

"Doing Good"  
Galatians 6:6-10

We're in this series, "God's Great Desire for You," and we've seen that His very best for your life and mine is to glorify Him and enjoy Him forever. There is certainly an intellectual element to doing that. Colossians 3:1 encourages us to "set our minds on the things of God, things that are above, not...things that are on earth." We glorify and enjoy God as we put Him first place in our thoughts, as we acknowledge Him for Who He truly is, glorious, wonderful, awesome, powerful, loving, and good. But glorifying and enjoying God is not just what you think or say, it's also what you do. God's Word describes this active part of our faith in a number of ways: it's a path we go down or a "walk." What we do as Christians is also likened to a building we build. And in a number of places in God's Word our life is described as a field in which we do planting.

In this word picture of a field, there's a very important principle: whatever you sow with your life, you will also reap. In other words, your actions now will result in consequences later. We know this to be true in the world of agriculture. The kind of harvest and the size of the harvest are determined in advance by the farmer, by what seed he sows and how much seed he sows. So if a farmer wants a huge harvest of a particular type of corn, he must sow the right corn seed and he must sow a lot of corn seed. Only then can he expect a bumper crop of corn. Precisely the same principle operates in our lives ethically, morally, and spiritually. The old adage is true: "Sow a thought, reap an act; sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny." This is an unchangeable principle for all people, but one especially designed to encourage and to warn those who are followers of Jesus Christ. In our passage, your life in Jesus Christ is likened to a farm with two fields. You have two choices as to where you will sow seed (that is, what you will do with your time, energy, talents, and treasures in your life). You can either sow "to please your sinful nature," or you can sow "to please the Spirit."

The first choice, "Sowing to please your sinful nature" means doing what satisfies your old, sin-dominated self. It's to think, feel, behave as if the world and all its people exist to serve you. You serve someone else? That question is not even on the radar screen. The examples that come to mind when we think of sowing to please our sinful nature are usually evil, wicked pursuits – greed, conceit, lust, and so on. I want to raise an example that is much more subtle, but every bit as dangerous. In her presentation after our 11:15 service last Sunday, Emily Statema said something I've heard repeatedly from young people who do short-term mission work in third world countries. She spoke about being angry about America, for the incredible material abundance we enjoy, while people in the third world have nothing. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, I've often found myself walking around our house thinking about people in Louisiana and Mississippi who have lost everything, and I wonder, "What would my reaction be if everything in my house was gone?" I realize that we Americans have three types of possessions. One, there are the things we need. Two, there are the things we want. And three, there are the things we accumulate. That third category is a "dumping ground" of things we needed at one time, but don't need anymore, and things we wanted at one time, but don't want anymore. Instead of giving them away, passing them on, we keep them. Why? I fear it's because they give us a sense of comfort and security. But when that happens, this stuff that we've accumulated becomes an idol. We worship the stuff because of that sense of comfort and security, instead of worshipping God. In Hosea 13:6 God says, "Being satisfied, their heart became proud; therefore, they forgot Me." When we're prosperous, when we're able to accumulate a lot of stuff for ourselves (and that includes our time and talents as well as our treasures) we become proud. We forget God. At that place, we're sowing to please our sinful nature.

Jesus spoke about the person who acts this way. In Luke 12:15-21, He said, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." Then He told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, you have plenty of good things laid up for many years. I will take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.' But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded of you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?" Jesus concludes, "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself, but is not rich toward God." I believe there's a warning there to all of us: Accumulate, keep for ourselves our possessions, our treasures, our time and talents and there is no glory, no enjoyment of God, only disappointment and destruction. Why? Because we're sowing to please our sinful natures, doing what satisfies ourselves.

The second choice is "sowing to the spirit" which means doing what is pleasing to the Spirit of God. Verses nine and ten describe this as "doing good." We know we're not saved by the good things we do. Our salvation in Jesus Christ is entirely a work of God's grace in our lives. But we put that salvation on display by doing good, by showing loving actions to one another in our homes, to one another in our church family, to one another in our community and world. This is what it means to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world. As Jesus said, "Let your light shine before men, that they may see" your light? No. "That they may see your good works, and praise your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Paul says in verse six, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked." Sowing to please the spirit, doing good for Jesus Christ always produces good results. It may bring comfort, relief, or hope to people in need. It may lead an unbeliever to repentance and salvation. It may help slow the moral deterioration of society and even make the community a better place to live in. It may increase people's respect for what is right, noble, good, and true, especially in these days when those standards are slipping fast. And it will bring good, blessing to the doer, for Jesus promised, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Doing good for Jesus Christ always produces good results. In II Corinthians 9:10-11 Paul describes those good results this way: God "will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion." Rich not in material things that are here today, gone tomorrow, but rich in the things that last, in this life, and in eternity! Sowing to the Spirit means recognizing that the Holy Spirit aims to produce a magnificent harvest of righteousness in your life. In that harvest He will be glorified and you will enjoy and be blessed by Him richly!

There's a real sense in which the principle of sowing and reaping says that your future is in your hands. You decide your tomorrow by what you do today. God does not give us the riches of time, talents, and treasures to keep for ourselves, to use for our own private enjoyment. That's sowing to please our sinful natures and leads only to disappointment and destruction. He gives us time, talents, and treasures so that we might "do good" with them, use them, invest them for His glory. I've deliberately cut this message short today, because I want to free up a few extra minutes for you to check out some of the many opportunities to "do good" in the life of your church. The "Ministry Faire" is taking place today in the Multi-Purpose Room. I strongly encourage you to come and consider and pursue the good works God has already prepared for you to do as you honor and glorify and enjoy God in your life.