

Are You Weary Of Doing What'S Right?

Spiritual Depression

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The apostle Paul traveled extensively and saw firsthand the troubles that the local congregations of God's church in the Gentile world experienced. He wrote to help them to understand the causes of their troubles and the way to overcome them. He dealt with the causes as they arose.

In his epistles, he dealt with all types of spiritual depression, one of which was weariness. The problems in people's spiritual lives are always the same; they never seem to vary. The appearances differ; the specific excuse for the trouble may vary; but the cause is losing heart. Human nature and, often, demonic influences are generally behind this problem—not always, but most of the time.

Of course, Satan never varies in his ultimate objective. There is a terrible subtlety in the way our adversary works. He tries to tempt God's people and make us miserable by suggesting false teaching and things that discourage us. We have all seen his very clever way of putting certain things in our midst which should not be there or of giving the world some new kind of religion, a mixture of various religions salted with a touch of truth. We see these things in the Pope, Mohammad, the Dalai Lama, Rick Warren, and, recently, Oprah. It is amazing that she is getting such a following.

However, God's people are in quite a different circumstance because these religion mixtures do not fool them. For the most part, the problem in the church today is not false religions, although the introduction of false doctrines is a continual threat. The real threat to members of God's church is weariness in well-doing. Are you weary of doing what is right?

In the fifth chapter of Paul's epistle to the Galatians, the Christian's life is equated to a battleground, and the flesh and the Spirit are two combatants at war with each other. You may remember that Galatians 5:19-22 lists the works of the flesh and the fruit of the spirit, two completely opposite lists.

In Galatians 6, though, the Christian's life is equated to a country estate. The flesh and the spirit are two fields where we plant seed. Further, the harvest we reap depends on where and on what we plant seed. Our sowing of seed must be different from the world's. We must keep our sowing separate from what the world sows.

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This is an essentially important principle of holiness. Whether the concept is found in the Old Testament Hebrew or New Testament Greek, it basically means "separation" or "setting apart." The English word *holy* is from the Saxon *halig*, meaning "whole" or "sound." Holiness is a general term used to indicate sanctity or separation from all that is sinful, impure, or morally imperfect—it is moral wholeness.

We are not the helpless victims of our nature, personality, and environment as educators today would have us believe. On the contrary, what we become depends largely on how we behave; our character is shaped by our conduct. According to Galatians 5, our duty in conduct is to "walk in the spirit"; according to Galatians 6, to "sow to the Spirit." In this way, the Holy Spirit is equated both to the path along which we walk and to the field in which we sow. How can we expect to reap the fruit of the Spirit if we do not sow in the field of the Spirit?

The old adage is true: "Sow a thought, reap an act; sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny."

Galatians 6:8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

Let us take a moment to examine the two kinds of sowing which are possible, namely, "sowing to the flesh" and "sowing to the Spirit."

Galatians 5:24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Our "flesh" is our human nature with its passions and desires that, if unchecked, break out in the works of the flesh listed in verses 19-21. This human nature remains in us even after our calling and baptism. It is one of the fields of our human domain where we can sow seed—but what quality of seed?

To "sow to the flesh" is to pander to it—to cherish, coddle, and stroke it—instead of crucifying it. The seeds we sow are largely thoughts and deeds. Every time we allow ourselves to harbor a grudge, nurse a grievance, entertain an impure fantasy, or wallow in self-pity, we are sowing to the flesh. Every time we act on our own behalf to the detriment of others, every time we lie in bed when we should be up and praying, every time we read pornographic literature, every time we take a risk that brushes aside our self-control, we are sowing to the flesh. Some Christians sow to the flesh every day and

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wonder why they do not reap good character, moral wholeness, holiness. Holiness is a harvest; whether we reap it or not depends almost entirely on what and where we sow.

To "sow to the spirit" is the same as "to set the mind on the Spirit" and "to walk by the Spirit." Again, the seeds we sow are our thoughts and deeds; in other words, our attitudes and works. We are to seek and to set our minds on the things of God, "things that are above, not... things that are on earth."

James 3:17-18 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

There are two ways that the words *fruit of righteousness* can be understood in verse 18. Righteousness is the seed that bears the fruit. The fruit of the Spirit is the fruit that the Holy Spirit produces; the fruit of repentance is the evidence in our lives that we have truly repented. In the same way, the fruit of righteousness is the fruit righteousness bears. Righteousness is the fundamental reality of being right with God. The life of wisdom is not a new thing or something different; it is just another way of talking about being right with God and of the life that, by good works, shows what a lovely thing being right with God is. All of the good fruits that James mentions in verse 17 are the proper and natural outgrowth of being right with God.

The other application of the words *fruit of righteousness* is "the fruit that consists of righteousness." In this case, righteousness is a summary description of the life of a person who is right with God and, therefore, approved by God. Generally, we can say that the fruit of righteousness is wisdom.

Righteousness is the seed from which they grow and/or righteousness describes the life in which they come to harvest. A seed needs its own proper conditions for germination, growth, and production. However good the seed, it cannot thrive out of its environment. The crop demands the right context or proper environment for its excellent growth. Peace is the soil and those who make peace are the green-fingered gardeners. Therefore, the peaceful fellowship of God's people is the environment in which grows the good fruit that is pleasing to God.

The Apostle Paul distinguishes between the two harvests as well as between the two sowings:

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Galatians 6:8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

The results are only logical. If we sow to the flesh, we will "of the flesh reap corruption." A process of moral decay will set in, and we will go from bad to worse. On the other hand, if we sow to the Spirit, we will "of the Spirit reap eternal life." A process of moral and spiritual growth will begin and continue.

If we want to reap a harvest of holiness, our duty is twofold. Firstly, we have to avoid sowing to the flesh; secondly, we have to keep sowing to the spirit. We must unsympathetically eliminate the first and concentrate our time and energies on the second. It is another way of saying that we have to "crucify the flesh" and "walk by the Spirit."

Moving on from Galatians 6:8, the subject changes somewhat from personal holiness to doing good, helping others, and giving in caring and kind ways in the church and, secondarily, in the community. Paul continues to expand this subject under the metaphor of sowing and reaping.

Active Christian service is tiring, testing work. Many people tend to become discouraged, to slack off, or even to give up. Therefore, Paul gives us this incentive: he tells us that doing good is like sowing seed. If we persevere in sowing good seed, "in due season we will reap, if we do not lose heart."

Galatians 6:9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

If the farmer tires of sowing and leaves half his field unsown, he will reap only half a crop. It is the same with good deeds. If we want a harvest, then we have to finish the sowing and be patient, like the farmer who "waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it..." The sowing is the doing of good works. Patient well-doing in the church or, in a limited way, in the community, should produce good results. It may bring comfort, relief, or assistance to people in need. It will bring good to the doer, as well. It cannot bring salvation, since that is the free gift of God; nevertheless, faithful service will be rewarded in God's kingdom, which will probably take the form of still more responsible service.

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This is what Paul is talking about when he says, "Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." However, there is a qualification to this.

Galatians 6:10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Paul shows here that since sowing of good seed results in a good harvest, "as we have opportunity," we have to be careful not to sow the seed where it is not wanted. If seed is sown where it is not wanted or accepted, it will not produce good fruit.

Through the last five decades of attending God's church, I have witnessed people trying to serve others who did not want help, and even found it insulting. They saw it as interfering in their personal lives. No good fruit will come out of forcing people to do something against their will or to force service upon them. We have to respect people's wishes when they do not want our help.

We have a measure of responsibility to all people to do good, when the occasions arise. Kindness and compassion have no restriction as to who receive them, except that our physical and spiritual families have first priority and loyalty. As in a home, family needs are met first, then those of the neighbors.

The household of which Paul speaks consists of fellow members of God's church, who share with us "like precious faith" and, therefore, are our brothers and sisters in the Family of God. However, Christian well-doing should never stop at that point if anyone is in need. Verse 10 speaks clearly about Christian social responsibility, but it is primarily addressed to individual members of God's church. The church is not an agency for social work to the world, but individual Christians may be led in this way to serve as they are able and have opportunity.

A patient continuance in well-doing is a characteristic that is so essential that it will be taken as evidence of faith when judged.

Romans 2:5-7 But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who "will render to each one according to his deeds": eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality;

Beyond the gift of salvation that God gives us, there is a reward that is given according to our works.

Paul mentions two broad classes here: those who persist in doing good and those who follow an evil course. The difference is that those who have the right perspective see the reward of eternal life as a promise to those who do not regard their good works as an end in themselves but see them as marks not of human achievement, but of hope in God. Their trust is not in their good works, but in God, the only source of glory, honor, and righteousness. Paul is portraying the motivation and the quality of the life that will culminate in eternal fellowship with God. It is the way of life for "those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality." The motive is very, very important.

In the sixth chapter of Paul's letter to the Galatians, the apostle is not concerned about the danger of our going astray through heresy and error or by taking up some strange religious beliefs. He is concerned about something much subtler: The people just become weary and tired while still going in the right direction.

Galatians 6:9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

This is the case of those who are on the right road and facing the right way. They are moving in the right direction, but the trouble is that they are shuffling along with drooping heads and hands, presenting a scene that is the direct opposite of what we are meant to be in living God's way of life. In living God's way of life, our heads are never hung low, other than in humility.

There is something called the danger of the middle period of life. It is something that I have been experiencing for a few years, and I know that many of you have already experienced it and are in the process, as well. It is something that is true not only in a Christian's life, but it is eventually true of everyone. It is the problem of middle age. It is something that is evident in varying degrees in everyone, and it is something we all have to face sooner or later as we grow older.

Great attention is being paid to the youth today, which is evident in the "future shock" rapidity of change in all areas of the pop-culture. There is even a deceptive political movement today in this country that touts "Change!"—but the reality of that change is fascism and communism. Also, a considerable amount of attention is being paid to the elderly today, which is seen in the dramatically increasing building of retirement

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communities and in the increase of retiree vacation packages, no doubt as the result of the huge influx of retiring baby boomers, which began a year or so ago.

Perhaps the most difficult period of all in life is the middle period. There are compensations in youth and there are compensations in old age that seem to be entirely lacking in this middle period. According to *The Fourth Turning* by William Strauss and Neil Howe, midlife is from 42 to 62 years of age. They also call these periods "seasons of life."

Aging is something we all have to encounter. As we get older, our resilience and our vigor tend to go, and we are aware of a slowing down and a slackening in our powers. In fact, I heard a talk show host on the radio, about six months ago, say, "What is wrong with age 50? I just turned 50, and all of a sudden all of my energy has gone." I have personally noticed this in a greater way since age 50, and I am sure those of you who are older can attest to the fact that it does not end there. This is something with which we are all familiar, at least by hearsay if not in actual experience.

Is it not also true in connection with a person's work and occupation? That constitutes a problem for many people. It means that they have gone beyond that stage of developing and building up and have reached a certain level. For many reasons, it is impossible to develop further physically. There they are on that level, and the difficulty is to keep going on that level while lacking the stimulus that took them there in the first place. In our younger years, we all have a lot of energy and we are ready to tackle anything and leap the highest building.

This happens to business owners, who often find it much more difficult to maintain a business than to build it up. In a sense, everything seems to be with them when they are building it up, but it is when they arrive at that point and lose the stimulus, the enthusiasm for building that business up, that they find it extremely difficult to hold that position. I have heard from business owners who have said that very thing: that once they build up their company to the point that it is working smoothly, they just lose the enthusiasm for maintaining it. That is why you see so many individuals start a new business and then sell it and start another business. They become bored with what they have produced.

This could be illustrated almost endlessly by taking it purely from the standpoint of natural life and from our experiences in work and occupations and various other callings. If you read the biographies of the most successful men the world has ever known, you will find that they all agree that that level or plateau was the most difficult period of their lives. Without even realizing this in my research here, I would say that my

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forties were the roughest decade of my life.

This is equally true in the religious or spiritual life. This is the stage that follows that initial experience where everything was new and surprising and wonderful and clear, the stage when we were constantly making new discoveries that never seemed to come to an end. Suddenly, though, we are conscious of the fact that they seem to have come to an end and we have become accustomed to God's way of life. We are no longer surprised at things, as we were at the beginning, because we are familiar with them and know them well. That thrill of new discovery that made us full of life in the early stages of being in the church suddenly seems to have gone.

Nothing seems to be happening; there does not seem to be any change, advance, or development. This may also be true of us individually; it may be true of our work; and it may be true of the church as a whole. (I have left the middle age part now and am speaking about everyone and speaking about it on a spiritual level.) It is something that always tends to happen when we are over the newness, the thrill and excitement of doing something that we have never learned before or done before, and we settle down into our routine, doing the same thing day after day. This is the condition that the Apostle Paul deals with here, and he recognized it in the church.

Making matters worse, there may be trials and difficulties caused by other people that may add to our troubles. They may do things they should not do and offend in various ways. As the result of such trials and troubles, at a time when we ourselves are in this critical period, we become weary in well-doing. Often, there comes a point at which development and advance seem to have come to an end, and we are in a kind of doldrums when it is difficult to know whether the work is moving at all, either backwards or forwards. Everything seems to be at a standstill and nothing seems to be taking place.

There is no doubt that some of the Christians to whom Paul wrote his epistle to the Galatians had arrived at that point. The false teaching, the heresies, and other troubles no doubt had something to do with this, but that is not what Paul is dealing with in chapter 6. These people were not so much tired *of* the work as tired *in* it, which is why Paul warns them not to be weary in doing good.

What should we do about such a depressed situation? Whenever we are found in this condition of weariness, before we begin to do anything positive, there are certain negatives that are absolutely necessary.

The first is this: We should not consider the suggestions that come to us from all

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directions. I do not mean so much from people but from within ourselves, the thoughts that seem to be speaking around us. Do not listen to them when they suggest that we should give up or give in. A strong temptation comes at the point when we say to ourselves, "I am weary and tired; it is too much for me." There is nothing to say at that point, except do not listen. It is important to start with these don'ts on the very lowest level. No matter what happens we always have to say to ourselves, "I am pushing forward. I am not giving up."

II Timothy 1:6-7 Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

The gift that Timothy had received was the Holy Spirit; which provided the help to preach and defend the truth. This gift is represented by the concept of a fire, which, if it is not frequently stirred up and supplied with fresh fuel, will go out. This is the specific idea that Paul had in mind when he used the Greek term translated *stir up*, which literally means "to stir up the fire; to add fresh fuel to it." From this, we know that if Timothy had not continued to be a diligent worker with God, he would have received this gift of God in vain. What a waste this would have been. "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." We are to use it lest we become "weary in doing good."

However, giving up is not necessarily the strongest temptation. Let me put it in the form of a second negative: Do not resign yourself to the weariness. While there are people who hand in their resignations and say, "I am quitting," it is not so with the majority. The danger of the majority at this point is just to resign themselves to the weariness and to lose heart and hope. They will go on, but they go on in a hopeless, dragging condition. To put it more specifically, the danger at this point is to say something like this:

Well, I have lost that enthusiasm that I had, and obviously I am not going to get it back again. I am going to drudge on, though. Out of loyalty, I will go on as a sheer duty. I have lost the enjoyment I once had; that is gone and it's undoubtedly gone forever. I just have to put up with it. I will resign myself to my fate. I will not be a quitter; I will not turn my back on it. I will go on, even though I feel hopeless about it, just shuffling down the road, not walking with hope as I once did, but keeping on as best I can.

That is the spirit of resignation, putting up with it. When you start putting up with

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something, the fire goes out. There was a speech assignment in Spokesman's Club and Ambassador Club that was "Stir to Action." It is one of the hardest speeches to give, because you have to stir your audience to action. It was a real challenge. That is what we have to do with our lives: we have to stir ourselves to action. We do that spiritually by stirring up the Holy Spirit within us, which does require a great deal of prayer.

The spirit of resignation is one of the greatest dangers; and it is not only dangerous on the spiritual level, where we are most concerned, but also on every level in life. We can work like that in our job and get by, but we cannot live our lives like that without rotting away spiritually, mentally, and physically. It will ruin our health.

We are really saying to ourselves: "The best years are gone; my productive years belong to the past. I may never live that again, but I will just keep pushing on." There is something about this, of course, that may seem wonderful to some; there is something heroic about it. Notice, however, that it is presented to you here as a negative. We have to be careful that it is not a temptation. Satan has put in front of us. If he can get us to lose hope, he will have succeeded in destroying us.

Obviously, this is one of the greatest dangers confronting a Christian because it is so subtle. It is the danger of doing something only as a formality and as a matter of duty to be technically correct. True, you are going on, but wearily trudging along instead of walking as we should walk in the spirit.

That brings us to the third and last negative, and this again is a very dangerous thing. This third danger is that when we become weary and tired in this way, some of us will resort to artificial stimulants. You know the temptation. It has been the ruin of many people, minister and layman alike. There have been many business owners who have gotten into this weary state. They are conscious that they do not have the strength and the vitality that they once had, and they do not feel up to par. People in the church who have lost their first love have run into this very same disaster.

They do not know what to do about it themselves and increase their alcohol consumption for relief and escape; they think it is just the shot in the arm they need. There have been many people—including, even more sadly, teenagers—who have turned to alcohol to help them to continue. People turn to drugs in exactly the same way.

I worked with a man twenty-five years ago who was one of the nicest people I have ever met. He had been the owner of a successful construction company, which he eventually lost to alcoholism. While in his forties, he was flying a plane carrying his whole

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family—his wife and children. The plane crashed and everyone was killed except him. He lost his entire family that day, but he survived—barely! He never forgave himself for that.

The more he drank to ease the emotional pain and anguish, the more he destroyed what little he had left. Down in the dumps, he applied for a job as a boiler room maintenance supervisor at the company where I worked. The facilities manager felt sorry for him and offered him an opportunity to turn his life around.

He continued to drink on his own time; I never knew of him having any alcohol on the job. One winter Monday morning, he did not show up for work. I think everyone in the department was concerned, since his problem was public knowledge. A few days later, we received word that he had been found in his van at a beach resort; he had been drinking so heavily that he passed out. He had frostbite and had to have his feet removed, and he died from the operation. Ironically, it was close to the anniversary of the death of his family.

Some things really push people to the limit of what they can handle, especially if they do not have God's Holy Spirit. We do have God's Holy Spirit, though, and that can help and empower us.

However, this negative has a vital spiritual application. Over many years, I have seen people in the church dealing with this general spiritual weariness in a similar way. I have seen ministers become alcoholics; I have seen widows addicted to their wine. I have seen alcoholic teens who could not do without a drink, who could not have a good time without imbibing alcohol.

We sometimes see the problem of a lack of excitement for biblical themes in the advertisements outside mainstream church buildings. There are certain churches that are always putting out some fresh announcements or finding some new attraction to try to entice people in. Those churches are obviously living on artificial stimulants, and it is all being done with this idea in mind. The minister, deacon, or deaconess has said, "Things are not very exciting; we are becoming somewhat dead. What can we do about it? Well, let us do this or that. It will provide serving opportunities and activities. It will be fun." This type of thinking in the spiritual life and in the life of the church can be compared to the person who takes to drinking or drugs in order to give himself some excitement or to work himself up.

Obviously, this is an extremely subtle temptation and a subtle danger. It seems to be so reasonable; it seems to be just the thing needed; but the terrible fallacy behind it all is

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that, in a scientific sense, what they are really doing is to exhaust themselves even more. The same is true of relying on natural energy rather than spiritual. I have seen many, many people do that. They come into the church, all enthusiastic, and they burn themselves out; in a few years, they are gone. The enthusiasm is good but it has to be guided in the right direction.

Also, as they become more exhausted, they will need still more drink and still more drugs. The process is cumulative. It is exactly the same in the spiritual realm.

Those are three negatives that are very important; now let us turn to the positive. What can we do to avoid getting weary in doing good?

The first thing must be self-examination. We must start by examining ourselves. Do not just shrug it off by saying that your dreary state cannot be helped. Do not turn to the stimulants. Sit down and say to yourself, "Why am I weary? What is the cause of my weariness?" It should be an obvious question. We cannot treat the condition before we diagnose it; we do not apply the remedy before we know the cause. We have to ask ourselves why we are weary and how we got into this condition.

Often it is a lack of prayer and Bible study; often it is a lack of faithfulness or lack of dedication. There are many possible answers to the question. We may be in that condition simply because we are working too hard. We can be tired in the work and not tired of the work. It does not matter in what area, whether natural or spiritual, exhaustion is still the result when we have been over-taxing our energy and our physical resources. A lack of proper sleep can contribute to this condition. I know for many women who go into menopause, it is a miserable set of years because the lack of sleep keeps them in an exhausted state constantly. My heart goes out to them.

If we go on working too hard or under strain, we are bound to suffer. Of course, if that is the cause of the trouble, often the remedy that is sought is medical treatment, which is a very bad idea, because it takes us back to the negative: artificial solutions through drugs. I am not talking about only uppers and downers (or whatever the terms are for them), but even something like aspirin can be an artificial solution if not used very carefully.

There is an insightful example of this in the Old Testament. You remember that, when Elijah had an attack of spiritual depression after his heroic effort on Mt. Carmel, he sat down under a juniper tree and felt sorry for himself. The real thing he needed was nourishment and sleep; therefore, God gave him food, water, and rest before He gave him spiritual help.

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I Kings 19:1-10 And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time." And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, "It is enough! Now, LOORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!" Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, "Arise and eat." Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again. And the angel of the LOORD came back the second time, and touched him, and said, "Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you." So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God. And there he went into a cave, and spent the night in that place; and behold, the word of the LOORD came to him, and He said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" So he said, "I have been very zealous for the LOORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life."

Was Elijah "weary in well doing"? He had been very tired, not getting enough sleep, food, and drink. Notice that the food and drink God provided did not consist of alcohol and chips.

I Kings 19:15-16 Then the LOORD said to him: "Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria. Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place."

It is interesting to note that God could have given him spiritual power that could have carried him but instead, through an angel, provided him with food, water, and rest before He gave him the task of the forty days and forty nights' journey followed by spiritual commission and help. We need to take that as an example so that we do the same and are up to the task at hand. That must have been some food and sleep, for him to survive for forty days and forty nights.

However, let us assume that it is not that we need food and rest. Something else may be the cause of the trouble. Often it is that we may have been living God's way of life or doing good works by means of human energy. We may have been doing it all on our own strength instead of being driven by the power of the Spirit. We may have been working with mere carnal, human mind power, and maybe even physical energy.

This is what we will do on those days that we do not pray. If we try to do God's work ourselves, there will be only one result: It will ultimately crush us because it is such spiritually demanding work. To resist the pulls of this world and our human nature—to resist committing sin—is hard work in this society that is always working against us. Therefore, we have to examine ourselves to see if there is something wrong with the way we are doing this work.

Then a still more important and much more spiritual question arises. We have to ask ourselves why we have been doing this work and what has really been our motive. Thus, we get back to motive again.

We have been active and enjoying the work, but now we find it has become a burden. Why have we really been serving the whole time? It is a very revealing question, because it may be the first time we have asked ourselves that.

We have taken everything for granted and assumed that our motive was pure; after all, we are converted. We may find, though, that our motives were not as true as we thought. Some people work for the sake of thrill and excitement or just to find something for others to do.

If we are not careful, we can cause others to be weary in well-doing. Some people are not happy unless they are always doing something. They become very actively engaged in church-related work and, without realizing it, sometimes end up forcing others to fulfill their own need for activity. It is possible to do this merely for the thrill of organizing. There are always those who love to arrange the lives of others. Some have seen this, especially those of you who were in Worldwide, years ago. There were people always assigning things for other people to do. If we live that way we will get exhausted and cause the same exhaustion in the lives of others. We end up accomplishing far less than the energy we put forth, because everything is overdone, even the simplest of needs.

In reality, the real motive is to satisfy the self, to please ourselves, to be able to say to ourselves, "How wonderful I am and how much I do!" Self says that we are important.

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Sadly, it has not all been for the glory of God, but for our own glory.

We may say that we do not want the praise and "to God be the glory," but we like to see results and to be acknowledged openly. Self has come in, and self is a terrible master. (I am thankful that I have never felt that way in the Church of the Great God; I really appreciate the way things have been done.) If we are working to satisfy and please the self in any shape or form, the end is always going to be weariness and tiredness. It is so important to ask ourselves about the motivation in connection with our work! If the motivation is "all for the glory of God," then joy, peace, and good fruit will result.

I Corinthians 10:31-33 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

The principle here is that when we seek to do something or get others to do something for us, we have to make sure we are not unnecessarily burdening others for our own personal benefit. To do something "good" for one person but in the process cause grief to someone else does not bear good fruit. I am not saying we should not sacrifice for the benefit of others—absolutely we should! I am speaking in the context of causing others to become weary in well-doing.

When we were in our previous affiliation, there was something going on several times a week, on Saturday night, and on the weekend. I can honestly say that we became weary in well-doing. The Y.O.U. activities wore us out. This is the type of thing that I am talking about. Big productions are made out of everything that is done.

A last, very important question regarding overcoming weariness in doing good is to ask the question, "Has this work kept us going?" Instead of being God's work remotely, has it been a kind of mainspring of our own lives? One of the greatest dangers in the spiritual life is to live on our own activities.

In other words, the activity is not in its right place as something we do to joyfully be of benefit to others but has become something that keeps us going. It is a sad condition for people who do not realize that they have been living for years on the force and strength of their activities. These activities kept them going until then they became ill or grew old and could no longer do what they used to do, and then they became very depressed.

I remember seeing quite a few deacons in Worldwide that became that way. Physically,

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they were unable to serve any more. They became very depressed because they were in wheelchairs or whatever. It was because they were living for that physical service, rather than doing it for the right motives. I am sure that they did it for the right motive quite often, but there was also the wrong motive involved. They did not know what to do with themselves, because they had been living on their own activities. It seems to be one of the most obvious tendencies in this society. It is certainly a major cause of neurosis.

The world has become so mad that we are kept going by this terrific momentum and rush of life. Instead of our being in control, the activity controls us. Ultimately, it exhausts us and depresses us.

Let us look at some of the main elements in this essential process of self-examination. Here is the principle: If in any area of your life you are weary, please stop and ask yourself, "Why am I weary? How am I being carried along?" Examine your whole attitude towards your life and the activity or thing in particular that you are doing and realize how you feel about God's way of life. Why do you want to live this way?

Let us look at the matter positively. There are certain great principles, according to the Apostle Paul, that we have to recognize if we are to be cured of this condition of weariness. In the first place, there are phases in our process of conversion, as there are in our whole physical life. The New Testament talks about being "babes in Christ"; it talks about growing. The Apostle John wrote his first epistle to little children, young men, and old men with regard to our physical and spiritual lives. It is a fact—it is scriptural—that the Christian's life is not always the same. There is a beginning and a continuing and an end. Because of these phases, there are many variations and many challenges.

It may be that feelings are the most variable. You would expect to have the most feeling at the beginning, and this is what usually happens. Often, God's people become weary because certain feelings have gone away. This is why you see, as I mentioned earlier, some people will come into the church with a massive amount of enthusiasm and then burn out after a few years and leave. They were running on emotion and feelings.

We do not necessarily realize that what has happened is that we have grown older. Because we are not as we once were, we think that there is something wrong. However, as we grow and develop spiritually, changes must take place, and all these things obviously make a difference in our experience.

Here is an illustration to which we can all relate: No doubt you have noticed families

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coming into the building for Sabbath services. The small child or children, especially the boys, are not walking, but hopping, skipping, or sometimes running like a lamb into the building. Then, comes the parent, usually the mother, weighed down with a variety of things—possibly a blanket or diaper bag and Bible, maybe some toys—but she walks in. You do not see her skipping or hopping.

Notice the spiritual application in this picture. The child is bounding with energy and has not yet learned how to control it. In reality, over the long term, the mother actually has a great deal more energy than the child; although superficially, it would seem that she has much less because she walks in quietly. However, we know that is not the case. The energy is actually much greater in the adult though it appears to be greater in the child, and it is because they have misunderstood this experience of slowing down that so many people think they have lost something vital and become weary and depressed. By the way, the mother does not usually need to take the nap during church, but the child does.

Remember that there are phases and recognize that there are these stages of development, both in our physical and spiritual lives. Sometimes the realization of that fact alone will go a long way to solve the whole problem.

Now to the second principle: "Let us not be weary in doing good (or well-doing)." Remember, it is about "doing good," which is the thing we tend to forget. We moan and complain that life is the same thing week after week. Because that is our attitude towards life, we become weary. Paul says, though, "Let me remind you that you are in and are learning God's way of life, and His way of life is a life of doing good, of well-doing." If we regard God's way of life as a dreary task we are insulting God.

What is our Christian life? If we come to regard any aspect of God's way of life merely as a chore or duty, and if we have forced ourselves and to grit our teeth in order to get through it, we are insulting God and have forgotten the very essence of God's way of life. Eternal life is a quality of life, not necessarily a length of life. Who would want to live forever and ever in a state of mental anguish, poverty, and hopelessness?

The Christian life is not a chore. God's way of life alone is worthy of the name "life." This life alone is righteous, holy, pure, and good. (The Bible, the written Word of God that teaches us all about it, is dynamic. This is why every time that we read it we get something else out of the exact scripture.) It is the kind of life the Son of God Himself lives. It is to live like God Himself. That is why we should live it! It is not a matter of just trying to carry on somehow. It is a great and good life; it is "doing good"; it is "well-doing."

God called us into this way of life of His. We have been uniquely invited to be among the firstfruits of His Kingdom—a very small and exclusive group, His own special people. We have come from the broad way to the narrow way because the only begotten Son of God left heaven and came down to earth for our salvation—for yours and mine. He divested Himself of all of His eternal glory and humbled Himself. Although He may have become physically weary in work at times, He never became weary in well doing.

He endured a life in this world and was spit upon and reviled. He had thorns thrust into His head and was nailed to the stake to bear the punishment for my sin and yours. That is how we have come from that to this. If we ever—even for a fraction of a second—question the greatness and the glory and the wonder and the nobility of this walk in which we are involved, we would be spitting on Him. "Let us not grow weary while doing good."

Let us take this further. The next principle is that this life of ours on earth is a preparatory one. Go back and look at your life and put it into the context of eternity. Stop and ask yourself what it all means. It is a preparatory school. This life is a basic (spiritual) training.

Our greatest joys are the firstfruits and the foretaste of the eternal joy that is coming. It is very important that we remind ourselves of that. It is the sheer grind of daily life that gets us down. We will reap what we have sown. The moment that we realize the truth about the spiritual harvest, we are energized, if we really do understand it.

The trouble is that the world's thoughts are still too much a part of our minds. We are too immersed in our problems, which is why vision is so important. We need to look ahead, to anticipate, and to look forward to the Kingdom of God. The greatest harvest is coming!

I Corinthians 2:9 Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.

Colossians 3:2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

Realize the glory of the life toward which we are headed. That is part of the cure. Paul told the Corinthians,

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I Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

We have to go on with our work, whatever the feelings. One minister once told me years ago, and I have never forgotten it, "Sometimes you have to rise above the way that you feel and perform the task or duty at hand. Neither headache nor non-infectious disease should keep us from doing God's work. God will provide the increase. He will send the rain of His abundant blessings as we need them."

Above all, we have to consider the Master for whom we work. Remember how Christ endured and how patient He was and is.

Hebrews 12:3-11 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

We are to look to Christ's example in order to avoid becoming weary and discouraged.

We have not yet resisted to bloodshed. Christ has. He understands what we are going through. He had to push Himself, and He was given a full measure of the Holy Spirit, but He had to stir it up with the help of the Father. Through His life here on earth, He went unflinching on and never complained. How did He do it?

Hebrews 12:2 says that we must look to Jesus, "the author and finisher of our faith, who

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for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame...." That is how He did it! He had vision; He saw the end result; and He saw all the joy toward which He was working. Plus, He had the joy of what He had within Him: the Holy Spirit, the knowledge and the fellowship of God. It was the joy that was set before Him. He knew about the crowning day that was coming. He was able to see the harvest that He was going to reap and, seeing that, He was able to ignore wearying and depressing things and to go through them triumphantly. You and I have the opportunity—we have the privilege—of being molded to be like Him.

Matthew 16:24-27 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works."

In the meantime, we may even have the honor and privilege of suffering, in a worse way, for His name. Paul says an extraordinary thing in writing to the Colossians (1:24). He says that he is privileged to make up in his own body what remains of the suffering of Christ. We have the same privilege, but often without realizing it.

We have to remind ourselves to ask God to forgive us for ever having allowed ourselves to be weary. Look at your life in this way, and as certainly as you do, you will find that you are filled with a new hope, a new strength, a new power. You will not need artificial stimulants or anything else, because you will find that you are again thrilled with the privilege and the joy of it all. You will despise yourself for having grumbled and complained, and you will go forward still more dedicated and joyous, until eventually you will hear Him saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord," (Matthew 25:21,23) and "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).