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Sowing And Reaping

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"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" (Galatians 6:7,8).

Galatians has much to say about the flesh and the Spirit as contrary to each other. When one walks in the Spirit, he does not fulfill the lust of the flesh. The works of the flesh are separate, individual acts: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. The fruit of the Spirit—not fruits—are all of one, but manifold in expression: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law. If we are led of the Spirit, we are not under the law, that is, there is no law against doing what the Spirit leads us to do.

The word "flesh" is used both in a physical and in a moral sense. When used in a physical sense, it means the body. When used in the moral sense, "flesh" is always sinful and means human nature in its depravity. "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:8,9). "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh),

dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom. 7:18). "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13:14). "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24). "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:17). We have in our Scripture passage:

1. A Solemn Reminder. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked." We are deceived if we think we can beat God. "God is not mocked." The word for "mocked" comes from "mukter", which means nose, and means to turn the nose up at someone. We need not turn our nose up at God. Other translations: "God is not to be sneered at," "God is not to be scoffed at," etc. We turn our nose up at someone we disdain and disregard. But God cannot be disregarded. He is going to have His way. You cannot elbow God out of your life and do as you please, at least, without suffering for it.

2. An Unalterable Law. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Look at this law in the natural realm. Everything brings forth fruit after its kind. If you sow wheat, you will not reap a crop of barley. If you plant corn, you will harvest corn, not potatoes, or tomatoes, or something else.

Now, this same law operates in the realm of

morals. Man is a moral being, and all his thoughts and words and deeds have a moral quality—they are either good or bad. What is sown to the flesh is bad and nothing but corruption can come from it. And what is sown to the Spirit is good, and the harvest will be everlasting life. Everlasting life here does not refer to salvation but to rewards. It is the result of doing good. We are to be rewarded for our good works, but we are not saved by them.

Human life can be lived on two levels or planes: the level of the flesh and the level of the Spirit. We can sow to the flesh, or we can sow to the Spirit. And whatever we sow, that we must reap. You cannot sow one thing and reap another in the moral realm any more than in the natural.

SOWING TO THE FLESH

What does it mean to sow to the flesh? Remember, there is a moral quality in our thoughts, words, and deeds. And the seed of all these things is in itself—like produces like. Sow a thought, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny.

A man is sowing to the flesh when he follows the lust or desires of human nature; when he yields to the baser passions or appetites. It is evident that the drunkard has sown to the flesh when you see him staggering on the street or lying in the gutter. Hospitals and prisons are filled with people who have sown to the flesh. There are many ways to sow to the flesh, and some of them are not as self-evident as that of the drunkard or libertine or gambler. A man may be sowing to the flesh while doing that which will bring human praise. Doing a good thing with a wrong motive is sowing to the flesh. The Pharisees are examples of that—they gave alms and prayed for self-glory—they did it with a view to their standing among men—and they were living for the present—for the things of this world just as truly as those who live vulgar and vicious lives. A preacher is sowing to the flesh when he preaches to please men and win their applause. Anybody is sowing to the flesh when he lives for the temporal and material things of life, without due thought of the life beyond. A man may sow to the flesh and get a present reward. Jesus said of the Pharisees: "They have their reward."

Esau is an example of sowing to the flesh. He despised his birthright in preferring a mess of pottage—the birthright involved future blessings; the pottage was a present delight. Esau was living for the present without any thought of the future. His sin was not in satisfying his hunger, but it was putting physical hunger above his spiritual birthright. And Esau is called a profane person. That does not mean a man of profanity; it does not mean he swore; it means he put things above God; his life was filled with carnal interests.

A man may be pursuing a perfectly legitimate profession, such as law, or medicine, or teaching, or mining, and yet sow to the flesh. He may be an honest lawyer, a sympathetic doctor, or an honest mechanic, and yet live within the framework of a profitable present life with no view of anything beyond the grave.

SOWING TO THE SPIRIT

To sow to the Spirit, we must first of all have the Holy Spirit. We must be born again—born of the Spirit. No unregenerate person can sow to the Spirit. He can do nothing good with the right motive as God sees it.

In sowing to the Spirit, we must be conscious of our own inefficiency—we must be humble. We must realize our sufficiency is of God. We must realize the need of the Spirit's leading. This will beget prayer. We should ever pray to be led of the Spirit.

In sowing to the Spirit, we must give consideration to the will of God. The flesh is rebellious, for the carnal mind is not subject to the will of God. In sowing to the Spirit, we regulate our lives by the Word of God. And to do this, we must know the Word of God. The Holy Spirit does not ignore the Word of God. He comforts by the Word; He guides by the Word; He teaches by the Word; He rebukes by the Word.

Dr. Shields tells that when A. J. Gordon was pastor in Boston, there was a certain man who never missed prayer meeting, and like some other people, always prayed the same prayer, and always closed it by saying something like this: "And grant Lord that in the end, we may hear thee say, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joys of thy Lord, Amen.'" On one occasion, when he sat down, Dr. Gordon is reputed to have said, "Now brother, I have heard that prayer often enough, and I do not want to hear it anymore. It is no use of your praying like that, and asking the Lord at the end to say, 'Well done thou good and faithful servant.'" What you need to do is, by His grace, be good and faithful and never mind the rest." He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

Our Scripture gives a word of encouragement. "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9). The reaping may be a long way off, and we may be tempted to get discouraged and quit before harvest time. The believer's rewards are generally represented as being given when the Lord comes.

It is not wrong to sow for profit, but when we sow to the Spirit, the profit will be reaped in everlasting life—it will be reaped in the world to come. "For bodily exercise profiteth little:

but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (I Tim. 4:8).

The Smoker's Lament

I trusted the Lord, accepted His Son,
Then quit my vile habits, all except one.

I felt that a Christian should clean up his life,
Abstain from all worldliness, wickedness, strife.

So I quit playing cards, gave up my beer;
Quit gambling and dancing in less than a year.

I conquered all these, but one lingers yet
I can't seem to master that vile cigarette.

I thought many times I'd just taper off,
And maybe get rid of that ominous cough.

So I tapered and suffered but always came back
From two smokes a day to the usual pack.

I tried all the filters the poison to purge
But they all seemed to sharpen that nicotine urge.

Cigarettes are my master; I yield as a slave,
I'll never be free till I land in the grave.

What they cost me in money can't compare with my health,
For life's of more value than all of the wealth.

My lungs are congested, my heart-beat is slow
I've tried to quit smoking, but one thing I know—

I'm a slave to old "NICK" drinking life's bitter cup,
But I cannot somehow give my cigarettes up.

The curses attend me, they're not just a few
The children I influence are smoking them, too!

Butts in the ashtray, table and sink—

Every room in my house is beginning to stink.

Betty and Tommy and Susie and Jack,

Each of them daily are smoking a pack.

This "innocent" habit is keeping me broke,

Family prayers are impossible in cigarette smoke!

—David A. Beam

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