

Investing: Flesh Vs. Spirit

Part 1: (8/16/26)

Please turn to *Galatians 6:4-8*.

Let's talk about **the Christmas Tree Industry**. The best-selling tree for over 40 years now is the Fraser Fir and demand—therefore pricing—is the highest. On the lower end is the Blue Spruce which is more work and lots of pain, for way less money.

Imagine, if you will, that you **visit me during planting season** and you see that I'm planting Blue Spruce seedlings. As I'm doing so, I explain to you that Fraser are the top dollar tree and I hope to make a good profit at harvest time. Confused, you ask me if I'm planting Fraser in another field and I get defensive: *"why are you asking?!"* You point out that I'm planting Blue Spruce and not Fraser, and I respond, angrily *"yeah, so?!"* You decide to exit the conversation.

8 years later you visit me again during the harvest season, to the same field. The Blue Spruce I previously planted have now grown to be 6-7 feet tall and are ready for harvest. I'm standing there with my chainsaw, looking angry and frustrated. When you ask me what's wrong, I say *"there's not a single Fraser in this field! Fraser are the most profitable and in highest demand, but all I got is a field of spruce!"*

My anger escalates and I begin **waving my chainsaw around** (NOT a good sign) and shout *"some enemy of mine has done this! Maybe someone playing a sick joke! He came around after me, tore out my Fraser, and planted Spruce to ruin me!!!"*

You point out that you were here, 8 years ago, when I was planting this field and that ***I* planted Spruce**. No enemy did this, no prankster...me. That you tried questioning me about it at the time, but I wouldn't listen. I continue to act angry and confused at this outcome and say *"nothing ever works out for me! I can't get ahead! Why is God punishing me like this?!"*

ALTERNATE UNIVERSE. You visit me during planting season and see me planting thousands of **Fraser**. 8 years later you come back to see me happily harvesting Fraser and selling them for top dollar.

- Which is the better investment: Spruce or Fraser?
- If I plant Spruce, what sort of tree do I get at harvest?
- If I plant Fraser, what type of tree appears at harvest?
- If I plant Spruce, and expect Fraser, then am I delusional?

- If I plant Spruce, expect Fraser, and blame it on an enemy at harvest am I also delusional?
- Might said delusion lead me to bitterness, anger, frustration, and hopelessness?
- If I plant Fraser and expect Fraser, am I walking in truth?
- If I plant & get Fraser, might I be filled with hope, joy, and peace?

[Gal 6:4-8 ESV] 4 But let each one **test his own work**, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. 5 For each will have to bear his own load. 6 Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. 7 Do not be **deceived**: God is **not mocked**, for **whatever one sows, that will he also reap**. 8 For the one who **sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption**, but the one who **sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life**.

Verses 4-5: the “work” Paul is referring to are the seeds we’re currently planting.

There are 2 harvests from all of said work: in this life, and in God’s Kingdom. What we’re doing, what we’re saying, how we’re living, and the choices we make *affect us in this world and after Jesus returns*.

These verses present an opportunity and not a finger wag.

If you’re taking it as the latter, *please pull back and hear what I’m saying*.

Paul is revealing the amazing investment plan of God.

Have you ever noticed how **members of Congress are worth** tens of millions but the average salary for both House and Senate is \$174,000 per year? They are THE most... **“accurate” stock pickers!** Everything they buy seems to shoot right up.

I want *their* market brokers advising me. Those folk apparently know which ones are the sure-fire winners and which ones will sink like the Titanic.

Good news: **we have a Source** better than Gordon Gecko or Warren Buffett. **We have the Holy Spirit.**

The Holy Spirit—speaking through the Bible—is the **ultimate high level insider source and He’s talking to us.**

- He’s telling us what to buy, how much, and what to avoid.
- He even tells us the results with 100% accuracy, which means no risk.

Consider this: a financial advisor approaches you and says that, if you invest your money in the stocks or funds he tells you to, **you're 100% guaranteed to get a major return**. The more you invest, the more you get.

Imagine if he goes on to **name exactly what those stocks and funds are**. Then he tells you precisely which ones to avoid and names what they are.

What would a wise person do?

- A wise person would invest in exactly what this advisor said and would therefore make a profit.
- A foolish person would invest in the stocks & funds the advisor said were losers, then lose their money.
- A different foolish person would “bury” their money out of fear and do nothing...sermon for another time.

In the verses I just read to you, *Paul wrote down the financial advice the Holy Spirit gave:*

- The money making, profitable investment *is the spirit*.
- The investment that will cause us to lose everything and be in debt *is the flesh*.

As an additional point, Paul addresses **the deception we sometimes fall into** which is this: **we invest in the flesh, get the flesh, then get angry and say “how did this happen?!”**

Before I continue I will say this: **is it possible to do pure good and get bad?** Of course...Jesus is the premier example of this. He never committed a sin, was purely righteous, and worked only to serve others. Lots of people hated Him and did their best to take Him down. He went on to say that the same would happen to us: *that we would be persecuted for His name's sake*.

Righteous persecution is this: **we are following Jesus in our beliefs, words, actions, and lifestyles and getting flak for it from this Jesus-hating world.**

What Paul is referring to in Galatians is not righteous persecution ***but the result of where we've invested our "money" (spiritual).***

- If I've invested mine into fulfilling my earthly desires, then that's the harvest I get.
- When I "eat" this harvest, how confused and surprised can I truly be?
- Am I walking in truth if my attitude is "*why does this always happen to me? [Deception]*" or "*why is God punishing me? [Mocking God]*"

Speaking for myself, when I do what Paul said in verse 4: "test my own work" **I discover that the majority of the bad harvest in my life is because I planted that seed.**

- When I'm overweight [HARVEST], it's because I eat [PLANTING] more calories than I burn.
- I, Scott Towner, eat that much because a) I love the pleasure of eating and b) I use food to "medicate" myself through other problems in life I refuse to face.
- The more video games I, Scott Towner, play and action/horror movies I watch [PLANTING], the more angry, frustrated, depressed, and purposeless I feel [HARVEST].
- The more angry, frustrated, depressed, and purposeless I feel, the harder it is the pray, read my Bible, and enter into worship [HARVEST]. The more distant I feel from God! [HARVEST]

If you could observe me doing all this "planting," then see my harvest, and I said to you: ***"I don't understand why this is happening?! Why am I so angry and frustrated all the time? Why is God punishing me?!"***

I would be both deceived and mocking God at the same time.

I need victory. How does that happen? **It begins with admitting that I'm the planter of these seeds.** Not the world, not the devil, not my wife, not the environment, not the circumstances, not the times, not the government, not the system, not the video game industry and their ability to make addictive games, not big food who chemically engineers their food so that I always want more.

If God were NOT in my life, I might try to achieve victory by saying ***"I got myself into this, I will get myself out."***

Yet God IS in my life, so I will say ***"Father, I don't want to plant these seeds to the flesh anymore. Help me, in Jesus' name, to plant seeds to the Spirit!"***

Jesus is a carpenter and even a contractor, yes? I mean...He had a crew of 12. Suppose He builds our house and installs the amazing heating/cooling system complete with a thermostat that we control. In the summer it's 90 degrees but in our house it's 72. In the winter it's 10 degrees, but in our house it's 72. This is made possible by the HVAC system Jesus installed and our ability to adjust the thermostat.

Regardless of the conditions outside in the world, enemies we may have there, extenuating circumstances...we decide the temperature IN the house!

Jesus also referred to Himself as the Planter (Sower) of Seed and look what He says about others:

[Mat 12:30 KJV] 30 He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth [HARVEST] not with me scattereth [SEED—PLANTING] abroad.

When a farmer in the first century planted their seed, they had a bag or basket full of the same they took with them. They would grab handfuls of it and “scatter” it as they walked slowly down their rows. In the verse I just read to you: *Jesus wants us to “scatter” HIS seed—that of the Spirit.* The seed of the Word of God that He identifies in the famous Parable of the Sower. **Jesus goes on to say that the same person who planted WITH Him will harvest WITH Him.**

The person who plants their own seed [the world, the flesh] does not end up gathering the same harvest as Jesus.

Remember what Paul taught us in Romans 8:

[Rom 8:5-10 ESV] 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 For to **set the mind on the flesh is death [INVESTMENT PATH #1],** but to **set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace [INVESTMENT PATH #2].** 7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. 10 But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

The unbeliever does not have the insider trading information you and I do.

They do not have the Spirit of God in them, they only have the flesh...which CANNOT submit to God's commands. Therefore even if they do wonderful charitable work here on earth, they 1) will not be Saved and 2) will not earn any heavenly ROI [Return On Investment].

- Jesus has forgiven me of my sins: a gift He gave me.
- He sealed me with His Holy Spirit for the day of Resurrection: another gift of His.
- I no longer belong to myself [flesh]. I belong to Jesus [Spirit].
- My old man was ruled by my earthly desires and feelings [flesh.]
- My new man is ruled by King Jesus [Spirit].

Now I've been appointed as one His "laborers" and its time for some ROI.

I am a Kingdom of God inside trader!

I'm personal friends with a VERY high level "broker" in heaven, and He's given me the skinny on WHERE to invest...here it is:

[Gal 5:16-24 ESV] 16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

The investment strategy is to spend my spiritual money on the Spirit. To plant all my seed there. In the next few verses, the Holy Spirit will now tell me exactly what happens if I ignore His advice and invest in the flesh:

19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Next He shows me my ROI if I put my money on the spirit:

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

This isn't a religious finger wag, it's investment options right from the Holy Spirit Himself. He's telling us if we spend here, we get this. If we spend there, we get that. If we plant this type of seed, we get Blue Spruce. If we plant that type of seed, we get Fraser Fir.

If we plant the seed of God's Word with Jesus, we get more of Jesus! He is there at both seed time and harvest—He is always with us!

How about we do exactly what Paul said?

- We test our own “work” and ask: “what have I truly been planting? Flesh or Spirit?”
- We ask and answer that question **not** to shame ourselves with guilt and condemnation, but to realize where we've been putting our “money.”
- We ask Jesus to help us and empower us to a) quit planting flesh and b) start planting Spirit.
- We ask Jesus to plant alongside Him wherever He is scattering His seeds, knowing we'll be with Him when He harvests!