

## Walking In the Spirit: Part 3

### Galatians 6:8

#### Introduction

We have been doing a mini-series on Walking in the Spirit that focuses on spiritual growth. The Apostle Paul says we can approach spiritual growth in one of two ways. We can approach it under the Law, which means focusing on God's commandments and trying to keep them by our own moral will-power. Or we can approach it under grace, which means that we trust the power of God's Holy Spirit to transform and teach us how to love God and love one another. Paul calls this second way "Walking in the Spirit." So, what does it look like to walk in the Spirit?

Two weeks ago, we began with Romans 8:1-11 and setting our minds on the Spirit. Last week we looked at a parallel passage in Gal. 5:16-6:9 and how to keep in step with the Spirit. Today, we will look at Galatians 6:8 and what Paul calls "sowing to the Spirit."

Last week we learned that walking requires three essential elements: balance, locomotion, and direction. Walking in the Spirit also requires three vital elements. The first one is "setting your mind on the things of the Spirit," found in Romans 8:5-6, which says, For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those *who live* according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. (Romans 8:5-6 NKJV) We discovered that this means to choose to think about every area of your life from the perspective of God's grace.

The second element, "keeping in step with the Spirit," found in Galatians 5:25, which says, If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. (Galatians 5:25 NKJV) We discovered that this means to be responsive to the Holy Spirit's guidance in your life.

This week, we'll explore the third element, found in Galatians 6, which says that Walking in the Spirit involves "sowing to the Spirit." Paul uses an agricultural metaphor he carries over from chapter 5 to describe the results of walking in the Spirit, which he calls the "Fruit of the Spirit."

Spiritual laws are just like natural laws; they will work for everyone under the right conditions. When you meet the conditions, they produce results.

Sowing to the Spirit has its scriptural basis in Galatians 6:7-8, which says, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 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." (Galatians 6:7-8 NKJV)

Life is about sowing and reaping. It is about seeds and what kind of seeds you are sowing. Your life is like a field or a garden, and every day you plant seeds in that field.

Your thoughts and words are seeds. Unfortunately, the bad seed produces terrible fruit. Paul says when you sow to the flesh, you will harvest corruption. When you sow to the flesh, you look to the world and nonbelievers for solutions, even though you are a child of God. Sowing to the flesh will cause your life to be dominated by negativity. The corruption of negativity will keep you from being united with God's master plan for your life. The result is you will miss out on the best investment of your life because you have focused on selfish interests rather than spiritual growth.

## **I. Purify Your Thought Life**

It all begins with your thought life. What thoughts dominate your mind every day? Negative thoughts lead to negative communication, which, in turn, leads to negative actions.

Faith-filled thoughts lead to a positive Godly connection that inspires positive action. The New Testament truth is that we all manifest to the outside world what's inside us. Jesus shared this principle in Luke 6:45, "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh."

Galatians 6:7-9 says, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 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. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." ([Galatians 6:7-10 NKJV](#))

His point is obvious: you reap what you sow. This is not Paul's version of the Karmic law of "what goes around comes around." Paul teaches a fundamental principle of cause and effect in spiritual growth. If we sow to our fallen nature, we will reap the corruption of the lifestyle described in Galatians 5:19-21 as the "deeds of the flesh."

"Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ([Galatians 5:19-21 NKJV](#)) It's not hard to figure out what the works of the flesh are!

But if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap "eternal life," which refers not only to heaven but also to the "fruit of the Spirit" described 5:22-23. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law." ([Galatians 5:22-23 NKJV](#))

Again, Paul makes it easy for us to know precisely what the fruit of the Spirit is. If you want to reap an excellent spiritual harvest in your life, you must sow consistently and

regularly to the Spirit. Of course, results don't show up immediately, but later they always show up. But it all begins in the mind, and whether your thoughts are about the things that lead to the works of the flesh or the fruit of the Spirit.

If you put money in a savings account, at first, there's not much you can draw out. But over time, not only what you put in can be used, but the interest you gain can be significant. The same is true spiritually. What thoughts you invest in your mind grow over time and significantly impact how you think and live your life.

When you listen to someone speak for just a short while, you can tell the kind of seed that has been sown into their heart. When your life is out of sync with God's word, it means it has become corrupted by what Paul calls "fleshly thoughts." For a positive, fruitful life, we need more and more of the incorruptible seed of the word of God to displace the corruptive thoughts of the flesh.

1 Peter 1:23 says that we, "having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever." ([1 Peter 1:23 NKJV](#))

## **II. Apply The Word of God**

The word of God is the seed we need because it is incorruptible. But once we receive the incorruptible seed, we must apply it; we must sow the life-giving seed of God into our minds. When you sow the seed of the Word of God into your heart and mind, the fruit of the Spirit begins to operate in your life. The Holy Spirit restrains you from sowing to the flesh and receiving a harvest of corruption. As a result, your life will be more and more Christ-like, and the thinking of the world will not corrupt it.

Our text then draws this parallel: you will harvest everlasting life when you sow to the spirit. When you deposit the good seed of the Word of God, you are making spiritual investments, and you will reap eternal life. The term "everlasting life" or "eternal life" is the original Greek word, "Zoe," which means more than eternal life. It refers to the overcoming, undefeatable, unconquerable, and indestructible life you received from God when you become born again spiritually.

However, if you only receive the word of God (good seed) on Sunday and then sow bad seeds (negative words and ideas) throughout the week, the bad seed will produce weeds that choke out the good seed, so your life doesn't produce good fruit. Paul calls this the spiritual law of sowing and reaping. How many of you know you can't harvest oranges from a lemon seed.

Sowing to the Spirit requires following the Spirit's lead, obeying His instructions for living. To be more specific, sowing to the Spirit means sowing the kind of seed that produces the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, kindness, faithfulness, and the like. It means mining the good spiritual fruit from the Word of God that produces a joyous, victorious Christian life.

When we sow to the Spirit, we learn how to deny our own ambitions and choose to serve others. Every time we think, speak a word or perform a deed, we are planting a seed. And every time we think, say, or do anything for the glory of God, we are sowing to His Spirit.

Whoever sows to the Spirit reaps the greatest harvest of all: eternal life. This does not mean, of course, that salvation comes by works. Eternal life is a gift based on believing, not on doing. However, believers are doers. And though works alone cannot save you, believers are never without them either. When a believer sows to please the Spirit, God, in His grace, gives us the reward of eternal life.

There are three conditions to the promise of verse 9, "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." (Galatians 6:9)

We will receive if we sow:

- In due season – at the proper time.
- If we do not grow weary of doing good – with the proper attitude.
- If we faint not – with patient persistence.

Managing your resources under the principle of sowing and reaping requires patience because the harvest doesn't come immediately after you sow the seeds. Isaiah 40:31 says, "But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew *their* strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint." (Isaiah 40:31 NKJV)

### **III. Pursue Christian Growth**

So what does it look like to "sow to the Spirit?" It means to consistently participate in those activities that the Bible says result in spiritual growth. Theologians often call these activities the "means of grace." I like to call them the "means of growth."

Here's what John Stott, one of the great Bible teachers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, says about this passage, "If Paul is speaking in Galatians 5:22 of the harvest of the Spirit, he also says in 6:8 that we are to sow to the Spirit, and then we reap what we sow."

Reaping the fruit of the Spirit depends on sowing to the Spirit. The seeds we sow to the Spirit that produce this harvest are a disciplined use of the means of grace. Daily talking to God and meditating on the Scriptures is a means of spiritual growth. Reading Christian books, making Christian friends, and getting involved in Christian service is a means of spiritual growth.

In Acts 2:43-47, Luke describes the dynamic spiritual vitality and fruitfulness of the first century Christians. "Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:43-47 NKJV)

In verse 42, he describes how they sowed to the Spirit, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2:42 NKJV)

Notice what they sowed. "The apostles' teaching" refers to learning and studying the Bible, especially the teachings in the Old Testament about Jesus the Messiah and God's grace. "Fellowship" refers to sharing God's truth and love with one another in the context of a Christian community and personal relationships. "Prayer" refers to both individual, private communication with God and also corporate prayer (see Acts 4,12). "The breaking of bread" is a little ambiguous. It may refer to the Lord's Supper, which then connects it to prayer and emphasizes thanksgiving. Or it may refer to having meals together (2:46), which then connects it with fellowship.

To these, we can add serving love or what we call agape love. Paul includes this in verse 10 when he says, "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." (Galatians 6:10 NKJV) As we reach out in love to serve others for Christ's sake, the Holy Spirit vitalizes us spiritually and gradually transforms our lives.

Notice how they sowed. "They continuously devoted themselves." Luke goes out of his way to emphasize that the believers initiated this sowing ("devoted themselves to") consistently and continually. It was the secret to their vitality and fruitfulness. Sowing to the Spirit is when you build a lifestyle that centers around these means of growth.

## Conclusion

In closing, let me give you some practical tips as you pursue spiritual growth. Be sure you practice the means of growth with grace. What you are tomorrow depends on what you *do* today. Right now, you are making choices that will affect the rest of your life. It's important that you sow the seeds of obedience. Then, in the future, they will bloom into a harvest of righteousness, not just for you but also for your children and grandchildren. When you sow a thought, you reap an act; sow an act and reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny."

Don't become discouraged with doing good even when the harvest seems a long way off. Continue to pursue Christian growth. Persevere and don't quit. Because God promises that you will reap if you don't give up.

Cultivate a taste for these means of growth. The temptation is to specialize in those means of growth that you find easiest and most enjoyable while neglecting the more difficult ones for you. The means of growth are like food groups. You need a balanced diet for healthy growth. Donuts and junk food are not part of a healthy diet.

Remember, spiritual growth works the same way. The means of growth are interconnected, so that genuine progress in one requires involvement in all. If you're serious about being a follower of Christ, then get involved with other serious followers and pursue spiritual growth by sowing to the Spirit.

Get involved in a bible study group (We have some here on Wednesday nights). I mention that because it's a great way to get exposure to the means of grace and grow in faith. You will meet other people who also want to learn how to pray, study God's Word, build Christ-centered friendships, and share their faith. For some of you, this may very well be the next step that God's Spirit is prompting you to take.