

## Sowing, Reaping, & the Mocking of God

Galatians 6:6-10

Series: No Other Gospel #26

**Introduction:** Take your copy of the Scriptures and join me in Galatians 6 – Galatians chapter 6.

Galatians 6 verse 6 says this . . .

Mankind has a huge problem with the ways and laws of God. In so many instances in the physical world we take for granted these laws of God and we order our steps accordingly. We set our clocks according to the law of God which dictates the orbit of the Earth around the sun. And we operate according to the law of gravity, and we spend billions of dollars a year trying to figure out how God's world works through scientific research so that we can function better in it – which by the way is clear evidence for God as Creator. Science itself proves that God has put order in place in His Creation because science is the ongoing study of those laws and rules by which all things function.

But God is a God of order and rules and laws in the spiritual realm as well. And this is where mankind's huge problem with God bursts upon the scene. From the very first man and woman we have been deceived to think that we can skirt around God's immutable ways and get to an outcome which completely contradicts God's right and unchangeable laws. So, Adam and Eve thought that they could have more life and more knowledge and be more like God if they ate the fruit which He had clearly told them would lead to their destruction. Eve was deceived into believing that God's Word could be denied while still having the pleasant outcome. This same deception is in your heart and mine, and it was present in the Galatians too. It's a mankind problem. We want to believe that God's ways will be bent just for us.

In our text this morning we have a clear and forceful command – do not be deceived. This assumes that you will be tempted to be deceived. This is the human condition. We think that God doesn't really mean what he says. The heart of our text is found in verses 7-8. This core truth is surrounded by the idea of doing good. So in verse 6 we are told to share good things, and in verse 9 we are told to not grow weary of doing good things, and in verse 10 we are told to do good to everyone, especially those in the household of faith. And in the middle of these commands to good – we have the core truth – do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. The command and principle are given in verse 7, and then this principle is further explained as it relates to our spiritual journey in verse 8.

The central principle found in verse 7 is that God will not be mocked. The root idea of this mockery is a snubbing or a snorting of the nose at God. It is a flippant sneering at God which disregards His Word and His ways. We attempt to mock God when we think that we can sow seeds of one kind and reap a harvest of another kind. Your spiritual life is being equated to a farmer's field here. If you sow seeds of wheat and expect a harvest of pumpkins you are an

obvious fool – you are the one who is deceived. We accept this in the physical realm, but in our spiritual lives we are tempted to believe that we can sow seeds to our flesh and still reap all the benefits and joys of eternal life in God. But the law of God is unbendable. What you sow will be what you reap.

Verse 8 expands upon this universal law to help us understand its relevance for daily life. If we sow to the flesh we will reap corruption, but if we sow to the Spirit, we will reap eternal life. This is a universal and unbendable law of God. The flesh always brings about corruption because the flesh is itself corrupted by sin. Your flesh is completely depraved – meaning that it is corrupted in every way by your sinful rebellion against God. This rebellion and all of its anti-God propaganda has infiltrated every part of your being. So, if you sow seeds in the field of the flesh then you will reap what that field will produce – which will always be corruption. This word for corruption is pointing toward decay and a wasting away – and ultimately to total death and destruction. If we live unto the flesh we will reap what the flesh can give us – which is total destruction and condemnation before a thrice Holy God.

Take note of the little preposition “to” in verse 8. We can sow seeds “to” the flesh, or as believers in Jesus freed by the power of the Gospel, we can now sow seeds “to” the Spirit. This is a preposition of advantage, which means that we are sowing to the advantage of the object mentioned. The NIV translates this idea when it says “sows to please.” The idea here is any thought or action which we pursue for the sake of pleasing our flesh. We sow to the flesh when we entertain thoughts, desires, actions, and lusts which are to the advantage of the flesh, and to the pleasure of our sinful flesh. This is what was happening in the churches in Galatia. This principle strikes at the heart of the controversy in these churches. The legalists were trying to deceive everyone into thinking that they needed to pursue self-righteous, self-dependent, fleshly effort to keep the Law of Moses so that they could be one day declared to be fully right with God. These false teachers took the Gospel of Jesus and put the Law of Moses after the Gospel instead of before it. Instead of Jesus perfectly fulfilling the Law on our behalf and earning our righteousness which we now accept by grace through faith – these false teachers took the grace of the Gospel and said that we need Jesus and then after Jesus we need the Law so as to guarantee our place of salvation before God. It was a flesh-dependent system, and what Paul has exposed in this letter is that it is a system which drives us to the works of the flesh which are always exalting the individual at the expense of others. This corruption which the flesh brings is seen ultimately in eternal corruption when the sinner dies apart from the grace of the Gospel, but this corruption is seen all throughout life in the destruction and corruption of relationships which are the fabric of life. Don’t be deceived – this is all the flesh can offer – corruption.

But there is another way. We can sow our seeds to the Spirit and reap what the Spirit always produces – which is eternal life. Instead of corruption, we can know the joy of eternal life. This term – eternal life – is pointing ultimately to the final reality of full and final peace with God in His presence where we will know the fullness of joy and true and real and unending life with God. As it points to this ultimate reality is also speaks of the present benefit of this possession. So, being in Christ by grace through faith, we have the current possession of eternal life. It doesn’t just start on the day of our death, but rather on the day of our conversion. The quality of this eternal life will be fully realized in Heaven, but there is a present quality in which we grow

in our knowledge of God, and in our life in God. This life is full of the fruit of His Spirit's work in us, and we can pursue living unto the Spirit and thereby knowing more and more of this eternal life here and now, not just then and there. This is not speaking of works based salvation where we do the works of the Spirit and then we earn this eternal life. We know this because it has been so forcefully denounced in the letter already, but we also know this because these exhortations are all within the context of life in the Spirit. In other words, the assumption in these verses is that the Spirit of God has brought life to you already through the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You have received this salvation by faith and not by works. It is faith alone in Christ alone by grace alone based upon the Word of God alone. But this faith alone is not a faith that is alone. Salvation is not earned through works, but faith in Jesus Christ will produce these good works out of us. And this is the kind of life which the Spirit always leads us further and further into. So, we have been told in chapter 5 to walk by the Spirit and to be led by the Spirit and to keep in step with the Spirit. This always looks like being led toward others for the purpose of good works which are evidence of the Spirit's work in us. And that is no different in this text. So, as a believer in Jesus Christ, you still have a constant choice about how you are going to live. You will either work to sow to the advantage or unto the pleasure of your flesh, or you will work to sow to the advantage or unto the pleasure of the Spirit of God. God will not be mocked here – if you sow to the flesh – you will not know and enjoy the harvest of the Spirit.

So, the obvious injunction upon us this morning is that we ought to sow unto the Spirit and not unto the flesh. If you are in Christ, you still have a choice. If you are not in Christ by grace through faith, then this is not even an option for you. You just continuously sow unto the flesh and one day you will reap the full harvest of eternal corruption which is the only thing the flesh can produce. Friend if that is you – if you are on your way to an eternal reaping of condemnation before God because you are still in the flesh and not in Christ, then I beg you in this moment – be born again! Look to Jesus and live before it is too late!

If you are in Christ by grace through faith, then think for a minute of a continuum – a big line which stretches from one side of the platform to the other. On one extreme end is eternal condemnation for those who die in the flesh. Their eternal state is outside of Christ and they die in a lack of forgiveness and complete corruption. On the other end of the continuum is the fullness of eternal life – the perfection of ongoing, unending, complete fellowship with the God of Heaven in his joy-filled presence. This is what awaits the one who is in Christ by faith. Their sins – past, present, and future sins – are forgiven by the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ on their behalf. The Christian is somewhere on this continuum. We don't yet know perfection, and by the grace of God, we will never know complete corruption. We are in process as we grow in maturity in Christ – putting on the mind of Christ – following the lead of the Spirit – walking in step with the Spirit. The principle of this text is that you ought not be deceived. If you make choices and entertain thoughts which are to the advantage of the flesh you will work your way closer to that end of the continuum as you reap in your life what the flesh produces – corruption and decay. But if you sow to the Spirit, enabled by His grace and compelled by God's great love – then you will reap what the Spirit always produces – which is greater degrees of this eternal life.

In our text, this core idea of sowing to the Spirit and not to the flesh is surrounded by three commands. Verse 6, verse 9, and verse 10 all contain commands which call us to sow to the Spirit

and not to the flesh. In other words, we must sow to the Spirit in these three ways – by sharing, by persevering, and by seizing.

I. **By Sharing – vs. 6**

- a. So, in verse 6 we are told to the one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches. This is sowing to the Spirit. This is also by the way, why we preach systematically through the Scriptures. This is a verse I would avoid if it were up to me because it is uncomfortable for a guy in my position to talk about. But when we commit ourselves to working systematically through a book of the Bible we don't get to pick the topic – God does. The truth here is pretty straightforward. We are to sow to the Spirit of God by sharing all good things with the one who teaches us the Word. We will reap eternal life if we are doing this. And if we are not, then we are sowing to the flesh and reaping corruption.
- b. This word behind the phrase “one who is taught the word” is the same word used to describe the relationship between Luke and Theophilus in Luke 1. Luke was the teacher of the word about Christ to his pupil Theophilus. This is the pattern in the church. Several men are to be entrusted with the responsibility of shepherding the Church through the ministry of the Word. This is by the way, the simplest and clearest job description of gospel ministry – the teaching of the word. Phil Ryken says, “The center of any gospel ministry must be the exposition of Holy Scripture.”<sup>1</sup> This is what must be at the center of a pastor's job – the clear teaching of the Word. And when that is present, then the expectation of Scripture is that the teacher should be supported by the sharing generosity of the ones who are taught. So the expectation of the shepherd, pastor, elder is that he will teach the Word, and the expectation of the learner, listener, student is that he will share all good things with his teacher.
- c. These good things has an obvious physical concern to it. It is not just a sharing of nice advice and good counsel, but it is the sharing of the good physical things of life. This is what the Philippian church did for Paul when they had the opportunity. They were so thankful for his ministry of the Word among them that they sent messengers to him with abundant gifts to supply his physical needs. This is in keeping with the principle which is laid out for us in 1 Corinthians 9. Paul had sown spiritual things among the Corinthians, and so it was right for him to expect to reap material things from them. This is in keeping with the words of Jesus in Luke 10:7 when he instructs the 72 to stay in the houses of those who welcome them and to enjoy what they provide in eating and drinking and lodging because the laborer deserves his wages. This is clarified in 1 Timothy 5 where we are told that the elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor and then these elders are further identified as those who labor in the preaching and teaching of the Word. This describes a strenuous effort in understanding and explaining the Word of God to the people of God.

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Graham Ryken, *REC: Galatians*, pg. 253

The idea here is that not every elder is going to be freed to do this, but there will be a few who are, and they are worthy of the financial support they are given.

- d. Beloved, so many pastors have taken advantage of this in Western Christianity. They have presumed upon the generosity of the saints and they have been lazy in the carrying out of their main duty – to preach the Word by strenuous effort. Many have found themselves busy with running programs and marketing schemes and carrying on the maintenance of a ministry machine that they neglect the very thing they have been primarily called to – the preaching of the Word. The lifeblood of the Church is the clear preaching of the Word. We are a household of faith – and this faith comes by hearing the Word. And this hearing of the Word comes from the lips of those sent to preach. Therefore, let the preachers make this their central and most important task – the strenuous effort it requires to preach the Word!
- e. We are to sow to the Spirit by sharing with those who have taught us all good things. This word for share is the same word for fellowship – koinonia. Though the preacher and teacher of the Word is deserving of his wages – this is not some consumeristic transaction of payment for a spiritual service rendered. This is what pagan priests demand before they perform a religious rite – a payment of a fee. This is not what verse 6 is prescribing. Rather, this is a Holy Spirit directed and Holy Spirit blessed sharing of truth which brings about the sharing of good things. This is the sowing of the Word of God by the teacher, and the reaping of a livelihood for himself and eternal life for others. This is the sowing of the seed of sharing all good things by the student so as to reap the deep truths of the Word of God and therefore more and more of eternal life. Your financial giving to the support of your pastors is not simply a paycheck for a job done, rather it is a spiritual koinonia – a Spirit-led fellowship. This is not a job and paycheck thing – this is a spiritual fellowship thing.
- f. Before we move on, can I just tell you how amazed I am by the goodness of this design by our gracious God? A sinner like me does not deserve the immense privilege of giving my life to the study and teaching of the Word of God. And the teaching of the Word of God deserves the full attention of a man who is freed from having to provide for the physical needs of his family through other employment. It is a grace-filled design by God. And this is not something to be presumed upon, nor is it something to be taken advantage of on either side, but especially on the side of pastors. May the heart of every pastor who ever serves at Newton Bible be like the heart of Paul when he wrote in 2 Corinthians 12 – I seek not what is yours, but you . . . I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls!
- g. We sow to the Spirit by willingly sharing all good things with the ones who teach us the Word.

## II. By Persevering – vs. 9

- a. We also sow to the Spirit by persevering in doing good things. So verse 9 says – And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. In other words, it is quite possible to work hard for a long time, but

then to give up too soon and therefore lose out on the harvest. We are not to be deceived by the lack of immediate results in doing good. Walking by the Spirit of God is not an instant payout deal. It is less like buying corn at Dillon's and much more like growing corn in your garden. This is hard for us in our consumeristic Western instant gratification mindset. We want to microwave everything so that we can get back to our entertainment based lifestyle. But that is not God's way. He is not a microwave kind of God.

- b. But the harvest will come – if we persevere. We will reap if we do not give up. The Spirit of God will not be mocked here. He will not give a harvest where there has been no sowing, and he will not fail to give a harvest when there has been faithful and persevering sowing. Therefore, we should not grow weary, and we should not lose heart. These words in verse 9 speak of the exhaustion of planting seeds to the Spirit. It is hard work to do good. Other texts tell us to hold fast to what is good, to be zealous for good works, to provoke one another to good works, to maintain good works, and to bear testimony to the Gospel by our good works. All of this good work is constantly hard work!
- c. It is difficult to crucify the flesh with its evil desires and passions and to walk according to the Spirit. It is exasperating to try to help others as we show the fruit of the Spirit in us. There is an unending need around us and the need can always be met by the Spirit of God leading us to show love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. And yet there is no shortage of obstacles both inside of us and outside of us. Paul made this clear in 2 Corinthians where he said that he despaired of life itself because he was so oppressed by the difficulty of walking according to the Spirit of God which was leading him to constantly be doing good things. There were fights without and fears within – but he pressed on to the prize of the upward call of God. He did this because he had his eye on the prize.
- d. This the issue for us in our perseverance. Perseverance is determined by our worldview. If we are living simply in the moment or for the immediate, then we will not persevere in doing good. This is true because so many of our good efforts – even our Spirit-empowered and Spirit-directed efforts – on behalf of others produces so few quick results. We have missionaries who have given their lives to serve in some of the hardest places on Earth. They have labored for decades among animistic people steeped in the deception of the doctrine of demons – and they have labored in the good works of Spirit-empowered and Spirit-led ministry. And yet they have seen few results. This is in the spirit of William Carey who gave himself to the work of the Gospel in the needy country of India. The lack of result in the work of the Gospel often pushed Carey to despair and to the verge of quitting. He wrote to his sisters back in England and said,
  - i. “I feel as a farmer does about his crop; sometimes I think the seed is springing, and thus I hope; a little blasts all, and my hopes are gone like a cloud. They were only weeds which appeared; or if a little corn sprung up, it quickly dies, being either choked with weeds, or parched up by the sun

of persecution. Yet I still hope in God, and will go forth in his strength, and make mentions of his righteousness, even of his only.”

- e. This is the essence of verse 9 – a persevering attitude in the face of dismal results even of your best efforts to bring about good in the lives of others. Carey was sustained – not by his grit and determination – but he was sustained by God. Though the harvest had not yet come, he was convinced that God’s Word would not return void and there would be eternal effect upon the souls of India if he continued to sow to the Spirit of God. The doubts which plagued him and the hardships which were thrust upon him were no match for his faith-filled zeal for doing good and entrusting it all to God.
- f. This is not growing weary and not losing heart. The opposite of growing weary and faint-hearted is found in 1 Corinthians 15:58. In light of the ultimate victory of Christ over sin and death and hell, the believer is to be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. The Gospel of Jesus Christ compels us in every moment to persevere unto the end as we follow the example of our Lord. And He is our ultimate example in this. There is no greater good work than what Jesus did in securing our salvation through His work on the Cross. Hebrews 12:1-3 says – “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.”
- g. What is the key practice for the persevering heart? It is to consider Jesus, who endured the worst in order to accomplish the best. And he endured the worst because he had his eye on the finish line – the joy set before him. He saw by faith the end result of his cross work – therefore he could despise the shame and endure the cross because he knew it would yield an eternally great harvest.
- h. Beloved, where are your weary and fainthearted in your Spirit-empowered and Spirit-led good works today? Are you faltering in your investment in others for their good, in your investment in your kids for their good, in your zealous pursuit of the lost for their good, in your giving of yourself to help others for their good, in your use of your spiritual gifts for the good of the church, in your obedience to Christ as you kill sin and walk in the Spirit, in your leadership of others as you serve them and point them to Christ . . . where are you growing weary and losing heart? Here it is that you must look to Jesus – consider Him – follow his steps – keep your eye on the eternal realities at stake and by grace refuse to stop sowing to the Spirit – knowing that one day you will reap if you do not faint!

### III. By Seizing – vs. 10

- a. This persevering pursuit of doing good which is dependent upon the Spirit of God to produce a harvest leads naturally then into verse 10. We also must sow to the Spirit by seizing the moment and do good to everyone and especially to those who are of the household of faith. There are two verbs in verse 10. The first is - as

we have opportunity. This a present active indicative. It is indicating a presently true reality. We do currently and constantly have something. We have the opportunity – or better translated – we have the appointed time or season. In other words, this is planting season for field of the Spirit of God. Now is the time to be putting seed in the ground, and those seeds are the good works which the Spirit empowers us to do, and leads and directs us to do. These are good works which are faith-infused as we look to Jesus as our example. It is not yet harvest season. That will come ultimately in the next life. We may or may not get glimpses of it here in this life. Paul had small glimpses of the harvest of his life's work of sowing to the Spirit. He ended his life alone, cold, and hungry in imprisonment in Rome. There was no way he could have seen the eternally significant impact of 13 of his letters which were inspired by the Spirit and would shape the church until the return of Christ. Paul's perseverance was a work of faith believing that his life was all about sowing and not all about reaping.

- b. We get this so wrong in our view of the ministry of the Gospel. We exalt those who get immediate results in the response of numbers and the significance of the crowds. But God has a different economy of success, and immediate results are not at the top of his list – faithfulness is!
- c. Therefore, you must sow to the Spirit by doing good to everyone because now is the time for such a thing. The second verb in the verse is a present imperative which could be translated literally as “let us work the good.” So, since this is the appointed season for sowing – let's be about the business of sowing by working the good for all people – especially those who are of the household of faith. The good works of the Spirit-empowered Christian are to start within the family of God and they are to go beyond the family of God. They are to be to all people, and they are to be especially for the family of faith. This means that these good things you are seeking to sow are not self-serving, self-exalting, self-promoting things. Notice how the Spirit once again leads us to one another. His work in us is always a community project. He always points us toward others, and especially toward our brothers and sisters in the family of God. The flesh does the exact opposite. The flesh looks for the good works of others which are for my benefit. The flesh complains when others are not doing the good they ought to be doing to me. The flesh looks for ways to get out of having to do good to others so that I can take advantage of others doing good to me. The flesh is a fierce opponent of persevering good works for the benefit of others. But the Spirit will always lead you here and empower you by His grace to walk in these ways.
- d. Notice quickly that this family of God which is especially to be our concern is a household defined by faith. This lets you know that the whole context has not been man-dependent effort for the earning of our salvation or our sanctification. Rather, this is all about faith. We believe the Gospel by faith and are adopted into the family of God. And we walk by faith in the Spirit of God believing that our good things are tools in his hand to bring about his harvest. It is all faith.



**Conclusion:** So beloved – what does a perusal of your life show? Are you walking in a self-deceived way which is somehow believing that God will give a spiritual harvest where there has been only sowing to the flesh? Or which believes that God will ultimately fail to bring about the harvest he has promised? Do not be deceived! God is not mocked, for whatever one sows that will he also reap. Beloved – sow to the Spirit and reap eternal life. Do this by sharing, by persevering, and by seizing the moment. Let's pray!