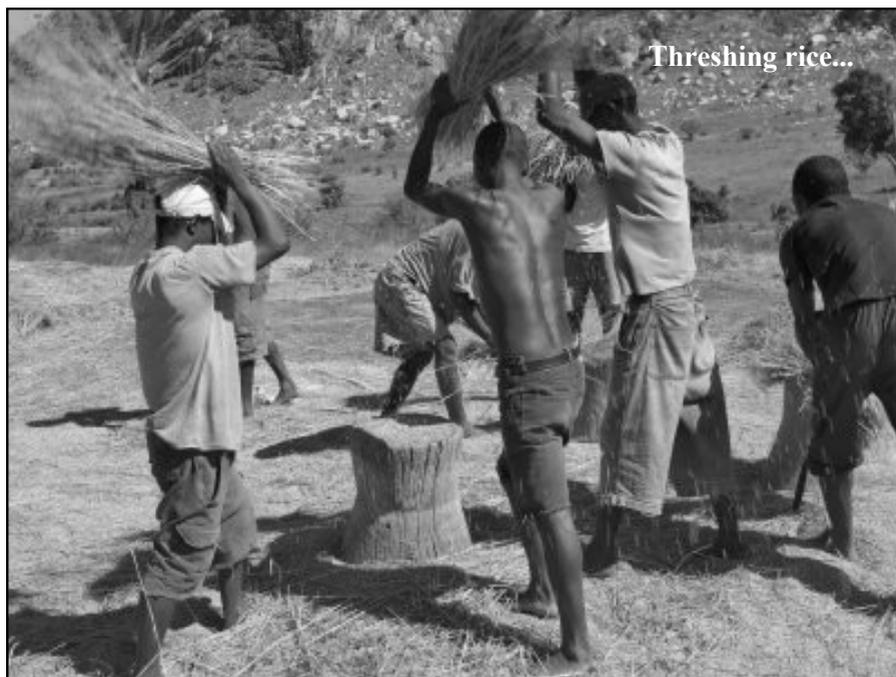
be repeated. **The complete removal of our connection with sin is a work demanding the divine skill and power of the Holy Ghost, and by him only will it be accomplished.**

Threshing becomes needful for the sake of our usefulness; for the wheat must come out of the husk to be of service. We can only honour God and bless men by being holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. O corn of the Lord's threshing-floor, thou must be beaten and bruised, or perish as a worthless heap! ***Eminent usefulness usually necessitates eminent affliction.***

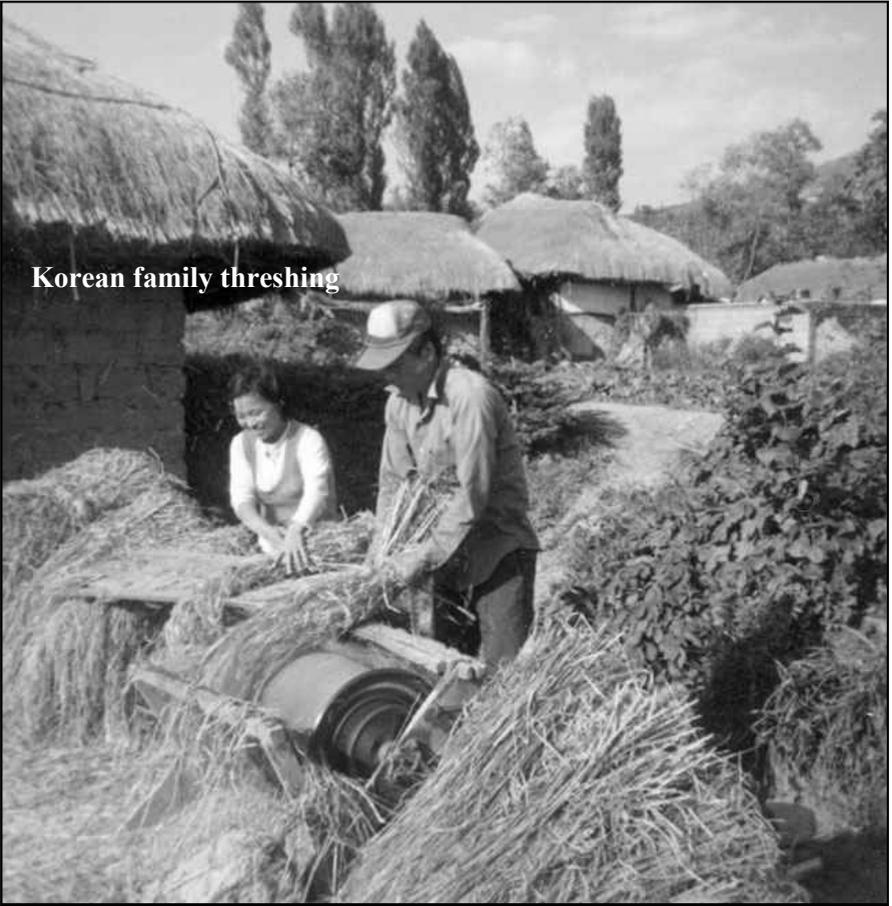
Unless thus severed from sin, we cannot be gathered into the garner. God's pure wheat must not be defiled by an admixture of chaff. There shall in no wise enter into heaven anything that defileth, therefore every sort of imperfection must come away from us by some means or other ere we can enter into the state of eternal blessedness and perfection. Yea, even here we cannot have true fellowship with the Father unless we are daily delivered from sin.

...Remember, however, that ***as threshing is a sign of the impurity of the wheat, so is affliction an indication of the present imperfection of the Christian.*** If you were no more connected with evil, you would be no more corrected with sorrow. The sound of a flail is never heard in heaven, for it is not the threshing-floor of the imperfect but the garner of the completely sanctified. The threshing instrument is therefore a humbling token, and so long as we feel it we should humble ourselves under the hand of God, for it is clear that we are not yet free from the straw and the chaff of fallen nature.

On the other hand, the threshing instrument is a prophecy of our future perfection. We are under-going from the hand of God a discipline which will not fail: we shall by his prudence and wisdom be clean delivered from the husk of sin. ***We are feeling the blows of the staff, but we are being effectually separated from the evil which has so long surrounded us, and for certain we shall one day be pure and perfect. Every tendency to sin shall be beaten off. "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him."*** If, we being evil, yet succeed with our children by our poor, imperfect chastening, how much more shall the Father of spirits cause us to live unto himself by his



Korean family threshing



holy discipline? If the corn could know the necessary uses of the flail, it would invite the thresher to his work; and since we know whereunto tribulation tendeth, let us glory in it, and yield ourselves with cheerfulness to its processes. *We need threshing, the threshing proves our value in God's sight, and while it marks our imperfection, it secures our ultimate cleansing.*

II. Secondly, I would remark that GOD'S THRESHING IS DONE WITH GREAT DISCRETION; "for the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument." The poor little fitches, a kind of small seed used for flavouring cakes, were not crushed out with a heavy drag, for by such rough usage they would have been broken up and spoiled. "Neither is a cart-wheel turned about upon the cummin": this little seed, perhaps the carraway, would have been ground by so great a weight: it would have been preposterous to treat it in that rough manner. The fitches were soon removed from the stalks by being "beaten out with a staff," and the cummin needed nothing but a touch of a rod. *For tender seeds the farmer uses gentle means, and for the hardier grains he reserves the sterner processes. Let us think of this, as it conveys a valuable spiritual lesson.*

Reflect, my brother, that your threshing and mine are in God's hands. Our chastening is not left to servants, much less to enemies; "we are chastened of the Lord!" The Great Husbandman himself personally bids the labourers do this and that, for they know not the time or the way except as divine wisdom shall direct: they would turn the wheel upon the cummin, or attempt to thresh wheat with a staff. I have seen God's servants trying both these follies; they have crushed the weak and tender, and they have dealt with partiality and softness with those who needed to be sternly rebuked. How roughly some ministers, some elders, some good men and women will go to work with timid, tender souls; yet we need not fear that they will destroy the true-hearted, for, however much they may vex them, the Lord will not leave his chosen in their hands, but will overrule their mistaken severity, and preserve his own from being destroyed thereby. How glad I am of this; for there are many nowadays who would grind the tender ones to powder if they could!

As the Lord has not left us in the power of man, so also he has not left us in the power of the devil. Satan may sift us as wheat, but he shall not thresh us as fitches. He may blow away the chaff from us even with his

foul breath, but he shall not have the management of the Lord's corn: "the Lord preserveth the righteous." Not a stroke in providence is left to chance; the Lord ordains it, and arranges the time, the force, and the place of it. ***The divine decree leaves nothing uncertain; the jurisdiction of supreme love occupies itself with the smallest events of our daily lives.*** Whether we bear the teeth of the corn-drag, or men do ride over our heads, or we endure the gentler touches of the divine hand, everything is by appointment, and the appointment is fixed by infallible wisdom. Let this be a mine of comfort to the afflicted.

Next, remark that the instruments used for our threshing are chosen also by the Great Husbandman. The Eastern farmer, according to the text, has several instruments, and so has our God. ***No form of threshing is pleasant to the seed which bears it;*** indeed, each one seems to the sufferer to be peculiarly objectionable. We say, "I think I could bear anything but this sad trouble." We cry, "It was not an enemy, then I could have borne it," and so on. Perhaps the tender cummin foolishly fancies that the horse-hoofs would be a less terrible ordeal than the rod, and the fitches might even prefer the wheel to the staff; but happily the matter is left to the choice of One who judges unerringly. What dost thou know about it, poor sufferer? How canst thou judge of what is good for thee? "Ah!" cries a mother, "I would not mind poverty; but to lose my darling child is too terrible!" Another laments, "I could have parted with all my wealth, but to be slandered cuts me to the quick." There is no pleasing us in the matter of chastisement. When I was at school, with my uncle for master, it often happened that he would send me out to find a cane for him. It was not a very pleasant task, and I noticed that I never once succeeded in selecting a stick which was liked by the boy who had to feel it. Either it was too thin, or too stout; and in consequence I was threatened by the sufferers with condign punishment if I did not do better next time. ***I learned from that experience never to expect God's children to like the particular rod with which they are chastened.*** You smile at my simile, but you may smile also at yourself when you find yourself crying, "Any trouble but this, Lord. Any affliction but this." ***How idle it is to expect a pleasant trial; for it would then be no trial at all.*** Almost every really useful medicine is unpleasant: **almost all effectual surgery is painful; no trial for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, yet it is the right trial, and none the less right because it is bitter.**





**Threshing maize
in Nepal**



**Threshing
in India**



Notice, too, that God not only selects the instruments, but he chooses the place. Farmers in the East have large threshing-floors upon which they throw the sheaves of corn or barley, and upon these they turn horses and drags; but near the house door I have often noticed in Italy a much smaller circle of hardened clay or cement, and here I have seen the peasants beating out their garden seeds in a more careful manner than would naturally be used towards the greater heaps upon the larger area. Some saints are not afflicted in the common affairs of life, but they have peculiar sorrow in their innermost spirits: they are beaten on the smaller and more private threshing-floor; but the process is none the less effectual. How foolish are we when we rebel against our Lord's appointment, and speak as if we had a right to choose our own afflictions! "Should it be according to thy mind?" Should a child select the rod? Should the grain appoint its own thresher? Are not these things to be left to a higher wisdom? Some complain of the time of their trial; it is hard to be crippled in youth, or to be poor in age, or to be widowed when your children are young. Yet in all this there is wisdom. ***A part of the skill of the physician may lie, not only in writing a prescription, but in arranging the hours at which the medicine shall be taken.*** One draught may be most useful in the morning, and another may be more beneficial in the evening; and so the Lord knows when it is best for us to drink of the cup which he has prepared for us. ***I know a dear child of God who is enduring a severe trial in his old age, and I would fain screen him from it because of his feebleness, but our heavenly Father knows best, and there we must leave it.*** **The instrument of the threshing, the place, the measure, the time, the end, are all appointed by infallible love.**

It is interesting to notice in the text the limit of this threshing. The husbandman is zealous to beat out the seed, but he is careful not to break it in pieces by too severe a process. His wheel is not to grind, but to thresh; the horses' feet are not to break, but to separate. He intends to get the cummin out of its husk, but he will not turn a heavy drag upon it utterly to smash it up and destroy it. In the same way the Lord has a measure in all his chastening. Courage, tried friend, you shall be afflicted as you need, but not as you deserve: tribulation shall come as you are able to bear it. As is the strength such shall the affliction be: the wheat may feel the wheel, but the fitches shall bear nothing heavier than a staff. ***No saint shall be tempted beyond the proper measure, and the limit is fixed by a tenderness which never deals a needless stroke.***

It is very easy to talk like this in cool blood, and quite another thing to remember it when the flail is hammering you; yet have I personally realized this truth upon the bed of pain, and in the furnace of mental distress. I thank God at every remembrance of my afflictions; I did not doubt his wisdom then, nor have I had any reason to question it since. ***Our Great Husbandman understands how to divide us from the husk, and he goes about his work in a way for which he deserves to be adored for ever.***

It is a pleasant thought that God's limit is one beyond which trials never go—

*"If trials six be fix'd for men
They shall not suffer seven.
If God appoint afflictions ten
They ne'er can be eleven."*

The old law ordained forty stripes save one, and in all our scourgings there always comes in that "save one." When the Lord multiplies our sorrows up to a hundred, it is because ninety-and-nine failed to effect his purpose; but all the powers of earth and hell cannot give us one blow above the settled number. ***We shall never endure a superfluity of threshing.*** The Lord never sports with the feelings of his saints. "He does not afflict willingly," and so we may be sure he never gives an unnecessary blow.

The wisdom of the husbandman in limiting his threshing is far exceeded in the wisdom of God by which he sets a limit to our griefs. Some escape with little trouble, and perhaps it is because they are frail and sensitive. The little garden seeds must not be beaten too heavily lest they be injured; those saints who bear about with them a delicate body must not be roughly handled, nor shall they be. Possibly they have a feeble mind also, and that which others would laugh at would be death to them; they shall be kept as the apple of the eye.

If you are free from tribulation never ask for it; that would be a great folly. I did meet with a brother a little while ago who said that he was much perplexed because he had no trouble. I said, "Do not worry about that; but be happy while you may." Only a queer child would beg to be flogged. Certain sweet and shining saints are of such a gentle spirit that the Lord does not expose them to the same treatment as he metes out to others: they do



Millet threshing...

not need it, and they could not bear it; why should they wish for it?

Others, again, are very heavily pressed; but what of that if they are a superior grain, a seed of larger usefulness, intended for higher purposes? Let not such regret that they have to endure a heavier threshing since their use is greater. ***It is the bread corn that must go under the feet of the horse-man and must feel the wheel of the cart; and so the most useful have to pass through the sternest processes.*** There is not one amongst us but what would say, "I could wish that I were Martin Luther, or that I could play as noble a part as he did." Yes; but in addition to the outward perils of his life, the inward experiences of that remarkable man were such as none of us would wish to feel. He was frequently tormented with Satanic temptations, and driven to the verge of despair. At one hour he rode the whirlwind and the storm, master of all the world, and then after days of fighting with the pope and the devil he would go home to his bed and lie there broken-down and trembling. ***You see God's heroes only in the pulpit, or in other public places, you know not what they are before God in secret. You do not know their inner life: else you might discover that the bread corn is bruised, and that those who are most useful in comforting others have to endure frequent sorrow themselves. Envy no man; for you do not know how he may have to be threshed to make him right and keep him so.***

Brethren, we see that our God uses discretion in the chastisement of his people; let us use a loving prudence when we have to deal with others in that way. Be gentle as well as firm with your children; and if you have to rebuke your brother do it very tenderly. Do not drive your horses over the tender seed. Recollect that the cummin is beaten out with a staff and not crushed out with a wheel. Take a very light rod. Perhaps it would be as well if you had no rod at all, but left that work to wiser hands. Go you and sow, and leave your elders to thresh.

Next, ***let us firmly believe in God's discretion, and be sure that he is doing the right thing by us.*** Let us not be anxious to be screened from affliction. When we ask that the cup may pass from us let it be with a "nevertheless not as I will." ***Best of all, let us freely part with our chaff. The likeliest way to escape the flail is to separate from the husk as quickly as possible. "Come ye out from among them." Separate yourselves from sin and sinners, from the world and worldliness, and the***



process of threshing will all the sooner be completed. God makes us wise in this matter!

III. A word or two is all we can afford upon the third head, which is that THE THRESHING WILL NOT LAST FOR EVER.

The threshing will not last all our days even here: "Bread corn is bruised, but he will not always be threshing it." Oh, no. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee." "He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Rejoice, ye daughters of sorrow! Be comforted, ye sons of grief! Have hope in God, for you shall yet praise him who is the health of your countenance. The rain does not always fall, nor will the clouds always return. Sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Threshing is not an operation which the corn requires all the year round; for the most part the flail is idle. Bless the Lord, O my soul! The Lord will yet bring home his banished ones.

Above all, tribulation will not last for ever, for we shall soon be gone to another and better world. We shall soon be carried to the land where there are neither threshing-floors nor corn-drags. I sometimes think I hear the herald calling me. His trumpet sounds: "Up and away! Boot and saddle! Up and away! Leave the camp and the battle, and return in triumph." *The night is far spent with some of you, but the morning cometh. The daylight breaks above yon hills. The day is coming—the day that shall go no more down for ever. Come, eat your bread with joy, and march onward with a merry heart; for the land which floweth with milk and honey is but a little way before you. Until the day break and the shadows flee away, abide the Great Husbandman's will, and may the Lord glorify himself in you. Amen.*"



Threshing...!

Winnowing in the wind...

“His winnowing fan (shovel, fork) is in His hand,
and He will thoroughly clear out and clean His threshing floor
and gather and store His wheat in His barn,
but the chaff He will burn up with fire that cannot be put out.”
Matthew 3:12

Winnowing is part of God’s harvesting work!

It is a very important part of His work...



According to Wikipedia, “**Wind winnowing** is an agricultural method developed by ancient cultures for separating grain from chaff. It is also used to remove weevils or other pests from stored grain. Threshing, the separation of grain or seeds from the husks and straw, is the step in the chaff-removal process that comes before winnowing. ‘Winnowing the chaff’ is a common expression.



In its simplest form it involves throwing the mixture into the air so that the wind blows away the lighter chaff, while the heavier grains fall back down for recovery.

Techniques included using a winnowing fan (a shaped basket shaken to raise the chaff) or using a tool (a winnowing fork or

shovel) on a pile of harvested grain.”

The process of winnowing needs great skill, so that some of the grain will not be lost together with the chaff...

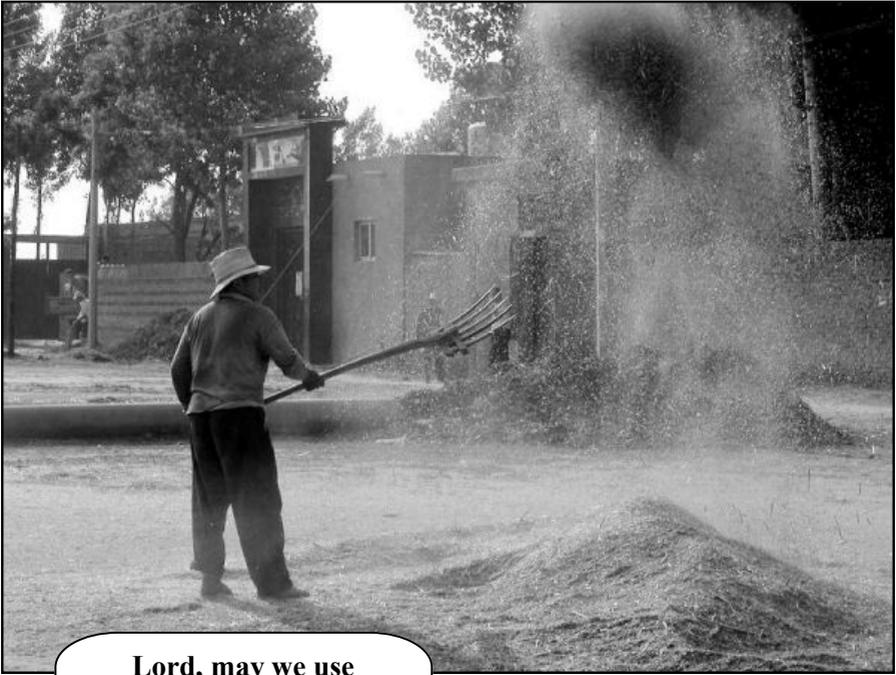
We read in Matthew 3:12 what John the Baptist said about the Lord Jesus. He said: “**His winnowing fan (shovel, fork) is in His hand**, and He will thoroughly clear out and clean His threshing floor and gather and store His wheat in His barn, but the chaff He will burn up with fire that cannot be put out.” (Matthew 3:12).

This means that **the Lord Jesus knows HOW and WHEN to do the winnowing**, spiritually speaking. He knows how to **SHAKE** the produce of the threshing process, in order to **SEPARATE** the useless from the useful, the bad from the good, the chaff from the grain, the impure from the pure, the unholy from the holy, the ungodly from the godly... He also knows how to **SELECT the right wind conditions** for the winnowing process. Winds that are too strong or too weak will hinder the process or harm it. He knows how to do all of this in OUR LIVES! He’s the One who oversees it and does it! He’s the One who brings a shaking in our lives and a wind—but it’s all for the purpose of PURIFYING the grain and making it more useful for Him!



Winnowing in God's Wind...!





**Lord, may we use
YOUR Wind
(the Wind of Your Spirit)
to winnow
in OUR lives...!**





**Lord, as You taught us to shake
this (to winnow), may You use all
that shake us to winnow us too!**



Sieving

“...that he might **sift you like wheat** (grain)...”
Luke 22:31

Sifting of grain and seeds is part of the process of harvesting. The main purpose of sifting is to **TEST** and **GRADE** and **SEPARATE**...

God does the same in our lives, spiritually and practically. He may sometimes allow the devil to sift us, or people, or events. He may do it Himself other times. Think of how He instructed Gideon to sift his fighting men, until only 300 men remained out of 32 000 soldiers!!

God will allow us to go through certain things, may it be afflictions or trials or successes or prosperity or poverty or adversity or sickness or loss, or whatever it may be... He does it to **TRAIN** us and to **TEST** us (Judges 3:1-2)!

The different types of sieving are: throw-action sieving, horizontal sieving, tapping sieving, sonic sieving, air-jet sieving, and wet sieving...



Drying in sun

The SUN is a picture of the SON!

“Hundreds of millions of tonnes of wheat, corn, soybean, rice and other grains as sorghum, sunflower seeds, rapeseed/canola, barley, oats, etc., are dried in grain dryers. ...The final moisture content for drying must be adequate for storage. The more oil the grain has, the lower its storage moisture content will be. ...**Drying is carried out as a requisite for safe storage, in order to inhibit microbial growth.** However, low temperatures in storage are also highly recommended to avoid degradative reactions and, especially, the growth of insects and mites. A good maximum storage temperature is about 18°C.” (Wikipedia)

When wheat is exposed to the SUN for drying,

- ✱ It decreases the water content of the wheat.
- ✱ It makes storage better.
- ✱ Less complications set in.
- ✱ It reduces the growth of insects and mites and microbes...
- ✱ It makes the harvested crop last longer.





Drying in the sun...

*Thank You, Father
for the light and the heat of Your Sun
that preserves the harvest and destroys what can damage it!*





Selecting seed for sowing

“And the earth brought forth grass, herbs yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit, wherein is the seed thereof, after their kind: and God saw that it was good.”
Genesis 1:12 (ASV)

Jesus told them another parable:
“The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field.
Matthew 13:24 (NIV)

Good seeds produce good fruits, while bad seeds produce bad fruits...

It is important to make sure that you have the best seeds you can get and that they are in a good, healthy condition. Good farmers are always on the lookout for good fruits and good seeds. When they see a tree or a plant that bears good fruit, they immediately want the seeds!

It also means that a farmer will take of his BEST crop and NOT sell it or eat it, but keep it—for the seeds! He’s selecting seed for sowing!

This is also true in the spiritual life. A good co-worker in God’s harvest will always be on the lookout for good fruit in people’s lives, and when he sees it, he’ll enquire after the seed—in other words, he’ll ask: “What produced such good fruit?” “What were they taught?” “What do they believe?” “What are their spiritual disciplines?” “What are the messages (sermons) they receive?” “What are their habits in the Lord?” “Where do they feed?” “What spiritual food are they fed?” “How do they walk with God?!”

Good seeds are a God-sent!



Pounding!

“Even though like grain you should pond
...in a mortar with a pestle...”
Proverbs 27:22



AFTER the harvesting and the threshing and the winnowing and the sieving and the drying, ...comes the POUNDING! The chaff has been separated from the grain... some of the husks have been removed as well... Light pounding will help remove the remainder of the husks. Heavy pounding will break the inner part and actually pulverize it into a powder! Now it's nearly ready for bread to be made—to feed others!

In the same way, a child of God will go through all these stages—to be made “broken bread” for others to be fed... He (or she) will be cut off from where they grew, they'll be beaten and separated from all “chaff” in their lives, they'll be exposed, they'll be crushed and even pulverized...! This is the “pounding” phase, as part of God's plan!

It is important to surrender to God in this process and not to “jump out” or seek a short-cut, but to yield to God and let Him have His way!



This is hard work, but it must be done, because without brokenness, there will be no food for others!



Pounding...!



**Father,
we know
there's no
FULLNESS
without
OPENNESS
and
BROKENNESS!**



SCIENCEPHOTOLIBRARY

Grinding!

“Two women will be grinding at the hand mill...”
Matthew 24:41

Grinding and pounding are very similar. Some say it means the same. To me it seems that **grinding** is a more thorough crushing and pulverizing process than pounding. In other words, it may refer to the deeper, further process of God breaking and crushing and moulding His children and servants... Oswald Chambers wrote the following about it:

GRINDING

“Jesus said that in the lives of the saints there will be tribulation, not difficulties, but tribulation. The great cry of modern enterprise is success; Jesus says we cannot be successful in this age. This is the age of the humiliation of the saints, that means we have to stand true to Jesus Christ



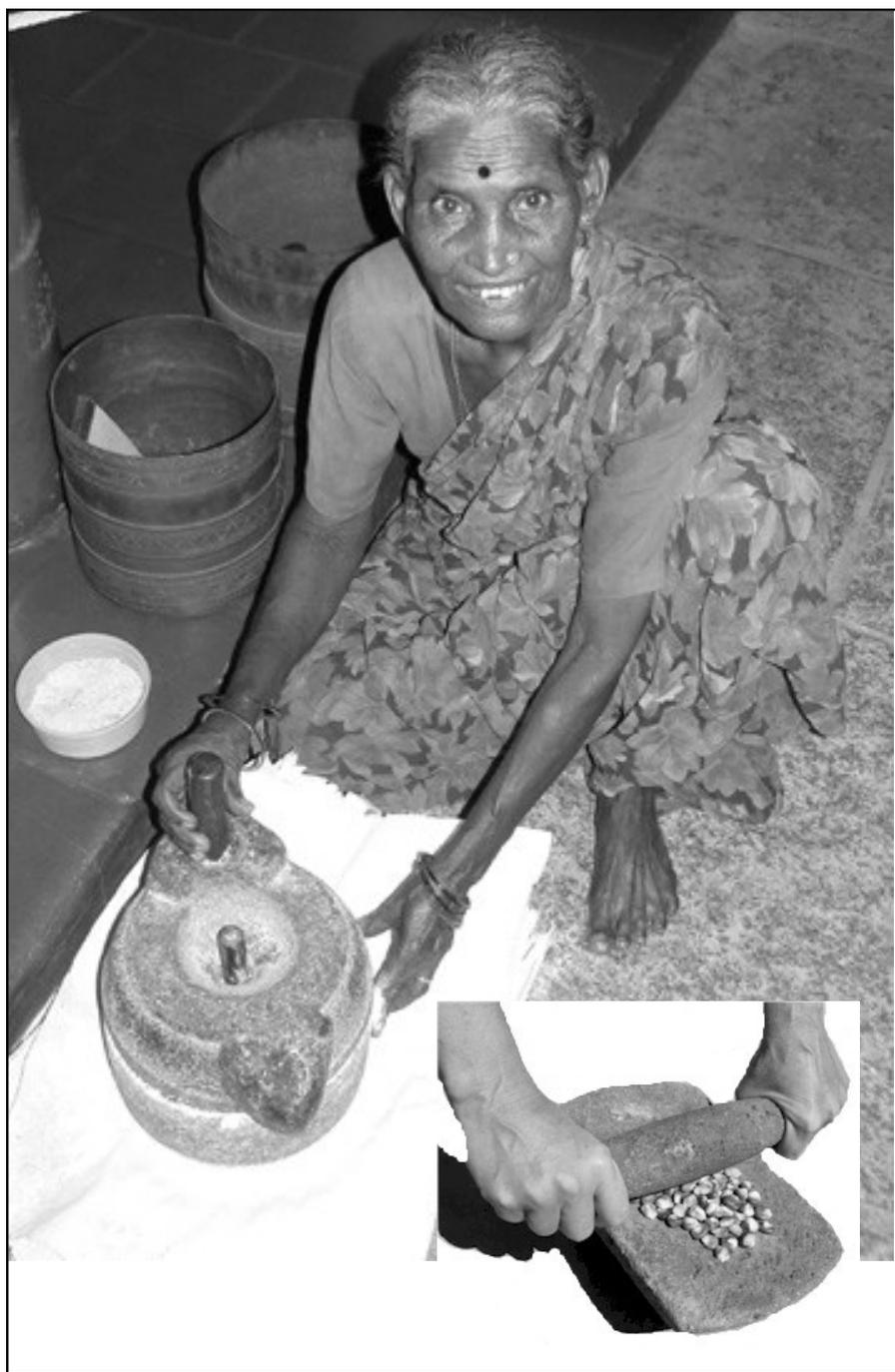
while the odds are crushingly against Him all the time.

*‘Tribulation worketh patience.’ **In the experience of tribulation we are brought to understand what millstones are. Millstones are used to grind the corn to powder, and typify the sacredness of the discipline of life –***
*‘No man shall take the mill or the upper millstone to pledge: for he taketh a man’s life to pledge.’ (Deut.24:6) You have been having a snug time in the granary, then God brings you out and puts you under the millstones, and the first thing that happens is the grinding separation our Lord spoke of – ‘Blessed are ye when men shall ...cast out your name as evil for the Son of man’s sake.’ The other crowd want to have nothing more to do with you, you are crushed for ever out of any resemblance to them. Very few of us know anything about suffering ‘For My sake’. **When God is putting His saints through the experience of the millstones, we are apt to want to interfere. Hands off! No saint dare interfere in the discipline of the suffering of another saint. God brings these things into our lives for the production of the bread that is to feed the world.***

In the East the women sing as they grind the corn between the millstones; and ‘the sound of the millstones’ is music in the ears of God. The worldling does not think it music, but the saint who is being made into bread knows that his Father knows best, and that He would never allow the suffering if He had not some purpose. Ill-tempered people, hard circumstances, poverty, wilful misunderstandings, and estrangements, are all millstones. Had Jesus any of these things in His own life? He had a devil in His company for three years; He lived at home with brothers and sisters who did not believe in Him; He was continually thwarted and misunderstood by the Pharisees, and He says, ‘the disciple is

not above his Master’. If we have the tiniest element of self-pity in us God dare not put us anywhere near the millstones. When these experiences come, remember God has His eyes on every detail.”







Grinding with God!



Storing

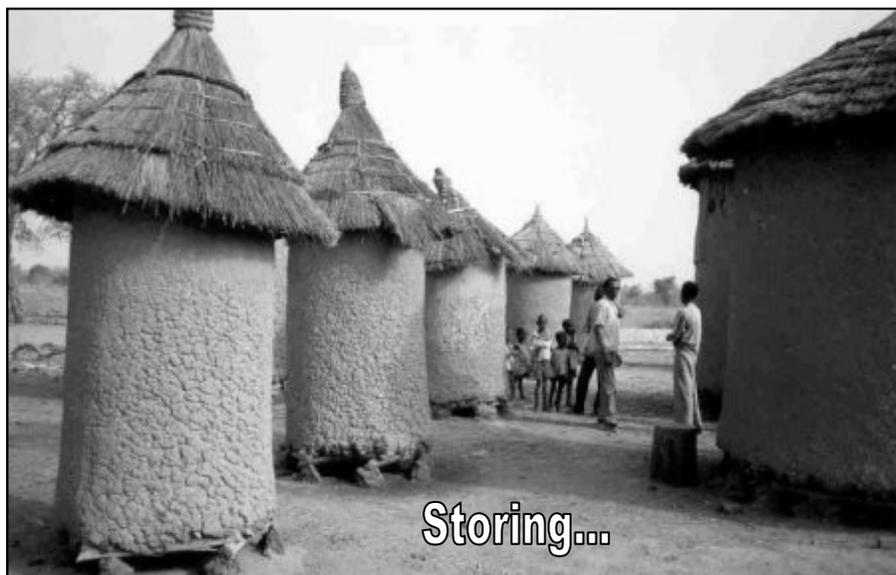
“He will ...store His wheat in His barn”

Matthew 3:12

Effective storage is essential to secure the produce that was harvested. When the storage is not optimal, everything that preceded it gets wasted! As was said earlier, rats eat or spoil 20% of India’s food grain *every year!* This amounts to a 26,8 million metric tons loss per year!

In the spiritual realm too—if we do not store what we’ve gained in and through God, we can lose it easily, or it can be eaten up by the cares and the worries and the desires of this world... We need grace from God to store in our hearts (as Mary did) what He gives us, while using it to serve others. We also need grace from God to “store” the new converts in a safe spiritual environment, where they will not suffer loss due to deceiving spirits, false doctrines, deceptive teachings or un-Biblical practices...





Baking bread

“For **the Bread of God** is He Who comes down out of heaven
and gives life to the world.” John 6:33

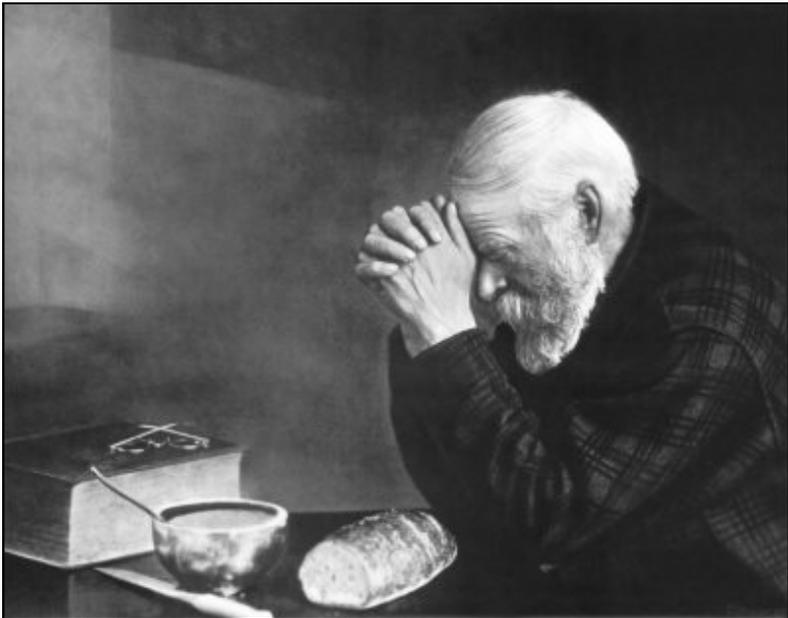
“I am **the Bread of Life** [*that gives life—the Living Bread*].” John 6:48

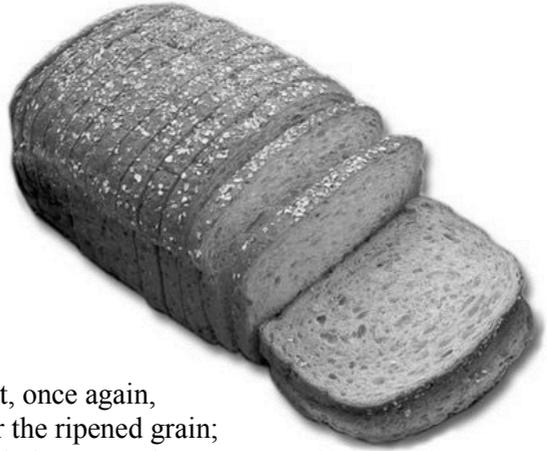
“Give us this day our **daily bread**.” Matt 6:11

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

*Back of the loaf is the snowy flour,
And back of the flour the mill,
And back of the mill is the wheat and the shower,
And the sun and the Father’s will.*

Malthie D. Babcock





Lord of the harvest, once again,
We thank Thee for the ripened grain;
For crops safe carried, sent to cheer
Thy servants through another year;
For all sweet holy thoughts supplied
By seed time, and by harvest tide.

The bare dead grain, in autumn sown,
Its robe of vernal green it puts on;
Glad from its wintry grave it springs,
Fresh garnished by the King of kings;
So, Lord, to those who sleep in Thee
Shall new and glorious bodies be.

Nor vainly of Thy Word we ask
A lesson from the reaper's task:
So shall Thine angels issue forth:
The tares be burnt; the just of earth,
To wind and storm exposed no more,
Be gathered to their Father's store.

**Daily, O Lord, our prayers be said,
As Thou hast taught, for daily bread;
But not alone our bodies feed,
Supply our fainting spirits' need:
O Bread of life, from day to day
Be Thou their Comfort, Food, and Stay.**

Joseph Anstice, 1836.



In “*The Servant as His Lord*,” Oswald Chambers summarizes the whole **process of the bread being produced**—from the soil being prepared and ploughed, ...to the bread being broken and given to others to feed on. His summary is presented here as it appeared in the chapter “The Sacrament of Saints”:

I

“I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: yea and the bread which I will give is My flesh, for the life of the world.” John 6:51

“Why should I start at the plough of my Lord, that maketh deep furrows on my soul? I know He is no idle husbandman. He purposeth a crop.”

Samuel Rutherford.

Good corn is not bread; if we are compelled to eat corn we will suffer for it. Corn must be ground and mixed and kneaded and baked, and baked sufficiently, before it is fit to be eaten. When the husk is away and the kernel garnered, we are apt to think that all is done; but the process has only just begun. A granary of corn is not bread; people cannot eat handfuls of corn and be nourished, something must be done to the corn first. **Apply that illustration to the life of a sanctified saint. The afflictions after sanctification are not meant to purify us, but to make us broken bread in the hands of our Lord to nourish others.** Many Christian workers are like Ephraim, ‘a cake not turned’; they are faddists and cranks, and when they are given out for distribution they produce indigestion instead of giving nourishment.

The WAY OF THE PLOUGH

‘Hear ye then the parable of the sower....’ Matt 13: 18-23.

It is the plough that prepares the ground for sowing the seed. The hard way through the field is the same soil as the good ground, but it is of no use for growing corn because it has never been ploughed. Apply that to your own soul and to the souls of men. There are lives that are absolutely stupid towards God, they are simply a way for the traffic of their own con-

cerns. **We are responsible for the kind of ground we are.** No man on earth has any right to be a highroad; **every man has the chance of allowing the plough to run through his life.** Sorrow or bereavement or conviction of sin, anything that upsets the even, hard way of the life and produces concern, will act as the plough. A man's concern about his eternal welfare witnesses that the plough has begun to go through his self-complacency. The words of our Lord, 'Think not that I came to cast peace on the earth: I came not to cast peace, but a sword', are a description of what happens when the Gospel is preached – upset, conviction, concern and confusion.

THE WILDNESS OF THE PLACE

'And unto Adam He said, ...cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; ...' Gen. 3:17-19 (R.V. marg.).

That is a description of the place where the plough has to go. It was once a holy place, but now it is desecrated and wild. 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is desperately sick: who can know it?' (Jer. 17:9). The way through the field which has been battered hard by men's feet is an illustration of the human heart. The human heart should be the abode of God's Holy Spirit, but it has been trampled hard by passions until God has no part in it, and the plough has to come into the desecrated place. As workers we must remember this fundamental line. ***The tendency today is to ignore it, to say that men do not need ploughing, they need praising; that the human heart is not bad; that the world is not a wild place. The plough has to come into every place which has been desecrated by the prince of this world, for one purpose – for the seed to be sown.***

THE WORK OF PATIENCE

'Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' Gal 6:7

Don't sow the human heart with mingled seed: 'thou shalt not sow thy field with two kinds of seed: (Lev. 19:19) God's seed will always bring forth fruit if it is put in the right conditions. Man cannot order the seasons or make the seed to grow (cf. Jer. 33:20); and as preachers and teachers we are powerless to make saints. **Our duty is to put the seed into the**

right place and leave the rest to God. It would be foolish for a farmer to sow his seed and tell his servants to watch it; he must sow his seed in the right place and then trust in God and Nature, and by and by he will reap his harvest. **So all we can do is to sow the seed of the Word of God in the hearts of the hearers.** The words our Lord uttered in reference to Himself are true of every seed that is sown – ‘*Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*’ ***All Christian work, if it is spiritual, must follow that law, because it is the only way God’s fruit can be brought forth.***

Be endlessly patient. There is nothing more impertinent than our crass infidelity in God. If He does not make us ploughers and sowers and reapers all at once, we lose faith in Him. ***Modern evangelism makes the mistake of thinking that a worker must plough his field, sow the seed, and reap the harvest in half-an-hour. Our Lord was never in a hurry with the disciples, He kept on sowing the seed and paid no attention to whether they understood Him or not. He spoke the truth of God, and by His own life produced the right atmosphere for it to grow, and then left it alone, because He knew well that the seed had in it all the germinating power of God and would bring forth fruit after its kind once it was put in the right soil.*** We are never the same after listening to the truth; we may forget it, but we will meet it again. Sow the word of God, and everyone who listens will get to God. If you sow vows, resolutions, aspirations, emotions, you will reap nothing but exhaustion ‘...and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it’ (Lev. 26:16); **but sow the Word of God, and as sure as God is God, it will bring forth fruit.** ***Human sympathy and human emotions and human hypnotism in preaching are the signs of a spiritual hireling and a thief. Sow emotions, and the human heart will not get beyond you. There are men and women at work for God who steal hearts from God, not intentionally, but because they do not preach the Word of God. They say, ‘I don’t want anyone to think about me’; that should never need to be said. If the thought of ourselves is lurking anywhere as we preach, we are traitors to Jesus Christ. Our duty is to get people through to God.*** A man may not grasp all that is said, but something in him is intuitively held by it. If you talk truth that is vital to yourself you will never talk over anyone’s head. **See that you sow the real seed of the Word of God, and then leave it alone.**

II

‘...an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord:’ Lev. 2:2

*This Scripture (Lev. 2), as in fact all Scripture, testifies that **service is self-surrender, self-sacrifice**. Christ, to satisfy others, was broken; the bread-corn must still be bruised; and the nearer our ministry approaches the measure of his ministry – immeasurably far as we shall ever be behind Him – the more shall we resemble Him, the bruised, the oppressed, the broken One.*

REAPING

Corn that has come to fruition must be watched. The enemy of souls, works most havoc in the standing corn. Our Lord told the disciples to pray ‘the Lord of the harvest, that He send forth labourers into his harvest’, to cut down the corn, i.e. to disciple men and women. God puts in His sickle by the hand of a disciple and cuts down where we never thought we would have to be cut down. Every sanctified soul is handed over by God to a disciple to be reaped for Him. What do we say to the people who have come into the experience of sanctification – ‘Thank God, you are all right now’? That is not discipling them. People come in to reap who have no right to reap. We have to let sanctified souls know that they are there to be cut down, to be reaped, to be made into bread to feed the world. We are apt to shout ‘Halleluah’ when souls enter into sanctification, but it is then that a time of intense care and anxiety begins until these lives are reaped for God. The need is to watch the standing corn, to watch those who are right with God until they are matured and established. Notice the earnest solicitation Paul had for his converts: ‘My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you.’ The time after sanctification in every soul under our care is an additional concern to us if we are true servants of God. ***Times of revival have led the Church to rejoicing instead of watching by earnest prayer until these souls are reaped. Never sympathize with a cut-down soul, but rejoice, and teach them to rejoice.***

‘For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing?... For ye are our glory and our joy.’ This is the dividing of the spoil. How many of us are going to hear Jesus Christ say when we stand before Him, ‘That soul was

reaped by you'? Jean MacLean wrote underneath the only photograph she ever had taken, '*Spoilt for this world saving as I can win souls to Jesus.*' She was an obscure, noble missionary and was used by God in untold numbers of lives, she literally reaped them for God.

THRESHING

The first description John the Baptist gives of Jesus is that of a Divine Husbandman at work in His threshing-floor (Matt. 3:12). When corn is stored in the granary we are apt to think that that is the end, but it is only the beginning. Sanctification is a reaping, an end, but also a beginning. ***Standing corn has to be cut down and go through the process of reaping, threshing, grinding, mixing and baking before it is good for food; and sanctified souls must be told that their only use is to be reaped for God and made into bread for others.*** It is time we got away from all our shallow thinking about sanctification. The majority who are introduced into an experience of sanctification remain at the gateway – 'saved and sanctified'; but they do not know how to go on, consequently they begin to stagnate. We need to learn that God has a lot to do with a saint after sanctification; our perplexities come because this is not realized. We have to see that as right dividers of the word of truth, we bring this before people.

Beware of being guided by mental or spiritual affinities, let God mix you as He sees fit. Peter thought he knew better than God, but God had to mix Peter with the Gentles before he became good bread (Acts 10:9-16).

GRINDING

Jesus said that in the lives of the saints there will be tribulation, not difficulties, but tribulation. The great cry of modern enterprise is success; ***Jesus says we cannot be successful in this age.*** This is the age of the humiliation of the saints, that means we have to stand true to Jesus Christ while the odds are crushingly against Him all the time.

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a man's life to pledge.' (Deut.24:6) You have been having a snug time in the granary, then God brings you out and puts you under the millstones, and the first thing that happens if the grinding separation our Lord spoke of – '*Blessed are ye when men shall ...cast out your name as evil for the Son of man's sake.*' The other crowd want to have nothing more to do with you, you are crushed for ever out of any resemblance to them. Very few of us know anything about suffering '*For My sake*'. When God is putting His saints through the experience of the millstones, we are apt to want to interfere. ***Hands off! No saint dare interfere in the discipline of the suffering of another saint. God brings these things into our lives for the production of the bread that is to feed the world.***

In the East the women sing as they grind the corn between the millstones; and 'the sound of the millstones' is music in the ears of God. The worldling does not think it music, but the saint who is being made into bread knows that his Father knows best, and that He would never allow the suffering if He had not some purpose. Ill-tempered people, hard circumstances, poverty, wilful misunderstandings, and estrangements, are all millstones. Had Jesus any of these things in His own life? He had a devil in His company for three years; He lived at home with brothers and sisters who did not believe in Him; He was continually thwarted and misunderstood by the Pharisees, and He says, 'the disciple is not above his Master'. If we have the tiniest element of self-pity in us God dare not put us anywhere near the millstones. When these experiences come, remember God has His eyes on every detail.

BAKING

There is a spiritual significance in the methods of preparing the meal offering mentioned in the Book of Leviticus (Ch. 2) – the frying pan, seething in pots, or baking in an oven. Why some people suffer is open and clear to everyone; others are placed in a boiling tumult (watch a porridge pot and you will see what this means), and only God knows what is happening. Others again are placed in fierce, silent ovens, no one knows what is going on, but when they are taken out they are precious to God and man alike. ***God is producing good food for Himself and for His saints. We all have our special functions, never try to do what someone else is doing; let God make you what He wants you to be. He knows your circumstances and He will alter them when He chooses.*** Be careful

of God's honour as a saint.

III

'He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; and the field is the world; and the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom.' Matt. 13:37,38 (R.V.)

'Be content, ye are His wheat growing in our Lord's field. And if wheat, ye must go under our Lord's threshing instrument, in His barn-floor, and through his sieve, and through His mill to be bruised, as the Prince of your salvation, Jesus, was (Isaiah liii.10), that ye may be found good bread in your Lord's house. (Samuel Rutherford)

God sows His saints in the most useless places, according to the judgment of the world. Where they will glorify Him is where God puts His saints, and we are no judge at all of where that is. When we become rightly related to God the likelihood of our being of use to men seems in the eyes of the world to be pathetically crippled. People say, 'Don't be so absurd as to go and bury yourself there.' *We have to let God sacrifice us as He likes, and go where He sends us. Never be deluded into making this statement: 'I am here because I am so useful'; say rather, 'I am here because God wants me here.' The one lodestar of the saint is God Himself, not estimated usefulness.*

BLESSED BREAD

BROKEN BREAD

BEATIFIED BREAD

These three section, written by Oswald Chambers, are presented next (under the following main headings...)

Blessing bread

(Continuation of Oswald Chambers' sermon)

BLESSED BREAD

Sacrificed

'...and He took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, He **blessed** and **brake** and **gave** the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.' Matt. 14:19 (cf. Romans 12:1)

God never uses in His service those who are sentimentally devoted to Him; He uses only those who are holy within in heart and holy without in practice. The Book of Leviticus is full of spiritual teaching, and the significance of all the detail is that **a servant of God must keep himself unspotted from the world, sternly and guardedly holy, not for his own sake but for the sake of his calling.** No man has any right to break the word of God and feed the people of God unless he is without blemish spiritually through the Atonement. That standard is being blotted out **a man's life to pledge.**' (Deut.24:6) You have been having a snug time in the granary, then God brings you out and puts you under the millstones, and the first thing that happens if the grinding separation our Lord spoke of – '**Blessed are ye when men shall ...cast out your name as evil for the Son of man's sake.**' The other crowd want to have nothing more to do with you, you are crushed for ever out of any resemblance to them. Very few of us know anything about suffering '**For My sake**'. When God is putting His saints through the experience of the millstones, we are apt to want to interfere. **Hands off! No saint dare interfere in the discipline of the suffering of another saint. God brings these things into our lives for the production of the bread that is to feed the world.**

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Whenever God’s blessing is on something or on someone, then there is a godly element in it or in that person that makes it to be a blessing to others and to glorify God. That which cannot be explained in a natural way, refers to the blessing of God. Though bread is ordinary, when blessed by God, it has an extra-ordinary function. Though we are ordinary people, when God’s blessing rests on us, He is glorified and others are helped and brought closer to Jesus!

Father, thank You for this bread! May Your blessing rest on the use of it and may You be glorified!



Breaking bread!

(Continuation of Oswald Chambers' sermon)

BROKEN BREAD

Suffering

'And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it; and He gave to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body.' Matt. 26: (cf. 1 Peter 4:19)

Not only does God waste His saints according to the judgment of men, He seems to bruise them most mercilessly. You say, 'But it could never be God's will to bruise me'; if it pleased the Lord to bruise His own Son, why should He not bruise you? To choose suffering is a disease; but to choose God's will even though it means suffering is to suffer as Jesus did – *'according to the will of God'*.

In the Bible it is never the idealizing of the sufferer that is brought out, but the glorifying of God. God always serves Himself out of the saint's personal experience of suffering. ***If suffering is used to idealize the sufferer there is an aftermath of sickly sentimentality*** – 'What I have gone through!' and God is not glorified. In actual life the true sufferers and the affected sufferers are mixed, and the Spirit of God gets His chance only through the one or two who are so completely effaced by means of identification with the Death of Christ that the thought of what they are going through never affects them. ***The thing that strikes one about such lives is never the sense of restraint but of inspiration, the feeling that there is unfathomably more behind.***

If we are self-willed when God tries to break us and will do anything rather than submit, we shall never be of any use to nourish other souls; we shall only be centres of craving self-pity, discrediting the character of God. Jesus called self-pity Satanic (Matt. 16:22,23). No one understands a saint but the saint who is nearest the Saviour, and if we accept

sympathy from any others, we will end in being traitors to Jesus Christ, because the reflex thought is, ‘Well, God is dealing hardly with me.’ The people we have to knit to our souls are not those who sympathize with us, they hinder, because sympathy if it is from a wrong source always enervates, but those who bring us into a fuller realization of the purpose of God.

Jesus Christ represents the Bread of God broken to feed the world, and the saints are to be broken bread in His hands to satisfy Jesus Christ and His saints.

When by the sanctifying power of the grace of God we have been made into bread, our

lives are to be offered first of all to Jesus Christ. ‘*Give Me to drink.*’ In the Old Testament the first fruits were always offered to God, and that is the symbol of our lives. **The saint is meant to satisfy the heart of Jesus first, and then be used to feed His saints.** ‘...and ye shall be My witnesses’ – ‘*a perfect delight to Me where I place you*’. The saints who satisfy the heart of Jesus make other saints strong and mature for God. The one characteristic of the life is, ‘**In all the world there is none but thee, my God, there is none but thee**’.



The consummation of self-sacrifice is that just as our Lord was made broken bread and poured-out wine for us, so He can make us broken bread and poured-out wine for others; but He cannot do it if there is anything in us that would make us give way to self-pity when He begins to break us. **The one mainspring of the life is to be personal, passionate devotion to Jesus Christ.**

BEATIFIED BREAD

Sovereignty

‘*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to usward...*’ Romans

8:18-25 (cf. Ephesians 2:6)

The saints who satisfy the heart of Jesus are the imperial people of God for ever, nothing deflects them, they are super-conquerors, and in the future they will be *side by side with Jesus*. ‘He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father, in His throne.’ (Revelation 3:21). ***The glorified Lord will take up his abode with the saint who puts God first in reality, not in sentiment.*** ‘We will come unto him, and make our abode with him.’ The Triune God abiding with the saint! Jesus Christ is made heavenly bread to us now, and there is a glorious day coming – and is even now in the experience of many of His people – when the nourishment of the life is the same for the saint as for his Lord. ‘I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.’ (Rev. 3:20)”



breadfor**theworld**
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

Feeding others & oneself...

We need to be broken and blessed bread that others can eat and be satisfied, having tasted of the Heavenly Bread, which is Christ! May God enable us to become such bread, for His glory!

As Oswald Chambers put it: “Good corn is not bread; if we are compelled to eat corn we will suffer for it. Corn must be ground and mixed and kneaded and baked, and baked sufficiently, before it is fit to be eaten. ...A granary of corn is not bread; *people cannot eat handfuls of corn and be nourished, something must be done to the corn first.* Apply that illustration to the life of a sanctified saint. The afflictions after sanctification are not meant to purify us, but to make us broken bread in the hands of our Lord **TO NOURISH OTHERS.** ..Jesus Christ represents the Bread of God broken to feed the world, and the saints are to be broken bread in His hands to satisfy Jesus Christ and His saints.”

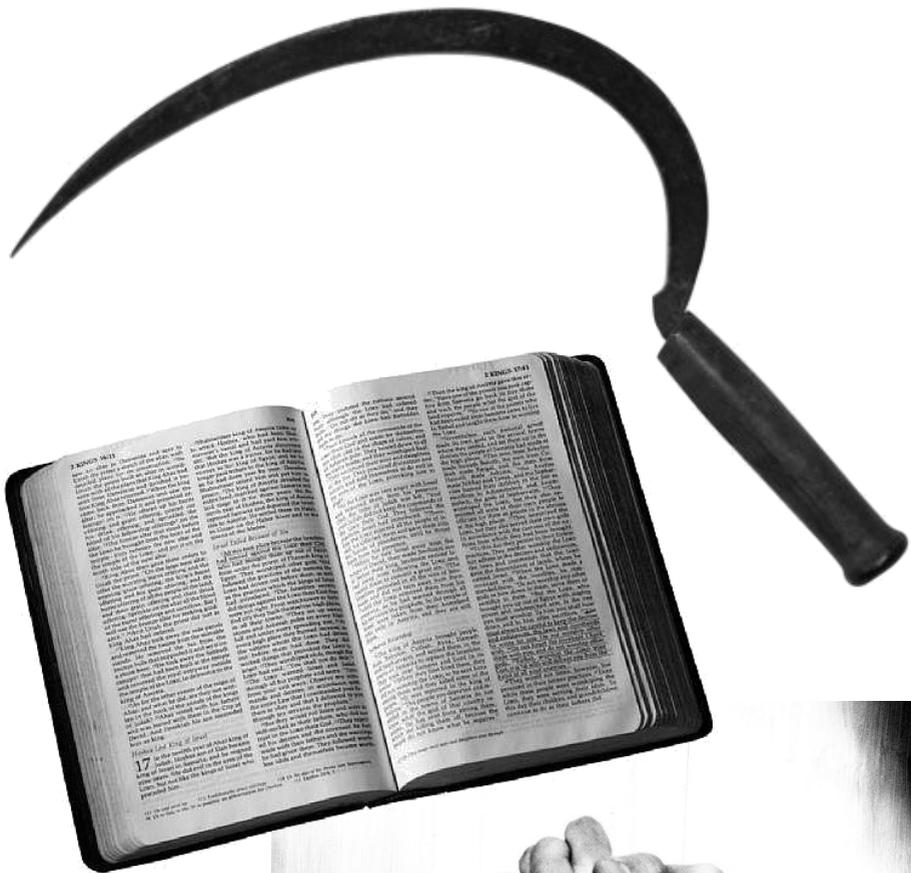


For God's glory!



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The harvest is past... and you are not saved?!

**"The harvest is past,
the summer is ended,
and we are not saved."**

Jeremiah 8:20.

“Not saved! Dear reader, is this your mournful plight? Warned of the judgment to come, bidden to escape for your life, and yet at this moment not saved! You know the way of salvation, you read it in the Bible, you hear it from the pulpit, it is explained to you by friends, and yet you neglect it, and therefore you are not saved. You will be without excuse when the Lord shall judge the quick and dead. The Holy Spirit has given more or less of blessing upon the word which has been preached in your hearing, and times of refreshing have come from the divine presence, and yet you are without Christ. All these hopeful seasons have come and gone—your summer and your harvest have past—and yet you are not saved. Years have followed one another into eternity, and your last year will soon be here: youth has gone, manhood is going, and yet you are not saved. Let me ask you—will you ever be saved? Is there any likelihood of it? Already the most propitious seasons have left you unsaved; will other occasions alter your condition? Means have failed with you—the best of means, used perseveringly and with the utmost affection—what more can be done for you? Affliction and prosperity have alike failed to impress you; tears and prayers and sermons have been wasted on your barren heart. Are not the probabilities dead against your ever being saved? Is it not more than likely that you will abide as you are till death for ever bars the door of hope? Do you recoil from the supposition? Yet it is a most reasonable one: he who is not washed in so many waters will in all probability go filthy to his end. The convenient time never has come, why should it ever come? It is logical to fear that it never will arrive, and that Felix like, you will find no convenient season till you are in hell. O be-think you of what that hell is, and of the dread probability that you will soon be cast into it!

Reader, suppose you should die unsaved, your doom no words can picture. Write out your dread estate in tears and blood, talk of it with groans and gnashing of teeth: you will be punished with everlasting destruction from the glory of the Lord, and from the glory of His power. A brother's voice would fain startle you into earnestness. O be wise, be wise in time, and ere another year begins, believe in Jesus, who is able to save to the uttermost. Consecrate these last hours to lonely thought, and if deep repentance be bred in you, it will be well; and if it lead to a humble faith in Jesus, it will be best of all. O see to it that this year pass not away, and you an un-forgiven spirit. Let not the new year's midnight peals sound upon a joyless spirit! Now, NOW, NOW believe, and live."

*"ESCAPE FOR THY LIFE;
LOOK NOT BEHIND THEE,
NEITHER STAY THOU
IN ALL THE PLAIN;
ESCAPE TO THE MOUNTAIN,
LEST THOU BE CONSUMED."*

C. H. Spurgeon



Retrieved 12/31/09 http://www.spurgeon.org/morn_eve/this_evening.cgi

A Last Prayer

Father, I scarcely dare to pray,
So clear I see, now it is done,
That I have wasted half my day,
And left my work but just begun.

So clear I see that things I thought
Were right or harmless were a sin;
So clear I see that I have sought
Unconscious, selfish aims to win;

So clear I see that I have hurt
The soul I might have helped to save;
That I have slothful been, inert,
Deaf to the calls thy leaders gave.

In outskirts of thy kingdom vast,
Father, the humblest spot give me;
Set me the lowliest task thou hast,
Let me repentant work for thee.

Helen H. Jackson

here am i.
send me.

