

But have you suffered a temporary blight or decay? Have you relaxed your spiritual exercises? Are you not given so much to prayer? Are you not calling upon God? Are you not stirring yourself up to take hold upon him? Are you not so diligent in the perusal of God's Word? Are you not putting forth the vigour of the Christian life—is your faith not exercised—is your love to God grown cold and languishing—is your desire for God's glory feeble and inoperative—and your soul doth fade as a leaf? Then, what can revive you but the grace of God—the quickening influences of his spirit—these influences sought and obtained—that grace desired and waited for? Go to the fountain of all gracious influences—exercise the graces conferred upon you—faith—charity—hope: wait upon God—supplicate the spirit—walk in love: Let patience have its perfect work: Resist sin: avoid the chilling, blighting influences of the world: be frequent in prayer: then God shall again be unto you as the dew: you shall grow as the lily, and cast forth your roots as Lebanon: your branches shall spread, and your beauty be as the olive tree, and your smell as Lebanon. Instead of fading as a leaf, you shall be as a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in its season—your leaf will not wither.

But these words have a natural as well as a spiritual reference. "We all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." Here, too, the figure is strikingly apposite.—When we go abroad amid the scenes of nature at this season, what do we behold? Do we not observe the trees every where assuming the brown or yellow hue, that is the sure precursor of decay? The sight is not without its interest. God has given in this, as in other instances, to the marks of decay, a beauty all their own. The poet speaks of the "lines where beauty lingers," in the face of the dead. It cannot but have been noticed, at all events, in the hues of autumn.—Those trees are beautiful even in decay—while they are resigning their summer glories—and baring themselves to the winter's blast. These yellow, these falling leaves, speak interesting lessons.—They remind us of our own decay, and of the causes of that decay; and we see in their fate an emblem of our own,—unless, being dead in Adam, we are made alive in Christ. Our state is not, you will observe, compared to the tree on

which the leaf grows—but to the leaf.—It is not said we fade as the tree, but as the leaf. Some trees grow to a long age. The oak or the cedar may count its thousand years, and still flourish. But the leaf buds in spring and dies in autumn. How apt an emblem of man's life! How speedily does it come to a close! Look at our three score years and ten—what are they? How quickly do they pass: One generation is swept away—and the next is fast treading on its heels. We follow our fathers but a few years later to the grave. The grave has not long closed over them when it receives our selves. The succession is almost like the one wave upon the other. A few years, with their crowding events, and their busy memories, in one view look much. It is a stretch of the imagination to pass the intervening gulf, and bring the past event, or year, or object before us. How much has happened since that time or event! The years that fill the interval as we travel them over again, seem long indeed. But in another view, how short the intervening time! And since our boyhood—when we carried a parent, perhaps, to the grave—or when we saw that incident, or marked that event—how short, how very brief, the period! Are we old?—we cannot have long to live.—One or two years may close our earthly pilgrimage. Are we in middle life?—some ten, or twenty, or thirty years, perhaps, will be the limit of our existence. Are we in the morning of our days?—What after all is our life? Hear the Psalmist on the subject,—“As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.”—The prophet says: “All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass.” The Apostle says: “What is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth a little time, and then vanisheth away.”

But our life is not only short, it is frail and precarious. It is *one Autumn*. It is not a whit more secure than is the connection of the leaf with the branch on which it hangs. It is as sickly, or as fragile, and as uncertain as the existence of the leaf, which every blast may take away, and consign to the fate of its fellows. A thousand accidents may destroy that which hangs by so frail a fibre, and