

A.W. Tozer:

The Cruel, But Effectual Plow in Fallow Ground

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December 30, 1956

Now, about 18 years ago, I preached a sermon, and then it got written up and got into a booklet. And I've steered away from ever preaching it since, because I didn't want to repeat myself. I've been told wryly by certain people that they have heard men who've written books, preach their old chapters over again and they have sat in the back of the of the church and gone over word for word, the chapter. And the way they told me about it, I concluded it wasn't a very acceptable thing to do. So, I've tried to steer away from it. But I feel I've just got to go back and preach again on the text. Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.

My old friend, Burt Miller back there, may have heard me preach on this once out in Ohio. If he did, he's going to hear it again. Because I want to talk to you about certain truths that underlie this text. Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy and then particularly this, break up your fallow ground for it is time to seek the Lord. I told you this morning that I did not want at the end of the year to talk about what had been and scold you about it, but rather talk about what could be and what is to come. Now we'll proceed.

Here are two kinds of ground mentioned, fallow ground and plowed ground. And I don't know what you, in your part of the country mean when you say, fallow ground, because the scientific farmers use the word otherwise than what it was used in Bible days and out where I came from, before there were scientific days. But here are two kinds of ground, fallow ground and plowed. Now what is fallow ground? Well, fallow ground is ground that may be fertile alright, that doesn't need to be necessarily, but it can be fertile ground. But it has been allowed to run waste.

And there it lies, this piece of ground as safe and smug, and I suppose, well satisfied with itself. No doubt it's collecting the tradition and buttons for attendance at Sunday school. But it's a safe, smug, self-satisfied, at ease in Zion affair. And the result of it is, nothing grows on it but green briars and burdock because nothing's been planted on it and it hasn't been plowed up. It's just lying there. Its potentialities are tremendous, but it's not getting anything done to it, so it lies there. It has no life in it. No miracle of life is present here, because it's lying fallow, it has protected itself. No doubt it can turn to its constitution and justify its fallowness by Article 3 and by the marginal note showing that it was changed at a council in 1916. But there it lies nevertheless, fallow and there's nothing growing on it. The blue jay won't light on it except by mistake because there isn't any reason why he should. There's nothing there. It's simply fallow ground. And then the farmer decides that he'd better put that back in production again. So, he gets out a plow.

Now, a plow was never a pleasant thing, never. Plows are not meant to be pleasant. They do not have pearl handles on them. And they have never been made soft. There never was soft plow yet. So, the farmer gets out his plow, and in olden times, his horses or oxen, back in the days when this was written. And that cruel plow goes to work on this smug, self-satisfied field that's been lying there so long that it's gotten gray with tradition. It's got a beard on it because it's been there, well-satisfied and content.

But now the plow starts. And so, there's first the disturbance, and then it's travailing and it's pained and bruised and it's unprotected. There's one thing about a field, it can't be protected and plowed at the same time. It just can't be. A field has to have its fences, at least part of it, taken away so that the plow can get in. So begins the plowing. And if a field could bleed, it would bleed. And if it could mourn, it would mourn. If it could weep, it would weep. If it could suffer, it would suffer. For everything is going on there to make it suffer.

And so round and round go the oxen or the horses, and round and round until it has been thoroughly plowed. Not scratched on the surface, but plowed down deep. And somebody who doesn't understand, watching the plow, would say, what a cruel man that farmer is. Why, I remember that field for nine years now, and it's been one of the nicest little old green briar patches in the world, ground squirrels, and blue jays. But now look what he's doing. He's plowing it up. He's cruel, that man. And they won't come to hear him

preach.

But nevertheless, I want to tell you what happens when you get your ground plowed up. After the plow has done its work and that field has had its smugness knocked out of it, and its safety removed and his protection taken away from it, and it knows what it is to be attacked and invaded and chopped up and chewed down and chewed out, and got mad by the plow. Then the wonder of life begins. That which had been lying and only now potential, now becomes a wonderful field full of life with bursting seed and life, and there’s birth and growth and there’s the hand of God manifested in corn or wheat or whatever it may be. And people who go by say, look what a comeback that field made. While I remember when it was an old, infertile thing lying there. But now look at it, why, the wheat’s as tall as a man bent over, with great, brown golden heads of wheat. Well, that’s what happens when the plow gets at the field.

Now, that’s the illustration only. But the application is, that there are two kinds of lives. There’s the fallow life and the plowed life. The fallow life is the contented life. That is, he’s the Christian who is quite satisfied with himself. He’s at ease and he has slowly grown a protective shell. He’s heard all the preachers on the radio and off. And he’s read everything so that he has grown a protective shell, and you can get at him. He’s protected. There he is. God can’t even get at him, because God didn’t say, I’m going to plow your ground. He didn’t say that. God didn’t say, I’m going to plow your ground. God can’t even plow him, because he’s too well-satisfied with himself.

And I don’t mind telling you I hate to wash our linen in public and talk before company, but I don’t mind saying to you that one of the heartaches of my life is that a number of our people and some of you may be here now. A number of our people have grown old and gray in this church, and you’re as fallow and as unproductive as you were when I came here, a black-haired stripling, 28 years ago. And I say that’s a tragedy too terrible. The only thing that’s changed about you is the color of your hair. You’re still the same fallow person you were before. Because you’ve thrown up a protective shield. You will not let anything get after. You’ve built a religious fence around yourself, and you’ve come to approve yourself. But do you know what’s wrong? There is no fruit and there is no growth. And there is no miracle of life, and there’s no wonder of bursting seed, and there’s no miracle of springing fruit. There isn’t anything there but a fallow life.

And the churches of this country brother are full of them. The churches are full of them, fallow lives. They’ve been on the board since the year 1, and they will be there yet, at the end of time. And there they are, religious fellows that there’s no more love, no more tenderness. They’ve never ripened any. There is no mellowness There is no evidence of penetration, no spiritual insight. No, no upward rush of spiritual life, but they’ve remained just what they were because they’ve protected themselves from the plow. They won’t let the Holy Ghost get to them. And there are some of us like that here tonight. We just won’t let the Holy Ghost get to us. We have become what they called blasé. And I think that’s French for dead. Anyhow, it’s French for burned out and dull and sophisticated and a state of just having heard everything, a perpetual yawn inside of their soul. And there isn’t anything that will stir them, no matter who comes to preach. They will come and listen, but they won’t let the plow ever get to them.

Then thank god, there’s the other kind, and we’ve had a lot of them around here and some of them are on the mission field Brother. Some of them are preaching the gospel in various parts of this country and some of them are still with us. And I’ve watched you grow and lived beside you, and in some instances, sat on the committees with you and watched you grow. Well, that’s the plowed life.

Now, what does that mean? It means that you begin to get discontented with your crop of green briars and burdock, and you’ve decided that you’d like to be a fruitful Christian. That you’re weary of producing nothing. That the Son of God’s love beats down, but only bakes you. And the rain of God comes down as sweet and merciful upon you, and yet doesn’t do you any good, and you’re getting weary.

Now, the first step toward any progress in the spiritual life is discontentment. And don’t you let anybody take a New Testament and try to take away your discontent. I am weary of these counselors whose whole job in life is to make everybody satisfied with his spiritual state. I say we need to be dug up sometimes. Not all the time, but plowed occasionally. Now, the plow only went in there once a year, but it did a fine job while it was there. And so discontent, dissatisfaction, and when would there be a time when normally and psychologically, we’d get discontented anymore than now.

We stand only a breath away from the New Year. And you’ve got behind you old ’56 with her troubles and her miseries and her scares and her frights and her weariness. Now look back over it. Are you satisfied

with it? Have you been what you should have been? Have you followed God as you should have followed Him? Are you contented with 1956 and with yourself? If you are, then you might just as well go to sleep because I have nothing to say to you. You have got to be discontented before there can be anything else.

Then there must come contrition. There must come a sorrow of heart, and down go the fences. And there must come pain of heart, and we must put ourselves in peril. There must come a stirring up and a humbling and a seeking and a confessing and the going down before God either in church or in private. I donâ€™t care which. I have gotten more from God alone in my own room by myself than I ever did any time anywhere with a company of people. And if you want to do it that way, itâ€™s all right with you. All Iâ€™m afraid of is, that if you get out of here, you wonâ€™t. And so we insist sometimes that people come and do it publicly, because we know if we let them go, they wonâ€™t do it privately. Thatâ€™s the only reason I ever give invitations, because I donâ€™t care where your knees are resting. But I only know that if thereâ€™s a humbling and a seeking and a confessing, there will be preparation for progress at least.

And so that is the cruel plow. Thatâ€™s the cruel plow. And the man who uses it, or who even exhorts toward it as a rule, isnâ€™t a very popular man. I have noticed that the popular preachers of the day are very careful to be so general, that the plow point never gets in. Thatâ€™s why we can have campaigns and not have any lasting results, or not raise the moral standards of the country. Thatâ€™s why we can boast of 100 million church members in America, at the same time, sadly, admit the lowest moral standards in the nationâ€™s history, all one at the same time. More church members and worst sinners, and very often, theyâ€™re the same people.

Now, that cruel plow, the odd thing about that is youâ€™ve got to use it yourself. Nobody else can use it. Youâ€™ve got to take the protection away from yourself and take the shell off and let the Holy Ghost get to you. And if you do that, then comes the new life. Then comes the wonder then comes that miracle of new life. Then comes the manifestations of God. Then comes fruit and birth and life. And people go by and say, what happened to this fellow? Heâ€™s made a comeback. Why, I remember when you looked at him, it was as much as your life was worth. He gave you the half wham just looking at you. He was a cold fundamentalist, satisfied with himself. But now, bless me, heâ€™s warm and fragrant and vibrant and full of something. What happened to him? Well, he got plowed up, and God Almighty poured seed in there, and the kind rains of Heaven came down and the sun warmed it by day. And now the miracle of life has taken place.

Now my friend, religious history shows these two phases, the dynamic or plowed life, when thereâ€™s advance and victory and growth and miracle and life, and the static or fallow phase, when there is safety and protection and weakness and silence and barrenness. Thatâ€™s why I donâ€™t stand always with my own Society, because I see that as we get more and more barren, and more and more fallow, we multiply protective regulations so nobody can get to us. And weâ€™re dying by inches, because we will not expose ourselves. The old days our brother told about back there, 1897, when man had nothing but the will of God, their two knees and faith. Why, that was the day of breaking open things and doing things in the Alliance. But weâ€™re so protected now that God Almighty couldnâ€™t withdraw his forces from us for ten years and we wouldnâ€™t find it out, because weâ€™ve got it all regulated and looked at. And I want this church, weâ€™ve got its constitution, but itâ€™s so skeletal and necessary under law that we have it or I wouldnâ€™t even have that. Because I find that when Christians are growing, theyâ€™ve got nothing but God. When theyâ€™re dying, they have regulations to protect them from finding it out.

Now, my brethren, these two phases are here, and theyâ€™re in church history. I donâ€™t want to belabor it, but only point out that there was an old man one time. He had been young, but now he was a pretty old man. I can see him as a tall, upright old man with quite a beard, dignified and stately. For he never but once in his life did anything that wasnâ€™t dignified that I can find in the Scriptures and his name was Abram. And he was in Ur of the Chaldees, thoroughly fallow, satisfied with Abram, quite, and making idols history tells us. And therefore, it was quite alright, thank you, a respectable religionist, and he was a statistic.

And then one day a strange moving came on his heart and he got discontented, and he walked around looking for somebody to talk to and nobody could understand him. And then when he did dare to bare his heart to somebody they said, now, keep calm brother, donâ€™t get too stirred up. Religion will drive you insane if you to get too stirred up, you know. Psychiatry has proved that. So, Abraham had to get away and throw off each of the â€œego crazyâ€• fellows and pulled up stakes and uprooted himself and started for a land he had never been in before, not knowing where he was going. Talk about plowing a man up. That was it, sir. He didnâ€™t know his destination. He got his ticket and it was blank. And God said, now, you go but you donâ€™t know where youâ€™re going. But Abraham said, God, do you? And God said yes and Abraham said, thatâ€™s enough. And then started the fruit, fruit abundant began to flow out of the manâ€™s life.

Well, then there was Israel in Egypt. You remember how Israel in Egypt, with no power, no victory, no advance, no life, multiplying physically, but having no spiritual life at all. For 100 years, Israel lay fallow, out of the will of God, or at least out of the directive will of God. And then one day God called a man named Moses. And Moses answered the call and went and said, let my people go. And out from Egypt there came a people, a disturbed people, an uprooted people, the people who were leaving or was for they were the people of Israel, leaving the old land and going out where they scarcely knew. And then came the miracle and the cloud of the fire and the crossing of the Red Sea and the manna and the wonder of God's leadership, all because they got out of that old sandy deathbed where they'd been for 400 years. They had exchanged the static situation for the dynamic.

And then came the Judges. When you read the Judges you will find that there would be periods when Israel would go completely static and fallow. She would lie under the control of some foreign nation, then God would raise up some wild fellow who hadn't much education or culture but who knew God. And Ehud or Samson or somebody would rise up and do strange disturbing things. And the plow would go into the soil, and Israel would have a renaissance and would come back to life again for a while and the blessing of God would begin to flow.

Well then, under the time the long cressence before Christ's time, broken only on the surface by the Maccabees. But there was that long period between Malachi and the birth of Jesus, 400 years about, between the strange man named Malachi, that means a messenger of God. That's all we know about him. History can't locate the man. But he wrote that terrible, wonderful four chapters of Malachi.

But oh, after that, for 400 long years, there was the fallow ground. There was the static situation. Israel wasn't growing. She was so dead, so infertile, that when the Prophet talked about the coming of Christ, he called Him a root out of a dry ground. He was born in a miracle out of the dry ground, for Israel was a dry ground. And then when Jesus came and the Gospels began to take place, the events of the Gospels and then the death and resurrection of our Savior and the book of Acts, the outpouring of the Holy Ghost.

And then came the miracles and the wonder. Then came the spread of the gospel. Then heaven opened and shown in its fullest glory. And what had been 400 years of drought, now became a long period of fruitfulness and power. And the rain descended and the floods came and the sun by day and the moon by night, and the plow and the uprooting and the disturbance and the persecution and the praying and the long vigils with God, and the disturbed upset patterning of our pattern of our living. Now, that came when their plow got in. Now that's the way history shows it you see. I'm illustrating from history, and nobody can gain say it nor deny this is so.

And then there was that long period after the awakening of learning in the Middle Ages, or a little after. And then came Erasmus and the rest of them, the humanists, and they began to do translate and just rediscover the writings of the old Greeks and the rest. And men began to plow themselves up mentally. And they had what is called the Renaissance.

And then about that time also, there came that great big ploughman, we call Martin Luther. Now he was rough, and for an educated man, and for a man as brilliant as he was, for don't forget, he was not only brilliant, but he was one of the great musicians of his time and composers. And yet he was as rough as a bull, literally. And there came that great big fellow. Now, if it had been some soft rubber-nose plow that was out to be kind to people, and remember they're just dust, there never would have been any reformation, and you would have been kissing the cardinal's ring come next Wednesday. And you would never have known the gospel that set you free. But this great big rough fellow had a plow. I think personally, he went down in too deep and hurt people just kind of because he wanted to. But he did it anyhow.

And Erasmus, the polished white-handed scholar who knew so much and did so little and who refused to go along although he believed in the evangelical movement. He wouldn't go along with it because he said he wasn't called to revolution. He was called to educate people. But Martin Luther was called to get people converted. And then we had the Reformation. And a nation was born and the Bible was released from its chains in the monasteries and got out among the plain people, so the German youth could read the Scripture and memorize it and quote it as he followed the oxen. And then followed after that period, periods of theory and indoctrination and marking of time, static periods, broken only occasionally by ploughman who came and put in the plow.

Revivals, we call them now in history and there they are. It's not the wild imagining of an excited preacher.

Theyâ€™re there in history. Theyâ€™re there, revivals in Ireland, revival in Wales, revival in England, revival in New England, revival in the middle western part of the United States under Finney, revival in Korea, revival in China under Sung. Those periods when a ploughman arrived, and men began to plow up their own hearts. And the periods of theory and a time marking were all broken up, and the plow was put in. Then men did daring things, and theyâ€™re walked out in the midst of danger. They did dangerous things.

But nowadays, I want to preach on it some time, but nowadays, our young people, they lack the spirit of daring in their Christian lives. Theyâ€™ve got to be played into the Kingdom, entertained when theyâ€™re there and jockeyed along and fed out of a bottle, and nobody talk rough to them for fear theyâ€™ll backslide. And treated like a house plant raised inside, watched over lest they be told that thereâ€™s something dangerous in the gospel.

Brother, there is something dangerous in the gospel. There is a no and a yes in the gospel and the no means death and the yes means life. There is a cross and a resurrection in the Gospel. And the cross means death and the resurrection means life. There is a plow and there is fruit. And there is never any fruit before thereâ€™s a plow. And to tell our young people as is being done up and down the land, to tell our young people that itâ€™s fun serving Jesus is to tell them a lie that may damn their souls. The cross of Christ is not fun. The cross of Christ is the instrument of your death. And up out of your stony grief and up out of your Josephâ€™s new tomb, God will bring you in life and wonder, and thereâ€™ll be blessing and fruitfulness and there may even be joy that you canâ€™t contain. But it will not be the cheap joy thatâ€™s being offered by those who lead our young people astray.

And Iâ€™d rather preach to a few young people who have maturity enough to come out to hear me preach, than to preach to 10,000 of them who want only to be entertained, or who want to be told the grand lie that Christianity is another form of entertainment and that you can be, have a lot of fun following the Lord. Have you ever found much fun in it, brother, down there where your life was in danger? I have no trouble at home. I have no trouble with my family. I have no financial troubles. Iâ€™m not particularly sick though my family claims Iâ€™m neurotic on the subject. But thereâ€™s nothing wrong with me. We get along all right. Thereâ€™s never an unpleasant word or thought between us. Iâ€™m not in trouble and yet I have a heart ache two thirds of the time.

But itâ€™s a heartache for the church. Not only this one, but a heartache for the church of God. The heartache for bad evangelism and mislead young people. A heartache for the honky-tonks and juke-joints that pass for Christian churches these days. And I got a heartache for it. No trouble at home, nothing to worry about. I own this suit. Itâ€™s paid for. And I know Iâ€™m going to get my breakfast. And nobodyâ€™s after me. But thereâ€™s a heartache, a self-imposed plowing that keeps going on all the time in my heart, not always with the same intensity I suppose, but certainly keeps going all the time in my heart. Why are Godâ€™s people so insufferably stupid? Why are the dear sheep of God so easily led astray?

In an ad that I have seen in some of our current religious magazines, there is a fellow, a round-faced fellow that would look like a Christian whether he was or not. You know, heâ€™s got a built-in smile there that he got from his mother in overeating, and heâ€™s written a book. And the advertising for the book is this, â€œNow, Soul Winning is Easy.â€ Get his book and soul winning is easy. And to get a few dirty dollars, the magazines publish that stuff and except the money, or else they donâ€™t know any better. But imagine saying, soul winning is easy, my brother. Soul winning is easy. Soul winning is no easier than giving birth to a child. Soul winning just canâ€™t be done by rule of thumb. And it canâ€™t be done. after any methods known by a man or that can be put into a book and sold with royalties attached. You canâ€™t win souls easy. You can make these, what do you call them, these cheap converts that arenâ€™t converts.

Well, anyhow, you can swing them from one religion to another. You can get them to bow their head and say I take Jesus, but you canâ€™t get them converted. For conversion means wrestling a soul loose from hellâ€™s grip, and you donâ€™t do that easy. Getting a man converted means getting him born out of an old deadness into a new life, and that doesnâ€™t come easy. Things are made easy enough and the result is we see all around about us. And so no daring, no danger, no growth, no upset, no plowing, weâ€™re protected and cared for and watched over in order that we might not find out thereâ€™s a cross in Christianity. The only cross we know is the one on the church steeple, and the one on the Easter card. But the cross on which He died is carefully hidden behind the door.

My brethren, you can do two things with his talk tonight. You can shake your head and say thatâ€™s too rough for me. I preached this sermon 18 years ago on a missionary who is a missionary now, but he was there. Oh, brother, he said, that was brutal. It was brutal, but he went down to the altar. He met God. And heâ€™s been a

successful missionary on the field for some years. Brutal maybe. And you can say that man's too brutal. I'm not coming back. Well, I'll be sorry if you don't and it will be another heartache. But I can bear to think. But you can't dare, you can't afford to take that attitude, because fruit follows the plow.

God's power comes when it's called out and never when the church is in hiding. What I'm worried about here is, we're too cultured. We know too much. We're too well educated. We're too smooth. We've got it all worked out. And everybody is dressed so neatly. And nobody's in trouble with himself. That's what I'm worried about. God's power comes when it's called out, brethren, and never, never when we're protecting ourselves. Never when we're in the rut, never when we're lying fallow. Never when we've got the fence up all the way around. And no matter who the preacher is, he can't get past our guard. No, never does the power of God come then. Because then it's satisfaction, and resting on our lees, and sterility and infertility, and borderline death. And then, maybe in a meeting like this, the blessing of the Holy Spirit penetrates the disguise and gets past the shield and gets through to the heart and power is released into the life. And the church dares to do something.

You know what can happen to us friends? We can get middle-aged in our church life the same as we can in our normal physical life. I used to remember when I never walked up a pair of stairs, never. I always ran up the stairs and invariably, two at a time. I used to remember when I never allowed a bus to get away from me. If it was in the same block, I caught it and got on. But you know, I've philosophically concluded that's no way to live. In other words, middle-age caught up with me. And my physical daring is gone.

There was a day when long trips and all. I don't want to go nowhere now, no sir. Lovely English, but I don't want to go anyplace. I just want to, if I was a tree, I would just be happy and stay right there. I don't want to go anywhere. And I never go out of the city but what I wish I was back and hate every inch of the journey. Middle-age brother, and you can get that way in the church. We can drag our feet and sit on our hands and be overcautious and not have any daring nor any aggressiveness.

All right, God says, go ahead. If you want to do it, I'll just withdraw my power. You just go ahead now and become middle-age in your church life, and go through the routine. Have your elections and your board meetings and your gatherings and go your way and get hard and fallow and fruitless. I can't do a thing unless you plow yourself up, plow up your fallow ground He said. He didn't say, ask me to do it. I'll have no all-night prayer meeting asking God to plow up this church. That would be as ridiculous as asking God to go out and drive you home in your automobile. God is not going to do what you're supposed to do. God isn't going to fry your ham and eggs in the breakfast nor perk your coffee. He's given you sense enough to do it, and then you do it. And there are some things God won't do. And so, God isn't going to plow you up. God says, you plow up your fallow ground, for it's time to seek the Lord.

And then will come miracles, and by miracles I don't mean necessarily physical manifestations of power, even in healing as precious as that. I tell you; I've seen miracles that healing never could touch. I've seen an old bum get up and look all around wonder what had happened to him, and go on from there to live a wonderful, happy Christian life. I've seen a few homes that were broken, cemented back together again by a miracle of the grace of God. And I've seen young people full of nonsense. Not here tonight, I think, or if he is, he'll forgive me. But I saw a young fella who was hot rod driver, if you please. He loved to zoom around corners, you know, on one wheel. And then one day, McAfee walked up and slapped his back and said, what's the matter with you? Why don't you get right with God? That same night I preached and I don't remember what it was, but the plow went down his back. And He almost ran down that south aisle into this room. And I think his two knees hadn't more than reached the floor until God met his soul.

Well, he's in his last year at Nyack now and I got a letter from the Foreign Department and one from the Home Department, asking about him. Do you recommend him? And I wrote a letter of recommendation that would sell an electric fan to an Eskimo. And then they said, do you know anything against him? Well, I said, if there's anything against him, it's he's too enthusiastic. But if that's a fault, it's one that's not very common in our day. That's a miracle brother. And that's a bigger miracle than the healing of a cancer, though I'd like to see cancers healed too. If God Almighty in His kindness would deliver people, I'd like to see that. But I'd rather see this kind of thing happen to a young man in the dawn of his life, to change him from an opinionated, young, smart aleck to a happy, glorious, young Christian. That's a miracle to me. And that's the kind of miracles I want to see. And the other ones will come along if God wills it.

But my brethren, you have got to follow the plow. And you've got to use it and then miracles will follow you. For the safety and security of your life, dare to throw yourself out on God for something new. Do you suppose we dare to do that this year? Are we going to go around the squirrel cage this year, one more year around the

squirrel cage? Well, I'm going to tell you something brethren, I'm not. I'm not. If God will help me, I'm not. I'm not boasting. I'm meekly, humbly making a statement. I am not. And if there's going to be barrenness and continued fallowness and no effort to break it and no intention to do anything about it, then there must be some realignments and some partings of the way. Because I don't intend to. I will be sixty years old next April 21. And a man my age can't afford to fool around brother. I haven't got an awful lot of years ahead of me, maybe. I'm not on my own strength. My family rides me for this. But it's just realism and common sense. Suppose I put on a fiery red shirt and didn't even tuck it in and ran around trying to be young? Wouldn't I look silly? I am just admitting my position is off and I am not going to waste 1957 if God Almighty will help me.

And I have a little book here that I've got prayers in that go back to 1937. I keep it somewhere here in one of my, and one of those prayers is this one, O God, let me die right, rather than continue to live wrong. I would rather be right with God with His face in full view and drop over and be lugged out, than to continue to be a fallow, unproductive old man on his way to Carlisle old folks home, worse than he was when he was 30 years old. And I'm not going to have it. By the grace of God, I'm going to keep the plow in my life. And I'm the worst member of this whole outfit. And if God can bless me, he can bless you.

What about you, sir? Are you going to let God help you? Are you going to take the fence down, take the protection away and ask God to help you this new year to dash and dare to go out and believe for something new? If you are, God will work on your side. And only high heaven can visualize what may come to you in 1957, if you'll put away your carelessness and your smugness and your contentment, and plow yourself up until you bleed.

Now, brethren, we're going to close this meeting, I've had a friend who has been my friend. We call each other by our first names. And I think there are not three people in the world that call me by my first name, and he's one of them. And I'm going to ask him to come down here after a while when I indicate it and take us before God and asked for help for us.

Now, first of all, who wants prayer, for you? You'll dare to make this kind of prayer, O God, so arrange providential circumstances for me that I will keep plowing myself up and keep fertile and productive rather than become stale and fallow this year. And no matter what cost God, I want to make progress and go on with Thee so I'll be a better Christian a year from now than I am now. How many will say, pray for me and stand? Brother, Burton Miller, will you come down here please? My friend, Reverend Burt Miller, evangelist and a man with great success in starting churches and resurrecting old churches. Come on up here Burton. Take us before God's and ask God to do something for us, this church, and me, and these fellas back here who share my responsibilities and trouble.

O God in the name of thy holy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. We would bow the knee and bow the heart tonight with all sincerity. We've listened tonight, Lord, with Eternity's values in view. We refuse to go the way of the world and the flesh and The Devil. We chose tonight to go God's way in God's time. Lord, we thank Thee for the plow tonight. We thank Thee Lord it isn't pearl-handled, but it's genuine and real. The Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. We feel like we've been slain tonight. We thank You for it, Lord. And we will go down before Thee in sackcloth and ashes. We will do it now. And as thy people respond to the call of Thy Spirit through Thy Spirit-anointed servant, Lord, meet us tonight. Meet us in this church, with its long God-blessed history. But Lord, don't let it get on the shelf. Let better days be ahead, days of revival power and fire. O Lord, were so sick of the sham and the program of today with its likeness and its cheapness so far from the Word of God, we can't even recognize it. Lord. We go back to the book and back to the blood and back to the way of the Holy Ghost, and we do it now. We do it now Lord, not just by standing up here, raising our hands and going down before Thee on our knees. Give us a spirit of brokenness tonight. Lord, as we meet up with our fellow men these days, we're so helpless to do too many good. We're so helpless to help them to God. And that's why they're going here and they're seeking things that seem to be genuine, but are so false. Forgive us for failing Thee. Forgive us, Lord, for being afraid to be genuine Christians and the followers of the Lord Jesus. We trust Thee to do it, Lord, even now, even now. I feel while we're praying folks, God be pleased and begin to move right now, don't you? I want to be among you to do that. God bless you richly. Amen.