

Galatians | The Grace Manifesto

Sow What? Sow Where? (A New Investment Strategy)

Galatians 6.6ff

9.8.19

The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him. ⁷ Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. ⁹ Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. ¹⁰ So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

¹¹ See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. ¹² Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. ¹³ For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh. ¹⁴ But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵ For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. ¹⁶ And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

¹⁷ From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus.

¹⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

This is the last sermon in this present series... all summer we looked at Paul's Letter to the Galatians and... now we've read the final word: "Amen."

Some of the phrases in this final section are familiar and even famous (14) and YET I caution us again that we have to call on everything we've read and considered (in the whole letter up until now). The easiest way to misunderstand the Bible and come up with wrong ideas IS TO IGNORE THE CONTEXT.

But thankfully, we HAVE the context...because we've been soaking in the whole letter (all summer) and now we take WITH us all we've read and considered.

And ONE reason I belabor this point is because this one phrase/idea seems so contrary to the main idea of the letter and sadly it's been misused and misapplied without reference to the whole intention of Paul's argument in this Grace Manifesto.

I wonder if you've spotted the phrase – the apparently anti-GRACE statement made at the close of this revolutionary letter. It's the line (v.8): "for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap."

That sounds like karma – like "this-for-that" (quid-pro-quo, transactional religion) and yet each week we spoke against that – Galatians is contrary to that ...right?

So how are we to understand it? How does it fit the context and how will it help us to understand and LIVE the grace-life taught throughout this radical letter?

Let's look at: 1) The End of the World, As We Know It
2) New Investment Climate (calls for a new strategy)
3) The Fine Print and the Bottom Line

This letter is about the Main Thing...it's about the Person of Jesus Christ, the life of grace received by faith...about the life that comes out of what God did in Jesus Christ. It's about a life empowered by God's Spirit and not simply a law-abiding, white-knuckled approach that one can find in any religion or system of morality and self-help. This is different.

And this Main Thing is SO different from the basic approach that we've all learned – the basic rules of the game, the elemental things that are like second nature to us – this way of Jesus Christ that is NOT cause-and-effect is SO different that even when we GET IT... we find it elusive to LIVE IN IT.

Our own hearts get distracted...and we find peripheral non-issues and we elevate the small-stuff (we sweat the small stuff). One such issue was this religio-surgical procedure called circumcision. "Yeah Paul, we get that God in Jesus Christ settled our debt and reconciled us to Himself and one-another and that He sees us NOT AS REBELS but now as His own chosen children... We get that! B U T ...should we require Gentiles to have the operation?"

And Paul says TWICE: "In Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision really matters..." (5.6, 6.15)

Its like you get a verified, irrefutable television report that an asteroid will strike planet Earth and destroy all life in ONE HOUR...and the person next to you says, "My only question is – should I get an oil-change in my Subaru?"

You'd have to conclude – "This person doesn't get it- this is a non-issue!"

And last chapter had Paul saying, "the only thing that really matters is faith expressing itself by love" and here in the final sentences Paul says it another way, v. 15 "For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but a new creation."

See, if you see what God is doing by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ it'll have a dynamic clarifying effect on your life...suddenly the secondary issues are exposed as...secondary and relatively unimportant.

WHY?

Because God is in the process of remaking the world, a New Creation is emerging like a bird from an egg, like the Phoenix from the ashes... And Paul thinks of this as SO big that he uses death/resurrection imagery to describe it. When Jesus Christ died, "the world was crucified to me and I to the world."

It's the end of the world, as we know it.

All that we've learned about DOING for God so that God would bless us and save us and enlighten us – all the very basic things about cause-and-effect that WE applied to God and spirituality ARE DEAD.

The old creation... the basic physics of the spiritual life have died.... Crucified with Christ.

And now...there's clearly NO REASON to boast that, "I had the operation...and I urged other people to have the operation..."

"May it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."

So, if that old-world is exposed and dead...if there's a completely NEW investment climate then HOW should I invest my resources, my attention, my time?

Paul says, "Invest in the New Creation and not the old...sow to the spirit and not to the flesh. Buy stock in grace, not works... in faith NOT circumcision. Don't spend yourself/resources in the old economy that is dead... Don't invest in something that is obsolete and doomed to fail." (Hebrews 8.13)

Would you invest in cassette tapes? (Some of you don't even know what that IS!) Would you invest in cameras that use film...in horse-and-buggies... fax machines? Some these outdated/obsolete technologies have sentimental value (vinyl records) and there may be collectors and historians who are interested out of love for history or nostalgia... but no one is saying, "Oh! The sundial is where we're heading...the wave of the future...where it's AT!"

So, how? How are we to invest in this New Spiritual economy – this New Creation/Main Thing? How do we invest/sow to the Spirit, not the flesh?

And Paul says, “Look...there are plenty of bad teachers out there who turn God’s grace into old religion... BUT there are also teachers who keep the Main Thing the main thing – when you find one of those teachers – support him so that he can help you focus on the New Creation, the death and resurrection of Jesus, the power and presence of the Spirit...the life of faith...the Gospel as the lens through which we are coming to see everything!”

When you find that kind of teacher – pool your money and compensate him so he can devote himself to teaching the Gospel... That’s what Paul means when he says, “whatever a man sows, that will he reap”. You have a billion sources pushing and promoting the way of karma – be sure you have someone who can keep you fixated on grace.

To invest in karma-religion will lead to death and decay. To invest in grace – the New Creation – the New Investment Climate – to get a teacher who can publically portray Christ and Him crucified (3.1; 1 Cor 1.23 ff) Christ crucified and resurrected, Christ who pours out His Spirit and sweetly empowers you to love instead of forcing you to submit – take care of that person because your life depends on the Gospel.

Paul will tell Timothy, “Preach the good news like your life depends on it and like their life depends on it...because it does.” (1 Timothy CH 4: “Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.”) That’s pretty heavy.

And here St Paul tells you about this new investment strategy, “The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.”

Well, T.J., that’s a little self-serving...don’t you think?

Is it a little weird for me to preach this passage? Why, yes it is! It’d be really weird if I told you, “the Greek word for “all things” (“share all things with the one who teaches”) the Greek word is “raiso” meaning pay-increase...”

And IF at the end of this letter Paul was giving us some sort of fine-print in the contract saying, “You better pay your preacher or you won’t get eternal life!” THAT would be weird...

But turning our attention to the last point, and looking at the “Fine Print and the Bottom Line” we find that Paul is NOT reversing his course – ONLY reinforcing it and doubling-down.

Did you notice that where we might expect to get fine-print, we instead find the opposite?

See v.11: “See with what LARGE LETTERS I WRITE” – it’s as if Paul is saying, “For everyone who is tired (are you tired?)...for everyone who’s disappointed and wounded by this world...for everyone who’s sinful and guilty ...who has regrets and secrets and shame... for everyone who gives up and simply falls into the nail-scarred hands of the Crucified and Risen Jesus Christ – there is rest. “(BIG LETTERS!)

There is full and free acceptance with the Holy, Holy, Holy God. There is freedom from the past. Hope in the present and FULL PARTICIPATION in the New Creation in the future...

No fine print – just a reinforced promise (v.16) – “those who live by this New Rule (the New Physics of the New Creation – the Main Thing - peace and mercy be upon them – all who trust in Israel’s Messiah – they are the True Israel of God.”

And with that...Paul drops the mic (as we’d say) and he walks into the sunset... and we notice stains on the back of his tunic.

And he turns and says, “Oh, yeah, I take this seriously...I have the marks to show it – not that religio-surgical procedure THEY tell you is so vitally important... but a back that has felt the whip more than once – I bear in my body the brand-marks of Jesus... given by a world that rejects the grace of God.

And with that – he issues that bottom line of the whole letter – no fine print – just the Main Thing writ-large and I pass it on to YOU:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
be with your spirit, brothers and sisters.
Amen.