

THE SAME STORM...

Most have heard the phrase, “The same sun, that melts the wax, hardens the clay.” The axiom seems to fit well with the Biblical account in Exodus of the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart. Pharaoh’s experience teaches that those whom the Spirit touches never leaves them as they were before His touch. The resultant change depends on how the Spirit is received—positively or negatively.

Some time ago, I was surveying the two oak trees in my front yard. The two trees are only about eight feet apart from one another at their bases. Their closeness resulted in their branches dueling for existence in the congested area where the trees face one another.

The result of this ongoing conflict for space caused certain limbs of both trees to die, leaving dead wood in the process. Since it is early Spring, new leaves now cover the once-barren winter branches, making the dead branches much more obvious. I had entertained the idea of getting a ladder and sawing off the dead limbs, which would, I thought, make the trees more attractive.

Yesterday, our neighborhood experienced weather that was full of strong, pelting rain and swirling winds. The weather passed in the night, and the morning revealed ditches full of water and rose bushes, which had been full of blooms, bowed over from their recent drenching.

The two oak trees appeared to glisten as their newly sprouted leaves were now cleansed from the accumulation of the heavy yellow pollen that had been provided by neighboring pine trees. The trees’ leaves now had that new greenness that comes with Spring.

While the strong winds and rain had torn away a few fledgling leaves, it had also brought to the ground many of those dead branches that now populated themselves on the ground round about the trunks of the two trees. The same storm that had cleansed and vitalized the new leaves had also pruned and removed the dead branches.

We, of course, see how a spiritual application can easily be made to our lives as Christians. The storms we encounter in life sometimes brings cleansing and renewal but, at the same time, also pruning and removal. While we must have times of renewing, we must be careful not to cling to those things that must be subtracted from our lives—to experience one is to experience both!

It can be difficult to see the “dead wood” before the storm. While in the storm’s grasp, we may not understand all the workings of the swirling deluge, accompanied by the flashes of lightning and the resounding roar of thunder in the night. However, with morning’s light, when we witness the vibrancy following the cleansing and also see the lifeless, dead wood scattered abroad—we will both understand and be glad!

Even pastors trying their best to follow God sometimes find the fury of a sudden and unexpected storm, having blinding sheets of rain and twisting and tearing winds, difficult to handle when it strikes his assembly. Uproars and fires break out where and when least expected!

“We are praying for revival!” comes the anguished cry! And in the lapse of memory, we forget that revival means much more than the sprouting of new growth—but it also includes the removal of dead wood.

Reviving and removal are the works of the same storm.

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