

“When I get out, I’ll be *thirty*. That’s almost *dead!*”

Corporal Walter “Radar” O’Reilly

THE SWEET SEASON

...but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.
1 Corinthians 13:10

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 aroma of fresh-cut grass.

After the long and drab months of winter, 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 changes in the eyes of a doting auntie. Last year’s acorns littering the land sprout and take root, on their way to becoming real trees some day. Even the weather itself 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.

Those of us bearing the load of multiple decades, especially of half-century or more, admire the elasticity of youth. We admire—even envy—their ability to stretch and run and jump without incurring

irreparable damage to the body’s substructure. Those of us who on the morning after, suffer the stiffness and aches of the previous day’s labors, wax nostalgic over youth’s ability to spring from their morning bed with a sprightly lightness of being.



If youth is a red Ferrari, then we of more advanced years have become a lumbering dump truck.

Youth, in its red-corpuscled exuberance, thinks that life as a whole should be as eternal spring. Since innocent youth does not acknowledge the expiration of vitality, it believes that once the sweetness of life has faded into the dusty musk of age—if, perchance, such an alien ill befall them—then what is the point? Life is probably no longer worth the bother.

A FRESH VITALITY

Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their

meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Acts 2:46-47

There is a feeling of fresh vitality to a new faith. It is the sweet season in a walk with God. Prayers are glowingly honest and unscripted: The new Christian has not yet learned the mind-numbing vernacular of the church; he still speaks from the guileless heart, rather than the well-tempered brain. His relationship with God and God's word is erratic but eager; every page turn brings new and stunning revelation. For Him Jesus Christ is a brand new friend, and time spent with Him is a sweet and pleasurable exchange. For the new Christian Christ is electrically real.

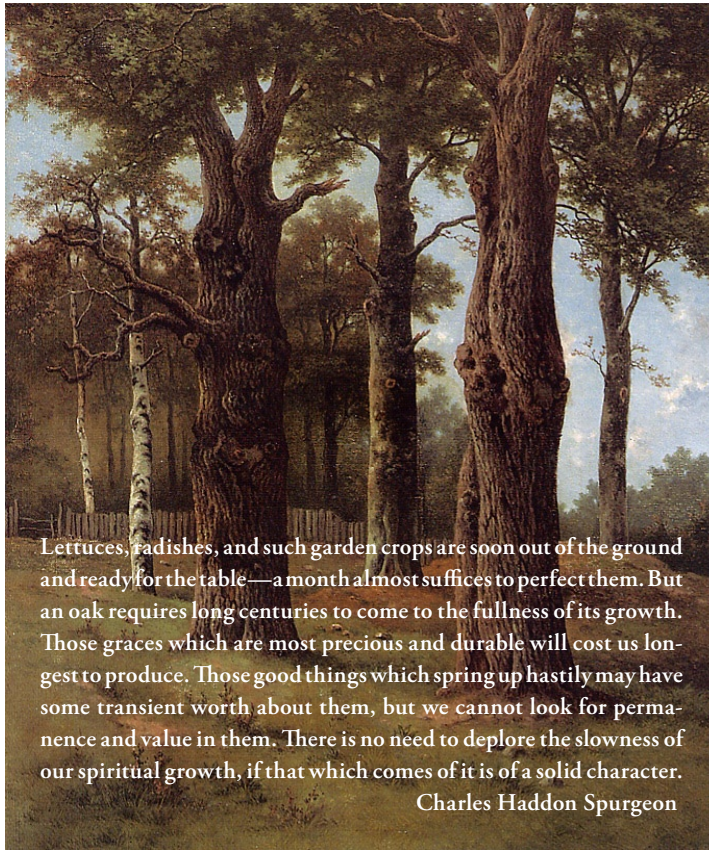
When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.

1 Corinthians 13:11

A new faith, however, is also a time of impetuous youth, of unformed thoughts and uninformed beliefs. It is a time of innocence and eagerness, but also of inaccurate perception. Because the things of God are so deep, and so wide, it takes time—even persistence—to take in all the truth. On a practical level, the new Christian simply hasn't had the time to ingest everything God wants him to know and experience. Beyond that, the new believer can make the mistake common to all youth: a feeling of invincibility. He may be of the opinion that what he knows now, at this early stage, is sufficient—that this is as good as it gets and this is all he need know. In the euphoria of fresh faith, he may purposely or inadvertently reject the unknown depths of God as he clings desperately to that which he already knows—which is very little.

THE BALANCE OF AUTUMN

The blooms of lilacs and the budding fruit trees smell invitingly sweet, but they fade quickly and are soon gone, withered brown in the heat of approaching summer. The succulent blooms of spring are, as well, the most inviting to those who would consume them: a weathered old oak holds little fascination for a passing deer, but a young sapling in bud is a tasty morsel indeed.



Lettuces, radishes, and such garden crops are soon out of the ground and ready for the table—a month almost suffices to perfect them. But an oak requires long centuries to come to the fullness of its growth. Those graces which are most precious and durable will cost us longest to produce. Those good things which spring up hastily may have some transient worth about them, but we cannot look for permanence and value in them. There is no need to deplore the slowness of our spiritual growth, if that which comes of it is of a solid character.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

The sweet flowers of spring wither quickly, 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. Just so, the church is freshened and revived by the exuberance of new believers, but it is *sustained* by those old, weathered venerables whose roots have grown long and deep in the Lord.

On the surface, the older men and women of the church 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. They have weathered the storms, the brutal heat of the harder months. They have already traveled the roads youth has not yet found.

The pillars of the church are the ones holding it up. Having been beaten up by life, they have emerged stronger, more experienced and, usually, more wise. The Spirit has been at work in them for a long time—molding, shaping, testing by fire—and by their scars they have proven themselves worthy of trust and respect.

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the

proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Ephesians 4:11-16

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.

It is the spiritually mature that carry us from one season into the next, and though it may not be as obviously sweet, it is their season of wisdom that is the one to be envied.

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