

One of the problems with every worldview—or benefits, depending on your perspective—is that you have to be able to live with it. Your beliefs about life have to work in the real world. And sometimes it's hard, when people work out the implications of their beliefs in the real world.

Take the Fermi Paradox, for example. As the story goes, back in 1950 a group of nuclear physicists were having a casual discussion on their lunch break. Someone brought up UFOs and aliens, they chatted and laughed about that for a while, and the conversation moved on to other things. And then suddenly, one of the men blurted out, "Where is everybody?" Everybody immediately realized he was asking about extraterrestrial life, and at first they laughed at the crazy question. But then this physicist, Enrico Fermi, began to sketch some quick calculations on a napkin about the probability of other Earth-like planets in the universe and the likelihood of life arising on those planets, and suddenly the Fermi Paradox emerged. If (as is held by evolutionary theory) all it takes for intelligent life to form is the right environment plus time, we should have been contacted by aliens many times over.

To me, as someone who believes in creation as a supernatural act of God and the vastness of the universe as a testimony to His greatness, the Fermi Paradox is just a curiosity. But to a sensitive and thoughtful evolutionist, it could be a real challenge. Last week I listened to an interview where a young nuclear physicist was expressing his sadness over the Fermi Paradox. "[T]here's nobody out there who knows more than we do, like, about science, about-- there are no better songs. There are no better books. This is it, you know? ...what we know is it. What we are is it." He was thinking deeply about the implications of his worldview, and it suddenly made him deeply sad. Advanced life, it appears, is a total fluke. Mathematically, there's no reason we should be here. In fact, one of his smart scientist friends put it to him directly, "OK, if that's the case, I have to believe in God. So that's what you're saying." The bummed brainiac replied: "How many physicists do you know who believe in God?"

Worldviews have implications, and you have to live with them, like it or

not. Our beliefs about life have real world ramifications.

So what happens when your most basic beliefs about life are these? "We are a complete mess, but our future is incredibly bright because of Jesus. And anybody can get in on this for free." What are the implications of a gospel-based view of life? That's what Paul has been working out for us here in the last few chapters of Galatians. Throughout this letter, he's been strenuously arguing that God accepts people by His grace alone through our faith alone in Jesus alone. If that's true, Paul assumes it will produce behavior—"conduct in step with the gospel" (2:14). As we've been saying it, gospel truth produces gospel culture. Gospel teaching contains implications for gospel living. And in our text for today, Paul develops three more of them:

- Support the word.
- Sow to the Spirit.
- Spread all the good you can.

(with props to Ray Ortlund for this wording)

#### **Support the word.**

**v6** *One who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches.*

The words "taught" and "teaches" in this verse both come from a semi-technical term for instruction in the basics of the gospel: *κατηχέω*, from which we get our words "catechize/catechism." In other words, Paul is saying those who receive training in the gospel should support their teachers. He's just made the point in vv4-5 that we all must take responsibility for ourselves. But we could take that notion to the extreme, so Paul reestablishes the rightful role of teachers.

Obviously, this could be really awkward—having one of your teachers explain to you that you should support your teachers. But let me say a few things to alleviate the tension. First, thank you for doing such a wonderful job of applying this verse. Aundrea and I feel supported and cared for by this church in every way. We could tell story after story about you have shared all good things with us. I am not the only teacher here, and I know these others who teach us—Jim, Tom, Karl, and Rick—would share my gratefulness and my commendation.

Second, the sharing in view isn't strictly financial. Share "all good things." Paul is talking about a richness, variety, and depth of sharing that goes way beyond money. It all comes back to gifting—some are gifted to teach, others are gifted in other ways. All of it gets shared.

"Share" is a key word. Paul doesn't just say "give." Why? Because this is not a business transaction. In fact, the word the Holy Spirit has selected here is "*koinonia*"—i.e., fellowship, partnership, companionship. In the gospel, no one "works for pay"; they are called into fellowship with one another where they share everything they've been given.

And notice how deeply personal the sharing is: "One who is taught... must share with one who teaches." He doesn't say the congregation should do this as a whole. It's one-to-one. It's a personalized gift given in a personal way: "Thank you for sharing with me what God has given you; in return, here's some of what God has given me." These are the kind of deep bonds and generous relationships the gospel creates.

### Sow to the Spirit.

**v7** *Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.*

It's a strong word: "Do not be deceived." These Galatian churches have been much deceived, but that's not quite Paul's point here. He's trying to get their attention: "Listen up! This is serious." He wants his readers to pay special attention to the warning he's about to give.

Warning about what? About the law of cause and effect God has built into every human life: "Whatever one sows, that will he also reap." It's not how you earnest you are at the end that determines the results, but how you live at the beginning. This is the law of returns, the law of harvest. And we are so quick to forget it. We think: "It'll be fine. I'll get away with it. It's never cost me before. I'm an exception."

Notice the warning: "God is not mocked." It's a graphic word, picturing turning up one's nose in contempt. No, Paul warns, what you sow, you will reap. This is how God created the world to work, and He cannot be scorned.

Paul makes 2 points about the metaphor: 1) verse 8 – Whatever you sow, you will reap; 2) verse 9 – Whenever you sow, you will reap.

**vv8-9** *For 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. <sup>9</sup> And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.*

Whatever you sow, you'll reap that same thing. Sow apple seeds, reap apples; sow corn, reap corn. The harvest is predetermined, based on what you've sown. In the biological world, the harvest is organically encoded into the seeds. There's a full set of instructions inside for what kind of harvest to produce. Sow dandelions and don't be surprised when your lawn is full of weeds.

The same principle operates in the moral universe:

**v8** *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.*

When we sow to the flesh, the outcome is assured. We reap whatever is organically, morally encoded into the flesh—namely, corruption. See how Paul says it: "The one who sows to his own flesh will FROM THE FLESH reap corruption." It's not like you're having a good time, minding your own business, and suddenly God steps in to ruin your fun: "Sow to the flesh and reap from God." No, we sow to the flesh and we reap from the flesh. The outcome is predetermined by our choices at the start. Junk food will never yield good health. No matter how much you want good skin, toned muscles, and endless energy, Doritos and Dr. Pepper do not have the chemical makeup to give you that result.

What does it mean to "sow to the flesh"? Paul uses a preposition that's unexpected—"into"—conveying the idea that this sowing is done "for" that reason—to please, to satisfy. Sowing to the flesh are behaviors done to please the flesh. Sowing to the Spirit entails behaviors done to satisfy the Spirit. In response, the flesh and Spirit pay back those who sow to satisfy them—"will from the flesh reap... from the Spirit reap." The Spirit pays back eternal life. The flesh pays back corruption.

When has sin EVER delivered the exciting, satisfying, high-octane life it promises? Never. Sow to the flesh, reap corruption, destruction, disintegration. Sin makes everything fall apart.

It's a sobering warning, friends. We are not often victims of circumstance; more often than not, we reap what we sow. **And the results echo out for eternity.** Did you notice how high the stakes are? Paul is not just offering a helpful tip for spiritual growth. He's describing final judgment. What's at stake is "eternal life" or "corruption" (also could be rendered "destruction") in a final sense. Paul is talking about Christians vs. nonChristians. **How you "sow" (to flesh or Spirit) will reveal at harvest time which you are.**

For as much emphasis in this letter as Paul has lain on God's grace, he is just as clear that human effort is required. **We are saved by grace through faith alone, but faith that saves never remains alone.** It is always followed by a changed life of good works (cf. 5:6 "faith working through love"). This verse does not undermine salvation by faith alone—after all, if we inherit "eternal life," we get it "from the Spirit."

Likewise, holiness is a harvest. It's a result of careful, deliberate, consistent "sowing to the Spirit." Your choices matter! This is an implication of the gospel! An incomprehensibly vast universe—even if there is a God, why would we matter in the grand scheme of things? And then, that God takes on human flesh and becomes a man. The incarnation validates human life. Your choices matter!

So encouraging, especially if you are laboring to sow to the Spirit:

Whenever you sow, you will reap:

**v9** *And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.*

Gospel sowing is hard work. But don't give up! You will reap.

ILLUS: "Luke Short was a farmer in New England who attained his hundredth year in exceptional vigor though without having sought peace with God. One day as he sat in his fields reflecting upon his long life, he recalled a sermon he had heard in Dartmouth [England] as a boy before he sailed to America. The horror of dying under the curse of God was impressed upon him as he meditated on the words he had heard so long ago and he was converted to Christ--eighty-five years after hearing John Flavel preach."

**Spread all the good you can.**

**v10** *So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.*

What a simple and delightful vision for what the gospel is all about—just spreading good to the people around you. The Christian life is not activities, meetings, and programs; it's doing good to the person right in front of you. NOTE: "doing good" is bigger than just evangelism. Of course it includes that. But it's much broader, because human life is much broader. "Do something useful to earn the opportunity to do something spiritual."

But don't get overwhelmed: "as we have opportunity" keeps us sane!

APPLICATIONS:

- Envision the harvest. Imagine the joy of seeing lives changes. Yes, you've giving up time and money now to do good where needed, but picture what this person, this relationship, this family, this community could be in 10 years if these kinds of seeds keep getting sown.
- Start with those closest to you – spouse, kids, friends
- Never never never give up!

When you wake up and start your day, you grab two bags—flesh seeds and Spirit seeds. Everywhere you go, everything you do, everyone you meet – you are sowing seeds. Nothing you do occurs in a vacuum. Every decision has connections that reach into your future. Every conversation, you're sowing seeds. Every act includes a harvest. The choices you make about your leisure, your relationships, your time, your money—these aren't just one-time decisions; these are moments of propagation.

Communion

- share needs, pray with each other, linger over Communion together
- Crystal's story
- prayer