

MBC – 8/7/2022 – Pastor Doug Thompson
 PAUL’S EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS – GOSPEL FREEDOM
“Sowing and Reaping”
 Galatians 6:6-10

By the time we reach ch.6 in Galatians, Paul has finished his warning against legalism. He has “publicly portrayed Christ as crucified.” The Good News of the Gospel is that forgiveness for all our sins is given by God to any sinner who will trust in Jesus, alone for their salvation. No other works or rituals or rites are necessary. Salvation is a gift of God’s grace – not a payment for our good deeds. *Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe, sin had left a crimson stain – He washed it white as snow!*

So how do we respond to all of this doctrinal teaching in the first 5 chapters? We don’t want to drift away from what we have heard. So Paul tells us. Let’s hear the Word of God together—

- Galatians 6:6–10 ⁶Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. ⁷Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸For 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. ⁹And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. ¹⁰So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

I. The universal principle (v.7)

The entire universe is under the control of God-given laws – like gravity – and they operate whether or not we are aware of them or submit to them. V.7 gives us a universal principle that God was woven into every aspect of life – what you sow is what you will reap. And you can turn it around: you will reap what you have sown.

- I was 4th grade at Orestes Elementary School, an old brick school building in rural Indiana. The principal was a crotchety old guy named Fred Disque. He would come into our classroom once in awhile to give us life lessons. One day he came to talk to us about sowing and reaping – from this passage. He said, “When I was a little boy, my father gave me a mason jar full of corn. He said to me, “Son, go plant this jar of corn!” I didn’t want to plant corn, I wanted to play, so I dug a hole, and dumped the jar full of corn into the hole, covered it up, and went to play. But after a heavy rain, two weeks later, what do you think appeared in that spot where I buried the jar of corn?” We weren’t stupid, we all said, “Corn!” He said, “That’s right! I sowed corn, and I reaped corn, and I also reaped a spanking from my father.”

I never forgot that story – and how dumb he was as a kid. You don’t bury corn! I would have poured battery acid on it, or something like that. But I did remember the principle of sowing and reaping. It’s a profound universal principle. Think about some of the implications—

1.) You must sow in order to reap – if you don’t plant, don’t expect a harvest. In the parable of the talents Jesus was speaking of the same principle: if you don’t invest, don’t expect a return. You will only reap if you sow. *Are you sowing?*

2.) What you sow is what you will reap – if you sow corn, you won't reap rice. If you sow your wild oats, don't expect a crop of peaches! And if you sow evil, you won't reap good. *What are you sowing?*

3.) The *amount* you sow determines the *amount* you will reap – much seed sown means much crop harvested. In 2Cor.9:6 Paul applied this to our giving: "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." *How much are you sowing?*

This principle applies on so many different levels of our lives, doesn't it? God has built into all of life, and yet we can so easily think that we can beat the system—that's why Paul says, "Don't be deceived, God is not mocked"—

- Just a few days ago, there was a pandemic that affected millions in this country: lottery madness – \$1.34 billion was in the jackpot. And it drove some people crazy: instead of working diligently for their money, they thought that they could just buy a lottery ticket and all of life's problems will be solved. Sow a couple bucks and reap a billion. That's self-deception, folks!
- But people mock this principle all the time: they seem thoughtless about the consequences of their actions: they sow lies, deceit – in their relationships, they sow selfishness and insensitivity – and then they seem surprised at the harvest they gather.

Whatever condition your marriage and family are in right now – to a large degree, you are reaping whatever you have sown.

- I see this in the way people communicate: Our words are like seeds that we sow: Don't expect to reap a harvest of love and understanding if you sow cutting words of accusation and insults. Janice and I always counsel people to ask the question, before they speak, "*What do I hope to accomplish by what I say?*" To put it another way, "If this is what I want to reap, what words do I need to sow?"

But don't be deceived! Don't fool yourself. God built this principle of reaping and sowing into the universe, and God is not mocked. Interesting word: *mukte_rizo_* - means to turn up your nose, to sneer, to treat with contempt – and it can also mean to fool or outwit. Many people think they can outwit God: They sneer and scoff: this principle won't hold for them! They can sow one thing and reap something completely different. Or in the case of every thief and swindler, they can reap without sowing at all. But God is not mocked, and He will bring the harvest.

*And I think this principle is one way to gauge personal maturity: an immature person, or a person who never grows up, never seems to get this principle. He never seems to connect his actions with the consequences – "Duh, I wonder why this happened? How did I end up here?" No one else wonders. You are just reaping what you sowed! A wise and mature person understands this, asks what he or she wants to reap, and then sows accordingly. Teens, I hope you are listening to Pastor Doug this morning: where do you want to be in 5 years? Make the choices now that will bring about that dream 5 years from now. But know this: you will reap *then*, what you are sowing *now*.

The principle is in v.7, but in v.6, Paul gives—

II. A specific application (v.6).

- ⁶Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.

John MacArthur says, “the context suggests that Paul is referring to the spiritually and morally excellent things learned from the Word, in which they fellowship together¹” I.e., your teacher shares spiritual insights with you, you share wonderful spiritual insights with your teacher.

That completely misses what Paul means here. He’s talking about meeting the material and financial needs of those who teach you the Word – and you will reap spiritually the way you sow financially. I’ll tell you a story that does not put me in a good light—

- Our family had only been at MBC for a couple months when we took a trip down south to visit family. And folks from the church I had pastored there wanted to see us. One of them said, “Hey Doug, why don’t you come to the Bible study tonight?” (which the new pastor was leading – who was a friend of mine that I had recommended to the church – and he is still there, 32 years later and it’s become a mega-church in the San Fernando Valley under him! He’s a good man.) But when the former, founding pastor of Shepherd’s Community Church showed up at his Bible study, he was a bit intimidated.
- I made up my mind to lay low and keep quiet – but, they were studying this passage, and he took the MacArthur view and said that Paul couldn’t possibly be talking about money when he mentions “*sharing all good things with the one who teaches,*” I couldn’t restrain myself! I said, look over at—
- Philippians 4:15 ¹⁵And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in *giving and receiving*, except you only. (“partnership” is the same word as “share” in Gal.6.6 – *koinonia*)

They *shared* in his ministry – they had fellowship with him – through their financial support. And Paul practically paraphrases Gal.6.6 in—

- 1 Corinthians 9:11 ¹¹If we have sown *spiritual things* among you, is it too much if we reap *material things* from you? He means financial support. And 3 verses later he said—
- 1 Corinthians 9:14 . . . the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

But I really should have kept my mouth shut – and I promise when we come back to visit Middletown I will be more gracious to your next pastor!

But I *was* right!

Jesus Himself taught the principle of supporting those who teach the Word when He sent out the 70 to evangelize. He said, “The laborer is worthy of his wages.” Paul quoted Jesus and applied that to elders who labor in preaching and teaching (1Tim.5:17-18).

¹ MacArthur, J., Jr. (Ed.). (1997). [The MacArthur Study Bible](#) (electronic ed., p. 1799). Nashville, TN: Word Pub.

Paul brings this up here because it is a specific application of the principle of sowing and reaping in v.7 – you and I will *reap* what we *sow* in the lives of those who teach us God’s Word. If we encourage and support them, including financially, we free them up to dedicate themselves to the study and preaching and teaching of God’s Word. And we will reap the spiritual benefits!

- Martin Luther said, “It is impossible for one man both to labor day and night to get a living, and at the same time to give himself to the study of sacred learning as the preaching office requires.”

That’s just what the Apostle said in Acts 6: “You people select some men to head up the meals on wheels to the widows, we must devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word!”

*I know dear brothers who are bi-vocational pastors: they pastor and they also have to support themselves. And bless their hearts for doing what they need to do, but they are handicapped in their studies and their ministry, and it’s their flock that suffers. Every church should make it a top priority to support their pastor to free that man up so that he can devote himself fully to the ministry.

Did you know that Paul was a bi-vocational minister for a time? When he arrived in Corinth to share the Gospel, we read this—

- Acts 18:4 ⁴And he reasoned in the synagogue *every Sabbath*, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.

Just like he did wherever he went, right? But there is something that Paul *wasn’t* doing in Corinth that he did in other places: he *wasn’t* in the marketplace, witnessing about Jesus, during the week. Why not? Because he had to support himself by working with his friends Priscilla and Aquilla, making tents during the week. He had a Saturday-only ministry.

Paul didn’t complain. But 2,000 years later, we read this and think: the Apostle Paul was in *part-time ministry* because he had to work to support himself? – that’s a tragedy! By God’s grace that didn’t last long. We read this next—

- Acts 18:5 ⁵When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was *occupied with the word*, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus.

He was back in full-time ministry because Silas and Timothy brought him financial support from the church in Philippi. Whew! And there was more of a harvest in Corinth because Paul was sowing more.

- So would this principle apply to supporting a Christian podcast or some ministry that you benefit from? Sure! But first and foremost, Paul was thinking of believers supporting their own teaching elders – he says in 1 Tim.5 that those who labor in preaching and teaching are worthy of double honor. And MBC has always made that a priority and I hope you believe you have reaped the benefits of what you have sown.

But there is another way that we sow and reap—

- We *sow* here at MBC when we help support our missionaries so they can devote themselves full-time to their ministries – and we *reap* when we hear the stories of the fruit of their ministries – in India, Uganda, Cameroon, the Philippines, Spain, and even Hartstone in Potter Valley.

In v.8, sowing and reaping applies to our own spiritual lives—

III. Application to our spiritual lives (v.8).

- Galatians 6:8 ⁸For 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.

He's back to that flesh and Spirit dichotomy that defines us: We are new creatures in Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit – and at the same time we have this leftover, unredeemed part of us that's called the "flesh." It's like the new you is trapped inside the old you. That's why in the last chapter Paul said that we are always at war in ourselves: the flesh wants to control you, and the Holy Spirit also wants to fill you and control you.

Here, Paul gives us another illustration: it's like the flesh and the Spirit are two fields in which we sow seed. What we harvest depends on where we sow and what we sow—

A. Sowing to the flesh.

"For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption." What does it mean to sow to the flesh? It means anything you do that helps to nourish and cultivate your sinful passions and desires. What seeds are you putting in that field? What are you planting through your thoughts? If you entertain impure fantasies, if you nurture a grudge against someone, if you think up ways to excuse your sin. - Proverbs talks about plotting evil while you are lying in bed! – it's just like you are watering and weeding the field of your flesh. So don't be surprised at the awful harvest you reap.

B. Sowing in the Spirit.

"But the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." And I think it will make more sense if we say, *"sowing in the Spirit."* You sow in the Spirit's field when you walk in step with the Spirit and His priorities; by setting your mind on the things above and not on the things that are on the earth – by intentional prayer, intentional reading and meditation on God's Word. By faithfully worshiping with the church gathered; and then discipline yourself to attend the Wed. prayer time, or the men's Bible study, but none of this happens accidentally. Write this down—

Holiness is a harvest – and you will only reap what you sow. If you want to reap a harvest of the fruit of the Holy Spirit, are you sowing toward that end? Which field are you cultivating?

- This is where self-deception comes in: I would imagine most of us would say that 90% of the time, we aren't sowing to either field, we're just doin' stuff: working or watching TV or texting friends, or listening to the news, or watching Tik-Toks – but I think everything we do is sowing in one field or the other—
- Didn't Paul say in 1 Cor10:31, "Whether then you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God?" So if you are working or playing, if you have your mind set on pleasing God and

bringing Him glory, then yes, even that is sowing to the Spirit. But if you just let yourself be carried along by what is on your phone or social media, or the news – you are probably sowing in the field of your flesh. You and I are *always* sowing.

And Paul said that we can expect two different harvests—

- 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.

Know that whatever you sow to your flesh is temporal and will not cross over into eternity: John said, “The world is passing away along with its lusts” (1Jn.2:17).

Just remember Jesus’ story of that rich man who invested everything into storing his crops – but nothing into his own soul – and then he died—

- Luke 12:20–21 ²⁰But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ (How much did he leave? All of it.) ²¹So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

But whatever you sow in the Spirit – whatever you do in the power of the Spirit, to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, for the sake of Gospel and the Kingdom of God – that will last into eternity – along with you!

At the end of his long chapter on the resurrection – 1Cor.15, Paul gives this incredible encouragement. Listen—

- 1 Corinthians 15:58 ⁵⁸Therefore, my beloved brothers, – in light of Christ’s resurrection, and our coming resurrection—be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is *not in vain*.

It is not just temporal. It won’t pass away along with this world. It will reverberate throughout eternity!

So what stops us from sowing in the Spirit all the time? Because we don’t always get to see the harvest. There might be a long time between what we sow and what we reap – amen? And we get tired. And discouraged. So what Paul says next is so important—

IV. There will be a harvest. (vv.9-10).

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

Paul is coming along and holding our arms up, isn’t he? “Keep going children! Don’t lose heart, don’t lose hope. Keep believing that God always, always blesses the work His children do in the Lord. If you sow in the Spirit’s field there will be a harvest – as long as you don’t give up!”

James told us, regarding prayer, “You have not, because you – ask not.” And sometimes we reap not because we sow not! Paul goes on—

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

Doing good in the lives of people is a kind of sowing, isn't it? And he says all people – even your enemies. Do you make it a point to pray for God's blessings on people you don't like? Didn't Jesus say, "Bless your enemies and pray for those who persecute you?" Seriously, start with praying for them, and do something good for them, as you have opportunity. And believe me, if you set your mind to do this, God will present you with opportunities!

- *Will you reap a harvest when you do good for unbelievers? *I believe God promises in v.9 that you will.* It might be in that unbeliever's life – they might come to know Christ. How many times have we heard testimonies from people who remember the love and kindness Christians showed them when they were at their worst. But God blessed what they sowed, and a soul was reaped for heaven.
- *But the harvest you reap will also be in your own life: when you love an enemy and do good and pray for people who don't treat you well, that changes you. It changes your own heart. Amen? But whenever you set your mind to do good to everyone, you will not sow in vain. There will be a harvest.

And Paul says, "*especially to those who are of the household of the faith.*" Charity begins at home. Of course, you start with your brothers and sisters in Christ first. God puts you in a family of believers so that you can care for one another – for your physical needs and your emotional and spiritual needs. Paul was writing about our earthly families in this passage, but it applies to our spiritual family as well—

- 1 Timothy 5:8 ⁸But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Doesn't that apply to our church family? So do good for your brothers and sisters, as you have the opportunity. Do it as much good as you have the time and energy. The world has told us for decades now that we have to be concerned with our own "self-care." Take care of yourself. Make sure you have "me time." Yeah, yeah. There is truth to that, but I don't read it in my Bible. I read, "Do good to everyone." And you have no idea of the harvest that God can bring from that very small seed that you sow—

- That verse you shared; that visit to the hospital room; that meal you took; that time you prayed with them. There might be a harvest from that small effort that you will only hear about in eternity.

God has graciously encouraged Janice and me recently through folks who have told us how our ministry over the years brought them Christ or changed their lives. And honestly, in some case, we hardly remember the people or what we did or said – but God brought about a harvest anyway.

* * *

This is the kind of message that applies directly to you whether you are listening and taking notes, or daydreaming and bored. *You will reap what you sow.* You *are* sowing by the way you live your life – whether you are living for the glory of God – or you are mocking God. You are sowing. And there will be a harvest. And it will be eternal.

- It occurred to me this week that we might think that the principle of sowing and reaping doesn't hold when it comes to salvation: we sowed sin in our lives before we were saved, but we will reap eternal life – we reap what we *didn't* sow. But that's not the way to look at it. In salvation, we reap what Christ sowed for us. He said this about His death—
- John 12:24 ²⁴Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

Amazing thought – heaven will be the great harvest from that Jesus sowed when He was died, buried, and raised. If you trust in Jesus, you will reap what He sowed for you. *But if you don't come to Jesus for your salvation, you will stand before God and you will reap what you sowed!*

As your shepherd, I want to encourage you if you are weary this morning because you don't feel like you see any harvest for your work, your service, your prayers. Don't give up, don't lose heart. Your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

- Maybe you are tired this morning because you have prayed and prayed and prayed for that child who is not walking with the Lord. Nothing seems to have worked. You have sowed the seeds of the Gospel, many times, but you have reaped nothing – yet. A mom told me this week that she feels worthless, like a failure as a parent, which is the only thing she thought she was good at. I quoted her v.9: “Don't grow weary – the harvest is yet to come!” God hasn't written the last chapter in that child's story yet. But He promises that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

Keep sowing. Keep doing good to all men, especially the household of God. Don't slack off now! And can I say: start with prayer! That's the first way you can do good to all people. When you pray, in due season you will reap, if you don't give up.

Many of you have read about George Muller who was such a great man of prayer. He prayed for more than half a century for the salvation of a group of men. He wrote: “In November, 1844, I began to pray for the conversion of five individuals. I prayed every day without a single intermission, whether sick or in health, on the land or on the sea, and whatever the pressure of my engagements might be. Eighteen months elapsed before the first of the five was converted. I thanked God and prayed on for the others. Five years elapsed, and then the second was converted. I thanked God for the second, and prayed on for the other three. Day by day I continued to pray for them, and six years passed before the third was converted. I thanked God for the three, and went on praying for the other two.

“These two remain unconverted. The man to whom God in the riches of His grace has given tens of thousands of answers to prayer in the self-same hour or day in which they were offered has been praying day by day for nearly thirty-six years for the conversion of these individuals, and yet they remain unconverted. But I hope in God, I pray on, and look yet for the answer. They are not converted yet, *but they will be.*”

Those two men, sons of a friend of Muller's youth, were still unconverted when he died in 1897, after having prayed daily for their salvation for fifty-two years. His prayers were answered, however, when both those men came to faith in Christ after Muller's death.

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

Some of you remember this song—

... I dreamed I went to heaven, ... And you were there with me
We walked upon the streets of gold, Beside the crystal sea
We heard the angels singing, Then someone called your name
You turned and saw this young man, And he was smiling as he came
And he said friend you may not know me now
And then he said but wait, You used to teach my Sunday School
When I was only eight
And every week you would say a prayer, Before the class would start
And one day when you said that prayer, I asked Jesus in my heart

Thank you for giving to the Lord, ... I am a life that was changed
Thank you for giving to the Lord, I am so glad you gave

Then another man stood before you, And said remember the time
... A missionary came to your church, And his pictures made you cry
You didn't have much money, **But you gave it anyway**
Jesus took the gift you gave, And that's why I'm here today

Thank you for giving to the Lord, ... I am a life that was changed
Thank you for giving to the Lord, I am so glad you gave