

GALATIANS

Lesson 22

Sowing and Reaping Galatians 6:6-10

INTRODUCTION

There are certain universal, immutable and fixed spiritual principles of God. These principles never change and are as true today as they were one thousand years ago. One such law is that God saves all who place their faith and trust in Christ. Another such law is that God's wrath burns hot against all who do not have Christ as their Lord and Savior. There are many of these kinds of fixed laws of God, and one of those laws we are going to concentrate on here is "A man reaps what he sows."

Sowing and reaping are agricultural terms. If a farmer wants a harvest, he must sow his seed in his field; otherwise there will be no harvest. The kind, quality and quantity of the harvest depends upon the kind, quality and quantity of the seed sown. Corn seed will always produce corn, and weed seeds will always produce weeds. A strong, healthy seed will produce a good quality crop, and bad seed will produce a bad crop. If the farmer sows plentifully, he can expect a plentiful harvest, but if he sows sparingly, then he will reap sparingly.

SOWING AND REAPING IN THE AREA OF FELLOWSHIP WITH FAITHFUL TEACHERS 6:6-7

"Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor."

Many Bible scholars have taken the word "share" to mean the sharing of finances by those being taught in the Word with those teaching the Word. That is, the pupil has a financial responsibility to the teacher. It certainly is a Biblical principle that those who teach the Word (teaching elder or pastor-teacher) are to be supported by those who are taught (Phil. 4:15 **"Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need."** 1 Cor. 9:14 **"In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel."**).

Ministers are not to be kept poor, nor are they to get rich. They are to be paid well enough that they will not have to become men of the world. While this section may be teaching that the congregation should pay the pastor, the context of Galatians six does not seem to fit the idea of paying teachers of the Word.

The word "share" is the Greek word *koinonia*, which means "to have all things in common." So here in this context it means "to hold fellowship with another person." The word "instruction" is *katakeo* in the Greek and it is from the word, which we derive our English word "to catechize." Therefore, the meaning seems to be that those who are catechized or taught from the Word of God should fellowship with teachers who are teaching the truth.

To fellowship with teachers who teach the truth can present a problem, for there are all kinds of Christian leaders who claim their little brand of Christianity is the truth, and if you do not "dot your I's and cross your T's" just as they do theologically on secondary issues, then you are excommunicated from that particular group. One thing we must remember is that while the Bible contains all the truth for faith and practice, no Christian has all the truth of the Bible at any given time. The fundamental truths on salvation are basic to all Christians but on secondary theological issues all Christians do not agree. I am afraid that

any Christian or Christian group that makes a claim to know everything there is to know about the Bible and they alone have all the truth in their possession, has stopped studying the Bible long ago. Those teachers and Christian groups who dogmatically claim they alone have all knowledge are so filled with pride and ignorance that they can be a tool in the devil's hand.

Teachers who teach the truth must be men who know the truth, and the only way to know the truth is to be constantly studying God's Word. The greatest sin among ministers and teachers of the Bible in our generation is a failure to spend hundreds of hours studying God's Word.

F. Greshen Machen said, "The minister is no longer a specialist in the Bible but has become merely a sort of general manager of the affairs of the congregation." (*The Minister and His Greek New Testament*)

When the Apostle Paul told these Galatians to fellowship with teachers of the truth, he had some particular truth from the context in mind. Galatians was written to refute the false teaching of the Judaistic-legalizers who taught that salvation and sanctification were to be obtained by keeping the Mosaic Law. These Judaizers actually taught that works gained salvation. Therefore, the whole theme of the book of Galatians is about the Christian's deliverance from the Mosaic Law and that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ. The "good things" in this verse are all the teachings about grace. It seems as though this verse is saying that Christians should fellowship with teachers who are teaching the unchanging principle of grace since salvation and sanctification are all of God. The bedrock of Biblical Christianity is grace, and to leave the principle of grace is to leave real Christianity.

The point of this exhortation is obvious. What we sow we shall reap. If we follow false teachers, we shall find ourselves in false teaching. If we shun grace, we shall wind up in law, works and legalism. If we stay in churches which do not teach the truth, then we shall reap coldness and dead orthodoxy in our own lives and the lives of our children. If we willingly place ourselves under liberal teaching then we can expect to lose our own souls for eternity. Yes, we reap what we sow when we place ourselves under false teachers. Yet, if we place ourselves under true teachers of the Bible, then we can expect salvation and spiritual growth for our children and ourselves.

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

We must keep in mind that this whole context is directed to men and women who profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. There are many Christians who are deceived concerning the law of sowing and reaping. They rationalize their responsibility to God and sow spiritual seed in a thoughtless, nonchalant, careless way, and they forget they shall reap exactly what they have sown.

God is not mocked. The word "mocked" means "to fool" or "to out-wit." God is not fooled or outwitted when the Christian willfully sows bad seed in his life. Men can fool themselves but they cannot fool God, for God knows all about what men think and do, and will reward them accordingly. Men may think they can escape the spiritual law of sowing time and harvest, but they cannot. They may go on sowing their seeds and closing their eyes to the consequences but one day God Himself will bring in the harvest and judge every work of men. As sure as God is God, or that the sun comes up every morning, a man reaps what he sows.

Men actually rationalize the inevitable result of their immoral conduct by reasoning:

If I conceal the sinful act from others, they will never know and I have gotten away with something. No one knows; no one is hurt and I have pleased my flesh. Yet God always sees all of our acts whether public or private and every act of sin has consequences to others either directly or indirectly.

I imagine that if the wrong is entirely forgotten and regarded as a matter of the past, there will be no consequences or pain for me because of the immoral act. Yet God never forgets even when men do.

I hide behind religion to lessen the consequences of sin, wrongly reasoning that paying a penance or confessing to a priest or minister or praying will take away the law of sowing and reaping when it comes to my sin. Yet the consequences of sin still take its toll in our lives, even after we are convicted it is wrong.

I reason that asking for and receiving forgiveness will cause the law of sowing and reaping to be suspended. For sure, there is forgiveness and deliverance from the guilt of sin when confession is made, but there are still the historical consequences for sin due to the law of sowing and reaping.

In his commentary on Galatians, Charles Erdman comments on confession and the consequences of sin:

There is a reality in pardon, but it does not prevent the sinner from reaping a harvest of punishment and of shame. It does secure this supremely important thing: namely, the removal of the barrier of conscious guilt which separates the soul from God. It does bring one again into fellowship with the loving Father whose heart has been offended. It does enable one with more patience and submission to bear the burden which the fault has brought upon the sinning soul. It does also prevent one from sowing further seed which might result in a greater and more pitiful harvest of sorrow and distress. However, the consequences cannot be averted. "He that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption."

SOWING AND REAPING IN THE AREA OF PERSONAL HOLINESS 6:8

"The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction."

Paul again contrasts flesh (sin nature) and the Spirit. The sin nature still resides in every true Christian. The flesh is that principle that wants to do evil and is constantly seeking to gain dominance over the Christian.

As Christians we often sow the seeds of the sin nature in thoughts and actions. Every time we think an evil thought (which is quite often), hold a grudge, tell a lie or wallow in self-pity, we are feeding the flesh. Whenever we are with wrong companions who are leading us away from spiritual things, or involved in premarital sexual conduct, or being lazy when we should be working, or take any step which strains our self-control, we are sowing to the sin nature. If we are not praying, studying the Bible, or witnessing because of television or some other leisure activity which is occupying all of our time, we are pandering the sin nature and not crucifying it.

People often say to me that they want a more holy, godly, committed life and a more consistent witness. Yet many of these same people are not willing to commit themselves unreservedly to God. They sow to the sin nature every day and wonder why they do not reap holiness. We will not reap holiness if we sow corruption.

Perhaps this is a warning to professing Christians to give evidence of the reality of salvation in their lives. The professing Christian, who continually and habitually sows to the sin nature, will reap the destruction of spiritual death, proving that his profession of Christ was only superficial and not real (Gal. 5:19-21 **"The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God."**).

"The one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life."

Christians who sow spiritual seed by the Holy Spirit shall reap the harvest of eternal life, giving evidence that they are true believers in Christ. To sow to the Spirit is the same as to walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16 **"So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature."** To sow to the Spirit is to go after the things of God as they are recorded in the Bible. It is to have our minds on God

(Rom. 8:6 **“The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.”** It is to be thinking godly thoughts (Phil. 4:8 **“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things.”**).

This verse teaches we neither are not helpless victims of our sin nature nor are we slaves to our temperament and environments. By the grace of God, our character can be progressively changed to be more Christlike. Through dependence upon the Holy Spirit and renunciation of the sin nature, Christians can be progressively changed. This does not happen overnight, but is a lifetime process. What we become as Christians is directly related to how we behave. Our character is shaped by our conduct. If we sow to the sin nature, we will reap fleshy results and be frustrated and miserable, but if we sow to the Holy Spirit we will reap the harvest of experiencing eternal life.

John R.W. Stott says,

By the books we read, the company we keep and the leisure occupations we pursue we can be “sowing to the Spirit.” Then we are to foster disciplined habits of devotion in private and in public, in daily prayer and Bible reading, and in worship with the Lord’s people on the Lord’s Day. All this is “sowing to the Spirit”; without it there can be no harvest of the Spirit, no fruit of the Spirit.” (*Commentary on Galatians*)

SOWING AND REAPING IN THE AREA OF PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS 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.”

Now the Apostle Paul seems to move from the area of personal holiness to personal relationships with others; that is, doing good and helping others in true Christian service.

Christian service involves witnessing to the lost, working with the lost in community projects, involving ourselves in the training of saints in the local church and serving our Christian brothers and sisters whenever we can. After all, the ministry is not organizations, programs, activities or books but **people!**

There is a tendency for Christians to get discouraged in Christian service because it is very tiring and exacting because we are dealing with people. Sometimes there is not much obvious external fruit. However, we are not to give up. We are to keep at it. We are to persevere. And in time we will reap a harvest. We must sow the seed and wait patiently for God to bring the harvest. Faithfulness will bring the salvation of souls and the building of the saints.

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

Christians are to do good to all men as opportunity comes, for no Christian can be an island from the rest of society. The Christian is to have personal separation of life unto God and penetration of life into his community. However, the Christian’s first responsibility is to his brothers and sisters in Christ. Our Christian love for one another begins at home and then spreads to the community.

Jesus summed it all up when He said, **“By this shall all men know you are my disciples if you have love for one another.”** (John 13:35).

In the area of personal relationships, we reap what we sow. If we sow friendship, we will have friendship. If we sow coldness, hardness and a critical spirit, then we will reap the harvest of no friends. If we sow love, we will reap love.

CONCLUSION

For you without Christ, the fixed law of sowing and reaping applies to you as well. If you continue to live only for yourself and feed your life with lust, pleasure and materialism, you will reap the reward of God's judgment. If you continue to sow the seeds of unbelief and rejection of Christ, a wrathful God will meet you in eternity.

Yet God promises you that if you will sow the initial seed of belief in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, He will save you. Have you trusted Christ? Only Christ can save you from your sins and give you eternal life. Hear me now, unbeliever, you will reap what you sow! I urge you to sow the seed of Christ into your life by faith and you will reap the harvest of eternal life.