

Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse

and for days and years." Genesis 1:14



of the heavens to separate the day from

the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons

O CHRIST OUR LORD, THOU HAST BEEN OUR DWELLING PLACE IN ALL GENERATIONS. AS CONIES TO THEIR ROCK, SO HAVE WE RUN TO THEE FOR SAFETY; AS BIRDS FROM THEIR WANDERINGS, SO HAVE WE FLOWN TO THEE FOR PEACE. CHANCE AND CHANGE ARE BUSY IN OUR LITTLE WORLD OF NATURE AND MEN, BUT IN THEE WE FIND NO VARIABleness NOR SHADOW OF TURNING. WE REST IN THEE WITHOUT FEAR OR DOUBT AND FACE OUR TOMORROWS WITHOUT ANXIETY. AMEN. (A.W. TOZER)

Aspects

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Encouraging
believers to know
God and His ways,
and to enjoy a more
intimate communion
with Him

FOR EVERYTHING A SEASON

There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven—

Ecclesiastes 3:1

My mind is never more appreciative of the four distinct seasons of the Midwest than during the dog days of summer. The rains are few and far between, and the grass is brittle and dry. Temperatures are doggedly high, and the humidity is persistently miserable. And pervading everything is a numbed feeling of, “Can we just move on, please?”

But even in the lingering irritation with the present there remains an encouraging knowledge of the future. For soon the humidity level will drop—and stay there; soon the temperature will lower to a more habitable level; and soon the monotonous greens of the foliage will gradually shift into the rainbow spectrums of autumn.

Of course, with autumn comes also the responsibility to finally do all those things I’ve put off because of the intemperate weather. I will quickly lose my handy excuse for not painting those bare spots on the outside trim, for not trimming the oak trees that are looking a bit shaggy around the trunk, and for not chopping the wood that will keep us warm this winter. With the air clean and bright, and the temps more civilized, some hard work will finally have to be addressed.

A time to give birth and a time to die;
A time to plant and a time to uproot what is planted.
A time to tear apart and a time to sew together;
A time to be silent and a time to speak.

Ecclesiastes 3:2,7

Every season contains both the pleasant and the unpleasant. Even as I grumble over the shirt-soaked temperatures of late summer, I delight in the chorus of singing cicadas, the plaintive cries of the frogs and toads encircling the pond, and the evening crickets’ serenade. Soon this seasonal soundtrack will be stilled by the drier air and first frost of autumn.

The perspective of the earth-bound is to allocate everything into one of two columns: Good or Bad. Some things are pleasant, some unpleasant. Some things bring us joy, while some bring us misery. The perspective of heaven, however, is that all things are good, because God made them. Evil and sin may dwell perpetually in His “Bad” column, but God does not subdivide the rest as we do.

The heat and humidity that I find so unbearable are the very same components of summer that cause the corn in the fields to flourish. And the singing of the insects that so delights me, others may find monotonous and irritating.

For everything there is a time. For everything there is a season.

“While the earth remains,
Seedtime and harvest,
And cold and heat,
And summer and winter,
And day and night
Shall not cease.”

Genesis 8:22

*Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.*

*“Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!”
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—
“Great is Thy faithfulness,” Lord, unto me!*

(Thomas O. Chisholm)

THOU ART NOT RESTRICTED BY TIMES AND SEASONS. OUR PROSPERITY COMES FROM THEE, AND OUR ADVERSITY IS ORDAINED BY THEE. THOU RULEST IN THE DARKNESS, AND ONE GLANCE OF THINE EYE KINDLES IT INTO DAY. LORD, BE NOT SLACK TO KEEP THY WORD, BUT RISE FOR THE HELP OF THY PEOPLE. BOTH LIGHT AND THE LIGHT-BEARER ARE OF THEE. OUR HELP, AND THE INSTRUMENT OF IT, ARE BOTH IN THY HAND. THERE IS NO LIMIT TO THY POWER; BE PLEASED TO DISPLAY IT AND MAKE THY PEOPLE GLAD. LET THY SACRED PREPARATIONS OF MERCY RIPEN; SAY, "LET THERE BE LIGHT," AND LIGHT SHALL AT ONCE DISPEL OUR GLOOM.

(CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON)

REGULAR VARIATIONS

Your word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.

Your faithfulness continues through all generations;

You established the earth, and it endures.

Your laws endure to this day, for all things serve you.

Psalm 119:89-91 niv

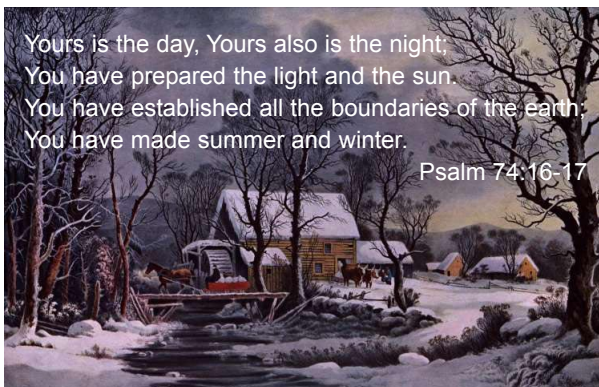
Young men and old, who today barter goods at the local feed store in sweaty T-shirts and dust-covered work boots, will soon be conducting business dressed in heavy snow suits and insulated rubber boots. Their pickup trucks parked outside, now wearing a film of dry road dust, will soon be under-girded with a dirty apron of accumulated snow and ice. And then their truck beds, now empty, will always contain something of weight, to give their back wheels traction in the ice and mud of winter.

Though there will always be the inevitable variations from year to year ("We ain't never had a July *this* dry before!"), like a great wheel within a wheel the seasons keep turning, keep revolving around each other with a dependable, heavenly precision. Out in the fields, those cattle with tongues now lolling stickily from their mouths in the wet heat of summer, can put it in the bank: before long they will be huddled together in a clump, combining their body heat and bulk for protection against the icy wind blasting out of the north.

There are times that I appreciate most the very change of the seasons—the variety factor. But more often what I appreciate about the seasons is their consistency—the fact that autumn always follows summer, that winter always follows the fall. And only a sovereign God could manage such predictable precision.

There will be moments this winter when, huddled against the icy blast that burns my cheeks and makes my outdoor work miserable, I will long for the more temperate season of spring. But there will also be moments when I will exult in the clear, crisp bite of that winter chill, moments when I will gratefully be rid of the oppressive heat of the summer months.

But no matter the season, what I exult in most of all is the fact that a dependable, all-powerful God rules over it all. From one season to the next, my fickle pursuits may vacillate and change, but I call upon a God who does not. The seasons of his creation rotate as regularly as a Swiss movement, but in their regular variation they speak most eloquently of a supreme Master who remains always the same.



Yours is the day, Yours also is the night,
You have prepared the light and the sun.
You have established all the boundaries of the earth:
You have made summer and winter.

Psalm 74:16-17

*The King shall come when morning dawns,
And light triumphant breaks;
When beauty gilds the eastern hills,
And life to joy awakes.*

*The King shall come when morning dawns,
And light and beauty brings;
Hail, Christ the Lord! Thy people pray,
Come quickly, King of kings! Amen.*

(Trans. by John Brownlie)

THE SWEET SEASON

...but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.
1 Corinthians 13:10 niv

Spring is the sweet season—the season of the year in which the fresh air is fragrant with the presence of new grass, budding fruit trees, peonies, tulips, lilies of the valley, and lilacs. It is the time of revitalizing rains, cool days bathed in intense sunshine, and the sharp bite of fresh-cut grass.

Spring is the time of newness, and explosive growth, when living things change from one day to the next as quickly as a young child does to a doting auntie. Even the weather is young in the spring, moving quickly from sunshine to thunderstorm, then back again. If autumn is the time of old men and checkers, spring is the time of youth and baseball.

And youth thinks that life as a whole should be as spring. Since youth does not believe in the denouement of vitality, it believes that once the sweetness of life has faded into the dusty musk of age, then life is probably no longer worth the bother.

When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.
1 Corinthians 13:11 niv

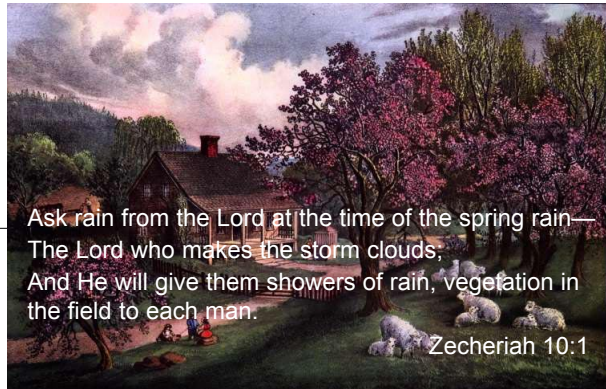
There is a feeling of fresh vitality to a new faith. It is the sweet season in a walk with God. But it is also a time of impetuous youth, of unformed thoughts and uninformed beliefs. It is a time of innocence and eagerness, but also inaccurate perception.

Spring needs the balance of autumn, and the sweet season of a youthful faith needs the balance of a less energetic but more substantial season of age. Old men may be less exciting than fiery youth, but they supply the solid base to the body of Christ that youth cannot supply on its own.

Lilacs and lilies of the valley smell invitingly sweet, but they fade quickly and are soon gone, withered brown in the heat of approaching summer. But the mature plant that gave them birth remains, bearing up under the storms and withering heat, the bone-dry autumn, and the freezing chill of winter.

It is the mature that carry us from one season into the next, and it is their season of wisdom that is the one to be envied.

Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.
1 Corinthians 13:12 niv



Ask rain from the Lord at the time of the spring rain—
The Lord who makes the storm clouds;
And He will give them showers of rain, vegetation in
the field to each man.

Zechariah 10:1

*My Lord, if indeed I am Thine,
If Thou art my sun and my song,
Say, why do I languish and pine?
And why are my winters so long?
O drive these dark clouds from my sky;
Thy soul-cheering presence restore;
Or take me to Thee up on high,
Where winter and clouds are no more.*
(John Newton)

Lord God, in the spring I am reminded of Your ever-fresh grace, Your never-tiring mercy, Your just and never-failing kindness. But in the spring I am also reminded of the youth and inexperience of my faith, the tenuous understanding I have of You and Your ways. O God, my prayer is that from now on every spring will be for me a fresh reminder of who You truly are—and who I truly am because of You.

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.
2 Timothy 4:1-2

SEASON OF PLANTING

As August becomes September the vast fields of tall corn that inhabit so much of Iowa are beginning their natural drying process. For, ideally, the farmer will not harvest the field corn until it is thoroughly dried, the stalk no longer green but a withered, desiccated remnant of its former self. To harvest before the ear of corn has lost much of its moisture is to incur the added expense of mechanical drying of the kernels prior to market.

In the Midwest, as in other parts of the world, there is a dependable rhythm to these things. Spring is for planting, summer is for growing, autumn is for the harvest, and winter is the time to let the soil rest.

A good farmer worth his salt would no more plant corn in the dead of winter than try to run his tractor on Kool-Aid. He needs to plant the seeds at the very beginning of the growing season, once the soil is warm, to allow the young plant time to grow and reach maturity so that it can be harvested before winter sets in. And either in the late autumn, or very early in the spring, the fields must be cleared in preparation for the new planting of the next year.

Everything in its season.

And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, "Behold, the sower went out to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up... And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."

Matthew 13:3-4,8

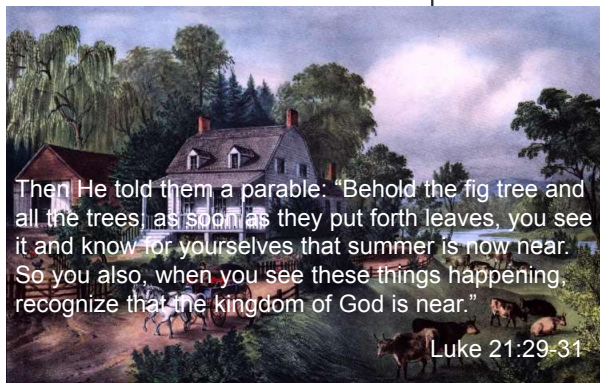
The planting of God's truth, however, is never tied to a season. There is no cycle of seasons when it comes to the cultivation of the Gospel. We are never too young or too old to share the good news of Christ. The little girl can take her neighborhood playmate with her to Vacation Bible School; the old man can bring along his checkers buddy to Sunday morning church.

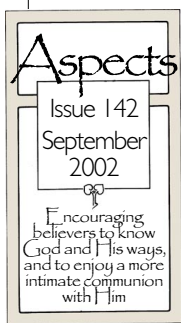
There never is an inappropriate time to stand up for the Lord. Oh, we may not grab them by the ears and beat salvation into their soul. But it's never wrong to sow the seeds of Christ through the quiet example of a righteous life, the touch of a ministering friend, the respectful silence of a listening ear.

The farmer must wait for spring to plant his seeds, but for the Christian, the fields are always ready, in season and out.

"And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."

Matthew 13:23





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