

# **November 9, 2014 - 11:00 a.m. Pastor Jonathan Falwell**

## **What Now? The Journey Begins**

### **Scripture: Galatians 5:13-26**

Summary: Pastor Jonathan Falwell, expounding on Galatians 5:13-26, outlines what is required in order to storm the gates of hell.

Last week we were talking out of Philippians 4. I was preaching from our Roanoke campus. But you remember in Philippians 4 we were talking about what's next for the church. What's next for us? We've been asking the question over and over again, what if? What if we were that church, that church that Jesus raised up, and that we actually did exactly what it is that God wants us to do?

We've been talking about that impact that we pray that God would allow us to see. We've been talking about going out in that Holy Spirit power into our world with a message of hope and a message of truth, a message of life.

Last week we looked at Philippians 4, and if you'll remember, we talked about some very important things with regard to staying true to the Lord, staying true to God's Word. We talked about making sure that unity in the church was something that we were seeking.

Now listen: Unity in the church doesn't happen unless we deliberately go out and try to make it happen, because naturally, in our human condition, we allow things to well up inside of us. We allow issues to come into our lives and our hearts that create division among the church. And God is not honored when that is there. So last week we talked about making sure that we are doing all that we can to see unity within God's body within this church.

Then we also talked about making sure that we are following after the things that are of God; making sure that we understand what it is that we are supposed to do, how we are supposed to live; that light and darkness cannot coexist.

Well today when we kind of begin with a new understanding, a new picture of what the Church is supposed to be after we've been talking about it for these many months. We get to the place today where we ask another question, and that question is this: What now? What now for us, for us here in the Church of Jesus Christ?

And really the journey begins now; the journey begins here because when we start putting into practice in a practical way, in a real way, in a deliberate way of making sure that we are that church that would go out and would be witnesses to Him in Jerusalem and Judea and in Samaria and to the ends of the earth, that's a start, not from some understanding, not from some idea, not from some concept. It has to start with practical teaching from God's Word: what are we to do now, in this moment? Where do we go? What do we do?

And today that's what I want to talk about. I want to talk very deliberately about what is going to happen now for our church in making sure that we emulate that Acts church so that we, just like they did, see people added to the church daily those coming to Christ, those whose lives are being changed because of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I want you to turn in your Bibles with me to the book of Galatians today. We're going to look in Galatians 5 in a moment in talking about, looking at, seeing a picture of Paul writing here about what we need to do now in a practical way.

You remember last week I referenced Matthew 16. That's the passage, if you'll remember, that Jesus said, "Upon this rock I'll build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." We've talked about how the church, by its very nature, by its purpose, by its commission from God of what we're supposed to do is to charge the very gates of hell. We need to make sure that we are going out there and taking the light and the love of Jesus into a world that is dark.

I love the way The New Living Translation puts that passage. It talks about how upon this rock and this church we will be able to have victory over the powers of hell. Now let me tell you, that's a little different perspective than the gates of hell that we're so used to hearing. But I like The New Living Translation statement when it talks about the victory over the powers of hell because the powers of hell speak to Satan himself, and I love to talk about victory that comes because of Christ, that comes through Christ, because we know that Satan, the Bible tells us, is out there to steal and to kill and to destroy, right? John 10:10. He wants to stop us. He wants to shut us down. He wants to stop us from doing what God wants us to do. And The New Living Translation in Matthew 16:18 very clearly says that if you will do what Christ has called you to do, if you will be who Christ has called you to be, then the powers of hell—or basically this: you will have victory over Satan. And I love to see Satan lose, don't you?

So today we begin taking a brand-new journey, a brand-new vision, really of what we're going to do and be doing today and in the days to come, how we at Thomas Road are truly going to charge the gates of hell and what we've got to have in our hearts. And we're going to begin with reading Galatians 5.

Galatians 5, this passage, says this beginning with verse 13. "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty [or been called to freedom in Christ]; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' But if you bite and devour one another [once again talking about unity], beware lest you be consumed by one another!"

Verse 16, “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.”

In other words, they are opposing forces that work against one another, that when we are walking in the Spirit of God, we are in opposition to the lust of the flesh, and when you’re living in the lust of the flesh, when you’re living in that sinful nature, it’s an opposing force against walking in the Spirit.

So Galatians 5 gives us this picture, this image that if you’re going to do and be who God wants you to be, then you have to avoid those things and you have to walk in the Spirit of God.

Let’s continue to read verse 18. It says, “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.”

Verse 19, there’s a list here that we get. “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like.”

We read that list and we see all of these horrible things that are listed off there: hatred, murder, envy, heresy. All of these things that are listed off there. We read that list, but there’s an interesting statement that this list is ended with, and it’s “And the like.” Think about that. “And the like.”

In other words, they’re all one big group here, one big bundle. Literally, sin before God is all the same. Now consequences, always different. But sin is sin is sin. And when you are not walking in the Spirit of God, you are living in sin and you are not fulfilling the call of God on your life and the call of God on the Church.

But Paul is not done here. He lists the stuff off, the things that we’ve got to do, but then he goes on to say, “Of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

But here’s another list, and I want to read this one. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering [or patience], kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”

You’ve got two different lists here. You’ve got the list of the world and you’ve got the list of God. You’ve got the list of the journey that the world would have you go, that Satan would have you walk on; a list that is full of things that always lead you further and further away from God, to not accomplish what it is that God wants you to accomplish. And when we are fulfilling, when we’re living in, when we’re seeking after and searching after our own sinful nature, going in that direction, that always takes us away from God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is a totally different list. The fruit of the Spirit is a list that sounds good to each and every one of us, doesn't it? When you look at those two different lists, you look at the one list that is full of anger and hatred and envy and sorrow and pain and you look at another list that talks about love and joy and patience and kindness and goodness and gentleness and hope.

Of those two lists, which side do you want to live on? I don't know about you, but I want to live on the good side. I want to live on the side that takes me to the idea of love and joy, and it's the fruit of the Spirit.

It means this: When you are a child of God, when you have accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, that is the path that God has given to you if we will obey and follow after it.

And so when we look at this passage and we talk about what it is the church must do now, the journey that we have been placed upon, the things that we are going to do, the direction that we are going to go, today I want to take a few moments in this passage to talk about what has to be in our heart in order to fulfill walking in the Spirit, to fulfill going the way that God has called us to go.

And the first thing that we've got to get when we talk about charging the gates of hell? It's interesting that God doesn't give us weapon. He doesn't say, "You're going to go and bomb," or "You're going to go and blow up." "You're going to go and attack and criticize." No, that is not what this Scripture tells us. If we are going to charge the gates of hell, to defeat and have victory over the powers of hell, the first thing that we've got to do is that we have to love to serve.

Look what it says in verse 13 again. It says, "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but rather through love serve one another."

The greatest weapon that we have in the Church today to charge and to defeat the gates of hell outside of the gospel of Jesus Christ is found in serving one another, in serving each other and having a passion in our hearts that we want to serve.

You remember last year at Thomas Road we instituted a new initiative, a new culture, a new heart last Christmastime at our church entitled "Christmas Cares." You'll remember what we did. We had hundreds of different opportunities for our church to get involved. And we had hundreds of you involved in different areas of serving and different ways of making a difference. In fact, I'm going to have our ushers right now come on down and pass out this brochure, this booklet that we want to give to you today that lists our Christmas Cares 2015.

Now you'll notice I didn't call it a program. I didn't call it a campaign. I called it an initiative. I called it a culture. Because when it's a culture, when it's part of who we are, when it's something engrained in our church, then we are fulfilling what God tells us to do in Galatians 5:13 of serving one another. And found within this booklet are hundreds of different opportunities that we as a church are going to have in the next six to seven weeks to impact our community with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Christmas Cares. An opportunity for us to love and to serve our community. And so I'm encouraging you today to take that booklet home, to look through it this week, and the hundreds of different opportunities that are there for you in the next few weeks to serve our community and to make a difference in our community and to pray about what God would have you do, have your family do, have your life group do, and then next Sunday come back and we're going to begin—out in Main Street—to put that into practice. We're going to be able to plan out what the next six, seven weeks looks like as we love to serve.

But notice this: Not only are we told to love to serve, but if it stops there, then really we're doing it just for ourselves. If all we're doing is going out and serving others and we're doing it without a love for others, then it's really all about us; it's not about them. So the second thing in this passage is that we must love those whom we are serving. We have to have a passion and a love in our heart for the people that we're making a difference with, the lives that we're impacting, the people that we're reaching. And if not, it's just doing it out of selfish ambition. If all we're doing is serving for our purposes, we're not fulfilling the call of God on our lives.

We here at Thomas Road have got lots of opportunities to get involved and to serve. This week I'll be traveling down to Guatemala, where we'll be dedicating a building there that we've built. We talked about that last Christmas. We raised the funds to build that building to train church planters, and we're going to be training 400 church planters in Central and South America every week in that facility—the Jerry Falwell Leadership Training Center. We're dedicating that building this week.

But also down in Guatemala, if you remember just a couple of weeks ago, the Nash family was part of our church and they have been here for many, many years, and a couple of years ago we had an opportunity for a missions trip and they decided to go on that trip. They wanted to go because they thought it would be fun. They thought it would be a good trip. They thought they would enjoy themselves. So they decided to go to Guatemala on a missions trip.

They went down there for seven or eight days and helped serve people down there and came back with a different perspective. They went again and then again and again, and what happened is they truly began to love the people of Guatemala, so much so that they weren't happy sitting here; the only way they were happy was when they were serving there. So that dear mom and dad and two kids up and moved out of Lynchburg to Guatemala, and today they are serving there in that country.

Now think about if we took that same idea, that same concept, that same context and applied it to our church in this community. What if we got beyond having activities and having events and having programs and having opportunities to serve in our community and loving to serve in our community and we truly had a passion and a heart and a love for our community? What would happen is this: We wouldn't simply be happy sitting in this room; we would be happiest when we are out there telling people about Jesus and serving them in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We have to have that kind of love.

So that's what this passage says. Look what it says in verse 14, "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" And I'm glad that God added

those last two words to that verse—as yourself—because He could have just said, “And you shall love your neighbor.” And then what we could do is we could kind of pacify that by saying, “Oh yeah, I love them. I love those people. I love my neighbor. I get that.”

No, no, no. When God says you love them as you love yourself, that’s a whole different level, isn’t it? Totally different perspective. It means that you love them to the highest possible level. That’s what God tells us to do.

So we have to make sure that we love those whom we are serving. So not only do we have to serve, we have to love the people we’re serving, but then there’s a third element that’s critical, because there are lots of different opportunities for charity; there’s lots of different opportunities for making a difference. You can do a Google search today of a charity or for how I can get involved, how I can make a difference, how I can give, and I promise you there are millions and millions of opportunities in the world today where you can go out there and you can serve.

But we don’t serve for serving’s sake. We don’t simply serve because we want to feel good. We don’t simply serve because we’re making a difference. We serve because we truly love the things of God. And that’s what this passage gives us in this last statement that we have to love the things of God. We have to love the gospel of Jesus Christ. We have to love the world so much so that we want to tell them about who Jesus is and what Jesus has done.

In this passage we read in verse 22, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering [that’s the word for patience], kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” This picture, this element here, are the things that come from God and God alone. These are the elements that God wants us to have, He wants us to get, He wants us to experience. And we sit here each and every Sunday with this incredible gift of God’s Word, this incredible gift of the gospel that God has given to us freely, and God wants us to take it to the world.

We’ve got to love the things of God, because if we’re just going out there to serve because maybe we do love to serve and maybe we do love those we are serving, but if we’re not doing it for Christ, then there is no eternal impact. Their bellies might be full today, but what’s going to happen tomorrow? They might have clothes to wear today; they might have a roof over their head; they might have an opportunity today; but what’s going to happen for eternity?

You see, our goal and our passion can’t just be about taking care of the needs right now; our passion, our heart has to be taking care of the needs for eternity. And the needs for eternity come from the love that Jesus Christ has for us when it says “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

My friends, we’ve been given a mission. We’ve been given a commission. We’ve been given a job. We’ve been given a duty. And so what begins today is a new journey for our church. What begins today is a brand-new opportunity. Now I don’t want to paint the picture here that we’ve not been doing the things that we’ve been talking about—we have—but I do want to paint the picture today that not enough of us have been doing what we’re talking about today.

Just outside the walls of this church on any given Sunday are scores of people that are living in a world that is dark. You remember last week we talked about the world that's full of darkness today; it's full of problems and heartache and suffering. That's the world in which we live. And you remember last week we talked about the fact that when darkness exists, when the light is illuminated, when the light is present, that darkness cannot exist. They cannot coexist. Where light is, darkness can't be.

And I want that to be said of our church that in a world that is dark that this church is a church that emanates the light of Jesus Christ. And when we emanate that light, we will begin to illuminate a community. We will begin to take a community that still is in darkness and we will begin to let light seep out into this community, and it will be changed. And not just for today, but for eternity. That's what God wants us to do.

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