

August 17, 2014
Sunday Evening Service
Series: Galatians
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
© 2014 David J. Whitcomb

To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as you prepare to study Galatians 6:6-10.

1. Describe the one who teaches (6:6).
2. Explain God's law of sowing and reaping.
3. What are the seeds of the flesh that we might sow?
4. What are the seeds of the Spirit that we should sow?
5. Describe the corruption that Paul said is the harvest of sowing fleshly seed.

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU SOW **Galatians 6:6-10**

There is a pasture of cows beside my Mom's house. Years ago Dad watched the gentleman farmer as he appeared to be sowing some kind of seed in that pasture. Later on that year a certain kind of plant began to grow in the pasture. Dad tried to convince me that whatever it was that was growing is what the farmer planted. I was a bit dubious and said, "No, I don't think a farmer would plant that stuff intentionally." In a matter of weeks, it was obvious that the pasture was being taken over with ragweed. No farmer with any sense is going to plant ragweed in his pasture. But if a farmer didn't take care of his pasture by mowing it, spreading lime, and watching out for it, it will be overtaken by junk.

That is a picture of a Christian's life. It is the picture Paul gave

us in this text. Here he warns us to be careful to learn the right stuff because the "stuff" is going to end up being the seed we sow. The seed we sow in life will result in a harvest that we have to reap. If we don't want to reap spiritual ragweed, we better pay close attention to the seed we are sowing.

A Random Principle (v.6)?

One who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches (v.6). That sounds pretty good, but where did it come from? Of course it is in the Bible and is profitable, but it is difficult to tie this statement to the previous instruction. The previous context of the statement is about restoring a fallen brother. We learned that sometimes a fellow Christian gets caught up in a sin. That getting "caught up" could be a surprise. But generally this is the result of a series of bad choices, not a surprising fall. Christians whose lives reflect the work of the Holy Spirit in them are supposed to repair and restore those confessed and repentant sinners to service for the Lord.

As we do this important and necessary work of restoration, we must guard our own hearts lest we fall into a similar trap. Watching ourselves to avoid sin is part of bearing our own burdens. If we become negligent in bearing our own burdens, it is easy for us to falter and become a burden to others. We would expect something at least related to this line of argument to follow, but that doesn't seem to be the case.

It is almost as though Paul chose to switch horses in mid-stream. Now we learn about sharing all good things. That is certainly a good lesson, and it is obvious that sharing is a Christian principle. Paul took the Corinthian Christians to task for not sharing, which caused an unnecessary division in the body. A clear principle throughout Scripture teaches that God gives us material blessings so that we can share with those in need.

Therefore, we should be able to see that Paul brought up the principle of sharing here because of what he had just taught. He taught that we are each supposed to bear our own burdens so that no one will become an unnecessary burden on others (vv.4-5). Now if the reader is keeping that truth in mind, at this point he might recoil.

If everyone is supposed to bear his own burden, what about those pastors of the churches? They don't seem to be bearing their own financial burdens, which in turn means they become a burden to us. Therefore, anticipating that possible response, Paul reestablished God's principle for taking care of His servants.

It is always difficult, and somewhat humbling (or should be), for a pastor to talk to the people about their responsibility to take care of him. Martin Luther felt that way when he wrote, "For my part, I do not gladly interpret such sentences, as these of Paul: for they seem to commend us, and so they do indeed. If a minister stands much in repeating such things to his hearers, it hath some show of covetousness. Notwithstanding, men must be admonished hereof, that they may know that they ought to yield unto their pastors both reverence, and a necessary living." (Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, Grand Rapids: Kregle Publications, reprint 1979.)

An explanation of the principle is in order. If we translated the principle directly from the Greek text, it would look something like this: "*But let be sharing the one being instructed the word, to the one instructing all good.*" This is an important first step in trying to ascertain what God wants us to learn.

First we learn that there are those who teach. It is not just that some people are more likely to talk or take the lead than others. In human relations, that is the case. Therefore, there is sometimes confusion about why one person feels compelled to tell other people how to live their lives. In fact, as a culture moves further away from the moorings of God's Word, the more likely this response will be. As churches become more and more human religious organizations, and less and less the product of Christ's building process, this will be the attitude.

Recently someone told me about a conversation he had with a fellow I knew some years ago. I was quite sure that the man had chosen a path that was leading away from the Bible standard back then. But, according to the report, the man now believes there is no real need for pastors and preachers. Apparently, in his opinion, it is altogether fitting for friends to get together at each other's homes and discuss the Bible. Okay, who will lead the discussion? Someone will naturally rise to the position of leadership. It is human nature. And when that person leads the discussion, will his "teaching" be his own

opinion about what the Bible says? Does he actually know how to rightly divide the Scripture in order to arrive at the truth.

The one who teaches is supposed to be a uniquely called servant of the Lord. The Bible indicates that this is someone who God set apart for the express purpose of telling His message for eternity. It is someone like Jeremiah and Paul, for whom God already had a plan while they were still in their mother's womb (Jer. 1:4; Gal. 1:15). The teacher is someone whom God equips to be able to discern and lay out the Word of God accurately (2 Tim. 2:15). He is someone who is able to declare the Word of God clearly and with authority (2 Tim. 4:2). In a "me first," "we have our rights," anti-authoritarian age that kind of reasoning sounds like utter foolishness. Who is going to buy into that line of thought? Everyone who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit ought to believe it, because the argument comes directly from the Scripture the Holy Spirit wrote. The teacher's job description from God is to be dedicated primarily to unfolding the truth of God's message—when it is convenient and when it is not (2 Tim. 4:3).

Then there are those who learn and share. It is possible to interpret the word *share* as a present tense, **passive** voice, imperative. If so, the word describes the one who is being taught as sharing in the same good as the one who is teaching. That is the idea Paul taught to the Christians in Rome when he wrote, *For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings (Romans 15:27b).*

On the other hand, it is possible to interpret the word *share* as a present tense, **active** voice, imperative. In that case, the one who is being taught should be sharing good with the one who is teaching. This was the principle Paul confessed regarding the sharing of Christians in Philippi. *And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only (Philippians 4:15).* In both (or either) interpretations, the point is that the ones who receive the blessing of the spiritual teaching are supposed to share material blessings with the one who is teaching.

That idea falls in line with Jesus' teaching to the disciples when He sent them out to minister. He told them, "*And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house*" (Luke 10:7). The

principle still stands for the Church because Paul quoted Jesus' teaching in the same context. *In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:14).*

Being taught involves more than sitting in a meeting hearing a preacher drone on about something religious. This is a technical term that describes the formal instruction about the principles of Christian faith, or the formal teaching of the gospel. Therefore, it is intentional, purposeful, teaching with a goal in mind. This is what someone did for a man named Apollos who became a very capable Bible teacher. Luke wrote that *he had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John (Acts 18:25)*. Through this means, God intends for His people to be able to discern His will. In spite of the fact that some Jews were hypocritical, it still remains, as Paul argues, that they *know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law (Romans 2:18)*.

Therefore, this statement is not random and disconnected from contextual arguments. Part of bearing our own burdens is to respond to teaching of and care for the teacher. Does it really matter if Christians do this? Observe . . .

A Related Warning (vv.7-8).

God has a law about sowing and reaping. Therefore, you should never believe that you can fool God. That is what Paul meant when he wrote *Do not be deceived: God is not mocked (v.7a)*. To be deceived is to be led astray and caused to wander like someone who is lost. Here the warning is to guard against accepting wrong information from others, or your own flesh, that will cause you to err.

The error we must avoid is coming to think that we can esteem God lightly. The Bible is full of evidence of people who "turned their noses up at God" (the literal meaning of the word). The Israelites despised God's blessing while He led them to the Promised Land, and they didn't get away with it. After the nation was settled, the people went through periods when they would embrace their neighbors' lifestyles which caused them to treat God with contempt. In the New

Testament, we find evidence of Judas who held the Son of God in contempt. There were Ananias and Sapphira who held the Holy Spirit in contempt and lied to Him. And the people in Corinth who had a low view of Christ's sacrifice.

In light of so many examples, both within the Bible and in real life, it is apparently rather easy for us to slip into an "I don't care" attitude toward God. The warning is that we must not go there because we will never get away with it. God knows our thoughts and intents well. He sheds light on them through His Word. The wise person responds in repentance when God reveals to him that he is developing the wrong attitude.

This is a most serious warning because God rewards according to what we sow. The rest of verse seven reads, *for whatever one sows, that will he also reap (v.7b)*. No one ever gets away with a wrong attitude toward God forever. The wrong attitude is generally a matter of rebelling against His truth and thinking we can get away with it. We might argue that our actions don't effect anyone but ourselves. We might argue that we are just adapting to a modern age and what we choose to do really is not sin and really has no unspiritual ramifications. We might even argue that we are going to do what we choose even if it is clearly contrary to the principles of God's Word knowing that we can get things right later.

But the fact is, sowing demands reaping. It is not that God might punish the rebel for his errant attitude. Yes, it is true that God chastens His children whom He loves so that we will desire to get back into line. But the argument here is that when we sow seeds of contempt for God, we will reap a harvest commensurate with contempt. Let me illustrate. In the above examples, all of those people harvested a painful, sorrowful harvest. The Israelites died in the desert, their posterity was regularly overrun by Midianites, Philistines, Ammonites, and the forefathers of Hamas. David's family was plagued, Ananias and Sapphira died, and the careless people in Corinth became sick and died. Adrian Rogers is credited with saying, "We reap in kind with the seed we sow, we reap after we sow and we reap more than we sow." Therefore, it is critically important that we consider daily whether we are sowing "flesh" seed or "Spirit" seed.

From the vantage point of my age, I am now able to observe

five generations. I have watched or am watching my grandfather's generation, my parent's generation, my generation, my children's generation, and now my grandchildren's generation. I must confess on the basis of evidence drawn from five generations that God's principle of sowing and reaping is absolutely true. Often the questionable practices of early adulthood bear the fruit in later adulthood. Too often the questionable practices of parents bears fruit in their children only to discover that it is too late to change the flow of the river. A sad reality is the common practice of grandparents who now have to rear their grandchildren because they did not sow good seed for the children. Someone said that insanity is when we do the same thing over and over and expect a different result. If you want a different result, you have to change the seed you are sowing!

Furthermore, God's law has spiritual ramifications. If you sow to the flesh and you will reap corruption. God's Word promises, *For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption (v.8a)*, This statement assures us that there are only two kinds of seed the Christian can sow. Let's not forget that Paul wrote this letter to Christians. At this point, Paul did not suddenly refer to the unsaved (flesh sowers) and the saved (Spirit sowers). The warning is that it is possible for Christians to sow seed that is characteristic of the fallen nature, that part of us that draws us away from God's will.

Be careful Christian because flesh seed produces a flesh harvest which is corruption. The verb translated *sow* speaks of practices, choices, and habits. The harvest is the unavoidable consequences of those choices. The only possible exception of harvesting all the consequences is God's grace and mercy that might soften or shrink the harvest. Lack of confession and repentance will guarantee a full harvest. And the full harvest is a harvest of corruption.

Corruption speaks of ruin, destruction, or decay. At issue is the character of the person sowing the seed. This person becomes less and less like Christ. Often the consequences of flesh sowing is a person who does not act or look at all like a saved person and has no assurance to that end. Probably the ultimate ruin is when God takes the fleshly Christian in death. Again the most heinous part of this harvest is how it effects the people around us.

Think of a beautiful field which the farmer tills and sows annually. Day after day you can drive by and observe the fruits of his

labor as you see the ground tilled, then the seed planted, and one day the green sprouts shoot up through the dirt, and it grows until the farmer goes out and harvests the crop. But one day the farmer loses interest and no longer cares for his field. It isn't too long before you see kudzu growing. Next year you notice that the kudzu has spread to the nearby trees and is approaching the barn. In five years you drive by the field only to discover that all manner of weeds have taken over and the kudzu has killed the trees and so enveloped the barn that it is ready to fall over. How sad the results of carelessness.

The good news is that there is an alternative. In contrast to the foregoing, if you sow to the Spirit and you will reap eternal life. *But the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life (v.8)*. This does not say that we must be busy sowing Spirit-kind of seed in order to gain eternal life. That is precisely what Paul has argued against in this letter. Seed that is characterized by the Holy Spirit is all that the Bible describes and defines as good. This is the kind of seed God expects people who possess the promise of eternal life will sow. If we are sowing Spirit-characterized actions, attitudes, and habits, we will enjoy reaping a life characterized by "eternal life" quality.

A Fitting Challenge (vv.9-10).

Don't grow weary. God challenged us who would sow Spirit seed not to become weary of doing good. *And let us not grow weary of doing good (v.9a)*. It is a good and necessary challenge. Because of the opposition of sin, the world, and the flesh, sowing Spirit seed is difficult. Let's me honest about the matter. We would rather yield to our desires and sow flesh seed because that makes us happy. We are always tempted to throw caution to the wind and sow seed that will produce a painful harvest. That is why God challenged us: *It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth (Lamentations 3:27)*.

Do not grow weary while bearing the yoke of sowing Spirit seed. The word **weary** means to become tired and yield to despair, to become discouraged, and, through losing heart, we decide to give up. Okay, we have all felt that way. How do we keep from doing it? We must keep an eye toward the harvest *for in due season we will reap,*

if we do not give up (v.9b). This promised result of reaping applies primarily to this life. If we will consistently practice living by, walking in the Holy Spirit, we will enjoy a harvest of Holy Spirit fruit in this life. In other words, we will begin to see Christlike character in ourselves. We will begin to enjoy more and more Christlike attitudes and actions.

Secondarily, the promise of reaping is also true in that ultimately we will rejoice in the harvest of eternity because when we see Christ we shall be just like Him (1 John 3:2).

Keep doing good. We are to be zealous to do good for anyone and everyone according to opportunity. *So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone (v.10a)*, Oh! Doing good to my neighbor is Spirit seed! That's what Paul meant when he wrote previously, *For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Galatians 5:13-14)*.

That is also what Jesus meant. He told the inquisitive lawyer, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40)*. Simply put, the requirement is to love God supremely and love your neighbor like you love yourself and you will be sowing Spirit seed.

More specifically, we are to do good especially to Christians, *especially to those who are of the household of faith (v.10b)*. This almost goes without saying. If we can't do good toward each other, it is highly unlikely that we will do good toward those people "out there" who don't care much for us.

God spells out His plan for us very simply. We are to sow Spirit seed every day, all day. Our supply of seed is in the Bible. Start the day by drawing seed out of the Word of God which the Holy Spirit has given, and then go out and scatter it in your actions.