

Galatians 6:6-10 “Tend the Garden”

GAL 6:6-10 “Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor. Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

As you’ll remember last week this section of Galatians is a practical teaching from Paul directed to the individuals of this church so that they might pull together as a body, using their gifts and ministries to not only further the gospel of Jesus Christ, but also to be strengthened so as not to fall prey to the false teachings and teachers who would try to divide them.

But as we come to our text this morning it seems as though verse six is just thrown in there with no apparent reason, kind of like how the Proverbs sometimes work. When you read Proverbs Solomon will often times deal with a variety of different issues which don’t appear to be related in the course of just a few verses.

PRO 22:5-8 “In the paths of the wicked lie thorns and snares, but he who guards his soul stays far from them. Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender. He who sows wickedness reaps trouble, and the rod of his fury will be destroyed.”

These are wise statements put together to instruct God’s people. And though Paul is instructing the Galatians with wisdom our text is not simply enlightening these people with miscellaneous and pithy statements.

There is a rhyme and reason as to what Paul is doing here. Let’s start with verse six of our text.

GAL 6:6 “Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.”

The NASB puts it this way. “The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches.”

The way this is normally dealt with suggests that what Paul is teaching here is that the congregation has a responsibility to financially support the Pastor who is teaching them.

And the word of God certainly teaches this concept. When Jesus sent out the 70 to proclaim the kingdom of God He told them to go into the houses of those who would accept them and to expect these people to feed them and provide for them as He said, “for the worker deserves his wages.”

Paul also points out this concept to the Corinthians.

1CO 9:7-14 “Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk? If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.”

But as we look at our text we have to ask, is Paul teaching this concept at this point in light of the context?

The answer could be yes and no. If Paul is exhorting the Galatians to materially or financially support those teachers who are instructing them it may very well be because of what Paul has been teaching them prior to this exhortation.

Remember, Paul has condemned the false gospel of these false teachers who were promoting the law along-side of grace. He has essentially told them to flee from their influence.

Now, if the bulk of their teachers were these Judaizers there would certainly be the temptation not to want to support any teacher in fear that they would potentially be supporting a false teacher.

They may surmise that before we financially support any teacher we'll put them on probation for a period of time. Well, that may be wise from one stand-point, but it may also keep a good teacher from being a part of that fellowship if he has no other means of support.

Now, keep in mind that Paul is not teaching here the finer points of how to choose a Pastor/teacher. It would be assumed that before they place someone in that position they've done their homework.

What Paul could be teaching here is that the basic principle still applies despite the fact that there are wolves in sheep's clothing in their midst, and that is, the worker deserves his wages.

He doesn't mean to suggest that they continue to support these Judaizers but that they don't neglect someone who does teach them from God's word simply because they've been burned by false teachers.

But there may be another way of looking at this passage and that is that Paul may not be teaching, in this particular verse, the financial support of the teacher but rather he may be encouraging the Galatians to share in the spiritual blessings of the teacher who dispenses such blessings in the teaching of God's word.

“The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches.”

John MacArthur points out that the Greek word for share here in our text is "koinoneo, which has the basic idea of sharing equally. It is the verb form of the noun commonly translated fellowship" which we all know as koinonea.

MacArthur says, “Paul is talking about mutuality, not of one party serving or providing for the other but of both parties sharing together. The one who is taught the word and the one who teaches have a common fellowship and should share all good things together....”

..... “The most common [Greek] term for material things that are favorable, or good, is kalos. But [here in our text] good things translates the plural of agathos, which is used in the New Testament primarily of spiritual and moral excellence.”

And so, the idea here in our text may be that Paul is encouraging the believers in Galatia, and all believers, to share all good things [spiritual things] with their teachers as they give up the false teaching of the law, as it pertains to attaining righteousness, and embrace the truth of the gospel of grace with all its spiritual blessings.

In fact, verse 6 of our text in the original Greek could be translated, “let him who receives instruction share with him who gives instruction in all good things.”

To pursue the law does not produce spiritual blessings. And so, if the Galatians want to enjoy such blessings with their teachers they

must insist that their teachers teach the whole counsel of God's word as they lay aside the law in favor of grace.

HEB 10:1 "The law is only a shadow of the good things [agathos] that are coming - not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship."

And so, in keeping with the context, Paul is exhorting the Galatian believers to pursue the truth and thus be blessed as they are conformed into the image of Christ.

And of course, the same is true of us. If we allow false teachers to influence us, be that from television, radio, tapes, the Internet, or even our own fellowship, we will not share in the good things which are from above because the falsehoods will take their place.

If we will not discipline ourselves to study God's word and meditate upon it in such a way where we can discern its truth we will always be at the mercy of the "experts". This does not mean to suggest that those with the gift of teaching should not be listened to and consulted with.

But, Paul certainly was one with the gift of teaching and yet he commended the Bereans for not simply taking his teaching without comparing it with the rest of the Scriptures to see if those things he said were true. And this was the way he prayed for the Philippians as well.

PHI 1:9-11 "And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ - to the glory and praise of God."

And so, as it pertains to our ability to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, we must approach the Scriptures for what they are, the very word of God. And as we do that we will grow in all good things.

1PE 2:2-3 "Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord." (NASB)

Okay, let's move on.

GAL 6:7 "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows."

This is a passage of Scripture that uses the language of agriculture in a sense. This was common knowledge among all people in this part of the world and was never questioned.

The imagery is that a farmer plants corn and he knows he will never get anything but corn. If he plants grapes he will always get grapes, and so on. Paul is saying to these wayward Galatians that this law of sowing and reaping applies in the spiritual world as well.

JOB 4:8 “As I have observed, those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it.”

PRO 11:18 “The wicked man earns deceptive wages, but he who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward.”

HOS 8:7 “They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind....”

In other words, if you sow in the flesh, then you will reap according to the flesh. If you sow in the Spirit, then you will reap spiritual blessings. Up to this point the Galatians have been sowing according to the flesh as they have tried to live spiritual lives according to the law.

In fact, earlier in this letter Paul raises the question as to this dilemma.

GAL 3:2-3 “I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?”

And so, in keeping with the theme of this letter Paul now again reminds his readers and us that if we think we can go forward spiritually with anything less than that which is spiritual, Godly, then we will never go forward.

We will reap what we sow, be that according to the flesh or according to the Spirit. And what Paul says in verse 7 is that to be deceived into thinking we can live spiritual lives in the flesh is not only foolish, it also mocks God.

The literal translation of the word mock in our text is to “turn up the nose or sneer at.” When we attempt to do our own thing contrary to God’s word we essentially turn up our noses to God. His ways become a stench in our noses.

And Paul is saying that despite how we might try and move ahead spiritually without the aid of the Spirit of God, there is no way that will be accomplished. And in the process we make God look as though He's not important in our lives.

But as Paul points out, we can try to attain spirituality through the flesh, but whatever we sow, just like that corn, if that's what we plant we will never reap anything other than what we sow. It's a law of nature, and it's a law of the spirit.

GAL 6:8 "The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life."

In this verse Paul is speaking in bold contrasts just as he did in Gal.5:19-23 where he made the comparison between the deeds of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. He's not suggesting here in verse 8 that if believers ever sow to the flesh that they will be denied eternal life.

He's simply stating that if only the flesh is pursued by people they will reap what the flesh produces which is death. If on the other hand people will sow to please the Spirit, and by this he means accepting the things of the Spirit by faith, specifically the gospel, then from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

But the questions needs to be raised, if we are true believers can we sow to the flesh? And if so, what will we reap?

The answer to the first question is absolutely yes, we can sow to the flesh. Just look to the Corinthians or even these Galatian Christians who were entertaining the idea of being circumcised to assure their salvation.

And the danger they were falling into was that they were going to reap what they sowed. What they were sowing was pride and elitism as they considered themselves much more spiritual as they not only believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, but were, through their actions, suggesting that now they were complete as they were sold out to the Lord, even willing to mutilate themselves.

Cutting the flesh doesn't produce a spiritual life. But neither does any aspect of the flesh; and by this we mean the sinful nature. When we try to please that area of our lives we only deceive ourselves. We weaken ourselves.

And again, this takes us back to the things of the Spirit which strengthen us, not the least of which is the word of God inspired by the Spirit.

John MacArthur puts it very well when he says, “God’s word is so important, not only for building up the church in the Lord but also for protecting it against being weakened and destroyed. An untaught believer is a weak believer and therefore a vulnerable believer. Scripture not only is the believer’s food but also his armor.”

The believer may sow to the flesh, but he has the hope that the new nature he has in Christ is one which will take precedence as he submits to the Spirit of God. But it takes repentance, and by this we simply mean a turning around and moving away from that fleshly path and moving in the direction of the things of God.

There is a reward in doing that. There is a reaping in doing that which allows us to reap the things of the Spirit as the Spirit of God builds us up to be better servants of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

That’s the point Paul is making. Just as sure as we will reap the things of the flesh if we sow to the flesh, we will most certainly reap the things of the Spirit as we pursue the things of the Spirit with the greatest reaping being eternal life to which the Spirit of God has sealed us.

We discussed it a bit this last Thursday evening as the question of eternal security for the believer came up, especially as it relates to a believer in light of how he might sow to the flesh at times.

And though we certainly don’t want to use our security in Christ as an excuse to sin, the fact of the matter is that even if we do sin we have an advocate in Christ, or as the NIV puts it “we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins...” (1JO 2:1-2)

But our joy and our motivation for wanting to pursue the things of the Spirit should come from the fact that our relationship with our God is not as fleeting as our flesh, or sinful nature, which is fickle at best.

Our motivation should come from the fact that God loved us even while we were yet sinners and continues to love us as His children as we’ve placed our faith in Christ alone for our salvation.

In this relationship we know that nothing will separate us from the love of Christ. We know that nothing can snatch us from the Father's hand. We know that there is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

The question then is not can we lose our salvation, but will we show our appreciation and gratitude for the life we've been given in Christ which is eternal in nature? If we will then we will not only reap eternal life, but we will also reap many other spiritual blessings both here and in heaven.

In this light Paul concludes this section.

GAL 6:9-10 "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."

You and I in Christ are part of a spiritual garden; reaping and sowing. And what Paul is conveying to us is that we need to understand that all of life is tending to this garden. The way in which we tend to this garden will determine what will spring up.

What we sow makes a difference to those around us and to the glory of God who has given us the privilege of being this garden in the midst of the world whose only fruit is destruction.

With this in mind we don't want to lose heart and decide to join the world since their garden seems much bigger. Our garden is not in competition with the world's garden in the sense that we want to match it. Our garden, though smaller in appearance is infinitely better in quality.

We don't want to lose heart. And believe me I know there is always the temptation to lose heart especially when the world wants to try and trample our fruit.

But here's the real reason we don't want to lose heart, and it has everything to do with who is ultimately tending this garden. Yes, you and I are responsible for sowing righteousness and the love of Christ in this world, but the fruit we sow is ultimately from God Himself. Remember, it is the fruit of the Spirit.

And as such, we should therefore come to God with a passion to want to seek the things of the Spirit so that His fruit would become more and more desirable to the world and our garden looks more

and more attractive to the end that they would want to meet the Master Gardener.

Let's not become weary in doing good, in sowing and tending this garden, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

There isn't a farmer in this world who hasn't become discouraged at times because of the amount of crop they've reaped being sometimes scanty. In fact, I'm sure there are some farmers who haven't reaped any crop at times because of disaster. But I will guarantee you that if that same farmer simply quits planting seed altogether we all know how much he'll reap. Nothing.

We need to continue to plant and to sow and water, not with the idea that we can make it grow but with the sure understanding that what we sow God can make grow. Isn't that what Paul told the Corinthians?

1CO 3:7-9 "So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building."

We need to continue to sow according to the Spirit. The flesh produces nothing that will honor and glorify God as it relates to promoting the things of the Spirit. And since we have only one life to live in this world we might as well live it unto the one who has given us life in the next.

We do that by being a living witness to all men. And we should never give up doing that no matter how much opposition we encounter. Whether it's family or friends who don't know Christ and who aren't interested in hearing about His salvation, or whether it's the people in the community in which we live, we must never give up sowing the word, the gospel of Jesus Christ and the love He has given us.

GAL 6:10 "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."

We need to continually seek the Lord for those opportunities. We need to ask the Lord to allow us to be used as messengers of life and hope found in Christ and ask that as we water and plant that

He would be pleased to give life to those we touch as they embrace Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

And believe me God will be faithful to give us those opportunities. We just need to be willing to act on them. And part of that is doing good to all people. Here's that word good we saw earlier in our study. Agathos; that which is joyful, useful, pleasant, as it relates to the spiritual good we find in Christ.

As we share this good with the world we can know that as we don't grow weary God will be faithful to use our work in His kingdom to His glory. And there is nothing more satisfying than to know that we are His vessels for grace and love as we tend the garden of life found in Christ alone.

But as we are doing good to all people we don't want to neglect doing good to those who are part of the same family of Christ we are in. We see this at the end of verse 10 of our text.

GAL 6:10 "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."

There is nothing like family. And there's nothing like belonging to a family with God as its Father, Christ as its Head, and the Spirit as our teacher.

It's a special forever family and we must always understand that we should do all we can to encourage each other to walk as a spiritual family as we help each other to flee from the things of the flesh and feed that new life, that new nature we have in Christ, always remembering that the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

This is our goal; eternal life, and this life starts today for all who embrace Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. But the flip side is true as well. If we do not embrace Christ by faith only the flesh and its penalty remains; destruction and condemnation.

JOH 3:15-18 "..... everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

For we who have believed, we have the promise that we will always be with our Creator God and Savior.

JOH 10:28-30 "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one."

Let's tend the garden and let our lights shine in a darkened world and give them the assurance that they too can be part of this family in Christ as we walk and serve in the Spirit to His honor and glory.