

The Encroaching Wilderness

I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness. Jer. 4:26

He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord.
Isa. 51:3

“Man was made to dwell in a garden,” says Dr. Harold C. Mason, “but through sin he has been forced to dwell in a field, a field which he has wrested from his enemies by sweat and tears, and which he preserves only at the price of constant watchfulness and endless toil. Let him but relax his efforts for a few years and the wilderness will claim his field again. The jungle and the forest will swallow his labours and all his loving care will have been in vain.”

Every farmer knows the hunger of the wilderness, that hunger which no modern farm machinery, no improved agriculture methods, can ever quite destroy. No matter how well prepared the soil, how well kept the fences, how carefully painted the buildings, let the owner neglect for a while his prized and valued acres and they will revert again to the wild and be swallowed up by the jungle or the wasteland. The bias of nature is toward the wilderness, never toward the fruitful field.

To the alert Christian this fact will be more than an observation of interest to farmers; it will be a parable, an object lesson setting forth a law that runs through all the regions of our fallen world, affecting things spiritual as well as things material. We cannot escape the law that would persuade all things to remain wild or to return to a wild state after a period of cultivation. What is true of the field is true also of the soul, if we are but wise enough to see it.

The moral bent of the fallen world is not toward godliness but definitely away from it. “Is this vile world a friend to grace,” asks the poet rhetorically, “to help me on the God?” The sad answer is no, and it would be well for us to see that each new Christian learns this lesson as soon as possible after his conversion. We sometimes leave the impression that it is possible to find at an altar of prayer, once and for all, purity of heart and power to assure victorious living for the rest of our days. How wrong this notion is has been proved by countless numbers of Christians through the centuries.

The truth is that no spiritual experience, however revolutionary, can exempt us from temptation; and what is temptation but the effort of the wilderness to encroach upon our new-cleared field? The purified heart is obnoxious to the devil and to all the forces of the lost world. They will not rest until they have won back what they have lost. The jungle will creep in and seek to swallow up the tiny areas that have been made free by the power of the Holy Ghost. Only watchfulness and constant prayer can preserve those moral gains won for us through the operations of God’s grace.

The neglected heart will soon be a heart overrun with worldly thoughts; the neglected life will soon become a moral chaos; the church that is not jealously protected by mighty intercession and sacrificial labours will before long become the abode of every evil bird and

the hiding place for unsuspected corruption. The creeping wilderness will soon take over that church that trusts in its own strength and forgets to watch and pray.” - **A.W. Tozer**

To the man who never prays ... there is little hope that a convincing religious experience will ever come. But to the man who prays habitually (not only when he feels like it-that is one of the snares of religion-but also when he does not feel like it) Christ is sure to make himself real. - **James Stewart**

Both quotes taken from “ ” by Edwin and Lillian Harvey

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