GALATIANS 6:1-18

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Taught by Simeon Forder on Sunday morning, 27th October 2024 @ Deal Christian Fellowship **Reading:** 2 Samuel 12:1-10

Introduction

We have reached our final week of studying the apostle Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia, and in it we have seen a robust defence of the gospel, which is that we are saved by faith alone, in Christ alone. And that the law, while designed to chase us to the cross of Christ, can chase us no further.

Furthermore, as the law was powerless to help us before we were saved, it is now powerless to condemn us now that we are saved. But does that mean we take no note of what it says? Not at all, for what we find in it is the heart of God. Indeed, Jesus said all the law and prophets hang on the simple application that we are to love the LORD our God with all our heart, soul, and mind — and that we are to love others as ourselves.

However, that love isn't born out of requirement to the law, but out of response to the love that we have been shown by Jesus, and so, as Paul concludes this letter, we'll see much application for us, of how we ought to love others, and to not forget God's grace.

Chapter overview of Galatians

- Chapters 1-2: Personal
- Chapters 3-4: Doctrinal

Chapters 5-6: Practical

Now, as I've intentionally repeated each week, we see a progression throughout the chapters of this book from Paul's personal experience of grace, to doctrinal teaching on the law vs grace, and then finally practical application of grace. And that's similar to other letters of Paul's, which I am certain was also intentional — for we are not to read and study the Bible merely for *information*, but for our *transformation*. Dustin Benge put it well;

If our daily reading of the Bible doesn't result in daily applying the Bible, we aren't reading the Bible correctly.

Dustin Benge

So then, let us approach this chapter with open hearts to how we ought to *live* in response to God's goodness. Indeed, I believe that not one of us, myself included, should leave this place today without having considered, nor continuing to consider, how our conduct might be more in keeping with God's Word, and how we might live more pleasing to Him.

So, let us take this letter in the same manner as Paul wrote to Timothy, saying "These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

Overview of chapter six

Overview of chapter six

- v1-9 Bearing and sharing of burdens
- v10-14 Reaping and sowing
- v11-15 No boasting, except in the cross
- v16-18 Reminders of peace and grace

In this final chapter then, we'll first see Paul talk about the bearing and sharing of burdens — both how we should look out for others, while not shirking our own responsibilities. And that will cover the first 6 verses. From verses 7-10 we'll be reminded of the inseparable link between sowing and reaping, of which there are many examples throughout scripture to demonstrate that principle. Then in verses 11-15 Paul will underline what he has written, saying that our boasting should be in Christ alone, not in ourselves. Before the final 3 verses close out this letter, ending with grace.

Chapter six

So, starting at verse one, then, we read:

Galatians 6:1

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

And we need to read this in the context of the letter, for in chapter 5 Paul had stated that "A little leaven leavens the whole lump." — referring how how just a little sin causes big problems. And there are two ways to apply that here. First, in the case of legalism, it puffs up quite literally into pride, arrogance and condemnation of others. Rather than looking to restore, it looks to reveal sin. And we have an example of this back in Genesis, where we read about Noah, who, having made the error of becoming drunk, was lying naked in his tent, and in walked his son, Ham. We read in chapter 9:

Genesis 9:22

And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside.

And so, unlike his brothers who we'll see protected the modesty of their father, Ham went and told literally every other man on the planet at that time. But we read of his brothers:

Genesis 9:23

But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness.

In other words, they restored Noah's modesty. They had the right attitude, seeking to love their father, rather thank mock him. And it's an attitude we should seek to emulate. We read in Proverbs:

Proverbs 17:9

He who covers a transgression seeks love, But he who repeats a matter separates friends.

As I mentioned when were were studying that passage in Genesis, there are certainly times where we are to publicly deal with someone's sin, but generally in the first instance, if we speak to *anyone* about it, it should be that *individual*, that we might restore them in love, not throw them under the bus or or mock them for their behaviour.

And what Paul is saying here in *Galatians* is that when you see a Christian brother or sister stumble in their walk with the Lord, and get entangled in sin, you shouldn't rejoice, but rather you should restore them. Rather than condemn them, you should correct them. That you would act for their good, not their condemnation. So how do we go about about that? Well, there are five things we should note from this verse:

Restoring those who sin

- Be present
- Be spiritual
- Be proactive
- Be loving
- Be wise

And the first of those is to **be present** — for how else will you know that they have any matter that needs correcting? By listening to rumours or gossip? No, no, that's not the way. We need to be present not only at church services and meetings, but present in each other's lives — close enough, that we can spot when something is wrong. The Greek word for *overtaken* here is prolambano which means *found out* or *detected*, even the idea of seeing something in advance, to anticipate it.

Another way of looking at this, then, is that we need to be close enough to others that we can see when they are playing with fire, and are about to get burnt.

But, while being present is important, even that won't help on it's own — for we need to know what the will of the Lord is in how we, and others, should live. We need to **be spiritually minded**. That is, we need to know our Bibles well if we're going to be of any help to anyone else. We are, as Paul wrote in the last chapter, to walk in the Spirit, and not in the flesh. And that is the second thing to note from this verse, that it is talking of those who are spiritual who are to correct. And indeed, we read Jesus' words in Matthew 7:

Matthew 7:1-5

"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Note that Jesus didn't say *don't* remove the speck, but rather that we must see clearly ourselves *before* we do. So we need to walk in the Spirit first, that we might be able to restore others second.

Now, the third thing we should note from this first verse of Galatians 6, is that we need to **be proactive**. You see, Paul didn't say "you who are Spiritual be ready to restore others when they ask you to help". No, rather he implies action on our part here. Why? Because sin easily ensnares us, it drags us and our fellow Christians down, and causes us to lose sight of our Lord. And when that happens, we need someone to lovingly step in to help us, exhort us, correct us, rebuke us if needed, and restore us in our walk with Christ. We need Nathans to step up and step in, when Davids set their hearts on Bathshebas.

But does that mean we should only step in when it's a serious matter? Well, how much sin required Jesus to die on the cross for you or that person? Any. Any sin. That's how serious *any* sin is. And helping others is a great kindness, for as Charles Spurgeon put well, "A little sin, like a little pebble in the shoe, will make a traveller to heaven walk very wearily." So, if we are walking in the Spirit, then we ought to let the Holy Spirit use us in *helping* others. Not *watching* others. No gossiping about others. But restoring others.

The fourth thing we should note from this first verse, is that ware are to **be loving**. That we are to restore in a spirit of gentleness. Does that sound familiar? It should, for we *read* at the end of chapter 5 what the fruit of the Spirit in our lives should look like — and that includes gentleness. It also includes love, patience, and kindness. And so we are not to beat each other up when there is a stumble or fall. Of course, let us not use that as some sort of excuse to avoid accountability — that would be utterly wrong, and we *should* be prepared to be challenged, corrected, rebuked and so on. But when we restore others, we are to do so in a spirit of gentleness. Indeed, the essence of restoring is like setting a broken bone — you are there for the other persons healing, not their harm.

Now, finally, the fifth thing we should note from this verse is that we are to consider ourselves lest we also be tempted. In other words, we are to **be wise**. Why? Because there are sins that we could get caught up in as a result of genuinely attempting to help others.

For example, in trying to restore fellow believers who have stumbled in the specific *sin you are also* prone to, you might inadvertently find you are drawn again to that sin. Now, your own history might make you the ideal person to talk with them in some ways, but the Bible says here that you shouldn't go into such situations without considering your own walk with the Lord too. That would be unwise.

But also, we need to consider that there are times it is unwise to help a specific *individual*, not because of the temptations *they* are wrestling with, but of our *own* sinful nature. For example, it would likely be quite unwise for a man to go for a coffee with someone else's wife in order for her to try and restore her from sin she has fallen into. There *might* be some exceptions, such as taking your mother or sister for a coffee. But I'm sure you get the point — that we need to be wise.

And of course, all this is a recognition that we *ourselves* are also sinners saved by grace. That we might not be all smug and self-righteous toward those that have stumbled in sin, and condemn them as if they are beneath us. For the church is much like a hospital — in that it's exactly where you should find sick people. And it would be quite wrong for a hospital to try and remain clean and free of infections, by refusing entry to anyone that needed help. But we must balance that, of course, for on the other hand, if someone had a contagious disease, it would be quite irresponsible to let them wander around as if everything were OK.

So, we are to be present in each other's lives. We are to walk in the Spirit ourselves. And we're to do what we should and correct, rebuke, restore others in a spirit of gentleness, being wise to our own shortcomings, that we might not stumble in our own walk with the Lord in the process.

Now, continuing on, Paul makes his next point. He writes:

Galatians 6:2

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

And so we're not only to take in interest in others if and when they sin, but we're to take an interest in their lives. Not out of nosiness, but out of love. For how can we *possibly* bear other's burdens if we don't know what those burdens are? And this means we need to ask questions. We need to ask how people are, how their jobs are going, how their children are, how their marriage is, how things are going with their ministry or how their families are.

We should be interested in each other. And I know this seems basic, but we so often miss this — for how many conversations do we have (whether after the service, or at a conference, or via text with a friend) and the entire focus of what the other person is saying is all about them — and they fail to ask at all how we are doing. That can be bothersome, right? Well, don't let that be you. Because *you* need to bear *that* persons burdens where you can, and if you only talk about *yourself*, you'll have no idea how you can love, help and support *them*. To be engrossed in self is not proper Christian conduct. We are to love others as ourselves.

But, there's another aspect to this. For how can others bear *our* burdens if we don't engage in conversation with them? I mean, you have to be present to have a conversation. The time of fellowship after a church service shouldn't be something to avoid — for that is our time to minister to one another, including being ministered to. It is a time where we can, and should, be sharing our burdens with each other.

I know the typical British answer is that we're OK, even when we're not. But it would be hard to argue that's a Biblical response when you look at this verse. Now, I'm not saying we just broadcast everything in an effort to create some drama. But as much as we need to take an interest in others, we need to let others take an interest in us.

And I'm not saying this is easy. It's not. Indeed, I think Tim Keller summed it up well, saying:

Everyone says they want community and friendship. But mention accountability or commitment to people, and they run the other way.

Tim Keller

But let us not run the other way. Let us each work on this. For it's essential, if we're going to obey what the Bible says in these two verses. We can't be too proud to admit our struggles, or to share our burdens, as we read in verse 3:

Galatians 6:3

For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

Simply put, you're not above needing help. And you're not above helping others. To avoid both these things is to be much like the Pharisee who prayed "God, I thank You that I am not like other men", following which Jesus said "for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

And so, as Christians, we are to be humble, noting verse 4 which says:

Galatians 6:4

But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

In other words, don't try and make a name for yourself, don't try and impress others, but rather focus on obeying God, and pleasing Him. Because living for the praise of others is a terrible, and destructive way to live — not only for yourself, but for others too.

But, lest we think that we should do the opposite of trying to make a name for ourselves, and instead be idle workers, we read in verse 5:

Galatians 6:5

For each one shall bear his own load.

And at first glance we might wonder if this is a contradiction to what we read in verse 2; that we should bear one another's burdens. But that's not the case, for there is a difference between letting others into our lives that they might help us, and absolving ourselves of all responsibility to do that which we can for ourselves.

Jon Courson explains this rather helpfully in his commentary on this passage. He notes:

You see, in this battle we're in, we're each supposed to bear our own pack. But when someone has been walloped by the Enemy, we're supposed to carry his load with him. Consequently, we should not be people who are always trying to get someone else to carry our pack. At the same time, there are moments, events, and days that wallop us. During those times we need brothers and sisters to stand with us.

Jon Courson

So let us be ready and willing to help one another, and humble enough to let others help us. But let not that willingness to let others help us turn to negligence, failing to do that which we should.

Now, as we move on to verse 6 we read:

Galatians 6:6

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

And the context is important. For if each person should bear his own load, what is the load that the preacher, the Bible teacher, the pastor should bear? Should they be self-supporting? Well, Paul says here that it is normal and right that a pastor be supported by the local church. Just as he exhorted the Corinthian church, saying that as no soldier goes to war at his own expense, neither should one who teaches the Bible. And likewise, this is as he wrote to Timothy, pointing out that the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The labourer is worthy of his wages."

And this is indeed direct. J Vernon McGee, made this comment:

Paul is bluntly saying this: "Pay your preacher. If someone ministers to your spiritual benefits, minister to him with material benefits." If God has blessed you materially and you are being blessed by someone spiritually, then you ought to minister to that person with material benefits.

J Vernon McGee

Now, in a world where money for many is tight, and probably for all of us is loved a little too much, we can balk at this. It makes us feel uneasy. And perhaps this morning you might be thinking "oh great, the pastor is talking about why we should pay the pastor — that seems self serving!". And perhaps I could prefer someone else was standing here teaching this passage. But you know, I must not fail to teach this verse, or any verse in scripture. That is my responsibility. And it is *all* our responsibility to listen to what it says — me included.

For I have not been a pastor my whole life, and it's quite possible, even probable that I will not be a pastor for the rest of my life. And so one day I need to know what my responsibility is when it comes to supporting the pastor that I next sit under the teaching of. And for us as a church family we need to consider this, for I will not be your pastor forever — for either one day the Lord will call me to serve elsewhere, or in another way, or perhaps I'll conk out while serving here. And at either of those points it will be necessary for another man, called by God, to take on pastoral responsibility in this place. So how will he be supported?

The problem that many Christians have is the celebrity pastor, the type that has a private jet, a mansion, or Ferrari. And believe me, I have a problem with that too — especially when it is reported that some have a net worth in the tens, even hundreds of millions of pounds, whose salary is as out of line with scripture as their preaching. There is no justification for that whatsoever, for a pastor is to feed the flock, not fleece them. But, what Paul is getting at here is that we should not go to the other extreme, for a pastor shouldn't be so poorly supported (or even unsupported) that it is a bad witness. He shouldn't be so poorly supported that his children resent the ministry. So clearly, there has to be a balance — that while a pastor should not live in opulent luxury, he should not be in dire straights either. So how do we find that balance?

Well, I suggest that we turn our focus from *what* a pastor should be be paid, to *why* a pastor should be paid, and why it is desirable for any church to have a full time pastor. And I believe the Bible gives us at least a couple of principles...

The first is this; that a pastor should not serve at their own expense. Now, that isn't to say a pastor should expect the ministry to cost them nothing. Anyone who enters the ministry hoping for that is — frankly — deluded. But, in writing to the Corinthians, Paul made it abundantly clear that we have a responsibility to cover the costs of those in ministry, writing: Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock? And so costs should be covered, just as no soldier would be asked to pay for their own travel to the battlefield, or to buy their own bullets.

But furthermore, it is desirable not only that a pastor's costs be covered, but that a pastor should be undistracted in serving. In part, that should be as we see in Acts 6 where the apostles devoted themselves to the ministry of the Word and prayer, while other spiritual men were tasked with the administration of practical needs. But we also read in 2 Timothy 2:1, that *No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.*

Now, that is surely something applicable to us all, that we would not become so entangled in the things of this world that we are no use to our Saviour. But it does have particular application regarding pastors, for I can tell you that it is exceptionally hard to balance a full time job with the needs of ministry. And I don't say that because I look for an easier life, but because it is good for a pastor to be more available, to study the Bible more, and to pray more, than is possible when balancing the needs of a secular job with the demands of ministry. That's not to say having secular employment is wrong — for even Paul made tents to support himself — but I am saying that it is not what we should desire. For the distraction a secular job brings is of no advantage to me, or to you.

But in order for me, or any pastor, to *not* have a regular job, there must be support from the local church. For while I might gladly serve all my days for no salary at all, I can't feed my family or pay my mortgage without one. Nor can any pastor. And so the Bible is very practical in this instruction to us, that he who is taught the word should share in all good things with him who teaches. Not that their bank account might be inflated, by that the ministry might be effective.

Now, what does this mean for us as a fellowship?

Well, we should each pray that God would lead and direct us in what we should specifically give. We should also pray that God would provide, not only for this need, but all our needs as a church — thanking Him for what He has already provided, from literally giving us this building, to providing the finances to repair two roofs and soon a kitchen. But what we shouldn't do is wonder *if* God would have us give, for He has made it clear in His Word that we should.

Now, I don't want to lay a greater weight on you than what the Bible teaches. And we should be realistic that, in most cases, a church of 3 people is unlikely to be able to support a full time pastor, just as a church of 100 is unlikely to not be able to support a full time pastor. But somewhere in between that, there comes a point where a local body of believers *can* support a full time pastor. I'm not proposing that is where God has led us to today. But at the point we *can* do so, we *should* do so, not merely that the pastor be less stretched, but that his ministry be most effective, *whoever* that man might be.

Now, that may *feel* like an inordinate amount of time on that topic, but it's one that the Bible speaks of in several places yet we rarely touch on, and it's one that we, as indeed all churches should, get right — especially in a world where our love of money makes us reluctant to part with it, and in a world where the celebrity pastor's love of money has also made us reluctant to share in all good things with him who teaches.

So then, what does Paul write next? We read in verses 7 and 8:

Galatians 6:7-8

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.

In other words, you can use your money, your time, your energy and your life for that which you choose. But what you sow, you will reap. And this is a timeliness principle. If you sow wheat, you will get wheat. If you sow barley, you'll get barley. And if you sow the flesh, you'll reap corruption.

In our study of Genesis we saw how Abraham's hasty trip to Egypt led to him coming back with Hagar, who would of course be the complicating factor in his life. We saw how Isaac and Rebekah's favouritism of Esau and Jacob respectively, actually drove the family apart. And we saw how as Jacob deceived Isaac, he was then deceived himself by his uncle Laban.

And the examples don't stop there. For even though King David was a man after God's own heart, his failure with Bathsheba led to the death of their child and more beside. Likewise King Ahab's indirect murder of Naboth, resulted in his own demise. And even Paul, who was consenting to the death of Stephen, was himself stoned.

Now, none of this is to say God is finished with you; for we saw how God blessed Abraham, how He restored David, how He forgave Paul. But be under no illusion, that if you sow to the flesh, you will reap corruption. Only by God's mercy do we not reap all that we should.

But the opposite is true too, that if we sow to the Spirit, we will reap everlasting life. And what blessing there is in sowing to the Spirit. Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Solomon asked God for wisdom, and God made him the wisest man to have ever lived. And the apostles, including Paul, saw the gospel they preached turn the world upside down.

And so Paul continues by saying:

Galatians 6:9

And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

So don't give up sowing to the Spirit, don't give up walking with the Lord, don't give up sharing the gospel, for we never see the full picture of all that God is doing at the time. But look what He has done through so many before. We've had people in our fellowship who have come to know the Lord after decades of prayer by their family. I saw a friend come to know the Lord *years* after me and others had prayed that she would. We've seen the Lord give us a building, after much fervent prayer. And we've seen people come to know the Lord through coming along to our youth group.

But this isn't only regarding the gospel. I've seen how God has used others to encourage me, which in turn has encouraged others. We've also seen how God has blessed people in this fellowship in all sorts of ways, from jobs, to children, to relationships and more besides. And we've seen people who were once stagnating in their faith truly press on in the things of God.

And so, knowing God is able to do above an beyond all that we can imagine, Paul writes:

Galatians 6:10

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

And in many ways, this sums up all he has written so far. That we might restore those who have stumbled, that we might bear one another's burdens, that we might not forsake our own responsibilities by placing them on others, and that we might materially support those who spiritually feed us. And furthermore, that we might sow to the Spirit, that we might walk in the Spirit not only for our own good, but the good of others — especially our Christian brothers and sisters.

And now, underlining this, he writes:

Galatians 6:11

See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand!

Is he talking about the font size he's using? Well, some suggest that was the case because of his poor vision that he'd already alluded to in chapter 4, but on balance I believe it was more likely that he was referring to the length of this letter — not because it was his longest, but because it was the longest he had penned himself, rather than dictating. But either way, this is an indication of how passionate he was about getting this critically necessary Word of correction on the law vs grace to them, that despite any difficulty he had, they needed to hear this, for, he writes:

Galatians 6:12

As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.

And so he says these folks who have tried to put you under the law, are only in it for their own ease. First, their legalistic standards are only so high — that is, they are setting the bar low enough so it is within their reach, but high enough that they might compel you to come up to their self-righteous standard. But second, they are persisting in their gospel of earned favour, because it is *appealing* to others who think they are pretty good too. Whereas the gospel of grace is offensive, for it's foundation is that we are not good at all. And they don't want to offend, for they don't want to be persecuted for what they say. Rather, they are only in it for their own egos:

Galatians 6:13

For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.

In other words, they can't keep the law, but they want you to, that they might show you off as some sort of trophy. They want you to be followers of them, not followers of Christ.

Galatians 6:14-15

But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.

And so Paul says the gospel doesn't produce boasting in our selves, but only in what Jesus has done for us. That we would lift our voices in praise to God, not because of how good we are, but because of how good He is. And rather than it be about ritual, it is now about relationship, about the new birth, about salvation, about forgiveness, and about God filling us with His holy Spirit, and about Him adopting us as His sons.

Galatians 6:16

And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

And so, rather than being slaves of sin, and guilty before God, we can now have peace *with* God, having received His mercy and grace, as those who are truly sons of Abraham — not by works, but by faith alone, in Christ alone.

And in closing, he writes:

Galatians 6:17

From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

That is, for all the legalists talk of circumcision, of having an outward sign to show their relationship with God, Paul says "look, if they want to see an outward sign, then look at the physical marks on my body from the five times I received 39 lashes, or the three times I was beaten with rods, or the times I was shipwrecked — yet none of that matters, because it's not about what I have endured, but what Christ endured for me. And so he concludes as he started this letter, writing of God's grace, saying:

Galatians 6:18

Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

And indeed, we are, if we have come to Christ in repentance and faith, we are brethren — we are adopted sons — and beneficiaries of God's amazing grace. We are recipients of God's Riches At Christ's Expense. What wonderful, wonderful news that is.

Application questions

Let us then, for one final time from this letter, for now at least, let us ask ourselves some probing questions. Let us be honest with ourselves, and may we listen to the Spirit as He challenges and convicts us. First...

- Do you seek to reveal sin, or restore others from it? Are you doing so in a spirit of gentleness?
- Are you bearing other's burdens? Are you taking an interest in them?
- Are you being open about your own burdens? Or are you running from fellowship and accountability?
- What, how, where, when, and why is God calling you to give? (Not is God calling..!)
- What are you sowing? For you will reap what you sow.

