

**Galatians 5: 5-12**—<sup>5</sup>“But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. <sup>6</sup>For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. <sup>7</sup>You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? <sup>8</sup>That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. <sup>9</sup>‘A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.’ <sup>10</sup>I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whoever he may be. <sup>11</sup>Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. <sup>12</sup>As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!

**“<sup>5</sup>But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.**

- Needless to say, Paul is angry.
  - “I wish those who unsettle you would mutilate themselves” (5:12).
- Right in the middle of this dispute Paul says something that is tremendously encouraging to imperfect, sinful saints like you and me.
  - In 5:5 he says, **“by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.”**
- **Piper:** “Here is a way of life that is utterly opposed to the way these opponents in Galatia are living. He speaks of a righteousness that is yet future—a “hope of righteousness.” He speaks of life now as a “waiting” for righteousness, not a possessing of righteousness. He speaks of this waiting as waiting “through the Spirit.” And he speaks of it as waiting “by faith.” “Through the Spirit by faith we wait for the hope of righteousness.”<sup>1</sup>
- There is a whole way of life in this one little verse. You can relate to God as an heir, or you can relate to him as a slave.
  - **Ills.:** Have you ever worked for a boss that was never happy with your performance? Even when you exceeded his expectations his or her feedback always focused on what you could have done better, how you could improve on it in the future, etc. Such is exasperating!!
- We are like the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:25–31. You recall how the father with overflowing grace received the broken, contrite, poverty-stricken prodigal. The father didn’t make him a slave to earn his way back into favor. The freedom and glory of his grace overflowed with a robe and a ring and celebration.
- But what was the response of the elder brother? He would not go into the feast. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered with words that put him squarely in the camp with the false teachers in Galatia:
- “All these many years I have SERVED you, and I never disobeyed your command.” The elder brother had the mindset of a slave. He worked for the father. He did not rest joyfully in the father’s beneficence.
- Paul describes righteousness as a Future Hope.
- Righteousness is a hope and not a full present reality.
- In all likelihood the Judaizers were teaching a kind of perfectionism, that strict adherence to the Mosaic ceremonial law you can be perfected in righteousness.

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<sup>1</sup> John Piper, “Our Hope: Righteousness,” June, 1986, [http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByScripture/7/545\\_Our\\_Hope\\_Righteousness/](http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByScripture/7/545_Our_Hope_Righteousness/).

- There will be no perfection in this life. Full and perfect righteousness lies in the future. It is our hope not our possession.
- The second thing to see our present life is a life of waiting, eager waiting. **“by faith we eagerly...the righteousness for which we hope.”**
  - I’ve been teaching through the book of Romans on Tuesday nights here at Northlake, and the word here in this passage for “wait” here is exactly the same one used in the text of **Romans 8:23**. There Paul says, “Not only the creation but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies”
- Galatians 5:5 says the same thing about the moral condition of our souls that Romans 8:23 says about the physical condition of our bodies. We wait for the hope of righteousness, and we should understand that there is groaning and frustration and disappointment in ourselves while we wait.
- There is a great comfort and an exhortation in this word “wait.”
  - **The comfort** is that the presence of a struggle with sin in this life is not a sign that we are lost.
  - **The exhortation** is this: we must not be indifferent to righteousness in this life; we must wait eagerly for it.
    - Jesus said, in the Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” We hunger for it as we wait.
- Therefore, we are not content with sin. There is battle and struggle and failure and confession and forgiveness and relief and joy and power and then failure again and confession and forgiveness and deeper love to Christ. And so it goes till the great day.
- The third thing to see in verse 5 is that the way we wait for the hope of righteousness is “through the Spirit” or “by the Spirit.” **by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.**
- Verse 6 of our text is one of the most important verses in the whole book.  
<sup>6</sup>**For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.** <sup>7</sup>**You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?** <sup>8</sup>**That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you.**
- *Ills.*: RSVP. Several years ago I rode in the RSVP (Ride to Vancouver BC & Party). It is a two day, 187 mile ride. Similar to the STP (Seattle to Portland), but a bit shorter (the STP is 200 miles), much more beautiful, and significantly more hills. About mid way through the second some of the markers that they used to identify the path/road that we were to take were either washed out because of the rain or for some reason were never marked. So there were intersections that simply didn’t indicate which way we were to go. Some went one way, others went another, and still others went off in a third direction. For my part, I simply kept going straight; my motto was: keep going in whatever direction you were last directed and don’t turn until told to do so. Fortunately, I happen to choose the right direction, but those that didn’t either had to back track significantly, or many simply never found the finish line and ended up lost all over Vancouver BC. Paul says, “You were running well”—or put figuratively, “You started the ride well, by the power of the Spirit, and you were relying on him with every mile you peddled. But this new turn you’ve made, this deviation—God didn’t direct you to make that turn; and if God didn’t, you know who did!”

- Verse 9 gives another warning:
- 9, **'A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.'**
  1. This may mean that a few leaders in the church with a legalistic mentality will soon corrupt the whole church. Or
  2. It may mean that legalistic self-reliance in one little area of your life (like circumcision) will destroy your whole life (see 5:2).
- In either case, the dreadful seriousness of motives in the Christian life is evident. There are motives that come from depending on God, and there are motives that come from depending on yourself—and the difference is a matter of life and death.
- ***Ills. Of motivation.*** Letter from Jon Bloom: “When God’s Will Isn’t Clear: The Difficulty is Part of God’s Design” October 2007.
  - Have you ever stopped to think that most of the decisions you make aren’t explicitly addressed in the Bible? The Bible doesn’t clearly answer questions like, Should I eat out? What should I wear? Should I stop giving money to my unwise family member? Should I grocery shop today or tomorrow? How should I respond to this instance of my child’s defiance? Should I read a book or do the dishes? Should I check my email *again*? Which project should I not work on?
  - Some of these decisions that aren’t answered in the Bible are actually huge, life-directional ones. Should I marry this person? Should we adopt a child? Should I pursue a different vocation? Should we homeschool? Should I pursue chemo or try an alternative cancer treatment? Should we buy this home or a less expensive one? Which college should I attend? Is it time to put my elderly parent in a nursing home? Should I go to the mission field? Should I separate from my spouse while we work on these very painful issues? Should I give more or save more?
  - As we weigh these ambiguous decisions the Apostle Paul instructs us,
    - Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. (Ephesians 5:15-17)
  - Well, that’s helpful. But how do you do that, Paul? How do you understand what the will of the Lord is when it is not explicit—especially when many of these decisions must be made quickly?
  - Paul answers this way:
    - Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2)
  - There’s the key: the renewal of our minds. The will of God in ambiguous decisions can only be discerned by a renewed mind.
  - But it can still be difficult. A renewed mind doesn’t always instantly know what God’s will is. God sometimes allows us to wrestle and wait for clarity.
  - Why? Because the motives and affections of our hearts are revealed in decisions that require discernment, whether simple and spontaneous or difficult and deliberate.
  - If God made more things explicit, we would tend to give more attention to what we do than what we love. Like the Pharisees, we likely would focus on

whitewashing our tombs with good works to impress others rather than deal with the dead bones of our sinful pride.

- But in decisions that require discernment, the wheat is distinguished from the tares. All of us make decisions based on what we really love. If deep down we love the world, this will become apparent in the pattern of decisions that we make—we will look mainly like the world. But if we really love Jesus we will increasingly love what he loves. This is the transformation of a renewed mind. And our love for him and his kingdom will be revealed in the pattern of small and large decisions that we make. I say “pattern of decisions” because all of us sin and make mistakes. But conformity to the world or to Jesus is most clearly seen in the pattern of decisions we make over time.
- That’s why God can take his sweet time as he helps us discern his will. His goal is for us to mature and have our “powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil” (Hebrews 5:14). So he regularly uses circuitous routes to get us from point A to point B. Because what matters most to God is not how fast something gets done but whether or not we are learning to love and trust him supremely.
- (Bloom goes on to look at)...the difference between God’s will of command (his explicit will) and his will of decree (all the things that he ordains to happen—including evil). Understanding how these two wills work together is very important for the Christian. ~ Jon Bloom Executive Director, Desiring God Ministries
- Verse 10 expresses Paul’s confidence that the new believers in Galatia will agree with this letter and turn back to faith, and his confidence that those who go on teaching legalism will be judged.

**<sup>10</sup>I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whoever he may be.**

- As much as we might like (indeed, as Paul might have liked!) to motivate people solely by the beauty of Christ’s love and power, neither we nor Paul can ignore the reality of judgment.
- “It is appointed unto men once to die and after that comes judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).
- *Ills.*: Not to warn the Galatians about this would be like trying to get someone to step off some railroad tracks in order to smell the beautiful flowers but not telling them a train is coming. Paul warns people that judgment is coming.
- *David Lodge*: “At some point in the nineteen-sixties, Hell disappeared. No one could say for certain when this happened. First it was there, then it wasn’t. Different people became aware of the disappearance of Hell at different times. Some realized that they had been living for years as though Hell did not exist, without having consciously registered its disappearance. Others realized that they had been behaving, out of habit, as though Hell were still there, though in fact they had ceased to believe in its existence long ago...On the whole, the disappearance of Hell was a great relief, though it brought new problems.”<sup>2</sup>
- *R. Albert Mohler, Jr.* “The traditional doctrine of hell was developed in the earliest centuries of Christian history. Based in the New Testament texts concerning hell, judgment, and the afterlife, the earliest Christian preachers and theologians understood hell be the just judgment

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<sup>2</sup> David Lodge, *Souls and Bodies*, (London: Penguin, 1980), 113.

of God on sinners without faith in Christ. Hell was understood to be spatial and eternal, characterized by the most awful biblical metaphors fire and torment.”<sup>3</sup>

- **Thomas Oden:** “Hell is the eternal bringing to nothing of corruption and ungodliness. Hell expresses the intent of a holy God to destroy sin completely and forever. Hell says not merely a temporal no but an eternal no to sin. The rejection of evil by the holy God is like a fire that burns on, a worm that dies not.”<sup>4</sup>
- **Augustine:** “Moreover, is it not folly to assume that eternal punishment signifies a fire lasting a long time, while believing that eternal life is without end? For Christ, in the very same passage, included both punishment and life in one and the same sentence when he said, ‘So those people will go into eternal punishment, while the righteous will go into eternal life.’ [Matt. 25:46] If both are “eternal,” it follows necessarily that either both are to be taken as long-lasting but finite, or both as endless and perpetual.”<sup>5</sup>
- **Mark 9:42-48**—“And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck. <sup>43</sup>If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. <sup>44</sup>It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. <sup>45</sup>And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. <sup>46</sup>It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. <sup>47</sup>And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, <sup>48</sup>where ‘their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.’”
- One of the great difficulties when contemplating the doctrine of eternal punishment is the (apparent) disproportionate punishment (eternal) for sin (finite). That is, how is it just to punish someone eternally for sins that are not eternal? Jonathan Edwards examined this question with his typical insightful precision. He noted that the degree of blameworthiness is commensurate to the greatness and dignity of the one that you offend, not from how long you have offended a particular being.
- **Edwards:** “The crime of one being despising and casting contempt on another, is proportionably more or less heinous, as he was under the greater or less obligations to obey him. And therefore if there be any being that we are under infinite obligation to love, and honor; and obey, the contrary towards him must be infinitely faulty. Our obligation to love, honor and obey any being is in proportion to his loveliness, honorableness, and authority...But God is a being infinitely lovely, because he hath infinite excellency and beauty...So sin against God, being a violation of infinite obligations, must be a crime infinitely heinous, and so deserving infinite punishment...The eternity of the punishment of ungodly men renders it infinite...and therefore renders no more than proportionable to the heinousness of what they are guilty of.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Albert Mohler, “Modern Theology: The Disappearance of Hell,” in *Hell Under Fire*, eds. Christopher W. Morgan & Robert A. Peterson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 16.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1992), 3:450.

<sup>5</sup> St. Augustine, *Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans*, tr. Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin, 1972), 1001-2.

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Edwards, “The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners,” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1972), 1:669. For an exposition of Edwards’ view on hell, see Jonathan Gerstner, *Jonathan Edwards on Heaven and Hell* (Morgan: Soli Deo Gloria Publishers, 1999); and Chris Morgan, *Hell and Jonathan Edwards: Toward a God-Centered Theology of Hell* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2003).

