The Seven
Laws of the Harvest
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Preface

I can still remember my grandmother warning me about my choices in life. In her attempt to see that her grandson would behave himself, she used to say, “Don’t forget, Hampton, you always reap what you sow … always.” And of course, she was right. But when most of us think of the concept of reaping what we sow, I have found we usually think of this in the negative sense. We think of paying the consequences for sinful actions or foolish choices, but the laws of the harvest are not just negative. These laws are also positive, very positive, and stand as a promise of blessing for sowing that which is good as well as a warning against sowing what is bad. We see this in Galatians 6:7-8.

Galatians 6:7-8 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life.

Several years ago, I had the privilege of being one of the speakers at a pastor’s conference with the late John Lawrence who was teaching at Multnomah School of the Bible, now Multnomah Bible College. While we were at the conference together, he gave me a copy of his book called Life’s Choices, published by Multnomah Press. I found John’s book to be tremendously rewarding and insightful. As a pastor, I have taught the principles of this book a number of times and have seen these principles really motivate and encourage a number of people in their walk with the Savior—not so much because of the negative connotations—but because of the positive. The seven laws as stated in the outline of this study come from John’s excellent book and this study is a summary of those principles. For a more thorough treatment of these seven laws, the reader is encouraged to get a copy of John’s book. John is now with the Lord and already reaping the blessings of a life devoted to teaching the Word of God.

Law 1:
We Reap Only What Has Been Sown

Life is filled with choices, choices that affect us on an everyday basis in everything we do which means our everyday choices are not without significance. Our choices affect us and others in dramatic ways whether we see it immediately or not. While earth remains, no man will mock God by changing for even one time these laws of the harvest.

This study is not meant to intimidate us from making choices, for even a failure to make choices is a choice. Rather, it is designed to motivate us to wise choices that we may redeem the time.

Ephesians 5:15-18. Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil. 17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.

Psalm 90:12 So teach us to number our days, That we may present to Thee a heart of wisdom.

Why do we need wisdom? So we can make wise choices!

Stop and think about this! All life comes from antecedent life: from the labor and sowing of others. What we reap was planted either naturally or purposely, either by God or by man, and for either positive or for negative results. We reap the fruit of much for which we have extended no labor because we enter into the labor of others.
either for good or for bad. In other words, this law of the harvest, *We Reap Only What Has Been Sown*, has both a positive and a negative side.

**The Positive Side**

Though we are benefactors of much for which we have extended no labor, we still have the privilege of entering into the labor of others (John 4:35-38).

**Blessings We Reap Because of What God Has Done on Our Behalf**

(1) **The Blessings of Common Grace** (Matt. 5:45; Acts 17:24-28; James 1:17; John 3:27). God is gracious toward all men whether they realize it or not, or whether they ever give Him thanks for His blessings. In fact, every good gift we enjoy comes from God (Acts 17:24-28; Jam. 1:17; John 3:27).

(2) **The Blessings of Salvation Grace** (Matt. 21:37; John 3:16; 6:27-32; Rom. 10:6-8; Jam. 1:17-18; 1 John 5:9-12). Regardless of man’s lack of thankfulness, God has given man the greatest gift of all in His Son who became man that we might have life by faith in Him.

**Blessings We Reap Because of What Others Have Done In Our Behalf**

**The Fact** (John 4:35-38; Deut. 6:10-11 and the laws of inheritance). Our Lord’s statements in John 4, though dealing with the ministry of evangelism, are nevertheless based on this general principle of life. Deuteronomy 6 and the laws of inheritance further illustrate this principle, but it is true even for that person who brags about being a self-made man in dozens of ways. Whether he realizes it or not, his talents, the opportunities for success, and the fruitfulness he has experienced are all given by the grace of God.

**An Illustration:** Not only are we blessed because of what God has done in our behalf, we are also blessed by what others have done. Others have labored and we have entered into the blessings of their labors. Any honest study of Western civilization must admit that the blessings we have enjoyed in the Western world, of freedom, of law, of ministering to the suffering, the poor and the like, are all the by-products of Christianity and our godly heritage.

A good number of years ago there appeared in the “Christian Advocate” the following:

America rests upon four cornerstones: the English Bible, the English language, the common law, and the tradition of liberty. But liberty, language, and the law might have been drawn from the Bible alone. Had we brought nothing with us across the sea besides this supreme book, we might still have been great. Without this Book, America could not have become what she is and when she loses its guidance and wisdom, she will be America no more.

Did we bring the Bible to these shores? Did it not rather bring us? The breath of the ancient Prophets was in the sails that drove the tiny *Mayflower*.

It has been said that South America was settled by the Spanish, who came to that land in search of gold, but North America was settled by the Pilgrim Fathers, who came in search of God. That is what made the difference.¹

**Application:** Do we realize the far-reaching implications of our choices on the lives of others—children, family members, co-workers, friends? The teaching of Scripture on being an example to others stresses this very point (2 Chron. 17:3; John 13:15; 1 Thess. 1:7; 2 Thess. 3:7-9; 1 Tim. 4:12; Tit. 2:7). Being a good model is a form of sowing that can result in reaping Christlike changes in the lives of others.

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The Negative Side

We Reap the Wrong Others Have Sown

The law of sowing and reaping also has a negative side. We not only enter into the blessings God has bestowed, but we also reap the results of wrong others have sown both before us and around us.

1. We reap a certain amount of wrong inherited from our parents (Ps. 51:5; 58:3; Gen. 5:3; Ex. 20:6; 34:6-7; Num. 14:18).

2. We all reap the sin of Adam and we pass that along to our children. This means not only a sinful nature, but things children can learn like how to be critical from a fault-finding parent.

3. We reap the wrong of foolish and corrupt leaders and the consequences of a decaying society (see Isa. 2:5-3:15). This often includes the judgment of God on society—past, present, and future.

What is happening in our cities across our nation is that we are treasuring up unto ourselves “wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Rom. 2:5). It is of concern to us because, if the Lord tarries, it shall affect us greatly. We were willing to settle for a “no win” policy in Korea and so we settled for a “lose the war” policy in Vietnam. The next step is to settle for “no contest” right here at home.

We are already reaping the consequences of living high on the hog—way above our means—and we have just begun this process of reaping the results of deficit spending. As a nation, whatever we do is wrong because we as a people are wrong spiritually and morally. We have forgotten that God takes the lid off of our cities, and what he sees is a stench to His nostrils!

Available to us is the work of Edward Gibbon who, in 1787, after 20 years of labor, completed his book The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. In it he attributed the fall of the Empire as being:

1. The rapid increase of divorce; the undermining of the dignity and sanctity of the home, which is the basis of human society.

2. Higher and higher taxes and the spending of public monies for free bread and circuses for the populace.

3. The mad craze for pleasure; sports becoming every year more exciting and more brutal.

4. The building of gigantic armaments when the real enemy was within, the decadence of the people.

5. The decay of religion—faith fading into mere form, losing touch with life and becoming impotent to warn and guide the people.

Challenges and Implications

A Call to Sowing What is Good

We need to be doing what we can while we can and leave the results with God knowing that our labor is never in vain (1 Cor. 15:10, 58) and also knowing it has consequential implications on others. Some may be involved in the sowing, some in the watering, and others in the reaping, but God is at work bringing the increase according to His purposes (1 Cor. 3:6-7).

A Call to Thankfulness

Another challenge is one of thankfulness by acknowledging the fact of a personal God who has blessed us with His providential care and given us the privilege of not only sowing and reaping, but of reaping the blessings of what others have sown (Rom. 1:18f; Ps. 100:1-5; 107:1f)

A Call to Moral Responsibility (Matt. 5:43-48)

1. To love others and treat them in grace as we all experience the common grace of God who causes His sun to rise on the evil and good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous alike.
(2) To acknowledge our moral responsibility because we are created in the image of God.

**A Call to Trust God to Provide for Our Needs (Matt 6:25-34).**

This has both a positive and a negative side.

(1) To rest in the reality of God Himself, in His personal care and supply by putting Him first and by using the resources He gives. To see and respond to this, Jesus challenges us to compare the birds of the air and the lilies of the field (Matt. 6:25-34).

(2) To trust God rather than lean on our own solutions and strategies for handling life or to find security, significance, and happiness (Jer. 1:13; 17:1f).

**A Call for Vigilance, Prayer, and Wisdom**

1 Timothy 2:1-3 First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. 3 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Ephesians 5:15-18 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil. 17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.

Galatians 6:1-8 Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted. 2 Bear one another’s burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4 But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. 5 For each one shall bear his own load. 6 And let the one who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches. 7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life.

**Law 2:**

**We Reap the Same In Kind As We Sow**

If anyone had told David before or even right after his affair with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11) that he would break every one of the laws of the second table of the Law, he would have denied it with all his might and replied that they were more than just a little crazy. But the laws of sowing and reaping and this law in particular, “we reap the same in kind as we sow,” strongly stress our need to follow the admonition to “take heed lest we fall.”

Before this incident was over, David:

- coveted his neighbor’s wife—2 Sam. 11:2, 3,
- committed adultery—2 Sam. 11:4,
- committed murder—2 Sam. 11:15,
- stole—2 Sam. 11:4 and,
- bore false witness—11:8, 21.

David’s downfall into sin posts a serious warning to each of us of the deceitfulness of sin and its dire consequences in the law of sowing and reaping:
Hebrews 3:13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is **still** called “Today,” lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

This was just the beginning because each of these sins would be reaped within his own family.

**Foundation for this Law**

Genesis 1:20-24 Then God said, “Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens.” 21 And God created the great sea monsters, and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good. 22 And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” 23 And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day. 24 Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind”; and it was so.

Genesis 5:3 When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a **son** in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth.

**Principle of Reproduction**

In the six days of creation, God ordered everything to produce “after their kind” (Gen. 1:11, 12, 21, 24-25). We all recognize that this is true in the biological and zoological world, but what is true in the physical world is also true in the spiritual world. Adam was created after the image of God and he would reproduce that image from generation to generation.

Because he was created for fellowship with God and to walk in dependence on Him, Adam would likewise reap the results of his actions. When he took of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he reaped the results: spiritual death in his own life and the life of his posterity. As a further consequence of his negative choice to live independently, his sinfulness was transmitted from generation to generation.

Psalm 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.

Psalm 58:3 The wicked are estranged from the womb; These who speak lies go astray from birth.

Romans 5:12-18 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—13 for until the Law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law. 14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. 15 But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. 16 And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the free gift arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification. 17 For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. 18 So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.

Apart from divine intervention, the fall halted man’s ability to sow and reap spiritual fruit and experience any fellowship with God. Adam reaped spiritual death (loss of fellowship with God) and began to die physically.

**Principle of Regeneration**

John 3:3-6 Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” 4 Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” 5 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into
the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

Titus 3:5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,

John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

Through God’s grace and the gift of spiritual regeneration, man gains the capacity to sow and reap spiritual fruit and reap the blessing of God on his life and in the world.

Note the words of John 3:6, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh (this is the law of reaping the same in kind as we sow), and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (the same law). Because of this, the natural man can only sow and reap according to the flesh. But in Christ, we become new spiritual creations, new creatures with the capacity to sow and reap of the Spirit (Gal. 6:7-8).

While human good can produce some benefits in society, in families and nations, without God’s Word and New Life in Christ, there are no absolutes, no solid foundation, and no spiritual capacity for the continuation of sowing good and reaping accordingly. So man faces the law of moral degeneration and decay since he reaps the same in kind as he sows.

Proclamation of this Law

Galatians 6:7-8 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life.

Whatever we sow, we reap; so that, if we sow good, we will reap good. This principle as stated in Galatians 6 is an absolute law.

“Be not deceived, God is not mocked.” These words introduce not only the law of sowing and reaping, but the fact that we reap the same in kind as we sow. This is a warning and stresses the absolute nature of this law.

“Be not deceived” is planao (planaww) “to cause to wander, lead astray, deceive.” It is a present passive, imperative and means, stop allowing yourself to be deceived, led astray, or never allow it to happen. The continuous present and the passive voice anticipates the constant threat and activity of our spiritual enemies seeking to wreck havoc on our spiritual walk with God. It warns and reminds us that Satan and the world system under his control is ever at work with his age-old lie, “you surely shall not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:4-5).

“God is not mocked.” “Mocked” is mukterizo (mukterivzw) from mukter (muktevr), “the nose.” It means “to turn up the nose at, to treat with contempt, to ridicule.” Man cannot ignore and treat with contempt God’s truth and laws by attempting to live by his own wisdom and tactics without serious consequences.

“For whatever.” “Whatever” makes this law all inclusive—it applies to any and everything we sow. Then, the words “this also” makes the connection in kind to what we reap.

Principle: Since everything reproduces after its kind, God can never be mocked. Just as no one can sow peas and produce watermelon, or breed donkeys and produce thoroughbred horses, so no one can sow evil and produce good. We cannot sow discord and produce unity. We cannot sow lies and produce truth. We cannot sow sin and produce holiness.

If we sow to the Spirit, we reap of the Spirit. If we sow to the flesh, we reap of the flesh. If we sow evil, we will reap evil. If we have filled our minds and hearts with what is evil, we cannot bring forth what is good.

Matthew 12:34-35 You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. 35 The good man out of his good treasure brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings forth what is evil.
If we sow indifference to God and spiritual values and priorities, we reap the fruit of indifference—ignorance, hardness, greediness, futility, and frustration (Eph. 4:17-19). Here is something for us to think about:

- Sow a thought, reap an act;
- Sow an act, reap a habit;
- Sow a habit, reap a character;
- Sow a character, reap a destiny.

**Biblical Illustrations of this Law**

**Hosea 8:1-10**

*Put the trumpet to your lips! Like an eagle the enemy comes against the house of the LORD, Because they have transgressed My covenant, And rebelled against My law. 2 They cry out to Me, “My God, we of Israel know Thee!” 3 Israel has rejected the good; The enemy will pursue him. 4 They have set up kings, but not by Me; They have appointed princes, but I did not know it. With their silver and gold they have made idols for themselves, That they might be cut off. 5 He has rejected your calf, O Samaria, saying, “My anger burns against them!” How long will they be incapable of innocence? 6 For from Israel is even this! A craftsman made it, so it is not God; Surely the calf of Samaria will be broken to pieces. 7 For they sow the wind, And they reap the whirlwind. The standing grain has no heads; It yields no grain. Should it yield, strangers would swallow it up. 8 Israel is swallowed up; They are now among the nations Like a vessel in which no one delights. 9 For they have gone up to Assyria, Like a wild donkey all alone; Ephraim has hired lovers. 10 Even though they hire allies among the nations, Now I will gather them up; And they will begin to diminish Because of the burden of the king of princes.*

Verse seven says, “For they sow the wind, And they reap the whirlwind. The standing grain has no heads; It yields no grain. Should it yield, strangers would swallow it up.”

The phrase “they sow the wind” is transitional. It alludes to the futility of Israel’s human solutions and strategies by which she sought to handle life and her problems, specifically, her idolatrous worship by which she was seeking to design God according to her own wishes (vss. 4-6) and her foreign policy independently of God (vss. 8-10). This she was doing in place of knowing and trusting in the Word and the true and living God (4:6).

“Wind” represents that which lacks substance and is, like all efforts of the flesh, futile, worthless, and of no assistance (cf. Prov. 11:28-29).

“Whirlwind” represents the harvest in kind which comes from sowing the wind. “The futility (wind) which she had planted like seed would yield a crop of destruction (represented by the whirlwind). All her efforts directed toward self-preservation would be self-destructive.”

**Psalms of Promise**

Psalm 1:1-6 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. 3 And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season, And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers. 4 The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. 6 For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish.

Psalm 32:1-2 A Psalm of David. A Maskil. How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered! 2 How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit!

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Psalm 33:12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, The people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance.

Psalm 34:8 O taste and see that the LORD is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!

Psalm 40:4 How blessed is the man who has made the LORD his trust, And has not turned to the proud, nor to those who lapse into falsehood.

Psalm 41:1 For the choir director. A Psalm of David. How blessed is he who considers the helpless; The LORD will deliver him in a day of trouble.

Psalm 84:5, 12 How blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee; In whose heart are the highways to Zion! … 12 O LORD of hosts, How blessed is the man who trusts in Thee!

Psalm 112:1 Praise the LORD! How blessed is the man who fears the LORD, Who greatly delights in His commandments.

Psalms of Warning

Psalm 7:12-16 If a man does not repent, He will sharpen His sword; He has bent His bow and made it ready. 13 He has also prepared for Himself deadly weapons; He makes His arrows fiery shafts. 14 Behold, he trauils with wickedness, And he conceives mischief, and brings forth falsehood. 15 He has dug a pit and hollowed it out, And has fallen into the hole which he made. 16 His mischief will return upon his own head, And his violence will descend upon his own pate.

Psalm 9:15-16 The nations have sunk down in the pit which they have made; In the net which they hid, their own foot has been caught. 16 The LORD has made Himself known; He has executed judgment. In the work of his own hands the wicked is snared. Higgaion Selah.

Psalm 10:2 In pride the wicked hotly pursue the afflicted; Let them be caught in the plots which they have devised.

Psalm 35:7-8 For without cause they hid their net for me; Without cause they dug a pit for my soul. 8 Let destruction come upon him unawares; And let the net which he hid catch himself; Into that very destruction let him fall.

Proverbs

Proverbs 11:18 The wicked earns deceptive wages, But he who sows righteousness gets a true reward.

Proverbs 22:8 He who sows iniquity will reap vanity, And the rod of his fury will perish.

Proverbs 26:27 He who digs a pit will fall into it, And he who rolls a stone, it will come back on him.

Esther

Esther 7:10 they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai.

Jacob

Jacob schemed to get the blessing belonging to the firstborn, and Laban later tricked him with the rights of the firstborn.

Genesis 29:20-26 So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her. 21 Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife, for my time is completed, that I may go in to her.” 22 And Laban gathered all the men of the place, and made a feast. 23 Now it came about in the evening that he took his daughter Leah, and brought her to him; and
Jacob went in to her. 24 Laban also gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid. 25 So it came about in the morning that, behold, it was Leah! And he said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? Why then have you deceived me?” 26 But Laban said, “It is not the practice in our place, to marry off the younger before the first-born.”

Religious activity does not necessarily mean spiritual activity. We can be religious and still be sowing to the flesh. The following passage are a standing commentary on the barrenness of external religiosity or on what happens when we go through the motions of religion, but keep our hearts from God.

Isaiah 1:1-19 The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, concerning Judah and Jerusalem which he saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. 2 Listen, O heavens, and hear, O earth; For the LORD speaks, “Sons I have reared and brought up, But they have revoluted against Me. 3 An ox knows its owner, And a donkey its master’s manger, But Israel does not know, My people do not understand.” 4 Alas, sinful nation, People weighed down with iniquity, Offspring of evildoers, Sons who act corruptly! They have abandoned the LORD, They have despised the Holy One of Israel, They have turned away from Him.

5 Where will you be stricken again, As you continue in your rebellion? The whole head is sick, And the whole heart is faint. 6 From the sole of the foot even to the head There is nothing sound in it, Only bruises, welts, and raw wounds, Not pressed out or bandaged, Nor softened with oil. 7 Your land is desolate, Your cities are burned with fire, Your fields—strangers are devouring them in your presence; It is desolation, as overthrown by strangers. 8 And the daughter of Zion is left like a shelter in a vineyard, Like a watchman’s hut in a cucumber field, like a besieged city. 9 Unless the LORD of hosts Had left us a few survivors, We would be like Sodom, We would be like Gomorrah. 10 Hear the word of the LORD, You rulers of Sodom; Give ear to the instruction of our God, You people of Gomorrah. 11 “What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?” Says the LORD, “I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams, And the fat of fed cattle. And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs, or goats. 12 When you come to appear before Me, Who requires of you this trampling of My courts? 13 Bring your worthless offerings no longer, Incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies—I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. 14 I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts, They have become a burden to Me. I am weary of bearing them. 15 So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you, Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood. 16 Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, 17 Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless; Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow. 18 Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the LORD, “Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool. 19 If you consent and obey, You will eat the best of the land; …”

Isaiah 29:13 Then the Lord said, “Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote, …”

Law 3:
We Reap in a Different Season than We Sow

“Too many believers are sowing wild oats throughout the week and then going to church on Sunday and praying for a crop failure.”3 They hope their life-style won’t catch up with them, but of course, it always does. As seen from Galatians 6:7, God will not be mocked by man. No man can turn up his nose at God’s laws and get away with it. Sooner or later his choices will return to haunt him. What we sow, we reap, but the thing that is so deceptive

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3 Lawrence, p. 47.
is that we reap in a different season. Let’s first look at the fact of this third law of the harvest from several stand-
points.

The Foundation for this Law

The Creative Purpose of God

Genesis 8:22 reads: “While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, And cold and heat, And summer and
winter, And day and night Shall not cease.” The harvest never comes immediately after planting for, while the earth
abides, there is seedtime and harvest, cold and winter, etc. There are seasons to life and the harvest never comes im-
mediately.

Rome was not built in a day. Plants don’t grow overnight. Athletes don’t become strong or proficient in a
week. Children aren’t born overnight. Wisdom isn’t gained overnight, and so it goes throughout all of life.

“In Due Time” or “Season”

(1) Negatively

Deuteronomy 32:35 Vengeance is Mine, and retribution, In due time their foot will slip; For the
day of their calamity is near, And the impending things are hastening upon them.

(2) Positively

1 Samuel 1:20 And it came about in due time, after Hannah had conceived, that she gave birth to a
son; and she named him Samuel, saying, “Because I have asked him of the LORD.”

Psalm 145:15 The eyes of all look to Thee, And Thou dost give them their food in due time.

Psalm 104:27 They all wait for Thee, To give them their food in due season.

Galatians 6:9 And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not
grow weary.

The Necessity of Time and Growth in All Things

The following passage reminds us there is a time for everything which teaches us we can’t rush the laws of
God nor should we try to ignore them.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event
under heaven—2 A time to give birth, and a time to die; A time to plant, and a time to uproot what
is planted. 3 A time to kill, and a time to heal; A time to tear down, and a time to build up. 4 A
time to weep, and a time to laugh; A time to mourn, and a time to dance. 5 A time to throw stones,
and a time to gather stones; A time to embrace, and a time to shun embracing. 6 A time to search,
and a time to give up as lost; A time to keep, and a time to throw away. 7 A time to tear apart, and
a time to sew together; A time to be silent, and a time to speak. 8 A time to love, and a time to
hate; A time for war, and a time for peace.

While the original creation was created with apparent age and maturity, Scripture and life itself teach us that
for everything else, time is needed for growth and maturity in the biological, zoological, social, spiritual, mental,
athletic, and economical areas of life (compare: Gen. 1:28; 3:18; 2 Kgs. 19:29; Ps. 104:19; 147:9; Phil. 3:11-14;
Heb. 5:11-14; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18; 1 John 2:11-14, 18).

Applications of this Law

Without question we reap what we sow, but the principle mankind doesn’t want to face is we reap in a dif-
ferent season. There are several important factors here:

(1) Because we do not see the immediate results, we often think we have gotten away with something or
can, but we never do.
Ecc. 8:11-12 Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil. 12 Although a sinner does evil a hundred times and may lengthen his life, still I know that it will be well for those who fear God, who fear Him openly.

(2) We live in a self-oriented society that says “do your own thing,” or “to thine own self be true.” This is a society that is therefore given over to instant gratification. We have instant everything: instant tea, instant oatmeal, quick rice, TV dinners, and microwave cooking. We can jump into an automobile and either whiz across town in minutes, across most states in a few hours, or board a plane and 12 hours later be in Europe.

(3) We watch a TV program and see family conflicts or national conflicts resolved in one hour, or at the most in a mini-series, four hours, but in reality, these things often require months and even years to resolve or change.

The younger generation today has the mentality of wanting and expecting to have all the material blessings and advantages their parents have. The difference is the parents often had to wait years to accumulate what they have. Young people are not willing to save, do without, and wait.

We want what we want when we want it which is usually right now, or preferably, yesterday. So, because we are accustomed to immediate gratification, we are too often unwilling to wait for the results of biblical sowing—sowing what is good and waiting on the Lord and His timing. So we take matters into our own hands. We run ahead of the Lord. We employ our own strategies and methods:

- We light our own firebrands to light our path (Isa. 50:11)
- Build our own cisterns, but they are broken and hold no water (Jer. 2:13)
- We lean on the arm of the flesh, our own ability, rather than lean on the arm of the Lord (Jer. 17:5-7)

**We don’t want to wait on the Lord! We want to reap without sowing!** But the Psalmist, in his determination to wait patiently on the Lord, wrote:

Psalm 130:5-6 I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, And in His word do I hope. 6 My soul waits for the Lord More than the watchmen for the morning; Indeed, more than the watchmen for the morning.

Unfortunately, because many Christians today tend to operate more on emotional sentiment rather than on biblical content, they have little or no faith and fail to sow for a later reaping or fail to have the perspective of laying up treasures in heaven. The Psalmist knew that envy, fretting over the prosperity of others, was really a matter of faith and seeing life from an eternal perspective. So he wrote:

Psalm 37:7-9 Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who carries out wicked schemes. 8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret, it leads only to evildoing. 9 For evildoers will be cut off, But those who wait for the LORD, they will inherit the land.

In the context of the Lord’s exhortation for us to lay up heavenly treasure, we would do well to remember His words of rebuke to disciples, “oh men of little faith” (Matt. 6:30).

The Law of the Harvest says, “We sow in one season; we reap in another.” No harvest comes the moment the seed is planted, but it must wait for God’s appointed time. This should be both a warning against sowing evil (Pr. 9:16: “the wicked is snared by the work of his own hands”), and an encouragement for sowing good seed (1 Cor. 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”).

**In Faith and Patience, Sow What Is Good**

James 5:7-8 Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. 8 You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.
1 Corinthians 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.

Galatians 6:9 And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary.

Pray to the Lord of Harvest and Don’t Faint

Luke 10:2 And He was saying to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”

Luke 18:1 Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart,

John 4:35-38 Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. 36 Already he who reaps is receiving wages, and is gathering fruit for life eternal; that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. 37 For in this case the saying is true, ‘One sows, and another reaps.’ 38 I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.

Please note, we reap only what has been sown, but there are others who have sown.

Wait Patiently on the Lord Who Will Reward Your Labor

Psalm 27:13-14 I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD In the land of the living. 14 Wait for the LORD; Be strong, and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD.

Psalm 37:7-11 Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who carries out wicked schemes. 8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret, it leads only to evildoing. 9 For evildoers will be cut off, But those who wait for the LORD, they will inherit the land. 10 Yet a little while and the wicked man will be no more; And you will look carefully for his place, and he will not be there. 11 But the humble will inherit the land, And will delight themselves in abundant prosperity.

Psalm 147:10-11 He does not delight in the strength of the horse; He does not take pleasure in the legs of a man. 11 The LORD favors those who fear Him, Those who wait for His lovingkindness.

Proverbs 20:22 Do not say, “I will repay evil”; Wait for the LORD, and He will save you.


Those who wait in true faith are renewed in strength so that they can continue to serve the Lord while looking for his saving work rather than take matters into their own hands. There will come a time when all that God has promised will be realized and fulfilled. In the mean time, the believer survives by means of his integrity and uprightness (biblical character) as he trusts and rests in God’s grace and power.

Law 4: We Reap More Than We Sow

No fact is more significant and sobering than this one. When we sow good, we bountifully receive from the hand of God who is debtor to no man; for the harvest is always greater than the seed planted. If this were not the case, no farmer would ever plant a thing. If he only got back what germinated in the ground, he would be on the losing end and spend his life in utter futility.
Reaping more than we sow is fundamental to the laws of the harvest and this is not just true for the agricultural world, it is true for nearly every aspect of life: for the physical and the spiritual, for believers and unbelievers alike.

This law works in reverse as well. When we sow evil, we will generally reap more than we sowed as well.

Of course, there are some exceptions due to the fact we live in a sin cursed world with natural and economic disasters. A farmer may sow bountifully and have his crop destroyed by drought or a tornado, or he may reap a good crop and not be able to reap a reward from it because of economic factors in his country.

Also, due to God’s grace in this age, when there is genuine repentance and change, we may not reap the results of sin as bountifully as in Old Testament times, but the law still applies in general.

Declarations of this Law from Scripture

**Proverbs 22:8**

He who sows iniquity will reap vanity, And the rod of his fury will perish.

There is a kind of play on words in this passage through alliteration in the Hebrew text. “Iniquity” is לְעַתּוּל and “vanity” is לְעַתּוּנ. “Vanity” here is better translated as “calamity” or “trouble.” It’s the Hebrew לְעַתּוּנ, “trouble, sorrow, distress, misfortune, idolatry, emptiness.” “The primary meaning of this word seems to have two facets: a stress on trouble which moves on to wickedness, and an emphasis on emptiness which moves on to idolatry.”

The most basic meanings is “trouble.” This is seen in Gen. 35:18. Just before Rachel died, she named her newborn son, Ben-oni, (son of sorrow). In Deut. 26:14 and Hosea 9:4, לְעַתּוּנ is associated with death. So it is a word of calamity and adverse circumstances.

Proverbs 22:8 is telling us that when a person sows iniquity or wrong, they will reap trouble and sorrow.

**Hosea 8:7a**

Hosea 8:7 For they sow the wind, And they reap the whirlwind. The standing grain has no heads; It yields no grain. Should it yield, strangers would swallow it up.

This is the same in kind, but it is more. The phrase “they sow the wind” is transitional. It alludes to the futility of Israel’s human solutions and strategies by which she was seeking to handle life and her problems, specifically, her idolatrous worship by which she was seeking to design God according to her own wishes (vss. 4-6) and her foreign policy (vss. 8-10). This she was doing in place of knowing and trusting in the Word and the true and living God (4:6).

“Wind” represents that which lacks substance and is, like all efforts of the flesh, futile, worthless, and of no assistance (cf. Prov. 11:28-29).

“Whirlwind” represents the harvest in kind which comes from sowing the wind. But it also represents the concept of “more.” The futility (wind) which she had planted like seed would yield a crop of destruction (represented by the whirlwind). “Whirlwind” is a Hebrew intensive form and means “a violent whirlwind.” God’s warning here is that you do not just reap in kind, but you may reap much more. All her efforts directed toward self-preservation would be self-destructive. The idea then is “sow wind (your solutions), reap a tornado (your consequences).”

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Illustrations of this Law from Scripture

Negative Illustrations

(1) Jacob: As a result of sowing the wind, the scheming of Rebekah and Jacob to get the family blessing (Genesis 27), Jacob and Rebekah reaped the whirlwind—trouble and heartache.

- Jacob was forced to flee because Esau had threatened that after his father’s death, he would kill Jacob.
- Rebekah had said that Jacob would only have to be gone a few days and then she would send for him. But she never saw Jacob again and he was gone for twenty years.
- Jacob had schemed to get the blessing, later he would receive in kind and even more from Laban. First he received Leah in place of Rachel whom he loved.
- Jacob used the skin of a kid to deceive Isaac, and it would be used against him by his sons.

(2) David: We know the story of David and his sin with Bathsheba, but it is Nathan’s indictments and judgments against David that tell the story of sowing the wind and reaping the whirlwind or sowing iniquity and reaping trouble.

- The indictment: You killed Uriah (2 Sam. 12:9).
  The judgment: The sword will never depart from your house (12:10).
- The indictment: You took his wife (12:9).
  The judgment: Your wives will be taken before your eyes (12:11).
- The indictment: You did this secretly (12:12).
  The judgment: Your wives will be defiled openly before all Israel (12:11-12).
- The indictment: You gave occasion to the enemies to blaspheme the Lord (12:14).
  The judgment: Your child also born to you shall surely die (12:14).

(3) The Tongue or Words

James 3:5-6 So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. Behold, how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! 6 And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.

Proverbs 10:19 When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, But he who restrains his lips is wise.

Proverbs 12:13 An evil man is ensnared by the transgression of his lips, But the righteous will escape from trouble.

Proverbs 13:3 The one who guards his mouth preserves his life; The one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.

Proverbs 18:6, 21 A fool’s lips bring strife, And his mouth calls for blows. … 21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.

Proverbs 21:6 The getting of treasures by a lying tongue Is a fleeting vapor, the pursuit of death.

Proverbs 26:28 A lying tongue hates those it crushes, And a flattering mouth works ruin.

David: A Positive Illustration

Though David did sin against the Lord, as a whole, he walked with the Lord and sowed what was good. When confronted with his sin by Nathan, he quickly confessed. This made him a man after God’s own heart. Compare 1 Kings 15:5. Most of David’s life was sowing good, not evil, and as a result, God continued to bless him and many of the kings of Judah for many years.
Law 5:
We Reap In Proportion to What We Sow

The promise and warning of Scripture is that we reap what we sow. This means that life’s choices are filled with consequences both good and bad—temporal and eternal. Reaping what we sow means we reap only what has been sown, we reap in kind as we sow, we reap in a different season than we sow, we reap more than we sow, but we also reap in proportion as we sow.

In essence, the laws of sowing and reaping mean, “As Now, So Then.” Not “someday, and then I’ll get started.” Why is this? Because today we are becoming what we will be the rest of our lives!!

While the last two laws are related, there is a very important difference. The last two laws both deal with the fact we reap more than we sow. Both deal with quantity and amount, but the previous law where the seed is multiplied many fold has to do with God’s part, but this one with ours—with human responsibility. It has to do with living by faith, with being faithful, bold, courageous, venturesome.

Let’s ask ourselves a question: “How many burglars of faith and sowing do we allow to break through the doors and windows of our lives and rob us of the challenge of sowing to the fullest?” There is a sign along the Alaskan Highway that reads: “Choose your rut carefully, you’ll be in it for the next 200 miles.”

God’s part is that whatever is sown is multiplied many fold. Man’s part is that, trusting in God’s sovereign providence, mercy, and promises, he needs to sow all the good he can and leave the results to God.\(^5\)

Declarations of This Principle

2 Cor. 9:6.

Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully.

While this verse is not a direct quotation from the Old Testament, it is a clear statement and summary of this principle which is found throughout the Bible. Bountiful sowing leads to bountiful reaping. Lawrence stated the principle of bountiful giving this way:

If you want to be rich … GIVE!
If you want to be poor … GRASP!
If you want abundance … SCATTER!
If you want to be needy … HOARD!

The world’s philosophy, that of man’s wisdom, is typically just the opposite. It can be described as:

GET ALL YOU CAN,
CAN ALL YOU GET,
THEN, SIT ON THE CAN.

The law that “we reap in proportion to what we sow,” like all the laws of the harvest, operates both negatively and positively. If we sow abundantly to the Spirit, we will reap abundantly in spiritual blessings and consequences. But if we sow abundantly to the flesh, we will reap an abundant harvest of the consequences of fleshly living—a life full of the weeds of unrighteousness.

David is a case in point: Because David continued to sow to the flesh, his sin snowballed. He went from coveting Bathsheba to one sin after another until he had broken every sin of the second half of the decalogue, the Ten Commandments. He sinned abundantly and reaped abundant consequences.

\(^5\) Lawrence, p. 74.
However, the primary motivation and emphasis of this principle and promise in the Bible is toward the good. It is a spiritual law of life that is inherent in the nature of God, but one that is contrary to the nature of man. So God encourages us through a number of passages to live as children of God according to this principle and promises that our generosity will not be forgotten.

Acts 20:35 In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’

Luke 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.

Matthew 19:29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name’s sake, shall receive many times as much, and shall inherit eternal life

Proverbs 11:24-26 There is one who scatters, yet increases all the more, And there is one who withholds what is justly due, but it results only in want. 25 The generous man will be prosperous, And he who waters will himself be watered. 26 He who withholds grain, the people will curse him,

One of the results of this principle is that we are to be:

- Zealous for good deeds (Tit. 2:14),
- Ready for every good deed (Tit. 3:1),
- Careful to engage in good deeds (Tit. 3:8), and
- Learn to engage in good deeds, to meet pressing needs, that they be not unfruitful (Tit. 3:14).

In other words, we are to be a people who sow bountifully or generously of our lives, of our talents, time, treasures, and truth.

Foundations for This Principle

God’s Character

God’s divine essence, His character, forms the foundation and motivation for operating by this principle in life. We need to remember who God is, what He is like, and what He has promised. Not only is He omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, and sovereign, but He is a loving, kind, gracious, and a giving God. It is God’s nature to bless and give. The gift of His Son is the supreme illustration of this.

Since this is the case, we can expect God to be generous with us when we echo His character through our walk with Him (cf. Rom. 8:32).

Ephesians 3:20 is a case in point:

Ephesians 3:20 Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,

Notice carefully what the Lord is able and wants to do for us:

- according to what we ask and even think,
- above all we ask and think,
- abundantly above all we ask or think,
- exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think. (2 Cor. 9:8 “And God is able to make all grace abound to you ...”).
Man’s Part and Need

Man needs:

• Knowledge and insight
• Faith and faithfulness
• Hope and endurance
• Love and labor.

Obviously, since bountiful sowing is the result of what we do, we need to say a bit about our part and what is needed in us if we are going to act on this principle of sowing bountifully.

Bountiful sowing is always to be the result or the outworking of biblical insight, values, commitment, and the Spirit-filled life.

2 Corinthians 8:3-8 For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord, 4 begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, 5 and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God. 6 Consequently we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well. 7 But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also. 8 I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also.

2 Corinthians 9:5-6 So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, that the same might be ready as a bountiful gift, and not affected by covetousness. 6 Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully.

“Bountiful” in 2 Corinthians 9:5-6 is eulogia (eulogiva) from eu, (eu) “good” and logos, (logov”) “word.” We get our word “eulogy” from this Greek word. It meant “fair speaking, flattering speech,” then “praise,” and then, “blessing, benediction.” From this it came to mean simply “blessing.”

“Bountiful gift” is the Greek eulogia which means “blessing, benefit.” Why use this word? Paul probably chose eulogia here because it is a play on the word “collection,” logeia, (logeiva) in 1 Corinthians 16:1.

Principle: Paul wants our logeia, our collections (one of the ways we sow to the Spirit), to be a eulogia, a gift and a collection that is the result of the grace work of God and His blessing both spiritually and financially, but especially spiritually. Eulogia refers to the gift of money to be collected and sent by Corinth which, of course, was designed to be and would be a blessing to Jerusalem.

Our sowing is to be the result of faith from singleness of vision and devotion to God. We should give because we are trusting God for eternal treasures, trusting God both to supply our present needs, and increase our ability to give and be a blessing. Of course, we should always give out of love for God and people in need, but we also give in faith because we know God has promised to supply our needs, that our giving will not be our lack. In connection with the gifts given by the Philippians to supply his needs, Paul wrote:

Philippians 4:19 And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Other passages pertinent here are:

Matthew 6:21-23 for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. 22 The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

2 Corinthians 8:2 that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.
2 Corinthians 9:6-7 Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully. 7 Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver.

A point of clarification is in order here. The analogy of sowing and reaping in 2 Corinthians 9:6 does not teach that you will get back ten fold or a hundred fold of your giving so you can live in greater and greater luxury or prosperity. In grace sowing, you give so that God is glorified and others receive a blessing. There is a promise of return, but it is to increase our seed for sowing, greater giving, and increase the harvest of our righteousness, spiritual fruit for the glory of God (cf. 2 Cor. 9:1-11).

Life’s Uncertainties

Ecclesiastes 11:4-6 He who watches the wind will not sow and he who looks at the clouds will not reap. 5 Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things. 6 Sow your seed in the morning, and do not be idle in the evening, for you do not know whether morning or evening sowing will succeed, or whether both of them alike will be good.

Contrary to how man typically thinks, these verses and the conditions they describe are designed to promote bountiful sowing, not the opposite which is stinginess. These verses warn about the dangers of being overly cautious which hinders generous sowing.

The uncertainties of life are one of the things that keep most people from giving and ministering to others when they have the opportunity. They are afraid their giving will be their lack. Who knows what the future holds. If I give, I might not be able to meet the needs of my family. But these verses are given in a context that calls for casting our bread upon the waters, for generous giving knowing that our gifts will return to us later.

The point here is don’t try to second guess the sovereignty of God. Just trust the Lord. We can’t wait for conditions to be perfect. Nor can we wait for things to be free of all risks—absolutely free, absolutely safe. Instead of protecting ourselves, we have to take what appears to us as risks and live by faith.

Ecclesiastes 11:1-6 Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days. 2 Divide your portion to seven, or even to eight, for you do not know what misfortune may occur on the earth. 3 If the clouds are full, they pour out rain upon the earth; and whether a tree falls toward the south or toward the north, wherever the tree falls, there it lies. 4 He who watches the wind will not sow and he who looks at the clouds will not reap. 5 Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things. 6 Sow your seed in the morning, and do not be idle in the evening, for you do not know whether morning or evening sowing will succeed, or whether both of them alike will be good.

Law 6:

We Reap the Full Harvest of the Good Only if We Persevere; The Evil Comes to Harvest on Its Own

This is a sobering principle of life. Scripture and the experience of life itself teach us that we reap the full harvest of the good only if we persevere, but evil naturally comes to harvest on its own. It doesn’t need our help. This is easily illustrated in gardening. It takes perseverance in cultivation to keep the weeds out and provide for conditions that promote healthy growth and fruitful plants, but weeds will naturally grow and take over a garden without doing a single thing.

When it comes to knowing God’s Word, we face a number of problems:

- There is the problem of ignorance. We need to know more of Scripture.
• There is the problem of understanding Scripture correctly. We need to carefully and accurately handle the Word. But probably the greatest problem is our lack of application.

• We need desperately to apply the truth we know. God’s truth sets us free, but not if we fail to apply it.

Lawrence gives the following illustration of this truth:

A large 18-wheeler was parked along a Kentucky highway. The driver was standing by the tractor from which a front wheel had been removed. A preacher stopped to see if he needed any assistance, but the trucker thanked him and said he had already sent for help. He had burned out a wheel bearing, and another was on its way. As the preacher pulled away, his eyes caught the lettering on the side of the van: Standard Oil Company of Kentucky, Lubricants Division. He had burned out a bearing—hauling grease.

Many a Christian has failed in his own life while seeking to minister to others. We do not dare let weeds grow in our own garden while we seek to hoe them out of others.

2 Timothy 2:6 The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.

There is an important principle in this verse. The farmer who labors must be the first partaker of the fruits of his own garden. This is not selfish: it is survival (cf. 1 Tim. 4:15-16).

Lawrence writes:

Somehow we have the feeling that if we do things right, there should be no problems. This is not so. Even the Son of man who sowed the good seed had an enemy come along behind and sow tares (Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43). If this happened for Him, how can we expect less. Whenever the saints say, “Let’s rise up and build,” the enemy will be right behind to rise up and oppose …

The Principle of Perseverance

The key passage for this study has been Galatians 6:7-8 and other passages have added to our understanding of the concept of sowing and reaping. But it is Galatians 6:9-10 which focuses our attention on the need of perseverance with a warning, an exhortation, and a promise.

Galatians 6:9-10 And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary. 10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

As mentioned above, anyone who has ever planted a garden knows that it cannot be planted and then forgotten. If it is, very little will come from the planting because of the many forces that work against a good harvest. A garden requires continuous labor and care in order to reap an abundant harvest. Because of the entrance of sin with the fall of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3), and because the presence of Satan and his demon forces, with every opportunity for good there is always faced an accompanying problem, the problem of opposition. This is true in the spiritual world as well as in the physical world. Whether we are sowing the seed of God’s Word in the soil of human hearts or simply sowing seed in one’s garden in the backyard we are faced with opposition.

Mark 4:14-20 The sower sows the word. 15 And these are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them. 16 And in a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; 17 and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away. 18 And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, 19 and the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. 20 And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it, and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.

6 Ibid., p. 86.
To use another metaphor, with building we are always faced with the need for battling the forces of evil. This is illustrated graphically in the life of Nehemiah when he was leading the people in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. They had to rebuild the wall “with one hand doing the work and the other holding a weapon” (cf. Neh. 4:1-23). This means the need for watchfulness and perseverance.

Why do we need this exhortation by the Apostle? Because of our natural tendencies to slack off and because of the actions of those spiritual enemies that stand against us. Satan sows tares right in the midst of our good sowing. Further, he attempts to get us to stop sowing or cultivating through the many problems we face that tend to produce discouragement. We usually do not see immediate results because it takes time to grow a crop. Ecclesiastes 11:1 tells us to “cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days.” When? After many days. And sometimes we do not see results in this life at all.

To draw our attention to the need and the problem we face, Paul used two words to warn and encourage us against giving up in favor of perseverance.

“Let us not lose heart” (enkakeo enkakevw)

This Greek word means “to act or treat badly, wrongly,” and then “to cease, give up, lose heart, despair.” It is used:

- In Luke 18:1 of fainting as the only alternative to prayer.
- In 2 Corinthians 4:1 of not fainting in the pressures of life because of the hope of experiencing Christ formed in the life by the Spirit as we behold Him in the Word (cf. 3:18).
- In 2 Corinthians 4:16 of not fainting as the consequence of a biblical perspective of life kept alive by daily renewal and a biblical focus on the certainty of the future (see verses in context).
- And in 2 Thess. 3:13 to exhort the Thessalonian believers against growing weary in doing good.

“If we do not grow weary” (ekluo ekluvw)

This word is used only in the passive voice which points to the impact of something on one’s life which causes them to give up. This word was used of:

- The waist and meant “be ungirded” (so used in an early church writing called the Didache) and so unprepared. It’s the opposite of 1 Peter 1:13, “gird up your loins.”
- Becoming faint of soul, weary or slack, give out, lose moral courage (Heb. 12:3, 5; Deut. 20:3 [Septuagint]).
- Growing physically weary or faint from hunger (Mark 8:3).

It seems the first word stresses the idea of discouragement, a failure of the will. The second word stresses failure in spiritual strength.

Reaping is related to the sowing, not only in the matter of the quality of the seed, but also in regard to the quantity sown (2 Cor. 9:6). But the quantity sown is related to the concept of endurance through the long haul. While diligence and perseverance in the present will produce proportionate abundance later, Paul is challenging us to remember that laxity and fainting now produce proportionate poverty later (2 Pet. 1:8f).

“For in due time” is lit. “in its own time.” This is the harvest time. Harvest time has its own time. This is God’s appointment, and is neither to be hastened nor delayed by the act of any of His creatures. The reference is to a fixed relation between seed-time and harvest; it carries on the idea of sowing and reaping.

A father and two children, a boy of eight and a girl of ten years, all good swimmers, entered the waters of the Atlantic at a New Jersey seashore resort a few summers ago. When some distance from shore, they became separated and the father realized they were being carried out to sea by the tide. He called out to the little girl: ‘Mary, I am going to shore for help. If you get tired, turn on your back. You can float all day on your back. I’ll come back for you.’
Before long, many searchers in boats were scurrying over the face of the Atlantic Ocean hunting for one small girl, while hundreds of people to whom the news had spread waited anxiously on shore. It was four hours before they found her, far from land. She was calmly swimming on her back and was not at all frightened. Cheers and tears of joy and relief greeted the rescuers with their precious burden as they came to land.

The child took it calmly. She said, ‘Daddy said he would come for me, and that I could float all day, so I swam and floated, because I knew he would come.’

“In due time” refers to a right, proper, or a favorable time. The emphasis is on the quality of time and the things that characterize the time as: a time for harvest (Matt. 13:30; Acts 14:17; Gal. 6:9), punishment (Matt. 8:29), discharging duties (Luke 12:42), opportunity for doing (Matt. 26:18; Gal. 6:10; Eph. 5:16), or of a time suitable for a special purpose as in temptation (cf. Luke 4:13).

Note the contrast in the use of the Greek word kairos (kairov”), “time, opportunity.” In verse 9 it is used of the season for harvest, and in verse 10 where it is translated “opportunity,” it is used of the season for sowing. To miss or fail in one is to miss or fail in the other.

The apostle also stresses the importance and nature of sowing by the use of different terms for doing good.

(1) “In doing good” (vs. 9) is a combination of one word for “doing, executing, producing.” (poieo poievw) and another word which means “good” (kalos kalov”). Literally it is “doing what is beautiful, helpful, beneficial.”

(2) “Do good” (vs. 10) combines two different sets of words, synonyms, to drive home the point. The verb means “be active, work effectively, accomplish, carry out” (ergazomai ergazomai), and the noun used refers to what is intrinsically good, valuable, fit, useful (agathos agaqo”).

Conclusion

The need is perseverance in sowing. It’s seldom easy, and sometimes we don’t see the fruit of our labors in this life. Hebrews 11:33-39 speaks of those who were severely persecuted for their faith, but they persevered because they looked for eternal rewards as sojourners and pilgrims (see Heb. 11:13-16). These, we are then told, “having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised,” that is, in this life. A wonderful illustration of this truth is found in the life of John Wycliffe.

You and I have an English Bible in our possession largely because of a man named John Wycliffe. He was known not only as a builder, producing the first English text of the Bible, but also as a fighter. What a leader! When he died, his enemies burned him at the stake and took the ashes of his body and sprinkled them over the Thames River in London. “Forever, we’re rid of Wycliffe!” his enemies must have thought. They were wrong. The product of his labors, the English Bible, is with us today because he did more than fight. He stayed at the task.8

Wycliffe never saw the fruit of his sowing, but he persevered in faith and we today enjoy the product of his labors. But where does perseverance come from? It comes from knowing God through the Word and leaning on His promises by faith. It ultimately boils down to faith and staying focused on the Lord and His person, plan, promises, and purposes as given to us in Scripture.

Romans 15:4 For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

1 Corinthians 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.

James 1:2-4 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

7 Ibid., p. 98.
Psalm 138:8 The LORD will accomplish what concerns me; Thy lovingkindness, O LORD, is everlasting; Do not forsake the works of Thy hands.

Law 7:
We Can’t do Anything About Last Year’s Harvest, But We Can About This Year’s

Life is full of consequences both good and bad. Life is full of important choices because every choice has a consequence of some kind and to some degree. Actually, the most important choices are often the ones that seem small by comparison, but these are the ones which may either protect us from evil or expose us to choices that have tremendous repercussions (cf. Prov. 5:8-9; 6:21-24; 7:1-10 and Luke 16:10).

But how do we handle it when last year’s harvest is not so good, when we have fumbled the ball or failed? The tendency is to let our failure keep us from positive sowing today. What we must understand and act on is this final law of the harvest—**we cannot do anything about last year’s harvest, but we can about this year’s.**

This law translates into at least four important concepts that we need to understand and apply if we are going to be able to act on this law. Let me summarize them and then we will look at each one in more detail.

(1) We cannot do anything about last year’s harvest.

(2) We must learn to live with the consequences of our failures.

(3) We must commit ourselves to this year’s harvest.

(4) We must not judge our harvest by the standards of the world and its ideas of success.

**We Cannot Do Anything About Last Year’s Harvest**

Whatever we did last year, last month, last week, even yesterday is over and past. There are no time machines to take us back so we can change what we did yesterday. Nothing we do today can in any way change the record of what was sown and what was or will be reaped as a consequence. It is either a harvest that will be worthy of praise or burning—or perhaps portions of both—but whatever was produced stands as the record of the lives we live on this earth. The problem with all too many Christians is that they are not forgetting the past and reaching on to what is before (Philippians 3:13-14).

If we failed to produce a crop worthy of the Lord’s praise last year our brooding and wallowing in self-pity for having wasted this time will only cause us to fail to produce anything glorifying to the Lord this year. If we did use the opportunities the Lord gave us and produced a harvest of good things, we cannot rest on our laurels. This is another year; and just because the Holy Spirit led and blessed last year, as we were obedient to Him and the Word, does not mean that we automatically will produce anything good this year.9

**We Must Learn to Live With the Consequences of Our Failures**

When people believe they are failures or that their failures (evil sowing) forever ruin their chances for success and marks them for life, it neutralizes them and wipes out their ability to use their life and the gifts God has given them.

But how do we avoid this? By the following:

- By confessing our failures to God (1 John 1:9; Ps. 32:5). This wipes the slate clean.

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9 Lawrence, p. 102.
• By knowing and resting in the fact we are forgiven through Christ and can move ahead for the Lord and in life regardless of the past (Ps. 32:1-8; 51:1-13).

• By learning from our failures: use them as back doors to success (Psa. 119:59, 67, 71). The principle is we need to learn from our failures (Heb. 5:8).

• By forgetting the past (triumphs and failures) so we can press on for the future with renewed commitment to God’s will (Phil. 3:13-14; Luke 9:62).

• By seeing and using the trials caused by our failures as character builders. “The tests of life are to make, not break us. Trouble may demolish a man’s business but build up his character. The blow at the outward man may be the greatest blessing to the inner man.”10 Again consider Ps. 119:67, 71 with Jam. 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 1:6-7.

As Lawrence mentioned, brooding and wallowing in self-pity for having wasted some part of one’s life will only cause us to fail to produce anything glorifying to the Lord in the year ahead. Therefore:

We Must Commit Ourselves to This Year’s Harvest

We must press on in our lives by sowing for the future and for the Lord. Whether we did or did not produce effectively in last year’s harvest, we must neither sit around in self-pity or guilt, or sit on our laurels. We must press on toward the upward call of God in Christ. The following passages illustrate what we need to do by way of pressing on whether we have experienced victory and growth, or failure, or a lack of growth.

Philippians 3:14-20 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; 16 however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained. 17 Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. 18 For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, 19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. 20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

Hebrews 5:11-6:8 Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. 12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

1 Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3 And this we shall do, if God permits. 4 For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame. 7 For ground that drinks the rain which often falls upon it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; 8 but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.

Hebrews 12:5-14 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reproved by Him; 6 For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives.” 7

10 Ibid., p. 115.
It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. 11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. 12 Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. 14 Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

Luke 22:31-34 “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; 32 but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” 33 And he said to Him, “Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!” 34 And He said, “I say to you, Peter, the cock will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me.”

We Must Not Judge Our Harvest By the Standards of the World

It is hard to face failure because it is so ugly and devastating, but our failures can become like a ladder to success. We often sing a great old hymn, “Victory in Jesus,” and have a hard time admitting that the road to victory is often filled with speed bumps, pot holes, accidents, and detours.

In his book, Failure, The Back Door to Success, Erwin Lutzer writes:

Perhaps we have forgotten that not many wise, noble, and mighty are chosen by God. We judge ourselves and others by a false standard.

A few noble, wise, and gifted are called. But they are exceptions. God usually chooses the weak, the ordinary, and the despised. Why, then, do so many of us believe we are failures? Perhaps we have a totally false notion of success …

Success comes in being obedient to the Lord and growing in character like the Lord Jesus, not in numbers, names, and noses, or position, power, prestige, and possessions, or activities, abilities, and acceptance by people. If we judge the Lord on the basis of His possessions, acceptance, names and number of noses that followed Him, He would be a failure.

But in our world, people typically use the wrong yardstick. They measure success by things like who they know, by comparing results, personal gifts and abilities, clothes, cars, houses, popularity, and fame.

Concerning results and abilities, I can remember when in seminary going to the mail room where we usually got our blue books with the results of our tests. Listening to the response of guys to their grades provided a good illustration of this. You could often hear something like this. One says, “I got an A.” while the other one says, “He gave me an F.” Notice how we are quick to take credit for our successes and to blame others for our failure.

But we can have everything that the world thinks makes us a success, and still be a huge failure in the eyes of God.

There is another class of failures: those who mistakenly believe they are successes! They may earn an honest living and be fine supporters of the church. They unconsciously (or sometimes all too consciously) consider themselves examples for others to follow. Yet they do not realize that from God’s perspective they are failures. One man put it this way: “I climbed the ladder of success only to discover that my ladder was leaning against the wrong wall!”

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12 Lutzer, p. 17.
Conclusion

We come then to the same truth emphasized in the sixth law, namely we must forget about the past and concentrate on that which is at hand. The “Illinois Medical Journal” carried an article that states why this (learning to forget the past, etc.) is so important.

There are two days in every week about which we should not worry—two days which should be kept from fear and apprehension.

One of these days is Yesterday with its mistakes and cares, its aches and pains, its faults and blunders. Yesterday has passed forever beyond our control. All the money in the world cannot bring back Yesterday. We cannot undo a single act we performed; we cannot erase a single word we said. Yesterday is gone.

The other day we should not worry about is Tomorrow with its possible adversities, its burdens, its large promise and poor performance. Tomorrow is beyond our immediate control. Tomorrow’s sun will rise either in splendor or behind a mask of clouds—but it will rise. Until it does, we have no stake in Tomorrow, for it is as yet unborn.

That leaves only one day—Today. Any man, by the grace of God, can fight the battles of just one day. It is only when you and I add the burdens of those two awful eternities—Yesterday and Tomorrow—that we break down.

It is not the experience of Today that drives men mad—it is remorse or bitterness for something which happened Yesterday and the dread of what Tomorrow may bring. Let us, therefore, journey but one day at a time.  

Actually, by taking care of today we provide for tomorrow—or at least prepare for it. The call of Scripture is “Today, if you will hear his voice, Do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, As in the day of trial in the wilderness.” The children of Israel miserably failed and wandered about in the wilderness for forty years because they failed to daily take care of their hearts so that they could keep their eyes on the Lord and trust in Him. The trials they faced were opportunities for growth and the glory of God, but because they failed to daily discipline their lives for godliness, they spent their lives going in circles in the wilderness (cf. 1 Tim. 4:7b).

The “War Cry” magazine reminds us of an important principle. “A loose wire give out no musical note; but fasten the ends, and the piano, the harp, or violin is born. Free steam drives no machine, but hamper and confine it with piston and turbine and you have the great world of machinery made possible. The unhampered river drives no dynamos, but dam it up and we get power sufficient to light a great city. So our lives must be disciplined if we are to be of any real service in this world.”

What are the tests of life? They are tools in the hand of God designed to shape us into the character of Christ. Their design is not to break us, but make us by conforming us into His image. Again, while we should never want to fail, we all do and we need to learn to use our failures as stepping stones to growth and sowing a harvest for the glory of God.

We cannot control the length of our life, but we can control its width and depth.
We cannot control the contour of our countenance, but we can control its expression.
We cannot control the other person’s annoying habits, but we can do something about our own.
We cannot control the distance our head is above the ground, but we can control the height of the contents we feed into it.

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13 Lawrence, pp. 111-112.
14 Ibid., p. 113.
God help us do something about what we can control
and leave all else in the hands of God!


\[15\] Ibid., p. 11.