

It Should Be Fall

By PAUL J. SCHARF

It should be fall.

Oh, I know it may be a little early to say that—in this first week of August—but I have always loved fall, so every year I try to rush ahead. It is my favorite season of the year.

Where I live, in Wisconsin, fall weather generally provides the greatest comfort. Normally by the start of September the sweltering heat has largely subsided, and there is almost never an early season snowstorm.

People should be getting back into the regular routines of life right now. For many, that means that school should be starting again.

From kindergarten through seminary, and adding in my teaching experience, I have been part of 28 fall semesters to date. I started out loving school, then learned to hate it at times, but definitely ended by learning to love it again. As a kid, a new school year meant new school clothes, new notebooks—even a new lunchbox.

When I was in college and seminary, especially, I remember the enthusiasm I had for the new books, and even my excitement at reading through a new syllabus. Going to the first day of a new class in seminary was sort of the adult version of sitting down to open a big Christmas gift.

But fall also means other things to us in our spare time—like football. From high school, through college, and adding in my coaching experience, I have been part of 14 football seasons.

Football for me has always been more than a seasonal pastime. It is much more like an analogy for all of life. Lessons learned on the football field come back to mind on a daily basis. When the football season ends in February, there has always been a void for me. The world does not seem to be entirely in rhythm until the games reappear just about this time of year.

But this year is different, because of the coronavirus crisis. I never thought that I would see the day when we would come to this point in the summer and be wondering if the football season would be played. After all, World War II did not even stop football. Yet here we are.

Far more concerning for many people is the state of limbo in which our schools find themselves. Just a few weeks from the start time, people literally do not know what is going to happen with the school year—or, in many cases, they know they will have great difficulty handling the situations which they have received.

It really seemed like we missed the spring this year, as our nation was mostly shut down. The collapsing economy that came in the wake of the health crisis fed into the

rioting and violence of a long, hot and regrettable summer. It seems now that this fall season may largely be a casualty as well.

Where do we turn for hope at such a time? Some of Solomon's most famous words in Ecclesiastes encourage us, beginning with this reminder:

To everything *there* is a season,
A time for every purpose under heaven. (Eccles. 3:1)

While we may be experiencing “a time to weep” (Eccles. 3:4), we must still proceed faithfully, in spite of the circumstances, knowing that we are guided today by the same God Who made this promise following the catastrophic year of the flood:

While the earth remains,
Seedtime and harvest,
Cold and heat,
Winter and summer,
And day and night
Shall not cease. (Gen. 8:22)

And let me mention one more thing to encourage you. Fall—*especially* this fall—is a wonderful time to think about the men and women of faith who fill the annals of church history. While some people are enchanted with Halloween, I have always been captivated by the Reformation. And following Reformation Day (Oct. 31), it is naturally time to focus on the Thanksgiving Pilgrims—who also flow both chronologically and logically from that Reformation.

Four hundred years ago this week, on Aug. 5, 1620, the Pilgrims left Southampton, England, in their two ships, before the *Speedwell* failed, and all 102 passengers had to crowd into the *Mayflower*. God would guide them to Plymouth, in spite of many difficulties.

Five hundred years ago at this very time, Martin Luther was preparing to receive the papal bull from Pope Leo X, as I have written about previously. The Reformation was about to go into full bloom.

Let us set time aside during this season of crisis and uncertainty to think about these “noble” historical milestones—which certainly “*are* of good report,” and worthy for us to “meditate on these things” (Phil. 4:8).

May God give us the strength of conviction that these, our forebears possessed—*especially* this fall.

Paul J. Scharf (M.A., M.Div., Faith Baptist Theological Seminary) is a church ministries representative for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, based in Columbus, WI, and serving in the Midwest. For more information on his ministry, visit sermonaudio.com/pscharf

or foi.org/scharf, or email pscharf@foi.org.

Scripture taken from the New King James Version®.
Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.