

Galatians Chapter 5 v 13 - Chapter 6 v 10

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[0 : 00] So, Galatians chapter 5, beginning at verse 13. You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free, but do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh.

Now, when Paul uses that phrase, the flesh, he means our sinful nature, that part of us which naturally goes towards sin, our sinful nature, the flesh is the phrase there.

That's going to come up many times. Do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh. Rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command.

Love your neighbor as yourself. If you bite and devour each other, watch out, or you will be destroyed by each other.

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

[1 : 07] They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

The acts of the flesh 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, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh 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 and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently.

[2 : 23] But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks they are something, when they are not, they deceive themselves.

Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else. For each one should carry their own load.

Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the Word should share all good things with their instructor. Do not be deceived. God cannot be mocked.

A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction. Whoever 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. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

[3 : 32] Just a few moments ago. Florence Chadwick was 34 years old when she attempted to become the first woman to swim the 21 miles across the Catalina Channel, from Catalina Island to the Californian coast, a very well-known area in Western America.

The weather that day was challenging because the ocean was ice cold, even though it was July the 4th. The fog was so thick she could barely see the support boats that went with her.

The tides and the currents were against her. Nevertheless, on that morning, July the 4th, 1952, she entered the water, hoping, expecting the fog would clear.

Hour after hour, she swam, but the fog never lifted. She kept going and going. After 15 hours, she began to doubt her ability to finish the swim.

Unfortunately, 15 hours and 55 minutes, she had to stop and was taken into one of the boats. Because of the fog, she couldn't see how far she had come or where the coastline was.

[4 : 50] She had no idea until just a little while later, she was less than a mile from her destination, less than a mile from the coast. She could have easily reached it if only she'd stayed in the water just a few minutes longer.

Two months later, she tried again. It was still as foggy as before, but this time she just kept going and going. Her time was 13 hours, 47 minutes.

She broke a 27-year-old record by more than two hours and became the first woman ever to complete that swim. Florence's story seems to me to sum up something of the sentiment of Paul's words here in Galatians 6 and verse 9.

Let us not become weary in doing good. For at the proper time, we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. One of the hardest things for a Christian, one of the hardest things for us who seek to live for Christ and to serve him, is to keep on going.

To keep on going. There comes a point in all of our lives when we become weary in serving God, weary in doing the things that he's called us to do, and we want to give up.

[6 : 09] It doesn't seem to be working. But this sentence of Paul's, I believe, is full of great encouragement for us to prevent us from becoming discouraged, to prevent us from giving up, to keep us pressing on and persevering in the Christian life and in the service of our Lord.

And one of the things that strikes me to begin with, which is of such encouragement, is how Paul words this sentence. He says, Let us not become weary.

Paul associates himself with those who feel weary. He includes himself. Let us. He isn't saying, Don't you give up.

Don't you stop. Don't you become weary. It's let us. Me as well included. Paul is not like the coach that you might see at a premiership football match, shouting from the sidelines to the team, and then going back and sitting into his nice warm shelter.

No, Paul is on the pitch. Paul is the one who sweat mingles with all the other players, whose tears drop to the ground as he strives for the goal with them.

[7 : 25] Paul says, Let us not give up. Let us not become weary. Because certainly he did.

Certainly he did. As he sought to serve Christ, he felt himself also as hard-pressed, as discouraged at times, as they did.

The Christians to whom Paul is writing in Galatia were Christians who were having a hard time of it. A hard time because false teachers were there trying to lure them away from the gospel back into the dead religion of works.

And they were struggling. They were finding it hard to keep going and to hold to the truth. Paul also felt it hard because those false teachers were teaching against him.

He wasn't tempted to give up the gospel. Or what he was tempted, no doubt, to become weary because no matter how much he preached and taught and encouraged and strengthened the church, it seemed that they didn't seem to be getting anywhere.

Christians were still losing heart. They were still not going forward. They seemed to be not growing in their faith. Paul was struggling as they sought to undermine him.

[8 : 43] He writes earlier on in the letter, chapter 2, This matter arose because some false believers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves.

We did not give in to them for a moment so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you. It's hard to keep going. It's hard to keep serving.

Paul himself was a man who knew what it was to suffer for the gospel. There's that incredible place, isn't there, in 2 Corinthians, in chapter 11, where he lists the difficulties he's faced, the oppositions he's faced.

He says this, I've worked much harder, been imprisoned more frequently, been flogged more severely, been exposed to death again and again.

Five times I've received from the Jews the 40 lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was pelted with stones. Three times I was shipwrecked.

[9 : 47] I spent a night and a day in the open sea. I've been constantly on the move, been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles, in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea, in danger from false believers.

I've labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep. I've known hunger and thirst and often gone without food. I've been cold and naked. Besides all these things, I face daily the pressure of

my concern for all the churches.

Who is weak? And I do not feel weak. Who is led into sin? And I do not inwardly burn. No wonder he knew what it was like to feel weary and want to give up.

Now I don't think there's many of us here who've experienced any of those things. We may have been hungry and cold. That may be the limit of it. But none of those things that he went through as he sought to do good in taking the gospel to a lost world, in reaching people with the love of Christ. We haven't experienced those things. So why is it that we are tempted to become weary? Why is it that we do become weary in doing good?

[11 : 01] Why is it that we are tempted at times to give up? Well, because doing good is hard work.

Doing good is hard work. It's not easy. It's not something which just comes naturally to us. In fact, the first problem we have is that within our natural tendencies we are selfish and self-centered and self-certaining.

It goes against the grain to do good. It's much more natural to do good for ourselves, isn't it, than for others? It's much more natural to serve our own desires, to please ourselves.

ourselves. The wonderful truth is that as Christians we've been born again of the Spirit of God. As Paul speaks again of this similar phrase, living by the Spirit and walking by the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit.

We have the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. We are different people than what we were before.

We met with Christ. We are changed. But always lurking in the wings is the flesh, the sinful nature.

[12 : 13] We don't suddenly become saints in that sense where all of our badness is removed from us, all of our selfishness, all of our pride is taken away. No, it's always there, lurking.

Just looking for an opportunity to get into our conversation, to get into our attitudes, to get into our actions. Isn't it much easier to pull somebody apart than it is to encourage them?

Isn't it much easier to say things which are hurtful than things that are nice? Why is that? Because we have a sinful nature. There's no point Paul speaking as he does here in this verse, let us not become weary in doing good if doing good was easy.

It's hard because we are sinful people. But it's also hard because the people that we want to do good to are also sinful people. It's not easy to do good for some people, is it?

It can be very frustrating. Either they're unwilling to receive any good that we do for them because of their pride. They say, I don't want your help. I don't need you to support me or help me, whatever.

[13 : 27] Or they're very ungrateful for the things that we do for them or show no appreciation for the good we do for them. when we do get opportunity to do them good. Don't you find it frustrating when, you know, you're in your car and you stop to let somebody out or to pass and they don't even say thank you.

Don't you want to say, well, I wish I hadn't bothered? Or when you open the door for somebody to let them through and they just walk through, you know, and they just keep coming. They think you're the doorkeeper.

And inside your heart, you're going, oh, it's hard to do good, isn't it? When people don't appreciate it or appreciate you or say thank you. But the problem's with us, isn't it?

It's with them as well, maybe, but it's with us too. Paul tells us, doesn't he, about some of the things that are naturally within the human heart as he goes through them there.

Things like selfish ambition, envy, fits of rage, jealousy, hatred. These are the things that we meet with when we meet with people and seek to do them good.

[14 : 39] And I'll tell you a secret. It's not just the non-Christians that are hard to do good to, is it? Christians are hard to do good to. We are, aren't we?

It's hard to serve one another in the church because at times we feel that we're taken for granted.

That we're not appreciated. That nobody else seems to be doing the work.

These are real things. Let's not pretend. Let's not brush them under the carpet and say, oh no, yes, that's right. We can get angry with the person who doesn't say thank you for letting us them pass in the car.

But we know the struggle to do good is hard in the church as well. But also, particularly, we find that it is hard work to do good because when we are serving the Lord, we're involved in a spiritual work.

It's not just practical, it's not just physical, not just material, though for many of us it is. The things that we do, we do to the Lord with our hands and our energy and our time and so on, but also it's a spiritual work and therefore it's a spiritual conflict that we're engaged in.

[15 : 49] There's spiritual warfare. We have an enemy, the devil. He wants to prevent us from doing good. He wants to discourage us. He wants to tell us to throw the towel in. He wants to hamper us from serving the Lord.

He wants to tell us it's not worth it. You've done it so often and nobody cares. Don't bother anymore. Or else, of course, his best trick is this, isn't it?

He distracts us with everything else in life. Oh, you've got so many better things to do than serving Christ. You've got your garden.

Look at it. It really needs a good trim and sorting out. Well, of course, then you've got the family and charity begins at home. So it can go on, can't it?

He'll distract us and he'll tell us there's something better we can do with our time. Or else he'll load us down with the cares and the worries of life. We have an enemy. That's why in Ephesians and chapter 6, we're told our struggle, our battle, the difficulty, the wrestling match we have is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

[17 : 01] So when we are seeking to take the gospel to men and women, when we are seeking to serve those in the world, particularly, we are against fighting an enemy. He doesn't want us to do that and he will stir up their particular selfishness or ambition or pride or whatever also to make it difficult.

And again, another secret is this. Dear Christians, we can be used by the devil. If we allow ourselves to be, if we let those selfish ambitions, that pride, that hatred, that jealousy, that envy, if we allow those things room in our hearts, then when, in our dealings with one another, we will be serving the enemy.

Think about it. Think about it. What does the enemy want us to do? He wants us to be discouraged. How can he do that?

By getting Christians to moan about one another. What does the devil want? He wants us to stop preaching the gospel and sharing the gospel with people and encouraging and serving.

How does he do that? By getting Christians to criticize one another. So many servants of God have not been able to finish the race or finish the work, not because of the devil at work in the world, but because of the devil at work in the church.

[18 : 32] Dear friends, we've got to be on our guard. We cannot think for a moment that we are simply able to just coast through life and it's not, it's just going to be a bell of roses.

It's going to be easy to serve Christ and follow him and live for him and do good. Do not become weary in doing good. Why? Because doing good is wearisome to the soul, to the heart, to the emotions, to the body.

It is hard work. which is why, again, very sadly, if we're honest, there are some Christians who will not put their shoulder to the plow, who don't want to start the work, who don't want to get involved in serving because of the flack that they might get, because it's much easier just to step aside than to try to engage with difficult people.

It's hard because of who we are, because of who the world is, the people we meet with, because of one another and because we have an enemy. But it's also very hard for us and this is the reason I believe why Paul writes as he does, do not become weary in doing good because we don't see the results, obviously, in the good that we do, do we?

We serve Christ, we don't see immediately wonderful things happening. Sometimes, and in various places, that has happened. But it's very, very, very uncommon.

[20 : 03] More often, as we plow on in serving Christ, in doing good, in seeking to preach Christ and live for him, we find that we see very little immediate fruit, very little harvest.

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 the temptation is to give up. Because we're going at it again and again, we don't see very much.

Because the work we're engaged in is a spiritual work, we've seen that already. Paul has talked about the fruit of the Spirit, do you see that? Do you notice that all those fruit of the Spirit are things inward?

They can be expressed outwardly, but they begin in the heart, don't they? Love and joy and peace, they're heart things, aren't they? Gentleness, self-control, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, they're all things, character things of the heart, of the life, that will present themselves in the things that

they do, but inwardly, they're hidden.

The work of the Holy Spirit is a hidden work, isn't it? Jesus talked about, the wind blows wherever it wants to blow, so is someone born of the Spirit. We see, we hear, but we don't know where he's coming or what he's doing.

[21 : 19] We can understand why people serve the Lord in very practical ways. We can understand why people would go across to somewhere, a third world country, a developing world country, and build a hospital, and drive a supply chain with food.

These are good works, no doubts. They're things that can be seen, but serving the Lord in the local church, serving the Lord in our homes, in our workplaces, in our schools, serving the Lord where we are, that's often something that we do not see.

And think about one of the greatest works, if not the greatest work that Christians can do. The greatest work that Christians can do, and the first thing that we must do above all else, is pray. But nobody sees us doing it, do they? There's no physical evidence to show that we've been in prayer, and the results of our prayers cannot be traced back to us, traced back to our good works. We can't say, well, you know, somebody became a Christian last week, it's because I was praying. That's why they're saved as me. I was praying. Did you know that? I just thought I'd tell you all about it. No, of course you can't do that.

[22 : 36] And surely what Paul has in mind here is that the results to serving the Lord, to doing good, take a long time to come. That's why he assures us with this promise.

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. But that proper time seems a long way off, doesn't it?

It seems to be so long, we feel like we're always laboring, sowing, watering, but never reaping, constantly doing good, but never seeing the harvest. It's the waiting for the harvest which is the most wearying aspect of the Lord's work.

more often than not we give up because of frustration, exhaustion, desperation.

We fail to see the harvest. We get so far down the line. We serve the Lord so much for such a long time. But because the harvest hasn't yet come, we decide in our own minds and hearts, well, that's it.

[23 : 46] it's as far as I can go. Can't go any further. I can't wait any longer. I can't keep praying for that dear one to be saved any longer. I've been praying for them for 20, 30, 40 years.

Nothing's happening. Because it's an invisible work, an unseen work. It's God's work. So having thought about why it's hard and why we should feel weary and why we may give up, let's think about the encouragement from this verse why we mustn't give up but we must carry on doing good so that we might witness the harvest.

What does this verse have to say to us as well as the whole of Scripture to give us an impetus and encouragement to strengthen our weak hands and our knobby knees and cause us to go and to keep on going in the strength the Lord provides?

Well, because God has promised that we'll see a harvest. Do not give up or let us not become weary in doing good for at the proper time we will reap a harvest.

It's a promise, isn't it? This is God's word. This is what he said. Therefore, he has told us we will reap a harvest from the good work we do. It's a guarantee.

[25 : 05] A harvest is coming. In spite of how things appear in spite of how hard it is and tired we are in spite of how much opposition there may be in spite of the fact that we feel alone or whatever it may be here is the promise it must arrive.

And that's the place we have to put our faith. We cannot put our faith in ourselves. We cannot say because I'm so determined I'm going to get there and we're going to get a harvest.

And we can't put our trust in our own skill or ability. Because I can do this good work so well because the Lord has gifted me and because I'm intellectually capable or because I'm intrinsically good or because of this or that our only place that we can rest our faith the only place that we can stand is upon the promises of God.

Because as soon as we look at ourselves as soon as we look at one another as soon as we trust in any other resource or power then we shall ultimately become discouraged and become weary and give up.

When we trust in the word of God we are trusting in one who cannot lie. We are trusting in one who never ever fails to keep his promises. We read that all the way through the scriptures.

[26 : 32] We've seen it in our own lives too. God is the Lord of the harvest. He's the giver of the harvest.

He's the one who causes the seed to grow and increase to 1 Corinthians chapter 3 in verses 6 and 7.

Paul is talking to the Christians who kept on saying, well Paul he's the best evangelist and the best preacher. No, Apollos he's the best our faith and trust is in him. No, no, we think Peter's the best our faith and trust is in him.

What does he say? He says, I planted the seed Apollos watered the seed but God made it grow and so he who plants and he who sows is nothing but God who makes it increase everything. Yes, God uses various means to fulfill and accomplish his work and his promises. For some it will be through particular preacher George Whitfield and John Wesley and C.H. Spurgeon particularly gifted men that God has raised up for times and he brings it about but in other times he brings about the promise and his fulfillment through just one small person who seems insignificant unimportant or through a church that seems to be crumbling or falling apart or becoming smaller and smaller.

[27 : 57] He uses music and he uses all whatever means are at his disposal to bring about his purposes. Our temptation of course is if we're not careful we'll look at where God is blessing in a particular situation say oh we've got to copy that and our faith becomes in that particular form of evangelism or that particular type of preaching or that particular type of worship instead of our faith being in the promise of God and his word.

You will reap a harvest harvest. And the fact of the matter is that God has planned when that harvest shall be reaped.

Let us not become weary in doing good for at the proper time the right time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. God has a proper time.

The timing of the harvest is in God's hand and not in ours. We're impatient for the harvest. We pray for revival. We pray for God to save. We think it should be now or if not now tomorrow or if not tomorrow maybe next week at the very latest.

That's not God's time is it? No farmer will be so foolish as to say yes I'm going to tell you exactly when I'm going to reap the harvest for my wheat field. I've sown this wheat on the 20th of March and I know that it should be ready and will be ready and I'm going to hire my combine harvesters for August the 20th because that's when I'm going to reap it.

[29 : 35] He knows it's out of his hands. He knows there's many different factors that dictate when the crop is going to be ready to harvest it. The amount of sunshine it receives, the amount of rain it receives, when it receives them in the coming months, the actual day itself, whether the weather will be possible.

He knows that it's not in his power to control the harvest or the growth of the grain. He can guess, He can work towards, He can look back and say over the past several years it's taken this many weeks or this many months, but what a strange year we've had this year, a very cold winter, long winter, then a blazingly hot summer.

Very unpredictable. God knows God knows God knows God knows everything there is to know. There's nothing that's out of his control. Everything is within his power, even the very hearts of men and women to come to faith and trust in him.

God knows how long we will have to work until the harvest is ready to be reaped. He's fixed a date in his will when the promised harvest will begin and nothing in heaven, nothing on earth and nothing in hell can hold back that day in the proper time.

[31 : 00] Earlier in Galatians, Paul talks about the Lord Jesus Christ being born at the proper time. It's that sense of being within the sovereign plan and will of God.

And one last encouragement it seems to me here dear friends. God has provided for our needs so that we can carry on until the harvest.

Let us not become weary in doing good for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. What has God provided for us that we should not give up?

Well it's been coming all the way through this passage hasn't it? The Spirit, the Holy Spirit. So I say live by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

For the flesh desires what's contrary to the Spirit and the Spirit what's contrary to the flesh. There's a power within us. If you are led by the Spirit you're not under the law. The fruit of the Spirit is love.

[32 : 00] Since we live by the Spirit let us keep in step with the Spirit. Christian people it is not in my power or yours. my strength or yours to keep on going.

And the reason we often become weary is we are relying upon our own reserves and strength. Instead of relying upon God the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. The only reason that we were saved.

The only reason we came to life. The only reason we put our faith in Christ. Because God's Holy Spirit worked in us and revived us and brought us from death to life. That incredible resurrection that took place.

Impossible for men. Possible for God. Didn't we think even this morning about the words of our Lord Jesus in John 15. He says I am the vine.

You are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit. Apart from me you can do nothing. nothing. Apart from me you can do nothing.

[33 : 06] We're never separated from Christ as believers. There are times when we seek to do things apart from his strength. Apart from his power. Apart from his spirit.

Dear friends, you and I have been saved to do good works. Do you know that? We've been saved to serve Christ. Ephesians in chapter 2.

He's talked about us being saved by grace and that by through faith not of ourselves the gift of God for we are God's handiwork created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Dear friends, let's throw off the weariness that so easily entangles us and which if we're honest we like to give in to and we like to moan about. Let us throw it off because it oppresses us and drags us down.

Let us lift our eyes up and press on in the good works that God has given us to do with renewed strength and vigor knowing that he has promised we shall receive a harvest if we do not give up.

[34 : 17] We don't have the fog, if I can put it that way, clouding the island for us. We see clearly because we see with the eyes of faith that we must reach the other side.

that the harvest that God has promised and planned will be brought about. Knowing that our labour in the Lord is not in vain.

Here's what Paul says at the end of 1 Corinthians 15. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.

So I'd like us to come to prayer. I'd like us to be able to bring our prayers to God. Some of us, as I said before, may be able to lead us audibly, verbally.

For others, perhaps it's silent prayers that we need to bring before God. Things that are very private and personal that we're not able to vocalise. But dear friends, all of us need to pray in response to the promise of God.

[35 : 34] Lord, keep me from becoming weary in doing good and help me to keep going to the harvest. So that's