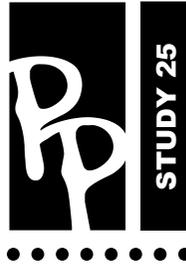


WHAT YOU PUT IN

IS WHAT YOU GET OUT



Galatians 6:6-10

This Study Paper contains the following :-

- 📁 Introduction to the passage
- 📁 What these verses mean
- 📁 Summary
- 📁 A suggestion of what to preach about from these verses
- 📁 Focus Point: A man reaps what he sows and the teaching of Karma
- 📁 Over to you

Introduction to the passage

The apostle Paul is a very practical teacher. He has had to defend very strongly in his letter to the Galatians the fundamental basis of trusting in Christ alone for salvation. A Gentile does not have to become a Jew to be accepted by God. Those who told the Galatian believers that they must take on the Jewish way were really saying that all the rules and regulations must be obeyed and followed. These rules were not God-given but thought up by men. To Paul this was all wrong and it could not be ignored because man-made rules produce different results from the results of following God's ways. Trying to earn salvation by keeping to rules has tragic consequences. It fails and results in the sinful nature's showing itself in all types of ungodly behaviour. Paul lists these in 5:19-21. Trusting in Christ alone produces a different set of results, stemming from the Holy Spirit's changing that person's life. This is called the fruit of the Spirit (5:22-23). In chapter 6 Paul sets out how the fruit of the Spirit works out in practice. In the first five verses Paul has shown the Galatians how a situation should be handled if a fellow-believer falls into sin. The fruit of the Spirit is active and rather than

condemn the person, the attitude should be to see how that person can be restored. Paul will now give a second application and then set out a principle for general Christian living.

What these verses mean

Verse 6

Anyone who receives instruction in the word

This is one practical example of the many mutual helps that should exist among believers, mentioned in 6:2. The word for "receives instruction" has the same root as the Greek word meaning "catechumen". It is the word Luke uses of Theophilus: "you have been taught" (catechised) (Luke 1:4). "In the word" means the whole message of the gospel. Paul is therefore including all professing believers who come together in a Christian community (i.e. local church) for worship because as part of their coming together they will receive instruction. What is Paul telling these believers to do?

must share

The Greek word used here is related to the word "fellowship" or "sharing". This idea of fellowship among believers is an idea that comes into prominence in the New Testament immediately after Pentecost (Acts 2:42). The presence of the Spirit in believers is proved by their new willingness to share what they have with others who have a need. (See Romans 15:27). The particular application here is to the teacher who gives knowledge to the pupil. What are they to share?

all good things with his instructor.

This means all the good things of this life (see Luke 16:25). The pupils are to support the teacher (1 Co. 9:11,14). In other words congregations should be ready and willing to support their pastors and ministers (elders). In the majority of societies today this will be financial support. In societies where goods are exchanged rather than the use of money, then the church leader (elder) who teaches is to be supported by food and clothing. This is not a new concept. We find in the Old Testament that the other tribes of Israel supported the Levites. The Levites could then devote themselves fully to the service of God by maintaining the temple and carrying out the sacrifices that the people brought. Today pastors (elders) are to be supported by the rest of the believers so that they can devote themselves to the service of God. This is what they do when they instruct people in the Word. They have to study and prepare. It is the responsibility of all believers to give financial support and for churches to pay their pastors adequately. From the beginning Paul appointed elders in the churches (Acts 14:23) whose duties included teaching the

church members (1 Timothy 3:2 – “apt to teach”). If an elder has to work to support himself and his family, what quality of teaching will he be able to give?

Verse 7

Do not be deceived:

The Galatian believers were being misled. They were being tricked into doing something they should not be doing. What was the result of their being taken in by the false teachers?

God cannot be mocked.

They were ignoring God and no one can get away with that. They were turning up their noses at God. They were being disrespectful which would end in their disregarding God. If the Galatians fail to accept those who teach them the truth, they are disrespectful to the will of God in this matter.

A man reaps what he sows.

The principle is generally true. Everyone will be judged according to their works. No one will be able to outwit God. The principle is true in the particular Galatian instance. If they fail properly to accept and follow the truth (the grace of Christ 1:6), they will be led into error by false teachers.

Verse 8

The one who sows to please his sinful nature,

“Sinful nature” here means (as in 5:19-21) not the physical realm but human nature under the control of sin. To sow to please the sinful nature (flesh) means to allow yourself to behave in ways described in 5:19-21. (See Romans 8:13.) Those who sow in this way are motivated in their thoughts and actions by indwelling sin. Their sinful nature shows that no change has taken place in their hearts and God is not deceived by their claim to be his children. This means that they ...

from that nature will reap destruction;

This is to bring into a worse condition. There is no suggestion of annihilation or total destruction. Since it is contrasted with eternal life, the implication is that the worse condition resulting from sowing to the sinful nature is also everlasting (2 Thess. 1:9). No amount of religion can help such people to be rescued from God’s anger. They will be condemned eternally. What is the only answer to this problem?

the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

Sowing has the same meaning as earlier in this verse. It means living, behaving, doing the things we do. If all this comes from the leading of

God’s Holy Spirit, then it is proof that we are God’s children (Rom. 8:14).

Verse 9

Let us not become weary

Paul often uses words about agricultural workers who may grow slower in their work after hours of toil and who may be overcome by the heat in which they work. Our human nature always finds it difficult to persevere, especially when results are not immediate.

in doing good,

The word “good” means “something beautiful” and includes both physical and spiritual activity. It is possible that Paul refers here to the collection of monies to help poor believers in Jerusalem as one example of well-doing (2:10; Rom. 15:25-28; 1 Co. 16:1; 2 Co. 9:1-8).

for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

There is always, in God’s purposes, a proper time for events to take place (4:4; 1 Tim. 2:6, 6:15; Titus 1:3). The appropriateness of God’s timing is a part of the splendour of the event; the harvest of well-doing is therefore worth waiting for. To have it earlier would be only half as glorious!

Verse 10

Therefore, as we have opportunity,

Paul uses the same word as “proper time” in verse 9; i.e. there are suitable times in which we should do the good we ought to do (Eccl. 3:1-8).

let us do good

“Doing good” is doing the kind of beautiful thing Paul is writing of from 5:22-6:9. Earlier in this letter Paul has strongly condemned justification by works. This was for those hoping to gain favour with God by doing good works. Now Paul is encouraging good deeds, but the difference is that the motivation comes from being in a right relationship with God. The person has trusted in Christ alone; their life has been changed as the Spirit has cleansed them and dwells within them. These good works will have a mark about them, which can be identified as follows:¹

Good works

- Through these good works God will be glorified (John 15:8)
- These good works will conform to the Bible (2 Thess. 3:14)
- The good works will arise out of the indwelling Spirit (Gal. 5:25)
- The motivation behind these good works will come from love for God and his Son (2 Co. 5:14-15)

¹ Edgar Andrews, *Free in Christ* (Evangelical Press).

to all people,

God gives many good things to all people, whether they are believers or not (Matt. 5:45). By those universal gifts God makes continuing life possible for them. So believers are to follow this pattern and do good to all.

especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

God's universal care of all people does not deny that he also has a sphere of particular and special concern for his people (1 Tim. 4:10; Eph. 2:19). The translation used in this study describes such people as "the family of believers". In other translations the term "household of faith" is used. The phrase "of [the] faith" describes all who accept the doctrines of the gospel, whether Jew or Gentile (i.e. the things believed, not the act of believing).



Summary

Paul has given two examples of how the fruit of the Spirit influences the way the Christian behaves. Paul may well have picked on these two because of a specific problem amongst the Galatians. The first was self-righteousness and Paul addressed this by considering how a person who has fallen into sin should be dealt with (6:1-5). The second example is about Christian giving (6:6). Instead of thinking about self, the Christian believer is to consider others. In this case it is the important work of Christ, taking the gospel to people and teaching the believers. The elders appointed to do the task of teaching are to be supported to do this work so that they can give their time to it. Paul then lays down the general principle of Christian living. Those who have truly believed and whose lives have changed as a result will sow to the Spirit. They will live in a manner that glorifies God. They will reap everlasting life. Those whose profession of faith is false will only give in to their sinful nature. They will reap corruption. Paul therefore encourages believers not to give up, but to persevere and do good to all people and especially their fellow-believers. This way the reality of their faith will be demonstrated.



A suggestion of what to preach about from these verses

Sowing and reaping

To get a good harvest of rice, we must sow good seed and sow it plentifully. This is a natural law which no one doubts. No one sows poor seed and then expects a good harvest.

Yet in the realm of moral and spiritual things many people behave as though they believe they can sow what they like and still reap a good and blessed harvest! No one can outwit God's law of life like that. The sowing-reaping law is seen:

i. **In the area of Christian ministry** (Gal. 6: 6-7)

Where the good seed of God's Word is being sown, those being instructed should respond by giving financial support to the teacher. To support good teaching is to make possible the good harvest of mature, well-established believers.

Note:

- The teacher is to be earnest about teaching the Word well. The good seed must be sown liberally. A lazy, careless teacher must not expect to be supported: Compare with 1 Timothy 5:17.
- Those being taught must not demand that the teacher only say what they want to hear, because they pay him. The right relationship between teacher and taught is described by Paul as "a sharing together".

ii. **In the area of Christian holiness** (Gal. 6:8)

Our thoughts, words and actions are seeds. It is our duty to "sow to the Spirit". There is no other way to expect the spiritual harvest of everlasting life.

- (a) Every time we allow our minds to be occupied with impurity, jealousy, evil intention and hate, we sow to the flesh. Holiness is a harvest that only comes from spiritual sowing.
- (b) By the books we read, the friends we have, the means of grace we use, we can sow good spiritual seed and expect to reap holiness.

iii. **In the area of Christian well-doing** (Gal. 6:9-10)

Doing good to all is sowing seed. Here too there can be a good harvest if good deeds are sown. Good deeds do not earn salvation, for that is God's free gift. Yet good deeds do produce a good harvest: e.g.

- People may be comforted and helped;

- Moral deterioration in society may be halted;
- Respect for what is good, true and beautiful may be fostered;
- A life of faithful goodness earns a reward in heaven (Matt. 25:14-23).

In none of these spheres can God be mocked. To reap a **good harvest** we must persevere in sowing **good seed**.

Sow a thought, reap an act; sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny.



Focus Point:

A man reaps what he sows and the teaching of Karma ²

The link that the Bible makes between our life on earth and the consequence it will have for our eternal destiny can be easily misunderstood where other religions also stress this relationship. This is very relevant in regions where Hinduism prevails. Paul is not teaching in Galatians 6:7-8 the Hindu doctrine of Karma. Paul is teaching that we are each responsible for the effects that our actions produce. This is very different from the Hindu teaching.

Bible Teaching	Hindu teaching
Paul is writing about how we use this life.	Karma suggests that what a person is in this life is the inevitable result of what he did in former lives.
Paul is teaching that the believer is free to behave in godly ways that lead to eternal life.	Karma suggests that a person is a prisoner of his fate. His fate was determined in a previous life, and from which for the ordinary person there is no escape .
Paul's teaching is that everyone will be judged according to their works; no one will evade God's righteous judgement. God is not mocked.	Karma teaches that each individual can himself struggle to find a way of release from eighty-four lakhs (one hundred thousand) of reincarnations.

For these reasons we must say that Paul is not teaching the Hindu doctrine of Karma.

Moreover there are other reasons why the Hindu doctrine must be regarded as wrong.

1. Karma ignores the fact of the solidarity of mankind. What any person receives in life is **not** the fruit of **his** actions alone, for he is continually being affected by the actions of others. The lives of people are not like the hairs of the head, where each fibre hangs separately. Human life is like a closely woven cloth in which the stresses and strains suffered by the whole affect each individual thread. It is wrong to say that the only destiny a person can affect is his own. All suffering is not the result of one's own actions.
2. Karma ignores the fact that there is suffering which some people may choose to endure for the benefit of others. Mahatma Gandhi voluntarily endured the suffering of fasts, nearly to death, to alter the destiny of others and to bring benefit to society. All suffering in this life is not therefore the result of behaviour in a previous life. And the results of suffering are not limited to the benefit of the life of the sufferer alone.
3. Karma ignores the fullness of the nature of God. Karmic law that where there is sin there must be penalty too, is only half of the truth. God is not only righteous: he is also love. Thus, it is also true that where there is sin, the gracious love of God will cause him to enter into this sinful world and, being incarnate as Jesus Christ, to die for sinners. God cannot express himself fully in the punishment of sin alone; he can express himself **fully** only if, with the inevitability of punishment, there is also a divine activity to destroy sinfulness. The coming of Jesus Christ as Saviour was not an optional thing; it was the revelation of a divine compulsion and of an eternal plan.
4. Karma ignores the true nature of sin. By suggesting that a person can himself **escape** the consequences of sin by many reincarnations the seriousness of sin is belittled. Because sin could **only** be atoned for by the infinite value of the death of Christ (2 Co. 5:19), it is obvious that no mere human endeavours can provide such an atonement.

² Karma was originally a name for a religious rite in Hinduism. Today it has come to mean the belief that one's actions in this life affect one's future destiny for better or worse. The doer of good becomes good and the doer of evil becomes evil. Karma derives itself from the attitude of a person. For example, actions performed from duty in a disinterested way stem from an attitude of no desire and therefore will have no "karmic" effects. It will not build up any positive credit for the life to come.



Over to you

What is the attitude of believers in your situation or culture towards their responsibility of sharing what they have to support the pastor (teaching elder) in his ministry of teaching? If it is negative where does the problem exist?

How would you deal with a person in your church whose way of life appears to please his/her sinful nature? (Note that this is not the same situation as is found in 6:1.)

Hopefully, there will be a lot of good deeds being done by the people in your congregation. Why are they doing these good works? What answers would you get if you asked them? This may inform you what you have to do as a church leader and Bible teacher.