

Free to Plant and Harvest

Galatians

Cause and Effect

What is “Cause and Effect”?

What we do has consequences

When do we experience it?

When does it bring joy to follow it?

When is it shameful to ignore it?

What is a “Gift”?

When do we experience it?

How might it be shameful to treat a gift as “cause and effect”?

Which is true for Christians?

Both!!

The letter to the Galatian Church

A letter from the Apostle Paul to the Galatian church

The diversity of the church led to a deep theological conflict

Religious practices (especially circumcision) that were deeply tied to culture were not shared by all people groups in the church

This raised the question of what place these religious practices played in Christianity

The Apostle Paul wrote a letter to clarify

The diversity in the church led to an amazingly good theological gift to Christians ever since that day

A Christian Worldview

The world is an amazingly good place!

Yet it has so much trouble!

Because of what the Bible calls “sin” (contrary to God’s design)

Every single person sins, bringing harm to self and others

Results in indirect harmful effects through groups

Results in separation from the love and goodness of God

What can be done?

The obvious solution that doesn’t solve anything...

The life of a slave: forever forced to plant but never really harvesting

Doing moral and religious good deeds (works of the law)

that are never good enough to make us loved by God (justified),

yet we are forever trying to be good enough (until we give up)

Galatians

2:16

“justified” → loved by God

“the works of the law” → moral and religious good deeds

5:1: Error # 1

Being free in Christ, yet living like we are still slaves to good works

Believing we will only be loved by God (justified)

if/when we do enough moral & religious good deeds (the works of the law)

Sadly, so many Christians live under this impossible weight...

Thinking that if we are good enough long enough, we might be loved...

knowing that we keep falling so far short of the goodness of God

5:13-14: Error #2

Thinking that salvation by the grace of God means that

there are no real consequences for our behavior (good or bad)

since we are guaranteed salvation by the grace of Christ
and our best works are like filthy rags compared to Christ
So...be thankful for forgiveness and stop struggling so hard to be good!

6:7-10: Error #3

Not hoping for a wonderful harvest that comes from planting good deeds

The Big Idea

**In Christ, we are freed from slavery to doing good
so that we will joyfully abound in doing good
having the hope of reaping a wonderful harvest in God**

Doing good works in various ways...

Doing good until we collapse...

If we think we might earn a pass if we do the best we possibly can!

If we fear the consequences of not doing well enough yet struggle to make enough progress

So we wear ourselves out trying...

Doing good without really trying...

If we think we are guaranteed God's love

So we just put in time without actually intending or expecting to improve

Doing good without joy...

Because we are being made to do what we don't like to do

and we think the struggle won't bring anything good

and others are blocking our progress

or we block our own progress

or we are forced to work with broken "instruments"

Not doing good if we are not being forced to do it

Since we have been given a guaranteed God's love

And since God is so much better than we are anyway

So why struggle?

Doing good for the love of goodness and the love of God!

Amazed at the goodness and kindness of our fantastic teacher

Delighting when we can do good things like God

Working so that we can do more good as we learn

Working so that we can earn the praise of our good and gracious teacher

Application

Delight in the freedom of being loved by God through faith alone in Christ alone

What we could never earn (God's love)...

has been given as a free gift...

by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ

received by faith (trust) in Jesus Christ alone

What an amazing gift!

Yet it is so easy to return to the fear or pride of thinking that we must earn salvation, without even knowing it!

Revealed by...

Joyless obedience

Pride over others

Guilt and shame for not being or doing better

Joyfully abound in good works in Christ

Be like God

"Common grace": generous goodness HORIZONTALLY

justice & mercy in head, heart, and hands

like rain and harvest given to all

"Salvific (salvation) grace": generous goodness VERTICALLY

helping people discover new life in Christ

helping people grow in their life in Christ

To all people

Especially among believers

Not growing weary or giving up (as tempting as that can be...)

How??

Look forward to the joyful harvest FOR US in God

Following the model we have in Jesus:

“And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:1-2

What is this joyful harvest?

Good “seeds” (attitudes, words, actions) result in good fruit

Being more like God brings the joy of God

Those who do good works in Christ will be rewarded by God!!

“Well done, my good servant!’ his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.’” Luke 19:17

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.” Matthew 6:19-20

By the work of God in us, there is real good in our works as we follow Christ

We are no longer slaves to good works

To a master (the Law) who required endless works from us

Without giving us the promised reward of the harvest

No longer having to earn God’s love

Rather, we are children who are loved by God and who will reap a wonderful harvest from the good deeds we plant in Christ

By grace, we are now like the owner of our own land:

the work planting good seeds brings a joyful harvest to us!

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” Galatians 6:9

We are free to plant the good deeds of being like God and to harvest the delight of God in Christ

Conclusion

Philippians 3:12-14

Reflection Questions for later today or this week...

1. Which piano practice drawings reveal ways that you approach doing good works?
2. Have you experienced the delight of the freedom of being loved by God through faith alone in Christ alone? If not, what is holding you back?
3. When, and in which part of life, are you tempted back into living as if you were a slave to good works? What is pulling you there? What steps will you take to prevent that?
4. In your own words, what is the harvest that is promised to Christians who “sow to please the Spirit”?
5. How does the promise of an abundant harvest in God help you to persevere in doing good so that you don’t grow weary and give up?