

Pako Morning Service: 05/06/2016

Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 5; Gal 6:6-10; "Sowing generously"

Congregation, one of the things we struggle with as human beings is to constantly be enthusiastic and positive about the choices we make and the things we do in life. But the reality is, the enthusiasm can soon wane. I know of people who have paid megabucks on the Northern Beaches in Sydney to get an ocean view, but within very quick time some of them are over it. I know of one lady who got so tired of looking at the ocean every day, she changed the layout of her house so that she look at some trees and cars and people going past her window and no longer had to look at the boring ocean.

The same can happen in our Christian life. We start a new activity in the church, whether it be teaching Sunday School or leading a Bible Study, or organising a camp, or being on Church Council, and although starting with enthusiasm, we soon get tired. However, Galatians 6:9 says, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

Now one could ask, what is the 'doing good' referring to. I would suggest that it is showing the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives, after all the Holy Spirit enables a person to be spiritual and do good, at least in God's eyes. A truly spiritual person filled with the Holy Spirit is to be engaged in restoring fellow Christians who fall into sin. That is doing good. A person filled with the Holy Spirit should be able to do is to help carry the burdens of fellow Christians. That is doing good. A person filled with the Holy Spirit doesn't think they are better than any one else. On the contrary, we are to share with people and help them. That is doing good!

We should not become weary of doing good. Or if you like, don't become weary in showing the fruit of the Holy Spirit for that is what one does when one sows to please the Spirit as v9 says. Furthermore, there are eternal ramifications attached. V8 makes it clear – if you sow to please your sinful nature, from that nature you will reap destruction, whereas the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the spirit will reap eternal life.

Let's not just gloss over this. Your eternity is at stake by how you sow. We're not speaking about justification or your sanctification, but where you will spend eternity. In other words, the evidence of whether you are indeed filled with the Holy Spirit and therefore a Christian is evidenced by the way you live your Christian life. So let me say it again, "Let us not become weary of doing good."

Now, going back to verse 6, one way of doing good is also by sharing the financial burden of Christian teachers and preachers. "Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor." Paul focuses on the responsibility of those who receive instruction in the word to support their teachers. This of course enables them to have enough time to study and bring God's word of salvation. Interestingly where the phrase "should share" occurs elsewhere in Scripture, it describes generous giving (Rom 12:13; Phil 4:15).

We are not to be miserly when it comes to supporting those involved in bringing God's word. Paul writing to Timothy says in 1 Tim 5:17-18; "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages." Similarly, the "good things" in other instances refers to possessing the things necessary to live.

Now let me be rather straight up about this. First, let me say how thankful I am that this congregation allows me to study the word and bring it each Sunday. We are well cared for and very thankful. However, having said that, I find it interesting that in most churches I have been involved in, the 80-20% rule applies. So often 20% of the members carry 80% of the financial load. And generally, members don't like it when preachers like myself speak on the need to be generous towards Kingdom work because they think we are just feathering our own nests.

I remember once, I was asked to do a service on tithing and the need to be responsible in this area before the Lord while I was a vicar, and a rather angry parishioner rang me immediately after the service. The conversation went a little like this. "Pastor John, I was so disturbed by your message this morning on tithing that I decided not to give my tithe in the offering bag." I gently reminded this parishioner that perhaps he should reconsider what he said and perhaps ring me after he had given some more thought to what he said. But the man was adamant. He said what he said and that was that and challenged me to reply. So reluctantly and as gently as I could I reminded him that maybe he has a problem with giving or even worse, what the Lord actually meant for him, for as it happened, the offering was taken up before the sermon was delivered.

Let me say it again. Let us not become weary in doing good by sharing resources with those who bring the Word, for in this way you also fulfil the law of Christ as v2 reminds us and it is certainly an indication of the Holy Spirit working in one's heart.

Now I suggest v7 enforces verse 6, although it seems unrelated. **"Do not be deceived; God is not mocked. A man reaps what he sows."** The exhortation that Paul makes here must not be disregarded or taken lightly, for God will not stand for being scorned indefinitely when we try to find excuses for not giving to support the ministry of the word. Unfortunately, we so often forget that all we have is a gift from God's Fatherly hand. Not only our health and strength, but also our bank balances, our means to be employed gainfully and so on.

God has built a principle into the world that one will reap what one sows. If you don't get your car checked when it starts to splutter, it will probably stop at the most inopportune time. And if you don't give generously to Kingdom work, then you will not reap a bountiful harvest either. I mention this for the words, "sowing" and "reaping" refer to generous giving. In 2 Cor 9:6 the same words are used. **"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously."**

I find it interesting that people are often very stingy with God's trust fund. In fact, Scripture has examples of people who thought that they should help themselves and be miserly towards God. Gehazi in 2 Kings 5, thought that his master Elisha, the man of God had been too easy on Naaman, and decided to travel after him and deviously squeeze two talents of silver and two sets of clothing. It ended up being Gehazi's undoing and he became leprous himself. (2 Kgs 5:22f) Similarly, Ananias Sapphira in Acts 5 also thought they could pull the wool over God's eyes. And the warning is particularly serious for Paul has one's eternity in mind as v8 indicates. Although what Paul says in Gal 6:7 is a principle that sums up life as a whole, the focus is still sharing. Those who live for the sake of others and for the glory of God will receive an eternal reward as v8 indicates.

Paul has the final judgment in view here. Yes, we know that such good works cannot be the ultimate basis of life eternal. All the money you give for the support of kingdom work will not earn you a place in heaven. Nor the little you are able to give mean you will miss out on heaven. So it seems best to say that good works constitute evidence that one has been transformed by God's grace and that is what v8 is also aiming at. **"The one who sows to please his own sinful nature, (the flesh) from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life."**

In a sense, we are speaking here about attitude. What lives in your heart? What has priority in your life? Notice, there are two different kinds of sowing envisioned. One either sows to the flesh, or one sows to the Spirit. Sowing to the flesh in this paragraph means that one uses one's worldly goods for one's own advantage and in accord with selfish desires. Sowing to the Spirit is another way of speaking of walking in the Spirit (5:16), being led by the Spirit (5:18), and marching in step with the Spirit (5:25). Those who sow to the Spirit produce the fruit of the Spirit (5:22 – 23).

In this context, such sowing to the Spirit manifests itself in generous giving to others. Some commentators suggest that one sowing to the flesh could mean someone placing one's hope for salvation upon circumcision and obedience to the law, a move which would result in missing salvation altogether. Personally, I not convinced.

Further, "the works of the flesh" referred to in Ch 5:19ff, have a whole different meaning whereas sowing to the Spirit includes all that is lovely and good, as is summarized in "the fruit of the Spirit" (5:22–23). Notice also the two contrasting results that are envisioned. Those who sow to the sinful nature the flesh if you prefer "will reap destruction." The future tense "will reap" points to the last judgment. In other words, their final end will be eternal punishment. That is the ultimate destruction that is in view here.

In direct contrast those who sow to the Spirit "will reap eternal life." For several weeks I have been hammering that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone, but a faith that saves never stands alone! The gospel of grace, as presented by Paul doesn't allow moral laxity. Sure, justification is not based on works, but those who never practice good works will not receive eternal life. And so Paul continues to encourage and let me say it again **"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."**

In several other places in Paul, readers are admonished not to lose heart 2 Cor 4:1, 16; Eph 3:13; 2 Thess 3:13; to name a few. Here the Galatians are encouraged not to become fainthearted in doing good. "Doing good" here could possibly go all the way back to v1 – restoring the sinner, carrying each other's burdens, but Paul's focus is probably particularly on the giving of money and resources to alleviate the suffering or to meet the needs of others.

The parallel in 2 Thess 3:13 is remarkable, and it bears the same meaning. After rebuking the idle and instructing the Thessalonians not to give to those who refuse to work, since the former must supply their own needs through useful work. Paul says, **“And as for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good.”** (ESV)

It seems clear in the context of 2 Thess 3:13 that “doing good” means that the Thessalonians must continue to help those in financial need, even though they must not support those who refuse to work. So too, the Galatians are exhorted to continue to be generous in helping others and not to grow lax in such giving. As in 6:7–8 Paul reminds the Galatians in v10 of the end reward. At the right time, a time known only to God and not disclosed to the Galatians or anyone else, those who have given generously will reap a reward.

The reward is reserved for those who do not become disheartened, and hence Paul exhorts the Galatians to continue to march in step with the Spirit by showing a spirit of blessing towards others. Note v10; **Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.**

Congregation, one day, we won't have any more opportunity to do good for others. The “good” in view here is particularly helping others materially, so that their needs for everyday life are supplied. The limited resources of believers are acknowledged in the recognition that it is not possible to meet all needs. As we have opportunity.

Indeed, a hierarchy is established, so that a priority is assigned to those who are fellow believers (“members of the household of faith”). Doesn't mean others are excluded, but if we don't look after those who belong to the household of faith, it could be regarded as a denial of our faith. In 1 Tim 5:3–16 we see a similar theme. Here believers are commanded to support widows who are related to them.

The failure to lend such support is considered a denial of the faith, and Paul identifies those who refuse to help needy widows in their families as worse than unbelievers (1 Tim 5:8). In other words, those who do not assist family members in need are not authentic believers. Believers should use their resources to help their families first.

If extra funds are available, they should give to the church. Remaining resources should be given to assist those outside the circle of faith who are in need. Generous giving is not optional according to Paul. It is a prime indication that one is walking in the Spirit (5:16), being led by the Spirit (5:18), and sowing to the Spirit (6:8). Indeed, being generous is one of the fruits of the Spirit, even though it is not listed in 5:22–23, but that is not meant to be an exhaustive list!

The importance of helping fellow believers is also emphasized by Paul's concern for the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem. The collection was a major issue for Paul, as 1 Cor 16:1 – 4; 2 Cor 8:1 – 9:15; and Rom 15:22 – 29 attest. Congregation let us be known as individuals who are generous, and not miserly towards the ministry of the word, to those in need, especially those who belong to the household of faith.

Those who are generous will receive eternal life on the last day, while those who are stingy and self-absorbed will face judgment. **What would we not want to be generous in light of our own salvation. 2 Cor 8:9; “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.”**

Amen.