



LEAVES DEVOTIONAL

ISAIAH 34:4

“All the host of heaven shall rot away and the skies roll up like a scroll; and their host shall fall as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree.”

EXPERIENCE

The colors of fall leaves are incredibly pretty, even though the leaves are dying. The stunning orange, yellow, and red color variations let us know the leaves are about to fall to the ground. Leaves do radiate a beauty in their last moments, but only if they are connected to the tree.

This fall, I went out to pick some green leaves off a tree in which most of the leaves had already turned color. I took my green leaves and clipped their stems to a dead tree. My work colleagues laughed at me, wondering if I had lost my mind. Together we watched as my leaves withered over the next few days. The leaves turned from green to

brown—no orange, no yellow, no red. The leaves did not die with resplendent color. Their demise was absent of glory. They withered away and fell without any beauty at all.

CONTEMPLATION

The demise of leaves is emblematic of our own human deaths. Death is inevitable and unavoidable. It is sorrowful, but it need not be without a certain beauty. Christians have an opportunity to die beautifully even as death is ultimately a grotesque reality. Many leaves die well, they die with a richness of color that makes people marvel. Their color is stunning. Christians can also approach their death in a way that others marvel. Christians die beautifully when their deaths cause others to glory in Christ Jesus. This glorious fading happens only as they remain connected to the tree.

Application: In John 15:4, Jesus exhorts his people to remain in him. When a believer's life is fading over years, months, weeks, or days, their life in Christ has an opportunity to reflect the glory of their maker. As they remain in Christ till their dying breath, the beauty of God shines through. I cannot help but think of two saints who died recently. As death was imminent, both Linc and Bob spent their last few days on earth speaking of Jesus to every family member, visitor, and hospital staff member who entered their rooms. As these men's strength was fading, the glory of their creator's strength was on display. Linc and Bob lived out Psalm 71:17-18. The passage is clear about how this glorious strength is exhibited:

"I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim

your might to another generation, your power to all those to come.”

My hope for believers' whose life is in its final fade is that the strength of their Savior may be beautifully displayed. However, believers in all stages of life are called to die well. The fall leaves are a reminder of Jesus's call in Luke 9:23-24 to die daily. He said:

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it.”

Whatever season of life this finds you, we are called together to die to self and live unto Christ in such a way that Christ is magnified in our lives. How might you “take up your cross” for Christ's sake today?

PRAYER

Lord God, death is a reality with which I must reckon. Though I do not enjoy pondering the subject, help me to yearn to live this life and to expire from this life in such a way that displays your beauty. I long that my life from first to last breath might glorify you. Would you be pleased to allow my life to proclaim your might and your glory through those years of gray hairs and until my last breath. And show me this very day, how I might deny myself, losing my life for your sake? I ask it in Christ's name. Amen.

CONFIRMATION

Withering leaves are an emblem in Scripture (Isaiah 34:4 and Jeremiah 8:13) of human death. Jonathan Edwards (see below) also saw the connection between the differing seasons and the human experience. Edwards specifically made the connection between the church (redeemed humanity) and leaves. It is interesting to note how Shakespeare (see below) saw the specific connection between autumn leaves and dying beautifully.

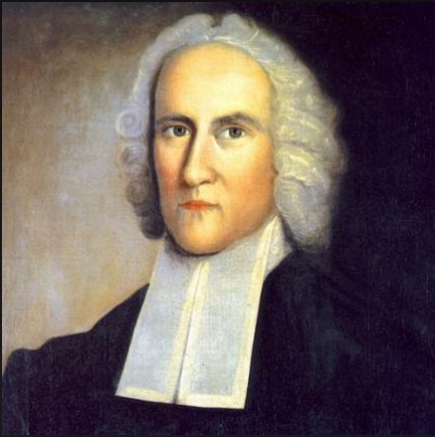
- *Colorful fall leaves are an emblem of aging and dying. Fall leaves call out to believers to age and to die in such a manner that expresses the glory of God.*

CORNER

SCIENCE

“The autumn leaf is in its final phase of its life span. It has accomplished its work on behalf of the tree, so it has only one final task—beauty! The green chlorophyll makes its way from the leaf to the inner parts of the tree leaving behind the breathtaking colors we observe. What is left behind in the leaf are only the materials the tree is unable to use. The colors come about simply by old age and the quickly fading life of the leaf. The stem forms a last layer of substance between it and the twig, when completed the leaf is enabled to fall on its own. Often a gentle breeze is all it takes to bring about the leaf’s fall to the ground.”¹

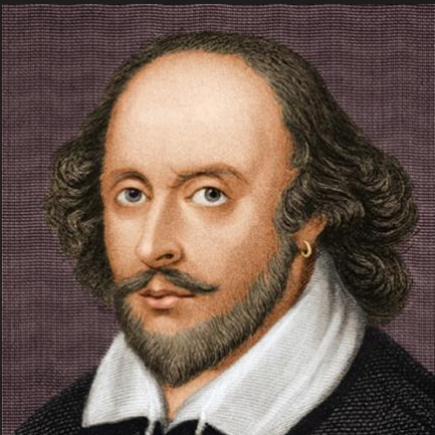
¹ Anna Botsford Comstock, *Handbook of Nature Study* (Ithaca, NY: Comstock Publishing Associates, 1967), 621-622.



Jonathan Edwards

FROM [IMAGES OF DIVINE THINGS NO. 99](#)

*“The various changes of a tree in different seasons, and what comes to pass in its **leaves**, flowers and fruit in innumerable instances that might be mentioned, is a lively image of what is to be seen in the church. . . A tree [and its **leaves**] also is [in] many ways a lively image of a particular Christian, with regard to the new man, and is so spoken of in Scripture.”²*



William Shakespeare

FROM [SONNET 73](#)

*“That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow **leaves**, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds
sang.*

*In me thou seest the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed whereon it must expire
Consumed with that which it was nourish'd by.
This thou perceivest, which makes thy love more
strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere
long.”³*

² Jonathan Edwards, *Typological Writings*, WJE [11:89](#).

³ William Shakespeare, [Sonnet 73](#).