

LAW, LIBERTY, AND LIFE IN JESUS - Knowing How it all Works

Part twenty-three - Teaching #2175

Sunday, March 27th, 2022 - 10 a.m.

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NEVER LOSE HEART AS YOU SERVE THE LORD

IPAD TEXT - Galatians 6:6-10 - "Let the one who is taught the word share all his good things with the teacher. [7] Don't be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap, [8] because the one who sows to his flesh will reap destruction from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit. [9] *Let us not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don't give up.* [10] Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith."

Not all that long ago as far as cultural history goes a mainly Liberal majority in the House voted ***against*** the definition of marriage decreed in divine revelation by Jesus, God the Son, as an ***exclusive relationship between one man and one woman.***

Think about that for a minute - or ***re-think*** it - because that change is losing it's mental impact even in the evangelical church. We have long lost that sense that here is one more evidence that the Titanic has hit the iceberg. The music is still playing. The people are still singing. Nothing ***seems*** that different for daily life for many of us. But way down in the belly of our country's ship another huge hole has been torn, and the water is pouring in faster than most of us realize.

In **verse 8** Paul tells us that the one who “**sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption....**” Of course Paul is talking about **all** sinners, not just sexual sinners when he says this. Like all other sins, homosexuality is a classic example of what Paul, in this very letter, calls “**deeds of the flesh**” - **Galatians 5:19-21** - “**Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, [20] idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, [21] envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar. I am warning you about these things — as I warned you before — that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.**” - **IPAD TEXT**

To me the argument as to whether one is **born** with homosexual tendencies or whether one **develops** homosexual tendencies misses the point. In some way, and in different areas, we are **all** born with sinful desires and tendencies that must be restrained and denied and, yes, repented of. Heterosexual people will naturally become **immoral** if they follow every sexual inclination that seems natural. People will become liars unless someone teaches them this is wrong and they **restrain** themselves from lying. Small children naturally become selfish. They naturally **lose their tempers** unless they learn to **deny** these tendencies and forsake them.

It's a dangerous think for all of us as sinful human beings to pick a temptation and define our identity by it. In a sense, people are only now beginning to state what Christianity has been arguing all along. People are sinners because they are **born** sinners. And what **all** sinners do, apart from the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, is **normalize** their sinful behavior. You do this and I do this. And this is why Paul, in every list of sins he gives in the New Testament, closes with words like these:

IPAD TEXT - 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 - "...Don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom? Do not be deceived: No sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, or males who have sex with males, [10] no thieves, greedy people, drunkards, verbally abusive people, or swindlers will inherit God's kingdom."

Notice how Paul closes this list. These people **"will not inherit the kingdom of God."** Now, I want to come back to our passage for this week's study. I want to consider specifically Paul's call to the church **"not to get tired doing good"**(6:9a), because what **causes** Christians to lose heart, in addition to our **own** sins and failures and weaknesses, is precisely this world's constant drive to make things **compatible** with the kingdom of God that the Bible says are **incompatible** with the kingdom of God. These people **won't** inherit the kingdom of God. These things are **incompatible** with God's kingdom.

And there is a **second** factor that wears on our hearts as we try to do good. This whole passage in Galatians 6 is all bound up with the metaphor of sowing and reaping. There is such a **time lapse** between sowing and reaping. And ***the passing of time is the worst enemy of sustained passion.***

We need to keep this plea not to **lose heart** in the context of the passage. Paul's summons to the church not to lose heart follows right on the heels of his plea for them to keep **sowing to the Spirit - Galatians 6:7-8 - "Don't be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap, [8] because the one who sows to his flesh will reap destruction from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit."** - IPAD TEXT

There are **two** ways to be deceived. And both are extremely deadly:

First, you can be deceived about sin and sowing to the flesh. ***You can think that, because your life doesn't fall apart every time you do something bad, you don't have to fear sin.***

You can think that you are immune to small compromises. And Paul says this is deadly because you are being extremely **short-sighted**. You are sealing your own destruction, only you don't see it coming yet.

Second, you can be deceived about righteousness and the incredible power there is in sowing even small seeds consistently to the Spirit.

You put a little seed into the ***ground of the Spirit*** and it doesn't always appear that anything is happening. No one got saved at your Bible Study. You invited someone to Alpha and they didn't even show up. You read from 2 Chronicles this morning for devotions and couldn't even figure out what the writer was talking about. You keep praying for your son or daughter or spouse, that the Lord would wake them up to their need of God and His grace, but nothing seems to be happening. They're more influenced by their friends than they are by Jesus. You're worried they're running out of time.

And, little by little, a faith that started out singing gradually begins to lose its heart. You've been putting little seeds, sometimes ***tiny*** seeds, into the soil of the Spirit and they just seem to disappear.

Because of these two ongoing battles - the ***press of this world to justify and normalize sin*** and the ***time lapse that is inevitable in sowing and reaping*** - Christian people can lose heart while sowing to the Spirit. Paul is saying there are seasons when your zeal isn't ***self-sustaining***, when you feel you are ***peddling your bike uphill***, when it's ***harder to smile***.

What are the steps to take? What can we do at times like these? How do we obey this command **not** to lose heart in serving the Lord? That's what we want to consider now, and if the introduction to this teaching has been **long**, these closing points will be **brief**:

- 1) ***Especially when you feel no natural inclination or interest, keep yourself immersed in the corporate study of God's Word.***

IPAD TEXT - Galatians 6:6 - "Let the one who is *taught the word* share all his good things with the teacher."

It would be very easy to see nothing more in these words than a summons to churches to pay their pastor or pastors. But there is much more here than that. If we would **not lose heart** we must put a premium on the **corporate** teaching of the Scriptures.

Paul is not pleading here for their **private** devotional reading of the Word. They certainly wouldn't have to pay a preacher for that. He's talking about their **gathering together to hear the Word taught**.

Embers burn when pushed together and cool when spread apart. That's a good picture to keep in mind because we're talking about **not losing heart**. You will lose heart to the extent that you try to follow Jesus without the corporate teaching of the Scriptures. This verse describes the **essential** ministry of the church.

A church like ours does many things, all of which are good. There are dozens of ministries, specialized for varying interests and ages. But the **essential** thing this church does (or any church worthy of the name) is **teach the Scriptures**. When any other ministry becomes the **reason** for gathering (music, friends, worship, etc.), spiritual fervor will only be sustained for a limited time. **Trends** burn brightly but also quickly. They don't feed long term.

- 2) ***When you don't see your dreams coming true, shun what you know is sinful and keep doing the little things you know God would have you do.***

IPAD TEXT - Galatians 6:7-8 - "Don't be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap, [8] because the one who sows to his flesh will reap destruction from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit."

These are highly potent words. Both **destruction** and **eternal life** are bound up in the repetition of **small acts sown**. When you don't get **answers** concentrate on **character**. Your life takes shape while you're thinking about other things. Sow your thoughts and actions, small as they may appear, in the **garden of the Holy Spirit**.

Remind yourself of this truth **especially** when you find yourself beginning to lose heart because, when you start to lose heart, the first lie the Devil sows into your mind is the despairing question, **“What difference does it make anymore anyway?”**

When you're discouraged the Devil wants you to question the value of sowing to the Spirit. He does this by playing out all the points where what you're dreaming of **isn't** happening. And, if your dreams aren't coming true, **what good has your commitment been to sowing to the Spirit?**

That is the downward spiral into losing heart. And the lie in those thoughts is the lie that **God's** purpose and **your** dreams are always the **same thing**, or that God will accomplish them both at exactly the **same time**.

The **goal**, says Paul is **eternal life** - **“...the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit”(8)**. **“Eternal life”** is the goal. And there are a million different ways of arriving. Read Hebrews chapter 11. Some are given houses and flocks and wealth while others are sawn in half. But all those heroes of faith received the promise - **eternal life!**

- 3) **If your dreams aren't coming true, look for opportunities to do good to others - especially other Christians.**

IPAD TEXT - Galatians 6:9-10 - "Let us not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don't give up. [10] Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith."

What wisdom is found here! The surest way to lose heart in your Christian faith is to focus on yourself. The surest path to renewed passion is to **"do good to others."**

This is not espousing some **"works theology,"** where one is saved by being good to others. But it **is** recognizing that, as a child of God, my **deepest** needs can't be met while I focus my life on myself because eternal life comes from sowing to the Spirit. Paul says so - **"....the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit"(8)** - and Jesus described the **momentum** and **passion** of the Spirit as flowing **outward** from the inside, not **inward** from the outside:

IPAD TEXT - John 7:37-39 - “On the last and most important day of the festival, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. [38] The one who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him.” [39] He said this about the Spirit. Those who believed in Jesus were going to receive the Spirit, for the Spirit had not yet been given because Jesus had not yet been glorified.”

Notice how Paul says we are to **“look for opportunities”** to do good. Why? Because this is how we **sow to the Spirit**. And ultimately, this is what fills us with the hope of eternal life - **“...the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit” (8)**.

Look for opportunities to fill your life with hope. Sow small seeds in the garden of the Holy Spirit. See more than the deed itself. I don't think we are always used to doing this. I think sometimes all we see is the **deed** and not the **seed**. I think it is so easy for us to grow accustomed to doing the religious things we do that we can leave the Holy Spirit out of them entirely.

Let me give just one example right from our text to make my point. Look again at Paul's words in the very first verse of our text:

IPAD TEXT - Galatians 6:6 - "Let the one who is taught the word share all his good things with the teacher."

"Make sure," says Paul, "that you use your wealth to ensure and increase and mobilize the teaching of God's Word. Make that a priority in your life. Use your resources to accomplish this."

Then, in a way that actually surprises us, Paul moves from this command right into this whole passage about sowing to the Spirit, eternal life and not losing heart. In other words, giving my resources is one way of sowing to the Spirit and not losing heart.

So there is more riding on that online bank payment to the church - or that little white tithing envelop than many suppose. Do you see it as merely paying bills? Or do you see it as sowing to the Spirit and guarding your heart? Do you see your envelope as the way the Spirit of God wants to grow some ripe, luscious fruit in your life and in His kingdom? If you give to pay bills you will soon lose heart. You will soon give *joylessly*, if not *grudgingly*.

So keep your joy. Don't lose heart. Look for opportunities to **sow to the Spirit**. And keep an eye to the harvest.