



Galatians 6:6-10

Sowing and Reaping

2/26/2023

We are in our second-to-last week of our walk through Galatians today. Our plan is to finish Galatians next week, then do a short series on the Christ-centered life: Christ at home, Christ at church, Christ among the nations. Then after Palm Sunday and Easter we plan on going through the book of Job, where we will be all spring.

Let's read today's passage:

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

Paul preached a message of free grace: a message that the good things we do don't contribute at all to our right standing with God. And whether that is moral goodness, or following the ceremonies of the Old Testament law, they don't get us to God, in whole or in part.

It is only that God came to us in Jesus, and it is not by our works but by grace through our faith that we are saved. Jesus is our Savior, not just our moral guide.

And in this section in chapters 5 and 6 of Galatians, Paul is making sure that belief in free grace can't possibly lead us to think that if we just accept Jesus into our hearts and then our lives don't matter.

Paul has said, to the contrary, when we know Christ, His Spirit is within us, creating conflict of the Spirit versus the flesh, the part of us that didn't change yet. We are to strive to stop doing the deeds associated with that old nature. And if the Spirit is within us, we will bear fruit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness...

And last week, Cody walked us through the section that says that when we are bearing that fruit, if we see someone caught in a sin, we will seek to set that broken bone in the hopes of seeing them restored.

So people with the Spirit bear the Spirit's fruit. People who have been restored by God restore others. The idea that faith is just in our hearts and never overflows to our lives is completely foreign to scripture.

Faith without works is dead, James tells us.

Jesus tells us you can tell a tree by its fruit.

Real faith always produces something, and if it doesn't, it isn't real faith.

So continuing this thought that the way we live matters, we will look at the heart of today's passage for the main idea, and then look at Paul's applications of that.

Galatians 6: [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.

So Paul says, "Don't be deceived. Don't believe a lie."

And the lie here that we might be tempted to believe is that we can sow one thing into our lives and expect to harvest something else.

To think that way, he says, is to make a mockery of God.

"God is not mocked (v.7)." He is not saying nobody mocks God, they do so all the time. But if dad says, "I will not be disobeyed," he isn't saying my kids never disobey me. He is saying if you disobey, there will be consequences.

And when we believe that I can sow one thing with the way I live and reap another, we mock God. God has created the world with order.

If we sow apple seeds, it's not random what kind of tree is going to grow. We don't wait for it to sprout thinking, "I wonder what it's going to be!" God made the world with order and natural laws.

And the natural law of sowing and reaping applies to our lives.

The things we plant grow.

He says if we **sow to the flesh** we will reap destruction. And people who are headed to eternal life are sowing to the spirit, doing things that will produce a good harvest.

And we mock God if we think, "I am the exception, I can sow to the flesh and not reap any consequences, eventually God will make sure we reap what we sow."

And to know what he's talking about we have to look at this whole section that we've spent a month on: sowing to the flesh is participating in the works of the sinful nature in chapter 5 verses 16-21. We sometimes convince ourselves that I can go all in on some of those behaviors and not have it affect me. I can participate in envy and strife and divisiveness and sexual sins and idol worship and I will be fine. I'll be able to maintain a Christian life and a Christian image while, without repentance or resistance, I'm participating in sin.

We may think, "I can be addicted to porn and it won't affect me," but it already is affecting you, and it will continue to grow until the harvest. "I can sow cruelty to my spouse and it won't affect anything." But God won't be mocked. "I can get away with it," but nobody gets away with anything. God isn't mocked. You can't plant one thing and harvest another.

God is not mocked. We do reap what we sow.

On the other hand, we can **sow to the Spirit** and expect a good harvest. This includes things like obeying God's spirit, walking in accordance with the Gospel (5:25), walking in the spirit (5:16), being led by the Spirit (5:18), bearing the fruit of the Spirit.

And we can expect that if that is how we spend our lives, sowing love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control: if not here, at least in eternity we will reap a harvest from that.

You won't be the exception to that either. You won't be the one Christian who lives in love, joy, peace, and have that not work out in the end - at least in the very end. It may feel like you're the exception: you give yourself to God and serve others in love but it seems nothing good ever comes from it.

But God won't be mocked. Verse 9 says in due season we will reap. Don't hear prosperity gospel promises here - often much of the harvest comes at the resurrection on the last day. But there absolutely always will be a harvest.

For good or for ill, you will not be the exception. Your sin will find you out, scripture says, and your righteous deeds will find you out as well.

And because this law of sowing and reaping is true, when, in our lives, we keep getting the same kind of harvest, it's important for us to ask whether we are reaping something we sowed.

If you find yourself in a place where you don't have any friends, have you sowed to any relationships?

If you keep losing jobs, it may not always be the boss's fault. Our behaviors may be sowing what we keep reaping. It's really unwise to blame everyone else for the repeated bad results we see in our lives.

Adulteries have usually been sown in our thoughts for years.

Envy has been watered and nourished.

Anger has been cultivated.

Joy is grown through meditating on the gospel.

Patience is sown for years as we think about how patient God is with us.

Faithfulness and sticking to the faith, one foot in front of the other, is grown by drinking deeply of the hope we have that a resurrection is coming.

This law of sowing and reaping says that much of what we are reaping today is something we sowed in a long series of yesterdays.

Now this needs to be balanced with another reality, maybe the central reality in the book of Job, that sometimes innocent people suffer. Not everything we are reaping is something we sowed. **We have an enemy who sows weeds in our garden.**

And at the center of our faith there is the suffering of a perfectly innocent man. So not all bad things that come into our lives come as a consequence of our actions. We don't only suffer for our own sins and errors, we also suffer because the world is broken, we suffer because of the cursed creation with sickness and death baked into it since the fall, we suffer because of the sins of others.

The law of sowing and reaping is a truism - God made the world so that what you sow, you reap. But it fully acknowledges all of the exceptions to that in a world that is wracked and corrupt, in bodies that are becoming dust again, and that the world is filled with devils that threaten to undo us (Luther).

But if you drive down the road at 100 miles per hour and wreck your car, you shouldn't get out and say, "Well its just a broken world. Sometimes people suffer innocently." No, you should see that as an instance of the law of sowing and reaping.

In the end, God isn't mocked, and whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

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Now in this immediate context, Paul is not only talking about personal sins and virtues as things that we sow and reap. The laws of sowing and reaping apply to those.

But in this immediate context, Paul is calling us to realize that sowing to the Spirit is done, in large part, by the good we do to the Christian community, the household of faith, the church.

If the church is like the lifeboat where our spiritual life is sustained, then helping to repair the boat and row the boat and steer the boat benefits everyone on the boat. And if you shoot a hole in the boat with your behavior, everyone is the worse for it, including you.

And this passage is book-ended with two imperatives for us in the church: share what is good and do what is good.

Galatians 6:[6] Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. ...

Galatians 6:[10] So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

So starting with sharing what is good:

Galatians 6:[6] Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.

One principle here is that those who are taught the word of God should share good things with those who teach them.

Paul uses a very similar phrase in Philippians 4:15 to describe their financial support of his ministry. In it's narrowest sense, Galatians 6:6 is a call for churches to pay their ministers, as 1 Corinthians 9:14 says:

1 Corinthians 9:14 "In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel."

And as a church, we do this, and all I can say when I look at this command and how you respond to it is thank you. My salary is the one part of church life I don't speak in to at all, and I have no input on it in the budget process, and my family and I are thankful that you, through your giving and the elders through their generosity, allow this to be important to you and allow me and others to devote our days to this. And so I can say thank you with no qualifications.

You share your good things with those who teach you as you give here.

And I'm also a member here who is taught by others and I have the same command that applies to me as well, so as a member who also gives I can say that And we are all called to do so (I am as well as others teach me here), and it's a blessing to be able to use part of what God has blessed us with for the strengthening of the lifeboat.

I won't spend too much time on this point, I linked to an article in the sermon manuscript that explains more in depth why we do this (some church traditions don't pay their

ministers), and I believe the scriptures teach us to do so in Galatians 6:6 and elsewhere, so if you want to learn more there's a link in the manuscript¹:

<https://www.apuritansmind.com/puritan-favorites/francis-turretin/the-salaries-of-ministers/>

But it's important to say that as much as this is an important responsibility, a good pastor should be willing, if necessary, to find a way to teach without pay, as Paul did at times. Because the big reason a pastor does this shouldn't be the paycheck.

We have dark hard days where it is a grind, and feels like a job. But, in general, we should be in this for something much more important than money. We should want to benefit the people in our care with the word of God.

Last summer, I went on a pastors retreat at a camp out west. And typically, you don't go to camp for the food, so that wasn't anything I had my heart set on. I wanted to rest and read and enjoy nature and get refreshed by our fellowship, and the food would be the calories to be able to do all the other stuff with.

But when we got there, we were introduced to the cook. His name was Chad, probably about my age. He had one eye and one ear. And he told us on the first day, "I don't want compliments. My goal is not to hear your compliments, but to put five pounds on each of you and I want you to enjoy the food."

And then dinner came, and it began a few days of eating, not only the best camp food I've ever had (that is not a high bar), but some of the best food I've ever had at the nicest restaurants I've eaten at. He made perfectly cooked sous vide steak, smoked a brisket for hours so we were smelling it all day and building up the anticipation. He made a vat of melted butter with garlic chunks in it that you could stir and ladle onto the fresh-baked bread that he made.

And Chad would watch as we ate - and as our faces lit up, Chad's eye would light up with joy.

And I'm sure Chad got paid for doing this. But it was clear why he was in this. It wasn't for the paycheck, but for what he could see on our faces as we tasted his creation.

His currency was the joy that came from others taking in his work.

¹ <https://www.apuritansmind.com/puritan-favorites/francis-turretin/the-salaries-of-ministers/>

And a good pastor should be paid usually, but his real currency should be the delight he takes in the way the word that he teaches impacts your heart and life:

How it makes you kind and humble, how it makes you gracious and forgiving, how it makes you faithful to your spouse and honest in your dealings. How your view of God expands and grows, how your peace grows, how your love grows, how you're getting free from bitterness and resentment and jealousy, how the Gospel shapes your view of everything, how Jesus is using His word to make you more like his - these are the reasons for the teaching of the word. (Or should be.)

And we should sow that in our church by, not only giving material things, but valuing the ministry of the word, making room for the study and ministry of the word in our teachers lives, encouraging the ministry of the word, and guarding against being a hindrance to it.

Hebrews 13:17 [17] Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

So notice that as we learn, we have an obligation to do all we can to stoke the joy of those who teach and lead us. And as we do, their teaching provides an advantage to us. If we, unnecessarily, cause them to groan under their burdens, we don't get the same advantage.

Joyless pastors don't benefit the people as much.

And I think this is how it works. Imagine we go to Lowes and pick out some paint for the living room, and I start painting, and when I'm finishing up wall #1, Debbie says, "I'm not sure I like the color." My enthusiasm for walls 2 through 4 drops precipitously. If you're not going to benefit from it, why should I do the work?

And we, as learners, should be discerning and evaluate what we hear to see if it lines up with scripture, we should offer our teachers correction when necessary. But if we are quick to criticize, or quick to find fault, don't give the benefit of the doubt, aren't charitable in how we hear things, whoever is teaching us will lose all the enthusiasm to teach.

Another way we can devalue the ministry of the word is if we make up a job description for a pastor that is not the biblical job description centered on preaching and teaching the word, we will burn out our leaders.

A pastor is supposed to be a faithful, qualified follower of Jesus who focuses his ministry on teaching the word to us. He has to wear a lot of hats and do a lot of other things, but he isn't mainly:

A Political leader

A therapist

A show producer

A media personality

A ceo

A program director

A conflict mediator

A salesman

A paid friend

There is some necessary overlap into all of those categories, but we need to be glad when a pastor says no to many of those things to say yes to bringing us the word.

And if we sow a church where joyful pastors are free to minister the word to us, we will reap from that. It will make our church healthier and make us healthier.

If we sow a church where our teachers groan, enthusiasm for the word will dry up, we won't have tenured leaders investing decades in us, pastors will last a couple of years and then burn out, or move on, and the whole lifeboat gets less sturdy.

So sow to the spirit by sharing good things with the one who teaches - keep our teachers free to teach. So share good things.

And then verses 9-10 we are to DO good things.

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

Notice how different this mindset toward church is than the common mindset in our day.

We tend to treat church like a consumer product.

And we shop for churches - and actually call it doing that. And we look for a church with good music and buildings, a pastor who is just funny enough, programs that are just right for our perceived needs.

We want to get the best deal - I want a church that has it all, but don't talk to us about money at all because i want everyone else to pay for it.

We become customers of church.

And many of these problems start with us as church leaders creating a consumer product in the church - we all read a book in college that told us that if we wanted to plant a church, we should survey the neighbors and see what they want our church to be, and then make that church.

And many of us view our ministries just as corporate jobs, and pastors stick around for a couple of years, build a resume, then move on to a bigger church in a bigger market.

So we are consumer Christians when we treat our relationship to the church like our relationship to a store.

Or we can make demands on the church and on the leadership. But the leadership cannot make demands on us.

So we believe I should shape the church, but the church shouldn't shape me. Because at a marketplace, you don't have any expectation that you'll change. The customer is always right. You don't go in and say "I'd like some shoes," and they say, "Actually, you shouldn't want shoes, it's a raincoat you really need." Who are you? I'm the customer. I'm right.

I'm the customer, I make the demands.

We shop for a church based on our comforts and preferences. But we don't ask, "Does this church preach the word of God, even the unpopular parts that I might not like that I need to be shaped by? Will this church correct me if I need it? Call me on sin that

destroys? Call me to be faithful to my spouse? Remind me of Jesus and help me shatter my idols? Will it make me uncomfortable so that I can become more holy?

Those aren't the questions we ask of Target, but should be what we ask of the church.

We are also customers of church when we treat our brothers and sisters in Christ as disposable commodities.

I want to share life with people I fit with easily, but when the time inevitably comes that there are tensions and disagreements and difficulties, I bail quickly, looking for the next new product.

We treat a church less like a community we are part of and more like a product we shop for to satisfy an appetite.

Philippians 3:17-21 “17 Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. 18 For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.”

He says there are enemies of the cross of Christ whose God is their belly. They live to satisfy their own appetites. For comfort, for entertainment, for ease.

A consumer Christian is concerned mainly with their own preferences, but Jesus has called us to be concerned with Christ - with Christ being taught, His word being preached, the community shepherded and challenged.

A consumer just shops and says, “I’m gonna get what I can out of this place.”

But someone who wants to reap a good harvest says: I have to work - I have to sow, I have to plow.

Church is not a product I shop for, but a community I plow my life into.

[10] So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

But people are so wearying.

And the work is so frustrating.

But remember the harvest:

Galatians 6:[9] And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.

This parallels:

1 Corinthians 15:51-58 "51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.54 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."55 "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 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.

So he reminds them of the Gospel, he promises them the resurrection.

And then concluded with "Therefore..."

Therefore be steadfast, immovable, abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Remember how Solomon said it's all vain and meaningless when you look at life under the sun? The resurrection is the answer to that problem.

The coming resurrection means that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

It isn't wasted, even if it seems to be.

Because, somehow, the labor done in faith is resurrected too.

Because the whole physical creation is going to be resurrected, not just us, it seems - and this is a little bit of a guess - that when we work for justice or healing or hope or beauty, even though our efforts fall short and eventually even die, they somehow are resurrected as part of that new creation.

Jesus is the firstfruits, but one day God is going to do for his whole Cosmos what He did for Jesus at easter. I don't know how or what that means - how somehow the good we do on earth, even if it wears out and seems to die, can still somehow resurrect and bear fruit in the resurrection.

But Paul says, "Keep doing good - keep loving God and neighbor. Stay steadfast, don't move, because the resurrection means your labor is not in vain."

And that guarantee of the resurrection is ours by faith.

To sustain our faith until that day, one of the means God has given us is the Lord's supper.

Prayer of Confession:

Assurance:

Romans 8:1 "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

The Lord's Supper:

Sermon Discussion Questions:

- 1) How does the doctrine of free grace gel with the law of sowing and reaping as presented in this passage?

- 2) How can you discern when your suffering is reaping what you've sown, and when it is a result of a broken world, the sins of others, etc.?
- 3) How do you sow to the spirit? How do you sow to the flesh?
- 4) Paul spoke in this passage about keeping the ministry of the word important by sharing good with our teachers. How might we do that?
- 5) How can we do good to the church as a household of faith as opposed to treating it like a consumer product?