

BREAK UP YOUR FALLOW GROUND

~Other Speakers A-F: Richard E. Bieber:

Sow for yourselves righteousness,
reap the fruit of steadfast love; break up your fallow ground,
For it is time to seek the Lord
that he may come and rain salvation upon you.
Hosea 10:12

"...break up your fallow ground..." those idle fields that haven't produced anything in years, where the soil is hard and crusted and sour.

For most of us the only time anything happens to this fallow ground in our lives is when it's broken up for us. We're sliding along in our comfortable rut knowing very well that we're not even half alive, but too comfortable to do anything about it, until a crisis of some kind comes crashing in.

- Our health breaks.
- We lose our job.
- A loved one dies.

In the process of dealing with this crisis the fallow ground of our lives is broken up – things start growing there for the first time in years.

Sometimes a husband and wife live side-by-side without one harsh word.

- They have their dull resentments,
their secret forms of self-pity,
their escape fantasies.

- But life drones on.

Then one day their apathetic union is jolted, and the re-entments come pouring out. The hidden bitterness rises to the surface. Their marriage itself is called into question. In the process, the fallow ground is broken up. At last there is fresh air and new life in that home.

It happens to fellowships of believers. Very subtly whole fellowships can lose their vision of God, their view of the harvest field, and get flabby and lazy until God permits some disruption to break up their fallow ground.

But is it God's responsibility to break up our fallow ground for us? Do we have a right to expect God to be our alarm clock when we keep rolling over and going back to sleep?

The Lord has been extremely good to us all. He has broken our fallow ground again and again. But clearly God's desire is that we should grow up and start taking care of this matter ourselves. When you were a small child your mother woke you up in the morning. But when you grow up you wake yourself up, you make your own breakfast.

This passage in Hosea says: Don't wait for circumstances to do it for you.

- You break up your fallow ground.
- You stir up the gift that is within you.

Sow for yourselves righteousness,
reap the fruit of steadfast love; break up your fallow ground,
For it is time to seek the Lord
that he may come and rain salvation upon you.

When Zacchaeus climbed up into a tree to get a glimpse of Jesus, he was breaking up his fallow ground – doing something he'd never done before, never thought he would do.

"Me, Zacchaeus, climb a tree?"

When Nicodemus went to Jesus by night he was breaking up his fallow ground, getting out of his rut, coming down from his high horse, and admitting his need.

When the woman washed Jesus' feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair " she was getting out of her rut, breaking up the dry ground of her sin-sick heart, finding fresh air and new life.

When Andrew and Peter and James and John went down to the Jordan River to hear the message of John the Baptist, they were doing something to break the fallow ground of their dull religious lives - and they met Jesus - and so will we.

All the people who stay alive with the flame of God's life have this in common:

They don't wait for circumstances to come and beat them on the head. They disrupt their own apathy and start sowing the seed of righteousness and reaping the fruit of mercy.

How do I break up my fallow ground? What am I supposed to do?

"And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: 'The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your works; you have the name of being alive, and you are dead. Awake, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death, for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God. Remember then what you received and heard; keep that, and repent. If you will not awake, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you. Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy. He who conquers shall be clad thus in white garments, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life; I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

Revelation 3:1-6

In this prophetic word which is addressed to us as " clearly as to the church at Sardis---we are told specifically what to do to break up our fallow ground...

First, wake up!

"...Awake, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death ..."

We need to continuously wake up and see what's happening to us. Open your eyes and see how you've allowed whole areas of your life to grow fallow. We are not what our spiritual reputation may seem to say we are.

- We are alive only to the extent we are walking and talking with the living God now.

- We are alive only to the extent that we are in such communion with the Son of God that we are doing His will of mercy now.

"For I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God....

- wholehearted, genuine.

I have found them fallow, half-baked, mindless, listless ...Wake up!"

Second, remember!

"...Remember then what you received and heard..."

Remember what those fallow fields once were and are always meant to be.

Remember the life God gave you. God gave you His Son to be your Savior,
your Lord,
your friend.

God gave you His Spirit to be your comforter, your guide, forever.

God gave you His peace which passes all understanding.

God gave you a gospel to proclaim.

God gave you a life to live.

- You received all this, hang on to it!

Remember, remember.....

"...Do this in remembrance of me."

Third, repent!

"...Remember then what you received and heard; keep that, and repent..."

The person who is willing to repent, to turn gratefully toward God every day, every hour, will continuously be breaking up his fallow ground. Repentance is not just feeling sorry every time you spill the milk. Repentance is making changes in your ways so you don't spill the milk all the time. Repentance is turning your life and getting it back on course.

Fourth, to break up our fallow ground is to conquer.

"...He who conquers shall be clad thus in white garments, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life..."

Conquer. Overcome.

You don't survive in this kingdom of death by wrapping yourself up in religious plastic and hiding in some isolated religious community.

- You survive in this kingdom of death by conquering death, overcoming death, in your mind and body and spirit.

That fallow ground in your life is death - conquer it!

(1) Conquer that fallow ground with a continuous pursuit of the best God offers.

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus

Philippian 3:12-14

Paul is getting older but he isn't getting stale. He's pursuing the best God offers. He's pressing on toward the prize.

Press on! Pursue!

There is something better than you have now waiting for you up ahead - get it!

(2) Conquer the fallow ground with a continuous exercising of the Spirit over the flesh ... continuously choosing to be a woman or man of God instead of a vegetable.

So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh---for if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live.

Romans 8:12-13

There's nothing morbid about crucifying the flesh with its afflictions and lusts ... it's exhilarating, life-giving.

What people will put themselves through at a fitness center to get an inch off their waist! The diets we suffer in

