

Galatians 5:25-6:10

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[0 : 00] Well, if you've just joined us today, it's really great that you're here. We've been spending quite a while looking in the letter to the Galatians.

And this is our last session in the Galatians, at least for a while. This is our 11th week. It's gone on slightly longer than I'd planned, but it's been really good, hasn't it?

It's really been encouraging to hear how Paul has explained to us what is it that makes a human being right with the God who made us.

What is it that can make the impossible possible, a relationship with an infinitely good, infinitely powerful, infinitely holy God.

And he's told us, hasn't he, time and time again, it is not down to my works. It's not project me, what I can do to impress God.

[0 : 59] But it's faith in Jesus Christ and what he has done, who he has, that God the Father has sent to bring me to himself. And I hope we've kind of understood that, and that's in the DNA of our thinking by now.

But you know, it is possible today that all the work we've done and all the time that we've spent in Galatians over these weeks could go to complete waste.

Paul closes the letter with a warning in verse 7, if you look there. Don't be deceived, God is not mocked. What you sow, you will reap.

As if to say, as he closes up, listen, you've heard the message of grace from the Lord Jesus, but beware. Because what you do with that message has consequences.

And he says, doesn't he, it's as if you're a father, and you're depending, and depending on what you do with this message, the crops of your life will bear fruit in one way or another.

[2 : 08] He talks about sowing and reaping. And in this illustration, I just want us to see three things this afternoon. First of all, he says, don't be deceived because you are all sowing seed.

Don't be deceived because you are all sowing seed. He wants to say here, it is impossible to go through life and not be in the business of planting things that you are going to reap later in the future.

Notice, he doesn't say, does he, if you sow, you will reap. No, he says, what you sow, you will reap. In other words, each of us, without even thinking about it, really, are all the time, in everything that we do, planting little seeds.

Placing investments in something or another and hoping for a return, hoping for a crop, hoping for fruit for our lives. The whole of this earthly life that we are living is about sowing.

This mortal coil is the time to plough the fields and scatter for all eternity in our lives. Everyone, every single person with everything they do, is part of the form of this action of planting seeds.

[3 : 35] Seeds that one day will grow up into something in your life. And so he's saying it matters how you respond to the gospel of grace that we've heard about. Now, maybe that sounds like a bit of a contradiction.

Because Paul has shown us that the definition of grace is that God blesses me contrary to what I do and what I deserve.

He treats me better than I deserve by sending the Lord Jesus. And if knowing God and being right with him were dependent on what we do, then we would all be lost.

None of us would know God. No, he blesses me in Jesus Christ, despite my bad decision, despite my poor seed sowing. It's faith alone, right?

It's not what I do, but what Jesus has done. But Paul is saying here we mustn't confuse faith alone with a faith that is alone.

[4 : 39] In other words, faith in Jesus and his gospel shows itself in the way we hear and respond to that gospel.

A faith that trusts wholly in Jesus' works can never be apart from some practical change in your life. It can't be a faith that is alone, you see, without a change in attitude and affections and lifestyle. So he wants you to hear this message and respond in the right way. He wants you to do the right thing with it. And so actually it is not a question of whether you'll do anything with the gospel or whether you'll respond at all or whether you're sowing at all.

It is a question of how you're doing that and what you're doing with your seed, whether you're going to invest, where you're going to invest, and which field you're hoping to get fruit from.

And our response to the message that Jesus Christ brings will sow a seed in time that will bring a result. And we'll reap what we sow in response to God's grace.

[5 : 52] Many of you are very kind and often come up to me at the end and say thank you. And some of you might say thank you. It was a really interesting talk. And you never quite know how to take the word interesting, do you?

When people say that, that can mean anything. And if you've said that to me, I don't mean any disrespect here. I know what you're saying. But actually I want to say that neither I nor the Apostle Paul and definitely the Lord Jesus Christ are not speaking to you merely to interest you.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is clearly interesting. The Lord Jesus Christ himself is fascinating. He is a compelling figure. But what Jesus Christ wants from you is the right response.

And if you don't do that, your interest in him is somewhat immaterial. So don't be deceived. Every week you leave this room, you leave it having heard the message of salvation through the work of Jesus Christ.

You're given a bag of seed. And you've got to ask, where am I going to scatter that seed? What am I going to invest in? How am I responding to the message of the gospel really in my life?

[7 : 15] So don't be deceived because we're all sowing seed. Secondly, don't be deceived as you choose the soil. As you choose the soil. We live in West Sealing.

We've got a little, our family, we've got a little patch of garden. And it's not even real grass, it's fake grass. But we're really grateful for it in London. I'm way off being green fingered.

But we've just kind of started to buy a few pots. And try to grow a few flowers and stuff like that. But I'm a total novice. So I went to Homebase a month or two ago and bought a bag.

And it said on the front, multi-purpose compost. And I thought, that'll do. Whatever I do, that'll do.

It's general use compost. And my philosophy is just buy whatever seeds look nice and just throw it in general purpose compost and hope for the best.

But I'm sowing in total ignorance, really. I'm just hoping everything will work out and something will grow from it. And you know, so many people go through life like that.

[8 : 22] As sowers, as people who invest in things and look to different things for hope and for fruit. We don't want to get too specialised. We don't want to get into the different soils and all of that.

We don't want to get into Christian things too deeply. We might have a passing admiration for Jesus Christ. But I don't want to get into all the technicalities. I'm happy to use general compost to throw my seed out without really thinking about what I'm going to harvest.

And what it's going to look like. Just hope everything works out in the end. Just accept all expressions of God. Just be spiritual in a vague sense. And hopefully all my bases are covered.

It'll work out. But Paul goes on to explain here that as we sow seed in our life, it just doesn't work like that.

There's no general purpose compost. Really, there are only two very specialist soils that we can sow in.

[9 : 31] And we've got to choose one or the other. If you look at verse 8, there they are. There's the one who sows to what he calls the flesh. And the one who sows to the spirit.

It's very black and white, isn't it? Saying, don't be deceived. There's no multi-use. Everything will work out in the end. Compost for ignorant sowing for life.

There are only two soils. And we've got to choose them wisely. And as we look at these soils, we see that they are very different. Because one is a native, indigenous soil.

And the other is a non-native, imported, foreign soil. And as we've gone through the letter, we've seen the first soil already, haven't we?

The native soil. The soil that he calls the flesh. It's the native soil to every human being. It's the field that we naturally sow in.

[10:39] The field that we naturally look to and invest in. And hope in. It's the field, isn't it, of self. And of avoiding trusting in the Lord Jesus.

It's the soil of human effort. And human confidence. And human achievement. Human deduction. Human glory. Human boasting. And that soil is one of a kind.

One kind only. It's the native, natural soil of our lives. Before we trust in Jesus. It's the natural choice for everybody. And then there's the second soil.

It's the foreign soil. The non-native soil. That he calls the spirit. The spirit of God. Who indwells in his people.

The spirit who opposes the flesh. We saw a couple of weeks ago. He is the alkaline. To the acidity of the flesh. And he is a different type of soil altogether.

[11:50] And your response to the gospel. Is to queue up. For either of those two soils. Just two of them. There's no field in the middle. There's no neutral pH field.

That you can go to. And just hope for the best. As you live your life. And as you invest in things. And hope in things. It's one or the other. And you will reap.

Whatever you sow. Wherever you sow it. So don't be deceived. Because you are sowing. And you've got to choose your soil. And connected with that. Is the third and last point.

This afternoon. And don't be deceived. As you wait for the harvest. Don't be deceived. As you wait for the harvest. Because as you choose your soil.

The harvest you reap. Will be different. Depending on the soil. That you live for. And you choose. Being a novice in gardening.

[12:46] I'm realising now. That certain plants. Will only grow in certain kinds of soil. Some plants will only grow in sandy soil. Some plants will only grow in peaty soil.

Limey soil. And so on. So the choice of soil matters. Because what you produce. Depends on the soil. That's why you never see.

Wild coconut trees in Ealing. Isn't it? It's the wrong soil. It's the wrong climate. So. Let me help you choose the right soil. To invest your life in.

Look at what they produce here. And see which fruit you would prefer. For your life. Let me try and sell them both to you. Let's look at this soil called the flesh.

Kind of living for yourself. Trying to be right with God by yourself. You could invest your whole life in that. In your own efforts.

[13:44] And you know what? There are some short term benefits. There is some short term fruit. First thing you'll get from it is you'll be able to avoid persecution.

As a Christian. As a Christian. Just have a look at verse 12 there. It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh. Who would force you to be circumcised.

And only in order that they may not be persecuted. For the cross of Christ. Paul is talking about his opponents here. The Judaizers.

As we've seen them in the letter. And Paul's opponents. They understand that the short term benefits. Of sowing to the flesh.

Of religious outward efforts. They've seen that. We've seen it already. If you don't like it when people dislike you.

[14:42] And the Lord Jesus Christ. Then all you have to do is modify. Jesus Christ. And the Judaizers did that. By adding things to the work of Jesus. They added circumcision.

And why did they do that? Was it just a misunderstanding. About how to use the Old Testament law?

Was it a misunderstanding. About which age they were. In God's timeline? Well maybe it was. But Paul is pretty clear here. Actually it really wasn't those things.

They did that. Because they desired to get the short term fruit. Of avoiding. Persecution. If you don't have to say to somebody.

Look without the Lord Jesus. You have no hope. You are lost. You are dead in your sins. Jesus Christ is the only way.

[15:41] The truth and the life. If you don't have to say that. Then you're alright aren't you? The offence is removed. If you can say to someone.

Look Jesus Christ did this stuff. But if you can do something as well. You can add on your own stuff. Circumcision. Then the offence of the cross is removed.

You see that is one attractive thing about sowing to the flesh. And you can do that in a really religious way. It's what the Judaizers were doing. They invested in fleshy religious human effort. Because in the short term. It made them popular. They could remove the offence of the cross. And they could avoid persecution. That's the first benefit. Another short term benefit of sowing in the flesh.

Is that you'll have a good chance of the praise of other people. So not just avoiding persecution. You'll be praised. There's a really good chance that you'll be thought of highly.

[16 : 41] That you can be seen as a holy person. As a good person. As a righteous person. It's like Paul says about them. They seek to make a good show.

In the flesh. If you can. Concentrate on. On outward works. And forms. And if you can look really good.

There are benefits aren't there to that. Real benefits. Rewards to reap in sowing to flesh. Jesus says about the Pharisees of his day.

That they pray on the street corners. Making a show of their religion. And he says doesn't he. That they've received. Their reward. The praise of others.

So you can avoid persecution. And you can be praised. In the short term. But of course the problem with that. Isn't it. Is that we're not just thinking about the short term.

[17 : 41] That's the temptation. As we choose our soil. That's why he says in verse 9. Let's not grow weary in doing good. In due season.

We will reap. The implication here isn't it. That the season. For reaping the fruit. That comes from these two soils.

Is actually. Far away. We look at the short term benefits. We choose our soil. Based on what we think we can get from it now. But the real harvest.

And the real fruit of these soils. Is going to come later. And sowing to the flesh. Doing things in my. My own strength.

Living for myself. Produces that. That fruit. Have you heard of it? It's like the. Burien fruit. If I've said that right. It's a fruit. It produces beautiful flowers.

[18 : 36] With a fragrance. But then. The fruit appears. And it ripens. And it comes. And this fruit. It absolutely stinks. I don't know if you've heard of it. It reeks.

And living for the self. Is like that. It might look great. To start off with. But in the end. Look at what he says. In verse 8. The one who sows to the flesh.

Will reap corruption. It will stink. In the end. Corruption. What does that mean? It doesn't mean. That you will cease to exist. You won't. Your soul. Will not be annihilated.

Sort of just disappear. Out of existence. But corruption here. Means the addition. To your eternal soul. Of grief.

[19 : 35] And woe. Forever. Forever. And despite the. Outward benefits. Now. Actually. The saplings. Of that fruit.

Will already start. To appear. In the soil. Of the flesh. In a life. Lived. Without hope in Jesus. Hoping in yourself. Paul's dealt with those things. Envy.

And pride. And conceit. And so. Even with. The praise of others. The flesh. Is really. A miserable. Field. To sow in. You'll be tired.

Of keeping up appearances. You'll see. That. The saplings. Of woe. In. Trying to deal. With your own. Guilt. And shame.

And the ungratified. Efforts. The ceaselessness. The ceaselessness. Of striving. That the fruit. Of corruption. In. I read.

[20 : 33] The story. Of a farmer. Who had a crop. Of melons. In the United States. But he'd been having. A problem. With thieves. So cleverly. He decided. To put a sign up.

Saying. Thieves. Beware. One of these melons. Is poisoned. Pretty clever. Isn't it? So he thought. You know. The thieves will come. They won't know. Which one of the. Melons is poisoned.

So they won't steal any. But he came back. The next day. To find the thieves. Had put a response note. Underneath his note. Saying. Dear farmer. Please beware. Now two of the melons.

Have been poisoned. Touche. See. If you. Hear the gospel. And. You don't do anything.

With it. And you carry on. Living for yourself. Trusting in your own efforts. Sowing to the flesh. Whatever you do. And however you do that.

[21 : 26] However clever you think. You're doing that. If you think you can. Outsmart yourself. And just be a better person. You will always end up. With a field. Of.

Poisonous fruit. A field that you cannot. Feed from. And bear fruit from. You can't. Deceive the great deceiver.

Can you? The flesh. If you keep. Living for yourself. And for this world. If you keep. Trusting in your own works. You'll always reap corruption. Now.

And forever. Whatever your technique. It's a miserable field. To sow in. So what. What you need. Is not to sort of. Be better at sowing.

To the flesh. It is a different field. Altogether. Isn't it? You need to move out. Of the flesh. And to. To sowing. To the spirit. Paul says.

[22 : 22] Elsewhere. To set the mind. On the flesh. Is death. But to set the mind. On the spirit. Is life. And peace. And he says.

Doesn't he. To sow to the spirit. Is to reap. Eternal life. Despite. The outward. Bodily decay. There is. For the Christian. Who. Walks in step. With the spirit. And obeys him. An internal. Principle of life.

Planted in that person. By the Holy Spirit. That bears. Fruit. For the glorified. Enjoyment. Of fellowship. With God.

In his new creation. Forever. To set. The mind. On the flesh. Is death. But to set. The mind. On the spirit. Is life. And peace. To set.

[23 : 17] The mind. On. The finished. Works. Of Jesus Christ. And every day. Refuse. To sow. To the self. And to walk. In step.

With the spirit. To be led. By the spirit. To the work. Of Christ. So. As we close. Don't. Don't be deceived. Because.

Faith. In Jesus Christ. Is never. Faith. That is alone. Faith. In Christ. Alone. And. You've. Got. The seeds. Now.

So. Which. Soil. Are you. Going to invest. In. In. Everything. You do. Because. Whatever. One. Sows. That.

Will he. Also. Reap. One. Who sows. To his own. Flesh. Will. From the flesh. Reap. Corruption. But the one. Who sows. To the spirit. Will. From the spirit. Reap. Eternal life.

[24 : 13] Shall we pray. To the spirit. To the spirit. To the spirit. To the spirit. To the spirit. To the spirit. To the spirit. To the spirit.!