

## ***THE LAWS OF THE HARVEST***

### ***Galatians 6:6-10***

The order that is in the world is the work of God. The scientist has learned to depend upon this evident order in the universe. Depending on this he has been able to make his calculations, chart his course, and go to the moon and back. Such order in the universe is evidence of God.

The farmer depends on this order. Across the centuries farmers have depended upon certain laws that govern nature. As they cooperated with these laws, utilized these laws, they have been able to produce enough food stuff to feed themselves, and enough to provide for their neighbor. This is an evidence of God's work in His world.

The God of nature also rules in the moral and spiritual realm. In this realm He is a God of order. He has established laws in the moral and spiritual realm that operate just like they do the realm of nature. As Paul comes to the conclusion of his discussion of the flesh verses the Spirit, he makes an appeal. He appeals to these laws of the harvest to encourage us to follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and to put to death the cravings of the flesh. Wise people will surely give heed to this word of counsel. The man who allows the flesh to dominate his life with the hope of finding a full and meaningful life is mocking God. The God of the universe sees that our moral actions produce just the right result.

What are the basic laws of nature? Without fearing that I might seem too simple, I want to review them with you. They are utilized so beautifully in our text.

### ***I. LAW ONE: IF YOU SOW, YOU REAP.***

What you sow will come up. This is undeniably true in the realm of nature. I remember as a boy becoming weary one day at corn planting time. I was involved in the process of planting some corn by hand. In a gesture of weariness, I began planting the corn by the hands full. Rather than just dropping two or three kernels in the proper place, and covering it up, I would drop them in by the hands full, and cover it up. I thought I would soon be rid of the seed corn, and that I could quit. Much to my embarrassment in a few weeks what I had sown came up. In the places where I had sown the proper number of kernals, there would be the proper number of blades bursting through the soil. But where I had sown the hands full, there was a whole ball of blades bursting through the ground. My dad did not need a course in agriculture to know what had happened. He knew the laws of nature. There would be no such ball of blades bursting through the soil if someone had not planted a handful of corn down under the soil. Since that was the part of the field I had planted, my responsibility was rather obvious, and the consequences were certain.

This law is applicable in the moral and spiritual realm. In this context Paul has been contrasting two ways of life. One way of life is called the "flesh" way., The other is the way of the "Spirit". Each of our moral decisions and actions is prompted by one or the other of these forces. Every time we respond to the promptings of one of them, we have sown another seed. The law of the harvest is that when we sow, we can expect to reap. When applied to life it means simply that our life style right now is going to produce a harvest. There are consequences with which we must reckon. Sowing is followed by reaping. As the Apostle presents these laws he seeks to see some of the reaping coming in this life and some of it in the life to come. We do reap benefits from some of our actions in the here and now, but the full impact will not be known until we stand before the Lord at the last day. The law says: those who sow will reap.

## ***II. LAW TWO: YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW.***

This is the primary thrust of this great passage. "For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

The farmer depends on this law. He would always be in a state of confusion and uncertainty if he did not know for sure that wheat produces wheat, corn produces corn, and apples produce apples. The same kind of certainty exists in the moral and spiritual realm. You reap exactly what you sow.

Paul talks about two kinds of sowing. It may seem a little confusing as to whether we are to see the "flesh" as the seed sown or as the field in which it is sown. However the application is clear. To sow to the flesh is to do something in response to the promptings of the flesh, it is to act in such a way that you satisfy an inner desire of the old sinful nature in you. To sow to the Spirit is to act in such a way that you respond to the inner direction of the Holy Spirit in your life. The tense of the verbs used would suggest that Paul is thinking of a way of life. Those who are always acting in such a way as to satisfy the thirst of the flesh will reap a harvest of corruption. But those who are always walking in the Spirit, responding to the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit will reap a harvest of eternal life.

Let me see if I can illustrate this. In our discussion we have already noticed the contrasting works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. Let's imagine you Being presented with a temptation to be unfaithful to your marriage partner. It is a temptation that comes to you unsought. As a Christian you will find within you an old nature that responds to the temptation very positively, in fact it will awaken a desire to take advantage of the opportunity. But you will find in you

also the prompting to resist the temptation. The Holy Spirit will seek to direct you away from the temptation. You must decide which "leading" you will follow.

The positive response to the leadership of the flesh will produce a harvest of corruption. You will find many good things beginning to die in your life at once, but it can also involve some eternal issues. If you follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit, you will find eternal life. Every result of resisting a temptation to do wrong is good. There will be a fullness of life that comes. But the truth is that you reap what you sow.

The Bible provides us with many examples of the sowing to the flesh and the reaping that follows. The life of Jacob will provide such rich material on this subject. When he deceived his father Isaac to get the blessing, he was surely sowing to the flesh. He was sowing falsehood and deceit. Do you remember what came back to Jacob? The harvest was a bad relationship with his brother from that day forth, having to leave home and live in a foreign country, and then later to become the victim of even a greater deception at the hands of his sons. You reap what you sow. If you indulge in the satisfaction of the desires of the flesh, you will reap certain corruption.

The supreme example of sowing to the Spirit is the Lord Jesus Himself. Every deed of His life was a seed sown to the Spirit. Not one time did He ever give consideration to self as over against the leading of the Holy Spirit. He followed the daily direction of the Spirit perfectly. What was the harvest? All of the glory which He now enjoys at the right hand of the Father. If you want a full and abundant life in the here and now, and a blessed eternity in the fellowship of God you need to be sowing the seed that will produce such a harvest. You reap what you sow.

Let me apply it one other way. Suppose that you find yourself with an extra hundred dollars. You feel prompted of the Lord to give the hundred dollars to help some friend who is at the point of need, or to some Christian cause. But you find in your old nature a reluctance to make such a gift. Pother you feel prompted to spend the money on some thing of luxury you had been desiring. If you spend the money as prompted by the flesh, all that you will get out of it is the momentary pleasure and that will be gone forever. But if you give to help someone there will be a harvest of joy in the now, and a harvest of return in the life to come. You reap what you sow.

### ***III. LAW THREE: YOU REAP MORE THAN YOU SOW.***

Multiplication is a law of the harvest. The farmer lives off of this. He sows a bushel of seed, but in the harvest he gets back several bushels in return. He has another bushel to, sow at the next time for sowing, he has some to feed his family, he has some to sell to a neighbor so that he can purchase some of the

other necessities of life. There is such a law that works in the realm of the moral and spiritual. You sow a deed at the promptings of the flesh, and it will produce so much more than you ever intended. You sow a deed at the prompting of the Spirit, and you will find yourself receiving so much more than you ever anticipated. It is the law of the harvest.

The little seed can produce so much. More than one Christian has found themselves confronting a terrible mess that all began with just one little indulgence of the flesh. I talked with a broken-hearted man some years ago that had learned this tragic truth. As a young husband he had sown some unfaithfulness one night. Soon this moral compromise became almost a way of life for him. But then he began to reap. There was the loss of a wife that he really loved, there was the loss of the respect of his children, there was the loss of his place of leadership in the church, there was the loss of respect for himself. Years had gone by, and he had repented of the sowing many times, but the harvest just kept coming in. You see once you have sown, even your repentance will not stop the multiplying of the harvest.

But this principle can also work to our benefit. Let me share some personal reflections that have come to me. When you have pastored as long as I have, you have had some opportunity to do some reaping. I remember some sowing that I did in the first little church I served. I remember vividly one family to which I personally ministered the things out of the Lord. Out of that bad situation there have developed some beautiful lives. I invested so little in terms of time and energy and prayer, but now every time I hear of them I reap some gains of encouragement and joy. Sow a little love and it will come back by the bushels.

***CONCLUSION:***

This great text is most often preached in the context of warning and judgment. This note is surely in the text, but the primary thrust of the text is that of encouragement. The laws of the harvest should encourage us to persevere in well doing. We should be encouraged by it to look for opportunities to do good things. The most fruitful sowing in the whole world is to sow to the Spirit. Those who go forth sowing deeds of love, joy, peace, longsuffering kindness, and goodness will soon return bringing a harvest with them. They will reap what they sow and they will reap more than they sow.