

LESSON 7

They Seized the Opportunity

What are we walking past?

Let us not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don't give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith.

— Galatians 6:9-10

Introduction

Last week the gift was named. Peter took every Christian by the hand and said the same thing about each of them. As each one has received, use it to serve others. The body lives when each member brings what grace has put in his hands. The lesson closed on the promise that the Lord who provides the strength is on the way.

This week the eyes open. The same Lord who has placed a gift in every member's hand has also placed openings in every member's path. Paul brings the letter of Galatians to its close by telling a Spirit-led church to keep doing good, to refuse weariness, and to act on the openings as they arrive. Stewardship and alertness are the same instinct turned in two directions: one toward the gift in the hand, the other toward the opening in the path.

Galatians 6:9-10 sits at the end of a long argument for the gospel of grace. After five chapters of defending the Christian's freedom from the law, Paul lands the letter on a charge that is anything but theoretical. Do not grow weary. The harvest is coming. As the opportunity comes, work for the good of everyone, and especially of the brothers and sisters around you.

The Setting Behind Paul's Closing Charge

Paul does not drop this charge out of nowhere. He has spent the letter pulling the Galatian churches back from teachers who would bind them to the works of the law. By chapter five he has set out the contrast that frames the rest of the book. The works of the flesh on one side. The fruit of the Spirit on the other. The life of the believer is the life that walks by the Spirit, and the fruit of that Spirit is the kind of thing a church recognizes when it sees it.

In chapter six Paul moves from the picture to the practice. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2). Restore the brother caught in transgression in a spirit of gentleness (Galatians 6:1). Share all good things with the one who teaches (Galatians 6:6). Then the sowing-and-reaping principle in 6:7-8. Do not be deceived. God is not mocked. The flesh reaps corruption. The Spirit reaps eternal life.

Verse 9 carries that image one step further. The harvest is real. The work between planting and reaping is steady. The temptation in that long middle is to grow weary. Verse 10 names what the steady work looks like on the ground. As we have opportunity, do good.

Do Not Grow Weary in Doing Good

1 GALATIANS 6:9a

Do Not Grow Weary in Doing Good

ἐγκακῶμεν
enkakōmen
To lose heart. To flag at the spirit-level, before any slackening shows up in the hands.

Weariness comes by inches

- The visible returns lag.
- The same situations recur with the same people.
- A weary Christian still goes to the meetings.
- The eye stops noticing before the hand stops working.

The command assumes the work has been hard. It does not let the worker stop.

The first half of verse 9 reads like a quiet pastoral order. "Let us not get tired of doing good." The Greek behind "get tired" is *enkakōmen*, which means to lose heart, to flag at the spirit-level before any visible slackening shows up in the actions. Paul knows what is coming for the Galatian churches. Most of the good work in a congregation is unspectacular. The visible returns lag. The brothers being served are

not always grateful. The same situations recur with the same people. The temptation is not usually to quit in one large act. The temptation is to lose heart by inches.

A weary Christian still goes to the meetings. A weary congregation still keeps its appointments. The slackening starts further in than that. It starts in the part that used to notice the visitor in the back row, the part that used to think of the brother on a Thursday morning, the part that used to set down the phone and write the note. Paul writes to that inside place. Do not lose heart.

The command assumes the work has been hard and assumes the worker can be tempted. It does not pretend otherwise. It also does not let the worker stop.

The Promise of the Harvest

2 GALATIANS 6:9b

The Promise of the Harvest

"For we will reap at the proper time if we don't give up."

THE HARVEST IS	IT COMES AT	THE CONDITION IS
Certain Not optimism. Theology. There is a harvest.	The Proper Time Set by the Lord of the harvest, not by the worker.	Endurance Not size. Not polish. That the worker does not give up.

The meal carried. The call placed. The story heard again. The work is being kept on his books.

The reason Paul gives for not losing heart is not optimism. It is theology. "For we will reap at the proper time if we don't give up."

The grammar of the promise is worth holding still over. There is a harvest. The harvest is certain. It comes at the proper time, set by the Lord, not by the worker. The condition attached to it is not size or polish, but endurance. Paul does not say the harvest

comes if the work is large, or if it is admired. He says it comes if the worker does not give up.

That changes the way an ordinary week reads. The unseen meal carried to a sick neighbor is not lost. The phone call to the drifting brother is not lost. The hour spent listening to the widow who told the same story last month is not lost. The Lord of the harvest has his own calendar. The work is being kept on his books. In due season, the field comes in.

As We Have Opportunity

3 GALATIANS 6:10a

As We Have Opportunity

χρόνος · <i>chronos</i> The steady tick of the clock. Time that simply passes. It asks nothing of the one living through it.	καιρός · <i>kairos</i> The appointed moment. The door that opens for a season and then closes. The opening set in the Christian's path.
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A kairos missed is not a kairos postponed.

The hour passes. The neighbor moves. The visitor stops coming. The brother goes quiet.

Verse 10 turns the lesson outward.

"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us work for the good of all."

The Greek word for opportunity here is *kairos*, the appointed moment, the door that opens for a season and then closes. *Kairos* is not the steady tick of the clock. That word is *chronos*. *Kairos* is the particular opening, the timely moment when an action can be taken

that will not be available in the same way again. The Christian's calling is to do good as *kairos* arrives.

Paul does not say "as we plan good," or "as we coordinate good," or "as we feel inspired toward good." He says as we *have* opportunity. The verb assumes the moments are already arriving. The question is whether they are being recognized while the door is still open. A *kairos* missed is not a *kairos* postponed. The hour passes. The neighbor moves. The visitor stops coming. The brother goes quiet. The opportunity that was set in the Christian's path is not always there tomorrow.

This is why Paul ties the command to alertness rather than to ambition. Christians who wait for dramatic openings will walk past the actual ones. The actual ones are smaller, closer, quieter, and more easily

missed.

4 GALATIANS 6:10b

To Everyone, Especially the Household

THE WIDE HORIZON "Let us work for the good of all."	The neighborhood. The workplace. The school. The family that does not yet know Christ. The love of the New Testament is not tribal.
THE PARTICULAR ACCENT "Especially for those of the household of faith."	A house that lets its own go hungry while feeding strangers is no longer functioning as a house. (1 Timothy 5:8)

Both horizons stay in view, and the body is healthy.

To Everyone, Especially the Household of Faith

Paul gives the good work both a wide horizon and a particular accent.

"Let us work for the good of all." The church does not reserve its kindness for insiders.

The good Christians do reaches into the

neighborhood, the workplace, the school, the family that does not yet know Christ. The pattern of love in the New Testament is not tribal. It moves out into the world the gospel was given for.

"Especially for those who belong to the household of faith." Within the wide work, there is a priority on fellow Christians. The household keeps its own members alive. The doctrine here is plain. A house that lets its own go hungry while feeding strangers is no longer functioning as a house. The early church gave to the poor of the city. It also gathered relief for the saints in Jerusalem. Both belong in the same charge. Paul writes the same logic in 1 Timothy 5:8: anyone who does not provide for his own, especially his own household, has denied the faith.

Christian alertness keeps both horizons in view. The coworker who has never heard the gospel and the member who has slipped quietly to the edge of it. Where the wide work and the household work both stay in view, the body is healthy.

The Early Church Paid Attention

The early church learned this practice in the open. Acts is full of Christians who saw the opening and walked through it.

Ananias was sent to Straight Street to lay hands on a blind persecutor. He had every reason to argue. He raised the objection out loud. The Lord answered, and Ananias went. The man who had been arresting Christians walked out of that house with his sight restored and the gospel in his ears (Acts 9:10-19).

Barnabas saw an opening no one else was willing to see. When Saul came to Jerusalem and the disciples were afraid of him, Barnabas took him by the hand and brought him to the apostles, vouching for the persecutor turned preacher (Acts 9:26-27). The church gained its missionary because one brother seized a moment that the rest of the room was happy to walk past.

Aquila and Priscilla heard Apollos in the synagogue at Ephesus. They did not correct him publicly. They took him aside privately and explained the way of God to him more accurately (Acts 18:24-26). The church gained one of its most powerful preachers because two members noticed the gap and stepped into it before the moment closed.

Peter answered the call to the house of Cornelius the morning after the vision came. He did not delay. He walked into a Gentile home and opened the gospel to a household the Spirit had already prepared (Acts 10).

The church at Mary's house gathered to pray for Peter the night Herod had him in prison. When the answer arrived and knocked on the door, Rhoda was so amazed she forgot to open it (Acts 12:12-17). The praying body and the opened door are part of the same alertness.

Paul received the Macedonian vision in the night and embarked the next morning (Acts 16:9-10). The gospel crossed into Europe on the strength of one man's willingness to act on a *kairos* the day it arrived.

None of these moments were heroic improvisation. They were steady attention to what the Lord had set in the path.

What We Walk Past

The opportunities Paul has in mind are rarely dramatic. They are the small openings a busy life walks past.

The neighbor at the mailbox who said something quiet that almost asked for a real answer. The brother whose phone went silent two months ago. The widow whose Tuesday afternoon is longer than her Monday. The guest in the back row who came twice and has not come back. The teenager between classes. The colleague at lunch. The young couple in the third row with a baby who would not sleep last

week. The drifting member who has been thinking about coming back and is waiting to see whether anyone will call.

These are *kairos* moments. They arrive quietly. They close quietly. The Christian who is looking will see them. The Christian who is rushing will not.

Weariness erodes the seeing first. The eye stops noticing before the hand stops working. What restores the practice is not new energy but a renewed sense of where the Master has put his people. Paul writes the verse for Christians whose lives are already full. He does not tell them to find more time. He tells them to look up, see what is already in front of them, and act before the door closes.

Looking to Jesus

The pattern Paul calls every Christian to was first walked by the Lord himself.

Consider how he stopped for Bartimaeus when the crowd told him to be quiet. The blind man shouted from the side of the road, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Many rebuked him and told him to keep silent. Jesus stopped. He said, "Call him" (Mark 10:46-49). The Lord refused to walk past the one the crowd wanted silenced.

Consider how he called Levi from the tax booth as he was passing by. The text reads almost in passing. "As he was passing by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the toll booth, and he said to him, 'Follow me'" (Mark 2:14). The man at the booth was an unlikely disciple. Jesus saw him anyway and called him in the moment.

Or watch him sit down beside the woman at the well when the disciples had gone for food. The text notes the moment plainly. "It was about noon" (John 4:6). Jesus took the *kairos* the disciples had left him by sitting down with the one person they had not expected him to talk to. By the end of the conversation she was running back to her town with a question that turned into a sermon.

Consider how he turned to the woman who touched the hem of his robe in a crowd of pressing bodies. The disciples thought it was an absurd question. "You see the crowd pressing against you, and yet you say, 'Who touched me?'" (Mark 5:31). Jesus kept looking until she came forward. He refused to leave the moment incomplete.

See him look up into the tree at Zacchaeus and name the moment for what it was. "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, because today it is necessary for me to stay at your house" (Luke 19:5). The day held a *kairos* the tax collector could not have manufactured. Jesus took it.

Consider how he refused to walk past his own appointed hour. "Now my soul is troubled. What should I say—Father, save me from this hour? But that is why I came to this hour" (John 12:27). The greatest *kairos* in the history of the world was the cross. The disciples did not understand it. Jesus walked through it anyway, because the door of his Father's appointment was open and he would not turn back.

The pattern is the Lord noticing the person no one else was noticing, and acting before the moment closed.

A Final Encouraging Word

It is likely your congregation has been doing this work for a long time. Think of the brothers and sisters who send the message to guests on a Monday morning. The sister who notices the new face in the foyer spends a moment getting to know them. The deacon who hears about a need on a Sunday afternoon and is at the house with a truck by Tuesday. The teacher who stays after class because someone needs to be told a hard truth in private. The widow who keeps the prayer list and works her way down it on a Wednesday night. These are *kairos* moments seized in the regular life of the church, and they are some of the most beautiful work the body does.

The calling is not to invent something new. The calling is to keep the eyes up. The work of planting and reaping is steady, but it is not slow. Doors open every week in the lives of members, neighbors, visitors, and strangers that the Lord has arranged with specific Christians in mind. The body does not have to manufacture them. It must walk through them.

The promise of verse 9 stands behind verse 10. The harvest is real. The harvest is coming at the proper time. The condition is endurance. Until that day, the work is good, the eyes are open, and the Lord who set the *kairos* in the path will meet his people in the doing of it. To the glory of God.

Discussion Questions

1. Paul places "let us not get tired of doing good" immediately after the sowing-and-reaping warning of Galatians 6:7-8. How does the sowing-and-reaping frame change the way a Christian thinks about unspectacular, repetitive acts of service?
2. The Greek word behind "as we have opportunity" is *kairos*, the appointed moment that opens for a season and closes. What is the difference between treating life as *chronos* (a steady tick of the clock) and treating life as full of *kairos* moments, and where does that difference show up in a Christian's week?
3. Paul tells the Galatians to work for the good of all, and especially for the household of faith. How should those two horizons hold together in a congregation, and where does each one tend to drop out when the other is over-emphasized?

4. The Christians in Acts seized one opening after another. Ananias on Straight Street, Barnabas with Saul, Priscilla and Aquila with Apollos, Peter at the house of Cornelius, Paul at the Macedonian call. What did those Christians have in common that made them ready to act when the moment came?

5. Weariness in doing good rarely arrives in one large stroke. It seeps in by inches, in the part of the heart that used to notice. Where in your own life or in the life of the congregation has the energy for steady good work begun to slacken, and what would Paul say to that?

6. Think about this past week. What opportunity to do good for a particular person did the Lord place in front of you that you walked past, and what is the next opportunity already approaching?