

THAWING



You will find this blessed Holy Spirit in sharp opposition to the world's easy ways. We live in a degenerate hour when Christianity, it seems to me, needs a mighty reviving from somewhere, for the business of the church now seems to be to get along with the world and to go the world's way with the least possible opposition.

But the Holy Ghost says, "Never mind the opposition of the world." He expects it, just as Jesus Christ in whom He dwells in fullness of perfection, experienced opposition as long as He lived on earth, and just as the Church that names His name has had it, wherever she has been a pure and holy Church. Instead of your taking Christianity and molding it to fit the world, to avoid the disgrace of the cross, the Holy Ghost will insist that you leave it as it is, and walk with God in the light of New Testament truth, without caring what the world says about you.

Such a lifestyle will bring you in conflict with the world, for the ways of God and the ways of man do not parallel each other. They intersect each other, and where their intersection is there will be heat, friction, opposition, trouble and maybe persecution.

A.W. Tozer

By now the white-frosted topography has become so commonplace that we no longer notice it. It just is what is.

Has not the ground always been colored thus? Was not this land sculpted in frigid snow from the beginning of all time? Have not the driveway and gravel roads always been encrusted with a hard layer of ice? Have we not always driven the roads with the practiced caution we do now, avoiding the brake, avoiding quick moves that would cause our vehicle to plane helplessly into the nearest ditch?

This morning at five-thirty the outside temperature was eight degrees, with a wind chill of zero. Yesterday morning it was two degrees, with a wind chill well below zero. Snow that fell from the heavens a week ago is still frosting the landscape. Ice that was formed two weeks ago still sheets our driveway. We are frozen—and have been frozen—for weeks.

JANUARY THAW

But there is change in the air. During the next four to five days we will be enjoying a veritable heat wave of temperatures in the forties! Trickles of water will spill from the roof. Snow will melt and flow toward the pond. The driveway will run with the seepage from melting ice. And any snow or ice missed by the sunshine will surely be melted by the forecast rain. And perhaps, just perhaps, if the thaw is long-lasting and thorough, there will even be the rich, loamy aroma of spring wafting through the air.

A NATURAL STATE

The human heart is not unaccustomed to the frozen, hardened condition. For it is its natural state.

So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart.

Ephesians 4:17-18

We enter this world with a heart cold and hardened to the things of God, and every day lived beyond the womb only reinforces the heart's bulwark against Him. We may be born with the *capacity* for good, but we are born with evil built-in.

God looks down from heaven upon the children of men,
To see if there are any who understand, who seek God.
Every one of them has turned aside;
They have together become corrupt;
There is none who does good,
No, not one.

Psalms 53:2-3 NKJV

Even after salvation, with the Holy Spirit in residence, the heart yearns to return to its previous condition—its old habits and manners, its self-centered perspective, its companionship with the world. Like a lodestone drawn to iron, the heart of flesh never quite loses its attraction to the things of this world.

How, then, does the human heart soften? How does it begin to thaw?
By turning away from itself.

STEADY COMMUNION

We here in the Heartland know that a January thaw is not the ultimate warming that heralds spring, but is only a teasing foretaste of the next season before the curtain of winter draws down around us. The cold of winter will indeed return.

But for the believer the refreezing of the heart need not be inevitable. The thawing can become a permanent condition. The heart of cold ice in a believer is thawed by turning back to Jesus—not as an institution, or an amorphous, disembodied figurehead of religion, but as an intimate, personal friend. And the heart is preserved in this condition by steady communion with that intimate friend. The familiar old hymn by Fanny Crosby seems to express it best.

*Blessed assurance, Jesus is Mine!
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.*

*Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Savior am happy and blest;
Watching and waiting, looking above,
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.*

*Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
Angels descending, bring from above
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.*

*This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long;
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.*

Living “lost in His love” makes it impossible for the heart to be cold to the things of God. The richness of His presence, the sustaining embrace of His personality, His unshakable dependability—these and far more are what keep us warmed to the ways of God.

Jesus is that most touchable member of the Godhead, and we are to fill our lives with Him—“filled with His goodness.”

But where are we to begin? What is the first step in thawing our cold heart?

Many people today are pouring their lives out and working for Jesus Christ, but are not really walking with Him. One thing God constantly requires of us is a oneness with Jesus Christ. After being set apart through sanctification, we should discipline our lives spiritually to maintain this intimate oneness. When God gives you a clear determination of His will for you, striving to maintain that relationship by some particular method is completely unnecessary. All that is required is to live a natural life of absolute dependence on Jesus Christ. Never try to live your life with God in any other way than His way. And His way means absolute devotion to Him.

Oswald Chambers

NEXT WEEK: *Submission*