

The Law of the Harvest

Galatians 6:7-10 - NCBC, September 10, 2017

Main Point: **Your greatest eternal joy comes from your submission to God's Spirit now.**

- **Do not be deceived by sin's mocking.** (7-8)
 - Sin has real consequences for you.
 - Sin mocks the Lordship of Jesus.
 - Sowing to the flesh always leads to death.

- **Do not be disheartened, but keep imitating God.** (9-10)
 - Fullness of joy will come in due season
 - Doing good now counts for eternity
 - Loving all people
 - Loving all Christians
 - Sowing to the Spirit always leads to life

Application: **Make the most of your lifetime by sowing to God's Spirit.**

Opening Announcements:

Fall Ministries Startup

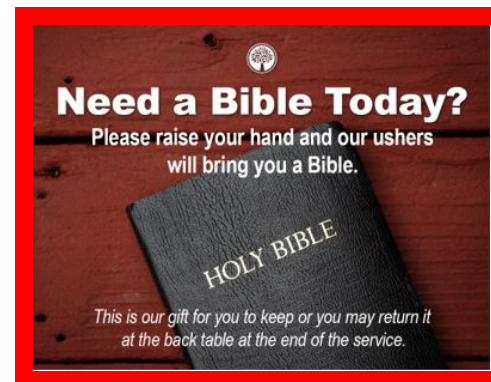
Harvey Hurricane Relief (& Irma Future Relief)

<<Before the Throne of God Above>>



We've gathered this morning to ascribe glory to God – for He alone has the power to save all who call upon Him. Jesus is the Lord of the storms and Lord of the waves. Praise God today for His abundant grace which is ready to meet you today in your worship of Him.

Let's continue our worship now by opening the Holy Scriptures to **Galatians chapter 5**, where we continue our study of how God's amazing grace frees us from the self-reliant spirit of legalism.



If you don't have a Bible with you this morning, please raise your hand as our men are coming to give you a Bible. You are welcome to take this Bible home as our gift to you, or just simply return it after our service by placing it on the table in the back of the room.

New fall routines give us a healthy reason to reconsider our life priorities and what we are really living for. So I'd like to add one additional exhortation for our hearts:

This fall would you consider strengthening your commitment to prayer? Will you join me in acknowledging our profound dependence upon God's Spirit's work among us?

New Castle Bible Church is profoundly desperate for God to move right now:

- Only God's Spirit can comfort and sanctify our hearts through this season of suffering and trial.
- Only God's Spirit grants the grace of repentance and faith when we begin to doubt or believe lies.
- Only God's Spirit can help bring the right person to join our staff as an office manager right now.
- Only God's Spirit can move our hearts to generously give the needed funding to strategically multiply our disciple-making efforts this year.
- Only God's Spirit can produce a witness of love, joy, and thanksgiving through us in these dark times.

We claim no ability or wisdom in ourselves for all that He has entrusted us with. *We desperately need* God to work. And we believe God will work as we cry out to Him

in faith – aligning our hearts with His will through our worship of prayer.

So I'm inviting you – how will you personally prioritize prayer this fall? I'm not asking you to attend a prayer meeting – although that would likely be a great help to you.

I'm simply asking if you would recommit yourself to the difficult and yet all-so-rewarding practice of prayer. Maybe you could give 15 minutes to prayer every day at lunch? Maybe for you it's during the mornings? Or turning off the news and being more intentional with your drive times?

As a people, we desperately need God. And to the extent that we realize our need – we will pray. Prayerlessness is a great epidemic of legalism.

So please consider how you might demonstrate your faith and humility this fall - as we desire more and more to become a people who work primarily through prayer.



Now, let's turn our attention to **Galatians chapter 6**.

Today we will be focusing on **verses 7-10**, but since **verse 10** really summarizes everything Paul has said since **chapter 5**, let's quickly review the context.

Galatians 5:13 reminds us that our freedom in God's grace was not given just so we might continue in sin. Grace freed us from the tyranny of self so that we might know the righteousness that comes from slavery to His Spirit.¹ No one is ever so free as when they are enslaved to God's Spirit. For when we walk by the Spirit – we fulfill God's law and truly love others with a supernatural love.

So please stand with me in honor of God's Word as I begin reading **Galatians chapter 6**, from the **English Standard Translation**:

***6:1** Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. ²Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. ³For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. ⁵For each will have to bear his own load. ⁶Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. ⁷Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸For the 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. ⁹And let us not grow weary of doing good, for*

¹ Romans 6:17-23

in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. ¹⁰ So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

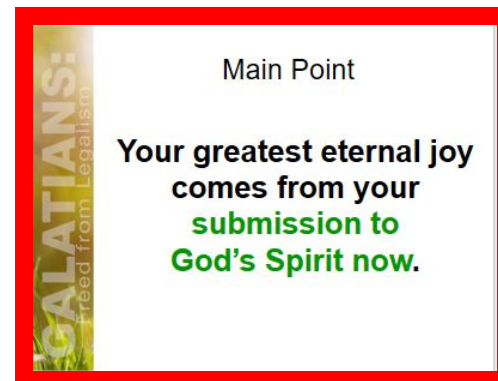
This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Let's Pray.

Our study of **Galatians 6** so far has taught us that biblical community requires every member to practice Spirit-controlled love. Self-serving hearts who live according to the desires of the flesh will only use and cannibalize others. Only hearts that are dominated by God's Spirit will be humble enough... and bold enough ... to really serve others sacrificially for their eternal good.

But as Paul is writing to the Galatian churches, he knows that this kind of loving community among believers requires a lot of effort. And a lot of sacrifice. So in **verses 7-10** today, Paul warns us not to be deceived, and not to lose heart.

You might summarize **verses 7-10** with this sentence,



Your greatest eternal joy comes from your submission to God's Spirit now.

Your greatest joy will be harvested in the future as you continue to sow to the Spirit today. The energy you expend this week to walk in the Spirit and supernaturally love your family and your neighbors has a future joy!

Your entire life here on earth is planting season. You can't see the true harvest until God calls you home. But you can be sure of one thing – your harvest then will reflect whatever you plant now. **Verse 7** is clear: *Whatever one sows, that will he also reap.*

This week many farmers will fire up their combines and begin this year's corn harvest. And once again this universal principle will be put on display.

If they harvest ears of corn like this one – it will be a result of planting corn. No farmer can plant beans and harvest corn. You can't plant wheat and harvest corn.

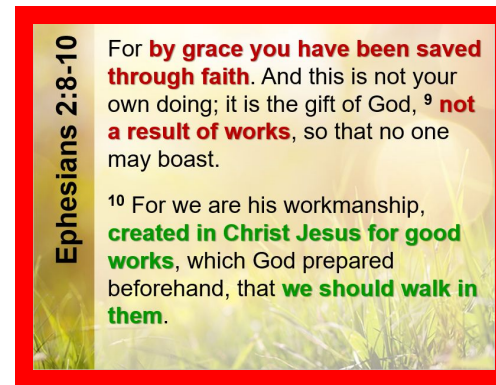
This is God's law of the harvest. Whatever you plant, you harvest. Whatever you feed, you'll grow. Holiness now harvests happiness then.

Listen carefully. Today's actions have *eternal* consequences. Therefore, I must ask you: What kind of harvest are you sowing with your life here and now?

God's grace is not a license for you to continue living in sin here and now.² God's salvation is not fire-insurance. God's salvation is freedom from sin!

² Romans 6:1ff

Ephesians 2:8-10,



By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Obviously we're not saved by our works. However, we're saved by grace *to* work and bear much fruit for God's glory and our eternal joy.

So this law of reaping whatever you sow is not contrary to salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone. It actually illustrates God's salvation by grace.

Picture it this way: If righteousness was represented by a corn crop, as a sinner the only seeds you can plant is

giant ragweed.³ At harvest time, all ragweed is burned, and all corn is brought home to God.

Well sinners can't sow the kind of righteousness that produces salvation.⁴ In our sinful state – all we can plant is ragweed seeds. Only Jesus Christ sowed perfect righteousness that reaped eternal life.

Thus salvation is through faith – as believing in the finished work of Jesus Christ unites us in a very real **Galatians 2:20** kind of way with both the sowing and the harvesting of Christ. We get Jesus' corn, because Jesus planted corn...because our faith has united us entirely with Him!

And what happened to all the ragweed you planted? When faith united you to Christ – Jesus took all that sin – and bore every last ounce of the ragweed judgment your sin deserved. Then He rose from the dead as victor over sin – all for the glory of God and to enable you to walk in newness of corn planting – bearing the good works which God created us to do in Him.

Now all born-again Christians can either plant corn or giant ragweed. **Verse 8** puts it this way,

For the one who sows to his own flesh [planting ragweed] will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit [planting corn] will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

³ Isaiah 64:6

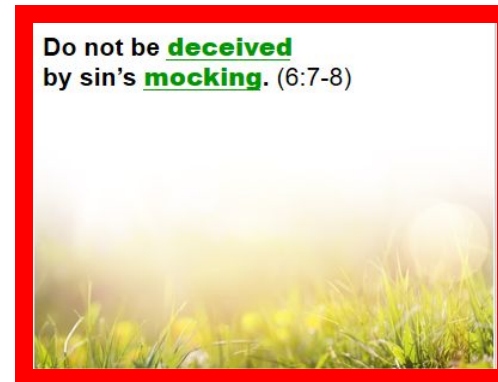
⁴ Hebrews 11:6; Romans 8:8; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:11

In other words –you must sow today in view of eternity's reaping.



Your greatest joy at harvest time will come from your submission to God's Spirit now.

So first, in **verses 7-8**, Paul warns us,



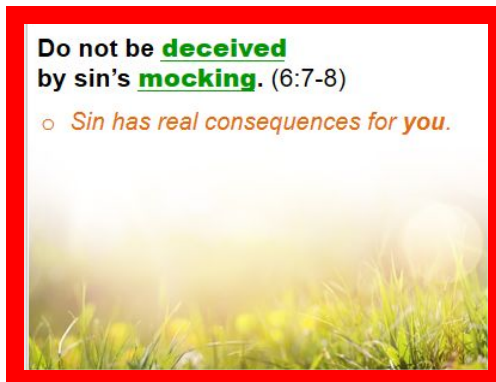
Do not be deceived by sin's mocking. (7-8)

Verse 7 is strong. *Do not be deceived.* Make no mistake about sin. Sin is very deceptive – like an attractive baited hook it promises joy but only delivers pain and death.⁵

Do you hate sin and see it as the destructive poison that it truly is in your heart? Do you rightly fear the self-deluding blindness of sin?

Do not be deceived by Satan's lie that you can do whatever you want without being held accountable for it. Sin's lie hisses that no matter what you do now, you can always become a spiritual person later.⁶ I can cut a few corners here, feed my lust a bit over here, compromise my integrity over here just for a little while... and then once I'm satisfied, I can then get serious about my relationship with Jesus.

Do not be deceived. There is no lasting joy apart from sowing to God's Spirit!



Sin has real consequences for you.

⁵ James 1:14-15

⁶ Galatians, Ryken

The young dating couple believes that their sexual sin is not hurting anyone. But do not be deceived. For someday they will harvest a marriage bed with a limited capacity for intimacy.

A Christian justifies her bitterness towards another woman at church – never realizing that her lack of forgiveness is harvesting a spiritual deadness in her soul.

A businessman sows greed and selfish ambition, a single person sows discontentment, and the widow sows self-pity... all blinded to the reality of corrupting unbelief, loneliness, and idolatry that they are feeding.

Consider John Stott's words as you ponder sin's real consequences in your life,⁷

Do not be **deceived** by sin's **mocking**. (6:7-8)

o *Sin has real consequences for you.*

Every time we allow our mind to harbor a grudge, nurse a grievance, entertain an impure fantasy, or wallow in self-pity, we are sowing to the flesh. Every time we linger in bad company whose insidious influence we know we cannot resist, every time we lie in bed when we ought to be up and praying, every time we read pornographic literature, every time we take a risk which strains our self-control, we are sowing, sowing, sowing to the flesh. Some Christians sow to the flesh every day and wonder why they do not reap holiness. Holiness is a harvest; whether we reap it or not depends almost entirely on what and where we sow.

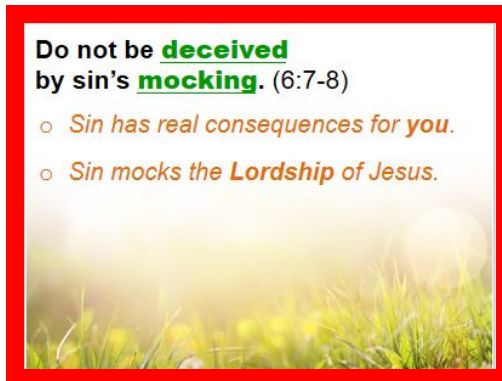
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⁷ Quoted in Galatians, Ryken

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Pray that God would help you not to be deceived by sin's mocking because all,



Sin mocks the Lordship of Jesus.

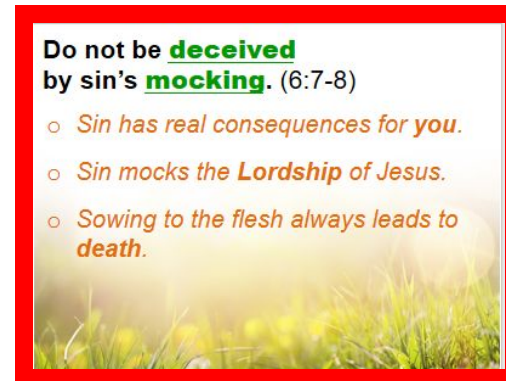
Verse 7 says, *God is not mocked.*

You'll never get away with sin. You can't fool God. You mock His all-knowing authority when you use His grace-given freedom as an opportunity for your own flesh, and then sneer at Him by turning up your nose and acting like your sin doesn't effectively hinder your relationship with Him at all.

Dear child of God – I ask you with great humility as I ask myself – how can you believe that you can spit in God's face throughout your life...and then expect a harvest of eternal joy forever? The blight of worldliness and spiritual apathy is far too common among us!

Is it possible that you are foolishly wasting your life – only building on your Gospel foundation those works of hay, straw and stubble that can never earn a joyful reward on judgment day?⁸ Yes by God's grace you will be saved, but only after suffering great loss of reward for your short-sighted sowing to your flesh here and now.

Brothers and sisters –



Sowing to the flesh always leads to death.

Verse 8 teaches us, *For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption.*

⁸ 1 Corinthians 3:10-15

To “*sow to your own flesh*” means the same thing as “*gratifying the desires of the flesh*” in **Galatians 5:16**. It is to live selfishly... notice the possessive pronoun “own.”

The flesh is the left-over sinful habits and self-serving mindset within the Christian. Sowing to your own flesh includes all the works of the flesh listed in **Galatians 5:19-21**. But in this immediate context⁹ I believe Paul is particularly focused on those argumentative and envying habits of legalistic conceit.

If the cry of your life is “please, please me” and you only provoke or envy others instead of living to bear burdens for them... do not be deceived.

You are coddling your flesh instead of crucifying it,¹⁰ and from the flesh you can only harvest corruption.

“Corruption” paints the picture of a decaying corpse lying in a coffin. Gradually moving further and further from life as the ruinous tentacles of sin become more deeply embedded in your heart.

You must not be deceived by sin’s unbelief. Put on a war-time mentality – the desires of the Spirit are against the desires of the flesh, and they are opposed to each other. There’s a battle for *future joy* raging in your soul... and by the indwelling power of God’s Spirit we can live by the Spirit, walk by the Spirit, be led by the Spirit, and sow to the Spirit. Only submission to the Spirit’s control in our life can bear the good fruit of a supernatural love for God and others that... how does the end of **verse 8** say it?

⁹ Galatians 5:15, 26

¹⁰ Galatians 5:24

...will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

Eternal life here is speaking about the quality – not duration – of our life in Christ. When you sow to the Spirit, you will bear the fruit of the Spirit. When you sow to the flesh – you don’t lose the Spirit or your salvation – but you do lose the fruit of the Spirit – that joy, peace, and love which characterizes our future glory together in Christ.

Are you hearing the Scriptures this morning with faith?

Whatever you feed you’ll grow. Whatever you plant you’ll harvest. If you sow wild oats, you’ll reap wild oats. Do not be deceived to think that sins like legalism or conceit have no consequences upon your future joy.

Now in **verse 9** Paul wants to encourage us in this battle. He knows that loving people enough to seek to restore them and help bear their burdens can often be thankless and tiresome.

So let us not grow weary of doing good...

I spent some time this week thinking about the cycle of spiritual fatigue in my own life.



Because I don't know about you, but often when I'm seeking to do more good ...the increased demands upon my energy and time start to make me weary.



In **verse 9**, "**weary**" literally means, "to give up" or "rest on my oars." So how do I often counter my weariness?



I "try harder" of course! Without being conscious of it, my weariness drives me towards more **self-reliance**. Boot-strapping, teeth-gritting, fist-clenching... just "get-r-done" efforting.

Can you relate to this?

But self-reliance usually just leads to,



Self-pity. And as I start to feel sorry for myself, that quickly leads to,



Despair. I become despondent, start to withdraw from relationships, and continue to cycle downward in an ever-tightening noose of self-focus.

Now consider how **verse 9** helps reverse this cycle,

Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap.

Cheer up weary soul. Harvest time is coming!



Keep an **eternal perspective!** See your reality through the eyes of God's promises. In the Lord your labor is not in vain – no matter if you see any fruit now or not!¹¹



And from an overjoyed vision of future glory together in the throne room a heart receives divine comfort and **courage.** A steadfastness of hope that powers the spiritual labor of love, or

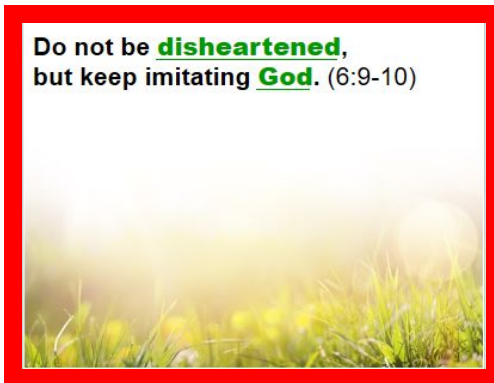


¹¹ 1 Corinthians 15:58

Sacrificial worship. Now I'm doing good in the strength that God supplies (1 Peter 4:11) – submitted to the Spirit and empowered by the Spirit to bear His supernatural fruit.

Thus the cycle of spiritual fatigue is reversed by the power of God's Spirit, as we get our focus off ourselves on onto our future joy, God's abundant strength, and His amazing and undeserved grace!

So quickly then, let's walk through **verses 9-10** which teach us,



Not to be disheartened, but to keep imitating God. (9-10)

God has entrusted all of us with neighbors to love, sinners to restore, and burdens to bear. Sometimes it can all get a bit overwhelming. But we don't give up because harvest is coming!



Fullness of joy will come in due season

Don't be discouraged just because you don't see the fruit of your labors right away. How foolish would the farmer be who plants his corn in April and then gives up farming when there's no harvest in May?

In our instant gratification culture, we must be reminded that you can't measure ministry effectiveness by immediate results.

James 5:7-8 teaches us,



⁷ *Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains.* ⁸ *You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.*

So do not grow weary in doing good, but know that



Doing good now counts for eternity

Every time you surrender to the work of God's Spirit in your life you can have the confidence that it will reap a future harvest of joy and blessedness beyond your imagination.¹²

In **Galatians 6:10**, the phrase "so then" tells us that Paul is now summarizing this entire argument that started back in **chapter 5**.

Paul's point is clear enough. *For freedom God has set us free.* Therefore believers' lives should be submitted to and shaped by the Spirit of God. The chief mark of a

spiritual person is love. To love God and others is the fruit of walking in the Spirit, or sowing to the Spirit. And according to **Galatians 6:9-10**, to love is to do good.

Verse 10 defines the scope of God's love through His people, exhorting us to

Do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.



In brief, God's Spirit in us empowers us to **Love all people** and **Love all Christians**.

And while our priority is first to love other Christians – we must not race past our biblical responsibility to imitate God in how we love our enemies, and how we love our unbelieving neighbors.

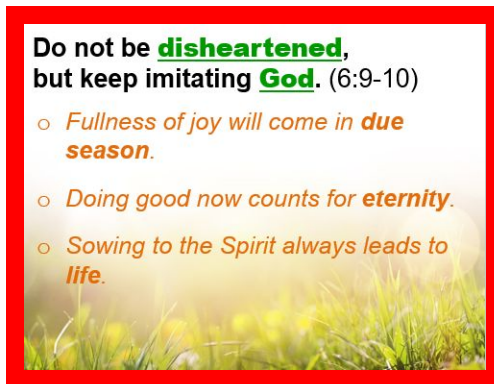
The church's witness has been foiled by a sheltering philosophy that has turned us into a self-contained fortress, rather than an outreaching hospital.

¹² Hebrews 6:10; Ephesians 3:20-21

God's plan for His church is to "go and tell" not "come and see." The world needs to see our good works outside of the church house if they are to glorify our Father in Heaven.¹³

So while we continue to excel yet more in our Spirit-given love for one another – may we also be praying and seeking every opportunity to imitate God and reflect His love towards our unbelieving neighbors as well.

Because – rejoice in this church -



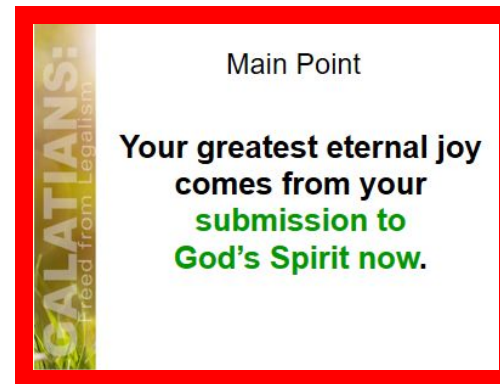
Do not be disheartened, but keep imitating God. (6:9-10)

- *Fullness of joy will come in due season.*
- *Doing good now counts for eternity.*
- *Sowing to the Spirit always leads to life.*

Sowing to the Spirit always leads to life

Every time you think a thought to the glory of God, or speak a word to the glory of God, or do good by the power of God's Spirit for the glory of God – you are sowing to the Spirit – and you are storing up for yourself a spiritual harvest of future joy!

¹³ Matthew 5:16



Main Point

Your greatest eternal joy comes from your submission to God's Spirit now.

This is great biblical motivation: Your greatest eternal joy comes from your submission to God's Spirit now.

Do not be deceived. And do not be discouraged.

But instead,



Application

Make the most of your lifetime by sowing to God's Spirit.

Make the most of your lifetime by sowing to God's Spirit.

Did you notice the little phrase we skipped in **verse 10**?

As you have opportunity...

This phrase could be better translated “while you have opportunity” because it’s not actually speaking about when you get the chance, or have the time, etc. Opportunity is the word for “time” or “season.” So this specifically teaches us to make the most of whatever time we have to plant. For your entire lifetime is a planting season.

What seeds are you planting? Are you sowing the giant ragweed of the flesh? Or are you sowing the fruitful corn plant of the Spirit?

Soon seedtime will be past, and we will enter eternity to reap the harvest we have sown. Don’t believe the false teaching that your actions today don’t have any effect upon your eternal joy in Christ. You have been saved by grace alone through faith in Christ alone to accomplish the good works that God has prepared for you beforehand to do. May your future joy motivate your patient submission to God’s Spirit today.



Let’s pray.

<Trust and Obey>

Let’s pray our Benediction now as we are dismissed,

Benediction



Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, ...according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— 27 to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ!
Romans 16:25-27

Recommended Resources on the Law of the Harvest:

- Numbers 32:23
- Job 4:8
- Psalm 90:8; 126:5-6
- Proverbs 1:31-33; 11:18; 22:8
- Hosea 8:7; 10:12
- Matthew 7:16-20; 13:39-42; 24:24
- John 8:44
- Romans 2:6-11; 6:21-23; 8:13
- Philipians 3:19
- 2 Corinthians 5:10; 9:6
- 2 Timothy 3:13
- Hebrews 12:1-3
- James 1:22-23; 5:7-8
- 1 John 1:8-10; 3:14; 4:20-21
- <http://www.desiringgod.org/labs/holiness-will-make-you-happy>
- *Your Eternal Reward*, Erwin Lutzer

Growing Deeper: Life Group Questions

1. Compare Galatians 6:7 to 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and James 1:14-16. What makes sin so deceptive?
2. Read Galatians 6:8. How are you most tempted to feed your flesh? What lies must you believe to continue in this corrupted sowing? What biblical truths could renew your mind, so you might instead sow to the Spirit?
3. Read Galatians 6:9. How does the concept of reward harmonize with the insistence that everything we receive from God is of grace?
4. Read Galatians 6:10. What does this 'especially' mean in practice, both for individual Christians and for churches?

5. Compare Galatians 6:9-10 to 5:13, 16, 22, 25. What does it mean to "do good?" How is doing good connected to sowing to the Spirit in verse 8?