

## **KEEP ON KEEPING ON GALATIANS 6:9**

Today, we're continuing our series on "Truth and Consequence". We're on part 5 and today's message is titled "Keep on Keeping On." I'm sure many of you have heard of this phrase before. It's kind of catchy or cute but we know it's hard to do. It's easy to say but hard to do. How do you keep on when your marriage is in a crisis? How do you keep on when the doctor gave you a grim prognosis about your disease? How do you keep on when you don't have enough money to pay your bills? How do you keep on when your boss is annoying, and your co-workers are irritating? How do you keep on when you get anxiety attacks? How do you keep on and so on and so forth? We all are facing obstacles and difficulties and there are times when you want to quit.

This morning, I'd like to share a message that I hope will lift anyone here who is feeling down and out. Let me tell you that the fight is not over. You have to get up before the count of 10 and you can, with the help of God.

In the book of Galatians, the Apostle Paul is writing this letter to the Christians in Galatia to help them understand the grace of God. He wanted them to know that, regardless of what they had done in the past, regardless of their brokenness, that because of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, there was hope that they could be free from the power of sin and death, that they could have a relationship with God that wasn't based on religion or performance, but they could have a relationship with God that was based on grace through faith.

So, Paul describes this all throughout the book of Galatians. But then, at the end of the book, Paul gets into this concept of personal responsibility and obedience. And he wants them to understand, and for us today, this is God's truth for us, that grace does not abdicate us of personal responsibility. Grace is not an

opportunity to disobey God. Grace is a motivation to live the life that God has called us to live. And Paul makes these statements. He says in verse 7, "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows."

Now, Paul is saying, "Whatever you pour out, you get in return." Meaning, there are people who live greedy lives, their lives shrink, and people who live generous lives, as the proverb says, their world gets larger and larger and larger. So, when you sow joy and peace and kindness into the lives of others, you get that back. And when you sow bitterness and anger, you get that back.

And then he continues his thought in verse 8. He says, "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." Notice how he's comparing and contrasting. He's saying that, when you live a life to please your flesh, when you live a life to do what you want to do all the time, and you respond to that broken part of you, there's death and decay that comes as a result. But when you live to please the spirit of God, when you wake up every day and you say, "God may the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you," that, in return, there is a harvest of everlasting life that goes from now through all eternity.

And Paul is helping us understand we get what we pour out. But then..when you're pouring out good, when you are pouring out good seed, there are moments in your life where it doesn't go the way that you want it to go. It's almost like you sow, sow, sow, sow, sow, sow, sow, sow and you don't get any harvest, and you start to wonder whether the law of sowing and reaping is really true.

And then Paul says in verse chapter 6, verse 9 which is our text for today, and please read with me, "*Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*"

Anybody ever get tired of doing what is good? You get tired of investing in other people when they don't respond the way that you thought they would? Or you

keep praying for a loved one to be saved and you see their life is still the same? So, you get tired of pouring out and pouring out. Paul is saying, if you persevere through the difficulty, if you continue to put one foot in front of the other, there is a harvest that God is going to bring into your life, a harvest of blessing. Keep on keeping on, do not quit. Something good is ahead.

This morning I'd like to share with you **three truths** about our lives. And the first one is this. The first truth is that whatever you're going through right now, **1. This is just a season.**

The fact is, folks, there is an expiration date to every season of our lives.

Let me show you a **picture of myself and my wife** just recently. That picture was taken when we celebrated our 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary. Our first stop was at the National Air and Space Museum. We're smiling and looking very happy. But when I look at the picture, I know what happened right before that picture. And many of you know that too because I posted it on Facebook.

I shared on my post how I was kind of a nervous wreck at the parking lot outside of the museum. Because I didn't realize you needed tickets now to get inside and the tickets already ran out for that day and I just prayed for God to intervene and so we walked up to the person checking the ticket at the entrance and just begged her to allow us to get in because we were celebrating our anniversary. And the woman asked me to rotate my phone and I even protested because I didn't have a ticket but she insisted and said, "The security behind us will see" and she proceeded to scan my phone and that's when I realized she was helping us and then just told us, "Get in, get in". That's when I realized God loves me so much because he didn't want me to get beaten by my wife.

What I'm saying is that 21 years of marriage is not all perfect bliss. There were ups and downs, we went through valleys and mountains, but we are keeping on because we realize that our lives, whether you're married or not, consist of

many different seasons. All of us go through different seasons in our lives. And let me tell you this. Every season is accompanied by three things: In every season that you walk through, **there are gifts, there's a grind and there's grief.**

I can understand that God is constantly blessing me with good things, but at the same time, in every season, there are going to be some hard things that I have to endure. It is kind of like, for those of you who are young parents, maybe you hold your child in your hands and you think, "Could it get any better than this?" But then, that night, when it's 2:00 AM and the child is whining in the middle of the night, and you're trying to change diapers, and it's your 15th night of getting two hours of sleep, you think, "Could it get any harder than this?"

You see, life comes with gifts and it comes with a grind. And it also comes with grievances, because maybe you're at a season of your life where your children are leaving the home. And there's a part of that, that is attractive. But there's another part of that. There's an emptiness. There's a grief in that, that you're mourning and your relationship with each other and your relationship with God.

When I understand this, it gives me the ability to endure, to understand that life flows in seasons. And right now, you are in a season. And, you know, sometimes when you're in a season, it's really hard to see that season will ever end. But God, today, wants you to understand that this, too, this grievance, this grind that you're in right now, this, too, shall pass. Peter says, in 1 Peter, I want you to hear his words. He says, ***"Praise be to the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his great mercy, he's given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade."*** (1 Peter 1:3-4)

That's the good news of Jesus, that no matter where you are in your journey spiritually today, by faith in Jesus, his death on a cross for your sins, his resurrection from the dead three days later, that you can have a relationship with

God and you can live in a broken, dying world, a decaying world with living hope because the good news of Jesus. And Peter wants them to understand that this changes the way that you see a trial.

Then, he says, *“This inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.”* Now, he says, *“In all this you greatly rejoice. Though, now, for a little while, you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.”* (1 Pet. 1:5-6)

Here's another truth. *It may feel pervasive when you're in it, but it's never permanent.* It's never going to last forever. There's always going to be a moment where that trial is going to finish, and God gives us the hope, God gives us comfort in our trials. And one of the ways that he comforts us is to help us understand there's an expiration date. Paul also says -- I want you to hear his words.

He says, *“That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.”* 2 Cor. 4:16-18 (NLT)

I hope today that this truth gives somebody strength in the midst of a season where they want to quit, to realize that this is not going to last forever. And in the midst of understanding that God will eventually give an expiration date to our trials, there's another truth that Paul highlights in Galatians 6:9, and it's this:

**2. Every season that you walk through matters.**

So, every season that you walk through in life, there is something that the good God of the universe is doing, both in you and through you. God is trying to

cultivate in us character. He's trying to form us and shape us, and he will leverage every season of our life to do this.

I love James' words, in James 1:2. He says, *"Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy."* This is one of the hardest verses for me to embrace because there are so many moments in life where James is saying there's all kinds of trials. There's getting stuck in traffic. There are moments where people get on your nerves at work. There are times where, in your home, it's really difficult. And somehow, in the midst of that, you're supposed to consider it an opportunity for great joy.

Well, why? Well, James describes it. He says, *"For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow."* (3) Any of you guys know somebody, don't look around, don't elbow anybody right now, don't make eye contact. But how many of you know somebody that they're 45 or 50 years old physically, but they're 14 years old emotionally? When you're with them or you talk to them, you're with a teenager. You might look like you're 50, but you're 14 internally.

And there is a sense in which a lot of people grow up physically, but they don't grow up spiritually. So, they stay immature. And there are a lot of followers of Jesus that don't have 30 years of following Jesus. They have one year of following Jesus repeated 30 times. There are a lot of people that are married that don't have 40 years of marriage. They have one year repeated 40 times. And that's because when we go through trials, if we don't embrace that every season matters, we will miss what God is trying to do both in us and through us in that season.

James says, listen to his last part of this. He says, *"So let it grow for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing."* (4) So, embrace the trial because God is using it to cultivate something in you that changes you and allows you to be used by God.

You See, God is at work right now in you and through you. And there is a way in every season that you can miss what it is that God is trying to form and shape in your character. I love this verse from John chapter 9, where Jesus is speaking. And he says, *"We must work the works of him who sent me while it's day, for night is coming when no one can work."* (John 9:4 ESV) Jesus is saying that there is a window for all work. There's a window for all the work that God wants to do, both in you and through you. There's internal work that God wants to do, and there's external work that God wants to do through you. And you and I both, we can miss that window.

There's one final truth that I want to finish on. And this perhaps is the most important thing that I want you to hear today. Number three, whatever it is that you are faithful to today, wherever in your life you are putting your hand of the plow, **3. There is always a harvest ahead.**

There is hope that, at the end of this trial, there will be a harvest from God.

Let us read again Galatians 6:9. *"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."* There's a harvest that God wants to bring into your life in the future that will only happen if you are faithful today.

Now, we all know that when you're running a race, the way you run will depend on the kind of race you're in. So, if it's a sprint, like a 100-meter run, you've got to give it all you've got in the few seconds you have to finish the short distance. But if you're in a marathon, you don't go out sprinting right away. You take your time, keep your pace, be at a comfortable level so that you can finish the long-distance race. If you sprint right away, what happens? You deplete your energy immediately and you will just collapse in the first few seconds of the race perhaps because of exhaustion.

So, I want to encourage you. There are some of you that are exhausted because you are looking at your life like a sprint. You just keep sprinting, sprinting, sprinting, and you're exhausted. And God is saying that there is a way that you can run, that you run all the way to the finish line, where you stand before the living God, and you hear the phrase, "Well done, good and faithful servant." You don't have to be among the number of people that quit where it matters most. You can be a person that perseveres.

Folks, there is a harvest ahead, there is a crown of righteousness for those who endure. There is a reward from your heavenly Father for every tear that you cry and every moment that you pour out, and you do good and nobody sees it. The God of universe sees it and he rewards, he blesses those who are faithful and obedient. So, my challenge, my encouragement to you is, do not give up, do not throw in the towel where it matters most.

You see, the enemy, what he will do to you is he will take all the elements of quitting and he will highlight the benefits of quitting. "Oh, if you quit, you won't be so tired anymore. Oh, if you quit, you won't hurt anymore. Oh, if you just give in right now, it's going to be so much easier on you." He'll highlight all the benefits of quitting, and he'll diminish all the words of perseverance.

But your heavenly Father, what he wants to do for you today is he wants to lift up the reward of perseverance. He wants you to see an image of yourself that is filled with love and joy and peace, patience, kindness. He wants you to get a vision for your life that, in the decades to come, your life can be more fruitful. That the most fruitful years of your life can be in the future. That when you see that, it changes the way you think. You see, the pain of quitting, the pain of throwing in the towel, the pain of regret is always greater than the pain of perseverance.

Let me say it one more time. **The pain of regret is far greater than the pain of perseverance.** And God is saying, "If you persevere today, I will reward you." But



there's only one way that you can do it. There's only one way that you can continue on. One way to keep on keeping on. And it's with this. You let go. **Let it go.** You see, so often in our lives, we are trying so hard to persevere, but we're doing it in our own power. We're doing it in our own strength. We think we can handle it on our own. We will fail if we do that.

I remember years ago, I was living and working in Australia. It was one of the seasons in my life. A season of endless pain and crippling anxieties. It started in the Philippines. I left Christianity. I forgot Jesus and even did not believe in him anymore because I felt he abandoned me when I needed him. So, I was drifting like a ship lost in the sea. And I was being tossed by the waves of the stormy sea. It was a terrible time for me. I was depressed and wanted to give up. I went through psychotherapy, took tranquilizers, practiced yoga, and did a lot of running in order to put my nerves at ease.

When an opportunity came to work in Australia, I seized it because I thought being in a new environment would change my situation. It didn't. In fact, it became worse. Because after six months, I was fired by the company I was working for since I was underperforming. I was now utterly in the dumps. I wanted to quit, end it all. I was a stranger in a strange land. I had few friends, my family was miles and miles away.

One morning, to shake off the anxieties I was feeling, I went outside to run. So, I jogged and jogged and jogged around the neighborhood till I felt exhausted. Back inside my apartment, the anxieties were still there. I was at the lowest point in my life. I was almost crying. It was then I felt I needed to do something. I needed to finally let go. I remembered Jesus and cried out to him, "Lord Jesus, I surrender. Please take over. Do whatever you want with my life."

That simple prayer of absolute surrender changed the course of my life. God heard that prayer and started to make changes in my life. Miracles after miracles

happened and that's when my heart changed. So, I entered another season in my life. In this season, God restored my faith. My love for him came back. He changed my heart radically. That is God's promise in **Ezekiel 36:26, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."** Folks, God is faithful. Always. Say it to the person next to you. God is faithful. Always.

You see, **there is a big difference between quitting and letting go.** Let me say it one more time. There is a massive difference between throwing in the towel and wholehearted surrender back to God to say, "God, my whole life belongs to you, and all I want to do is please you. All I want to do is be obedient to you. Thank you for the grace that you have displayed at the cross and the empty tomb, the living hope that I have. And because you've been so good to me, I pray that you would give me the power to persevere in the most difficult moments of my life."

I know I'm speaking to somebody today that God is saying, "I want to give you the power to persevere." But what he's asking of you is to say to him, "I need help. I need you, God, to step in. I need you to give me the power to persevere." Ephesians 3:16-17 says that the God of unlimited resources can strengthen you in your internal being to give you the power to persevere. Today, the spirit of God can give you exactly what you need to keep putting one foot in front of the other, so that you can be the kind of person that gets to the end of the race and you hear those words, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Well done, good and faithful servant."

I want to lead us, now, into a moment of response to what God is doing in us. Would you please bow your heads and close your eyes. Some of you today listening to this message, this is your first time ever hearing this good news about Jesus. And I want to tell you today that there is an opportunity for you to begin a relationship with God right now, in this moment, that goes through all eternity.

And by faith in Jesus and what he has done for you. His death on a cross, his resurrection. By coming to him and yielding your life to him, you can begin a relationship with God that goes from now through all eternity. And you can do it simply by, in your heart, making a choice to believe in Jesus and yielding your heart to him.

I want to invite you right now to take that step of faith. If that's you, I want to encourage you, be bold and step across that line of faith. And just tell God. You can say a prayer that goes something like this. "Father, I receive, Jesus. I receive the gift of life from you. I surrender my whole heart to you. Please forgive me for my sins. I want to follow you with everything that I am." But that decision is one of the most important decisions you'll ever make.

Others of you today, the spirit of God is stirring inside of you. And perhaps this is a moment just for you, right where you are, to posture yourself in surrender to say, "God, I need you. I need your mercy. I need your kindness. I need your strength." And he wants to step in and give you everything that you need to respond.

Father, we're grateful today for this truth, that the same God who conquered the grave is available and waiting for us to come. Thank you, that the same power that brought Jesus from death to life is available. Thank you, Holy Spirit, that you come and live in us and give us everything that we need to live the life that you've asked us to live. So, we call upon you today to give us everything that we need to live the life that you've asked us to live, to persevere when it's hard. In Jesus' name, amen.