

Waiting for Tulips

And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. (Galatians 6:9-10 ESV)

Tulips are my favorite flower. Their burst of color at the start of spring brings joy and welcomed anticipation of warmer days ahead. Growing up in southern Alabama, I never saw tulips in flower gardens or carefully manicured landscapes. Winters are not cold enough in the coastal region of the South for the blooms to form underground. God created this amazing little flower to develop its beauty and buds out of sight, deep underground during the coldest months of the winter when the surface is barren, brown, and often frozen. Now living in Ohio, every spring when these beauties start to burst forth from the cold, bare ground, I can't help but smile!

In recent days, months and years, I've observed a weariness in this world like never before. I'm sure you have too. We all have faced circumstances that have been challenging, hard, and stretching. It is easy to get discouraged when there is loss, pain, evil, and suffering. When we feel alone in the task at hand, or don't see results, it is easy to feel like just giving up.

Paul gives us some timely encouragement in the sixth chapter of Galatians. After reminding us of the responsibility and care we have for one another in the body and admonishing us to carefully examine ourselves, he turns to the agrarian imagery of sowing and reaping. There is a natural law of reaping what is sown. You don't grow tulips by planting daffodils. Likewise, Paul says when you sow to the flesh, you reap destruction, but when you sow to the Spirit, you reap eternal life (Galatians 6:8).

The frustration we often face is in the waiting season. We love to see immediate results, don't we? For tulips to do well in the Midwest, you must plant the bulbs at least 6 inches deep before the Thanksgiving holiday. In our area of central Ohio these beloved jewels don't appear until the end of March or beginning of April. That's four to five months of waiting to see any hints of life.

Are you tired? Discouraged? Weary? If you are doing good, investing in people and eternal things, then don't give up! Keep it up! Remain faithful! Your labor is not in vain; God sees it. The blooming season is coming. Trust your "work" to the timing and care of the Master Gardener.

So while we have opportunity, continue to plant **love** by going the extra mile to help a co-worker; sow **joy** with a song in your heart and smile on your face; seek **peace** by quickly confessing and forgiving; extend **patience** knowing we are all a work in progress, and share **kindness** with a listening ear. There are many ways to keep up the good work before you.

If you see a resilient tulip emerge from the ground in the coming weeks, I hope you will be reminded that beautiful things take time. May you be encouraged to persevere in service to our Lord.

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:58)



—April McKinion

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