

THE LAW OF THE HARVEST

Galatians 6:6-10, ***“Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. 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. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”***

This passage contains seven principles that explain this “Law of the Harvest.” These seven principles point the way to true spiritual prosperity and the life God blesses. Before we begin, think about two questions.

- 1) What have you been sowing?
- 2) Are you happy with what you’ve been reaping?

Let’s now look together at the seven principles that make up the “Law of the Harvest:”

(1) Wherever you receive spiritual benefit, there you owe a spiritual debt.

“Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor” (verse 6). This is a very general statement of responsibility with a very wide application. All of us receive “instruction in the word” from a variety of sources. It may be from a pastor, from a Bible School teacher, from a small group leader or from a personal mentor. And many of us are instructed in the word by the books we read and the music we listen to.

The point is not where you receive the instruction but how you respond to it. If we want to reap a harvest of blessing, we must “share all good things” with those who instruct us in the things of the Lord. We owe a great debt of love and gratitude. And we owe a debt of encouragement and prayer. We may choose to show our support in practical ways but we should always try to acknowledge that debt.

(2) You reap only what you sow.

“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life” (verses 7-8).

Here Paul is thinking about the pathway of God’s blessing for believers so he uses the illustration of sowing and reaping to drive the point home. The explanation goes like this: Since you always reap whatever you sow, generous giving (which is a kind of sowing) results in generous blessing (a kind of reaping). The principle itself is easy to understand. If you plant apple seeds, apple trees are what you get. You can’t plant carrots and expect to harvest corn and you can’t plant wheat and expect to harvest rice. You reap only what you sow. That’s true in the spiritual realm as well.

Picture a country estate with two large fields. One is labeled Flesh, the other is labeled Spirit. Every day we have hundreds of chances to sow in one field or the other. In fact, I think everything we do is either sowing to the flesh or sowing to the Spirit. There is no third alternative. Every word we speak, every step we take, every chance conversation, even the tiniest decision leads us in one direction or the other. This includes what we read, how we dress, and who we hang around with.

Life is a series of choices every day, and every choice is sowing a seed into the Flesh field or sowing a seed into the Spirit field. So don't miss the key point. You can't sow to the flesh all day long and then complain when you reap a harvest of corruption in your life. What did you expect? Did you think you could be angry and bitter and grouchy and irritable and bossy and rude and quick-tempered and then cancel it all with a quick prayer asking for God's blessing? It doesn't work that way. Whatever you sow, you reap. And you reap only what you sow every day. So make sure you are sowing your seeds in the right field if you want to reap a harvest of God's blessings.

(3) You reap far more than what you sow.

This point is closely tied to the preceding one. An acorn is a tiny thing but it contains within itself a mighty, towering oak tree. The size of the seed does not determine the size of the harvest. That's why the text warns on the negative side: "Do not be deceived." It is easy to deceive ourselves, thinking that this principle does not work. You cannot escape the consequences of your actions. Sin always carries a high price tag. You can ignore God. When you think you are getting away with sin, God says, "Judgment Day is coming." You sow to the wind but you reap the whirlwind.

Some think that if no one knows, they have escaped. Or, if it's in the past, it's forgotten forever. Or, if they try to make it up by doing good or being religious, they can avoid punishment. It is not so. God will not be mocked. Sin always leaves its mark in us and on us. You can shoot an arrow into the sky and repent while it is in the air, but that won't stop the arrow from hitting the ground. Repentance pardons your sin but it does not cancel its consequences.

- Sow a thought, reap an action.
- Sow an action, reap a habit.
- Sow a habit, reap a character.
- Sow a character, reap a destiny.

There is good news here as well. The devil pays off in compound interest, but so does God. And His rewards far outweigh the “pleasures of sin for a season.” If we keep on sowing to the Spirit, we will reap the harvest of godly character, answered prayer, a life in harmony with the Lord, and many blessings that come only to those whose ways please the Lord.

(4) Reaping a godly harvest requires patience and persistence.

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (verse 9). Anyone who has ever farmed for a living knows exactly what this verse means. It’s one thing to plant a few tomatoes in your back yard; it’s something else to plant 5,000 acres of wheat. Full-time farming is a year-round task. You start early and you work late, 52 weeks a year.

There is no end of the jobs to be done. Even during the winter there is equipment to maintain and preparation to be made for the upcoming planting season. You don’t get a harvest by accident and you can’t treat it as a weekend hobby. If you want the harvest, you’ve got to work even when you feel like giving up. Persistence, determination are supreme. This is especially true in the spiritual realm. Because we live in a fallen world and deal constantly with fallen people, it’s easy to grow weary and say, “What’s the use?” Sometimes what we need is a little reality check. Here is a short list:

- Life is hard. Deal with it.
- People are obstreperous. Love them anyway.
- Things don't go as we planned. Keep on moving forward.
- People forget to say, "Thank you." Keep helping them anyway.
- People are hardheaded. Share Christ with them.
- Not all your prayers are answered. Keep praying!
- God doesn't do what you think He should do? Trust him anyway!
- You may be scared and filled with fear. Keep believing!
- Your friends criticise you. Do what is right anyway!
- Do you feel like quitting? It's always too soon to quit.

Let us keep on sowing, even if through our tears and with a weary heart. Let's keep on sowing, even in famine. In the end we will rejoice when the harvest finally comes in. Here is all God asks of us: Don't give up! Don't stop! Don't grow weary! Keep on going. There will be a wonderful harvest to come. That harvest will partly come in this life and much of it will come when we finally get to heaven. Who knows? Perhaps we will look down from heaven and find out that we changed someone's life simply because one day we said to them, "Are you ready to carry on?" "Are you ready to follow your dream and never give up?"

(5) We must seize the opportunity before it disappears.

Our passage comes to a very practical end with a word of application: ***"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers"*** (Galatians 6:10). The word "opportunity comes from the Greek word *kairos*, which is sometimes translated "time." However, it's not a word that means the passing of the hours one by one. It refers to those moments in life when a door of opportunity opens before us and we have a choice to make. Will we go through that door or will we hesitate or procrastinate until it closes?

We all have opportunities to do good. Every day there are moments when we can say a word of encouragement. There are times when we can get involved in solving someone's problem if we will only take the time. You may be eating lunch when a co-worker begins to open up about her fears over the future in the light of the economic downturn. But no door stays open forever. Opportunities come and then they go. A sculptor once showed his studio to a friend who spotted a very strange statue. It was the figure of a man with hair completely covering his face and wings on each foot. "What is the name of that statue?" he asked. The sculptor replied, "His name is Opportunity." "Why is his face hidden?" "Because men seldom know when he comes to them." "Why are there wings on his feet?" "Because he is soon gone, and when he departs, he cannot be overtaken."

(6) We owe a debt to the whole world.

Dr. George Washington Carver said it this way: *"How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak. Because someday in life you will have been all of these."* Our calling is to do good to all people. We owe a debt to the whole world. To Jew and Gentile, to young and old, to rich and poor, to the happy and to the sad, to those who please us and to those who displease us. Paul said, "I am a debtor to all men." Because of God's grace to us, we owe something to everyone and the greatest good we can do is to share the greatest news in the world - the gospel of Jesus Christ. People need Jesus! They need to hear the good news that God loves them. They need to know that through the death of Christ, their sins can be forgiven and they can have eternal life as a free gift. Let us do the greatest good and share Christ with anyone who will listen, and while we are at it, let's do any other good that we can as well.

(7) Start with the needs closest to you.

Paul's final instruction is this: We are under a special obligation to show kindness to those who are part of the family of God. I interpret this broadly - not narrowly. Because our faith joins us with Christians everywhere, we have a sacred responsibility to do good to Christians everywhere. That certainly applies to the local church you attend but it reaches out to include other churches in your community, and Christian ministries of all kinds, and to missionaries in distant lands. And on a more personal basis, it means having a godly concern for fellow believers in your own family, on your own block, in your school class, and in the place where you work.

There is another way to say this. If we want to sow good seed, there is a simple way to do it. Start where you are! Start with the needs around you! Start with the people you know and meet and see every day. Then open your eyes to wider horizons. Pray for God to give you open doors. Pray the Jabez prayer. Ask God to give you more so you can do more for the Lord. Look to your left and to your right. Look in front and behind you. Open your eyes and you will see needs on every side. You can't meet them all but you can do something.

Now, I'd like to repeat those two questions I asked in the beginning. (1) What have you been sowing? (2) Are you happy with what you've been reaping? If the answer to the second question is no, what do you plan to do about it? So many of us have been sleepwalking through life, going through the motions, sowing to the flesh, frittering away our opportunities, and ignoring the needs around us. Wake up, and say. *"Lord, shake me up. Do whatever it takes to get my attention. Help me to get busy living for you. Amen."*