

J.R. Miller:

"Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." Psalm 97:11

The figure of the seed is very common in the Scriptures. All natural life begins in germs, and develops into fullness of form and strength. The same law prevails in the spiritual world. The kingdom of heaven begins in a heart as a very little seed—and grows until it fills all the life. Every Word of God is a seed which encloses a living germ; plant it in the soil of faith and prayer—and it will grow.

There is one passage, however, in which the figure of the seed is very striking: "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." "Light" stands for all spiritual blessing, and the thought is that our blessings are sown for us just as wheat-grains and flower-seeds are sown—and that we gather the harvest from this sowing—as we pluck flowers from garden or field, or reap the wheat from the fields. God gives us our blessings not full-formed—but as seeds.

We may think of the divine sowing of the light we are now harvesting. We may say that before the world began—God sowed seeds of light in his thoughts and purposes of redemption. There are trees on the earth which are many centuries old; one who sits in their shadow is lost in thought as he tries to think of the day when the seeds were dropped from which these ancient trees sprang. But the blessings of divine life in whose shade we sit these days in our homes and sanctuaries, are older than the hoary mountains; they were thoughts and purposes of love in the heart of God in the immeasurable past, and are but growing to ripeness in these later days.

Then we may say that our blessed Lord sowed seeds of light for us—in his incarnation, in his obedience, in his sufferings and in his atoning death. The tears that fell at Bethany and again on Mount Olive's brow, the blood-drops of anguish that stained the dewy grass in Gethsemane and those other life-drops that trickled down from the cross on Golgotha—these were all seeds of light sown to yield peace, joy, comfort and eternal life to human souls along these centuries of Christian faith. Who can ever count up the blessings that the world has reaped—from Christ's sowing?

Then we may say that God has sown light for us in his holy promises. All divine Words are seeds; wherever they fall, beauty springs up. Deserts are made to blossom as the rose, wherever the sower goes forth to sow. The promises were spoken ages since, and put down in the inspired book, and have been preserved, and now in these late times they bring cheer and hope to weary men who without them would perish in the darkness.

But there are more practical uses of the figure. A seed is a germ. When, therefore, we say that God has sown the light for us, we mean that he gives us our blessings in germ, not in full form—that they come to us, not developed into completeness of beauty—but as seeds which we must plant, waiting, sometimes waiting long for them to grow into loveliness. A seed does not manifest all the beauty of the life that is folded up within it. We see only a little brown and unsightly hull which gives no prophecy of anything so beautiful as springs from it when it has been planted. These facts in nature have their analogies in the seeds of spiritual blessing which God sows for us. The blessing does not appear; what does appear is often unlovely in its form, giving in itself no promise of good. Yet it is a seed carrying in it the potency of life, and the possibilities of great blessing.

For example, every duty that comes to our hand in the common days—is a seed of light which God has sown for us. Some seeds are dark and rough as we look upon them; so there are duties that have in them no promise of joy or pleasure as they first present themselves to us. They look hard and repulsive, and we shrink from doing them—but everyone knows that there is in the faithful doing of every duty a strange secret of joy; and the harder the duty, the fuller and the richer is the sense of gladness that follows its performance.

Thus every duty is a seed of light. To evade it or to neglect it is to miss a blessing; to do it is to have the seed burst into beauty in the heart of the doer. We need to learn the lesson. We are continually coming up to stern and severe things in our life's path, and oftentimes we are tempted to decline doing them, because they appear hard and costly. If we yield to such temptations, we shall reap no joy from God's sowing of light for us; but if we take up the hard task, whatever it is, and do it—we shall always find blessing.

One of our Lord's own words will help us here. When, at the well of Jacob, his disciples pressed him to eat, knowing that a little while before he had been weary and hungry, his answer was, "I have food to eat that you know not of." "Has any man brought him anything to eat?" they inquired. Then Jesus answered, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to finish his work." That is, he took up the duties that came to him hour by

hour, hard as they might be, and in doing themâ€”found bread for his hunger.

These duties, so to speak, were like nuts, hard and with rough, prickly hull, which yet, when broken open, yield delicious food. There is always in every doing of God's will, a secret gladness that feeds the soul. God's commandments ever enfold seeds of blessing whose ripened fruit can never become oursâ€”unless we obey the divine words.

Says the old Hebrew Psalmist, "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward." Psalm 19:7-11

In all these expressions, the blessing appears wrapped up in the divine will. We must keep the law, and it will restore our soul; we must observe the preceptsâ€”and they will rejoice our heart; we must obey the commandmentâ€”and it will enlighten our eyes; we must eat the honeyâ€”to taste its sweetness; we must keep the statutesâ€”to get their great reward. Thus God has sown seeds of light all along our path, in all the tasks and duties of our common days; if we will be obedient alwaysâ€”our lives shall be ever full of blessings.

The providences that God sends us are likewise seeds of light. They are seeds of light, for the light is not always manifest in them as at first they appear to our eyes. Ofttimes they have a dark and unattractive aspect; they come in the form of trials, losses, disappointments, pains.

Here is a lump of black coal which the miner brings up from the depths of the earth. He tells you to take it into your house and it will fill your apartment with light; but you shrink from touching it, and say, "Surely there is no light in that? See! it only blackens my fingers. It can shed no beams of light in my room." Yet that lump of coal is indeed a seed of light. The man of science takes it and puts it in his stove, and your chamber is made bright as day by its unimprisoned beams.

Many of the providences that God sends to us are in like manner repulsive in their form. We shrink from them. "There surely can be no hidden light in this trial," we say. "There can be no concealed gladness in this grief or pain." Yet it is just as in the lump of coal: there is a seed of light folded up and hidden away in the hard experience. There is a word in the Epistle to the Hebrews which carries the same thought: "No chastening for the present seems to be joyousâ€”but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto those who are exercised thereby." At first there is no fruit, only a seed, and that is dark, unattractiveâ€”not joyousâ€”but grievous. Then afterward, at the time of ripening, the fruit comes, beautiful, lusciousâ€”the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

"Within this leaf, to every eye
So little worth, does hidden lie
Most rare and subtle fragrancy.
Would you its secret strength unbind?
Crush it, and you shall perfume find
Sweet as Arabia's spicy wind.

"In this dull stone, so poor, and bare
Of shape or luster, patient care
Will find for you a jewel rare;
But first must skillful hands essay,
With file and flint, to clear away
The film which hides its fire from day.

"This leaf? this stone? It is your heart.
It must be crushed by pain and smart,
It must be cleansed by sorrow's art,
Before it will yield a fragrance sweet,
Before it will shine a jewel meet
To lay before your dear Lord's feet."

The lesson is plain: every dark providence that comes to usâ€”is a seed of light. The light is concealed in the

rough covering; but if we take the seed and plant it in the furrow gashed in our heart by the pain, it will in due time yield its blessed fruit of light.

It requires time to get the plant of beauty from the seed; the seed must lie in the ground and die—that the living germ enfolded in the husk may shoot up. So we have to wait a while—sometimes a long while—to get the blessing out of the sorrow or the pain that God gives to us. We must give the seed time to grow. Yet we need faith and patience to get the rich blessing. Not to be able to accept the bitterness of the seed—is to miss the sweetness of the ripened fruit. No doubt many people fail of the highest and best blessings of life—because they cannot take the pain or the severity in which the blessings are wrapped!

Every cross which we are called to take up—is also a seed of light. We are strongly tempted in these luxurious days, to seek out for ourselves easy ways of life—and to evade those that are hard. Naturally, we do not like to bear heavy burdens, to perform difficult tasks, to make self-denials and sacrifices. We prefer to be indolent. Not many people die of overwork; far more die of boredom. Souls as well as bodies—are withered and shriveled by self-indulgence!

When we are having great worldly prosperity, getting on easily, without much trial or struggle, we think we are enjoying God's special favor—and are being peculiarly blessed by him. But when times get harder, when there is more conflict, when there are fewer pleasant things, we think we are not having so much divine favor as formerly. But we are wrong in inferring this. It is a mistaken thought that God sows life's best blessings thickest—amid the flowers of earth's gardens. But really, they lie most plentifully on the bare fields of toil and hardship. Luxury has not in it half so many germs and possibilities of real good as are found along the sterner paths of life.

The poor man's boy envies the rich man's son—because the latter does not need to do anything or to exert himself to get started in life. The poor boy wishes his lot were the same, and laments the hardness of the circumstances in which he is doomed to toil and struggle. The angel that bends over the boy's head in guardian care, sees the seeds of a great harvest of blessing—in the very things the boy bewails as discouragements and hardships! The need for exertion, self-denial and endurance, for doing without many things which he craves, and working early and late to get the bare necessities of existence—builds up in him a strong, brave manhood. Idleness anywhere, always is a curse and brings a curse upon itself; while work anywhere, always is a blessing and brings blessing upon itself.

Of course toil and hardship are not easy; nor is it easy to take up the cross and carry it; but if we are wise, it is not ease that we are seeking—but good—growth, blessing, character, more abundant life. It was not easy for Jesus to go forward to his cross—seeing it ever in plain view. Yet we remember with what horror he looked upon the thought of turning away from it, when a disciple sought to dissuade him from going on to meet it. We are told, also, that he endured the cross, despising the shame—for the joy that was set before him. To his eye—the cross was a seed of light; the light—what wondrous light it was!—was wrapped up in the black folds. He took up the seed of ignominy and shame and woe, and out of it burst all the glorious blessings of human redemption.

So it is in all life—in the largest and the humblest—and in the smallest and the greatest things—God wraps up his best things in dark coverings, in husks that repel us by their sharpness and their bitterness. The law of all true living—is toil, endurance, pain, sacrifice. Nothing of much worth can be gotten—without cost. An easy life has but small outcome. We shrink from things that are hard—but really all calls to stern and severe duties are seeds of light; they are calls to accept divine gifts of inestimable worth. The hard tasks carry within themselves, germs of good and blessing. Crosses blossom—into crowns! All calls to self-denials, are invitations to fuller life, to nobler manhood. If we accept them in quiet faith and with heroic courage, we shall gather blessings into our bosom in the harvest-time.

These are illustrations enough, to make the principle clear. We are coming up to the seeds of light continually as we go on over life's hard paths. They may not lie like pearls of dew on leaf and flower, nor like diamonds blazing out their light; oftentimes they are rough, with prickly burrs—which it hurts our hands to take up. But afterward, when they have had time to grow, the fruit reveals itself. Every heavenly impulse obeyed, lights in our hearts a lamp whose beam at length flames out. Every hard duty accepted and performed, yields its secret of joy; every sacrifice endured for Christ's sake, brings its blessing.

But if we will not accept the rough seeds—we never can have the ripe fruit; hence only heroic souls can get the best things of life. Weak faith receives but small reward; its timid vessels venture not beyond sight of land. Only bold faith discovers new worlds! Only to those who overcome—are the blessings of victory promised.

Seeds of Light

The joys of victory none can tasteâ€”but those who pass through the battle.