

Sowing and Reaping

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[0 : 00] Please turn your Bibles to Galatians chapter 6. Amen. And this morning we have come to a passage of Scripture that can be or can appear to be self-serving for me to be addressing it.

And that's because it's a passage of Scripture in which people like you are called to give financial support to people like me. But you would all know, since we don't have any guests this morning, that I did not pick this passage of Scripture to preach on this morning.

Since February we've been in the book of Galatians working our way through section by section. And this section of the letter is where we have landed this morning for the sermon.

So it is in the providence of the Lord that we are, as a church, coming to Galatians 6, verses 6 through 10.

So let's open our hearts and let's hear God's Word. Galatians chapter 6, beginning in verse 6. Let the one who is taught the Word share all good things with the one who teaches.

[1 : 30] Do not be deceived. God is not mocked. For whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption. For the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

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. Let's pray together. Father, we are grateful this morning that you have watched over your Word.

You have given it. You have preserved it. We are the recipients of it. We are now able to sit under it. And I ask this morning that you would speak to our hearts from your Word.

[2 : 49] Holy Spirit, I ask that you would convince our hearts of the truth of your words. I pray that above and beyond the sound of my voice, every heart will hear your voice confirming your truth.

Well, I pray that you would guard me from error and excess and help me to be faithful to bring your Word to care for your people.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. But on the face of it, this section of Galatians that we are considering this morning can appear to be disconnected from the rest of what the Apostle Paul has been saying up to this point.

But it is connected. What is clear is starting in Galatians 5.13, I mentioned this when we covered this section, the Apostle Paul began to transition from theological instruction where he told us what we should believe about how sinners are made right with God.

That was the theological instruction. He did that from verse 1 of chapter 1 up to verse 12 of chapter 5. And then starting in 5.13, he begins to give ethical instructions or he begins to tell us how those who have been reconciled to God are supposed to live.

[4 : 33] In chapter 5, verses 13 through 26, he says several things about what it looks like to be living as a person who has come to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

First, he says that those who have come to saving faith in Jesus Christ do not use their freedom as an opportunity to gratify the flesh, but instead as an opportunity to serve one another in love.

And second, he said, those who have come to saving faith in Christ are those who walk by the Spirit so that they will not fulfill the desires of the flesh. And he spells out what the works of the flesh look like and what the fruit of the Spirit looks like.

And then third, he says that those who have come to saving faith in Jesus Christ care for those who have been trapped in sin and weighed down by life's burdens. And then we come to this section that we've just read.

And when we consider it as a whole, the Apostle Paul is addressing life and conduct in the community of believers. And in these verses, his focus is still the same.

[5 : 50] So here's how I would summarize what the Apostle Paul says in these five verses before us. Genuine believers demonstrate genuine concern for one another.

Genuine believers demonstrate genuine concern for one another. This is such an important point. It is such an important point because what it helps us to see, what Paul is helping us to see is that it is not the words of our lips that give evidence to the fact that we belong to Christ.

It is the lives that we live. Now, it's not final evidence, not final evidence, but it's substantial evidence that you can look at a person's life and determine whether that person belongs to Christ or not.

And Paul has already been doing this when he talks about what the works of the flesh look like and what the fruit of the Spirit looks like. Paul is addressing a virtue that is supposed to mark those who belong to Christ, that those who belong to Christ, over time, as they grow in grace, as they grow in sanctification, more and more, they become more concerned about others and not as centered and focused on self.

[7 : 26] Become less self-centered and more others focused. We become more generous, especially to those who are brothers and sisters in Christ.

That is what Paul is addressing in these five verses. And he talks about it using an agricultural term, sowing and reaping. And he shares three things about sowing and reaping that I want us to consider this morning.

First, he shares a principle about sowing and reaping. We find the principle in verse 6. Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.

The New Living Translation says it even more plainly. Those who are taught the word of God should provide for their teachers, sharing all good things with them.

Now, why does Paul raise this? Why does he address this as he is closing this letter? It may be because as false teachers had infiltrated the church with false teaching, that perhaps the care for the elders had fallen by the wayside.

[8 : 49] We know that Paul is addressing this church based on information he's received. And it could be that this was happening and Paul is now addressing it. But we don't know for sure.

We don't know for sure why Paul addresses this, but we know that he does address it. And what we do know is that the call for those who are taught to care for those who teach them is an expression of care.

It's an expression of care. It's in the same spirit that Paul was addressing the brother who is entrapped in sin, the brother who is burdened and needs others to come alongside and help and care.

It's in that same spirit that Paul is addressing this practice of those who are taught supporting those who teach them.

And to do otherwise is an expression of a lack of care. When we consider these verses, what we see is the Apostle Paul sees this as a shared relationship between those who are taught and those who teach them.

[10 : 11] And the sharing that those who are taught are called to give is not to be begrudgingly, it's not to be reluctantly.

I found it interesting the use of word that Paul employs when he talks about how they are to support those who teach them.

Paul could have used the word give, but he didn't. He uses a different word. He uses this word share. He says, those who are taught are to share all good things with the one who teaches them. He uses this word share. And this word that he uses for share or in the Greek, the word that share comes from comes from yet another word that is translated fellowship.

And it speaks about a shared life. It speaks about an integrated life. It almost speaks about like the breaking off of part of our lives and sharing it with one another.

[11 : 27] It speaks about this kind of social intercourse that is very intimate and very close. It speaks about a partnership. relationship. And that's what Paul is getting at when he talks about this kind of sharing that is supposed to be taking place between those who are taught and those who teach.

He doesn't use the word give, although the net effect is the same. The net result is the same. He employs this word share because I believe that he's getting at something that is bigger than just giving.

You see, when an elder teaches God's word, what he's done is he is bringing to God's people a message that he has labored over, spent time to study and to prepare and to pray concerning and he brings and he shares it with God's people.

He's sharing really a part of his very life. And in return, when those who are taught God's word, when they give of their financial resources, they, in a sense, are sharing their lives as well because they're giving that which they have labored for, they've poured their lives out for.

It's a part of them and they're sharing that. And Paul doesn't want it to be this kind of business-like arrangement where you work and I pay you.

[12:58] No, it's a sharing. It is a pouring, it is a reciprocal pouring out of life. He says that you're to share in that particular way.

Now, Paul does not address how much should be given. He doesn't address the extent to which those who teach are to be supported.

But the witness of Scripture, especially the New Testament, is that it should be generous. generous. That's the witness of Scripture. The witness of Scripture is that God's people are to be generous people.

For example, we find in 2 Corinthians chapter 9, verses 6 and 7, Paul writes this. The point, he's talking about giving, and he says, the point is this.

Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he is made up in his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

[14:09] So we should give generously, not sparingly. We should give cheerfully and not reluctantly. I remember in the church I grew up in, had a pastor from Georgia, and he was a wonderful man, but he would always say when it was time to give, he'd say, just remember, a reluctant dollar spends just like a generous dollar.

And he would just urge people to give even if they didn't want to give. That's not the spirit of Scripture. Scripture says that we are to give generously.

We are to give not out of compulsion. We are to give cheerfully. Now, generosity is not determined by how much we give.

Generosity is determined by our ability to give. Generosity is determined based on our circumstances from which we give. And Jesus makes this point ever so clearly in Luke 21 in the account about the poor widow.

Jesus was watching the contributions being given. And he saw the rich contributing out of their abundance. And there was this poor widow who gave two copper coins and Jesus said she gave more than all the rest.

[15:31] Now, dollar for dollar or in terms of quantity, she probably gave far less than the rich gave. But Jesus said she gave more because out of her circumstances which she gave, it was a generous gift.

So generosity is not determined by the amount we give but is determined by the circumstances from which we give. Now, we all know that this particular verse is subject to abuse.

It's subject to abuse by pastors and is also subject to abuse by congregations. Some ministers use it to demand excessive compensation to finance a materialistic and extravagant lifestyle.

This was not put in Scripture for us to demand anything. I remember some years ago I heard a local pastor on this island trying to justify his lavish lifestyle before his congregation and he said to the congregation that he should be the most prosperous person in the church so that the rest of them will have an example to look up to and to follow.

And they clapped and shared and shouted amen because they themselves were infected by greed and materialism.

[17:05] There's nothing in this verse or elsewhere in Scripture that gives ministers any basis to demand anything even more so to demand excessive compensation.

In the end we work for the Lord and he cares for his servants. But this verse is also subject to abuse by congregations.

Sometimes church members would withhold financial support because they are upset with pastoral leadership. They didn't like something that was preached or they didn't like a decision that was made or something isn't going the way they want it to go in the church and so they withhold financial resources.

I've heard of concerted efforts in churches where blocks of people would collude together to withhold their giving to try to have their own way in a particular matter.

But that spirit that motivates that kind of practice of withholding financial support for whatever reason violates the principle that we find in verse 6.

[18 : 26] And really it violates the entire witness of scripture. As I was considering this verse and preparing this week I was grateful to God that this has not been our experience.

This has not been our experience pastorally. This has not been our experience congregationally. So first the apostle Paul shares a principle about sowing and reaping and second he issues a warning about sowing and reaping.

We find the warning in verses 7 and 8. Do not be deceived God is not mocked for whatever one sows that will he also reap for the one who sows through his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption.

For the one who sows to the spirit will from the spirit reap eternal life. Notice how the apostle Paul begins this warning.

He clearly has a concern. He has a concern that he's expressing in these two verses. So he begins with this sober statement to not be deceived.

[19 : 44] Do not be deceived. And I've said it before and I'll say it again. Whenever you see those words in scripture, slow down and pay attention because the clear implication is we can be deceived.

The reason it is there is people are deceived. And in this context the deception is that we can have a different outcome doing our own thing, ignoring God's word and we can have a different outcome than God's word says we will have.

Paul says do not be deceived. And he tells us why. Here's why. God is not mocked. God is not mocked. The Greek word from which mocked comes from is, it means to turn up the nose. means to turn up your nose scorning someone, deriding someone. Paul says don't be deceived because God is not mocked.

You cannot turn your nose up to God. You cannot flick your hand and brush God off. God is not mocked. And he tells us, here's why, for whatever one sows, that will we also reap.

[21 : 07] And then in verse 8, he tells us there are two kinds of sowing. Sowing to our flesh, which will reap corruption, and sowing to the Spirit, which will reap eternal life.

Now what Paul says here, this law of sowing and reaping, can be applied broadly in life. It can be applied very broadly as a law of life.

But in context, Paul is not speaking broadly. The primary way that Paul is speaking here is in the context of giving. And he identifies two motivations that can affect how we give, the flesh and the Spirit.

And again, remember what he said earlier in chapter 5, verses 16 through 26, he talks about those who would sow, those who walk by the Spirit, and those who would gratify the desires of the flesh. I found Thomas Schreiner, his commentary, he's a pastor and a seminary professor, I found his commentary on Galatians very helpful this week.

[22 : 23] And here's what he writes about verse 7. He writes, it is probably the case that what Paul says in 6-7 cannot be limited to giving, but that we have a principle that sums up life as a whole.

Still, the focus is on giving. Those who live for the sake of others and for the glory of God will receive an eternal reward.

God is so I think it's important for us to not miss the point of verse 8. Let us not miss this point that he is making about giving because we take it and we apply it in a very broad way, which it certainly applies broadly, but in context he is speaking primarily about giving.

We don't limit it to giving, but here he's primarily addressing giving. And he further writes this, sowing to the flesh in this paragraph means that one uses one's worldly goods for one's advantage and accordance with selfish desires.

And he goes on to say, those who sow to the spirit produce the fruit of the spirit. In this context, such sowing to the spirit manifests itself in generous giving to others.

[23 : 56] Now one of the things that we should see, and I want us to see this morning, is that although how we handle our possessions is primarily in view here, Paul also has in view the final day of judgment.

He also has in view the final day of judgment. And be able to see this from his reference to eternal life in verse 8 when he says, those who sow to the spirit will reap eternal life.

So he's clearly speaking about the day of judgment. Here again, let me quote Thomas Schreiner, very clear on this point.

He writes, those who sow to the flesh demonstrate that they belong to the present evil age and will perish, while those who sow to the spirit demonstrate that they are a part of the new creation and will receive eternal life.

life. What he's saying is, we give evidence as to whether we belong to the life to come or we belong to this passing present evil age.

[25 : 19] If we are as a way of life sowing to the flesh, we will perish. We show that we don't belong to the age to come. We will perish. We're giving evidence that we don't belong to God because that is our way of life.

But when we sow to the spirit, we give evidence that we are part of the new creation, we receive eternal life. Now, one of the realities is this. We all know that we don't consistently sow to the spirit. We don't. We don't sow to the spirit every single time. There are times when sadly we do sow to the flesh, those of us who belong to Christ.

But the question is what marks us? Are we marked by a life and a pattern of sowing to the flesh? Or are we marked by life and pattern of sowing to the spirit? And I find the letter of 1 John so helpful, so clear for us in sorting through these things because sometimes, in particular for those of us who have tender consciences, we could really be torn and wonder, am I a Christian or not?

[26 : 37] Because I just sinned a moment ago. And I sinned in an area and the way that I asked the Lord for forgiveness for just yesterday. And John is so helpful because he tells us that the one who is born of God cannot go on sinning time after time after time after time.

And see, brothers and sisters, this is why it is so important for us to consider our lives and to consider what marks us. Are we in a situation where we prayed a prayer some time ago and we said, Lord Jesus, come into my heart and nothing has changed in our lives?

And we're still saying, I'm a believer? And our life is marked by sowing to the flesh, sowing to our desires in the moment.

Paul warns us. He warns us in these two verses that if we are sowing to the flesh, if that is our way of living, he says, we're going to perish.

We will reap corruption in the end. But if we, by the grace of God, are sowing to the spirit, then and only then will we reap eternal life.

[28 : 05] We know that what we do does not save us. We know that. The whole letter of Galatians has been making that point. But if our lives are marked by sowing to the flesh consistently, gratifying ourselves consistently, then we give evidence that we do not belong to Christ, we do not belong to the age to come.

And so these are sober words this morning and we need to take time to soberly evaluate our lives and really consider is my life more marked by this sowing to the spirit or is it more marked by a sowing to the flesh.

And in the primary context that he is addressing, how are we using our material possessions? Are we using our material possessions in a way that would be fleshly, that would be self-serving, that would be self-gratifying?

Or are we using it in a way that would glorify the Lord, that indicates that we are sowing to the spirit? Well, next, the apostle Paul, not only does he share this principle of sowing and reaping, he issues this warning about sowing and reaping.

Third, and finally, he offers an encouragement about sowing and reaping. We find his encouragement in verses 9 and 10.

[29 : 50] 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 the household of faith.

I find it interesting that the apostle Paul includes himself in verses 9 and 10. He says, and let us not grow weary. no doubt the apostle Paul knew firsthand how we can become weary in doing good. And the Galatian churches were exhibit A. The apostle Paul founded these churches and when they were being influenced by false teachers and he began to correct them, he became their enemy.

they began to see him as an enemy, a man who has poured out his life and risked his life for this church and now they see him as an enemy. The apostle Paul knew firsthand what it was like to be tempted to grow weary in doing good.

And there are times when we are tempted to grow weary in doing good. There are times when we do good and our good is met with ingratitude.

[31 : 21] And we are tempted to give up all together doing good and become more focused on serving ourselves and pleasing ourselves. I've heard people say this and you probably have as well.

I'm doing me now. I'm doing me. That's what I'm doing. I'm doing me. And it's a popular way to talk about selfishness without shame.

And sometimes for some of those people they have grown weary in doing well. And they've given up and they say I'm now going to do me. me. But the apostle Paul encourages us about doing good because sometimes when we do good, when we sow, we can sow for long periods of time without seeing any harvest for that sowing.

We sow and we sow and we sow and we don't reap. We don't see the reaping in sight. And as I wrote those words, I thought of a number of you.

I thought of a number of you who have been sowing for long periods of time of doing good. And it is weighing on you. It is tempting you to want to just give up and to focus more on yourself.

[32 : 51] the accusing voice of the enemy is coming at you and saying to you it's not worth it. It's not going to yield anything. They'll never appreciate it. You have done more than what most people will do.

And I sensed this morning that for those of you who may be in that place where you are beginning to feel weary for doing well, the Lord would say to you, do not grow weary in doing well.

Don't grow weary in doing well. Thank God that God understands this. He understands that we do at times go through seasons where we are tempted to just give up and just stop doing good.

He tells us don't grow weary in doing well. And the reason is because in due season you're going to reap if you don't give up. You will reap if you don't give up.

It is interesting how the Apostle Paul says this. Imagine hearing this as someone you're sowing, you're doing good, you've been doing good for a long period of time, you humanly speaking are doing it over time and now the Apostle Paul says if you don't give up you're going to reap a harvest.

[34 : 12] He says it not that you might reap a harvest, he says it this way, he says and let us not grow weary of doing good for in due season we will reap.

Not we might reap. We will reap. And so the only thing that we need to be concerned about is that we are doing good.

Because if we are doing good and we do not grow weary in doing good, God's word says to us we will reap. if it is good and we continue to do it, we will reap.

We will reap a harvest in due season. And some of that reaping will be in this life and some of that reaping will be in the life to come. But it's all in God's sovereign hand.

And you know what else? Ultimately it's from his sovereign hand. And one of the reasons that we sometimes grow weary in doing good is that we are looking at the person or persons to whom we are doing good as opposed to recognizing that ultimately we do good to the Lord.

[35 : 24] Our good is done as unto the Lord. And we need to look to him. Beyond that person who may not show the gratitude that they should show.

But ultimately it is the Lord to whom we look. his sovereign hands will determine when and how we reap.

And that we do reap. And so rather than give up we are encouraged to do good. And brothers and sisters when we forget this we will grow weary.

When we forget this we will grow weary. The apostle Paul also says in verse 10 he says as we have opportunity we are to do good to everyone.

And he points out another reality. The reality is we don't always have the opportunity to do good. even when we want to. There are some times that situations are presented to us and we just don't have the opportunity to do good because we may not have the time, we may not have the ability, we may not have the material resources to do good in that situation.

[36 : 54] So we are called as we have opportunity we are to do good. And with this let me just say this to us. We mustn't play games with this. God knows our hearts.

God knows our circumstances. God knows when a situation presents itself to us to do good whether we can do good. And so we do this in honesty before the Lord. So that when we say to a brother or sister I can't, God knows we have spoken the truth.

So let's not play games with it. Now some of you are probably wondering about this word everyone. What does that mean?

Is the Apostle Paul really saying to us that as we have opportunity we must do good to everyone, every person without exception? Is he saying that?

I don't think so. Because humanly that's not possible. It is not possible for us, even all of us together, to do good to every single person without exception.

[38 : 06] I think instead what he is saying to us, and here's another reason we can know that. If God wanted us to do good to every single person without exception, he would give us all the resources and the ability to do that.

He hasn't given it to us. But instead what he's calling us to do is to do good to everyone without distinction. We do good to all kinds of people.

We do good to those we like and those we don't like. We do good to those who are grateful like the single leper who returned to the Lord to give thanks. And we do good to the nine lepers who did not return to say thanks.

And I just want to say this as well. this may not be our experience but generally speaking I think the experience that Jesus had tells us that the vast majority of people will be ungrateful people.

The vast majority will be ungrateful. But you know Jesus didn't stop healing people after those ones were ungrateful. We're called to do good to everyone all kinds of people.

[39 : 18] We're called even to do good to our enemies when we have opportunity. So you should see clearly that this calls for discernment. Since we can't do good to everyone because we don't have the ability to do good to everyone, our resources are limited, our time, our talents, and our treasures, then we are called to make wise choices before the Lord concerning doing good.

God does not call us and want us to do good to every single person who presents him or herself to us. We're called to be discerning, we're called to be prayerful, and there's some opportunities to do good we will say no to, and there are others that we will say yes to, and this calls for walking in step with the Spirit as Paul was calling us to in the earlier section of this letter.

So we need discernment about when and how and to whom we are to do good.

And then in verse 10, notice that the Apostle Paul, to the latter part, he says to us, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Here again, this is a reminder that we have scarce resources, resources, and those resources are to be prioritized to those who belong to the household of faith.

[40 : 54] And this doesn't mean anyone who says, I'm a Christian. In context, it speaks about the local church, it speaks about the household of faith, where we are brothers and sisters in Christ, in the same way each of us has a natural household that we belong to, and there may be extended people outside who we relate to, but primarily that household would be those to whom you are immediately joined and connected.

And so we're called to discriminate in terms of priority to do good, first of all, to those who are to the household of faith.

Yes, we do good to everyone, all people without distinction as we have opportunity, but our priority is to brothers and sisters in the local church.

and so you see, as we demonstrate this kind of care for pastors, as we demonstrate this sowing to the spirit and not to the flesh, as we demonstrate this doing good to all kinds of people, what we do is we give evidence to a transformed life.

We give evidence to a transformed life that only Jesus Christ can bring, because I think we all know that left to ourselves we are basically selfish, but the life that is being laid before us, to which we are being called, is only possible when the Lord touches hearts, and he transforms lives to enable them to be marked by this kind of generosity, this kind of being others focused and not self-centered.

[42 : 40] love. And we put the gospel on display. Jesus said, it is our love for one another that will communicate to the world that we belong to him, that we are his disciples.

And that love can't be just an emotional love because people can't see an emotional love. They see a demonstrated love, love like the Apostle Paul is addressing in these verses.

As I prepared this sermon, I couldn't help but reflect upon the many years of doing good that we've had the opportunity to do in this church.

Many, many years. The Lord was kind to bring back many, many good memories where individuals in this church did good to others in this church.

Where groups of individuals banded together to do good for individuals and families in this church. And times when we as a whole church banded together and pooled our resources to do good, God. [44 : 04] And when we did those things, we gave evidence that we're sowing to the Spirit, not to the flesh. We gave evidence that we belong to the Lord.

And by the grace of God, we will have more opportunities. And by the grace of God, may we individually, in groups, and as a whole church, care for one another, do good for one another. And we do it knowing that one day we will reap. And the reaping that we look for is from the Lord's hands. No one else.

And that's how we continue. That's how we press on. And no matter what the response is, as a result of our giving, we should always be people who are grateful people. We should be thankful. But let us not be fixated on a thank you so much that we, when we don't receive it, we'll grow weary and say, all people aren't grateful.

[45 : 16] I'm not going to do this. I'm not going to do that. No. We do it because we do it as unto the Lord. And in the end, the gospel will be on display, and God will be glorified.

When the world sees this, they will look at us, but ultimately we can point to Jesus Christ. We don't do these things because we are better than other people.

We don't do these things just because we are kind people in and of ourselves. No. We do these things because the Lord Jesus Christ came to this earth and lived a perfect life keeping all the law that we could never keep.

And then he died in the place of sinners so that they can be reconciled to God. And so that their hearts of stone can be turned into hearts of flesh and that God can speak to them and use them to do good in his name.

All good that we do, we do it in Jesus' name. And may the Lord help us as a church to continue to do good as we have opportunity and put the gospel on display for the glory of God.

[46 : 28] Let's pray together. Amen.