

The Law of Sowing and Reaping

By
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The spiritual law of sowing and reaping applies to every man, woman or child whether they know about it or not, whether they believe it or not, and whether they are a born again, regenerated believer in Jesus Christ or not.

A person doesn't have to know about, believe, or understand a natural law, like the law of gravity, in order to be subject to that natural law, and a person doesn't need to know about, believe, or understand a spiritual law in order to be subject to that spiritual law. It merely exists, and we are subject to it, even if we are in denial of it.

The spiritual law of sowing and reaping, as revealed by Paul in his letter to the Galatian church is one of these:

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh... (the natural man without influence from the Holy Spirit)... will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. Galatians 6:7 Amplified (inserts and emphasis are the author's)

The farming metaphor is appropriate, because the "crop" (result) of his farming activity is directly related to the specific "seed" that he sows. Thus he gets what he plants. He can't plant corn seed and expect to get wheat. He will get what he plants.

The "seed" metaphor in this spiritual law simply stands for the things we do, which are the choices we make in our thoughts, words, and acts, choices that result either in a crop of "corruption" (the picture is one of death and decay) or a crop of "life" (the picture is one of life that is compatible with the transformed eternal life in Christ).

Outwardly the "life" crop looks like faith-filled love, with a deep concern for the welfare of others, an automatic response of doing the right thing even when the right thing will cause us personal discomfort, of being content and patient and kind, of being a source of encouragement for others, of deliberately and steadfastly seeking to know and respond to the will of God in all our circumstances. And this "life" crop will be accompanied by the grace (empowerment) of God so that we are not limited by our natural abilities and inclinations, and we have genuine peace of mind no matter what is happening around us because of the proven trust we have in God.

The seed sown to please the flesh, on the other hand, are those thoughts, words, and actions resulting from man's own natural faculties without any influence from the Holy Spirit (as our spiritual conscience) and possibly with influence from spiritual forces that oppose the influence of God in our lives.

“Flesh,” in this usage, is not just the physical body. It is all of man’s natural faculties apart from any influence from the Holy Spirit. Sowing to please the flesh then is defined as all the thoughts, words, and actions we make in response to meeting our psychological and physical needs on the basis of our own understanding (which we arrogantly assume is the correct or appropriate response no matter how many times it has failed us in the past).

In other words, doing whatever makes us feel better or whatever we think (with our extremely limited intellects) is best for ourselves in the circumstances. If we’ve got it all together, we might be satisfying our psychological and physical needs fairly well. If we haven’t got it all together then we may be trying to meet those needs in totally inappropriate and destructive ways.

Either way, we are deceived.

Essentially, all of our decisions, our words, and our actions are “seeds” that will produce a “crop” (the resulting consequence of our “seed”).

This may be short term, like some husband or wife blurting out something hateful in the heat of the moment, causing the other to pull away from the relationship on an emotional, physical, and/or social level that causes further damage to both. Or it may be long-term like an addiction or a moral failure with heavy consequences.

The law of sowing and reaping states that if we are sowing thoughts, words, and actions to please ourselves (appropriately or inappropriately, it doesn’t matter) apart from the influence of the Holy Spirit, our “seed” is going to ultimately produce a “crop” of corruption (a word in the Greek that is used of decaying flesh).

The warning he gives us is to not be deceived, and the deception Paul is warning us about is that we believe that our “seeds” (our thoughts and our “wisdom”) sown to the flesh will not produce corruption. This is like those crazies who think they can fly, so they jump off the building and flap their arms. They would not have jumped if they were not convinced in their own minds that they could fly. But the “crop” of their “seed” is to splatter like a pumpkin on the pavement below.

“Sowing” to the Spirit is to deliberately seek the influence of the Spirit, our spiritual conscience, if we are regenerated, born again believers, in all that we think, say, and do. Then the “seed” of our thoughts, words, and actions will produce a “crop” of life. This is not physical life, but the overcoming, transformed life that the Spirit gives to those who are tuned in and responsive to the Spirit. (See **“The Law of the Spirit of Life”**)

I spent most of my years sowing “seeds” to the flesh, and I have reaped a lot of corruption (i.e. bad results). The bad news is that bad seed that you and I have sown, and any that you and I continue to sow, does not just impact us individually. It impacts all of those close to us, like weeds in a garden, including some who cannot protect themselves from being co-inheritors of the bad “crop.” And it grieves me to think that anything I think, say, or do might produce a crop of rotten flesh for my friends, my family, my children or my grandchildren to eat.

It is not unusual for me to hear fellow Christians blaming God for some bad crop in their life, as if the spiritual law of sowing and reaping is supposed to be suspended just for them.

I had someone tell me one time that he and his family stopped going to church, because his older brother was killed in a car wreck. When I questioned him closely, he

revealed that the older brother, who already had one DWI, was intoxicated at the time and ran head-on into a light pole.

The family blamed God, and they rejected Him for not protecting their son from the son's own seeds of death. This may even have been a defense mechanism for rejecting the guilt they felt for sowing their own seeds of corruption into their son's life or for not recognizing and warning their son about the seeds he was sowing to the flesh.

That is not to say that men and women of faith cannot cover others in prayer from the bad seeds being sown, especially their own families and particularly their own children and grandchildren. But, ultimately, everyone is responsible for the seeds they sow, and everyone will individually reap the harvest of the seeds they have sown.

If we assess ourselves honestly (a difficult thing to do in the best of circumstances) we will admit that the things we are doing (the seeds of the flesh we are planting) are not working out as well as we wish they would, but we keep on doing the same things, expecting a different result, which is one definition of "insanity".

But it is never too late to begin sowing the good seeds of faith and obedience as we learn to seek His divinely revealed will in our thoughts, words, and actions.

A passage I have always loved, especially in the Amplified version, is in the third chapter of Colossians, because it thoroughly explains the source of both the "bad" seed that produces crops of corruption and death, and the "good" seed producing crops of blessing.

IF THEN you have been raised with Christ [to a new life, thus sharing His resurrection from the dead],..... set your minds and keep them set on what is above (the higher things), not on the things that are on the earth. Colossians 3:2 Amplified

The first step in learning to sow seeds of "life" is to find the source of those seeds and to deliberately seek them. Romans 12:1,2, one of the most important passages given to me by the Lord in my own discipleship, tells us that we must first deliberately, and with ongoing, watchful perseverance, STOP feeding on the conforming "seed" influences of corruption.

I don't have to elaborate on this. Everyone reading this is instantly aware of the conforming "seed" influences of corruption that have been or still exist in their own lives.

Then, having put a stop to the conforming influences of corruption in the world, we must deliberately, and with ongoing, watchful perseverance, SEEK the life yielding "seeds" of the Word of life that will renew of our minds.

So kill (deaden, deprive of power) the evil desire lurking in your members [those animal impulses and all that is earthly in you that is employed in sin]: sexual vice, impurity, sensual appetites, unholy desires, and all greed and covetousness, for that is idolatry (the deifying of self and other created things instead of God). ... (which Paul calls drinking the cup of demons in 1 Corinthians 10:1)...

But now put away and rid yourselves [completely] of all these things: anger, rage, bad feeling toward others, curses and slander, and foulmouthed abuse and shameful utterances from your lips! ... (the bad seeds of corruption and death).

Do not lie to one another, for you have stripped off the old (unregenerate) self with its evil practices,...(and its bad seed of corruption and death). Colossians 3:5, 7,8 Amplified (insert is the author's)

The following beautifully describes the decision point at which we decide either to sow to the flesh and reap a harvest of corruption or to the Spirit (the “Umpire”) and reap a harvest of life.

And let the peace (soul harmony which comes) from Christ rule (act as umpire continually) in your hearts [deciding and settling with finality all questions that arise in your minds in that peaceful state] to which as [members of Christ's] one body you were also called [to live]. And be thankful (appreciative), [giving praise to God always]. Colossians 3:15 Amplified (emphasis is the author's)

The “umpire” is our spiritual conscience connected to the Holy Spirit. All men have a natural conscience, but the natural conscience is shaped primarily by our conformance with the social sources and influences in our lives. A cannibal brought up in a society where cannibalism is not only acceptable but seen as a positive and necessary action, will participate in cannibalism without a second thought.

But that same cannibal, if he is regenerated by grace through faith in Jesus Christ now has a spiritual conscience connected to the Holy Spirit, and his choice concerning whether or not he will participate in cannibalism is now impacted by the influence of God's Holy Spirit.

At this point he is able to choose, and he will either choose to sow seeds to the flesh and continue to participate in cannibalism or sow seeds to the Spirit (the “umpire”) from which he will reap a harvest of blessing and life....

Let the word [spoken by] Christ (the Messiah) have its home [in your hearts and minds] and dwell in you in [all its] richness, as you teach and admonish and train one another in all insight and intelligence and wisdom [in spiritual things, and as you sing] psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, making melody to God with [His] grace in your hearts. Colossians 3:16 Amplified

Our choice is no different. We either deliberately take drastic measures (whatever it takes) to shut down the source of the bad seeds sown to please the natural self without the influence of the Holy Spirit, and deliberately and desperately seek the source of good seeds sown to please the Spirit. Or we simply yield to the source of corrupt seeds (many of which are disguised with sugar coating) and allow the corrupt seeds to produce a crop of decay and death.

THERE IS NO ESCAPING THIS CHOICE. We are all, believers and unbelievers, regenerated or degenerated, making this choice continually whether we are aware of it or not. Therefore, to do nothing is to deliberately continue sowing seeds to please the flesh, seeds that WILL yield a crop of corruption and death.

But Paul describes the opposite process of sowing life-yielding seed as a “living sacrifice”:

I APPEAL to you therefore, brethren, and beg of you in view of [all] the mercies of God...(already manifested toward you)...., to make a decisive dedication of

your bodies [presenting all your members and faculties] as a living sacrifice, holy (devoted, consecrated) and well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable (rational, intelligent) service and spiritual worship.

Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs], but be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind [by its new ideals and its new attitude], so that you may prove [for yourselves]...(through the sowing of life-giving seeds of faith and the reaping of a harvest of righteousness and blessing)...the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you]. Romans 12:1,2 Amplified (emphasis and inserts are the author's)

In this amazing passage, with a depth of understanding that is still being revealed to me, we learn that the will of God for our lives, which we know, according to Jeremiah 29:11 is “for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope,” will be revealed to us BY our lives if we are sowing to please the Spirit.

And we know that the opposite is true if we continue sow seeds to please the flesh.

By the grace of God we have been given this choice. So, don't waste it.