

Sermon outline and notes prepared by:  
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## Galatians 6:7-8      “You Reap What You Sow!”

Intro. One day a visitor in a penitentiary passed by a cell where a man was patching his prison garb with a needle and thread. The visitor, wanting to begin a conversation with the prisoner, said, “What are you doing? Sewing?” The prisoner looked up and replied, “No, reaping!” That prisoner realized the truth that I am going to share with you today, “You reap what you sow.”

Notice that Paul begins our text in v.7 by saying, “Do not be deceived....” The apostle was calling on the misguided Galatians to stop being deceived by others, because many of them had been led astray, or “bewitched” (3:1), by false teachers. Today, many are being deceived also. Let me give an example. Today’s dominant viewpoint regarding morality is that there are no moral absolutes. They say that morality is relative to each person, and to each person’s situation.

As a result, many people excuse their sin by saying that what they are doing is not wrong. But Paul warned in v.7, “God is not mocked.” That word means, “to turn up the nose, to ridicule, to sneer at.” This morning we will see that wrong is wrong whether you acknowledge it or not. And do you think you can do wrong and not suffer any consequences? Do you think that God is a weak person, and you can break His moral laws, and mock His supposed inability to do anything in return?

Well if you think that way, or if you know of someone who thinks that way, then this message is for you. Here in our text Paul uses a law of the physical world to illustrate a moral law of the spiritual world. After all, it is grossly inconsistent for people to argue that there are no moral absolutes, when everything in the physical world is clearly and undeniably regulated by absolute and unbreakable laws. Now if the physical world is regulate by absolute law, why do we suppose that the spiritual world is not? After all, which came first, the physical world, or the spiritual world? The spiritual world existed before the physical. As a result, we can expect that the physical world corresponds to the spiritual world. God made it that way that we might understand the spiritual world based on what we can see in the physical world.

So this morning I want to show you from our text one of the most basic laws of nature and morality. I want you to fully understand the truth of this law of God, and I hope it will affect the way you live in your daily life.

So first of all, I want you to:

### I. UNDERSTAND THE LAW OF SOWING AND REAPING

Here Paul uses a well-known law of botany-that a given seed can reproduce only its own kind. Notice how Paul states the law in the last of v.7, “...whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” We can easily see a universal law of nature: you reap what you sow. So if you want to reap a harvest of corn, you had better sow corn seed. No other seed will work. In science, there is the law of cause and effect. A cause will create a corresponding effect.

Now Paul is not giving a lesson in science or agriculture here; his main point is to illustrate a spiritual law. So the meaning of this law is simply this: if you will live a godly life of faith and obedience to God, you will reap blessing from God. But if you live a sinful lifestyle, you will reap the consequences of sin. You cannot reap good from what is bad. Too many think that living a life

of sin will result in a good life and happiness. But that thinking violates this basic law: you reap what you sow! Garbage in, garbage out!

This physical law of sowing and reaping in agriculture is self-evident. It is as impartial, predictable, and immutable as the law of gravity. In the natural world men never question the law of sowing and reaping. But the principle is just as true in the moral and spiritual realms. If you sow sin, you will reap judgment. If you sow disobedience, you will reap heartaches, conflict, wounds, shame, and pain. In fact, Prov. 22:8 says, “He who sows iniquity will reap sorrow....” Isaiah 3:11 says, “Woe unto the wicked! It shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him.” Romans 2:8-10 says, “... indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man who does evil... but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good....”<sup>1</sup>

It is vain to think that you can outwit God by reaping a different harvest from what you have sown. You might as well think you can jump off a 60-story building and not get hurt as to think this moral law will not hold true in your life. My friend, God is not a pushover! You can't mock Him like that. You can give words and gestures to mock God, but be sure of this, God will have the last Word.

History is full of illustrations of this divine law. There are many biblical illustrations. Jacob reaped what he sowed. He was a sneaky deceiver. He deceived his father Isaac and stole his brother's blessing. After deceiving his father, Jacob ran away and lived with his Uncle Laban for several years. He fell in love with Rachel, Laban's youngest daughter. Laban agreed to give her to Jacob as his bride if he would serve him for 7 years. He did so. They had the wedding, and the next morning he found out that he did not have Rachel, but Leah, the less attractive older daughter. Jacob had to give 7 more years of service to marry the one he wanted. He learned a real lesson on his honeymoon. You reap what you sow. He had deceived his father, and his father-in-law deceived him! (Gen. 29:25).

King David sinned against his family by committing adultery & murder, and he reaped turmoil in his family. His infant child died. His daughter was raped by her half-brother (2 Sam. 13:14). Her brother killed their half-brother (2 Sam. 13: 28-29). His own favorite son rebelled against him.

King Ahab had Naboth murdered & stole his property. Then God warned, “In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours.” And so it was! He suffered the same fate that he caused Naboth to experience. Someone randomly shot an arrow and it struck him between the joints of his armor. His blood poured out on to his chariot, and later the dogs licked his blood off the chariot.

In the book of Esther, we read that Haman plotted to have Mordecai, the Jew, killed. As it turned out, Haman was executed on the very gallows that he had built to hang Mordecai (Esther 7:1-10).

This law applies not just to the individual, but also applies to the families and nations. Back in the 1700's France became the center of publishing infidel, godless, humanistic literature. Sexual immorality was rampant. A high percentage of children born were born out of wedlock. Soon, they reaped what they sowed. Later that century they experienced the bloody French revolution, in which more than a million people were beheaded, shot, or drowned. They had a total of 13 revolutions in 80 years! In one year 10,000 newborn infants were fished out of the city sewers. The

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<sup>1</sup> Prov. 1:31 says, “... they shall eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.” Many other scriptures reinforce the truth of this spiritual and natural law. Hosea 10:13 says, “You have plowed wickedness; You have reaped iniquity. You have eaten the fruit of lies....” Obadiah 1:15 says, “For the day of the LORD upon all the nations is near; As you have done, it shall be done to you; Your reprisal shall return upon your own head.”

percentage of suicides in Paris was greater than in any other city in Europe. They reaped what they had sown!

In contrast, England and America were experiencing spiritual revivals around the time of the French revolution. Tens of thousands were being saved. The bars & saloons closed up in some communities. England and America prospered as long as they maintained a faith in God, and lived according to God's moral laws. We became the greatest and most blessed nations on earth. But we are turning to the same unbelief and immorality as the French, and don't you think for a moment that our nations will be exempt from this law that we will reap what we have sown! In fact, we are already reaping sorrow, sickness, and death. There has been a sharp increase in crime, mental illness, and certain types of diseases the past 50 years. There is an increase in lawlessness and insecurity.

So we need to stop being deceived by the liberals & infidels of our society. Our society once again needs to acknowledge God, and uphold God's absolute moral laws. We as individuals need to be born again by the Spirit of God. We can live right only if we have new desires created by our new nature. We can live right and be blessed if we rely upon the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is another application of this law I want to make to parents. Those of the liberal persuasion seem to want to undermine this law. If a man commits a crime, they seem to want to let him off the hook, blaming his crime on his environment or other factors. They want abortion & condoms to be freely available, so that a person can avoid the consequences of immorality. Liberals discourage parents from imposing any significant punishment for their children's misbehavior. And so when a child does something wrong & gets into trouble, the parents will often bail their child out, and prevent their child from suffering any negative consequences. So they never learn from their mistakes. Instead, they get the idea that they can sin and get by with it, and they get in trouble over and over again. Parents, don't work against this law! Enforce it!

So once you learn the law of sowing & reaping, the next thing you should do is this:

## II. CHOOSE THE HARVEST YOU WANT

In v.8 Paul gives two contrasting types of harvest. On the one hand, you can reap "corruption." The word translated "corruption" means just that. In the physical realm, it describes something that is rotting, decaying, and spoiling, such as food. Jesus said in Mt. 7:17 that "a bad tree bears bad [or corrupt] fruit." At my other house, I had a peach tree that bore peaches, but they would rot before they became ripe. The word also carries the idea of destruction. If you eat unhealthy foods, you will likely reap a harvest of heart disease, cancer, and other problems. And as there is corruption in the physical realm, even so you can reap a harvest of corruption in the moral realm. Corruption, ruin, and destruction will indeed follow those who sow to the sin nature. If you keep getting drunk over and over again, you reap all kinds of destruction, both to yourself and to others, such as disease and various "accidents." If you get involved in immorality, you reap destruction to yourself and to others, such as venereal diseases, AIDS, and broken homes & abortions often follow. Magic Johnson lived it up for years with all kinds of promiscuity, and he reaped AIDS. The deeds of the flesh are always corruptive and can only make a person progressively worse. And finally, when you compare this with the last part of v.8, the concept easily includes the idea of eternal destruction in hell. If you live for the world, flesh, and the devil, you will reap an eternity in hell. James 1:15 says, "When lust has conceived, it brings forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death." When you sow sin, you reap death.

Ernest Hemingway became famous for snubbing his nose at morality and at God, declaring that his own life proved a person could do anything he wanted without paying the consequences. For a while it appeared he was right. Like many others before and after him, he considered the ideas of the Bible to be antiquated and outdated, completely useless to modern man and a hindrance to his pleasure and self-fulfillment. Moral laws were to him a religious superstition that had no relevance. In a mocking parody of the Lord's Prayer he wrote, "Our nada [Spanish for "nothing"] who art in nada." But instead of proving that he was exempt from the consequences of unbelief, the end of Hemingway's life proved the folly of mocking God. His debauched life led him into such complete despair and hopelessness that he put a bullet in his head. Friend, if you are living like there's no God, you'd better be right!

But someone may say, "That doesn't seem to be my experience. I am living it up with sin and everything is going my way." I realize that when a man sows to the flesh and gives himself to the world, his harvest for a while can be money, success, pleasure, and so forth. But the apostle says there is also another harvest, and that is the corruption that will follow. You see, there is another law of the harvest: You usually reap *later* than you sow. In agriculture, there is always some delay between the time you sow seed, and the time you reap a harvest. Most plants require months to pass before harvest. If you smoke cigarettes, it may take many years to develop disease. This is why Hebrews 11:25 acknowledges there is pleasure in sin, but it adds the words, "for a season." The immediate result of sin may be pleasure, but the long term results will be suffering, bondage, broken lives, and death. Moses said, "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Num. 32:23). There is payday, someday. It's only a matter of time.

Paul also speak of a far better harvest: eternal life. But is he simply talking about a harvest that we shall reap after death? No! The Gospel of John makes it clear that eternal life begins now, in this life, for the Christian. The believer begins participating in eternal life the moment he trusts in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Even now we can enjoy the blessings of the age to come, such as joy and peace. I believe many of our young people experience the love, joy, and peace of the age to come during this week of camp.

On the other hand, we should especially sow our seed with a view toward the harvest of eternal life in heaven. In v.9 Paul said, "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." A great reward is awaiting those who do good, and faithfully serve the Lord Jesus.

So don't be fooled by the appeal of instant gratification that sin can bring. You need to compare the long term harvests of sin, on the one hand, and righteousness, on the other.

I said earlier that if you want to reap a harvest of corn, you had better sow corn seed, not some other seed. You can't get around God's law that you reap *what* you sow. So my last point is this:

### III. CHOOSE YOUR SEED WISELY

Paul gives two contrasting types of sowing in v.8. On the one hand, most people choose to sow to the flesh, or what may be called the sin nature. "Sowing to the flesh" means to allow the old nature to have its way. To sow to the flesh is to do whatever your sin nature desires to do. "His" flesh is better translated "his own" flesh. That word is added to bring out the idea of selfishness. The person who sows to his own flesh panders to its evil desires instead of letting the Spirit subdue it. The seed that we sow consists of thoughts, words, and actions, such as those mentioned in 5:19-21 (read). Every time we allow our mind to harbor a grudge, entertain an impure thought, or

wallow in self-pity, we are sowing to the flesh. Every time we linger in bad company, and every time we read pornographic literature, we are sowing to the flesh. And as we have seen, you cannot reap something different from what you have sown.

On the other hand, you can choose to sow to the Spirit. This is to yield oneself to the influence of the Holy Spirit and to let Him govern your conduct. This involves self-denial (2:20; 5:24), resistance of evil, guidance by the Spirit (5:18), obedience to the Spirit, walking in the Spirit (5:16, 25), living in the Spirit, and bearing the fruit of the Spirit like love & kindness (5:22-23). To sow to the Spirit is the same as setting one's "mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth" (Col. 3:2). As v.9 of our text says, it involves "doing good." We should not become weary in doing good because "we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

When I was 17 I yielded by life to Christ, and turned from a life of sin. Though I have been far from perfect, the general direction of my life has been toward righteousness and goodness. And I want to testify to you that over time I have reaped a good harvest. I daily experience the fruit of the Spirit that I talked about last week. God's blessing has been upon my life in many ways. And if I remain faithful, I will reap an even better harvest in the age to come.

So which will you do? When you watch a filthy movie, you are sowing to the flesh, but when you read the Word of God, or pray, you are sowing to the Spirit. If you gossip you are sowing to the flesh, but when you tell others about Jesus, you are sowing to the Spirit. So again, which will you do?

Conclusion: R. G. Lee, the famous pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, tells the story of the time when he was pastor of a church in New Orleans. He was on the radio, and from time to time he would receive a critical letter from one who called himself "The Chief of the Kangaroo Court". Sometime later, R. G. Lee was asked by a nurse to come and see someone in the hospital who would only identify himself as the chief of the Kangaroo Court. The nurse explained that he was dying and had no chance of recovery. So Dr. Lee went to see him. He approached his bed lovingly, gently, and asked him politely how he was doing. The man snarled back at him. Then Dr. Lee asked if there was anything he could do for him. He yelled back "NO, there is nothing you can do for me. They can throw my body out to the buzzards, if the buzzards would have it. But I know you preach to a lot of young people, and I want you to tell them that the devil pays in counterfeit money." Within two hours he had died a horrible death. He had reaped what he had sown.

Do you believe this law of God, that you reap what you sow? Do you want to reap a harvest of corruption, or blessing? Well, to reap blessing, you have to choose the right seed. My friend, what kind of seed have you been sowing? Your decision will determine what kind of harvest you will reap. If you have been sowing to the flesh, there is just one way to avoid reaping a harvest of corruption, and that is to stop sowing to the flesh. Repent. Ask God to forgive you and heal you. Receive the Holy Spirit, obey Him, and rely upon His strength to live right. Then you can begin reaping the joys & blessings of eternal life, which can begin now.

Sources: William F. Arndt & F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the NT & Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1957); W.A. Criswell, *Expository Sermons on Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973); William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Galatians & Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968); Alvah Hovey, *An American Commentary on the New Testament: Galatians* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1887); J.B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957); Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Vol. 14 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977 reprint); John F. MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Galatians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 5 (Pasadena: Thru The Bible Radio, 1983); Scot McKnight, *The NIV*

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