

What Are You Investing In?

Scripture Text: Galatians 6:6-10

Introduction

Last week we learned about being a goat, or more importantly, about not being a goat. Jesus referred to people as either sheep or goats, and it was important to be the right one. The sheep are those who demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit and act kindly towards others, primarily to members of God's family, the church. Jesus taught us that being kind to each member in the church is essentially being kind to Jesus Himself. While we should perform acts of kindness to all people, we must especially do it to those of the *household of faith*. Kindness starts among God's people, but it should not remain only there. Our kindness must spread outside the boundary of the church and into the world that is lost and needs Jesus. When we demonstrate kindness to one another, we show the world that we are the sheep of Jesus' pasture.

Today, we are focusing on the virtue of goodness. There is a slight difference between kindness and goodness. Kindness is the quality of being helpful to someone else. It is caring for others and showing them sympathy. As God was kind to us, by loving us and giving us a Savior who died for us, He desires for us to be kind to each other. Goodness is being concerned for the welfare of others, but it is more *active* than kindness. Goodness is demonstrating kindness through *action*. It is being generous to others, giving to others. God has been so good to us, so giving and generous to us, He expects His children to do good to others. Think of this as *investing* in the things that God desires. Doing good means investing in spiritual rewards that you may not immediately see, or even in this lifetime. This passage shows us the following: Sow What Reaps Eternal Rewards; Don't Give Up Doing Good; and Seize the Opportunities God Gives.

Sow What Reaps Eternal Rewards

There is a principle of sowing and reaping throughout the Bible. In fact, I think most people understand this concept even if they do not say it. If I want to have a garden of vegetables, I need to plant the seed and tend that garden. If I want to learn a trade or get a degree, I need to study and invest in it. We invest in what we want to receive. The question is, what do we want? In what do we want to invest? Paul offered two things in which to invest that had two very different results. Look at the following.

Galatians 6:6–8 ⁶ *Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.* ⁷ *Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he 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.*

The first thing Paul said in this passage was for the church to “share all good things” with those who teach. This is probably a statement about the church supporting those who teach the Word of God with whatever good things are appropriate. This is probably

one practical way to do good and bear one another's burdens within the church (Galatians 6:2). Then Paul spoke about *sowing* and *reaping*. He said whatever we sow is what we will reap. Notice the three sayings that Paul used to make this statement: *Do not be deceived; God is not mocked; You will sow what you reap*. It is as if Paul were saying to the church, "You should know this!" Paul's point was that there will be a payday someday because we reap what we sow. The crop you plant in the soil will inevitably sprout forth into a harvest. What will your harvest be? The prophet Hosea said something similar to the nation of Israel. Look at the following.

Hosea 8:7a *For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.*

So, what do you want to reap? What are you sowing? For this, Paul was probably referring to the previous topic of the works of the flesh versus the fruit of the Spirit. To continue doing works of the flesh will reap different results than cultivating the fruit of the Spirit. If we continue to indulge in the works of the flesh, moving deeper and deeper into the pit of depravity, then we can be certain of the harvest we will receive—*corruption*. That word "corruption" is literally "decay". It is what happens to a dead, lifeless body. It decays and decomposes. The many consequences of sin are clearly seen in the effects on our human bodies through disease, decay, and death. Remaining devoted to the temporary, material, fleshly side of life, brings physical death that will not be relieved by the hope of resurrection and eternal life. All people die, but some will reap eternal life afterwards. Sowing and reaping is certainly most evident in the difference between those who trust in Christ and those who do not: those who confess Jesus reap eternal life and those who do not reap eternal destruction.

We can apply this principle beyond our salvation experience, though. If we invest our time and energy into temporary, worldly or fleshly things, it will amount to destruction. It will damage our relationship to God and to each other. On the other hand, if we invest in the fruit of the Spirit, the Spirit will yield the harvest of spiritual blessing that will not fade away. You reap spiritually, relationally, mentally, and physically according to what you plant. It is foolish to think that you can live irresponsibly and not suffer damaging consequences. For instance, if someone continues to abuse a substance, such as drinking, smoking, or doing drugs, he or she will reap the consequences of that investment. Every time we harbor a grudge, nurse a grievance, entertain an impure fantasy, wallow in self-pity, linger in bed when we could be reading scripture or praying, read or watch pornographic material, we sow seeds to the flesh, to corruption, to decay. If we do these things, we should not be surprised that we do not reap holiness. Holiness is a harvest; whether we reap it or not depends on what and where we sow. So, are you sowing the deeds of the flesh or the fruit of the Spirit?

While this passage refers to focusing on spiritual fruit that leads to eternal life, how might the principle of sowing and reaping relate to the church as a whole? Is there a sense of sowing and reaping for the church body? I think there is! The church sows by investing into the work of God. Churches can invest in two main things: *Earthly treasures* or *Kingdom treasures*. We can invest in those things that make us comfortable, that are temporary, or that only focus on ourselves and the things we want,

and then reap decay and death in the church body. Or, we can invest in those things that build up God's kingdom (here and around the world), that share the love and hope of Christ with others, that reaches to the ends of the world with the Gospel, and reap the rewards of lives that are changed for eternity. What do we want to invest in?

Don't Give Up Doing Good

Do you ever feel like quitting? Maybe you have worked on something for so long and you do not see the results that you wanted to see, so you just want to quit. Some of us are weary of working. Some of us have grown tired of waiting to see results or to see God blessing our work. If that is you, trust me, I know how you feel. It is discouraging to continue to do good and not see a reward. There are two things about this that I would like for us to consider. First, are you missing the good things that are happening because you are looking for something else? Are you looking for the big events when God is moving in a "mighty" way? For instance, are people maturing in Christ? Are we making disciples? Is God's Word being preached? Don't despise the day of small things (Zechariah 4:10). The second thing to consider is something every coach has had to tell his or her team from time to time: *Don't give up!* Look at the following.

Galatians 6:9 *And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.*

What were the things that challenged the Galatians to the point of giving up? Perhaps it was the agitators who were stirring up trouble in the church. Perhaps it was a lack of spiritual fruit in members in the church. Whatever it was, to these fatigued and spiritually exhausted Christians, Paul encouraged them to not give up in doing good. God promises to reward those who are faithful in the long run. The Christian race is not a sprint, but a marathon. We must not give up because we cannot see the goal just yet. In difficult times, it is important for us to concentrate on making the right investment by doing good even when no harvest seems imminent. How many times have you done good and not seen the results? How many times have you done good, only to not see any fruit of that effort? Many times, I know! God is saying, "Don't give up." Therefore, let us continue doing good while we wait for God to yield the harvest. Maybe that raises the question: What are some things that are good to do? Consider the following:

- Caring for and reaching out to those who are in need
- Bearing one another's burdens and meeting their needs
- Investing physically, prayerfully, and financially in the work of the ministry
- Sharing with others the hope you have in Christ
- Being diligent in learning God's Word
- Being fervent in prayer
- Being faithful in fellowshiping with the whole church

Our responsibility is to sow seeds of goodness, but the harvest belongs to God. We will reap the harvest at the right time. We do not know when that is, but we have the promise of God that we will reap it. However, doing good is not seeking to earn God's

favor or the favor of anyone else. Doing good is living a life as God intended for us to live, walking in the Spirit, and bearing the fruit of the Spirit's work in our lives. Think of it this way, the goal is not to produce the fruit of the Spirit. The goal is to focus on Jesus and yield to the Spirit's work in your life so that you become more like Christ and please God. Continue in that! Consider Paul's word of encouragement to the church in Corinth.

1 Corinthians 15:58 *Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*

Paul's encouragement was to the whole church and it was this: Keep doing the work of the Lord. Don't stop! It is not in vain! Do not give up doing good things!

Seize the Opportunities God Gives

Last week, we ended on describing where kindness starts. We learned that we ought to be kind to everyone, but especially to the those within the church. That is where kindness and doing good starts. Christians in Paul's time suffered great economic hardship as a result of rejection and persecution. With no other means of help, those early Christians needed the support of their church family. Many Christians suffer in the same way today. Though Christians should be willing to help anyone in need, caring for fellow believers is still a priority, just not the only one. The primary focus should be on serving those in the church, but never to the exclusion of other people in the world. However, there is something else I noticed about this. There is a sense of taking advantage of the *opportunities* we are given to do good. Look at the following verse.

Galatians 6:10 *So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.*

Notice that Paul encouraged the church to do good to everyone as they *have opportunity*. This reminds me of a Latin phrase called *Carpe Diem*, which means "seize the day". The phrase is part of a longer statement that says, "Seize the day, put very little trust in tomorrow". I would say, "Don't waste the present." Some have said that *time* is the most precious commodity we have. We must take advantage of the time that we are given, for when it is gone, it is gone forever. Therefore, there is a sense in which we ought to do good while there is time, meaning while we are here on this earth and we are able to serve the Lord. As Jesus said, "We must work the works of God while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work" (John 9:4). Thus, while we await our eternal homecoming in heaven, we should do good to others while we live on this earth. However, I think there is also a sense of doing good to others as we are *given* those specific opportunities to do good. We need to take advantage of every opportunity God gives us to do good for others. Look at the following.

Proverbs 3:27 *Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.*

If we are given an opportunity to help someone and we have the ability to do it, then we should do it. If you see a need, then meet that need. That is certainly true for each of us individually, but is it also true for the church as a whole? I think it is. Paul was writing this letter to a church. He wrote “as we have opportunity” and “let us do good to everyone”. Paul was exhorting the church to take advantage of doing good, to seize the moment when we can do something good. Therefore, let us together take advantage of the opportunities God is giving us. For instance, is God providing us a unique opportunity for the church to do something good or better? Is God giving us a brand new opportunity that we have never had in order that we can do more good for Him? Perhaps He is. If so, will we seize the day? Will we take advantage of the opportunity that God may be giving us? Will we invest in what He is doing? May it be so.

Conclusion

In closing, three things we see in this passage. We need to be diligent to invest in the things that reap eternal rewards. Don't waste your time sowing seeds of destruction that will not bear spiritual fruit. Invest in those things that will bear fruit and eternal rewards. Next, realize the Christian walk is not designed to be easy. It is not a sprint, but a marathon. Thus, do not give up doing good. Be steadfast and continue to do the work of the Lord. Lastly, seize the day. Take advantage of those opportunities that God gives us, those divine appointments. If God gives you the opportunity and the means to help someone, then do it. If God gives us, the church, the opportunity and the means to do good (or to do better!), then let us seize the moment. Thanks be to God. Amen!