

## ***What you sow, you reap*** (Galatians 6:6–10)

Except perhaps for small children, everyone understands that in botany you only reap what you sow. Wheat seeds produce wheat, apple trees grow from apple seed. But it is just as true that actions have consequences, and spiritual or moral actions also produce in kind. Sowing and reaping is an important general principle which Paul also applies to the use of our material goods.

### **I. The general principle (6:7–8)**

1. *The principle you need to know:* what you sow, is what you reap. Not only is this true for botany, but also generally in life. For example, sow harshness and reap anger, sow anger and reap strife (Proverbs 15:1; 30:33).
2. *The reasons you need to know it:*
  - a. If you think you can avoid reaping what you sow, you are deceiving yourself.
  - b. This is a divine principle which you cannot get around, and attempting to avoid it “mocks” God, or “turns up the nose” at Him.
3. *The way it is used in this context of Galatians:*
  - a. Paul is continuing the contrast between the flesh and the Spirit (cf. 5:13–25).
  - b. To sow to your own flesh is to do what the remnant of your sinful nature desires. You will reap what is associated with the sinful nature, rottenness, and if it is a constant lifestyle, then it shows an unregenerate heart and the harvest is ultimate ruination.
  - c. To sow to the Spirit is to do those things which are Spirit led and produced, like loving, rejoicing, being at peace, etc. (cf. 5:22–23). You reap that quality of life which the Bible calls “eternal” and show through continued practice that you possess and will enter life everlasting.

### **II. A specific application: sow well by supporting instructors of the Word (6:6)**

1. *What does this show about the early church?* From the start the early church had teachers (Acts 14:23 with 1 Timothy 3:2; 5:17; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Corinthians 12:28). Teaching was considered important and was to be materially supported (1 Timothy 5:17–18; 1 Corinthians 9).
2. *Why was this included?* It was a practical application of being led by the Spirit and displaying the fruit of the Spirit about which the Galatians potentially needed to be reminded.
3. *How is this an application of the sowing and reaping principle?*
  - a. Simply: the way a church treats its teachers (sowing) will affect the teaching which they get (reaping).
  - b. More deeply: withholding support for “fleshly” reasons (e.g., selfishness) would reap a “fleshly” product (like a corrupting, idolatrous heart). But acting with grace-driven goodness (sowing to the Spirit) yields eternal benefits (from good teaching, gaining God’s favor, enrichment and thanksgiving to God, cf. 2 Corinthians 9).

### **III. A broad application with regard to doing good (6:9–10)**

1. *Don’t weary of it (and give up).* Lack of seeing fruit and even persecution as a result of doing good can de-motivate. But work at it, even suffering in it, and find favor with God (1 Peter 2:20).
2. *Be patient (harvest takes time).*
3. *Seize the opportunity.*
4. *Prioritize the help you give.* Exclude none, not even your enemies (Matthew 5:44–45), but help especially other believers.
5. *Anticipate reaping.* It may not be in this life, but it is certain.

What you sow comes out of your heart. To sow to the Spirit requires having a new heart which God gives when a person turns from sin and to God in Jesus Christ. Be sure you sow to the Spirit and do not deceive yourself. You will reap what you sow.

#### *Questions for further thought and discussion:*

- What other examples of sowing and reaping can you give from the Bible (especially from Proverbs)?
- When are you tempted to become weary and give up doing good? Why? What can help you persevere?
- Why does giving material help to someone produce a spiritual benefit?