

BREAK UP THE FALLOW GROUND

Hosea 10:12; Jeremiah 4:3

A New Year is upon us and two passages of Scripture challenge me to grow and change in the year to come. Both are spoken by Old Testament prophets to the people of Israel, who had become lazy, sloppy, and disobedient in their service of the Lord.

"Break up your unplowed ground

and do not sow among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, circumcise your hearts, you men of Judah and people of Jerusalem...." (Jeremiah 4:3-4a)

"Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and **break up your unplowed ground**; for it is time to seek the Lord, until he comes and showers righteousness on you." (Hosea 10:12)

These passages have in common the phrase, "Break up your unplowed ground." Just what does it mean for me and you to do that?

It is land that could be productive, but for whatever reason has not been broken up, tilled, plowed, and prepared for planting. The prophets speaking the Word of the Lord are commanding the people to break up that land -- spiritually! To plow the plowable land that they have. The prophets observe two things about fallow ground:

1. Fallow ground is unusable, and Fallow ground is unused.

Unplowed ground won't let a crop grow. It's hard, preventing seeds from penetrating, germinating, and growing to maturity. When it's time to put in the garden we get out the rototiller and turn the soil so that seeds are able to get into it and let their roots go down deep where moisture can be found.

Stumps must be removed. Cutting down a tree is hard work. But removing stumps is even harder. You must dig down and cut each of the main roots with an axe, hatchet, or chainsaw. Then you attach a rope or chain to the stump and pull it out with a team of horses, oxen, truck, or winch. Finally, you pile all the stumps together and burn them as you clear the land.

What's been growing in your heart previously? Hatred, bitterness, lust, greed? These must be rooted out so a new crop can be planted. Grain doesn't flourish under the shade of trees. They must be removed so the new crop can grow in the light.

Hardness must be broken up. You can dig it, one shovel at a time, but that's too slow. You need horsepower.

Where is the hardness in your heart? Where is the unbelief that is lurking in your soul? If you've been hurt in a relationship or by your father or mother, you may have sealed off an area of your life because it's just too painful. But you need to let God break up those old resentments and heal those old hurts. He'll pull the plow,

Larger rocks must be dislodged. Sometimes when you're plowing you come upon some large, immovable rocks. The tough cases such as rape, molestation, murder. As you've plowed your heart, have you discovered some big rocks that need to be removed? Can't budge them by yourself? Why don't you talk with your pastor or a mature Christian about the problem? They will have had some experience moving rocks in their own life.

Thorns must be gathered and burned. When a field goes unplanted for several years it often become covered with thorns or other weeds.

Matt 13:22 ¹⁹ When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. ²⁰ But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; ²¹ Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. ²² He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful

Mark 4:19."The worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the **desires for other things** come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful"

Luke 8:14."The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, **riches and pleasures**, and they do not mature"

Depending on your particular plot of land, those thorns may represent sexual temptations and lust, self-indulgence, pride, anger, selfishness, a love of entertainment and recreation, addictions, greed, and other thorns. Each of these chokes the Word. Each has a devastating effect on the crop that God wants to grow in you and me. We must root them out instead of molly-coddling them!

Fallow ground, unplowed, unprepared soil is unusable for any serious crop. God speaks to us that we must "break up" our fallow ground so that it is usable.

Fallow Ground Is Unused

But there's another side to this. Fallow ground is unused ground. You may have many aspects of your life surrendered to God and under cultivation for a crop of righteousness and the fruit of the Spirit. But maybe there's a plot of land -- a part of your life -- that you've never got around to cultivating, planting, and harvesting. It's there but it's wasted. Perhaps you've put off plowing this particular piece of land because it's too difficult or too painful. Perhaps you can't envision the fruit and grain that can grow there so you've never bothered.

But God is the great Vinedresser. If you'll break up the additional fallow ground in your life, he will extend and enlarge your fruitfulness. Looking forward over a New Year is a great time to rededicate the tracts of land that comprise our life and put them under cultivation for God. Now is the time to break up these unplowed fields and yield them to his growth. He calls you to this. Will you be obedient?

R. Laird Harris (editor), Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (Moody Press, 1980), #1360a.



Romans 10:14...and how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

Elder George Lockhart

The Church of the Living God, the Pillar and Ground of the Truth, Inc. www.clpggtwpb.org

West Palm Beach Mission: 1901 Tamarind Ave. West Palm Beach, FL 33401

561-252-7791 or lockharg@att.net

Bishop Meharry H. Lewis, PhD, Chief Overseer Tuskegee, AL

Bishop Luke D. Lewis, District Bishop Riviera Beach, FL Please visit our General Church website www.clpggt.org