

“You Sow, You Reap”

June 19, 2011

Text: Galatians 6:6-10

God has established physical laws by which our world works.

E.g., the law of gravity.

Einstein has changed our understanding of gravity from being a force that pulls us downward, to being a force that pushes us downward.

But the law of gravity itself hasn't changed at all.

If we violate that law by jumping off a 10 story building, we will pay a high price for it, because this law is inviolable, making no exceptions.

God has also established moral/spiritual laws for our world, & violating them comes at a high price too.

In today's text (Gal 6:6-10) we will explore 1 of those violable laws=> *“Whatever a man sows, this he will also reap”* (i.e., You sow and you reap what you've sown).

Obviously, this applies to the natural world=> If you sow an avocado seed, you'll never reap a saguaro cactus.

But the point of today's text is that this principle also applies to the spiritual/moral world.

It explains how God deals with people (even Xn people) based on His justice rather than His grace.

E.g. in II Sam 12, the prophet Nathan pronounced judgment on David for having killed Uriah & stolen his wife, Bathsheba.

God said through Nathan that, because David had violated God's Law in this way, *“The sword shall never depart from **your house** [family], because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife”* (vs 10).

That prophecy began its fulfillment when David's son Absalom killed his step-brother Amnon, then later stirred up a revolution against David himself.

David had sown the wind, & he would reap the whirlwind.

Someone: I thought David repented of that sin!

He did, & God forgave him, but God didn't let him off the hook or protect him from the natural consequences of his sin.

God never does.

And unfortunately, David dragged his whole family into the reaping of those consequences.

In today's text, Paul will teach us 5 principles by which we can use this law of sowing/reaping to our own benefit, and to God's glory...

*** Principle 1—Sow Based on Partnership**

[Galatians 6:6]=> *“And let the one who is taught the word **share** all good things with him who teaches.”*

Some of the Galatians seem to have stopped supporting their teaching-elders' financially.

Paul had chosen/appointed these men to be the churches' instructors, & had sought financial support for them, to free up their time for study/instruction in the Word.

He knew their ministries would suffer if they also had to earn their own living.

In 6 of Paul's epistles, he strongly supported paying such ministers to fulfill their ministry responsibilities.

E.g. 1 Cor 9:14=> *“The **Lord** directed those who proclaim the gospel to **get their living from the gospel.**”*

Paul is referring here to X's words in Lk 10:7.

The Galatians seem to have stopped supporting their teachers.

Paul was telling them that, in doing so, they were making a mistake—they had sown bad seed, disobeying God's revealed will, and they would inevitably reap to bad consequences because of it.

It seems likely that, when the Judaizers invaded the churches of Galatia, 1 of their tactics was to persuade their followers to stop supporting these ministers.

That way, the Judaizers could starve out their competition, then take over the teaching role themselves.

Still today, there are congregations that try to control their pastor and what he teaches, by controlling his salary.

One young pastor told me that he was having trouble supporting his family, so he appealed to a lay elder for help.

The elder said, "Just tell us what you need. If you need an apple, call us, & we'll get one over to you."

Gal 6:6 teaches that those whom a pastor teaches are to share all good things with those who teach them.

"Share" is from the word *κοινωνέω*, the root from which we get "fellowship" (*koinonia*), which actually means partnership.

So the Lord's plan is for pastors/congregations to form partnerships, in which pastors share good things from the Word w/ their congregation, & the congregation shares material things to help support their pastor.

I Cor 9:9 compares a pastor with an ox, saying=> "**YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING.**"

1 implication of this statement=> pastors are to labor hard.

We're to labor like oxen—not trying to make the pastorate an easy/cushy job, nor a get-rich-quick scheme.

We're just to keep plodding along, doing the job our Master has given us to do—faithfully (like an ox).

I am one very contented ox, with regard to material things of which I have few wants/needs.

I have never asked for more money, and I've never needed to, because you folks have generously met my needs.

I would still fulfill my ministry if it weren't like that, but not having that distraction makes it much easier, & it gives me great love for you (Dean/my "partners").

There's a benefit for you in this (Mt 10:41)=> "*He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward.*"

You have sown abundantly in our support, & we have sought to sow God's truths abundantly in your hearts.

*** Principle 2—Sow Based on the Principle** (of sowing/reaping)

We find the basic principle of sowing/reaping in verse 7.

[Galatians 6:7]=> "*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.*"

1st, there will be a perfect correlation between what a person sows in this life, & what he'll ultimately reap in eternity.

Those who have believed in Jesus X (& crucified their flesh, Gal 5:24), will end up in heaven, but those who have despised/disregarded Him will be consigned to hell—no exceptions.

God is perfectly just so He will make sure that the righteous go to heaven, and the unrighteous are subjected to eternal judgment.

Any other outcome would be unjust, and God's justice would never allow it.

Rev 21:7-8=> *"He who overcomes shall inherit these things & I will be his God & he will be My son. / But for the cowardly & unbelieving & abominable & murderers & immoral persons & sorcerers & idolaters & all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns w/ fire & brimstone which is the second death."*

Whatever men have sown, that will they also reap.

Someone: What about God's grace?

Ans: God's grace never trumps/cancels-out His justice (nor vice versa).

God has graciously saved people through sanctification from sin (2 Thes 2:13), if they have believed with repentant faith.

He doesn't save them so they can go on sowing to the flesh, without having to worry about being punished for it.

Rom 6:1-2=> *"Are we to continue in sin that **grace** might increase? / May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?"* (it's unthinkable).

God's grace does not trump the demands of his justice and righteousness.

By God's grace, Xns have escaped the judgment of His justice.

But He didn't set aside His justice, in order to achieve that.

He upheld his justice, by crucifying His Son, in our stead, satisfying the justice of His Law.

2nd, there will be a perfect correlation between the believer's rewards, & the faithfulness of his conduct/character.

As we have sown for God's glory, so shall we reap rewards.

* II Cor 9:6 says those who have sown good works sparingly, will reap their rewards sparingly.

* II Jn 1:8 says they won't receive a full reward.

* 1 Cor 3:15 even adds that=> *"If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire."*

By contrast, bountiful sowers will reap bountiful rewards.

On the basis of this same principle, the punishment of the unrighteous will be proportional to their wickedness.

Nothing in all of this will be arbitrary/accidental/unjust.

It will all be meticulously just (& therefore it's predictable).

Even in this world, the principle of sowing/reaping operates on a moral level.

Those who indulge in the sins of the flesh reap corruption that takes a toll here/now on their bodies/minds/health/welfare/lives/souls.

* Those addicted to drugs/alcohol, develop health problems.

* Those who habitually gamble lose their money.

* Those who sleep around, get STD's; those who don't, don't.

* Those who jump in/out of marriages lose their capacity for intimacy/trust, developing hardened emotions.

* Inveterate liars become so used to lying, they no longer recognize the difference between their own lies and the truth.

I spoke to a lady who was unhappy about having married a man with serious character flaws.

I asked if none of her friends had advised her not to marry him in the first place.

She said they had, but that she was in love.

Romantic infatuation doesn't nullify the law of sowing/reaping.

Paul begins verse 7 by saying=> "Do not be *deceived*, God is not *mocked*."

People who think they can live however they want, and divine justice will never catch up with them, are mockers of God.

The literal wording is that they turn up their noses at Him.

They accuse Him of lying, & argue that what they sow will have nothing to do with what they reap.

They disdain God's justice, & deny His inexorable realities.

In fact, they are out of touch with spiritual reality, altogether.

Most people are like this, thinking that regardless of how they have lived, eternity for them will be sleepy oblivion, so they're free to be utterly indifferent to their soul's welfare (if the soul actually exists).

Others believe that if they are nominally religious, or that if they have some modicum of moral goodness about them, God will accept that—if He really even exists.

They are totally ignorant of the omniscient/omnipotent/all-holy God revealed in Scripture.

If they happen to hear about justification by His grace thru faith in the atoning death of His Son, they sneer, totally indifferent to the terrible price God paid for that blessing, to those who believe.

Paul says that all these people are deceived.

* The devil has deceived them (Jn 8:44).

* False teachers have deceived many of them (II Tim 3:13).

* They have all deceived themselves (Gal 6:3).

The basic deception in each case is that they can sow 1 kind of seed with their lives, & reap a different kind of harvest in the end.

Their whole lives are an ongoing denial of the inviolable moral principle that, whatever you sow you will reap.

In Num 32:23, God says, "*Behold, you have sinned against the LORD, and be sure your sin will find you out.*"

In Rom 2:9-10, God says through Paul=> "*There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, / but glory and honor and peace to every man who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*"

No exceptions.

* **Principle 3—Sow Based on Profitability** (wisely, for our own spiritual profit)

There is eternal profit to be gained by sowing to the Spirit, and eternal loss to be endured by sowing to the flesh.

[Verse 8]=> "*For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption [ruin/death], but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life.*"

Notice that there is no "if" in this sentence=> *If one sows....*

We all sow—constantly—& we will all reap.

The only question is where we will sow=>

In the field of the Spirit? Or the field of the flesh?

"Sowing to the flesh" is allowing our sinful flesh to control us.

It's pandering to the flesh's desires, rather than nailing it anew to the cross of X, every day.

* It's toying with thoughts/feelings that we know are grievous to the H.S. within us.

E.g. letting the sun go down on our anger in order to keep a grudge alive.

- * It is impure thoughts/fantasies that we know defile us and offend the H.S.
- * It's cherishing bitterness against the authorities God has placed over us.
- * It's evil company/communications that corrupt us.
- * It's prayerlessness and indifference to the Lord.

All of these and many/more, are ways of => "sowing in the fields of our flesh."

Rom 8:5 says those who are "*according to the flesh*" set their minds on the sinful things of the flesh, and as a result, they sow to the flesh.

The flesh/Spirit constantly oppose each other within us.

We decide, moment-by-moment, hundreds/thousands of times every day, which one will win the battle for our hearts=> the flesh or the Spirit.

- * Those thousands of little decisions have a cumulative effect by which we either sow to our flesh and therefore strengthen its grip on our will/hearts;
- * Or sow to the Holy Spirit, becoming more/more yielded to Him.

This determines the moral direction of our lives.

"Sowing to the flesh" is giving free reign to the deeds of the flesh, so that they reinforce its hold on our character=>

"Immorality/impurity/sensuality, idolatry/sorcery, enmities, strife/jealousy/outbursts-of-anger/disputes/dissensions, factions/envying, drunkenness/carousing" (Gal 5:19-21)

Both now, and in eternity, those who have sown to the flesh will reap corruption/destruction from the flesh itself.

- * If these sins describe your life, God says to you (Gal 5:21)=> "*Those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*"

We might say, "But I'm a Xn!"

If that list describes you/me, we're really not, born again Xns.

Mt 3:12 says there will a reaping of such people, by X=>

"His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

- * There is also a reaping that takes place in this world.

He who sows to the flesh reaps corruption here/now.

He opens his heart to sin's corrupting influence—the moral rottenness of the flesh that is its own punishment in a sense.

There's an old saying=> "Sow a thought, reap an act; sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny."

Dabbling in sin is dangerous, because sin is so powerfully addictive, that Satan himself can't stop doing it, even though he reads in Revelation that it will destroy him.

When a person wakes up one morning and realizes his whole life is out of control and he's on an irresistible downward slide toward degradation/death which he can't stop, he is experiencing the horror of reaping in this life what he has sown to his flesh.

As Paul has made clear in Galatians, sowing to the flesh doesn't have to involve morally despicable corruption;

Those who try to earn their own salvation by their own good works, or by obeying the Mosaic Law in their own strength, also sow to their flesh.

By stark contrast, those who sow to the H.S. reap eternal life.

“Sowing to the Spirit” is submissively yielding to the Spirit’s promptings in our hearts.

It is the same as “walking by the Spirit” (Gal 5:16), being filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18), or abiding in X & His word so that He answers our prayers (Jn 15:7).

It is also the same as setting our minds on the things above (Col 3:2), and presenting our bodies a living/holy sacrifice that is acceptable to God (Rom 12:1-2).

Living this way reaps a harvest of eternal life, not in the sense of our becoming saved, but in the sense that we begin to enjoy here/now the blessings of holiness/sanctification in our lives.

We manifest the fruit of the Spirit=> love/joy/peace, patience/kindness/goodness, faithfulness/gentleness/self-control.

Our eternal rewards will be these virtues perfected in our hearts/lives.

E.g. Paul says in II Tim 4:8 that he expects to receive a “crown of righteousness.”

What is a crown of righteousness?

Righteousness itself, in its eternal perfection.

“*Eternal life*” is a quality of life that comes from communion with God.

Jn 17:3 (X prayed)=> “*This is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.*”

Eternal life is coming to understand/experience the truth that holiness is true happiness.

It is living life with the assurance that God is right there with you, blessing/loving you, making all things work together for your holiness/good—moment by moment.

Eternal life is something a Xn enjoys from the moment of his salvation, but which will someday be perfected, in heaven.

I love the words of an old Puritan writer named John Brown=>

“We should not look on the cultivation of the Xn, the spiritual, character as itself a hard, disagreeable task, *by* which—for which—we are at last to be compensated with an exceedingly great reward in heaven; but we ought to consider every attainment bringing its own reward with it, every spiritual view, every spiritual feeling, as a part of the heavenly felicity.”

David understood this, so knowing that his sin robbed him of that heavenly joy/felicity, he prayed=> “*Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation*” (Psa 51:12).

He also wrote Psa 84:10=> “*For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand outside. I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God, Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.*”

Rom 12:9 tells us to abhor what is evil, and cling to what is good, and this is one of the reasons we do so=> Good is its own reward.

Those who sow to the flesh will inevitably reap death/corruption in all its ugliness;

But those who sow to the Spirit will reap eternal life with all the various facets of its glory, now/forever.

Someone: I just wish the fruit of the Spirit didn’t grow so slowly!

The answer to that is Principle 4.

* **Principle 4—Sow Perseveringly** (sow persistently)

[**Galatians 6:9**]=> “*And let us not lose heart [give up, become tired/discouraged] in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary [get psychologically beaten down and defeated].*”

“*Doing good*” must certainly include bearing others’ burdens, because that’s what Paul has been talking about in the immediate context.

As we do good, even making sacrifices to do good, the fruit of the Spirit will begin to grow in our hearts/lives.

But fruit of any kind takes time to grow, and we can become impatient/frustrated with ourselves, because it takes so long for our love/joy/peace to ripen.

Paul says, “Just keep persevering and doing good to others, sowing to the Spirit.”

The harvest will come in due time because you’ve set a dynamic growth-process in motion, by sowing to the Spirit.

But like the farmer, you can’t expect the harvest to take place the same day you start planting the seed.

Human nature longs for instant gratification on the spiritual level, just as it does on the physical level.

That’s not the way God has designed things to work.

He calls us to wait on Him—and He alone causes life/growth.

This requires continuing effort that becomes habitual.

But in “*due time*” (the suitable, divinely appointed time, the time God knows to be exactly right for us, according to His eternal plan) the growth/fruit will come.

By this time our faith will have dealt w/ certain doubting reactions=>

E.g. 1) I’m not sure righteousness is all that important to me after all.

2) I’m not seeing any results, so this doesn’t seem to be working—I think I’ll slack off, or give up.

3) Maybe I’ve got this thing backward, & should wait on doing good deeds until I’ve 1st developed the proper attitudes.

No, the virtues/attitudes grow out of our “*doing good*” by the Spirit’s power, as we walk in Him.

The secret to perseverance is found in Heb 12—looking to X.

Heb 12:1=> “*Let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, /fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith.*”

Look to Jesus for help so you can endure.

Verse 3=> “*For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may **not grow weary and lose heart.***”

Look to Jesus as your example.

Weariness comes from slackness/weakness of faith, that has taken its eyes off of Jesus, having become distracted by the world.

This results in loss of incentive, as we begin to suspect that we’re in this all alone, and our efforts will all prove fruitless.

When we feel that way, it’s time to refocus on our Lord, so we will continue sowing good deeds, w/ perseverance.

*** Principle 5—Sow Promptly**

We are constantly sowing either to the Spirit/flesh, so we must choose to sow to the Spirit now, without hesitating/procrastinating, or even giving it much thought.

[Verse 10] “*So then [since you’ll reap if you don’t grow weary], while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.*”

Our life on this earth is very brief, so time is of the essence.

We have a short planting season, & there’s no time to waste, or for idleness.

Our lives will soon be past, & only what we do for X will last, having an direct effect on our eternal destiny.

So whatever we do for the Lord, must be done promptly.

Moreover, because X is coming soon, the Church's time is short as well.

Jesus said (Jn 9:4)=> *"We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work."*

Our good deeds should be done on behalf of all kinds of men.

E.g. 1 Tim 2:1 tells us to pray *"on behalf of all men."*

But we have a special obligation to do good for our fellow Xns.

These are the ones about whom X will say (Mt 25:40)=> *"To the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me."*

* If fellow-Xns are hungry/poorly-clothed, we owe it to our Lord to do good, by helping them meet their needs.

* If a fellow-Xn has fallen into sin, we owe it to X to gently confront him, helping to bear his burden of guilt.

The Church is to become a basket where all the fruit of the Spirit is on public display on earth, until X comes to establish His Kingdom here.

Jesus said the Church is to be=> *"the light of the world. A city set on a hill"* (Mt 5:14) to which all those who are lost in the darkness of sin can come & see X's goodness/light in His people's lives.

There's no time like the present for us to bear the fruit of the HS, so the time for us to sow our good deeds is now—today.

Let's seek/find/make opportunities to sow to the Spirit.

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1. God has established moral and spiritual laws for our world, and violating them comes at a [10 high] price.

Gal 6:6-10; II Sam 12:10

In today’s text, Paul will teach us 5 principles by which we can use this law of sowing and reaping to our own benefit, and to God’s glory...

*** Principle 1—Sow Based on Partnership**

[Galatians 6:6]

2. Some of the Galatians seem to have [16 stopped] supporting their teaching-elders’ financially.

I Cor 9:14; Lk 10:7

3. Gal 6:6 teaches that those whom a pastor teaches are to [12 share] all good things with those who teach them.

I Cor 9:9

*** Principle 2—Sow Based on the Principle**

[Galatians 6:7]

4. There will be a perfect correlation between what a person sows in this life and what he will ultimately [10 reap] in eternity.

Rev 21:7-8; II Thes 2:13; Rom 6:1-2

5. There will be a perfect correlation between the believer’s rewards and the faithfulness of his [16 conduct] and character.

II Cor 9:6; II Jn 1:8; I Cor 3:15

6. People who think they can live however they want and divine justice will never catch up with them are [16 mockers] of God.

Jn 8:44; II Tim 3:13; Gal 6:3

7. The basic deception in each case is that they can sow one kind of seed with their lives and reap a [20 different] kind of harvest in the end.

Num 32:23; Rom 2:9-10

*** Principle 3—Sow Based on Profitability**

[Galatians 6:8]

8. “Sowing to the flesh” is allowing our sinful flesh to [16 control] us.

Rom 8:5; Gal 5:19-21

9. Both now and in eternity those who have sown to the flesh will reap destruction from the [12 flesh] itself.

Gal 5:21; Mt 3:12

10. By stark contrast, those who sow to the Holy Spirit reap [16 eternal] life.

Gal 5:16; Eph 5:18; Jn 15:7; Col 3:2; Rom 12:1-2; Jn 17:3; Psa 51:12

* **Principle 4—Sow Perseveringly**

[Galatians 6:9]

11. As we do good, the fruit of the Spirit will begin to grow in our hearts and lives; but fruit of any kind takes [10 time] to grow.

12. The secret to perseverance is found in Heb 12—looking to [14 Christ].

Heb 12:1-3

* **Principle 5—Sow Promptly**

[Galatians 6:10]

Jn 9:4

13. Our good deeds should be done on behalf of all kinds of men; but we have a special obligation to do good for our [14 fellow] Christians.

I Tim 2:1; Mt 25:40; 5:14

14. There's no time like the present for us to bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit, so the time for us to sow our good deeds is [8 now]—today.