

Logan Smith  
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## **Galatians 6:6-10**

### **Sowing to the Spirit**

There are certain topics that I absolutely *dread* talking about in public - and at the top of that list is the topic of giving money, in particular to the church, and *especially* talking about paying pastors. It's awkward to talk about giving money to the church, but especially so when you're a pastor! And I think the reasons for that are pretty obvious, right? I'm paid by the church to be able to devote my full work-load to ministry. Which means that when I'm talking about giving money to the church, I'm worried it comes across as, "Give me money!" Which is absolutely *not* what I want to tell people or intend to do at all! And to make matters worse, there have been all kinds of scandals and charlatans over the years who have given churches and pastors ministries a bad name, scamming people out of their money in the name of the gospel all to line their own pockets (which is blasphemously wrong and completely unChristian).

So suffice it to say, I don't like talking about money. I find it very awkward to preach about giving money to the church and paying pastors and so forth. So when I came into the office at the beginning of this past week, looked down at the sermon schedule, and saw that my next passage was Gal. 6:6-10, a passage dealing a lot with monetary giving - even paying the pastor! - I was not particularly excited about preaching this sermon! And yet, this passage, too, is the Word of God; we need to hear what it says about how God wants us to use our money. And that's because what we do with our money, and all of our other earthly and material resources, reveals something about our *hearts*. It shows what we prioritize, value, and desire. Words can be cheaper than gold and silver and dollar signs. It's one thing to profess faith in the gospel, and says that we value the things that God values; but when we put our money where our mouth is, then our words carry more weight, don't they? The way we use our earthly, tangible resources often reveals the spiritual realities of our hearts.

So it makes perfect sense, then, that Paul now turns to this very topic of how we use our resources in a way that is in step with the Spirit, and not the flesh. In verses 6-10, Paul tells us that if we are walking by the Spirit, then we must "sow to the Spirit," and not "sow to the flesh." In other words, Paul now turns to the subject of how we use our resources in a way that is in step with the Spirit, not from our sinful, worldly flesh. That's what I believe this passage is about: at the heart of the passage, in verses 7-8, Paul is telling us that the way we use our resources now -

whether we're sowing to the Spirit or the flesh - shows the spiritual state of our hearts and, ultimately, whether we're heading towards eternal life or eternal corruption. And Paul applies this principle to two different exhortations as to how we should use our resources in a way that sows to the Spirit, first in v.6, then in v.10. And these practical application that Paul is making here are just more examples of how we are to love one another and bear one another's burdens as a Christian community, as a church family. We are to walk by the Spirit and bear one another's burdens by caring for one another's needs with the way we use our financial and earthly resources. And as we do this, Paul reminds, we are sowing to the Spirit and will reap eternal life.

So let's begin with the first exhortation of this passage, in verse 6:

### **I. Share All Good Things with the One Who Teaches You the Word of God (6:6)**

Paul continues by giving very practical applications for how we are to "walk by the Spirit" as a Christian church community. He begins the passage with another exhortation, in v.6: "Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches." And now this is the part where it becomes pretty awkward, isn't it? In essence, Paul is commanding the church to pay their pastors, those who regularly and rightly teach the Word of God and preach the gospel to them. And this is awkward for us this morning because I'm a pastor, paid a salary by this church - by you guys - to spend my time studying, preaching, and teaching the Word of God to you. Now, the last thing that I want to do is for this to come across as me telling you to pay me money. That's not at all my intention here. Like I said, this is not a topic I want to preach on. But I don't set the agenda or decide what to say - God does. I'm just trying to preach through the Bible, one passage at a time, and say what the Bible says. So let's unpack what God says here, through Paul, in this verse. And then, we'll look at *why* God gives us this command, why it's good for us, and how it applies to us today.

The command itself is pretty straight forward: "Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches." This is written to a church of Christians, gathering as a specific church community, with specific leaders appointed among them who are morally qualified, doctrinally qualified, and able to rightly handle the word of God as they teach and preach in, both publicly in the church - like in what I'm doing right now - and in private, as they privately teach and apply the Word to people's lives in discipleship and counseling situations. The Bible speaks about this teaching office a lot, calling these people "elders," or "overseers," or "pastors," which is the word we most commonly use today; all three terms are talking about the

same office, though; these are men recognized as called, qualified, and equipped by God to rightly teach the Word of God to the church. So Paul implies here that another essential component of what it means to be a local church is that the Word of God is being taught and preached, and that the members of the body are benefiting from regularly listening and responding to the ministry of the Word. And Paul says here that if we benefit from the teaching of the Word, then we are commanded to “share all good things with the one who teaches.”

So what does that mean? The “all good things” here refers to earthly, tangible blessings - material goods, resources, finances, etc. As we receive good things from the Lord - such as our paycheck from working hard at our job - then we are called to share all these good blessings of provision with “the one who teaches” us the Word of God in our church community. At the very least, it means providing for his needs (and for his family’s needs, if he has one, since he is also responsible for providing for them). But it also goes beyond just merely having his basic needs met - after all, we are to share “*all good things*” with him; as we receive provision and financial blessing from the Lord, so we give it to the one who teaches, as we have opportunity. So in one sense, sharing “all good things” goes beyond just financial resources, but I think that Paul’s main point here is that we generously give to provide financially for our pastor (or ideally even more than one, if we had the opportunity and means to do so).

And we know this is a command from the Lord because we don’t just see it here, but in many other places as well. For example, Jesus himself said, “For the laborer deserves his wages,” when speaking about those who proclaimed the gospel being provided for by those whom they taught. We see this perhaps most explicitly in *1 Tim. 5:17-18*: “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double-honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.’ and ‘The laborer deserves his wages.’” Again, the word “elders” here is just another word for “pastor.” The reason it’s plural is because the pattern that we see over and over again in the New Testament is for there to be multiple elders (multiple pastors) who are all shepherding together *in the same local church body*. All of these elders are biblically qualified (mature believers, with sound character and sound doctrine, able to teach), and they all have shepherd hearts, with a desire to help others know the Bible better, follow Christ, and grow in the Lord; all these elders “rule,” and what Paul means by that is, they lead the church to be Biblical and provide spiritual oversight for all the members. They do that together. And Paul says that those who “rule well are

worthy of double-honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.” So though all of them lead the church together, not all of them “labor in preaching and teaching” in the church; those that are set aside to take on the bulk of laboring in preaching and teaching the word are to receive “double honor” - and it’s very clearly from the verse that follows (about not muzzling the ox), that he’s talking about paying them financially.

So why is this the case? Why does God command us to pay our pastors - especially those who are set aside to do the bulk of laboring in preaching and teaching the Word to us? Furthermore, why does Paul give us this exhortation here, in v.6? I think it’s because this is a very practical and necessary way that we “bear one another’s burdens” and so “fulfill the law of Christ” (v.2) as a church. And here’s why I say that: our most fundamental need is to know and believe the gospel, not only for the first time, but more and more, each day, for the rest of our lives. Every single one of us desperately needs to know the Lord more personally, to know how much God loves us through the gospel of Christ Jesus, to love God and love others more deeply because of the gospel, and to know and obey GOD’s Word in all of our lives, both as individuals and as a church community. And the way that this happens - the way that we grow as Christians, are sanctified, and persevere - all comes through *knowing, studying, and applying the Word of God, the Bible*. As Christians, we are all, by necessity, born again of the Spirit - meaning we have new hearts and are led by the Spirit! We long to walk by the Spirit and produce the fruit of the Spirit - and therefore, we eagerly desire to know, study, believe, obey, and apply the Bible more and more! We know we need it and we hunger for it! We believe that this Bible is the very Word of God, that it’s necessary for our spiritual life, even our eternal life, and so we *hunger and thirst* to have a richer and deeper understanding of the Bible, so that God’s Word and the gospel of Jesus Christ that it reveals will truly be the center of our lives, our hearts, our minds, our families, our churches, and so forth. So all of us have an urgent, essential need - a burden, if you will - to know, study, and apply the entirety of God’s Word!

But knowing, studying, interpreting, and applying the Bible can be very difficult to do well; for one thing, it requires a lot of time and effort! It is far too easy to stray into false teachings, which the Bible sternly warns us against. It requires time and effort to learn how to study the Bible, and then continues to require hours and hours of study to rightly understand and apply each Bible passage and verse to our lives. But the reality is, the vast majority of us don’t have that kind of time and effort to spend; we have to work jobs to provide for our family, care

for kids, keep up the home, etc. Yes, all of us should be spending time in the word and prayer on our own, ideally each day; but I've heard many of you express to me how you still don't ever feel like you have nearly as much time as you'd like to spend time in studying and interpreting the word. Furthermore, not all of us have the gifting, or training and skills, needed to rightly study and interpret the Bible. So what do we do to alleviate this burden we all have to better understand, believe, and obey the entire Word of God? Well, this is part of why God created the office of pastors, or elders. One of the most key, essential responsibilities of pastors is to authoritatively teach the Word of God, both publicly and privately. Now, as we read from 1 Tim. earlier, the biblical norm is to have multiple elders (or pastors) in a church, who are all leading and providing oversight; all the elders guard the teaching ministry of the church together, and all do some teaching, even if it's just in one-on-one conversations. But even in such situations, the church is to provide financially for at least one of the elders to be able to devote his time to the ministry of the Word and prayer. If he has to work a full time job, working 40-50 hours a week in secular employment, on top of caring for his family and other responsibilities, then he will have very little time and energy left for studying the Word; and even less time after that for actually teaching it and pastoring the people of the church! So this is why God exhorts us to "share all good things" with the one whom we set aside to study, teach, and preach the Word of God to us.

When a pastor has to work another job on top of pastoring, this creates a much larger burden on him, his family, and therefore, the church. But if we provide for him financially, then he's able to devote his time to labor hard in studying, interpreting, and applying the Word of God so that he can better preach the gospel, teach the Word of God to us, and provide private teaching and counseling for us, shepherding us in how to better understand and apply the Bible to our lives. In other words, providing for a pastor to work hard in studying, preaching, and teaching the Word is a very good thing for all of us! On the one hand, it bears his burdens by not over-burdening him or his family in having to work another job on top of pastoring, preaching, and teaching. But on the other hand, it also helps *bear all of our burdens*, since we all have the need to be taught the Word! So I am just so thankful that I have the great privilege to get to be your pastor; and not just that, but to get to do this for a living, so that I can devote my time to working hard in the study throughout the week and laboring in preaching the gospel and teaching the Word of God!

And here's the neat thing: this means that as you work hard throughout the week at your job, whether your painting houses, sitting behind a computer screen, or managing other people, earn a paycheck to provide for your family, and then give part of your hard-earned money to the church, part of which goes to providing for the pastoral ministry of the church, then you're actually *directly contributing* to the Word of God being preached and taught to your fellow church members. So if the Lord sees fit to use these times of teaching and preaching to edify the church, help people grow in Christ, and even bring people to saving faith, then this means that *all of us* are participating in this ministry of the Word together!

So then, it is very good for all of us to be able to provide for those who labor well in teaching the Word of God to us. But another reason it's good for us to do this is because when we do, we're revealing that we have a very high value for the Word of God itself. Which brings us to point number two...

## **II. You Reap What You Sow: How we Use our Resources Reveals our Heart (vv.7-9)**

Paul backs up his exhortation with a theological principle in verses 7-8: "Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to the flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life."

"Sowing" and "reaping" are images most of us are all familiar with: you "sow" seed by planting it in the ground, and after a time of watering and waiting, when the plant grows, you "reap" the harvest of the crop it produces. And the important point Paul is drawing on is that reaping is directly tied to the sowing. If you want to have tomatoes grow in your yard, you have to sow tomato seeds; you can't plant seeds for peppers and then get upset when a pepper plant grows and not a tomato plant! YOU reap what you sow. And this principle applies to many things in life. If you want to be healthy, strong, and fit, then you can't just sit around on the couch all day eating potato chips; no, you put in the effort of working out at the gym in order to reap the physical benefits.

And the exact same thing applies spiritually. So Paul contrasts two types of "sowing" and "reaping" for us: sowing to the flesh vs. sowing to the Spirit. We sow to the flesh by investing in a life characterized by the works of the flesh, giving into sinful passions and desires. By contrast, we sow to the Spirit by "walking by the Spirit" and living a life that "keeps in step with the Spirit." SO in one sense, this is making the same point we saw in verses 16-25: we sow to the

flesh by living a life devoted to sin and the “works of the flesh;” we sow to the Spirit by crucifying the flesh, waging war against sin, and walking according to who we are in Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit who changes our hearts. But I think Paul is doing more than just saying the same thing he said above; I think that what he’s doing here, in this passage, is he’s taking the principle of “walking by the Spirit” and applying it to the way we use our resources - that is, that “sowing to the flesh” here means using our worldly goods and money for our own selfish, fleshly desires; by contrast, we “sow to the Spirit” by using our worldly goods, resources, and money in a way that corresponds to the things of the Spirit of God and the fruit of the Spirit.

Here’s why I think this sowing and reaping applies to how we use our resources: first, v.6 is clearly about generously giving money and earthly goods to the one who teaches, and Paul is using this “sowing and reaping” metaphor to back up that exhortation. Secondly, Paul uses this same metaphor and exact same phrase elsewhere, in 2 Cor. 8-9, to refer to generously giving to others (particularly fellow Christians) to provide for their needs financially. The same thing is going on here, as Paul applies this principle to “bearing one another’s burdens” in the church and “doing good to all, especially the household of faith” (v.10). So then, I believe Paul is saying that the way we use our resources is either sowing to the flesh or to the Spirit.

But then Paul tells us what we will reap from each: If we sow to the Spirit, v.8 says, we will reap “eternal life.” By contrast, if we sow to the flesh we will “reap corruption” - that is, the opposite of eternal life: eternal death and damnation. So does this mean, then, that our salvation and eternal life is based on our works, so that we can earn salvation by sowing to the Spirit? No, of course not; Paul has made it very clear that we are justified not by works, but only by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. We “reap” eternal life through the Spirit, not because of our works, but purely because Jesus Christ lived a perfectly righteous life in our place, that we could never live; died on the cross for our sins, paying the penalty of spiritual death and damnation we deserve, bearing the wrath of God in our place; then rose again, crushing sin, Satan, and death for us! He did this so that anyone who believes this good news and trusts in Christ alone will be saved! Not by works, but purely by grace through faith!

But the faith that saves never is alone; it produces fruit. Our faith is evidenced in our life by our works, as we’ve been seeing throughout chapters 5 and 6. And that includes in the way we use our money and other resources. If we live a life sowing to the flesh, then we shouldn’t be surprised when we reap death; furthermore, if we’re heading to eternal life through faith in

Christ, then we will necessarily sow to the Spirit. The way we invest our resources, time, money, and energy reveals what's in our heart. Or, as Jesus put it in Matt. 6:21, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." What you spend your money on reveals the values, desires, and priorities of your heart. We make time and spend on what we most truly value. If you're spending your money, time, and energy on things that just feed your own selfish flesh and sinful desires, then you're sowing to the flesh. But if, instead, you're investing your money, time, and resources into the things of the Spirit, then you're showing that you truly believe the gospel, love Jesus, value God's Word, and are walking by the Spirit! It shows that we truly believe and are truly saved!

So then, brothers and sisters let us "not grow weary in doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up" (v.9). After all, "God is not mocked." The truth will come out in the end. Let us keep sowing to the Spirit by fixing our eyes on the harvest that awaits us: eternal life! And again, this isn't to earn salvation - you can't buy your way into heaven! But as we fix our eyes on Christ and fully trust and love Him, then he changes our hearts and desires - even the way we spend our money, time, energy, and resources. So let us take all that we are, and all that we have, and invest it into the things of the Spirit, as we persevere in faith and reap eternal life!

But that begs the question: what does this look like? How do we "sow to the Spirit" with our resources and persevere in doing good? Paul answers this next, in our final point:

### **III. Do Good to All, But Especially to Fellow Believers (v.10)**

We are called to "sow to the Spirit" by doing good to all; but we are especially obligated to prioritize taking care of the members of our church family. We see this in verse 10: "So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, especially to those who are of the household of faith."

As Christians who walk by the Spirit and fulfill the Law of Christ, we are to be good to everyone. After all, the fruit of the Spirit is "love" and "goodness;" the law of Christ is fulfilled in loving your neighbor as yourself (5:14). The love of Christ compels us to do "goodness" to everyone that we encounter, even our enemies. At a bare minimum, this means we must not sin against people, or treat them wrongly, but must seek to do good to all, "as we have opportunity.

But the exhortation doesn't end there; we do good to all, but "especially to those who are of the household of faith." The "household of faith" refers to the church, our spiritual family. When we are united to Christ through faith in the gospel, we are adopted by God as children; and

that means, we're united *to each other* in Christ as well. We're a family! Brothers and sisters in Christ. This is true of all Christians - but we're not able to live this out with all Christians; instead, we're able to live out this reality in the local church. A local church body is a church *family*. As a Spirit-filled Christian family, we're commanded to "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ," as we saw from v.2. In other words, we're called to "do good" to one another. And given that verses 6-9 are focused on how we use our money, goods, and resources in a way that's according to the Spirit, I think Paul is applying the same principle here. One way that we bear one another's burdens in a Christlike, loving way is by generously giving and providing for one another's needs, as opportunity arises. And if it's true that we are to do good to all, then it is *especially true* that we have a special obligation to doing good to one another, as a church family. After all, this is true for our physical families, isn't it? If our neighbor is hungry, we should feed him. But if we're not feeding our own kids first, then we need to take care of them first, and *then* feed our neighbor. There's a greater obligation to care and provide for our family. And the same is true with the church. As members of a church family, we are connected together in a special relationship; we're committed to caring for one another, to bearing one another's burdens through prayer and encouragement - and often, at times, with our resources as well. Sometimes this is done through generous giving, other times maybe it's through meeting needs, showing hospitality, giving to a family in the church in need, visiting members in the hospital or nursing homes, providing help with manual labor, or sitting down and helping someone emotionally and spiritually. All of these are ways we're called to do good to one another! Another way we do this is through regularly giving part of our income as an offering to our local church family, prioritizing doing good to our household of faith. And that ties right in with vv.6-9, doesn't it? As we provide for those who teach the Bible and preach the gospel, we're doing good to all, so that the church might be built up through the Word and sinners might be saved by the glorious grace of the gospel of Christ. And as we do so, we're "sowing to the Spirit" by showing that we prioritize and value the Word of God, the gospel of Christ, our brothers and sisters in Christ, and the spiritual good of all people.

So let us walk in step with the Spirit, brother's and sisters. Let us do good to all - but let us especially do good to one another. And as we do so, we will fulfill the law of Christ - the Law of love. As John 13:35 says, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Let us love one another because Christ has first loved us, even by laying

down his life to save us from our sins! Let us persevere in doing good to one another even when it is difficult and costly by fixing our eyes on the heavenly reward of eternal life! We will reap this purely by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ! But those who reap will also sow. So let us sow to the Spirit with all that we have, brothers and sisters.

But perhaps this morning you're not a believer; perhaps you've been sowing not to the Spirit, but to your flesh. Perhaps you're living your life purely for yourself, and the way you use your money and time goes all to the sinful works and passions of the flesh; perhaps your heart belongs to the world and worldly things, not to Christ. If that's you, then the most loving thing I can tell you this morning is that if you keep sowing to the flesh, you will not reap happiness - you will reap eternal corruption in Hell. But there is good news for you! You can reap eternal life *purely by grace, despite all your sins!* And it's not by doing enough good works, because you could never be good enough or do enough or give enough. You can't buy your way into heaven. But you don't have to! Because Jesus Christ came and lived a perfect life, died on the cross, and rose again to generously and freely give eternal life to you! Simply trust in Him, and you will be saved! Then profess through faith in baptism and join a local church family as you begin to walk out the Christian life, sowing to the Spirit on the way to eternal life! If you have any questions about this, I would love to speak with you. Let us pray.