



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Galatians 6:1-10

Galatians

“Our Brother’s Keeper”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Our text this morning is Galatians, chapter 6. We’re going to look at verses 1-10. Just about at the conclusion of our study in this book. Should finish, Lord willing, next week. But this morning, Galatians, chapter 6, beginning with verse 1. “Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual restores such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Each one looking to yourself so that you, too, will not be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ, for if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. For each one will bear his own load. The one who is taught the Word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him. Do not be deceived. God is not mocked. For whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will, from the flesh, reap corruption. But the one who sows to the Spirit will, from the Spirit, reap eternal life. Let us not lose heart in doing good, for, in due time, we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.” May the Lord bless this reading of His Word. Let’s bow together in prayer.

One of the best loved stories ever written is John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*. You know I would think that from the frequent amount of times I have referred to it, and you would know that it’s the story of Christian’s journey through this world on his way to the heavenly city. But it is also as much about Christian and his companions wandering off the path as it is about them staying on the narrow way. The story is true to life, and full of

lessons. We are prone to wander. The path to heaven is lined with detours, and they are very tempting.

Paul has been describing the Christian life as a struggle in which the flesh fights against the Spirit, so that, he said, you may not do the things that you please. It’s a hard struggle. We are continually being pulled off the path. The only way to make our spiritual journey is to walk by the Spirit. But that’s not all. We must also be helping one another along the way. We are to restore the fallen, bear other’s burdens, share good things, encourage one another, and do good to all people, especially the brethren. That’s Paul’s teaching in Galatians 6:1-10. It answers Cain’s irresponsible question, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Yes, Paul says, we are our brother’s keeper.

This is what the Spirit-led Christian does. He or she thinks of others, and how he or she might serve them. The general principle is given in verse 2, with the statement, “Bear one another’s burdens.” But Paul begins the chapter with a specific example of burden bearing, by giving the instruction in verse 1 to, “restore those who have fallen into sin.” “Brethren,” he writes, “even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you, who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness.” Paul may have had the trespass of legalism in mind, since that is the main concern of the book, but he does say any trespass, and, having just listed the deeds of the flesh in chapter 5, he certainly had them in mind as well.

Now, he has been instructing us to walk by the Spirit. And the word ‘trespass’ literally means ‘fall beside’. It has the sense of taking a false step or misstep. And when we don’t keep in step with the Spirit, we take false steps, we stumble, we fall beside the path. That can happen to any one of us. If we’re not careful about our spiritual walk, it certainly will happen to us. We will be overtaken by a sin, Paul says, which has the idea of being surprised by sin.

So Paul is not speaking here of a person who is living willfully in a reckless sort of way. There are ways to deal with that. The Scriptures give instruction on that. But here, he is speaking of the person who, due to a careless walk, suddenly trips and falls into sin. What’s to be done for such a person? Paul says we are to restore such a one. The verb that’s used here is very instructive. It’s a word that is used in the New Testament of mending fishing nets. It was used in ancient medical literature of setting a broken bone. Each of those tasks took great skill.

Number of years ago, my daughter broke her arm, roller skating. My wife rushed her to an orthopedic surgeon who recommended setting it the old fashioned way, without an

anesthetic. Now, he was very experienced. He had set a lot of broken limbs on the ski slopes of Switzerland, so he knew his craft, and he said that this would be the most efficient way with the least amount of complications. So that’s what he did. He calmly took her arm, and then, with a sudden jerk, he set it.

Now that takes great skill and experience. You wouldn’t just let anyone do that – set a broken arm. And the same is true in spiritual matters. It takes skill. It takes experience. So rehabilitation must be done only by those who are spiritual, Paul says. Those whose life is controlled by the Spirit, and is producing what Paul has described as the fruit of the Spirit. They are competent because they have the special quality Paul recommends for effectively restoring a brother, and that is gentleness – one of the nine virtues listed in the fruit of the Spirit.

Back in chapter 5, Paul said, “Through love, serve one another.” That’s how we restore people. That’s how we restore the fallen brother, the one who has wandered off the path. We don’t restore people by beating them down with their guilt and making them feel like an outcast. We don’t restore a broken life by breaking the person even more. We restore and rehabilitate the broken with gentleness.

Luther put it this way: “Run to him and reach out your hand, raise him up again, comfort him with sweet words, and embrace him with motherly arms.” Now that’s quite a statement, coming from Luther. When I was in seminary, my church history professor, **John Hanna**, referred to Luther as a bull in a china cabinet. And that’s the kind of man that God raised up to do the great work that he did, the leveling and the building of the reformation. He was a bull in a china cabinet. But even Luther, with all of his rough edges, could speak like this about restoring a brother: “Embrace him with motherly arms.” That’s the sense in which Paul is speaking here. That’s the point that he’s making, and what this work of restoration calls for.

And that’s one of the reasons only the spiritual can do this ministry of restoring a fallen brother. Only the spiritual will be gentle. But we’re all responsible to do that. We can’t then look at this, and see, “Well, that’s the out for me. I’m not all that spiritual. I’m not really walking by the Spirit. I’m not producing the fruit of the Spirit. And so I’m not going to deal with that problem over there that I see.” We’re all responsible to do these things. And so we must become spiritual. We must walk by the Spirit. We must produce the fruit of the Spirit. And if the love of Christ has been poured out into our hearts, then the love of Christ should be pouring out from us to others.

This is to characterize all of us. That is being spiritual. And we must all strive, as I say, to be spiritual. To walk by the spirit and be looking to be a help to one another. At the same time, Paul gives the warning that we are to be looking to ourselves so that we will not be tempted. A spiritual person is humble. A spiritual person that he or she could stumble easily. We are all prone to wander and fall of the path. So the ministry of correction is never done with a sense of superiority. It’s always done with a deep sense of humility.

Now this specific command to restore the fallen is broadened in verse 2 to include all kinds of problems. Bear one another’s burdens, Paul says, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. The close connection with verse 1 would mean we are to bear the burden of temptation and the possibility of sin that recovering Christian would have. Because a person in that condition is going to be weak, is going to feel ashamed, is going to have various temptations, and we need to stand by that person and help that individual. Be an encouragement. Give wisdom and direction.

And Paul’s instruction here would be especially appropriate for those caught in the error of legalism. That’s the great burden of this book, and it would be particularly appropriate here, because the legalist doesn’t bear burdens. The legalistic teacher lays burdens on people. That’s how the Lord described the scribes and the Pharisees in Matthew 23:4. “They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger.”

**Zwan Wearsbee** wrote, “The legalist is always harder on other people than he is on himself. He’s not interested in bearing burdens. His great mission is to lay them on people. But the Spirit-led Christian demands more of himself than he demands of other people.” And that follows logically, doesn’t it? The Spirit doesn’t draw attention to himself. He draws attention to Christ. He points people to the Lord, Jesus Christ, not to himself. He doesn’t exalt himself. He exalts the Lord. And the person who has the Spirit and is walking by the Spirit will have that same character. He doesn’t point people to himself. He’s not self-absorbed. He’s concerned about others. He’s outward looking. And so that is what the Spirit-led Christian does. He or she looks to help those in need.

So the mature Christian tries to unbind the legalistic burdens laid on others, and tries to help guard the weak against stumbling into moral errors, where – moral error as well as spiritual error. But it’s even more than that. Paul has covered that in the first verse, but his instruction here applies to burdens of any kind. We are to be a help. And in saying all of this, Paul is instructing us to be active in our faith. The Christian life is a life of active

concern for others. It doesn't stand on the sideline and watch and talk, just be there as an observer. It acts. That's the nature of love. It's not sentimental. That's our popular conception of love. It's emotion. Now emotion is certainly part of genuine love. I can't imagine of someone having fervent love for someone and emotion not accompanying it, but I don't think we're to understand love to be essentially that. That's part of it, but love, essentially, is acting for others. For their greater good.

And Paul says, “By acting in love, by bearing the burdens of others, we fulfill the law of Christ.” This is the only place in the New Testament where the expression ‘law of Christ’ is found. And it may be directed at the legalists, and the libertines – that's the concern that Paul has in chapter 5, what he's just finished discussing – and both of those individuals – there was a problem with both in the churches of Galatia, and both of those were trying to undermine Christian liberties. So Paul seems to direct this at those two groups.

On the one hand, Paul was saying if you are insisting on observing the law, then make sure it's the law of Christ and not the law of Moses. But he's not discounting law in saying that, and in saying this, he was also correcting those who thought that Christian freedom meant freedom from law altogether, that it meant freedom from all moral controls and constraints. Paul was saying, no, no, we do have law. We're not under the law of Moses, but we have moral guidelines, and that's found in the law of Christ. And that law is the commandment to love.

Paul has already said in Galatians 5:14 that by loving our neighbor, we fulfill the whole law. So law never contradicts the holiness that is revealed in the law of Moses. It seeks other people's highest good. It sacrifices and it bears burdens. And the model for that love is found in Christ, in His character, in His conduct. Christ loved others. And sacrificed himself for them. He poured out his life for his people. For us. And we're to do the same. That's our model. That's our law.

But, again, that takes humility. A person can't be conceited or self-righteous and have sympathy or concern for the person who falls into sin or is in a position of weakness or need. Can't understand that person. “Aren't you strong, like me?” And so to support his exhortation to bear each other's burdens, Paul says, in verse 3, “If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”

Do you want to know what you are? The Psalmist tells us, in Psalm 103. He tells us that we're but dust. Says that's what the Lord knows. Says that you know that we are but

dust. Dust is weak. Not much to boast in about dust. Well, Paul takes even that away from us. He says we’re nothing. And so if you stand today, there’s something about your life that you can boast about – you have stability, if you have a job, if you haven’t fallen into any gross sin – well, ultimately, it’s only because of the grace of God, because you, in and of yourself, and I include myself in that, we’re nothing. And if you want to say we’re something, fine, we’re dust. But that’s it.

So self-inflation is self-deception. It is those who know their weaknesses, and know that they are nothing, and realize and understand that they are saved by God’s mercy alone that are most likely to show mercy to others. Service takes humility. But it also takes responsibility, and that’s what Paul urges in verse 4, where he warns against making personal comparisons. That’s what the proud do. They build themselves in their own estimation by comparing themselves to others, to their work with the work of the fallen brother. And then they can say, “Well, I didn’t do that, and I don’t do that, I’m okay.”

They’re like the Pharisee, you remember, that the Lord referred to Luke 18, who contrasted himself with the Publican. They both came into the temple at the same time, and they were both praying there, and the Pharisee prayed, “God, I thank you that I am not like other people – swindlers, adulterers.” And then he looked around and he saw another one and he said, “Or that tax collector.” Now, the tax collector wasn’t near the Pharisee. The tax collector didn’t feel worthy to be near the Pharisee. He was off at a distance, the Lord said. He was back behind everyone. Because he was so ashamed of himself, he couldn’t even look up. He just said, “Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner.”

But the Publican saw him. He had searched around and he had saw where everybody was. And he see that Publican way off in the corner, and he said, “Ah, that’s the one I’m going to compare myself to.” That’s what people tend to do. That’s what we all tend to do. But Paul says don’t do that. “Let each one examine his own work. We are responsible for the specific tax that God has given each one of us to do.” Christ is our standard, not each other. And so we’re to keep our eyes on him. We’re to model our lives after him. We’re to seek to please him.

And that will give us the true measure of ourselves. If we want to know what we’re like, then let’s compare ourselves to the standard of perfection. Let’s compare ourselves to Jesus Christ. And when we do that, then, of course, no one fares very well, and no one can be proud or arrogant in contrast to Him. And we will all confess, as those servants in Luke 17 did, when they finished their tasks, they said, “We are all unprofitable servants.” The best

we can do is what we’re supposed to do. There are no works of **super-irrigation**. There are no works that beyond what we’re called to do. The best we can do is what we’re supposed to do, and, even then, we’re unprofitable. That’s a true understanding of oneself.

We’re answerable to God for what we do. Not each other. We’ve been given our own task. Let each one examine his own work, Paul says, and it’s the Lord’s approval that really matters to us, not the approval of one another. And Paul reminds the Galatians of that in verse 5, where he says, “Each one will bear his own load.” Now, if you have a King James Version, your text reads, “Every man shall bear his own burden.” And that might seem to contradict the instruction that Paul gave in verse 2 about bearing one another’s burdens, but there is no contradiction, because the words for burden are different.

Verse 2 is a burden that is too heavy for a person to lift alone. He needs the assistance of others. It is the burden of affliction. It is the burden of hardship. The burden of temptation. In verse 5, the burden is a load. It’s like a pack that a traveler carries. And in it is his own possessions. It’s what he must carry. It’s what he’s responsible to carry. It’s the pack that he slings over his shoulder or whatever. His things are in it and he’s responsible for it. And that’s the idea here. It refers to our own personal duties.

Verse 2 is about our responsibility towards others. Verse 5 is about our responsibility to **ourselves**. Verse 2 is about the present, and verse 5 is about the future. And what Paul is saying here is God has given each of us a load to carry – a pack, so to speak – full of duties and tasks that are – that we are to complete. We’re responsible to do that. You have a mission that I don’t have. You have a gift that I don’t have. You’re to exercise that in a place that I’m not in. And vice versa, for me. We all have our responsibilities. We all have our duties.

If you’re a believer in Jesus Christ, you’ve been gifted and called and you are to be a witness. We each have an individual mission, and someday, in the future, in the day of Christ, we will give an account for how we carried out that mission. Now the Lord in that day won’t ask us how we did in comparison with other people. He won’t ask Paul how he did in comparison with Peter. He won’t ask you how you did in comparison with me. You might wish that he would ask that. You’d maybe look pretty good. But that’s not how we’re going to be judged. We’re going to be judged on our own merits. And our work will stand or fall on its own merits. And that day will come when we must give an account at the final tribunal. Each one of us will give an account of himself to God. Romans 14:12. Add

to that 2 Corinthians 5:10. Each one of us will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and will give an account for our life.

So we’ll look to ourselves in preparation for that day. We’re very good at preparing for the future. Many of us are. Preparing for retirement. Getting insurance. Saving some money. But we don’t do very well at preparing for eternity. Preparing for the day when we’ll stand before Christ and give an account. That’s what we must be doing. Preparing for that day. Those who do, of course, will not only be looking to themselves, but they’ll be looking to others, and will be concerned to bear one another’s burdens.

Having said that, in verse 6 Paul returns to the responsibility we have toward others, and in verse 6 he takes up the responsibility the Christian has in the use of money. He writes, “The one who is taught the Word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him.” This is the responsibility of the church, and further instruction on mutual help. The teacher relieves the student of ignorance, and the student is to relieve the teacher of his material needs. This is another way of stating the principle that the Lord taught when he said that the laborer is worthy of his wages.

Now, no minister should undertake his labor for wages. No one should go into the ministry because it’s a good job, it’s a good way to make a living. There are people that have done that, and the history of the church is full of that. A man’s chief concern in going into the ministry is serving the Lord. It’s not personal gain. But material needs must be supplied. That’s the church’s responsibility. His responsibility, though, is also emphasized here. It’s not the main point of the verse, but it is a point that’s made, and his responsibility, the teacher’s responsibility is clear. It is to be a teacher. It is to preach. It is to give instruction. That is the main duty of the ministry. Everything else is subordinate. And there are other things in the ministry that are important and must be done, but they are subordinate to the fundamental task of the ministry, which is teaching, which is proclaiming the whole **counsel** of God. The things that people like to hear about the love of God, and the things that they hate to hear about the wrath of God. Everything. The whole counsel of God is to be proclaimed. And that’s what a minister of the gospel is, is to spend his time doing and preparing to do. And that’s what we, as members of the church, are to desire for ourselves, and what we’re to expect from those who occupy the pulpit or the lectern. The Word of God. And a clear and deep knowledge of it.

A warning is then given in verse 7. Paul gives it in a principle of agriculture that illustrates a spiritual law – the law of planting and harvesting, the law of sowing and reaping.

“Do not be deceived. God is not mocked. For whatever a man sow’s, this he will also reap.” This has been called an immutable law of God. An inflexible, unchangeable law of God. And it certainly is. You see it materially. Illustratively, in the farmer. If he wants a harvest, he has to plant seed. No harvest without planting seed. If he doesn’t sow, there’s no crop. But if he does, and he sows good seed, he can expect a good crop. If he sows liberally, he can expect a large harvest. If he wants a particular crop, then he must sow the right seed. If he wants corn, then he must plant corn. If he wants wheat, he must plant wheat. If he sows weeds, he’ll get weeds.

And that applies equally in the spiritual realm. Whatever we sow, we get. As **John Stott** put it, “If he sows wild oats, as we sometimes say, then he must not expect to reap strawberries.” Or, as **Josiah** warned, “They sow the wind, they reap the whirlwind.” And it is reaping the whirlwind that Paul was trying to prevent in his warning here. So he says, “Do not be deceived.” Don’t think that actions have no consequences. People do that. People live like that. They live as though they can safely ignore God’s truth, as though God is ignoring them, and get away with it. But it’s all a deception. Everything counts. And everything sown has a harvest. That’s the immutable, the unchangeable law of God.

As Paul says, “God is not mocked.” That’s a striking expression, because the word ‘mocked’ is derived from the word ‘nose’, like the nose on your face. And literally, literally means to turn up the nose at, to treat a person with contempt. And that’s what a person does when he or she ignores God’s principles of conduct. God has set them down. He’s the law giver. And his law is a reflection of his character. And certainly an expression of his will. And those who ignore it, or those who disobey it, are thumbing their nose at God. They’re mocking God. But no one can mock God. No one can dismiss him.

No one can outwit God. That’s what people think they can do. If they really give any thought to it – they probably don’t give much thought to God – but should they do that and live this way they think they can outwit God. Well, men may fool themselves, but they can never fool God, and eventually there are consequences to be reaped. The Bible is filled with examples of men who resisted God and rejected his laws. God’s Word is filled with that kind of instruction. We can never say, “Well, I didn’t know. I didn’t know that would happen.” There are all kinds of examples of all kinds of rebellion, and the defeat that men have suffered in resisting the will and the law of God.

Pharaoh. How many opportunities did he have to repent and to let God’s people go? Plague after plague, he resisted, he **vacillated**, he rebelled, and, eventually, he lost his army

and his life and brought ruin on his country. King Saul, King Herod, many others. God is not mocked. Paul states the consequences of sowing good and sowing evil in verse 8.

Those who sow to their own flesh reap corruption, he says, and those who sow to the Spirit will reap eternal life. The contrast between the flesh and the Spirit, of course, goes back to chapter 5 where he developed that warfare, the – where it speaks of the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit.

A person sows to his own flesh, plants to his flesh, when he gratifies it. When he gives in to its desires. When he yields to its lusts and practices, its deeds, immoralities, strife, jealousy, just to name some of the deeds of the flesh. That has consequences in a person’s life, and it has consequences in the life of a church. There is a harvest of corruption, as Paul says, which is both physical and spiritual. You see it very clearly in the example of David – one of God’s children, a man after God’s own heart. Now, if it’s true of David, is it not true of any one of us? Is the possibility not true of this man who loved God and yet he sowed to the flesh with Bathsheba, and he reaped terrible consequences? He reaped the whirlwind.

Rest of his life was affected by that sin. And it will be the case with each one of us if we follow that path. Sowing to the flesh has a bitter end. But Paul’s warning is not only for the libertine. It’s not only for the law breaker. It’s also for the legalist. It’s also for the man who prides himself on his compliance with the law. Following the teaching of the legalists, like the Galatians were doing, is sowing to the flesh. Because legalism gratifies the flesh. It plays to man’s pride. His sense of merit. His sense of accomplishment. Something that he can take great delight in and point to. This is what I’ve done. It’s the opposite of grace. It’s the opposite of the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in a person’s life. It gives no thought to what Paul has said, that we’re nothing or that we’re dust, that all we have is a gift of God by his sovereign, unmerited grace.

It’s sowing to the flesh. It plays to the flesh. And the result of such a system of legalism is death. The temptation to go in the direction of either the legalist or the libertine – they’re opposite directions, in a sense. They both are of the flesh, but opposite directions. Yet the temptation to go either direction is very strong. Because of the strength of the flesh. And that’s why we need to be our brother’s keeper. To bear one another’s burdens and restore the brother who steps off the path. We deliver such a person, Paul says, from corruption.

In Galatians 5, the emphasis is on the Christian duty to walk by the Spirit. In Galatians 6, the emphasis is on our duty to sow to the Spirit and bear burdens. That requires

some heavy lifting. And that’s never easy. So on verse 9, Paul offers some incentive. He writes, “Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time, we will reap if we do not grow weary.” Paul is still using the analogy of the farmer, and here he reminds the people that results don’t come immediately. It takes time to see results. It takes long hours of labor to see them. And that can be a trial. That can get wearisome. Waiting. Waiting. That’s difficult. There’s one, particularly for us, as one of the old commentators put it. We want to sow and reap in the same day. We want it all right now. That’s what one of the old commentators said. How much more true of it in this age of fast food and fast everything? Immediate gratification.

But that’s not the way God has structured life. The harvest doesn’t come in a day. And so the impatience of the flesh, the distractions of the world, the opposition of people, all tempt us to lose heart. Let somebody else bear the burdens. I’m weary. That’s the voice that we hear. And then there’s the simple fact, as Calvin put it. We are naturally lazy in the duties of love. That’s true. We’re just naturally lazy about these things.

So often, we would rather spend our time doing things other than burden bearing. Spending time with ourselves and for ourselves. In fact, left to ourselves, that’s what we’d do. We’d spend all of our time on ourselves. We’re lazy about these things. But Paul says no, no, we’re not to be lazy about these things. We’re not to be indifferent. We’re to keep at it, even when we become weary, keep at it. Not with a sense of grim resignation, not with a sense of, “Oh, I’ll bear the burdens, but it is a burden to bear them.” We’re to do it with a sense of joy. Because it’s the right thing to do. We’ve been called to that. That’s the life that we’ve been called to. The Christian has not been called to an inactive life. Or a life of self-gratification or self-centeredness. Just the opposite. We’re to be outward in our life. That’s what we’ve been called to, and we’re to be joyful in it. It’s the right thing to do. And we’re to be joyful in it, because there is great reward in it. In due time, we will reap, if we do not grow weary. The harvest will come. That’s the encouragement.

The problem for us is we don’t know when that will be. The farmer has a good idea when the crops will come in. And so at this point the analogy breaks down. Seed time and harvest follow the same pattern each year, but that’s not so with the spiritual harvest. We cannot calculate when that – when the fruit will appear. God is sovereign and He is lord of the harvest. We plant and water, but He gives the growth. And we

can never know His schedule. It may be today. It may be that instant kind of gratification. You may give the gospel to someone you’ve been praying for and they believe on the spot. And what a glorious experience that will be. But it may be that they’ll hear the Word day after day, and they won’t come to a saving knowledge of Christ for a long time. As a result, there can be frustration and weariness in the world.

We want to see immediate results. We want to see visible results. And when we don’t see them, we wonder if we’re doing things the right way, or if we shouldn’t try something new, something innovative. Well, maybe we should. But there’s a danger in that. Because there are ways to get visible results. There are techniques that can be used that are quite successful. But those techniques will not end in lasting results. And that’s what we want. We want that which lasts, that which endures, and to get that, we must do things God’s way, which is sometimes methodical. And is always according to His Word. And that is we preach the Word and we obey it. That’s the right way. If we just do that, forget the innovations. And I’m not saying there should be no innovations, but if we just are faithful to God’s Word – we teach it clearly, faithfully, we obey it, we spend time on our knees, God will bless that.

The results may not be immediate, and they may not be spectacular, but they will come in due time. So we’re not to grow weary. There are stories of missionaries. I’ve heard them. I’m sure you’ve heard them. Men and women who spent their whole lives in ministry without seeing a harvest. And it seemed as though they were sowing on rocky soil. Then, at the end of their lives, or after their lives, in the next generation, the harvest came.

God’s Word will not go out and return to Him empty. It can’t. It will accomplish the purpose He desires. That’s what the Scriptures say. Isaiah 55:11. “Nothing is wasted when it is done in obedience to God’s Word and in service to Him.” God always blesses our efforts in due time. That’s a sure promise. And that’s true for our lives personally. One of the main objects of our concern should be ourselves, should be our own growth. The burden of the passage here, of course, is, for us, bearing other’s burdens and looking beyond ourselves. But Paul has already emphasized that we are to bear our own load. We are to be concerned about our spiritual lives. We are to be learning and growing personally. Sewing to the Spirit.

But growth is slow. It requires steady, consistent attention. Not just for a season, but for your entire life. But the promise is that there will be fruit. The harvest

will come in due time. So we are not to grow weary. Ultimately, though, Paul’s encouragement here has to do not with the fruit that we’ll see in our life, in this period of time, the development we’ll see. That’s certainly part of it. But the ultimate encouragement here is that we will see the reward in the age to come. We will see it as Christ’s return. That’s when the great harvest will occur, and we will reap eternal rewards. We will enter glory, and we will hear the Lord say, “Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your master.”

Now that’s worth living for. If we’re only living for the moment, for the material, then we’re just time servers. And the reward of that doesn’t last. Those who sow to the flesh, or sow to time, get only what time and the flesh can give. And whatever that is, at its best, is not much. It certainly doesn’t last. It’s gone in a moment. Those who sow to the Spirit and invest in the kingdom to come reap eternal rewards, and, in the meantime, live the best lives, in which they see souls saved and lives changed. We will see results in ourselves as we sow to the Spirit, and we will see that – we will see great results in the lives of other people, in the help that we give, in people in whom we invest our time and effort. If we do not grow weary.

So, then Paul writes, in verse 10, “While we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.” We are to help everyone we meet. That’s the teaching of the parable of the Good Samaritan. We are – where we see a need, we are to help as best we can. But for many, our resources are limited, and so our first responsibility is to the church, to the people of God. They are the household of the faith. They are our spiritual family. They are our brothers and sisters. They are loved by Christ and they love Him. They are His representatives in this world. They are the people with whom we’ll spend eternity. They’re our family, and we are to have a concern for them. It’s certainly no witness to the world that’s of much value if we don’t have an interest in the people of God and the world does not see that in us.

If it doesn’t see that in us, if it cannot say, as the ancients used to say of the early church, “See how they love one another,” then we have no real witness with the world. And our first concern is for God’s people. We are to bear their burdens. We are to be diligent in that. But the time to do it is limited, and may be short. Paul said, “We are to do good while we have opportunity.” An opportunity that’s lost is lost forever. And soon the Lord may return which will be a glorious moment, and we’ll all

rejoice, but when He comes, the opportunities to serve are at an end. Oh, we may soon leave this world. We fly away, as Moses put it in Psalm 90. Our life and our opportunities come to an end suddenly, and then we must give an account. The person who does not seize the opportunity will not reap a harvest.

So, to sum up. Let us not lose heart in doing good. Let us restore the erring brother, bear other’s burdens, support the ministry of the gospel, and do good to all men. Let us sow to the Spirit, not to the flesh, and be assured that in due time we will reap. So let’s not grow weary.

The promise in verse 8 is that those who sow to the Spirit shall, from the Spirit, reap eternal life. That’s spoken to believers, but it’s true for the unbeliever as well. Eternal life is the gift of Christ. We receive it through faith in Him. And he gives the Holy Spirit to enable us to live that life in the present. So if you have not believed in Him, sow to the Spirit by believing in Christ. Trust in Him, who died for sinners, and then live for Him by bearing other’s burdens, by being your brother’s keeper. May God help all of us to do that. Let’s bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for the instruction of the apostle Paul to the Galatians. Says so much that we could say about these things. Help us to reflect upon what we’ve read, what we’ve considered. That we might see our responsibilities and not consider them as duties or burdens to bear, but as great opportunities to serve others, and, in serving them, serve you. To give you a cup of cold water by giving a cup of cold water to a thirsty brother. So help us to do that, Father, to take on the responsibilities of being active in your service, wherever we see the opportunity. We thank you for the opportunity. We thank you for the life we have in Christ. It’s all due to your goodness and your love and your grace to us, and we thank you for Him who died for us. In His name we pray. Amen.