

Sowing and Reaping

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I have the advantage of usually giving a message in Prosser, and the good thing about that is, there's no record, but now they have me on tape. Anyhow, when I first gave this message, my beloved wife gave me some feedback on it. She doesn't say anything often, but when she does, I have to pay attention. The interpretation I got from her is that my points were so very deep, (she didn't say this) but the message I got was that my points were buried so deep that it was like exhuming a dead body and trying to breathe life back into it. So, this time I will get right to the point of the message.

If you would turn to Galatians 6, verses 7 and 8. Paul is telling these folks ...

Galatians 6: 7. *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*

In other words, he is telling them that there is no pretense with God. You can't fool God. Whatever you try to do, you're not going to get away with it.

Verse 8. *For he who sows to his flesh (Some translations say, our lower nature or carnal nature) will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.*

I've titled this, Sowing and Reaping. Kind of an obvious title there, but we've read those scriptures many times. They've been used in many ways, but there's a message in there that Paul gave to those people and is giving to us today. Obviously, it's not about gardening or farming. He's using a picture here, and this is quite common in scripture. He's using one thing to illustrate another. The Bible has many figures of speech. Neil mentioned one of the parables. I kind of categorize everything as a metaphor. There are different types of comparisons; there are analogies, there are similes and all of that, but if you just kind of view them all one way, it makes it a lot easier, at least it does for me.

You know, we have our figures of speech. Someone once said that all language began with a picture, and that's true if you think about the history of language and the things we understand and know. Most of our language started out as figures of speech and gradually evolved into what we have today. Just think about some of the common figures of speech that some of us use daily. Things like: You don't know me from Adam; Break a leg; The driver has a lead foot; A back seat driver. All of those are saying something. It depends on how we interpret those and the way we intend them. I heard one once that a person's life might be described as a junkyard that's been thrown down a staircase. That's quite an image, but I know people like that. Maybe I could say that

about my life at some points. We might say that a person is a wet blanket; we all have our blue Mondays; any port in a storm. We might say another person has a room temperature IQ. It's kind of like saying they have frayed circuits. We have expressions like, that dog doesn't hunt, or don't kick a sleeping dog. We used to use that at work all the time and it was intended to keep us out of trouble, to look and see what the problems might be and head them off. Another one is, the tension in the room was as thick as clam chowder. My wife used one the other day, waiting for the other shoe to drop. We know we don't take these literally, okay. They're simply conveying a message. They are common figures of speech.

The same thing is true here. Paul doesn't intend for his listeners to take this literally. He's not telling them, "You're too skinny and you need to plant more stuff, eat more and gain some weight." He's not saying anything like that at all. The message is metaphorical, just like many of them are in the New Testament. Most of the time, scripturally, they're used to convey a message. Another way to put it is that many times the spiritual message is embedded in a figure of speech. I know I just said that, but I just said it again.

I'd like to quote from the Companion Bible. A lot of us old timers have one of those. Anyhow, there's an appendix there, Appendix 6, and I'd just like quote what Bullinger wrote there. If you have one of those, you're fairly familiar with it. There are almost 200 appendixes in that Bible. It's a pretty handy Bible study aide. He says in regard to figures of speech, "It's most important to note figures of speech used in the Bible. It's absolutely necessary for true interpretation. Figures are never used but for the sake of emphasis of a spiritual truth (my thought there). Ignorance of figures of speech have led to the grossest errors which have been caused either by taking literally what is figurative or taking figuratively what is literal (meaning a truth). The Greeks and the Romans named some hundreds of such figures."

Thinking of how they have led to the grossest of errors, because people have interpreted things literally. This is just a reference, but you know over in Matthew 19:12, it talks about where Christ said there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept that. We know that the term, eunuch, means to remain celibate. As legend goes, Origen, one of early so-called church fathers, castrated himself, looking at that scripture. So that would be considered a gross error.

So we will get to the lesson that God inspired Paul to record for us, so that we can get the lesson from that too. It finally dawned on me that almost all the epistles that Paul wrote dealt with problems and issues in those particular churches. I'm not even sure if he knew they were intended to be used, not only in the Churches then but throughout history. Many times he would write to churches about problems and issues. The only exception to that is the letter to the Philippians and that kind of ends with a pat on the back, "continue as you're doing". That was not the case with a lot of the other epistles that Paul wrote. They were very corrective.

One of the things Paul had to deal with, almost at every turn, was false teachers who were getting people off track. He warned Timothy and Titus about that, these young ministers. Take a quick look at Titus and hold your place in Galatians, because we'll spend most of the time in Galatians. In Titus 1, it's getting at the problem that Paul and the other ministry in the early New Testament Church had to deal with almost on an on-going basis. Actually, if we think about this, we still deal with this today in many ways. Paul told Titus...

Titus 1: 5. *For this cause I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city, as I commanded you. (NKJV)*

In verses 6 through 8, it goes through some of the qualifications of bishops or elders.

Titus 1: 9. *Holding fast (what they should be doing) the faithful word as he has been taught (an appointed elder), that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict. (NKJV)*

Verse 10. *For there are many insubordinate (meaning kind of "in your face" to authority, and wanting to be an authority to themselves) both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision. (NKJV)*

If we think about that comment, and almost all the epistles that Paul wrote (Some people will argue whether or not he wrote Hebrews; I personally believe he did), when it's talking about the circumcision, it's talking about the Jewish converts. We'll get into that a little more as we go along.

Verse 11. *Whose mouth must be stopped, who subvert whole households (we could say, whole Churches), teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.*

Usually that "gain" is one of coveting power. They want a following. So, Paul warned Titus and Timothy about that, and that's exactly what's happening here in Galatians. In Galatians, Chapter 1, this is getting at why Paul said, that you're going to reap what you sow. He is stressing that here. Anyway, to my mind, we have to get the gist of why he said and why he used that particular term and that particular illustration in Galatians. It's kind of embedded in the context here.

Galatians 1: 1. *Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead),*

You'll notice that this is very different from most of his salutations, where he simply declares that he is an apostle. But he makes the point here, stressing that it's not from men. It goes on to explain that here.

Verse 2. *And all the brethren who are with me, to the Churches of Galatia: (NKJV)*

There were many Churches in the province of Galatia. Some of the commentators and scholars would talk about whether there were Churches in the north part of the province; and it would be like this state; there are Churches in one part of the state, in the south part and the east and west part. It doesn't really matter. He's writing to those Churches and obviously this epistle was intended to be read and used in these Churches because here is where the problem was, as it goes on to show.

Verse 3. *Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ,*

Again, he is simply establishing himself as their representative, and not from men. He's not a representative of any man or group or organization. He is a representative for Christ.

Verse 4. *Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.*

Verse 6. *I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel,*

Verse 7. *Which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert (or distort) the gospel of Christ.*

We have that account in Acts 20 where Paul is addressing the Ephesian elders, he's not going to see them again, it's very emotional. In Acts 20, and this is just a reference scripture.

Acts 20: 30. *Also from among yourselves (you elders) men will rise up, speaking perverse things (or misleading things), to draw away the disciples after themselves.*

Again, these individuals were mostly interested in getting a following. So, these various Churches in Galatia were being infiltrated, and actually it was other places too, as we can see from some of the other epistles. The commentators called them Judaizers. Actually there is no such word in the Bible, as we know. It's just a term that they applied to these individuals. Again, these were of the circumcision.

If we look at the population of all the Churches that Paul dealt with, usually you're going to find a mixture of Gentiles and Jewish people. Obviously, a lot of these individuals were not converted. So, just for the sake of clarity, I'm going to use "Judaizers", but I'm referring to the Jewish converts that were actually part of the Church. They were most

likely converted elders and maybe leaders. What they were doing was trying to revert back to their Jewish upbringing and they were confusing people, getting them all mixed up. As we go, we will see some of the methods they used to do that. They kept promoting the physical ceremonies, the things of what they called Moses' law. Actually it was God's law that Moses was following, God's instruction to institute. We know that. Where it says, "preaching another gospel," Paul didn't believe for a minute that they were actually preaching a gospel in that sense. It was just false teaching promoted as truth. There's a big difference.

So where does that mentality come from? Well, again, just as a reference scripture, Matthew 23: 27-28, where Christ said...

Matthew 23: 27. *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead [men's] bones and all uncleanness."* (NKJV)

There's a metaphor for us right there, a picture. Spiritually, these folks were dead.

Verse 28. *"Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."* (NKJV)

The point is that these Judaizers (Jewish converts), came from the same school. They were reverting back to these traditions, things that were not what Christ taught. This is what Paul was battling there. Back to Galatians 1: 8. Paul says...

Galatians 1: 8. *But even if we, or an angel from heaven (Paul includes himself or even some supernatural source), preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.*

The margin says anathema, which is Greek for something set aside for destruction. It means something that is going to be sacrificed with no opportunity or chance of redemption. They're going to be destroyed.

Verse 9. *As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.* (the famous Biblical curse here) (NKJV)

Again, these folks were being confused by what people were saying. People were coming along and saying, "Well, the truth is, you have to do this, that or the other thing to be saved." They wanted to include some of the rituals and ceremonies that folks had to practice in the Old Testament.

Verse 10. *For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.* (NKJV)

What Paul is saying is, “If I were trying to please men; if I actually represented them, (which he already established that he was not. He was a direct representative of God the Father and Jesus Christ.) he says, “If I was doing that, I’d be teaching smooth things, titillating things.” He would come up with new ideas almost every Sabbath or maybe some new prediction or new dates.

Verse 11. *But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.*

Verse 12. *For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught [it], but [it came] through the revelation of Jesus Christ. (NKJV)*

Again, he’s countering what these individuals were claiming. It’s like today, some will go around claiming they are this or that and they have credentials. We know Christ never said to look at credentials; He said to look at the fruits; look at what these folks are producing. A lot of these individuals would go around and claim they were leaders, etc. and they would deceive people.

Verse 13. *For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the Church of God beyond measure and [tried to] destroy it.*

He’s using himself as a truly bad example here. It’s the same mentality that these folks, these Judaizers, who were trying to influence and counter everything that Paul was teaching.

Verse 14. *And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my father. (NKJV)*

He demonstrated by his conduct that he was pretty good at persecuting. In the world today we can see some of that with the terrorism and the mentality that, “If you’re not like us, there’s something wrong with you. We’re going to convert you or maybe kill you.” But in this case, they simply wanted to convert people. They wanted to change people and get them to their way of thinking and then you have a following.

Verse 15. *But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called [me] through His grace,*

Verse 16. *To reveal His Son in me, (He’s saying that he got his revelation, what he knew, the gospel he was preaching he got directly from Christ.) that I might preach Him among the gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood.*

Verse 18. *Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem (and he’s been active all this time) to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days.*

Verse 19. *But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.*

It says later in the context that we won't read, but they didn't add anything, because Christ gave him all that he had.

Going on to chapter two, and again I'm getting at the sowing and reaping. This is the reason, background and context of Paul making that statement. If you look at it, it's actually a warning, and it's a timeless warning for us today.

Galatians 2: 1. *Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with [me].*

Verse 2. *And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain.*

It sounds like the equivalent of a conference. They had a meeting, he introduced himself.

Verse 3. *Yet not even Titus who [was] with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.*

Again, this is one of the things these folks were trying to promote. You had to be circumcised and keep the rituals of the law, the ceremonies, ordinances and all those things; and the stricter, the better, if we look at some of the things that these Pharisees and Sadducees and the others did.

Verse 4. *And [this occurred] because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage).*

Again, they're going to promote something else. It all has to do with sowing and reaping.

Verse 5. *To whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.*

Verse 6. *But from those who seemed to be something -- whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man -- for those who seemed [to be something] added nothing to me.*

That is a pretty strong statement by Paul; the opposite of the way most people would view those in authority. They would exalt those positions. Of course, these individuals

had Satan's help. They were trying to capitalize on this and were getting some mileage on it.

In almost any church group, we can remember years ago whenever we came into the church, we kind of looked to the older members. We thought they were better examples and they might know more than we did so we could gain some things from them. These individuals were doing the same thing; it was a strategy. The only trouble is, they were perverting the true gospel.

Verse 7. *But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as [the gospel] for the circumcised [was] to Peter.*

Just stating the difference between Jews and Gentiles, that Paul had the same status as Peter.

Verse 8. *(For He (Christ) who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles).*

Verse 9. *And when James, Cephas (Peter), and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, (they saw the fruits) they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we [should go] to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.*

Verse 10. *[They desired] only that we should remember the poor (probably referring to the collection they had for the saints in Jerusalem), the very thing which I also was eager to do.*

Paul makes a reference to Acts 15, to the conference, and again this all has to do with sowing and reaping, which we will see, because these folks were trying to get people off track by sowing seeds of deception. They were teaching another gospel, as Paul pointed out.

Verse 11. *Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed;*

Verse 12. *For before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they (the Jews) came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.*

Verse 13. *And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.*

Barnabas was intimidated by their status and the influence of Peter. So it's not hard to see from the reference to the Acts 15 Conference that there was a powerful Biblical

cord in the New Testament Church, in this early fledgling Church, between the teachings of Judaism and the teachings of Christ; that which Christ had inspired Paul and the other apostles. There was internal conflict within the Church, and that's what Paul is pointing out here. Again, we are sure that Satan was exploiting this to the max. We can still see that today.

Often today, you run into folks that say, "Well the Church was a lot better in the old days." How does that go ... if you don't learn the lesson from the past?

Verse 14. *But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before [them] all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?"*

That is, to follow Jewish customs and traditions. The point there is that Peter knew better than that, but the peer pressure got to him from these individuals. So the point again is, anyone can be influenced by these teachers.

Verse 15. *We [who are] Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,*

Verse 16. *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in (should be faith "of") Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in (of) Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.*

The point Paul is making there is that it is a non-physical process.

Verse 17. *But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, [is] Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! (Paul says)*

So the freedom that comes through Christ is never license to sin, as some tried to say. Rather, it should give us strength to strive for that righteousness, being right with God. In fact, we are obligated to do that, and we know this if we are converted.

Verse 18. *For if I build again those things which I destroyed,*

He destroyed things ... why? For the same reason Christ was destroyed. Christ was a threat and so was Paul a threat to these beliefs that these individuals were trying to promote. What he was telling the Galatians was, he didn't want them to go backwards and it has everything to do with sowing the reaping.

Verse 18b. *I make myself a transgressor.*

He didn't want to be a transgressor; he didn't want to go backwards and he didn't want them to go backwards.

Verse 19. *For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God.*

Verse 20. *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; (and that is all of our goal, by God's Spirit) and the [life] which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in (of) the Son of God (not faith in the ceremonies or rituals, the law, the circumcision, etc., but in Christ), who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

Verse 21. *I do not set aside (frustrate or nullify) the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain. (He died for nothing).*

Again, the whole point there, what Paul is telling them and us too, is you can't be justified by just keeping the law, by being circumcised. You can't do that. We could easily go to other scriptures that support that, but if you could do that, then you don't need Christ. That's what he's telling them. In effect, that's what these teachers were trying to do, there's the gospel of Christ and there's the gospel that they were trying to teach which were the ceremonies, rituals, circumcision, and all that.

In Galatians 3 going on, and again I'm trying to pull the context in here.

Galatians 3: 1. *O foolish Galatians!*

I like the Phillips translation where it says, "Dear Idiots." I told someone recently, "You know there are idiots in the Church of God," and I'm not being mean by saying that. In fact, I've been an idiot. If you do something that's idiotic, that qualifies you. Paul is really nice in I Corinthians where he states God calls the weak and the foolish of the world. He's calling us fools, and many times we are. This we are trying to overcome; we're not idiots anymore, hopefully. Well, some people might think I'm an idiot, I don't know. Continuing on ...

Verse 1b. *Who has bewitched (mesmerized) you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?*

They knew. This was the most popular event that happened in the world at that point. If you look at that Greek word "portrayed", in effect, there were posters made that depicted this crucifixion.

Verse 2. *This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*

Some commentators recognize that as sort of a bungled translation, the hearing of faith. They use that to support the "faith alone" doctrine. It should say, "By the obedi-

ence of faith.” It says back there in verse one, “Obey the truth”, but it should be “obedience to the truth”. The “faith only” crowd doesn’t like that word “obedience”, so they try to translate that out. It counters the idea of John 3:6, where they’re concerned. If you have a lot of commentaries, you have to be alert and be sure of your beliefs because you’re going to run into a lot of denominational bias from these so-called scholars. Well, they are scholars; they’re a lot smarter than I am in a lot of matters, so we go to them for technical information.

Verse 3. *Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?*

That’s what they were trying to do. It’s not an old law doctrine that they were trying to do, which you can find in other places, but they had to keep the commandments and the ceremonial laws, the rituals and circumcision.

Verse 4. *Have you suffered so many things in vain -- if indeed [it was] in vain? (NKJV)*

They experienced persecution in the early Church, if they were doing things the way they were being taught. People don’t like that. They want an easy and comfortable religion where they don’t have to suffer anything. As we know, religions will use all kinds of excuses to get around that.

Verse 5. *Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, [does he do it] by the works of the law, or by the hearing (or obedience) of faith?*

He goes on in verses 8 and 9 talking about Abraham being the example of faith, but he does something here in verse 10.

Verse 10. *For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.”*

Verse 11. *But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for the just shall live by faith. (He’s quoting scripture here.)*

Verse 12. *Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.”*

So what’s going on here? What is the context telling us? Again, as we’ve seen, Paul’s authority is being challenged at every turn. He had to state his apostleship; he had to state where his knowledge and gospel came from. He had to do all that because he was being challenged continually. Again, these teachers were trying to pervert the truth that Paul was teaching. So what he’s doing here, quoting this Old Testament scripture, he’s throwing things right back in their face, because they were wanting to revert back

to these things, so he's pointing them back to them and he's setting a trap for them. He's actually quoting Deuteronomy 27: 26, and he's countering them with their own logic. It says in Deuteronomy 27: 26, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all the things that are written in the books of the law to do them." You'd have to read all of Deuteronomy 27 to understand the powerful meaning of that quote. There are twelve verses in that chapter that begin with the word "cursed". If we recall, the response of the people is "amen" to all those things.

Some of the curses mentioned are ...

- If you dishonor your father and mother,
- If you pervert justice due to strangers in the land,
- One who has sexual intercourse with his sister or mother-in-law or any kind of beast,
- Takes a bribe,
- Slays his neighbor

The climax of all that cursing is if you didn't keep every iota of the law, it usually ended in the death of the person doing it. That fell under those curses. So what Paul is telling the Galatians, and we can get this lesson too, is if you believe law keeping is going to get you saved, if you buy into that logic, then you have to do that perfectly. You must obey every iota of the law, 24/7, 365 days a year. You have to do it continually your entire life. If you're a male, you're going to have some skin in the game here, because you're going to have to do that, no matter your age or whatever. There's a grim metaphor for you.

None of this is saying that you don't have to keep the law at all, because we know that we do, but these law keeping legalists knew exactly where Paul was coming from. He effectively backed them right in a corner because they knew that no one could keep the law perfectly. Christ was the only one that ever did. So what he is telling these folks because some of them had evidently bought into these ideas, Paul said, "If you decide that is the way to salvation by strict law keeping, including the ceremony of retro circumcision, then you have to live or die by that decision. He's making a very powerful point with these folks, and we should get that too.

Galatians 3: 19. *What purpose then [does] the law [serve]? It was added because of transgressions, (the law here is talking about ordinances that were added because of those transgressions) till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; [and it was] appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.*

Again, the sacrifices and everything just added because of human failure to keep the law. They broke the Sabbath and worshipped idols and all kinds of things. All of that, we know, pointed to Christ. It was part of God's plan that they do that.

Verse 21. *Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. (NKJV)*

We could have been saved by doing those things, if that were true.

Verse 22. *But the scripture has confined all under sin (all mankind), that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.*

Verse 23. *But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.*

In other words, the law and all that functioned as a custodian. As it goes on to say in verse 24...

Verse 24. *Therefore the law was our tutor [to bring us] to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

The Greek for “tutor” just means a guardian or we might even use the term “nanny”, someone to hold our hand.

Verse 25. *But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.*

It doesn't mean the ten commandments are done away at all. It just means ritualistic laws don't function the same way.

In Chapter 4, it talks about being an heir.

Galatians 4: 3. *Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.*

The implication here is those elements were evil, supernatural elements. Then Paul brings up the slavery and the bondage and goes through a discourse there. The point is that he didn't want them to go backwards.

Verse 17. *They (these false teachers; the term we used is Judaizers) zealously court you, [but] for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them.*

Their focus was a following. They were coveting God's people as a following. It goes on to say in verse 18 to be zealous for a good thing.

Verse 20. *I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you.*

Because of the things they were being sucked into.

Verse 21. *Tell me, you who desire to be under the law (the ones that were listening to these individuals), do you not hear the law?*

Verse 22. *For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. (NKJV)*

Once again, it's pointing back to the scriptures showing the Old and New Testament Covenants where he goes into this in verse 22 and a few verses there. Abraham had two sons, a bond woman and a free woman.

Verse 28. *Now we, brethren, as Isaac [was], are children of promise. (NKJV)*

It's a different promise. It's a different covenant.

Verse 29. *But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him [who was born] according to the Spirit, even so [it is] now.*

It's a warfare that continues even today.

Verse 30. *Nevertheless what does the scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.*

So, in a nutshell, it is making a comparison between Hagar, a slave, and Sarah, a free-woman. It's just saying, the one had the son, Ishmael, of the flesh; Sarah had a miraculous intervention and conceived at 90 years of age and bore Isaac, a legitimate heir. So, Paul is using this historical event to show the Galatians the difference and telling them what these individuals were trying to do. He said, "What do you want to be? Do you want to be a slave or do you want to be free? Because if you're just doing the law, you're enslaved to those physical things, rather than operating with the faith of Christ and living the way you should. It goes on to show that this has everything to do with the sowing and reaping.

Verse 31. *So then brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.*

Unless they threw it all away, which some of them were close to doing.

In Galatians Chapter 5, Paul says to stand in the liberty of Christ and don't be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

Galatians 5: 2. *Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised (physically, as part of the law of ordinances), Christ will profit you nothing.*

In other words, the ordinances, rituals and circumcision were not an end in themselves and he is stressing this over and over again, because these folks were falling for this. Again, there were a number of Churches in that area, in that province of Galatia and they were being influenced by these individuals. It could have been a small handful.

Verse 3. *And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.*

If we analyze that, it's really referring to circumcision of the heart. In other words, you're a converted person, you're a debtor to keep the whole law. He's talking about God's commandments, Christ's commandments, all of those.

Verse 6. *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.*

Verse 7. *You ran well; Who hindered you from obeying the truth?*

Verse 8. *This persuasion does not [come] from Him who calls you.*

Actually, it comes from Satan and his minions.

Verse 9. *A little leaven leavens the whole lump.*

We kind of skip over that just about every spring holy day.

Verse 10. *I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is.*

Again, this could have been one or two influential individuals.

Verse 11. *And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision (If I do it like they're doing) , why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased.*

Verse 12. *I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off! (NKJV)*

Meaning to mutilate themselves. Evidently, the more times you did it, the more righteous you would be.

Verse 14. *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, [even] in this; "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

Neil alluded to that. We will see in a little bit how, sometimes when we were first converted, that was a hard thing to grasp. How do you do that? How do you love your enemies? If we're dealing with someone with a "prickly" attitude, it's hard not to bristle back, but we try not to do that. We know we shouldn't be doing that and hopefully that is God's Spirit helping us as we grow.

Verse 15. *But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another.*

That's usually what that kind of influence does. Remember, in I Corinthians 3, when Paul was dealing with the Corinthians, he said they were acting like a bunch of children. That's usually what happens, when you get a wedge in a congregation with different beliefs and ideas; people want to convert you to their ideas, don't they. One of the things I think is very sad to see is when people will watch Pacific and other groups and it becomes critical. It's a constant criticism.

Getting back to sowing and reaping. Again, it's important to pull the context in here and why Paul said this. The chapter breaks really don't communicate the continuity and the content of what we are looking at. Chapters 5 and 6 dovetails very neatly. Paul is talking about how the Spirit governs our lives now that we are converted. We chose to walk in the faith of Christ and we're not just legalists thinking we can earn our way into God's kingdom. I think we all know better than that. People fall into that all the time. They think we have to do this or that, or you have to know this or that, some special knowledge that is going to get us somewhere. We see that all the time.

As Paul concludes now, he's going to go beyond what he discussed in regard to the physical and those who would take them backwards into those beliefs or those physical practices. He's now moving on to how someone, including us converted, should conduct our lives. It's going to be talking about sowing and reaping. What we do and the reason we do it matters to Christ. God sees our heart; He knows our motives.

Just as a reference, II Corinthians 5: 10. This is from the amplified:

For we all must appear and be revealed as we are before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive the pay or reward according to what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

God sees the motives; He sees the purposes; He sees the focus; He sees the things we do and why we do them. He is taking account. Judgment begins at the house of God and that is where we are today.

Galatians 6: 1. *Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who [are] spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. (NKJV)*

If you're full of your own self-righteousness, you don't even see some things.

Verse 2. *Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

A little about what Neil was talking about: your neighbor.

Verse 3. *For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.*

A legalist thinks that relationships are secondary to everything else. The self-righteousness comes first.

Verse 4. *But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. (NKJV)*

We just read that scripture from II Corinthians. We're going to be judges individually, not collectively, not as the Pacific Church of God, not as any other group or organization, but you and me individually.

Verse 5. *For each one shall bear his own load. (NKJV)*

You're going to have that load and you're going to unload it before the judgment seat of Christ.

Verse 6. *Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.*

That is, practices what they have been taught.

Verse 7. *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; (We're not going to fool God in any way.) for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*

Verse 8. *For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.*

If we think that we can, legally, get ourselves into God's kingdom by the things that we do, by practicing do's and don'ts, we are sowing to the flesh. So how does this sowing to the flesh work? How does this sowing and reaping work, that Paul is talking about?

Galatians 5: 16. *I say then: Walk (or live) in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*

Verse 17. *For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.*

Paul, in Romans 7 and 8, tells us there is a constant internal warfare, and we know that. Most of us know that every day. We look in the mirror and there it is. It's an internal conflict.

Verse 18. *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

Verse 19. *Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,*

If we sow something, it has to start with a seed and the seeds we sow are our thoughts that govern and motivate our actions and behaviors, the way we think and treat others. That's what we're sowing.

Again, referring back to what Neil was talking about, loving our enemies, not to return in kind for mistreatment or persecution. I think we've all seen some of that to some degree or another. We don't want to sow to that seed which would respond in a carnal or fleshly way.

Verse 20. *Idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,*

We've broken those down before. To me it's interesting, one of the commentators that I read, nails this. Here we have a protestant commentator and I'd like to quote him. He's referring to these verses about our carnal nature. He says that our carnal natures are still with us even when converted, when left unchecked, break out in the works of the flesh. It's one of the fields of our human estate in which we may sow. That is true. There is a whole field there.

I am reminded of that scripture in I Corinthians 3, the last part of it, where he is scolding them for being childish and spiritually immature the way they're treating and acting with one another. He goes on to say, "You are our field. Apollos waters, one plants; he's telling them that they're the product of what he's producing from what he's sowing; he's sowing the gospel of Christ. He's not sowing some legalistic way to get into God's kingdom." This man says, "To sow to the flesh is to pander it, to cuddle and stroke it instead of crucifying it. The seeds we sow are largely thoughts and deeds. Every time we allow our minds to harbor a grudge, nurse a grievance, entertain an impure fantasy or wallow in self pity, we are sowing to the flesh. Every time we linger in bad company, we know better, but can't resist peer pressure."

It's the same thing that happened to individuals at that conference in Acts 15. "Every time we neglect prayer; every time we expose our minds to pornographic material, every time we take a risk which strains our self-control." A lot of times we'll be tempted with something and God's Spirit working with us says, "Don't go there. Don't entertain

that thought. Don't go down that road because you're going to get into a lot of trouble." What you're doing is sowing to the flesh; you're sowing to your carnality. It might be some selfish thing.

This man goes on to say, "Every time we take a risk which strains our self-control, we're sowing to the flesh. Some Christians (he's making a pointed comment here) sow to the flesh every day and wonder why they don't reap holiness." For us, it's why we're not being Christ like. He goes on to say, "Holiness (being Christ like) is a harvest; whether we reap it or not depends almost entirely on what and where and how we sow." I don't know if you're familiar with John Stott commentaries, but that's his commentary on Galatians.

I think it should become abundantly clear, that if we sow to the flesh (and we have many scriptures that support this) it's going to degrade us spiritually. We're going to slip into moral decay. We're going to move away from God and Christ if we do those things.

Verse 21. *Envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like, (all thoughts and actions) of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told [you] in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

But on the other hand, we want to sow to the Spirit. In Romans 8, this is just a reference...

Romans 8: 3. *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh (Paul again pointing this out, and it's consistent with his teaching) God [did] by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh.*

Verse 4. *That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh (we don't sow to it; we shouldn't be. If we do, remember the scripture that says ... "Let a man examine himself." If we do find ourselves doing that, we need to stop.) but according to the Spirit.*

In other words, sowing to spiritual things.

Verse 5. *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those [who live] according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.*

Sowing and reaping. There's a scripture also in:

Colossians 3:2, *Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*

Paul was dealing here with Gnosticism, which teaches that the flesh doesn't matter, therefore you can do whatever you want. You can sow as much as you want to the flesh. That's what Gnostics taught. Actually, what was going on there was a blend of some of these things and Gnosticism.

Romans 8: 6. *For to be carnally minded [is] death, but to be spiritually minded [is] life and peace.*

Verse 7. *Because the carnal mind [is] enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.*

Verse 8. *So then, those who are in the flesh (sowing to the flesh) cannot please God.*

Going back to Galatians 5, this list here kind of takes on a different meaning when we put it into the context of sowing and reaping. Again, we've read this many times. These are the things we should be sowing.

Galatians 5: 22. *But the fruit (produce, product, harvest) of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*

That's a good translation; how faithful are we to sow to the things that we should and resist the things that we shouldn't.

Verse 23. *Gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. (NKJV)*

We're not covered by any rituals or any physical act or legalism.

Verse 24. *And those [who are] Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (NKJV)*

In other words, stop sowing to all those thoughts and actions; it's a process of overcoming with God and Christ's help.

Verse 25. *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. (NKJV)*

It's interesting, another scripture that I thought of; it's a reference over in James 1: 2.

James 1: 2. *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,*

It doesn't mean that we have to pretend that we're happy about it. It doesn't mean that at all. It means that we recognize that it's an opportunity to grow. Most of the time, we're strengthened by those things if we come through the other side and don't give in to it.

Verse 3. *Knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.*

Patience here just means courageous endurance.

Verse 4. *But let patience have [its] perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*

That word “perfect” means exactly what it says. It means that is what we strive for, trying to be Christ like. If we are sowing to the spiritual things, as we should be, that will be our goal. It’s not something that we cannot achieve. That’s our goal. We gain experience in doing that. How do we do that? We’ve read the following verse many times, but let’s look at it in a little different way.

Verse 5. *If any of you lacks wisdom,*

In this process, wisdom doesn’t mean that we’re taking some course at a local college and we want some smarts in math or geography or history. It doesn’t mean that at all.

Verse 5b. *let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*

What he’s saying is that you ask God for the wisdom to sow to the spiritual things, to learn what we should be learning. That’s what that wisdom is for. That’s what we ask for. Not to make us smarter or know something someone doesn’t know.

Galatians 5: 26. *Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.*

This is what usually happens, something contrary to God’s truth that is brought in. It sets up competition, remembering I Corinthians 3.

Galatians 6: 9. *And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.*

If we do not give up. There is an end and a reward that he’s telling the Galatians and is telling us. This is a timeless message.

Verse 10. *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.*

Then he goes on to conclude here.

Verse 11. *See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand!*

Verse 12. *As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh,*

That’s what they were trying to do. They were trying to get the Galatians off track to sway them with the idea, “Well, you don’t have to do all that stuff that Paul is telling

you. We have the same kind of credentials he has. We're elders too, or we're ministers too."

Verse 12b. *these [would] compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.*

Verse 13. *For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.*

In other words, they wanted a purely physical thing. They were trying to entice these folks into that.

Verse 14. *But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*

Verse 15. *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.*

This is what Paul wanted them to work on, to sow to the spiritual things, because they would reap that consequence. It was a message for them then and for us now.

Verse 16. *And as many as walk (or live) according to this rule (that is, continue in this process of this new creation that we've been called to), peace and mercy [be] upon them, and upon the Israel of God. (NKJV)*

So I hope that what we've seen here, what Paul is talking about, is much more than a simple agrarian metaphor. We should get the message that what and how we sow spiritually matters to what we reap, because the end product or harvest for us is going to be our very salvation, our entry into God's kingdom.