

FORGOTTEN TRUTH #1—WE ARE ALL SOWING!

INTRODUCTION:

The story is told of a young man “back in the day” who went to NYC to study to be an architect. He later became a contractor and builder and it wasn’t long before he made his first million.

While walking down the street one day, he met a shabbily dressed old man and soon realized it was an old friend of his by the name of John. John had helped him when he first came to New York City, but it was pretty obvious the old man had fallen on hard times. The young man asked about his wife, found out where they were living, and asked if he could come visit the next night. John agreed.

The next night the young man met with John and his wife in their tiny little apartment and found out more of what had transpired in their lives over the past few years. He then had a proposal for his old friend—“If you will cut out the booze, stop your gambling, live an honest, upright life and take care of your wife as your ought to, I’ll give you a chance to make some money.”

John promised that he would do that and was given the address of the young man’s office and the time that he was supposed to be there the next morning. John showed up as scheduled and the young man pulled out the blue-prints and specifications of a cottage he wanted built.

He then said, “John, I want you to build this cottage for me. I have money in the bank for you to draw from to buy the materials I have specified and I will be paying you a weekly salary. When you are done, report back to me.”

The old man went to work. It wasn’t long, however, before he began to cut corners. He substituted cheaper material than what the plans called for and pocketed the money he saved. He finished the job, though, and let the young man know that it was done. “I’ll be down to your apartment tonight,” the young man said.

As promised, the young man came to the apartment. After talking for some time he said, “For the sake of an old friendship and due to the fact that you gave me my first opportunity to make money when I came to New York, I’m going to **give** you the house **you built** and the lot.”

Feeling so humiliated that he had cheated, the old man broke down and wept. When the young man asked what was wrong, John told him what he had done and asked to be forgiven and be given another chance.

The young man’s response? “I’ll forgive you and give you another chance. You are, however, going to have to **live** in the house that you built!” (Great Preaching on New Year’s; 201-202)

Although most of us are not **house** builders, each of us is a **life** builder. We are building our own lives and we have to live with—and in—what we build. Paul told the Corinthians “But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon” (I Cor 3:10).

What is the difference between building a house and building a life? There are obviously many, but one in particular is this—you **know** when you are building a house, but you can **forget** that you are building a life! Too many times too many of us live our lives on “auto pilot” and forget that we are building a life we have to live with. You may not like these truths—and you may choose not to believe them—but that does not change the fact that you are participating in them whether you realize it or not.

1. *The Certainty of Reaping*

Please turn to Galatians 6:7-8.

A. Man's deceptive thinking regarding reaping (v 7a)

We can be deceived, can't we? My guess is that everyone of us adults have been deceived by someone one time or another. What's the old saying: "Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me."

Titus 3:3 "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, **deceived**, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another."

Other than the exception of being the recipient of a prank, most of us do not like to be deceived. We feel foolish and stupid and maybe even "violated." Kind of strange that although we don't like being deceived, often times we deceive **our own selves**. Notice your sheet:

James 1:22 "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, **deceiving your own selves**."

There are numerous ways we can deceive ourselves, but the context here has to do with sowing and reaping.

--We deceive ourselves when we think: God **doesn't** see me or hear me or care about what I say or do

Psalms 94:9-11 "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see? He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not He correct? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not He know? The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity."

--We also deceive ourselves when we think: God **does** see me and hear me and care about what I say or do, but won't—or can't—do anything about it

Hebrews 12:6 "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."

--And finally, we deceive ourselves when we think: I know God sees me and hears me and cares about what I say or do, but I'm going to **wait** just a little bit longer before I change.

Hebrews 3:15 "... Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation."

God's answer to our deceptive thinking? "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." We **are** going to reap—whether we like it or not—because that is God's design!

B. God's design for reaping (v 7b)

Notice the last part of verse 7 "...for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Can it be said any plainer than that? We are going to reap what we sow—it is something we can count on. Not the only place in the Bible we see this.

Luke 6:44 "For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes."

James 3:12 "Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh."

Aren't you glad for the constancy of God; the dependability and predictably there is in the world that we often take for granted? I don't believe a one of us this morning worried about whether or not the law of gravity had changed during the night. We did not cautiously open the door and hang onto the door knob while wondering whether or not we would fly off into outer space.

Some of you have raised animals. Although there may have been some "mystery" as to how **many** chickens would actually hatch...or how **many** baby rabbits would be born...or how **many** puppies would be in the litter, there was never any doubt as to **what** kind of animal would be born (or hatched). And when we plant seeds or seedlings, there isn't a fear that something different will come up. Why? Because of God's design—we will reap what we sow!

2. The Choices in Sowing

Notice verse 8 “For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” What are our choices of sowing in the spiritual realm?

--Sowing to the flesh...or sowing to the Spirit

Notice Galatians 5:16-17. We see here the spiritual battle that rages within us between the flesh—meaning here the sin nature—and the Spirit—meaning the Holy Spirit that lives within every believer.

A. Sowing to the flesh

What does it mean to sow to the flesh? Since the flesh is our sin nature—not our skin—what does it mean to **sow** to our sinful nature?

--To sow to the flesh means to cater to our sin nature, to feed it, to gratify it and satisfy it

--It means to focus on what pleases us; to pamper ourselves. John Stott wrote:

“Every time we allow our mind to harbor a grudge, nurse a grievance, entertain an impure fancy, or wallow in self-pity, we are sowing to the flesh. Every time we linger in bad company, who’s insidious influence we know we cannot resist, every time we lie in bed when we ought to be up and praying, every time we read pornographic literature, every time we take a risk that strains our self-control, we are sowing, sowing, sowing to the flesh.” (MacArthur, GTY, Gal 6:7-10, Oct 14, 2018)

What about you? Are you sowing to the flesh? When confronted with the choice between doing what pleases you and doing what pleases God, which do you choose? While working on this sermon I got a text from my wife telling me she was on her way home along with two requests: 1) turn on the oven; 2) start frying bacon for BLT’s. My immediate reaction was: “I don’t have time to do that—I’m working on a sermon!” But my second reaction—one that thankfully came rather quickly—was “I am being confronted with a choice. Yes, I have a sermon to do but I also have a wife that I am to love as Christ loved the church. She has worked all day. You can take 10 minutes to do these things and be a blessing to her.” So that is what I did!

Not every choice is that simple, is it? Our sin nature is strong and impulsive and persuasive. But if we cave in and “feed” it, I believe it will grow in strength. Again I ask, are you sowing to the flesh?

B. Sowing to the Spirit

It is tempting to say that sowing to the Spirit is simply the opposite of sowing to the flesh. There is more to it than that, however. In fact, there are a couple of places in the Bible where we see 3 ingredients of spiritual growth—which in my mind is the same thing as sowing to the Spirit. Please turn to Ephesians 4:22.

i. Put off the old man (v 22)

In other words, stop caving in to the desires of your sinful nature

ii. Be renewed in the spirit of your mind (v 23)

Our minds need to be renewed; our thinking needs to be changed.

iii. Put on the new man (v 24)

We are to put on the new man—we are to live our life in a new way—but that won’t happen if we don’t put off the old ways and have our minds renewed.

Ephesians 4:22 gives us the ingredients of spiritual growth, but how does the process take place? I believe II Corinthians 3:18 captures well the process.

II Cor 3:18 “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

Simply put, God’s Spirit changes us as we behold the glory of God in this book!

Do you want God to grow you? Do you want change to take place in your life? If so, you need to be reading and studying and meditating on God’s Word! Are you doing that? If not, why not? You cannot sow to the Spirit and ignore this book!

3. Consequences of our Sowing

Before we look at the consequences—and in order to better understand the harvest that Paul is talking about—I think it is important for us to consider **who** Paul is writing to. Is he writing to believers, unbelievers, or both? I believe he is writing to **believers** and here's why:

--In 5:13 he calls them "brethren"

--In 5:16 "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." An unsaved person doesn't have the Spirit so how can they walk in the Spirit?

--In 6:1 he calls them "brethren"

--In 6:9 he says "let us" meaning he includes himself with the brethren

Sandwiched between 6:1 and 6:9 is the verses we have been looking at

A. What we reap when we sow to the flesh

A believer can sow to the flesh; 5:16 says to "walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." If we fail to walk in the Spirit by having our minds renewed, what will we reap?

Verse 8 "For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap **corruption**"

Corruption here carries the idea of "decay, destruction, and death." What does the harvest of destruction look like in a believer?

--Feelings of restlessness instead of peace

--Feelings of misery instead of joy

--Feelings of guilt instead of forgiveness

We are not just destroyed by feelings though, are we?

--We can become trapped by an addiction that costs us the same as it does an unbeliever.

--An affair will destroy a Christian marriage in the same way it will destroy an unbeliever's marriage

--And a drunk Christian has the same possibility of killing someone else in a car accident as an unbeliever does. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

B. What we reap when we sow to the Spirit

Look at the last part of verse 8—"but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." What does it mean to "reap life everlasting" if a believer already has everlasting life? We know that it doesn't mean if someone does spiritual things they will earn their way to heaven because no one earns their way to heaven. So, what does it mean to "reap life everlasting?"

Notice the fruit of the spirit in Gal 5:22-23. We know we will demonstrate that fruit in **heaven** because we will be perfect. But isn't it God's goal for us to bear that kind of fruit now? The answer, of course, is "yes"—and I believe that is what we can reap here in this life when we sow to the spirit.

What a blessing it is to **love** the unlovable...and have **joy** in trials...and have **peace** in spite of problems and be longsuffering with those who try our patience...and be known for being gentle and good.

Is that what you are reaping? It can be if you sow to the Spirit—but it won't be if you sow to the flesh!

Concluding Thoughts:

1. First to the Christian—to those who have a relationship with Christ because they have been born again. Are you sowing to the flesh? I may not know—but God and you most certainly do! Have you deceived yourself into thinking that you can avoid reaping what you are sowing?

2. Now to the unsaved—those who are counting on their goodness to get themselves to heaven. I'm not going to ask if you are sowing to the flesh because I know you are. My question for you is this: Do you know what you will reap in the next life if you die without Christ?

It will be guilt and the suffering of torment—forever!

It will be the absence of anything good—forever!

And it will be the haunting memory that you had opportunities to trust Christ, but you failed to do so.