

Week of August 26-Sept 1

FARM STAND

Scripture Reading: Read Galatians 6

Last week, my family and I had an opportunity to get away for a camping vacation at Hamlin Beach State Park on Lake Ontario. For those of you who dislike camping, well...nothing really needs to be said does it? But if you did say something, you would probably mention the bugs, the mud, the dirty clothes etc.

For those of you who enjoy camping, though, you know its pleasures. The smell of the campfire. The fresh air. The lapping of the waves along the shore. The sounds of the gulls over the water. On one of the nights, I had a chance to stop by a local farm stand and pick up some corn for dinner. There's nothing like fresh picked corn from the farm that is cooked immediately and then rolled in butter!

In today's chapter reading, Paul speaks of harvesting too, but his is a reference to a spiritual harvest. He challenges the Galatian believers to sow wisely since we reap whatever we sow. If we sow to please the sinful nature, we will produce a harvest that leads to destruction. If we sow to please the Holy Spirit, we will produce a harvest that leads to eternal life.

At first glance, Paul seems to be at odds with what he taught previously in Galatians about God's salvation being a gift of grace received through faith. When we dig deeper, however, we realize that Paul is continuing his train of thought from the previous chapter about abusing the freedom we have in Christ. Paul warns those believers who though they could abuse God's grace and their freedom and indulge the sin nature without penalty not to be deceived. God cannot be mocked. We reap what we sow. This is true in the natural realm where, for example, we reap corn if we plant corn. It is also true in the spiritual realm where we reap destruction if we plant sin in our life.

Rather than reaping destruction, though, God's plan is that we reap the fruit of the Spirit by learning to sow to please the Holy Spirit or, as Paul puts it in the previous chapter, by learning to stay in step with and live by the Spirit. Such a Christ-honoring life naturally leads to eternal life; not by our efforts, of course, but by the work of the Holy Spirit who took up residence within us when we trusted in Christ. Since it is Christ at work in us and not our own efforts that produces the fruit, God is glorified.

This kind of harvest, however, takes time. We may be tempted to give up when we don't see the changes quickly enough in our life. We would do well to take to heart the encouragement of the apostle Paul: *"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."* Keep trusting in Christ and keep sowing to the Spirit. There is a harvest coming and it will be well worth the wait.

Action Step & Prayer Focus: What kind of fruit do you see in the farm stand of your life? Have you been planting seeds that please the Spirit or the sinful nature? Do an inventory of your "fields" and see if you need God to plow some fields under and start over with better seed. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you into making godlier planting decisions today.

Take-a-way: *Sow to the Spirit and you'll have plenty of good fruit to display at God's farm stand!*