

• *Problems in the Galatian congregations not dealt with by the law*

The particular topics that Paul is addressing in this section of Galatians (envy, quarrelsomeness, harshness towards the backslider, pride, disparagement of the teachers in Galatia) were some of the problems that Paul knew were present in the Galatian congregations. The Mosaic law had not dealt with those problems, and as Paul tries to deal with them he is not quoting the Mosaic law. They will be overcome if the Galatians keep in step with the Holy Spirit.

He asks for generosity towards the teachers of the churches

He asks for generosity towards the teachers of the churches. 'Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches' ^{☞1}. One special piece of 'burden-bearing' is to help the teachers of the gospel. Paul is specially thinking of financial help, but we need not confine it to finances. For teachers need other kinds of support (prayer, friendship, hospitality, even the encouragement that gratitude brings). Paul does speak of 'all' good things.

^{☞1} 6:6

The principle of sowing and reaping

He reminds them of the principle of sowing and reaping. 'Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever anyone sows that will he also reap' ^{☞1}. For the one who sows to his flesh, will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life' ^{☞2}. It matters how we live. What we sow we reap, good or bad.

^{☞1} 6:7

^{☞1} 6:8

• *To the flesh or the Spirit*

There is a danger that we might think we are an exception to this principle. So Paul says, 'Do not be deceived; God is not mocked ...' Sometimes we think we can do something sinful and dodge the consequences. But this is 'mocking' God. It is laughing at God while you sin. It is certainly true that God does not act quickly in judgement. 'He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities' ^{☞1}. True enough, but to exploit God's goodness, to 'mock God' invites a swift response from God.

^{☞1} Psalm 103:10

• *To exploit God's goodness is to mock God*

The sowing-and-reaping principle shows that our 'good works' are important. God wants our gratitude to be shown in godly living. Paul would be the first to insist that we are not justified by our good works. We are not regenerated – given life – by our good works. We are not made God's children by our good works. Nor do we get our assurance of salvation by our good works. Only Pharisees can do that ^{☞1}. But none of this means that good works do not come into our lives at all. We are created in God for good works ^{☞2}. We must be careful to devote ourselves to the good and godly activities that God puts before us ^{☞3}. Living the godly life is like being a farmer or a gardener. We are planting seed and we reap a crop of good fruits of one kind or another.

^{☞1} see Luke 18:11–12

^{☞2} Ephesians 2:10

^{☞3} see Titus 3:8

• *Sowing to the flesh*

What does it mean to sow to the flesh? It is to yield to any of the works of the flesh that are mentioned in 5:19–21, or anything like them. To commit such things is like planting a seed.

• *Reaping corruption*

What does it mean to reap corruption? It means that our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ is damaged. Guilt and shame takes over the conscience. The blood of Jesus no longer cleanses from sin. The anointing for ministry may be lost. Prayerlessness sets in. The voice of God is no longer heard.

• *Sowing to the Spirit*

What does it mean to sow to the Spirit? It means to follow the impulses of the Holy Spirit as He leads us in the ways of godliness. The Holy Spirit will lead us in ways of truthfulness and love, ways of mercy and wisdom, ways of humility and yet boldness. By the Holy Spirit, we do all that Jesus commanded us through His first apostles ^{☞1}.

^{☞1} Matthew 28:20

• *Reaping eternal life*

What does it mean to 'reap eternal life'? It does not mean to enter into our first experience of salvation. It does not mean to become 'justified' before

God. We are right with God already! But it means we enter more deeply into what we are saved for. We experience ever-fresh anointing from God. We hear His voice. We accomplish His will. We have our prayers answered as we pray for the progress of His kingdom. We experience spiritual liveliness. We begin to lay hold of that which God wants to give us. Paul told Timothy that we have to 'take hold of that which is truly life' ¹.

¹ 1 Timothy 6:10

He encourages them not to grow weary in well-doing

• *Cultivating Godly attitudes and motivation*

• *Living for God – not God's work*

• *Taking the opportunities that God gives us to show love – this is the 'law' of the Kingdom*

He encourages them not to grow weary in well-doing. 'So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up' ¹. Weariness is not a matter of committing sin. It is when you are doing what is right, but you are doing it in a sluggish or depressed manner. How do we obey Paul's word of exhortation and defeat weariness? There are certain things we must not do, and there are some things we should do.

¹ 6:9

First, we must refuse the suggestion that comes to us that we should give up. We must not become 'resigned' ('I suppose it will always be like this but I must plod on'). We must be careful not to take short cuts or adopt wrong methods just because of our weariness. The way to overcome weariness is to take yourself in hand and persuade yourself in the Holy Spirit that your weariness is unnecessary. Make sure that you are not overworking. To push yourself too hard will always cause weariness eventually. Make sure you are not serving God in the energy of the flesh. Examine your motives. Make sure you are in the will of God, and then realize that what you are doing is worthwhile. It is doing what is right. Don't live for God's work. Live for God Himself. The rewards will come eventually. Harvest time is on its way, maybe sooner than we think.

What particular things does Paul have in mind when he tells us not to be weary? He is not specific, but he says, 'So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith' ¹. Christian love must extend to everyone. If you love only those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? At the same time we show love for the Christian believers. Sometimes it will be more difficult to show love to those who are close to us than to those who are somewhat detached from us. We do not have to do everything that might be imagined, but God puts opportunities before us ('whenever we have an opportunity') and then we have to act. This is 'the law' of God's kingdom.

¹ 6:10



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