

Threshing

By Mary Kane

To everything there is a season; a time for every purpose under heaven." I love these words from the book from Ecclesiastes. Right now in Michigan, spring is in the air—the trees are budding, the birds are brooding and the flowers are blooming. The beauty of springtime will soon give way to the lushness of summer. Summer will be followed by the bountiful harvest of autumn. Everyone anticipates feasting on the fruit of the fields, but in order to enjoy the benefits of the harvest, the grain must first be threshed. As Christians our lives are also marked by seasons of new life, growth, harvest and threshing as God constantly works to bring a harvest of righteousness in our souls.

Before we begin our study for today, please take a moment to confess any offense to God and accept the grace He so freely gives. Now ask God to open the eyes of your heart so you can receive of His Holy Word.

Please read 1 Corinthians 9:10-11

In the space provided, please record what must happen before we can thresh our grain.

In this verse we see different phases of the growth cycle:

Plowing up fallow ground. God reveals to us, by the power of the Holy Spirit, a lack in our character; He exposes rough places that have not been tilled by His Word. Through the power of His Holy Word, God breaks up the uncultivated land of our hearts to prepare it for planting. Next...

A seed is sown. God strategically places us at the right place, at the right time so we hear something from God's Word—a *seed*. When we receive the implanted (growing, bringing to birth) Word, it begins to grow and change us from the inside out. In due season we will...

Reap a harvest. Of what we have planted, good or evil, we will reap a harvest. “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” If we have diligently sowed God’s Word into our situations, challenges, pleasures, relationships and works, in due time we shall receive that which we deserve. Remember, a harvest does not happen over night so do not be deceived or discouraged by its delay. You will reap—life or death, blessing or cursing. After the harvesting, comes...

Threshing: Threshing separates the nutritious grain from the useless chaff. First, grain is taken to a threshing floor. Preferably the threshing floor is in a wide-open elevated area where the winds can aid the threshing process. The sheaves of grain are heaped in this area. Then the oxen, or a harrow-like tool is driven over the grain to separate it from the chaff. Because of this process the stalks are eventually broken down to small pieces and the husks are worn off. Then the mixture of chaff and grain is thrown into the air and the wind whisks away the useless chaff and leaves behind the valuable grain. Through this somewhat forceful process of threshing, that which is good, is made better. Christians also experience a threshing process. After a season of planting and harvesting, God works to thresh away our chaff so we too can be made better. While *spiritual threshing* can be painful, it is also necessary. When we undergo a season of threshing we can take hope in the following points:

1. God is present at the threshing floor.
2. There is hope in threshing.
3. Threshing is a sign of fruitfulness.
4. Threshing brings sanctification.

Let us consider each of these points and how they affect our relationship with God.

First, God is present at the threshing floor.

Please read 2 Chronicles 3:1.

What is happening in this verse?

What remarkable thing happened at this threshing floor?

Please read 2 Chronicles 7:1 and describe what happened.

Can you imagine?

What was special about the temple of God?

The temple was where the Holy Presence of our magnificent God resided. The people of God gathered at the temple to worship and bring their sacrifices and offerings. The temple was a place of relationship.

From what you have learned thus far about threshing, why would God choose to build His temple on a threshing floor? Why not build His temple in a busy city, a wealthy suburb or by a beautiful seaside? What parallels can you draw between the threshing floor, the temple and our relationship with God?

When I think of the threshing floor I think of fruit, grain, growth, seasons, plowing, planting, nourishment, work, time, planning and nurturing. All of the concepts can be applied to our relationship with God as well. As Christians we should be growing, producing fruit of the Spirit, planting God's Word in our hearts, being nourished from our time with Him, and nurturing our souls through prayer and worship. At times God will also deliberately take us through a season of threshing to separate us from the chaff of bad habits, sinful attitudes and corrupt behaviors. God promises to be with us through our times of threshing.

After threshing we will become more fruitful and ready for a closer walk with Christ. All things considered a threshing floor is a very appropriate place for God to place His temple.

Second, there is hope in threshing.

When you have been through a season of plowing, planting, and weeding it is wonderful to finally come to the season of harvest when you can gather the fruit of your labor. After every season of harvest a threshing must follow. In the Hebrew dictionary *threshing* is defined as *separation*. Threshing takes what is useful (grain) and makes it more useful by separating the grain from the chaff. If you have recently reaped a harvest of righteousness God is probably going to call you to a time of threshing/separating.

Types of separation:

1. From the busyness of life
2. From an activity that is interfering with your relationship with God
3. From a relationship that is not honoring to God
4. From something that is good so you can move on to something that is better

In order to become even more fruitful, from what might God be calling you to separate at this time?

Threshing does not necessarily happen because you have done something wrong, often it occurs because you have done something right. Either way, if you are being threshed, hold on—there is hope in your situation. God is calling you to a closer more productive relationship with Him. Remember, threshing hurts, it is necessary, it will make us better, and it won't last forever.

Third, threshing is a sign of fruitfulness.

Please read Joel 2:24

What three nutritious items are mentioned in this verse?

What words are used to describe the grain, wine and oil?

Overflowing. Full. Abundant.

In order for the grain to be useful it must be broken. Brokenness is something we long to avoid but something that God greatly desires. It is a critical prerequisite to fruitfulness. Like the alabaster jar in the hands of the sinful woman, when we are broken we release the gifts God has placed inside us. Like the grain that is broken beneath the hooves of the oxen or the flail of the harvester..

It is only when we are broken that we are useful.
It is only when we are broken that we are abundantly fruitful.
It is only when we are broken that we are healed.

Our brokenness yields overflowing fruitfulness. *Overflowing* means "more than can be used or stored." Our overflowing fruitfulness, released by threshing, will splash all over those who come into contact with us. Threshing will benefit not only us but others as well. Rather than lamenting the threshing process, rejoice and focus on the outcome of the threshing—useful abundant fruit that will nourish you, others and bring glory to God.

Fourth, threshing brings sanctification.

Please read Matt 3:12.

What does God have in His hand?

What does God do with His winnowing fork or fan?

He thoroughly *cleans* or *purges* His threshing floor. The Greek word for *thoroughly clean* or *purge* is *diakatharizo*. This word, which means, "to cleanse thoroughly" descends from the Greek preposition *dia* and the Greek verb *katharizo*. The preposition *dia* means, "the channel of an act—it refers to the place, time and means by which something is happening." Hence, threshing does not happen by chance circumstances. God arranges the exact time, place and means needed for you to be purposefully threshed. God has a *purpose* for each threshing. *Katharizo* means, "to clean from stains and dirt, to clean by healing, to free from the contamination of sin, to consecrate, to dedicate." You are being thoroughly cleaned (threshed) because God is consecrating you for specific work, healing and purpose.

If you are going through a time of threshing, God has a specific purpose in mind. For what work is God consecrating you? For what purpose is He threshing you? From what wound are you being healed?

The sanctification or removal of the chaff is accomplished by the work of the wind. Please be ready to receive a blessing as we look at a verse from the Old and New Testaments. Please read John 3:8.

What two things are being compared in verse 8?

Now please read about a different kind of threshing in Daniel 2:35.

What element does John 3:8 and Daniel 2:35 have in common?

Both of the verses speak of the *wind*. In John 3:8, the Greek word used for *wind* is *pneuma*, which means, "the third person of the triune God, the Holy Spirit..." or "the work and power of the Holy Spirit." In Daniel 2:35, the Aramaic word used for *wind* is *ruwach*, which means "spirit, wind, the Spirit of God." From these two words, we can draw a wonderful application: As the wind purifies the grain of the harvest so the *Wind* works to blow away the chaff of our lives. We are tossed with

God's threshing fork of circumstances, trials and conditions of life. While we are tumbling through the air, the Wind of the Spirit blows away what is useless and detrimental to our souls leaving behind what is useful and fruitful. The more we are tumbled, the more we are sanctified.

Now let us focus our attention on the word for *threshing* in Daniel 2:35, *iddar*. *'Iddar* means, "a threshing floor, to fall out, as applies to grains as they are beaten out from the ears in threshing." Sometimes our walk with God can feel like a *free-fall* and often we feel as if we are *beaten* about by the trials of life. But this *'iddar* beating is not for naught! As we trace this word back to its origin we find that it is derived from the root word *'adar*, which means "to be great, majestic, glorious, to make glorious, honorable." Something *glorious* awaits you on the other side of your threshing. As God sanctifies your life and character from chaff (sin, flaws, failings) you will begin to bring Him glory and praise. Therefore, threshing is not a sign of guilt or shame but of honor and favor.

Please recap the four benefits of threshing on the lines below:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Let's take a look at one final Scripture. Please read Luke 22:31-32.

Peter and the disciples were about to go through another type of threshing called *sifting*. In the Greek this word transliterates as *siniazo*, which means to sift, to shake as grain in a sieve." Satan wanted to sift the disciples in hopes of destroying them, but what the Enemy means for evil God uses for our good. After Peter went through this time of sifting and turned back to Jesus, he was commissioned by Christ to strengthen his brothers and help build the church. After our seasons of sifting and threshing Christ asks us to do the same—draw closer to Him, strengthen our brothers and sisters and help build the church.

How have you used your threshing experiences or how can you use your threshing experiences to encourage others to follow Christ?

"Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion; For I will make your horn iron,
And I will make your hooves bronze;
You shall beat in pieces many peoples; I will consecrate their gain to
the LORD,
And their substance to the Lord of the whole earth."
Micah 4:13

By Mary Kane
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