

15. Do good

April 25, 2013

Is it just me or do you feel the same way that it is more scarce to hear about nice heart-warming stories and news nowadays? A few days ago, 7 of our soldiers got killed in Afghanistan; 3 women were kidnapped and held against their will for over 10 years; 4 Americans were killed because it was against Obama administration's political agenda to rescue them and let the world know that Al-Qaeda is still alive and kicking in Benghazi after Obama tooted his horn that Al-Qaeda is history. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had the audacity to pound the desk and yell, "What does it matter now?" to cover up the truth. All these start from one's selfishness and greed for power.

Almost at the end of his letter to the churches in Galatia, apostle Paul was reminding the believers of Christ to "do good" to one another. Obviously this theme is carried from our previous study – helping "one another."

If we are not careful in studying the Book of Galatians, we could get the impression that Paul is telling us that God's Law is bad. But the same apostle assures us that even though the Law itself cannot save a soul, it is good and was given for a good purpose that is pointing us to Jesus.

Now Paul is reminding us of another law – the law of the harvest – sowing and reaping. Depending on where and what we sow, we will reap accordingly. Let's learn the truth that the Lord has prepared for us.

A. SOWING AND REAPING IN PASTORAL MINISTRY

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

To be honest with you, I am not comfortable to teach this portion of the Scripture. Because it sounds like I am begging to you to pay me more. Really I am not. When the Board of Directors of our church get together for our annual board meeting in the second Sunday of January, we go over the budget for the new year.

When it is the time for the board members to talk about my salary and housing allowance, I step out of the room so that they can talk. In our 13 years of the church history, I've never asked for my salary increase, but I've told the board not to increase my salary 3 years due to the economic hard times. The Lord blesses Karen and me with my side income from my artwork so that we can make a living.

It might surprise you that Paul begins with money. What does paying one's pastor have to do with living the spiritual life? Plenty. Because, according to Paul, those teaching the Word of God should be supported by those they teach.

We must remember that what we do with material things is an evidence of how we value spiritual things.

Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

This would have been an especially important admonition to the Galatians. In an environment where the Judaizers were trying to snuff out the light of the Gospel, any teachers standing for the truth should be supported financially.

Studying and teaching the Word of God takes a lot of time and discipline. Trust me on this. There are some people who think that pastors should live in poverty level to be holy. A pastor should rightly expect to earn a living from the ministry of the Gospel.

I used to be a board member for a couple of Calvary Chapels before. I told other board members who were local people of their respective churches that their pastors should have adequate incomes from their churches if the churches can afford. I used to ask them if they could make a living with their pastors' salaries, if not, pay them more.

Are there occasional exceptions? Sure. Even Paul was a tentmaker for a time. But the apostle didn't see his situation as the norm; he encouraged his readers to support those who taught the Scriptures.

However, does this mean that pastors have a license to fleece their flocks? Absolutely not. We've all seen preachers and pastors who spend their time doing everything but preparing to preach and teach. As a result, the Word is watered down, weakened. Other preachers have no interest at all in rightly dividing the Word of Truth. They want one thing – wealth. And they'll do whatever it takes to get it, even preach falsehood. A person with enough charisma can fool his congregation into thinking he's doing God's will.

I adopt what pastor Chuck Smith says about the pastor's income – it should not be far more than the average income of his congregation.

Pastors aren't puppets to be controlled by congregations, and congregations aren't purses to be plucked by pastors. The pastor and congregation are partners in the same ministry. In fact, the word 'share' in v6 contains the same root as "koinonia" which means "fellowship." The pastor shares spiritual wealth with his congregation, and they share their material goods with him. Pastor and congregation are to look after one another.

B. THE LAW OF THE HARVEST

Galatians 6:7-8 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 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.

Last Sunday Tina Thorpe told me about her grandson who thought that when he closed his eyes, his grandma couldn't see him. That is how we think when it comes to doing wrong things and sinful things. Somehow we think that God cannot see us if we hide our sins. Wow, really?

Though we may fool ourselves into the idea that we can ignore the law of the harvest, God cannot be fooled. He simply has set His natural laws in cruise control motion. We reap what we sow. That's a principle ordained by heaven.

Money sown to the flesh will bring a harvest of corruption. We learned that in Galatians 5:19-21 which lists the works of the flesh. That money is gone and can never be reclaimed. Money sown to the Spirit – such as sharing with those who teach the Word – will produce life, and in that harvest will be seeds that can be planted again for another harvest, and on and on into eternity. If every believer only

looked on his material wealth as seed, and planted it properly, there would be no lack in the work of the Lord. Sad to say, only 10% of believers exercise this principle and the rest of them think that they don't have to. They are the ones who are missing out the blessings from the Lord.

Another very important thing of the law of the harvest is that we shall reap in proportion as we have sown.

2 Corinthians 9:6 But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

The believer who walks in the Spirit and sows in the Spirit is going to reap a spiritual harvest. If his sowing has been generous, the harvest will be bountiful, if not in this life, certainly in the life to come.

When believers ask me whether they should tithe of their net income or gross, I usually ask them two questions:

- 1) Which one should take the first portion of your income, God or IRS?
- 2) Which one would you like to be blessed according to your gross income tithe or net?

Holy and sanctified living isn't as mystical as some of us would like to make it. Holiness is a deliberate discipline. To grow well, we have to sow well. Christians have two fields before them into which they can sow: the field of the flesh and the field of the Spirit. If we're to live a holy life, we must sow in the field of the Spirit. How can we expect to reap a godly life if we neglect the field of the Spirit and instead sow our seed into the field of the flesh?! It's the law of the harvest.

By the way, What does it mean to sow to the flesh? It means to pursue thoughts and activities that feed our sinful nature – the work of the flesh. It's living for short-term satisfaction.

Hebrews 11:25 choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin

But sowing to the Spirit, then, means pursuing thoughts and actions that produce the fruit of the Spirit.

Sowing to the Spirit involves a negative as well as a positive action. In sowing to the Spirit, we must also avoid sowing to the flesh. We must continue to crucify the flesh with its passions and desires and instead set our minds on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. Just as harvesting a healthy crop requires that we not only plant seeds but pull weeds, chase off scavenging birds, and destroy ravenous insects, so harvesting a healthy life requires that we identify and root out sinful behaviors of ours.

C. DON'T GIVE UP

Galatians 6:9-10 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

We all can lose heart while doing the Lord's work, can't we? Even the most patient and enduring believer can be exhausted in doing good and right things for the Lord. The Lord knows all these, so He encourages us through apostle Paul.

Even the Galatians, who heard the Gospel truth from the apostle Paul himself, may have become discouraged by the Judaizers' opposition and Christ's Kingdom's slow growth. We all can get discouraged when no one notices our contributions; when people stand up and cheer for short-term, worldly accomplishments and ignore the steady, sometimes quiet impact we're making for eternity. Proclaiming the Gospel, helping needy people, volunteering our time and energy to the church – these can wear us out, especially when appreciation is seldom voiced.

One of the seven weapons of Satan that I taught you guys on Sunday a few weeks ago was 'discouragement'. It seems that it is obvious and easier to face persecutions against our faith than subtle discouragement that sips into our hearts. Before we know, we are in the middle of pity party and drowning in our own self-pity. How do I know? Because I often go through it when I hear comparing remarks with other big churches from some people who had no intention to discourage me.

We all don't get to see every result of our "doing good" this side of heaven. There is a bamboo called the 'Chinese bamboo'. This remarkable bamboo is different from most bamboo, because it doesn't grow in the usual fashion. While most bamboos grow steadily over a period of years, the Chinese bamboo doesn't even break through the ground for the first four years. Then, in the fifth year, an amazing thing happens – the bamboo begins to grow at an astonishing rate. In fact, in a period of just five weeks, a Chinese bamboo can grow to a height of 90 feet. It's almost as if you can actually see the tree growing before your very eyes – a little over an inch an hour. How would you like to be the farmer who plants seeds of this Chinese bamboo? You cultivate it, water it, and do everything for four years with no result, not even a tiny bamboo shoot.

We are to "do good unto all men." This is how we let our light shine and glorify our Father in heaven. It is not only by words that we witness to the lost, but also by our works. In fact, our works pave the way for our verbal witness; they win us the right to be heard.

Sharing blessings involves much more than teaching the Word and giving of our material substance. It also involves doing good "unto all men". There are those in this world who do evil; in fact, there are those who return evil for good. Most of the people in the world return good for good and evil for evil. But the Christian is supposed to return good for evil and to do this in a spirit of Christian love.

D. APPLICATIONS

- 1) We must remember that what we do with material things is an evidence of how we value spiritual things.**
- 2) Holy and sanctified living isn't as mystical as some of us would like to make it. Holiness is a deliberate discipline.**
- 3) Whenever you feel like quitting while doing good for the Lord, remember that the Lord Jesus didn't quit on you.**