

Classics

Preparing the Heart for Revival

By Charles G. Finney



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

What is it to break up the fallow ground? It is to soften the hard and dry heart until it is mellowed and is fit to receive the Word of God.

Because the Jews were a nation of farmers, Scripture often refers to their occupation to illustrate its points. The prophet Hosea employed this strategy to tell the Jews they were becoming a nation of backsliders. He reproved them for their idolatry and threatened them with the judgments of God.

Softening Your Heart

If you want to break up the fallow ground of your heart, you must begin by looking at yourself. Examine your individual sins one by one. Go over them as carefully as a merchant goes over his books. General confessions of sin will never do. Your

sins were committed one by one.

Ingratitude. Write down all the times you can remember where you have received favors from God for which you have never thanked Him. Do not forget the numerous mercies you have received.

Lack of love for God. Think how grieved and alarmed you would be if you discovered any lessening of affection for you in your wife, husband, or children.

Neglecting your Bible reading. Note the cases when for perhaps weeks or longer, reading God's Word was not a pleasure. Some people read whole chapters so carelessly that they cannot remember what they have been reading.

Instances of unbelief. Recall the times when you have virtually charged the God of truth with lying by your unbelief in His express promises and declarations.

Neglect of prayer. Think of the times when you have neglected secret prayer, family prayer, and prayer meetings.

A lack of love for the souls of your fellowmen. Look at your friends and relatives and remember how little compassion you have felt for them. How many days have there been where you failed to pray about their sinful condition or show any ardent desire for their salvation?

Watchful of your own life. How often have you entirely neglected to watch your conduct, and, having been off your guard, sinned before the world, the church, and God?

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?

Pride. Remember all the instances when you have found yourself acting or thinking with pride.

Envy. Look at the times when you were envious of those whom you thought were above you in any way.

A critical spirit. Remember the times you have had a bitter spirit and spoken of Christians in a manner that did not show charity or love; the times you have spoken unnecessarily about the faults, real or imagined, of members of the church or others behind their back.

Lack of seriousness. How often have you been lighthearted before God as you would not have dared in the presence of an earthly sovereign? Perhaps you have had less respect for Him and His presence than you would show toward an earthly judge.

Lying. It is any kind of designed deception. If you decide to make an impression contrary to the naked truth, you lie.

Cheating. Remember all the cases in which you have dealt with an individual and done to him that which you would not like to have done to you.

Hypocrisy. How many times have you confessed sins that you did not mean to stop committing?

Robbing God. Think of the times you have misspent your time, squandering the hours God gave you to serve Him and save souls. Where have you squandered money on your lusts, or spent it for things you did not need, and which did not contribute to your health, comfort, or usefulness?

Fruitful a Hundredfold

Break up all the ground and turn it over. Go deep and turn the ground up so that it will all be mellow and soft. Then it will be ready to receive the seed and bear fruit a hundredfold.

As you go over the catalog of your sins, make a resolution to reform your ways now. Wherever you find anything wrong, resolve at once, in the strength of God, to sin no more in that way.

Do not expect God to miraculously break up your fallow ground for you. Those who profess to be Christians should never be so self-satisfied that they expect to start a revival by suddenly jumping out of their slumbers, blustering about and talking to sinners. Unless you are right with God and filled with the Spirit, your work will be mechanical and fruitless.

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