

BIBLICAL INSIGHTS #137:
GOD’S THREE LAWS OF SOWING AND REAPING
(A SERMON OUTLINE)

By John Temples

Gal 6:7-9—"Do not be deceived; God is not mocked. For whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart."

1. THIS PASSAGE TALKS ABOUT SOWING AND REAPING.

- a. These are terms some of us may not be familiar with.
- b. They are terms related to farming.
- c. "Sowing" refers to planting a crop, sowing a seed.
- d. "Reaping" means harvesting—gathering in the crop you sowed.

2. PAUL, HOWEVER, IS USING THESE TERMS FIGURATIVELY.

- a. It's like the parable of the sower.
- b. Jesus spoke of a sower who went out to sow, and He talked about the various kinds of crops that came up.
- c. But he wasn't giving an agricultural lesson.
- d. He was speaking of planting the seed of the word of God in someone's mind.
- e. In fact, He said in Luke 8:11, "The seed is the word of God."

3. IN GAL 6, PAUL WAS ALSO USING "SOWING" AND "REAPING" TO TEACH A SPIRITUAL LESSON.

- a. He talked about "sowing to the flesh" and "sowing to the Spirit."
- b. What did he mean? He was talking about the way people live their lives.

- c. By “sowing,” he meant *the sum total of your life activities--everything you do, say, or think*.
- d. Every waking hour, you and I are “sowing”—doing things, saying things, interacting with other people.
- e. Paul says we are either sowing to the flesh or sowing to the Spirit.
 - i. “Sowing to the flesh” means living only for this life, thinking that life is only for satisfying your fleshly desires. (Compare our expression, “sowing one’s wild oats.”)
 - ii. “Sowing to the Spirit” means living by God’s rules, following God’s laws and trying to live for Him.

4. WELL, IF SOWING IN GAL 6 MEANS THE SUM TOTAL OF YOUR LIFE’S ACTIVITIES, WHAT DOES REAPING MEAN?

- a. Reaping refers to the consequences of everything you do, say, or think—the results of your thoughts, words, and deeds.
- b. Paul is saying that there is a connection between sowing and reaping.
- c. In fact, they are so closely connected that we might call this text “God’s Three Laws of Sowing and Reaping.”
- d. In this lesson, we are going to discover what those three laws are, and the ramifications for us.

5. THE FIRST LAW IS: IF YOU SOW, YOU WILL REAP.

- a. V 9 says, “We shall reap.”
- b. If you plant something, something grows.
- c. If you say something, or do something, there will be a result, a consequence of some kind.
- d. Every cause has an effect; every action causes a reaction; for any sowing, there will be a reaping.

6. IT’S SOBERING TO THINK THAT EVERYTHING YOU DO, SAY, OR THINK HAS AN EFFECT OR RESULT.

- a. A lot of people don't believe that—they think they can say or do something and nothing will happen; they can say something, and it has no effect.
- b. Their motto is, "No harm done."
- c. Paul says of such people that they are *deceived*—they think they can mock God and get away with it.
 - i. It's like the man who jumped off the Empire State building.
 - ii. He passed floor after floor, and after every floor, he said, "Well, so far, so good!"
- d. There's another way people can be deceived: there is usually a time delay between the sowing and the reaping.
 - i. A farmer doesn't plant corn and go out the next day to harvest it.
 - ii. Someone's aunt Sophie might have "smoked all her life and lived to be 100," or we might know people who lived dangerously and seemed not to reap any adverse consequences. ("Seemed" is the operative word.)
 - iii. Some might not even reap a full crop until after death.
 - iv. The rich man in Luke 16 "fared sumptuously" his whole life—he lived and died rich and well fed.
- e. But God's law still stands: *If you sow something, you will reap something.*

7. THE SECOND LAW: YOU WILL REAP WHAT YOU SOW.

- a. The crop you get will be of the same nature and kind as the seed you planted.
- b. This law is readily seen in nature.
 - i. If you plant peas, you get peas.
 - ii. If you plant corn, you get corn.
 - iii. Like begets like; things reproduce after their own kind.

- c. That's what v 8 is telling us: Sow to the flesh, reap fleshly consequences or punishments; sow to the Spirit, reap spiritual things and rewards.
- d. It is impossible to sow fleshly things and reap spiritual things, and vice versa.
- e. You can't live like the devil and go to heaven.
- f. As far back as Job's time, people realized this principle.
 - i. Job 4:8—"As I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same."
 - ii. That law hasn't changed since Job's time, and it won't.
- g. But people keep trying!
 - i. They know God's laws have been true since the beginning of time, but they are going to be exceptions.
 - ii. They know the Bible says liars and fornicators will go to hell, but God won't send them to hell.
 - iii. Smoking might give you lung cancer, but it won't give me lung cancer.
- h. Here is a news flash: God is not going to suspend His law for you.
- i. Whatever a man sows, THAT (something of the same nature) he will reap.
 - i. "But God, I deserve a reward, because I had good intentions."
 - ii. Listen: Paul does not say you reap what you meant to sow, or what you claimed you sowed, or what you wish you had sown.
- j. No, he says you will reap what (in like kind) you sow.
- k. So here are the first two laws: if you sow, you will reap; and you will reap what you sow.

8. AND HERE IS THE THIRD AND MOST POWERFUL LAW: YOU WILL REAP MORE THAN YOU SOW.

- a. One of the most amazing phenomena in nature is the multiplying power of seed.

- b. You can take one tiny tomato seed and plant it, and it will produce a giant tomato plant with dozens of tomatoes and hundreds of new seeds.
- c. Jesus spoke of this phenomenon of nature in Luke 13:19—“[The kingdom of God] is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a large tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches.”

9. THIS “REAPING MORE THAN YOU SOW” IS ALSO TRUE IN THE MORAL AND SPIRITUAL REALM.

- a. Hosea said it this way in Hosea 8:7—“They sow the wind, they reap the whirlwind.”
- b. You sow a *thought*, you reap an *action*; sow an *action*, reap a *habit*; sow a *habit*, reap a *character*.
- c. Sow a single act of sin, and the emotional and spiritual consequences will be in multiple proportion to the act.
- d. To put it another way, sin will:
 - i. Take you farther than you intended to go;
 - ii. Keep you longer than you wanted to stay;
 - iii. And cost you more than you intended to pay.

10. READ GAL 6:8 AGAIN: “FOR HE WHO SOWS TO HIS FLESH WILL REAP CORRUPTION.”

- a. What is sowing to the flesh? Well, one definition of it can be found just one chapter back, chapter 5.
- b. There, Paul gives a list of works of the flesh:
 - i. Adultery, fornication, uncleanness;
 - ii. Licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery;
 - iii. Hatred, contentions, jealousies;
 - iv. Outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions;
 - v. Heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like.”
- c. Sadly, to a lot of people, these are just things they do for FUN.
- d. And what does Paul say will be the result? *Corruption*. (A strong word.)

- e. What is corruption?
 - i. The Greek word refers to the putrid and repulsive condition of a dead and decaying body.
 - ii. Spiritually, it means eternal damnation and ruin.
- f. So you mean to tell me that a brief time of living it up with the pleasures of sin will yield a harvest of eternal damnation? Yes, because of the third law: You reap MORE than you sow.

11. BUT THANKFULLY, THIS PRINCIPLE IS ALSO TRUE IN DOING GOOD.

- a. Gal 6:8 says, “He who sows to the Spirit will reap everlasting life.”
- b. What is “sowing to the Spirit”?
- c. Again, back in chapter 5, we read: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”
- d. Hey—those are the things Christians do for fun!
- e. So if I spend this short life obeying God, doing good, and being kind and gentle, I will yield a harvest of eternal life with God in heaven? Yes. (That’s reaping more than you sow.)
- f. Another way to look at it is this: If I live as the Holy Spirit directs me in this life, I will have the best possible life here, plus eternal life after I die.

12. PAUL SPOKE OF THIS MULTIPLYING EFFECT OF SOWING AND REAPING IN ANOTHER PASSAGE, 2 COR 9:6.

- a. “He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”
- b. He was talking about giving, but it is true in any realm.
 - i. You can sow a good deed, a kind word, and reap a friend for life.
 - ii. Study hard in high school and college, and reap a lifetime of knowledge and productivity (not to mention income).

- iii. Save a little money along and practice financial discipline, and you can reap financial independence.

13. MY FRIENDS, GOD'S WORD DOES NOT LIE.

- a. And part of its power lies in the simplicity of its illustrations.
- b. All you have to do is look at a field of flowers or vegetables to realize the force and truthfulness of what Paul said here.
- c. Galatians 6:7-9 reveals God's Three Laws of Sowing and Reaping:
 - i. *If you sow, you will reap.* Every act has an impact, every word and deed has a consequence. For everything you do, there will be a price to pay or a reward to reap.
 - ii. *You will reap what you sow.* Everything reproduces after its kind. You can't sow worldly seed and reap a heavenly crop.
 - iii. *You will reap more than you sow.* The good you do will multiply; so will the evil.

14. ONE MORE THING TO REMEMBER:

- a. You have no choice about sowing. If you're awake, you're sowing. If you are breathing, talking, or interacting with others, you're sowing.
 - i. Your only choice is what kind of seed you're going to sow.
 - ii. You are either sowing to the flesh or sowing to the Spirit.
- b. You can sow a seed today that can have everlasting, joyful results.
- c. You can obey the gospel or make your life right with God right now.
(INVITATION)