

SPIRITUAL FARMING

Galatians 6:6-10

What would you say if I told you that I planted a watermelon seed and it grew up and produced a pumpkin? Or if I told you that I planted wheat in my field and corn came up instead? You would think I'm crazy, that's what. You wouldn't question the seed, but me. No one plants a watermelon seed and it produces pumpkins. Watermelon seeds produce watermelon. Pumpkin seeds, pumpkins. A seed of wheat will never grow into a cornstalk. It just doesn't happen. Jesus said, "Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?" There's an unbreakable and unpersuadable law in the botanical world that can't be broken. And it's there for us to learn from because it carries over into every other realm of life, physical and spiritual. It's the law of you reap what you sow, the law of cause and consequence. In eastern religions like Hinduism or Buddhism or New Agers, they call it karma. Christians often call it **the law of the harvest**. How you sow now influences your future harvest. Your actions now influence your future. Your future is influenced by right now. In fact, someone said 'the longer I live, the more I realize that many battles are won or lost before they even begin.' You can't expect to win the battle to pay your bills in two weeks if all you do is sit on your couch. You can't expect to healthy down the road if you live off fast food now. If you don't study, you can't expect to do well on the test. This law is everywhere. Hardly any skeptic or atheist would even deny this law. D.L. Moody said you'd be better off trying to blot the sun out of the heavens than blot out this truth from the Word of God.¹ And the Galatians needed to learn from this natural law from the world of agriculture, to take it as a warning for correction and a promise for persevering because legalism is sowing to the flesh and if they're going to sow to the flesh, they're going to continue to reap the deeds of the flesh now, and life to come a not so abundant harvest. So in the final exhortations here, Paul wants them to understand they need to be wise about their spiritual farming and start sowing to the Spirit instead and the spiritual farming principle is sort of encapsulated by two major precept that give them direction from here on.

At the end of chapters 3 and 4, which was the main section on doctrinal teaching about Law and Grace, we had a decision time based on that: it was time to cast out the bondwoman and her son – cast out the false teaching Judaizers with their legalism that's ruining the amazing grace of God in Christ. And now we're at the end of the practical portion of chapters 5 and 6 and again, Paul's giving them a warning and promise if they don't apply it. And they need this. Because if they're going to get rid of these guys and the legalism, I imagine some of are thinking, "What do we do then? Who's going to teach if we cast them out? What are we going to do?" Some of them probably like the fixed system. It gives them something to do. Religion ruins true spirituality and keeps us busy with dead works (Heb. 9:14). And so Paul gives them more direction on what to do next. **I guess we could say Paul is like apostolic ag-consultant who's going to give them some spiritual farming advice if they want a have an abundant harvest. And to ignore his advice is to lose the crop before it's even planted because you reap what you sow.** There will be no bountiful harvest for these believers if they don't heed his advice. And I want to take this verse by verse, in the order that Paul presents it because the order here is important. Notice that it starts with instruction on supporting a teacher of the word. They need to start with the right leadership.

I. SPIRITUAL FARMING ADIVCE #1 – THE CHURCH NEEDS TO SUPPORT A TEACHER OF THE WORD. (V. 6)

"The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one teaches him." It's mainly the context and other writings of Paul that give us insight into this verse. Without the context, this

verse just seems random. But context show us this is needed direction. So I think Paul is saying, “Instead of these Judaizers who care more about taking your money than they do about you, you get a solid pastor-teacher of the Word and you support that individual. That’s the first place to start.” And I want to say this before we get into it: I don’t know of any pastor, myself included, who likes to talk about money and or the need to support him. I don’t like to talk about it and I wouldn’t even talk about it if it didn’t just naturally come up here as we’ve worked our way through Galatians. Also, this church supports me and my family more than we could ask and I praise God for this church doing what Paul asks right here.

But the churches in Galatia obviously had a problem with the teachers and who they were supporting or better yet, who they *weren’t supporting*. It seems from Paul’s writings that other churches had the same problem. They *wouldn’t* support the real teachers of the Word but would let false teachers come in and walk all over them and they would pay them! We still see a lot of this today. We call them **charlatans**, false teachers who preach Christ for profit. Paul could have asked for the churches he was planting to support him but he refrained from doing so and instead only received support from churches he’d *already* planted. He did this because he didn’t want to have any reason for someone to accuse him of being a charlatan. To Corinth he said, “did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel to you without charge? I robbed other churches by taking wages from them to serve you; and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you.” So **this was Paul’s personal conviction not to be a burden** and that he wouldn’t take the support from his church plants. However, when it came time to send other pastors in behind him, he basically said, “you need support these guys because they’re worthy of your support and Christ has called them to it.” Pastor-teachers are Christ’s gift to churches for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, for building up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-12). If they are genuine and really commissioned by Christ, he says to support them. 1 Corinthians 9 says, “Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock?... You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing... If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?... the Lord has directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.” So there’s no question that churches are to pay their pastors.

Being a pastor is not an easy job. They have a stricter judgment than the rest. They typically help carry more burdens. They don’t just work one day a week, despite all the jokes that they do. They never really get a day off. Their work life depends on their spiritual life. They’re called to a task that they can’t do in their own power. It’s the hardest job in the world and the most important and if they’re a good pastor, they need paid (and there are some who don’t deserve to be paid)! If you want the good ones to continue doing a good job and want them to do a better job, they need full support, so it’s for the congregations benefit that they support him. The quality of preaching and teaching really goes up when they don’t have to work another job. Think Acts 6: not that they weren’t will but it was not most-desirable for the apostles in the Early Church to serve tables. They want to be fully devoted to the Word of God and to prayer so they selected some other men full of the Holy Spirit to serve tables. In 1 Timothy 4:15, Paul told him not to neglect the gift within him but to be absorbed in his teaching, to give himself wholly to it, and to take pains in teaching.

Some of your translations attached verse 6 to the previous paragraph about burden-bearing because it is a further illustration of the burden-bearing principle. However, some attached it to the next paragraph because of its importance for the church reaping a harvest. It's kind of like a bridge between both. The teachers/instructor are bearing the burden of feeding the congregation spiritually, while the congregation or instructed should bear the burden of supporting the instructor materially or with "good things" – it's just a generic word for material benefit or gifts. There's a reciprocation there. You know what a **reciprocating saw** is (saws-all)? It goes back and forth. This is what we're talking about with giving and receiving. It's a reciprocating burden bearing between the pastor and the congregation (**sowing spiritual and reaping material/sowing material, reaping spiritual; giving and receiving**). Paul said in Philippians 4:15, "You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone." That's not good. That's a sad verse. Only the Philippians were reciprocating with him as a missionary at the time. And I can't tell you how important this is. You reap what you sow in regards to supporting a teacher of the word. "You get what you pay for." He needs to have time to be in the word. It's the Lord's desire for him to be fully devoted to his task (2 Tim. 2:4). And if this Galatian church is going to go anywhere spiritually, they need to start with the leadership and get serious about supporting someone full time who preaches the Word of God to them. This is Paul's first corrective step to restoring the church and seeing it reap a harvest. It's not just a suggestion. It's not just for the pastor's benefit. It's for them too if they want to reap. In fact, this his main reason for bringing up the law of the harvest. What they support is going to determine what they reap.

II. **THE PROMISE & WARNING – THE LAW OF THE HARVEST (VV. 7-10)**

Paul reminds them of how spiritual farming works: Just because we're not under the Law doesn't mean that we're free from God's fixed natural law of consequence and accountability. He says, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap." That word "mocked" means "to turn up one's nose at". God won't have anyone turn up their nose at Him. He won't let them get away with their legalism or licenses in the long run. Sooner or later there's consequences for sin. The harvest law was tested right off the bat in the Garden of Eden wasn't it? Satan said, "You can beat the system, you won't die if you eat the fruit." Well, they ate and let's just say they didn't beat the system. Numbers 32:23 says, "Be sure your sin will find you out." Jesus said, "What you've said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs." God knows everything, sees it all and hears it all. He can't be mocked. 1 Timothy 5:24 says, "The sins of some men are obvious, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others surface later" (HCSB). Some are obvious right off the bat, but some that are secret, will eventually surface. Sooner or later, it comes around to bite you.

It's not surprising that D. L. Moody has many great teachings on this principle of sowing and reaping. He was a prolific evangelist and believed it with all his heart. He knew men had a responsibility to share the gospel and men were able to respond to it. This principle had a major influence on his thinking. You can't expect to win anyone for Christ if you don't share the gospel with them. **You can't reap if you don't sow, so he was always sowing.** In one of his tent-services where he was preaching on this text a man stood up in the audience and said, "I don't believe it!" He was trying to deceive himself. Moody told the man, "Sir, just because you don't believe it doesn't mean it's not true. Truth is truth whether you believe it or not. A lie is a lie whether you believe it or not." He didn't want to believe it but when the meeting broke up he found out why. An officer arrested him at the door because he was a wanted criminal. He was sentenced to the

penitentiary for twelve months for stealing. Moody said, “I really believe that when he got into his cell, he believed that he had to reap what he sowed.”²

So we need to be careful what we sow.

A. You reap what you sow. (v. 7)

Mainly what I mean by this is what we do in thought, word or deed. Like begets like. Corn produces corn. Wheat produces wheat. You can’t plant corn and expect it to come up wheat. You can’t plant sin and expect to reap blessings. You can’t plant thievery and not expect to reap a jail cell. You reap *what* you sow.

❖ **The seed we sow can be any thought, word or action.**

And the seed is either of the flesh or Spirit. If it’s not a thought, word or action that has its aim at glorifying God or not done according to God’s Word, it’s a seed sown in the flesh. Seeds sown in the Spirit glorify God. If all we do is sow to the flesh, we can’t expect to grow spiritually. If you sow legalism, you’ll reap the works of the flesh. But I think it’s helpful to think of where we sow as well.

B. Be careful where you sow. (v. 8)

“For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption. The one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.” There’s only two fields we can plant into – two choices. The field of the flesh or the field of the Spirit. It can read, “For the one who sows *in his own flesh...*” reaps corruption. If you want to render your services to the flesh field, in that field, *it will pay you back* in destruction.³ **You’ll never see a return on your investment in the flesh because its destructive. What you spend to support it is gone forever. However, if you render your services to the Spirit, you are making an investment and not just throwing your energy or resources or money away.** Sooner or later, the Spirit pays you back. The good soil in the good field is what will produce for you. Just thinking about a real field now, a field can have multiple soil types in it. Some soils are better than others. A field can have sandy, rocky stuff on the hilltops that hold no moisture and then heavier, darker soil in the low spots that holds moisture. Obviously, the better soil produces the best crop. And one my friends who used to work in the precision farming side of things told me that for a long time, guys were pumping more fertilizer and resources into those bad soils trying to get them to produce better yields. And then he said they finally realized that the poor soil wasn’t going to produce anything but poor yields and you might as well invest into your good soils.

❖ **Invest in the good soil of the Spirit!**

The bad is always going to be bad. The flesh profits nothing (Jn. 6:63). The only way to really change that bad spot in the field, and some guys do this, is to use an earthmover and come and dump a bunch of good soil on top of the bad soil, replacing it. But it takes a lot of work to do that. It’s interesting too that **if we’re not intentional to plant good seeds, nothing good will come up. But what never fails to come up? Weeds.** They come up no matter what. You can always expect a good stand of weeds in your field if you never do anything. But I’ve also noticed that **the farmers who do a good job of taking care of the weeds and stay on top of them, have less weeds to deal with in their fields.** If a farmer wants less weeds, it requires diligence to stay on top of them.

C. We reap more than we sow. (vv. 8-9)

One seed produces many seeds. It would be pretty frustrating for a gardener or farmer if one seed only produced one more seed. One seed produces seeds. That's a good thing if we sow to the Spirit, but if we sow to the flesh it's bad. Hosea 8:7 is talking about Israel rejecting God for other gods and says, "They sow the wind and they reap the whirlwind." A little wind here and there produces a whirlwind. They sowed idolatry and reaped the whirlwind of destruction and captivity. But if we sow to the Spirit, living for God, it will bring eternal life, wisdom, usefulness, blessings now, rewards in glory. God can make a multiplying effect on your sowing. We need to think of how investing in one individual, just discipling one person even, will impact many people.

D. We are to sow in season. (vv. 10)

"So then, while we have opportunity," is sometimes translated "while we have season," (KJV). I like that because it fits the farming idea. While we're in the season of sowing, sow! And that's exactly what season it is right now. September is planting season for wheat farmers. We're right in the middle of it or nearing the end. If I was going to start planting this year, I would've started last Monday. Anyway, as believers, now is the season for sowing. Today is the day of salvation, the day to sow. Go share the gospel and make disciples. The fields are ripe and ready for it and we're promised a harvest if we're diligent to sow.

E. We will reap in due time. (v. 9)

"Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary." This is the promise that encourages us to persevere. Don't grow weary, there is reaping ahead for your diligence. Your labor is not in vain (1 Cor. 15:58). Think of the patience and diligence of a farmer. The wheat farmer in particular must wait on the fall rains and spring rains, late and early rains (Jas. 5:7). He drills it in September, fertilizes maybe in the late fall when it comes up. Next year in the early spring, he may spray for weeds. In late spring when it heads out he may spray some headline fungicide to fight things rust and pesticide for pests caused by the wet spring weather. Only after all that work, can he harvest in summer. **As the farmer must be continually investing himself, his resources and his energy in farming, so should the Christian be continually investing himself, his resources and his energy in the field of the Spirit, the good things of the Spirit.** We're to keep on sowing, trusting God to grow it. Most of us have a neat little reminder of this need to sow on our cars. [This 19' statue guy is called the Sower and is on our state license plate and capital building representing Nebraska agricultural heritage. Let it be a continual reminder to keep on sowing.]

But let's also keep in mind that just as there usually aren't immediate results in the world of agriculture and the same goes for the spiritual. No one plants a seed and then put up a chair to watch it grow. It takes time and trust to be a farmer, expecting the seed to sprout and grow. It takes trust to live for eternal things, and eternal focus on things unseen. Moody said, "Men are constantly sacrificing their eternal future to the passing enjoyment of the present moment; they fail or neglect to recognize the dependence of the future upon the present."⁴ But we are to sow while we have time. We have a responsibility to sow. Sowing is an act of faith and a responsibility. The Bible teaches sovereignty, yes, but it also teaches man's responsibility. 1 Corinthians 3:7 says we plant and water but God will cause the growth. You see there's a lot of people not sowing today because they don't think they can

have a part in it. But the one who sows is trusting in God's harvest principle, trusting God to work through it. Think of it this way:

“[There were] two farmers. The one takes a look at his fields and says to himself, ‘I would like to have a crop this year. However, it is none of my business. There is nothing I can do about it,’ and with that he goes into his house, sits down in front of the open grate fire and prays for a crop. The other farmer says, ‘I, too, would like to have a crop this year and there is a great deal for me to do. I am sure I can have one if I do my part.’ He [prays and] goes to work. He ploughs the ground. He [tills it] and then he plants the seed and after he has done all that he knows is necessary, he then looks to God to send the sunshine and the rain and with perfect confidence, looks forward to the days of harvest. Which farmer would you prefer?”⁵

The irrational one or the one who trusts God and gets going? Guys we do play a part in this harvest. Those who have faith and are responsible are going to sow. That's the next point: Get out and sow good to all!

III. SPIRITUAL FARMING ADVICE #2 – THE CHURCH NEEDS TO REACH OUT AND SOW GOOD TO ALL.

Legalism had them self-centered but Paul wants them reaching out again. If you want to have a bountiful harvest, number one, you're going to need the Word of God and a pastor-teacher teaching it. Secondly, you're going to need to reach out yourselves and do good to all. A Spirit-led life is a life that desires to do good to all. Doing good always aligns with the Spirit and could be **a number of things**: loving others, serving them, pursuing peace, being patient, kind, generous, having self-control, bearing others' burdens, restoring others to freedom from legalism and license, remaining humble and meek, fighting for grace, providing for needs, caring for orphans, visiting widows, etc. There's just so many ways to apply this. But also notice he does put a note in here, family comes first. We take care of our brothers and sisters in Christ first.

How can we not help but think of Christ and how He was **always** sowing. He would place sowing over eating and sleeping. Do you remember when he was witnessing to the Samaritan woman in John 4? His disciples return from getting some food in the city and Jesus is busy sharing with her. His disciples say to Him, “Rabbi, eat.” But He said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” So the disciples were saying to one another, “No one brought Him anything to eat, did he?” Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work. Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are ripe for harvest. Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.” We should learn from that. We need to be willing to set things aside to sow some seeds and do some reaping. Christ was always about his Father's business. Always sowing and reaping. Sometimes I'm afraid we're so busy with our own business that we miss opportunities to sow and reap. So let's take home this promise this morning: “Do not grow weary in doing good, for at the proper time we shall reap a harvest if we do not give up. Let us do good to all, especially those of the household of faith.

¹ Dwight Lyman Moody, *The Moody Collection* (Bottom of the Hill Publishing, 2010), 107.

² Ibid.

³ Douglas J. Moo, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 386.

⁴ Moody, 114.

⁵ Oswald J. Smith, *The Passion for Souls*, (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1964), 117.