

Don't Just Live for the Moment Galatians 6:7-10

⁷ Do not be deceived. God is not mocked. To be sure, whatever a man sows, he will also reap. ⁸ Indeed, the one who sows for his own sinful flesh will reap destruction from the sinful flesh. But the one who sows for the spirit will reap eternal life from the spirit. ⁹ Let us not become weary of doing good, because at the appointed time we will reap, if we do not give up. ¹⁰ So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who belong to the household of faith.

In a song that was popular a few years ago, Katy Perry sings, “Let’s go all the way tonight. No regrets. Just love. We can dance until we die. You and I, will be young forever.” The song is so into the moment. It just wants to go all the way. No regrets, just love! Do you think that’s how it works? If we live for the moment and what feels like love, we will have no regrets, right?

Fittingly, the name of the song is Teenage Dream. We can’t just live for the moment, do what we want, do what feels right, and not have any regrets afterwards. Of course, that’s a dream. Unlike what the teenage brain thinks, life has consequences.

Unfortunately, our sinful flesh is very similar to a teenage brain. It tricks us into thinking that if we just live for the moment, live the way we want, we won’t have any regrets. But today we get a reminder that if we live life that way, we will have an eternity of regret. Today God tells us: Don’t just live for the moment. Live for eternity. And live for opportunities to do good.

Paul writes, “*Do not be deceived. God is not mocked. To be sure, whatever a man sows, he will also reap. Indeed, the one who sows for his own sinful flesh will reap destruction from the sinful flesh. But the one who sows for the spirit will reap eternal life from the spirit.*”

“*Do not be deceived,*” Paul begins. Why? Because it’s so easy to be deceived about this! “*Whatever a man sows, he will also reap.*” It’s true—but it’s also easy to ignore because the reaping is far off in the future.

A mom was complaining about how overweight her adult son had gotten. “How did it happen? He used to be so skinny!” Then she began to explain how all he does is sit at home playing video games and eating fast food. It’s not hard to see why he was the way he was. It didn’t happen instantly. Eventually he reaped what he sowed. Since bad results often happen gradually, we’re easily deceived into letting them happen. That’s especially true spiritually.

Some spiritual effects take until Judgment Day to see. That’s a long time, and so it’s very easy to be deceived about the effects of how we live in the moment. In the previous chapter, Paul talked about some of the things that our sinful nature wants: “*sexual immorality, impurity, complete lack of restraint, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, discord, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, orgies, and things similar to these. I warn you, just as I also warned you before, that those who continue to do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God*” (5:19-21).

Paul says, “I warn you! These things are harming your soul!” But pick any sin out of that list, and you can see how we can easily excuse it in the moment, and be deceived about how serious it is. *Sexual immorality*—“What will one small glance hurt, lusting for someone I’m not married to. No lightning fell, no one saw, no one got hurt. It’s fine.” *Outbursts of anger*—“What, so I lost my temper once, everyone does sometimes, and they had it coming, what’s the big

deal?" *Heresies*—"Oh, big deal, why so picky about false teachings? As long as we believe the basics, God won't care" *Idolatry*—I prioritize other things over God all the time. What's the big deal if I don't make worship a priority every day and weekend? My life is still going fine. God doesn't mind." This can even be true for the seemingly big sins on the list. So it must not matter. No regrets, right?

"Do not be deceived," Paul says. *"God cannot be mocked."* Who are we dealing with here? God! We might fool ourselves. But God cannot be tricked or persuaded. He's not a pushover, who says, "No big deal." God is like the force of gravity. A fact. What goes up must come down. And if you jump up in sin, God's judgment will come down in the end. Pick any one of those sins. Even if they seem fine in the moment, they will bring destruction in the end. You can't get away from them without regrets! *"Indeed, the one who sows for his own sinful flesh will reap destruction from the sinful flesh."*

So don't live for the moment in this life! Instead, live for eternal life. Paul writes, *"But the one who sows for the spirit will reap eternal life from the spirit."* What does it mean to sow for the spirit? Right after that list of sins in the previous chapter, Paul presents the fruit of the spirit: *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful flesh with its passions and desires"* (5:22-24).

We don't belong to the moment. We belong to Christ Jesus through baptism. We don't belong to our sinful flesh—we've nailed it and its corrupt desire to the cross of Christ. So we live not for the moment, but for eternal life. We live to play our part in God's good plans. That's difficult in the moment. But the harvest will come, and it will be worthy it! Our proof is Jesus.

Jesus laid out his plan in our Gospel reading. He would continue to live his whole life for God, even though it would mean he would suffer and die. Peter rebuked him! It seemed such a waste of a life! But Jesus would not be deceived. *"Get behind me, Satan!"* he said to Peter. *"You do not have your mind set on the things of God, but the things of men"* (Mark 8:33). Jesus knew that God would not be mocked. Jesus could live for the moment and lose his soul. Or he could lose his life for God, so that he could save the world and enjoy glory forever. With his mind set on the things of God, the choice was easy. Jesus would suffer every moment of his life if it meant he could save us forever.

Without Jesus, we would be mocked forever. "You gave in to that sin for that moment of pleasure. You knew it would bring eternal death. I bet you regret it now!" But in Jesus, the God who cannot be mocked, allowed himself to be mocked in our place. People saw him on the cross and mocked him: "What a waste of life!" Jesus allowed himself to reap that harvest of destruction that we deserve. But because he had sown for eternity through his perfect life, he was able to rise from the dead. He produced a harvest of eternal life for us. That means that every moment, through faith in Jesus, our sinful moments are forgiven. Our life is instead a life sown with seeds of the spirit for eternal life. Because of that, in the end we can face an eternity without regrets. It's not a teenage dream. That's God's love! And that's what we're living for when we resist our sinful desires and live with love, joy peace, patience, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, and self-control.

And here's the wonderful part about focusing on eternity. It does help you live for the moment in this life. But not for yourself—for others. Every moment of this life, we live for the opportunity to do good to others. Paul writes, *"Let us not become weary of doing good, because at the appointed time we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who belong to the household of faith."*

On January 15, 2009, US Airways flight 1549 lost power in both engines 100 seconds into the flight. Half a mile into the air, geese had been sucked into the jet engines, which exploded with fire. Captain Sullivan, the pilot, had 208 seconds—less than four minutes—until the plane would hit the ground. He made a split-second decision. He guided the plane into position and landed safely on the Hudson River. Before the plane sank, he got everyone out safely. He was the last to leave the plane after walking the length of it twice to make sure no one had been left behind. He saved 155 lives including several unborn babies.

In the movie based on this event, he says, "Here's the funny thing. I've delivered a million passengers over 40 years in the air, but in the end, I'm gonna be judged on 208 seconds."

But that's not entirely right. He wouldn't be judged only on 208 seconds. That judgment would come as a result of his entire life up to that moment. Sully didn't become a hero in those 208 seconds. He had been working towards it his entire life. In real life, Sully said, "For 42 years, I've been making small, regular, deposits into the bank of experience, education, and training. And on January 15 the balance was sufficient so that I could make a very large withdrawal." Sully was ready to serve on January 15, 2009, to be judged on that moment, because of how he lived the previous 42 years.

Sully could've grown lax in his hard work over 42 years. He didn't have any emergencies in all of that time after all! We can grow lax in our godly living. Doing good usually doesn't give us great rewards in this life. It often doesn't even seem like it makes a difference! "You mean I've gotta change that diaper again? You mean I have to forgive that person again!" It's hard to keep sowing those seeds of the spirit for however many years God gives us on earth. That's why Paul says, *"Don't grow weary!"* We're not living for the rewards now. The appointed time will come, when Jesus will come back and give us the gift of eternal life. You're here today to be filled with that hope through God's Word, through baptism, and through the Lord's supper, which we celebrate again next week. You leave worship filled with the hope of eternity, so you can open your eyes to live in the moment, to seize opportunities to do good to all people, especially to those right around you.

In our reading from Acts we heard: *"For David, after he had served God's purpose in his own generation, fell asleep, was laid to rest with his fathers, and saw decay. But the One God raised did not see decay"* (13:36-37). That's what this life is for the Christian. We don't live for ourselves saying, "No regrets, just love!" That life ends with eternal regret. No, we serve God's purpose in our own days and moments, with the people around us, and then we fall asleep. Without Jesus that would be it. All the good we tried to do in this life would decay and be meaningless. But Jesus, the Holy One, did not see decay. He rose again, and like David, after we have served our purpose in his great plan, we too will rise to enjoy the harvest of eternal life that Jesus has sown. It's an eternity with no regrets! Just love—the love of God forever.