

The Doctrine of Sowing and Reaping

- I. Definition and description:
- A) Agriculture is generally defined as the art and science of cultivation of the ground, planting, raising, and harvesting of crops.
 - 1) It is a science because it is governed by various natural, physical laws.
 - 2) It is an art since it is necessary to possess and apply certain skills that are learned only by attention, observation, and patience.
 - B) The law of sowing and reaping governs the entire physical realm; that is, one could not plant apple seeds and ever hope to harvest anything but apples.
 - C) The physical process of planting seed and reaping or harvesting the grown plant is used to illustrate certain spiritual realities.
 - D) The spiritual law of sowing and reaping governs the entire world as well, believer and unbeliever alike.
 - E) It is axiomatic (a self-evident and universally accepted truth) to state that one will reap what they sow.
 - F) This is called a law because it describes a relationship observed to be invariable between or among phenomena for all cases in which the specified conditions are met.
- II. Vocabulary.
- A. Hebrew vocabulary.
 - 1. זָרַע - *ZaRa'* (v) – 56x, the action of sowing seed in a field.
 - a. זֶרַע - *ZeRa'*, m. noun; lit. a sowing, used of seedtime, the time for sowing, used of seed, that which is scattered or sown.
 - b. זֶרַעַ - *ZeRua'* 2x; that which is or has been sown.
 - 2. קָצַר *QaTSaR* (v); to cut off, to reap or harvest grain. The participle refers to one that performs this action, a reaper.
 - a. קָצִיר - *QaTSiYR* m. noun; used for the process of harvesting, the time of harvesting, the harvest season, and for that which is harvested, the harvest or crops.
 - B. Greek vocabulary.
 - 1. σπείρω – *speiro* (v) 53x, to sow or scatter seed.
 - a. σπέρμα – *sperma* (n. noun) 44x; the seed, that from which a plant germinates, the grain or kernel that contains within itself the germ of the future plant. Often used collectively.
 - 2. θερίζω – *therizo* (v) 21x; to reap or harvest.
 - a. θερισμός – *therismos* (m. noun) 13x; the act or process of reaping, the time of reaping, that which is reaped, the harvest or crops.
 - b. θεριστής – *theristes* m. noun, 2x; reapers, only used of angels and the final harvest.
- III. Origin and Duration of This Law.
- A. The natural order of things on planet earth bears silent witness to the power, wisdom, and Deity of God. Rom 1:20 “*For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.*”

- B. Just as there exist certain physical laws that govern the reality of mankind (gravity, thermodynamics, motion, etc), it should be evident that there also exist spiritual laws that one cannot violate without consequences.
- C. In Gen 8:22 God stated that seedtime and harvest would be perpetual realities that would exist in the physical realm. *“While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, And cold and heat, And summer and winter, And day and night Shall not cease.”*
- D. In corresponding fashion, the spiritual law of sowing and reaping continues to exist and remain operative throughout the course of the angelic conflict. Gal 6:7 *“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.”*

IV. The Analogy Explained.

- A. The farmer prepares the soil for the introduction of the seed, tends to the seed as it grows, and eventually harvests the mature fruit.
- B. Obviously, the farmer plants the seed with a definite understanding of what will occur; in fact, he has that end in view when he begins this entire process.
- C. The farmer is analogous to any individual, whether a believer or unbeliever.
- D. The seed represents any deed, good or bad:
 - 1) Bad – Job 4:8 *“According to what I have seen, those who plow iniquity And those who sow trouble harvest it.”*
 - 2) Good – Jn 4:36 *“Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.”*
- E. The harvest is analogous to the time of judgment for one’s actions, expressed in either retribution or remuneration. Gal 6:8 *“For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.”*
- F. Sowing and reaping is designed primarily to teach the reality that our actions have certain, unavoidable consequences.

V. Concepts That are Taught or Illustrated by the Principle of Sowing and Reaping.

- A. The most familiar truth taught using sowing and reaping as an analogy is the Word of God and its function in the context of human volition. Mk 4:1-20
 - 1. The seed is the Word of God. vs 4,14
 - 2. The sower is the communicator of doctrine. vs 3,14
 - 3. The field or soil represents the volition of individuals that hear the truth – whether they accept it or not. vs 15,16,18,20
 - 4. Their volitional response to the truth is compared to the conditions that might exist in any given field, with the soil (volition) as the variable, the seed stays the same.
 - 5. The birds of the air represent men that are committed to the viewpoint of Satan and actively seek to undermine the Truth. vs 4,15; cp 1Tim 4:1f
 - 6. The first volitional response is that of the negative unbeliever. vs 4,15
 - 7. The next volitional response is that of the shallow/superficial believer, initially excited by the Truth but lacking any real commitment to the pursuit of Doctrine. vs 5-6,16-17
 - 8. The third category of volition is the believer that never truly breaks off the pursuit of the cosmos, placing the pursuit of the details of life above the pursuit of the Truth. vs 7,18-19

9. The final category is comprised of the few believers that are intellectually honest and pursue the Truth diligently; thus, producing the fruit the farmer seeks, to varying degrees. vs 8,20
 - a) the thirty-fold believer is the one who produces some SG3, but not at a consistently high level (due to either negative volition or lack of BD).
 - b) the sixty-fold believer is the one who produces a high level of fruit, but still has room to grow.
 - c) the hundred-fold believer produces a great crop of SG3, eventuating in the bestowal of the wreath/ crown.
 - d) compare the “children, young men, fathers” analogy of 1Jn 2:13.
 10. It should be evident that the crop or harvest was the basis for all the hard work of the farmer. Eph 2:10; 2Tim 2:6
 - B. The agricultural analogy is used to teach the reality that believers and unbelievers will live side by side in the world until the time of the end. Mt 13:24-30,36-43
 1. The field is the entire world. vs 38
 2. The farmer is Messiah. vs 37
 3. In this case, the good seed refers to those that have believed the Word of God, believers. vs 38
 4. The enemy is Satan. vs 39
 5. The tares are imposters, unbelievers attempting to pass themselves off as believers. vs 38
 6. The time of the harvest is the Second Advent, when the wheat (believers) and tares (unbelievers) are separated. vs 39; cp Mt 25:31-32
 7. The reapers are angels. vs 39,41
 - C. This analogy is used to communicate information regarding the superiority of the resurrection body to the physical body that currently houses the soul. 1Cor 15:35-44
 - D. It is also employed to exhort believers to exercise patience, citing the example of the Father and the concept of the early and latter rains. Js 5:7-8
 - E. Solomon utilizes this concept to teach the principle of diligence; he rebukes the lazy person and exhorts one to have a proper work ethic. Ecc 11:4,6
 - F. The Mosaic Law uses the sowing of two kinds of seed to teach the doctrine of separation. Lev 19:19; Dt 22:9 (On a practical level, it prevented cross-pollination with a resultant loss of production.)
 - G. This teaching is used to illustrate that God Himself will reestablish national Israel in their land. Jer 31:27-28
 - H. The fact that lower creation does not engage in agricultural pursuits is used to teach believers that they are to faith-rest their Ph2 provision and not pursue the details of life. Lk 12:22-24
- VI. Specific Areas the Word of God Stresses with the Principle of Sowing and Reaping.
- A. The first is the law of sowing and reaping as it relates to SG3. Gal 6:7-9
 1. The exhortation begins with a command to avoid deceiving yourself, or being deceived by any other external means. vs 7
 2. Paul points out that God is not effectively disregarded in this or any other matter, as the maxim of vs 7 explicitly states.
 3. The one who sows to his own flesh refers to the person that engages in actions that are motivated by the STA, designed to provide personal stimulation and satisfaction. vs 8

4. The result will be Ph3 corruption or destruction, loss of reward at the Bema seat. vs 8
 5. The one who sows to the Spirit refers to the individual that understands the Royal imperatives and executes them, rather than pursuing the gratification of the sin nature. vs 8
 6. The promise for that individual is a harvest of eternal life. vs 8,9
 7. Here, the harvest is viewed as being some indefinite time in the future, not necessarily the immediate future. cp. vs 9
 8. Since the time between the planting and the harvest can seem interminable and protracted, the exhortation of verse 9 is quite appropriate.
 9. The danger of soul fatigue when pursuing Divine good is certainly a hazard; but the promise of verse 9 assures the believer of maximum SG3 if they faithfully continue to execute. cp 1Cor 15:58 *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.”*
- B. There is also a related Ph2 application of the law of sowing and reaping in Gal 6:7-8
1. Those believers that sow to the STA, pursuing gratification of the OSN over the application of Bible doctrine, will reap discipline in time as well as loss in eternity. Heb 12:5-12
 2. Sowing to the sin nature includes the commission of such actions as are listed in Gal 5:19-21 on a regular basis.
 3. Those that plant such seeds will reap a life in time dominated by these very vices. Pro 22:8; Hos 8:7 *“For they sow the wind, And they reap the whirlwind...”*
 4. Consistently sowing to the flesh results in a life dominated by STA activity, the resultant decline in doctrinal and moral fiber, the consistent discipline of the Father, Ph2 misery, and finally, loss at the Bema seat. 2Pet 2:19 *“promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.”*
 5. While this process is individual, it explains the decay and corruption we observe in society as it degenerates. cp 2Tim 3:13 *“But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.”*
- C. The law of sowing and reaping governs the finances of every believer. 1Tim 5:17-18
1. Each believer that receives sound doctrine and partakes of the benefits of an adjusted ministry is under the Royal imperative to provide financial blessing for his teacher. 1Cor. 9:7-14
 2. God, who is not effectively disregarded or disobeyed in this or any other matter, will reward based on the standard of measure. Lk 6:38 *“Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.”*
 3. This is the first priority of each individual believer in the local church and is the first priority of the church corporately. 1Cor 9:7-11; 1Tim 5:17-18; 2Tim 2:6 *“The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.”*
 4. The finances of each believer are provided as part of the manifold grace of God, not by their personal abilities, intelligence, or ingenuity. 2Cor 9:10
 5. From this harvest, each believer has seed for the purpose of sowing SG3. 2Cor 9:10 *“Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food,*

will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness”

6. Each believer is to determine before the Lord how much of his seed he intends to plant. 2Cor 9:7
 - a. This is to be done voluntarily. “...as he has purposed in his heart...”
 - b. This is to be done without reservation. “...not grudgingly...”
 - c. This is to be done without coercion. “...or under compulsion...”
 - d. This must be done with the proper mental attitude in order to qualify as Divine good production. 2Cor 9:5 cp Mt 6:2-4
7. The one that plants few seeds cannot ever hope to harvest a large crop; but the one that plants much seed is promised a bountiful harvest. 2Cor 9:6; Pro 11:24-25
8. Each believer is a steward, all the money is God’s and if you do not use it appropriately, He will take back what He wants. Mal 3:7-12
9. Failure to function honorably in this area manifests a lack of confidence in doctrine and indicates a problem with greed. Lk 12:15; Col 3:5
10. Failure to function under this aspect of your stewardship destines you for financial problems and indicates some level of spiritual failure. Pro 11:28; Lk 16:9-14
11. The one sure way to short circuit the blessing of God in your life is to have a mental-attitude love of money and keep all that God has provided for yourself. Pro 11:24-25; 1Tim 6:17
12. There is a Ph2 as well as a Ph3 sense in which the believer that effectively overrules the sin nature and makes consistent applications in this area will reap rewards. Lk 6:38

VII. Conclusions.

- A. Just as there are physical laws, like gravity, that govern every aspect of our existence, there are spiritual laws that govern the world as well.
- B. Ignorance of any law does not exempt anyone from that law; the consequences of disobedience to a law are just as certain as if one had known.
- C. The believer must not be deceived into thinking they are above the laws that govern the universe, either physical laws or, more importantly, spiritual laws.
- D. Failure to acknowledge and orient to a law brings dire consequences.
- E. When the believer understands and orients to the laws of God, the result is blessing.
- F. If one rejects the laws of God, he can expect Divine discipline in time, some attendant misery, and loss at the Bema Seat.

2Cor 9:6 “Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully.”

Hope Bible Church
January, 2002