



“Sowing and Reaping”

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Today, I want to consider one of the most ancient principles not only in the natural world, but in the hearts and lives of people. What is taken for granted in creation is often forgotten in the spiritual realm: the law of sowing and reaping. The apostle Paul appealed to this principle when he wrote to the Galatian church reminding them of their responsibility to those who taught them the gospel. He said they were to provide their physical necessities just as those men had seen to their spiritual needs. He reminds them that investing in spiritual things reaps an eternal dividend, while dedicating all of our treasures to the flesh will reap only corruption and decay.

Galatians 6:6-8 “Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”

Jesus famously pointed out this truth in His Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 6:19-21 “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

I’m not here for your money and that’s not the reason I quoted these passages. I want to focus more generally on the immutable truth that Paul appeals to in his teaching: *whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*. As sure as the corn seed grows corn, the wheat seed grows wheat, and an acorn produces an oak tree and only an oak tree, so the seed we sow in the field of life will reap a corresponding harvest. The fact is, we spend much of our lives dealing with crops that came from seeds we planted. I want to consider some important things with you about the law of sowing and reaping and just how this truth plays out in our lives each day. I hope it will make us more wise and careful farmers.

The fact of sowing and reaping is as old as life on earth. In the genesis of time when God supernaturally created the various forms of life, He set the natural laws of reproduction in place, decreeing that each kind should multiply.

Genesis 1:11-12 “And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good.”

This law remains unbroken. We recognize it in the natural world. We never plant soybeans expecting to reap corn. We would never plant potatoes and expect to reap a harvest of wheat. The law of sowing and reaping is an immutable law. We understand that in nature. But it is just as much so in life. Paul emphasized this.

Galatians 6:7 “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

There is no evading or bypassing this law. Science has never found a way around it. For every seed that we sow, there is eventually the fruit that comes from that seed—not only naturally, but spiritually. We need to remember that as we go through life. But sometimes, as Paul suggests, we forget this or get deceived about it. We mock God, as he suggests, thinking we can sow one thing and reap another, OR if we do remember what the Bible says, we hope we can sow seed and hope and pray for a crop failure. But it simply doesn't work that way, especially in the spiritual realm.

One of the reasons we're often deceived about sowing and reaping is because we forget some of the facts pertaining to harvest. Paul states unequivocally that we do reap what we sow. It's just as true in your life as it is in your garden or on the farm. Every seed brings forth after its kind. You cannot sow to the temporal and reap the eternal. You cannot sow to the flesh and reap the things of the spirit. You cannot go through life living for the flesh and satisfying its appetites, living for the world and the things of the world and reap a relationship with God and eternal life in heaven. This law is set, and it cannot be changed.

Second, you not only reap what you sow, but you reap *more* than you sow. God said in the beginning to the plants of the field, the fish of the sea, the animals of the forest, and even to man, to multiply. From generation to generation, each race does not merely reproduce, but it multiplies—sometimes many times over. With each passing generation, the population increases. Plant a seed and it may produce many blooms or many stalks or branches of fruit that each produce their own seeds. So the cycle goes. It's that way in life. The seed that we sow in life not only reaps a corresponding result, but many times they are much farther reaching than the original action—whether good or bad. Sometimes the fruit is born in the lives of other people from the seed that we sow in our own lives. It spreads.

Hosea 8:7 “For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up.”

They got more than they bargained for. Albert Barnes explained that passage this way: “They shall reap not merely as they have sown, but with an awful increase. They sowed folly and vanity and shall reap not merely emptiness and disappointment, but sudden, irresistible destruction.” That's how it always is with sin and evil.

Thirdly, we not only reap what we've sown and more than we've sown, but we always reap later than we've sown. No seed instantaneously yields its fruit, but it takes time for that seed to germinate and yield what it's going to yield. Maybe a few days, maybe weeks, months, or years. Since the consequences of our actions are the same way, we're sometimes deceived into thinking that the good we do is for nothing (because we don't immediately see the results of it) or that we have gotten away with the wrong that we've done (because we're not immediately punished for it).

Ecclesiastes 8:11 "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

So, let's not be deceived into believing that we will not reap what we've sown, more than we've sown, and later than we've sown. For the Bible surely promises all three. Human experience testifies to this age-old truth.

We could make many positive applications of this principle that would be well worth our time, but today I want to focus on the warning that is seen in sowing and reaping. We may as well pull our heads out of the sand and realize that the places we often find ourselves in life are because of the seeds we have earlier sown. This should either cause us to repent of the sin we've committed or avoid sowing bad seed to begin with.

I. We will always reap what we sow when it comes to the choices we make.

Life is a series of choices. It's a combination of choices. Every waking hour, we're making choices. Some we don't consciously stop to think about. Those choices have a result or consequence. Whether the choice is big or small, it will not be without some kind of effect. It is sobering to think about the power that our choices have in our lives and in the lives of others.

Deuteronomy 11:26-28 "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known."

Deuteronomy 30:19 : I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:"

You see, the choices we make in what will be the most important things to us—who our companions are, who our spouse will be, how we'll raise our children, where we'll live, how we'll make our living, etc...--all of those are incredibly important decisions that will have an impact way into the future. Some of them will determine how we live the remainder of our lives on this earth. If we make the wrong choice, we'll pay for it for a lifetime.

Even more sobering, many of those choices will have an impact on our eternity. The choices and decisions that you are making this very day as they relate to your soul and the souls of those you love and have the most influence over will have an impact on where you and perhaps where they live forever. Do you ever stop to think about that? A simple choice you make today may set you or your family on a trajectory toward heaven or hell.

The book of **Ruth** is one of the most beloved books of the Bible. It tells one of the most wonderful, touching stories of all time. A story of love, devotion, and redemption. It also revolves around some choices—good and bad—that people made that changed the destinies of quite a few people. Chapter 1 begins with the story of Elimelech and his wife, Naomi, a Hebrew couple from Bethlehemjudah. They made a terrible and faithless decision when drought and famine gripped their homeland to move themselves and their two sons to the godless, heathen land of Moab.

As bad as things might've been in Bethlehemjudah, it was a foolish thing to go to Moab. The Moabites were enemies of God. It was a dark place filled with idolatry and evil. I don't think they ever intended to live like the idolaters of Moab or to participate in the evil that went on there in any way. It seems that they simply went there because of physical and financial concerns. If you know the story, they paid a terrible price. Three of the four members of that family—Elimelech and both sons—died there, leaving Naomi alone. She came home ten long years later, heartbroken and financially ruined with bitter regrets, all because of a choice Elimelech made. He seemed to be more worried about what they were going to eat than with the will of God. As a result of that choice, they lost it all.

Then there's Ruth, Naomi's daughter-in-law, whom she gained in that country, who made the decision to return from Moab with her. Somewhere along the dusty roadside, perhaps near the border country of Moab as Naomi was finally making her way back home, Ruth made a choice. She decided to turn her back on everything and everybody in her life at that point and to follow her mother-in-law to the land of God. That simple decision she made in faith and trust to live among God's people changed her destiny, the destiny of Israel, and even the destiny of the church today. We have reaped eternal reward because of the choice she made by the side of the road. I hope you remember that as you look into the faces of your husband or wife and your little children as you make your choices today. Young person, as you chart the course of your life, choose carefully.

My mother and father made a decision when they were well into their adult years in 1968 to leave the worldly life they had been living behind, to obey the gospel and be added to the church and begin living the Christian life. I'm very thankful for that choice they made over fifty years ago before I was even born. I don't know where I might be today had they made some other choice. You can make a choice today that will affect not only your own, but perhaps the eternal destiny of untold others. We reap what we sow when it comes to the choices we make.

II. **We reap what we sow when it comes to the deeds that we do.**

Sometimes we think that our lives are left to chance, but I suggest that nothing really happens by chance. Rather, everything that happens is the *reaction* of some action. Ralph Waldo Emerson said that the law of cause and effect was the law of all laws. It's the third of Sir Isaac Newton's laws of physics, I believe, that *every action has an equal and opposite reaction*. Really, that's not Newton's law, but God's law; Isaac Newton only discovered it. It's not only the truth in God's physical universe, but in His spiritual universe as well: **whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap**. Moses told the people in **Numbers 32:23** to **"...be sure your sin will find you out."** You can take that to the bank. Solomon the wise man, who certainly knew of what he, by inspiration, spoke said this:

Proverbs 13:15 "Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard."

You cannot sin and get by with it. I want to repeat that: you can NEVER sin and get by with it. There will ALWAYS be a consequence sometime, somewhere, and somehow for sin. A life of dissipation and

wantonness will eventually yield bitter fruit somewhere. The shores of time are littered with countless shipwrecks—lives ruined by immoral and godless living, and sin may come home to roost in physical disease or disability, addiction, a broken family, liver problems, venereal disease, mental/emotional problems, lost children...Sin exacts a price that you don't see when all seems like fun and good times. But you mark it down, the piper will be paid. It may not show up today. You make think that today you sin with impunity, that you're wiser than God and you can get away with it. But you can't.

There's a haunting scene revealed to us in **Ezekiel 8** involving the priests of Israel engaged in idolatrous worship. This was a vision that God caused Ezekiel to see concerning the state of His people at the time. In this vision, they had taken their wicked rituals into the cover of darkness.

Ezekiel 8:7-12 "And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall. Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door. And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here. So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, pourtrayed upon the wall round about. And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up. Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth."

Oh, but they were mistaken. Obviously, the Lord did see them and there was a reckoning coming, for Ezekiel goes on to predict their bloody and fiery doom. There's no getting away from God. There's no hiding from God or getting away with sin. There's no sinning with impunity. The wise thing to do is repent of your sin and God will forgive it. Yes, there will still be consequences in this life as the result of foolish and rebellious choices that we make. That's because of the immutability of the law of sowing and reaping. You can't undo what has been done, but God is mercifully willing to forgive. Isn't it better though to wisely avoid the things that only bring ruin and destruction into our lives and the lives of others whom we often claim to love? If you're living in sin today, I want to urge you to repent because you're planting seed and you will reap what you're presently sowing.

III. We reap what we sow when it comes to the attitudes we show.

Perhaps we're deceived about this as much as anything else. We just don't seem to see how our attitudes and actions toward other people eventually get turned back upon us when we're the ones who get into trouble or when we're the object of scrutiny. All of us are going to get into trouble at some point in life. Someone we're connected to is going to let us down or get involved into something that makes them the object of criticism or scorn or brings embarrassment and disappointment to us. Mark that down. If you don't mess up at some point in your life, your spouse, your children, or your parents may. When that happens, we usually want people to be as merciful and generous as possible with us. While the people of God can never condone sin or look the other way when evil is committed as though there is nothing wrong with it, we would hope that when scandal enters into our home or our life, people would be concerned enough about us and love us enough to try to help us get back up and not merely condemn us and walk away. But if you're going through life steeped in pride and self-righteousness, if you look down your nose and display an indignant and holier-than-thou attitude toward others, if you gossip about other's sins and display a harsh, condescending attitude toward others when they're down, you're sowing seed that one day you will reap.

Matthew 5:7 “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”

Luke 6:35-37 “But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:”

That’s often misunderstood. It doesn’t mean that we turn a blind eye to sin and refuse to rebuke sin or shun the influence of sin. Not at all! But it does affect how we deal with the sinner. It means that we show a compassionate spirit toward him, reaching out to help him and lift him up instead of knocking him down. It means that we apply the same standard and the same treatment that we would hope would be applied to us. We should be as gentle and entreating as we want others to be with us. The person who stands before God and says, *I’m thankful I’m not like these vile sinners* is not the one who will stand before God justified, as Jesus once said.

Luke 18:11-14 “The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

We’d do well in our relations to those about us to remember that we’ll reap what we have sown. The rod we use to beat others can just as easily be used to beat us. The standard we apply to others will be applied to us. God forbid that we justify sin, but God help us to love sinners enough to lead them to Calvary and the Lamb of God, who can take their sins away.

We’ve dealt with much of the negative aspect of sowing and reaping today. You may be dealing with the consequences of choices in your life up to this point. You also know that you can plant seeds in the garden of life this very day that will reap a harvest of just the opposite. You can plant the seed of gospel obedience and faith and reap an eternity of joy and reward in the presence of God. You can know peace and the forgiveness of your sins. You can know the friendship of God and He will help you in the struggles you may be dealing with in your life as a result of the life you’ve lived.

We want to invite you to obey the gospel today. We can help you learn what the gospel teaches that you need to do in order to be saved and help you take those steps and we want to do that

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