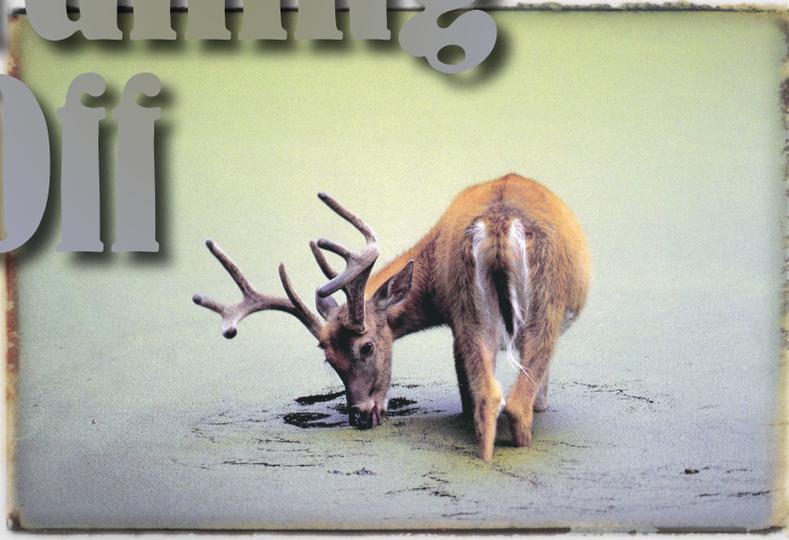


Things Falling Off



Part of the wonder and glory of winter in the Middle Ground of the United States is snow. After an extended, unseasonable drought from the stuff, this morning we awoke to a light frosting of white upon the ground. Once again the land is clean, pretty, refreshed.

Part of living where snow collects during the winter is the discovery of things left behind when the snow eventually melts away. Ice storms and high winds out of the north bring down tree limbs that must be dealt with come spring. Driveway gravel pushed from its place by the snow blade must be raked back from out of the grass. Winter storms take a toll on aging parts of the house and barn, betraying last year's procrastination.

Melting snow can also uncover items more exotic. One year we discovered a tailpipe from one of our cars resting comfortably in the lawn. Apparently it had fallen off the car and dropped onto the drive; it then snowed, and the tailpipe had become covered; I had come by

with the plow and unwittingly pushed it off to the side—to discover it only after the snow had melted away.

On a trip back from the mailbox one late-winter day we spotted something quite different lying in the exposed grass. The male white-tailed deer will shed its antlers every year, and a young buck had decided to drop his pair in our lawn. They were discovered only after the snow had melted away.

Just as antlers fall off the male deer, hair tends to fall off the mid-life human male—just witness the gathering clumps around the bathroom sink. Things wear out, or grow old, and they fall off.

A Process of Acquisition

And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" Jesus answered them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,

but to them it has not been granted. For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand."

Matthew 13:10-13

Life in the kingdom involves a process of acquisition—not of material wealth, but of Spiritual insight and maturity. The longer one walks with Christ—actively, attentively a disciple of His ways—the more one acquires His likeness. With that comes a better understanding of His ways. We don't just start looking like Jesus—the way a man and a woman, long married, begin to take on each other's appearance—but *behaving* like Him, and beginning to share His understanding of things holy and eternal.

This is not given to all, as if breath in the lungs and blood coursing through the veins entitles someone to wisdom from above. It is not given to all who name Jesus as Lord; it is not acquired automatically along with the Holy Spirit. It is given only to those who go in search of it—to those who, like Mary, sit at the feet of Christ to learn of His ways.

How tragic that we in this dark day have had our seeking done for us by our teachers. Everything is made to center upon the initial act of "accepting" Christ (a term, incidentally, which is not found in the Bible) and we are not expected thereafter to crave any further revelation of God to our souls. We have been snared in the coils of a spurious logic which insists that if we have found Him, we need no more seek Him. This is set before us as the last word in orthodoxy, and it is taken for granted that no Bible-taught Christian ever believed otherwise. Thus the whole testimony of the worshiping, seeking, singing church on that subject is crisply set aside. The experiential heart-theology of a grand army of fragrant saints is rejected in favor of a smug interpretation of Scripture which would certainly have sounded strange to an Augustine, a Rutherford or a Brainerd. In the midst of this great chill there are some, I rejoice to acknowledge, who will not be content with shallow logic. They will admit the force of the argument, and then turn away with tears to hunt some lonely place and pray, "O God, show me Thy glory." They want to taste, to touch with their hearts, to see with their inner eyes the wonder that is God.

A.W. Tozer

The Virus of Sin

As one grows old in Christ, the things of God become more permanently affixed to the life. Heavenly things that were, at first, alien and strange become, over time, familiar and comfortable. Instead of aging, withering, and falling away, they become, eventually, more strongly—even permanently—a part of us. And as heaven becomes more firmly attached, the things of earth begin to wither before our eyes.

So once again we discover that the rules of kingdom living follow a path in opposition to the rules of the world. If Sir Isaac Newton discovered that in gravity things fall down, then we discover that in Christ, things fall *up*.

Oh, the Christian is not immune from the pull of gravity; things will fall off from time to time, but it will be those spurious things of the world that somehow became attached over time. Just as he is not immune from gravity, the Christian is not immune from the sticky germs of man's depravity. Ever since that fateful day in the garden when Adam and Eve exchanged the virus of sin, man has been susceptible to extra dosings of the flu with which all of us were born. This we need not go looking for; it will find us, wherever we are, however much we try to avoid it.

But this insidious virus is not permanent in the believer. Not only will the Christian be rid of it, once and for all, on the day he passes into heaven, but he can be rid of it piecemeal even before that day by acquiring the perspective of that eternal dwelling as he walks with Christ today.

Shedding What we Shouldn't Have

Life in Christ is a process of shedding what we shouldn't have, and keeping what we should. As we seek Him, as we spend time with Him, as we sit listening at his feet we learn how to do both. We learn how to discard the temporal while keeping the eternal.

The deer sheds his antlers in anticipation of having something better next year. With each passing year his antlers will grow larger and stronger—more impressive for the does, and more intimidating for his foes. He will not be able to have that which is superior until he gets rid of that which is inferior.

Just so, the Christian sheds the inferior temporal, for the superior eternal. The things of God through Christ will have a difficult time of it in the life of one still clinging to the things of this earth. (ds)

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Hebrews 11:39-12:3

