

Sowing and Reaping
Gal 6:6-10; Prov 3:3-12

As we start a new year let's begin it with the end in mind.
There is an important principle of reality that comes into play – **SOWING AND REAPING**.
You see it in life, in agriculture, in relationships, and in the spiritual realm.
How many of you have or will plant a garden?

What will you reap??

Have you ever planted beans and gotten corn? Cabbage and gotten tomatoes? Squash and gotten watermelon?

Scripture gives a basic principle:

6 The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches *him*. **7** Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. **8** For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. **9** Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. **10** So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

Now, at first this almost sounds like Paul is contradicting what he has taught us elsewhere in Galatians. Throughout Galatians Paul has explained that the gospel, is that God gives us not what we deserve, but what Christ deserved in our place. As a gift. But these verses almost sound like Paul is introducing the principle of karma at the end—the good you do will come back on you. So, sow good karma so you can reap good karma later or something like that. But that is the wrong way to read this. Paul is simply reminding us of something we all know to be true, a principle, a law God has built into the very fabric of the universe: what you sow, you reap.

Let's begin with the end in mind.

I like how Andy Stanley explains this, Paul says what we really all know intuitively: life is connected. Where you are today is a result of decisions you made yesterday, and where you will be tomorrow is connected to what you do today. There is a relationship between your current irresponsibility and what you can expect in the days and weeks and months to come.

We must realize what Paul doesn't say here. He doesn't say, "People reap what they sow—unless they ask for forgiveness." See, forgiveness doesn't erase what you've sown. I run into this all the time as a pastor. Someone comes to me and says, "Andy, I'm doing my best." And I have to say, "I'm glad you're doing your best now, but for five years you didn't do your best. That was sowing. Now you're reaping from those years, and doing your best now doesn't erase all the sowing you did then."

You see, you can get forgiveness of sins and still have to suffer its consequences.

- If I **PIG OUT** during the holiday, I can ask forgiveness for my gluttony, and God will give it, but that is not going to make the weight magically fall off. You can get forgiveness for your sin, but you can't un-sin. Even when God forgives us our actions have consequences.

That's what Paul is saying:

WHATEVER you sow you will reap. If you sow tomatoes, you'll not get broccoli, but tomatoes.

Whatever you sow, you WILL reap. The seed may lie in the ground with no apparent effect for a while, but it will come up.

So the question for early January 2018 is, "What are you sowing?" **YOU WILL REAP IT.**

HEAR THE SOBER WARNING OF THIS TEXT:

7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked

Why does he say this? Because we are so prone to thinking that we can pull one over on God. "It won't happen to me." "I won't get caught" ... "It's just this once" ... "What's the harm? Who will know?"

Those are statements of self-deception.

Don't deceive yourself, and don't let others deceive you – God IS NOT MOCKED. He is not fooled. You can't sow one thing and reap another. It applies to agriculture and to the process of moral decisions and consequences. The moral universe has laws or principles. It really doesn't require a belief in God to see this. You learn this as a child. What do your parents tell you, "If you want to have a friend, then??? Be a friend" You reap what you sow.

Paul picks up on this principle and applies it to our life in the Spirit. What you sow to the Spirit you will reap from him.

This is similar to the metaphor he used in chapter 5: where he told us the quality of our fruits is determined by the depths of our roots:

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please

Drive your roots deeper in the Spirit and by the Spirit you'll bear the fruits of righteousness and a harvest of the Spirit.

This is true regarding the flesh as well. V.8 If you sow to the flesh you reap "destruction/corruption" = decay, ruin, shrivel, wither.

The book of Proverbs is all about how sowing to please the flesh reaps decay and corruption.

Sowing to the flesh leads to decay. That's going to be true for...

*...lying—every time you do it, it gets easier to do and it tears as the fabric of relationships

*... gossip- once you start, it gets easier and it creates decay in trust.

*...pride... every time you act on pride, it feels more natural, until you are basically a ridiculous narcissist who doesn't realize how ridiculous you sound to everyone else. I've heard it said pride is a strange disease...

*... envy and it breaks the fabric of contentment and creates bitterness.

That's true for any sin: Act on it, and it becomes even more a part of you.

• Righteousness works this way also. The more you act on righteousness, the more it becomes a part of you.

Jesus says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness; for they shall be satisfied." When you feed an appetite it gets bigger, so feed your hunger for God.

Though we are physical creatures who live in a "material world" (thanks Madonna), we are also spiritual creatures made in God's image. This means that we find our deepest satisfaction in relationship with Him, not things or other people.

When we sow to the Spirit, to that which is eternal, to righteousness, we shall be satisfied. It may be a while, but when we live with the ultimate end in view, it changes things.

Let me give you...

5 Biblical Laws of the Harvest ...

Today we'll get the overview, then next week we'll look at some specific areas of application.

Based off Paul's teaching here in Galatians and 2 Corinthians. (This list is compiled with the help of James MacDonald, J.D. Greear, Andy Stanley, and Tim Keller.)

Law 1: The harvest is limited to the planting. If you don't sow it, you can't reap it.

Law 2: The harvest comes later than the planting. The results are not immediate, so we can be deceived into thinking we've gotten away with it. What you reaped in 2017 was the result of what was sown earlier in the year, or even years before.

Law 3: The harvest is greater than the planting.

In the harvest, what comes back to you is always greater than what you sowed.

Here is something sobering - It's true with how you raise your kids.

EX: Billy Sunday—the professional baseball player turned evangelist—used to say: **For every 1 lap you take around the devil's track, your kid will take 7.**

(BTW, I know sometimes a kid walks away and it has nothing to do with that, but I've seen it over and over during my 35+ years in ministry)

Many Christian parents are surprised when their kids go off to college and walk away from the faith. And they always say, "But we raised them in church." Yes, but church and your walk with God weren't that important to them. They came sporadically. They didn't volunteer. They weren't in a small group. They didn't do missions together or read the Bible or pray together. Their kids weren't involved in the student ministry, and if they were the parents weren't really plugged in. They frequently missed church for sports events or dance or trips to the beach. They raised them around God, but with God as only a 2nd tier priority. And that multiplied in their kid's life, so when they went to college they left the faith behind because they figured getting up and going to church, or living a pure and God-pleasing life in the face of such a hostile culture was just not worth the hassle.

Their half-committed heart multiplied in their kids.

Some of us are going to learn this principle of harvest and planting in different ways this year—Good and Bad

Some will lean into the Word, just a little bit more, and you'll see a harvest greater than you expected. Even a small increase of scriptural input will result in seeing your heart come alive to God.

You're going to practice sowing seeds of repentance and forgiveness in your relationships, and you'll see it bear fruit in ways that will surprise you.

Sadly, some may let up on sowing to the Spirit, "just a bit", and it will lead to more rotten fruit than you expect. **DON'T BE DECEIVED; God is not Mocked.**

Law 4: The harvest is proportional to the planting.

It is better to give than receive. What is sown comes back in a greater amount, but it is still proportional.

Look at this: "Whoever is kind to the poor is lending to the Lord—the benefit of his gift will return to him in abundance." Prov. 19:17 God gives an incredible Return on Investment.

Law 5: We can't do anything about last year's harvest, but we can change this year's.

• The old proverb states: The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago. The second-best time is today.

The harvest you want to see next January must be planted now, and cultivated throughout the year. The harvest you want to see in 2,5,10 years needs to be planted now.

HOW TO SOW TO THE FLESH

We pretty much know how to do that: Anyone need help with this???

-Ignore God's truth, ignore corporate worship and fellowship, or just be sporadic in it,

-Ignore generosity and giving

-Be preoccupied with your own agenda and worldly wisdom. Fill your mind and heart with the values, thoughts, words, and habits of the flow of culture.

“turn off your mind, relax and float downstream” Tomorrow never knows- Revolver

HOW TO SOW TO THE SPIRIT

I want to borrow from Tim Keller five traits that comprise a wise, godly life. The sixth is mine (Apostle Paul's). They function both as means to becoming wise and godly as well as signs that you are growing into such a life. Most are derived from the book of Proverbs, chapter 3. I'll read Prov 3:3-12 today and jump to #6, then we'll come back next week for the rest.

PROVERBS 3:3-12

THE sixth habit for sowing to the Spirit is....

6. In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thess 5

In my life this has been a primary factor in keeping my heart in line with the Spirit.

Eph 5

15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil. 17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; 20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;

Being filled with the Spirit and giving thanks go together.

Is there an area in your life where you need to sow to the Spirit by giving thanks – even, or especially, when you don't FEEL thankful?

It's how we handle those areas that will determine what we sow and what we reap.

Remember the man who said to Jesus, “Lord I believe, help my unbelief”. **That movement of faith, even the size of a mustard seed can result in a harvest of righteousness, peace, and joy in your life.**

The one time the law was reversed was with Jesus. He sowed perfect righteousness, but got Hell, for us, who sow nothing but sin.

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