

God Is Not Mocked

by Walton Weaver

The word "mock" in Galatians 6:7 is an interesting term. Literally it means "to turn up the nose" in scorn; so it means to sneer, or to insult. Paul is warning us that we cannot insult God with impunity.

How does one insult God? Probably the most common way is to insult his authority. We go ahead and do what He has told us not to do, or we take the liberty of doing what he has not authorized us to do. In this passage we are told that if we indulge in selfish pleasures we will suffer the consequences. In view of teaching from the Lord to avoid such pleasures of the flesh, when we go ahead and choose this manner of life it will be in spite of His teaching on the matter. Paul tells us that we cannot mock God in this way; we cannot indulge in pleasures in spite of God's teaching to the contrary and get by without suffering the penalty.

Why is it that God cannot be mocked? One reason God cannot be mocked is that he is so holy that he cannot tolerate or blink his eye at sin. "Thine eyes are too pure to approve evil" (Habakkuk 1:13). We cannot hide our sins from his eyes (Psalms 139:7-13; Jeremiah 23:23-24), and because of His holiness He will not suffer the guilty to go unpunished (Exodus 34:6-7). Another reason God cannot be mocked is that it is impossible for God to lie (Hebrews 6:18), and he has said if one sows to the flesh he shall reap corruption (Galatians 6:8). To turn up one's nose at God, to sneer or to cast insult at him, will not change what God has said, and since God is a God of truth and cannot lie, he cannot be mocked, or he cannot be influenced to dishonor His law. Man cannot deceive God, he cannot bribe Him, and it is foolish of him to think he can disrespect his law and get by with it.

The Bible is literally filled with examples which demonstrate the truth that God cannot be mocked. To name Saul, the first king of Israel, Nadab and Abihu, priests of God, and Ananias and Sapphira is all that is needed to remind us of this truth. Saul was rejected from being king, deserted by the Lord and His prophet, defeated, and died a suicide. He reaped all these things after attempting to do as he pleased without paying attention to God's instructions to him (1 Samuel 15). Nadab and Abihu were immediately devoured by fire from heaven because they disrespected the authority of God to use fire which the Lord had not commanded (Leviticus 10:1ff.). Ananias and Sapphira fell dead immediately after they had lied to God (Acts 5:1ff.). Perhaps all of these thought they could mock God with impunity, but God cannot be mocked.

Paul lays down a law from nature for illustrative purposes: "For whatever a man sows, this he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7). What is true in nature is also true in the spiritual realm. We understand this law because we know that every seed produces after

its own kind (Genesis 1:11-12), and this will be true as long as this old earth continues (Genesis 8:22). Because of this law of nature man should not be deceived into believing that he can defy God's authority and get by with it anymore than he can disregard the laws of nature and escape the consequences. Whether one is doing good or evil the principle of seedtime and harvest applies, and this is also true whether one is talking about the natural order or the spiritual realm.

That men reap what they sow cannot be denied. Achan (Joshua 6-7) stole from God, tried to hide it, but died as a consequence because he could not mock God. He reaped what he had sown. David sinned grievously and tried to hide it, but he learned that God is not mocked. Sorrow, suffering, and disgrace attended him just as God said that it would as a result of his sin.

In this passage in Galatians Paul shows that one sows either to the flesh or to the spirit. The figure of sowing and reaping is meant to describe how one lives his life, or what one gives himself to in life. Only two possibilities are put before us, the flesh or the spirit.

These two terms represent the two sides of our nature. The flesh is the animal side and the spirit is the higher side that was made in the image of God. The contrast seems to be much like what we find in Romans 8:4-9 where flesh and spirit are put over against each other as representing two different ways of life. One either lives "after the flesh;" or "after the spirit." One either leads an animal life by living as if this life were all that is worth while, or he leads a spiritual life by keeping the flesh under control and doing those things that will promote his spiritual growth in the service of God. To "sow to the flesh" will lead inevitably to "corruption;" but to "sow to the spirit" will lead to "everlasting life." Do not think, my friend, that you can live your life in disregard for things spiritual and not receive a "just recompense of reward" (Hebrews 2:1-3). God is not mocked.

We must live our lives in such a way as to promote our own spiritual good. This is accomplished by being actively engaged in doing good. Paul adds to his warning that God cannot be mocked an admonition to do good: "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10). We will have more on this passage at another time. But here it reminds us that even though we may live the life of a respected citizen and not an immoral wretch, we are yet sowing to the flesh when we fail to actively promote those things that are good. We do not keep the flesh under control by simply living moral lives. We must also sow to the spirit, which means we will give attention to the things that are needed to promote our spiritual growth in service to God.