

Galatians Chapter 5 v 16 - Chapter 6 v 10

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- [0 : 00] I'm going to read the whole of the psalm. When the Lord brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy.
- Then it was said among the nations, the Lord has done great things for them. The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.
- Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like streams in the Negev. Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.
- Those verses I want us to be thinking about, and we're going to consider a topic which is in keeping with that, that those who sow with tears will reap with joy.
- And the reason, of course, that we have such confidence confidence and that God's people have always had such confidence is because our God is a faithful God. So we're going to sing together that wonderful hymn, 106.
- [1 : 08] Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father. There is no shadow of turning with thee. their God. There is no shadow of turning with thee.
- It is my faithfulness, oh, my God.
- There is no shadow of turning with me. How change us not, like our blessings we will not. How shall we speak that forever will be? Great is my faithfulness, great is my faithfulness. Now in my morning, new mercies I see. All I have needed, I am the fire.
- [2 : 23] Great is my faithfulness, I am to thee. As we pray together, let us all pray.
- Amen. Every single one of us this evening, oh Lord, can sing these words with meaning and faith.
- But we thank you that we can also sing them from experience. Because you are the God who has, in every way, revealed yourself as great in faithfulness.
- You are the God who has dealt with us, not as our sins deserve, but in great faithfulness. Thank you, oh Lord, that your faithfulness has not depended upon our faithfulness.
- Lord, even when we were in ignorance and sin and rebellion against you, when our hearts were full of unbelief towards you, we thank you that that did not prevent you from showing to us faithfulness.
- [4 : 09] Faithfulness to your electing love with which you chose us before the world was made. Faithfulness to that wonderful sovereign grace by which you moved and worked in our lives to bring us the sound of the gospel.
- To bring us, Lord, into contact with those who know you and love you. Lord, thank you that our faithfulness did not hinder you in the work of your Holy Spirit. But Lord, that you in mercy and grace drew us with cords of love and power.
- Until, Lord, we could do nothing else but yield to you our all and our everything. And confess great is your faithfulness.

Oh Lord, we thank you that this is true of our salvation, the greatest expression of your faithfulness. But we thank you that it has been our living testimony from that day onwards.

Through the many trials, sorrows, heartaches. Through our own sinfulness and backsliding and foolishness. Thank you, oh Lord, that you have remained constantly great in faithfulness.

[5 : 24] And once more, Lord, like Samuel of old and God's people of old, we would raise our Ebenezer. We would lift in one sense a monument, Lord, verbally before you to say, Thus far, Lord, you have helped us.

And we know that as we go out and go forward and go on, Lord, into this new week. So we know that therefore you will still help us. And you will still be faithful to us.

And you will not forsake us. And you will not leave us. And you will not abandon us. And Lord, no matter what we feel or what we go through or what people say or how difficult life is, We know, oh Lord, that you shall still be great in your faithfulness.

And so we ask, oh Lord, that you would indeed give to us something of that faithfulness ourselves. That we may live for you in obedience and love and honor.

That we may, Lord, be those who are truly faithful to one another. Always seeking, Lord, the best for one another. Always seeking to encourage and build up one another.

[6 : 41] That we might be faithful in our dealings with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Just as you have been faithful to us. Forgiving one another. Bearing with one another.

Supporting one another. And so we pray too that you would grant to us the help. That we might be faithful to those around about us who are yet in darkness and sin and death.

That we might be faithful and bright lights to them. That we might not be those who are uncertain in our testimony, but clear. That they may see in us the light of Christ and be drawn to him.

That we may be faithful to speak a word of testimony and a word of the gospel as opportunity presents itself. That we might be faithful to pray, Lord, for our town and our neighbors, our work colleagues, Lord, and our community.

That we might be, Lord, in every way a faithful people to love your word and to keep your commands. We thank you that you've drawn us here this evening out of faithfulness to us.

[7 : 47] You've drawn us here to bless. You've drawn us here to encourage. You've drawn us here to do us good. And so we ask, O Lord, prepare our hearts and lives to receive of your faithful blessing.

For we ask these things now in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, who was faithful unto death for us. Amen. Amen. I'd like you to turn with me, please, in your Bible to Galatians and chapter 5.

Galatians and chapter 5. We're going to begin reading from verse 16 and then read through into chapter 6 and through to verse 10.

So Galatians and chapter 5, beginning at verse 16 and reading through into chapter 6, finishing at verse 10. Here is God's faithful word.

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature.

[9 : 07] They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious. Sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy, drunkenness, orgies and the like.

I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.

[10 : 31] But watch yourself, or you may also be tempted. Carry each other's burdens. And in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself without comparing himself to somebody else.

For each one should carry his own load. Anyone who receives instruction in the Word must share all good things with his instructor. Do not be deceived.

God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature from that nature will reap destruction.

The one who sows to please the Spirit from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good. For at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

[11 : 35] Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people. Especially to those who belong to the family of believers. Let us stand and sing again together.

Well, we're in Galatians chapter 6 particularly. And verse 9 is the verse that I want us to dwell upon for a few moments this evening.

Verse 9 of Galatians chapter 6 reads this. Silly story.

Two frogs fell into a large bowl of cream. Don't ask me how or why, but that's where they ended up. The sides of the bowl were slippery and steep and there was no way that they could climb out.

One of the frogs was a realist. And he said to his friend, there's nothing to do. We just must accept our fate. And so he said goodbye, sank to the bottom of the bowl.

[12 : 51] The remaining frog said to himself, I can't get out, but I won't give up. But he continued to swim round and round. Round and round he went, hour after hour, beginning to get more and more tired, more and more weary.

As he found that the cream became more and more difficult to swim in. At last he thought to himself, this is it. I can't keep myself up any longer.

And he stopped swimming. But to his surprise, he didn't sink. Rather, he gave one last push with all his might and hopped out of the bowl, which now was filled with butter.

Well, I know it's a silly story. And it's not really all that right. But I think it sums up what Paul is saying here about not giving up.

Not giving up. And surely his words of encouragement to the believers here, to the church at Galatia, are of encouragement to us.

[13 : 54] In fact, it's a sentence full of encouragement for all God's people. And it is a preventative to discouragement. Something which all of us are prone to when we seek to follow Christ and serve him.

And that's true of Paul as well. Because it's wonderful that verse 9, after he's been speaking about you and about people in the third person, if someone.

He then gets to verse 9 and he says, Let us not become weary in doing God. He includes himself. He doesn't just say, Don't you become weary?

Or don't you give up? See, Paul is not like the typical football coach who stands at the side of the pitch shouting his instructions while he sits back in the safety of the shelter.

No, Paul is one of those who's on the pitch. Or he's one of those who's in the battle. He's one of those whose blood and sweat mingles with the blood and sweat of those in the church as they together strive for the goal of God's glory.

[15 : 04] Paul knew what it was to be weary in doing good. In fact, he is speaking as much to himself as he is to these hard-pressed Christians. If you know the story to the Galatians, then you'll know that really it's concerning these false teachers who are seeking to lure God's people away from grace and back to law.

And so Paul is having to write to them to stand fast in the freedom that Christ has for them, to resist, to press on, and so on. And Paul, too, must have felt that temptation.

Not the temptation, as it were, to give in and go back to the law, but simply the temptation to give in to the opposition and the undermining destructive and corrosive teaching, which he had to write against and fight against really throughout his ministry as these men sought to destroy him and undermine his apostleship as well.

For they would write things like this in chapter 2 about Paul, how he was less than any of the apostles. Paul was, though he did great things, a human being.

He was a Christian. He was someone who, like every Christian, was susceptible to the temptation to give up doing good. The temptation to give up because of the real wear and tear that following Christ and living for Christ has upon us.

[16 : 42] Let's not pretend otherwise. Let no one kid us into thinking living for Christ is the easy option, the soft option, the way out. It is the hard way, the tough way, the wearying way.

We know that Paul was a man who endured much, don't we? He gives us that list of the things that he went through in 2 Corinthians chapter 11 about him receiving the lash five times, about being beaten with rods and shipwrecked and stoned, about being in danger in the river, in danger from bandits, in danger from his own countrymen, in danger in the city, in danger in the country.

All these things that he went through. No wonder he knew what it felt like to be weary and want to give up. Now, we haven't been through most of those things.

Perhaps any of those things that Paul had to go through. But we also, at times, want to give up. We also, at times, get weary. There would be no point in Paul saying this, let us not become weary in doing good, if there is no temptation to become weary in doing good.

Be pointless. But it isn't pointless. It's helpful. And it's encouraging. What is it that makes us weary? If we don't go through stonings and beatings and shipwrecks and hunger and thirst and all those things, what is it that wearies us?

[18 : 10] What is it that tempts us? Why do we find it hard to do good? Hard to live the Christian life. Hard to be loving. Hard to be sacrificial. Hard to be serving.

Well, of course, it's hard for us because immediately living the Christian life goes right against our natural tendencies.

That's why Paul was speaking, as he did, in chapter 5 about the sinful nature and the Spirit. Look at what he says there. The sinful nature desires what's contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature.

We are sinful people. Though we've been born again and converted and made new creatures and the Holy Spirit lives within us, we still carry around this sinful nature which militates against the Spirit.

And so, though we know we should do good, the flesh says, why bother doing good? It draws us away towards sin. It goes against the grain for us to do God's will.

[19 : 14] That sinful nature is there lurking in the wings. Paul knew it himself. He spoke much about it in Romans chapter 7, about the good that he would to do, he doesn't do.

And so he recognizes that sin is at work. So it's hard doing good because we're fighting against the flesh, that sinful nature that we have. It's hard to do good because the people that we often seek to do good to are sinful creatures as well.

Because we notice, of course, that this doing good really is to do with caring for and loving and showing that love to others. That's why we have verse 10. And therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people.

Doing good to people. The people that we seek to do good to are often unwilling to receive of that good, particularly those who are unconverted. Because of their pride. Because of their self-righteousness.

They reject our efforts of doing them good. Or often, and this can be the case even within churches too, they show little appreciation of the good that we do. We feel undervalued.

[20 : 23] We feel as if no one really appreciates these things. Now, Paul knew all about this. He knew all about working hard and doing good and serving and it being hard work.

This is what he writes to Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 20. He says, We have our rough edges.

We have our sinful nature. We have our pride. We have all sorts of hosts of difficulties which make us difficult for others to love and do good to. But of course, we get weary in doing good because ultimately the work to which we have been called to, this good work, is a spiritual work.

It's a spiritual work. And therefore, it includes spiritual warfare. We have an enemy to our souls, an enemy to the work of the gospel. He and his hosts, Satan and his hosts, are determined, as much as they are possible, to disrupt, to undo, to discourage, to counter, to destroy the work of God's people.

Whenever you and I seek to do good, whenever we seek to serve Christ and live for him, we can be sure that we immediately place ourselves in the front line of Satan's assaults.

[22 : 14] That's why, as he writes the Ephesians, we know it only too well. He writes about the fact that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Therefore, we need to put on the armor. The devil is much at work in this world, and he will do all that he can to make us become weary in well-doing.

So, why don't you give up? What is the point of pressing on? You know that it goes against your own nature. Why don't you take life easy? You know that the people you're seeking to care for and to love and do good for often don't appreciate and understand you.

And why open yourself up to the devil's assaults? Why not just be like the rest of the world? How often he's tricked us up into thinking, as we thought even this morning, that there is satisfaction and contentment to be found in living for self.

So, it's hard. But it's not just hard work doing good because of the sinful world in which we live and the sinful nature we have, but it's also hard work, and we want to give up.

[23 : 28] Why? Because it's hard to see results from the good that we do. Let us not become weary in doing good. You see, what are we doing when we are living and seeking to do good?

Well, Paul has described it as sowing to the Spirit, hasn't he? The who sows the Spirit compared to he who sows the sinful nature. When we do good, when we live for Christ, when we seek to care for one another and show love to one another and to the world around about us, we are sowing to the Spirit.

Now, the work of the Holy Spirit is a secret work, isn't it? Jesus told us that when he spoke to Nicodemus about being born again. He said this, The wind blows wherever it pleases.

You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it's going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit. The work of the Spirit is a hidden work, a work within the heart.

It's not an outward work that we see until much later. It's hard to see results. Paul's talked about the fruit of the Spirit, hasn't he, in verse 22.

[24 : 38] Interestingly, isn't it, how the fruit of the Spirit is, again, they are inward fruit. Peace, love, joy. How do you quantify those things? They're not bricks and mortar, are they?

They're not roof tiles. They're not things that you can touch and feel. Compared, of course, to the acts of the sinful nature, they're obvious. Why are they obvious? Because they're all outward.

Hatred is outward because it's seen in discord and jealousy, fits of rage, dissensions, factions, drunkenness, and so on. So spiritual work, the good work that we are called to do, is spiritual and it is hard for us because we do not see the results immediately.

They're not the same as building a hospital in Africa. That's a good work, but not many of us will do that. Think of the greatest work that any Christian can do.

The greatest work that any Christian can do is this, to pray. It's the least we can do, and it's the most we can do. But prayer is hard, isn't it?

[25 : 44] Prayer is something which there's no physical evidence for prayer. You can't sort of go and say to somebody, look at my prayer chart and all the praying I've done.

Look at all the answers. It's often we don't have that. Prayer is hard. And the results of that prayer can't be seen. There's no physical evidence.

No one can trace it back to us. Surely what Paul has in mind here, which is most difficult and most hard about doing good and seeking to please the Spirit, is this.

That the results take so long in coming. The results take so long in coming. Let us not become weary in doing good. For at the proper time we'll reap a harvest if we do not give up.

But when? When, Lord? We've done all this sowing. We've done all this praying. We've done all this laboring. We've done all this good. When are we going to see the harvest?

[26 : 51] That's the hard thing, isn't it? That's the nub. That's what grinds against us. It seems to take so long. I feel like we're always sowing but never reaping.

We're constantly doing good but never seeing a harvest. It's the waiting for the harvest that's the most wearying. We've been praying and praying and praying for years and decades.

We don't see anything. Isn't that really why we give up more often than not for many of us?

It's sheer frustration. Exhaustion. Desperation. We give up and therefore we do not reap a harvest.

There are so many reasons why we become weary in well-doing. But it's time for us to draw encouragement from this verse.

[27 : 50] Not that we might just think about those wearying things, but that we might be strengthened. That we might be encouraged. That we might press on and keep going. And carrying on so that by God's grace we shall and will witness the harvest.

Why will we witness the harvest? Because God has promised that we shall reap a harvest. Here's the promise of God. Let us not become weary in doing good. For at the proper time we might perhaps reach a harvest.

It doesn't say that, does it? We maybe have a harvest. No, we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Here is a guarantee, a cast iron guarantee given by God to his people in every age and situation that those who sow to the Spirit, who live to do good and follow Christ shall reap a harvest.

That's me and you. And that's wonderfully encouraging, isn't it? In spite of how things appear, in spite of the fact that it may seem that the field is completely a washout, and there's not a green shoot to be seen, the promise of God is this, there shall be a harvest.

And it's the promise of God that we're to rely upon, dear friends. Not to rely upon our zeal. Not to rely upon our prayerfulness. Not to rely upon our skillfulness. Not to rely upon our experience.

[29 : 16] Not to rely upon anything else apart from on the person and promise of our God, who is not a man that he should lie. If we think that the harvest is coming because of what we do, then we shall always be disappointed.

If we think it's a new way of doing things, we'll bring a harvest. A new type of evangelism. Or a new type of church service.

Or a new song that we sing. Or anything else like that. It doesn't matter how wise we become. Or how clever we become. It doesn't matter how appealing we become.

The world around about us. How polished we are with our music or our preaching. None of those things are a guarantee or an assurance or should give us hope for the harvest. Our hope must be only in the word and promise of God.

And then we shall be disappointed. See, what happens is this. And it's happened to each one of us, I'm sure, at some time. We've pinned our hopes on a harvest because we've looked to a man.

[30 : 26] Or a woman. Or we've looked to a technique. Or we've looked to a system. Or we've looked to this or that or the other. And we've said, well, we've had a tremendous prayer meeting tonight.

There must be a harvest to answer our prayers. And what's happened? Nothing's happened. And we've become very discouraged.

And downhearted. We've felt like giving up. And the reason is because we haven't rested in the promise of God. And continued and pressed on and persevered in spite of what is going on around about us.

Looking to the Lord of the harvest. He is the one who alone causes growth. This is Paul again. In 1 Corinthians, we know this passage very well.

It's chapter 3. I planted the seed, says Paul. Apollos watered the seed. But God made it grow. Paul's not taking any glory for himself. He's not looking to Apollos.

[31 : 29] Well, it was Apollos who did it. No. Neither he who plants nor he who waters does anything. But only God who makes things grow. And here we have the promise.

Let us not become weary in well-doing. For at the proper time, we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. God will use whatever means he wants to use to bring in his harvest.

But it will only come because he's promised it. Because his word cannot fall to the ground unfulfilled. But there's also another encouragement here.

And the encouragement is this, that God has planned the time that we shall reap the harvest. Notice that Paul puts it at the proper time. The right time.

He uses a similar phrase earlier on in Galatians 3 when he talks about the coming, or for rather, the coming of the Lord Jesus. When the time had fully come, God sent his son. Now when the time is fully come, God will send the harvest.

[32 : 29] Timing, again, is something about which we have no control whatsoever. Just think about an ordinary, if I can put it that way, farming situation. A material farming situation.

No farmer, as far as I know, is foolish enough to set a date for when he will harvest his crop. He's not going to say, March the 20th I sowed the seed. On August the 20th I will harvest it.

Now he can make an estimate on the experience he's got. He can hope that it's going to be at this certain time of the year. But he's got no idea. He doesn't know how much rain will fall and how much sunshine will be given.

He doesn't know when the crop will exactly be as it should be. He knows those things are outside of his control. He makes an educated guess. He hopes. He prepares for the harvest.

He watches for the harvest. But only at the right time does it come. But our God knows everything. Our God knows everything.

[33 : 27] There's nothing in all of creation which is not outside of his control. Even the very hearts of men and women. You and I, dear friends, when we became Christians, we became Christians.

What, in our time? No, in God's time. We may have thought it was in our time. We may have thought we had a certain amount of control over it. But in the end, ultimately, it was God. For some of us, it was when we were that bit older.

Some of us, when we were very young. But it was in God's timing. He knows how long we are to work before the reaping can start. He knows how much watering is needed.

How much seed needs being spread. He's fixed a date in his will when his word will be fulfilled. And there's nothing in heaven and nothing in earth and nothing under the earth that can prevent God or hold him back from that harvest.

At the proper time, we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Isn't that marvelous? Therefore, dear friends, the truth is this.

[34 : 33] That God has not only planned when we shall reap a harvest and promised when we shall reap a harvest, but he has provided all our needs so we shall be able to reap a harvest. God provides for us all that we need that we can continue until that harvest comes in.

And this is by his Holy Spirit. This is why Paul has been speaking, as he has been speaking in this chapter, about the living by the Spirit. It's the Holy Spirit who allows us to give life to the dead and brings them into salvation.

It's God alone who brings in the harvest by his Spirit. It's God alone who equips us and helps us and keeps us going. You and I would have lasted around about five seconds in the Christian life if it hadn't been that the Holy Spirit had sustained and kept us, wouldn't we?

Let's be honest. How many times did we feel like giving up? How many times did we find the temptation to turn our backs on Christ strong because of the jeering of people around about us, because of the opposition of our family and friends?

How many times did we find the temptation and the draw of the world so alluring that if it hadn't been for the Holy Spirit of God himself, we would not have continued to this day? We are testimonies to the provision and goodness of our God.

[35 : 48] And so Paul has said here, hasn't he, throughout this passage, we are to live by the Spirit. We are to be led by the Spirit. We are to bear the fruit of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the provision of God for you and for I to continue to do good, to continue to the day of the harvest.

Jesus promised the very same thing to his own disciples when he gave them that illustration of the vine and the branches. In John chapter 15, he said to them, If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit.

Now again, one of the things that we can do, dear friends, that we can be discouraged about as we look at ourselves and say, well, I don't see much fruit in my life. I feel like I'm a barren tree.

I feel like I've got nothing. I've produced nothing. I've not accepted, I've not succeeded in any area of the Christian life. I've not got anything to show. Dear friends, this is why this verse is so important for us, that we are to keep on going.

We are to press on and not give up. We are to take Paul's words to our heart that we might be renewed in our zeal to press on for this work that God has called us to.

[37 : 10] Because the reality is this, every single one of us as believers has been called and saved to one end, that we might do good works. Here's Paul in Ephesians chapter 2.

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. It's a mystery, isn't it? But it's a wonderful truth that the things that you and I have been called to do now, the things that we do by the way that we live as Christians, the way that we pray, the way that we seek to love, and whatever else we have at our disposal to do, that God has called us to those things and prepared us for those things.

He's prepared those things for us and us for those that work, those things. Therefore, dear friends, let's throw off the weariness that would oppress us.

Let's throw off those things that would keep us back from persevering. Let's lift our eyes upwards to the Lord of the harvest. Let's go forward with prayer.

Let's go forward with expectancy. Let's go forward looking to him who has promised and planned and provided for us that a harvest will come. Our labor is not in vain.

[38 : 27] Yours and mine. How do I know that? Because God's word says so. And upon his word we stake our lives.

Let us not grow weary in well-doing or good works. Let us, because we will reap a harvest at the proper time if we don't give up.

Let's sing together a hymn which really is a hymn calling for the Lord's help and enabling that we should indeed persevere in serving him.

It's 398. Oh, breath of life comes sweeping through us. 398. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm.

Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord. Because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

[39 : 50] Amen.