

October 28, 2018
Sunday Morning Service
Anniversary
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as we prepare to hear from Galatians 6:7-10.

1. In what ways can people mock God?
2. Have you ever observed Adrian Rogers' interpretation of sowing and reaping fulfilled? ("We reap what we sow. We reap after we sow. We reap more than we sow.")
3. What does the harvest of corruption of the flesh look like?
4. What does the harvest of eternal life through the Spirit look like?
5. Describe the sowing of Spirit-seed by doing good.
6. In what ways can we sow Spirit-seed by doing good in the "household of faith"?

AS WE HAVE OPPORTUNITY, DO GOOD
Galatians 6:7-10

God has allowed me to minister in this same church for thirty-three years. We have seen a lot of folks come through the ministry in those years. We have seen many of you stay for many years. That has allowed us to observe how God has used the teaching of His Word,

the circumstances of your lives, the ministry of others to mature you spiritually. It is so satisfying to see how so many of you continue to become more and more like Christ.

At the same time, I hope that those of you who have been here for the long haul have been able to observe the same kind of spiritual growth in my own life. Frankly, I try not to think about how spiritually immature I was in those early years of ministry. It's a bit ironic how a pastor in his thirties is quite sure he has all the answers, when in reality he is generally clueless and operates solely on God's grace and patience.

I think that a broad and general view of "church" across the American landscape might reveal that there are local assemblies as God intended for them to be, and then there are religious organizations that are not what God intended. The difference might be flesh-led churches and Spirit-led churches.

A flesh-led church is often a gathering or organization of people who might focus on excitement, fun, or camaraderie that is really not much different than the guys hanging out down at the bar, or the local ladies' garden club. Or a flesh-led church might well be characterized by being very intent about religion, maintaining a focus on liturgy, with little emphasis on the Bible and great emphasis on the church's traditions.

A Holy Spirit-led church, in contrast, will be characterized by the truths of the Bible. The Holy Spirit will never shape a local church contrary to the truths He authored in the Bible. That kind of church will be manifested by people who are born again and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Those people will be concerned to help each other become more like Christ, being shaped by His Word. A Spirit-led church is not characterized by the life and excitement of the flesh, but by genuine, eternal life kind of traits. Eternal life traits are Christ traits.

I think and hope that Community Baptist Church has been changing over the years to reflect those Christlike traits more and more. Our text teaches us that we are all subject to God's law of sowing and reaping. God's plan is for each of us to buy up opportunities to sow good deeds among ourselves. The harvest for that kind of sowing is genuine Spirit-filled, eternal life characteristics.

Are you a part of that ministry in this thirty-three-year-old local assembly? That is God's will for each of us.

God's Law of Sowing and Reaping (vv.7-9).

God the Holy Spirit warned us of the danger of being deceived. *Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap* (v.7). We are certainly not surprised to be reminded that we can be deceived if we are aware that Satan is the great deceiver. That is the accurate picture of him in the context of his final judgment where John saw that *the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world – he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him* (Revelation 12:9).

It only stands to reason that Satan would be the deceiver because God is truth and Satan is God's polar opposite. Therefore, Jesus warned that Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44). In fact, the first mention of him in Scripture reveals him lying to Eve, contradicting God by saying, "You will not surely die" (Genesis 3:4). God had plainly warned Adam and Eve that if they took the forbidden fruit they would surely die.

Therefore, whoever listens to Satan will be deceived, which means to be led astray, seduced, caused to wander down a path of error. And yet so often Satan's leading doesn't look so dangerous. Because Satan is an angel of light, the path of error looks right. Sadly, Satan's deceptive path often looks more right than the truth.

The only way for us to keep from being deceived by Satan is to stay in the light of the truth of God's Word. That was David's conclusion (assuming he wrote Psalm 119). *Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path* (Psalm 119:104-105).

But Satan is not the only source of deception against which we need to be on guard. Our flesh is also deceptive. And being in a deceiving flesh is our natural condition. God spoke just that warning through Jeremiah: *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?* (Jeremiah 17:9). Because of this mixed up condition in which we are born, we naturally desire that which is in conflict with God's truth. That is precisely what Eve

illustrated to us. When Satan deceived her, lying about God's promise, her flesh also took Satan's side. *So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate* (Genesis 3:6).

Our flesh deceives us and leads us down the wrong path in so many areas. For example, pride can make a person think that he can do whatever it takes to make God forgive his sins. Or the simple deception of ease. Our flesh deceives us into thinking we can pamper our flesh, avoid work, avoid the difficult things, and have good results. Or pleasure. We naturally live for the times of pleasure because pleasure brings satisfaction. Those good times are also often the times of plenty. Our flesh deceives us into thinking that if we could just win the lottery all our troubles would be over. And as a result of the deceiving flesh, the people who can least afford to buy a lottery ticket spend the most money on it. And if they do win, the windfall destroys them in short order.

Another very deceptive lie is that life is all about me. It is astonishing how many professing Christians actually believe this. That is the same attitude Satan had and is a natural conclusion of our deceptive flesh.

But maybe manmade religion is the most deceptive aspect of our flesh. Of course it is inspired by Satan too. That is the underlying issue in this letter from Paul to Christians in the Galatian region. The chief problem of deception, according to the context, was false teaching. The Judaizers taught that it was necessary for a person to not only have faith in Jesus Christ, but also to practice certain requirements from the Mosaic law that Christ had already brought to completion. That was a lie from hell.

In particular were issues like circumcision (Galatians 5:11), the keeping of particular holy days and restrictions on foods (Romans 14:1-6), ceremonial washings, laying on of hands, teaching about resurrection, and eternal judgment (Hebrews 6:2). The Judaizers had practiced these matters diligently while they still worshiped in the Jewish religion. Now they were teaching that the same practices needed to continue in order for folks to be truly saved.

Paul warned Christians that though this kind of teaching seemed to flow from the Old Testament, it was actually a *different gospel* (1:6). It was a gospel of personal pride because it taught that an individual's good works could gain salvation (2:16). People who get caught up in manmade religions are not only deceived, they are bewitched (3:1). The spiritual battle is between human pride and bowing in humility before the grace of God revealed in His Word. Therefore, the further we move away from the clear truths of the Bible, the more we will be deceived into thinking that there is some redeeming value within us.

Ultimately the reason for us not to be deceived is that God will never prove to be foolish, or as Paul put it, *God is not mocked*. To mock is to treat with contempt, turn up your nose toward someone (generally an authority). Therefore, we must ask, "How is it possible to treat God with contempt in this matter of the gospel?" Follow the biblical argument. God is the author of salvation. God gave the law to Moses so that all of us are informed regarding His perfect holiness. When we acknowledge the Law, we should quickly come to the conclusion that we fall far short of measuring up to it. That is God's plan.

We understand how the gospel is such good news when the Law convicts us of our great need for the Savior. If we conclude that we can be our own Savior by accomplishing noble deeds, repeating the right mantra, submitting to manmade religious traditions, we treat with contempt the Author of the amazing plan of salvation by grace. Is that bad, acceptable, or no big deal?

That is a very bad conclusion in light of the accompanying warning. We reap what we sow. Don't be deceived, God will not be treated with contempt, *for whatever one sows, that will he also reap* (v.7c). The Author of the gospel of grace is also the architect of creation. The law of sowing and reaping is a law of nature as certain as the laws of physics like gravity, inertia, entropy, and so on. If we sow seeds of wheat, we expect to harvest wheat.

Likewise God's law applies in that if we sow seeds of diligence, we can expect a harvest of abundance. If we sow seeds of lethargy, we must expect a harvest of want. If we sow seeds of rebellion, we will reap anarchy. Adrian Rogers had a great way of expressing this law: "We reap what we sow. We reap after we sow. We reap more

than we sow." To assume we can sow carelessly and not reap sad consequences is to treat our Creator with contempt.

So what if we sow seeds other than, or contrary to, the gospel? What do we get? In the harvest after we have sown, we will either reap corruption or life. There are really only two kinds of seed to sow—flesh seeds or Spirit seeds. We reap based on what we sow.

Therefore, the warning is sow to the flesh, reap fleshly corruption. *For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption* (v.8a). It is natural and easy to sow to the flesh. By nature we are in the flesh, controlled by the flesh, subject to the desires of the flesh. Therefore, "flesh" is characterized by sin, the world, the devil.

However, even after we are born again, we still live in the flesh. That is why Christians are commanded to "put to death" the deeds of the body (Romans 8:13), and why Paul warned Christians in Colossae to put to death what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry (Colossians 3:5). We must be vigilant to identify the deeds that are driven by the flesh and avoid sowing them. Flesh seed looks like sensual or sexual thoughts and fantasies that lead to wrong actions. Or it is characterized by selfishness, jealousy, envy and self-indulgence. Or it can be anger, malice, slander, the desire to get even or to hurt others. We must bring thoughts like these into captivity to Christ, refuse to dwell on them because thinking like this is to sow seeds of the flesh.

Don't sow seeds like that because "flesh" seeds yield a harvest of corruption. *Corruption* is ruin, destruction, or deterioration. That is not to teach that the Christian who foolishly sows to the flesh will loose his or her salvation. But sowing seeds of the flesh will result in a defeated spiritual life, broken fellowship with Christ, grieving the Holy Spirit. This condition is manifested as worldliness, anxiety, sadness, a lack of Christlikeness. Worse, the harvest of flesh seeds can result in God's chastening as He disciplines His child to encourage the sowing of Spirit seed. And worst of all, the ultimate corruption (destruction) is when God calls one of His children home because they sow the wrong kind of seed.

Conversely, and coming as very good news, is the fact that if we sow to the Spirit, we will reap spiritual life. *But the one who sows to*

the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life (v.8b). Faithful Christians sow to the Spirit. This means that we who are followers of Christ should be governed by and live in fellowship with the Holy Spirit. In that condition, we will know the characteristics of the Holy Spirit, who manifests the traits of God the Father and Son also. We know this from the evidence all through the Bible.

The sowing of this seed is thoughts and actions characterized by the fruit of the Spirit. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (Galatians 5:22-24).*

The Holy Spirit grants the wonderful harvest of eternal life. Granted, eternal life is life that lasts forever, as opposed to the end of life. However, the Bible's full description of eternal life is life characterized by the eternal. It is called fullness of life or abundant life. It is a life that demonstrates the character of God who is Himself eternal.

What kind of seed have you been sowing? We can answer that question by comparing your thoughts, actions, and attitudes with the character of Christ that is clearly revealed in the Bible. A large part of seed sowing takes place in this vineyard, this part of the Body of Christ into which God has thrust you to interact with others. Therefore, we need to be zealous to . . .

Buy Up Opportunities to Sow Well (vv.9-10).

The first section of our text began with a warning. So does this section. We need to be alert and *not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up (v.9).* We do grow weary. Sowing Spirit seed is exhausting. It is tiring because maintaining mental discipline takes work. The easiest response to life's stimulations and temptations is to let our minds wander. In our world of make-believe this is not only easy, but encouraged.

Life is presented as a movie where we can expect only the fun things, the satisfying things, the exciting things. And so we end up with Christians who think about being like their world (wealthy, popular, sexy, satisfied). But then they are confused when they are

miserable because they are out of fellowship with their Maker and Savior. In a culture where mental discipline is not expected or encouraged, to think right seems unnecessary or even unacceptable.

In contrast to the acceptable norm in our culture, God's plan is stated succinctly by Peter. *Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:13).* And, *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8)*

It is tiring to exercise the mental discipline necessary in sober thinking, right thinking. But, sowing Spirit-seed among others is also emotionally tiring. It makes us weary. That truth stands in distinction to the truth that by nature we just don't feel like showing *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.* Often we have to make ourselves respond with these traits.

It is true that the more we practice sowing Spirit-seed, the easier it becomes. But because we live in flesh-oriented bodies, we have to work at it. That is why the Christian life is characterized as erecting a building, working in the field, training for and running a race, serving in the army. The Christian life cannot be fairly described apart from work. And we naturally avoid work.

The family farm is quickly becoming an institution of the past. It didn't fit well in a culture of ease, comfort, and pleasure. Too many young people, including myself, decided that the farm was too much work for too little money and walked away. A lot of us were not willing to commit to a life of working from sunup to sundown sowing seed, cultivating the young plants, praying for good weather, harvesting hay, corn, grain, and silage – all to be able to feed the cows through the winter, which demanding milking twice a day, seven days a week. Ironically, sowing Spirit-seed in the Lord's vineyard takes the same kind of commitment and hard work.

As we sow Spirit-seed, we must do so expecting a harvest. Do not grow weary in doing good *for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up (v.9b).* We cannot say if, in time, someone will respond to the gospel and trust Christ. In time, others will become more like Christ through your discipleship efforts. In time, someone

is going to have victory over sin. In time, we ourselves will enjoy the sweet consolation of the Holy Spirit giving us rest in our own hearts.

We need to hope toward the harvest of Spirit-seed as we tend to grow weary in the sowing. And ultimately our hope is rooted in the fact that we will one day hear our Master say to us, “*Well done good and faithful servant . . . enter into the joy of your Master.*”

Therefore, we must do good. *So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith (v.10).* Notice that the requirement here states that we need to do good to everyone. We will have opportunity to sow Spirit seed. The God who brought us out of sin and into His family through His sovereign grace will also give us opportunity to sow good seed. He has equipped each one of us in particular ways to sow particular kinds of seed. He has arranged to put us in this particular part of His Body in order to sow well.

While our influence is often most obvious within a select group, we need to buy up the opportunity to impact everyone. No one can sow Spirit-seed with everyone. But we can do good toward everyone who God brings into our circle of influence.

We especially need to do good to the household of faith. While we are doing good to everyone, we need to do good *especially to those who are of the household of faith (v.10b).* God desires for us to sow *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control,* and such in the Church universal.

But we need to sow this seed especially in this local assembly. Our ministry at Community must be characterized by the plan God laid down in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. We need to have pastors/teachers who *equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love (Ephesians 4:12-16).*

We will have opportunities to encourage each other by sowing Spirit-seed in that setting. God the Holy Spirit arranges the spiritual gifts within the Body to this end. Now in very practical ways, we can minister to each other at weddings, funerals, showers, meal needs during times of sickness. Often I have heard folks who are included in wedding invitations or funeral invitations for the entire church say, “I’m not going to attend because I really didn’t know so-and-so that well.” You may not know the people well, but attending is an opportunity to say in an observable way, “I care.” That is the essential work of the ministry. The work of ministry is a regular, ongoing practice of saying, “I care” in so many ways.

Do you care? Do you care about others here? Again, I have heard professing Christians say, “I don’t need to attend service all the time because I’m get all the preaching I need once each week.” Yes, but it is not about you. I know you care about yourself. Of course you do. I am concerned that you don’t care for the rest of us. If you don’t care, you are not sowing Spirit-seed. If you are not sowing Spirit-seed, you must be sowing flesh-seed. That never ends well. Instead, why not start sowing “doing good” seeds and reap a “well done” harvest.