

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 17 September 2017. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

What Are You Planting?

Galatians 6:7-9

In 1994, 20th Century Fox produced a re-make of their 1947 movie, *Miracle on 34th Street*. In the movie, a New York City judge is forced to make a ruling on whether or not a man named Kris Kringle is insane. Kris is a sweet old man; but he has just one problem: he thinks that he is Santa Claus. Now, the judge doesn't want to send Kris to an institution; but he can't find any way to declare him "sane." But at the last minute, Kris's lawyer, Bryan, saves the day. Just before the judge is ready to make his verdict that Kris is insane, Bryan sends a little girl named Susan up to the judge's bench, with a Christmas card to give to the judge. Not able to resist Susan's cute little face, the judge takes the card and opens it; and inside the card he finds a dollar bill. On this bill, the words "In God we trust" are circled in red. The judge understands the point that Bryan is making; and he changes his ruling. He rules that if the U.S. Treasury can print the words "*In God We Trust*" on its currency, without demanding evidence that God exists, then *he* can, by the authority of the State of New York, declare that there is a *Santa Claus*, and that he exists in the person of Kris Kringle! Folks, need I point out that this is blasphemy? *Miracle on 34th Street* makes a mockery of God. It puts Him on the same "fairy tale" level as Santa Claus.

Now, the only reason I bring up this ridiculous movie is that I wish to make a point about how lost people view the world. During one of the court sessions, when Kris's lawyer was defending his client, he asked the judge this question: "*I ask your honour to consider which is worse: A lie, that draws a smile? Or a truth, that draws a tear?*" Obviously, the viewer is supposed to come to the conclusion that an "innocent" lie is better than a hard, mean truth. In one sentence, Hollywood taught us what they wanted us to learn. This is the *world's* philosophy. According to the world system, it is better to believe lies than to believe the truth, because lies make us feel good about ourselves.

This is *exactly* the way that the devil wants people to think. Satan wants people to prefer sweet-sounding lies to "harsh" truths, because that way he can keep them blinded to the truth of the Gospel. Make no mistake about it: the consequence of loving and clinging to lies is dire. **Revelation 22:15** warns us that "*whosoever loveth and maketh a lie*" will be barred from heaven. God is a God of truth. He hates lies and deception. He hates *all* the works of our flesh. That is why we who know Christ as Saviour should be "walking in the Spirit," so that we will "*not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.*"

In **Galatians 6:1-6**, Paul gave us several practical ways in which we who are saved, and "walking in the Spirit," should conduct ourselves. Now, in this morning's passage, we will see how yielding to the control of the Holy Spirit is like sowing good seed—and how yielding to the flesh is like sowing *corrupt* seed. The title of this message is "*What Are You Planting?*"

Read Galatians 6:7-9.

I. The lost man's harvest

This passage of Scripture is grossly misinterpreted by many people who call themselves "Christians." Many people believe that one day there will be one great Judgment for all

mankind, in which it will be determined who will be allowed into heaven, and who won't, based on the deeds they sowed in this life. However, this simply is not what the Bible teaches!

First of all, the Bible teaches that we are *not* saved by works of righteousness. No matter how hard you may try to “sow” good deeds in order to earn eternal life, you can't do it! Even your best attempts at righteousness are worthless to God. He cannot accept them. **(See Isaiah 64:6.)** The only thing that God will accept is repentance (true turning of heart and mind from sin and self to God), and faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. **(See Ephesians 2:8-9.)**

This thinking that there will be one big judgment for all mankind is *also* false, because the Bible teaches that the saved and the unsaved will *not* stand together in the same judgment.

Read Psalm 1:1-6.

In this Scripture, David tells us that the “**ungodly**” (the unsaved) will *not* stand together in the same assembly with the “**righteous**” (the saved) on their day of Judgment. Scripture teaches that there will be **two separate Judgments**—one for the saved, and one for the unsaved: and the saved and unsaved will be judged in two very different ways. The unsaved will have all their sins held against them, because they never received God's gift of salvation; and their degree of punishment in hell will be dealt accordingly. The saved will *not* have their sins held against them, because Christ's blood has covered their sin; but they *will* receive or forfeit *reward* in heaven according to how faithfully they served the Lord in their time on earth. **First Corinthians 3:14-15** says that for the Christian, “***If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved.***”

The Bible couldn't be clearer. There are only two kinds of people in this world: those who are saved, and bound for heaven, and those who are still lost, and bound for hell. Either you are in Satan's kingdom, or in God's kingdom. Either you have repented of your sin and believed on Christ, and you have eternal life, or you have *not* repented and believed on Jesus, and do *not* have eternal life. The Bible says, “***He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life***” (1 John 5:12).

To *whom*, then, does this passage about “sowing” and “reaping” apply? Does it apply to lost people, or to saved people? Well, it applies to both—but *in different ways*.

First, let's see how it applies to the lost. In **verse 8**, we are told that those who sow “**to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.**” My friends, this statement applies to those who are saved, and *only* to those who are saved. A lost man *cannot* “**sow to the Spirit**” at all. A person who has never repented of his sin and believed on Christ has **no ability** to “**sow to the Spirit,**” because he doesn't have the Spirit of God within him. A lost person can sow only to the flesh, and he can *reap* only to the flesh. He cannot reap godly things; and he *will not* reap eternal life—unless, that is, he repents of his sin and believes on Christ. As long as a lost man remains in his lost condition, he can reap only corruption. He will reap corruption in this life; and if he die without Christ, he will reap corruption in the next life (in the Lake of Fire).

Read Romans 8:1, 5-10.

This is the point at which many people are offended at the message of the Bible. This is the point at which Jesus Christ ceases to be the sweet, harmless Babe in the manger, and instead becomes the Divider of men. Those who have never entered into the “**strait gate**” of salvation will protest, “You mean to tell me that all the good things I do count for nothing? You mean to

tell me that going to church, and working hard for my living, and being a ‘family man,’ and giving money to charity, is all considered ‘sowing to the flesh,’ and cannot be accepted by God at all?” Yes, that is what I’m saying—because it’s what *God* says.

A person who has not come to the Father through His Son Jesus may try his best to be moral; yet, no matter what he does, he is sowing to the flesh. Why? Because he is not energized by the Spirit of God. Instead, he is energized by his own will power, which is fuelled by pride. When a person is relying on his own performance of good works to get to heaven, instead of on Christ’s sacrifice, the real thought of his heart is not “What hath God wrought!”: instead, his thought is, “Look what *I* have wrought!” **Proverbs 21:4** says, “***An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin.***” Even ordinary activities such as “***plowing***” (in other words, one’s daily work) is “sin” to those who do not know the Lord! Why? Because all their labours are rooted in the thought, “Look what *I*’ve done!” The Bible says that there is *no* boasting in salvation, because it is all the work of God. Those who think “I’m a decent chap” have never humbled themselves before Christ and received His salvation.

Read Romans 3:24 – 4:4.

If you have never been saved, then what you are hearing right now is the plain, awful truth about your spiritual condition. However, there’s even more that I must tell you. You see, sowing and reaping of crops operates according to certain laws: and so does sowing and reaping in the spiritual realm. Let’s look at these laws.

The first law of sowing and reaping is that you reap *what* you sow. If you sow tares, you will harvest tares. If you sow thorns and noxious weeds, you will harvest thorns and noxious weeds. Likewise, when you sow spiritual corruption, you will reap spiritual corruption. You will reap according to what you’ve sown. As you sow **lies**, you will reap lies. (For example, parents tell their kids that there is a man in a red suit named “Santy” who comes down their chimney on Christmas Eve; but then they wonder why their kids lie to them all the time!) As you sow **anger** in your heart, you will reap anger from your family and friends. As you sow **grudges** in your heart, you will reap bitterness and gall in your own heart, and from others around you. As you sow **vengeance** against others, you *reap* vengeance from others. (This applies not merely to physical violence, but to emotional wounds inflicted on others through your words and actions.) If you sow **pornography** (whether it be in magazines, web sites, T.V. shows, or cinema), you will reap uncontrollable, lustful thoughts, which will control you like a puppet. It will lead to adultery, marital strife, messed up family relationships, divorce, and sorrow. (Perhaps even disease.) If you sow **drinking**, you will sow drunkenness and misery. Whether you go to the point of becoming an “alcoholic” or not, you will reap absolutely nothing good from strong drink. You will harvest only depression, and loss of self-control. **Proverbs 23:31-32** says, “***Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.***” If you sow “good works” in order to try to impress others, then you will reap the praise of men—and nothing more. Jesus said that the Pharisees made long prayers in order that they “***may be seen of men***”; but, He said, “***Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.***” In other words, they wanted others to notice their religiosity; and that was exactly what they got. But they did *not* receive the reward of eternal life.

Now, not only do you reap *what* you sow, but **you also reap far more than what you sow.** A farmer doesn’t sow one grain of corn, and reap one grain in return. He reaps *many* grains for every grain he planted. Likewise, when you reap to the flesh, you reap far more consequences than you ever thought you would. Many people say, “Oh, it’s just one drink”; or, “Oh, it’s just

one flirt with someone who is not my wife, or husband”; or, “Oh, it’s just one night of sinful pleasure with this person”; or, “Oh, it’s just one lie”; or, “Oh, it’s just one indulgence in a filthy show, a filthy book, or filthy magazine”; or, “Oh, it’s just one cigarette”; or, “Oh, it’s just a little blow up of anger here and there. It’s no big deal”; but in the end, the consequences are dire. Still others say, “Well, I’ve got my own religion. Maybe my religion doesn’t see eye to eye with the Bible; but I’ll still get to heaven through my religion, because I’m sincere.” This, too, is a poisonous crop; and in the end, it will yield eternal destruction.

Read Luke 12:42-48.

In this parable, the unfaithful servants represent Jewish people who will live between the time of Christ’s first coming to earth, and the time of Christ’s return to earth. Being Jews, they are *supposed* to be the servants of Jehovah, and are actually *called* His servants; yet, the Jews in this parable reject their Messiah, do their own will, and live as if Jesus will never come back. Now, Christ makes it clear that when He returns, those Jewish people who *knew* His will (because they had heard the Scriptures, and had heard that they needed to repent and believe on Him) will receive much greater “stripes”—in other words, much greater punishment in hell. Why? Because they knew the truth, yet rejected it.

Now, this parable doesn’t apply merely to Jewish people. *All* men are supposed to serve God with their lives; and *all* men are responsible to God for the truth that they have heard. Those who heard the Word of God, and have heard the Gospel preached again and again, yet rejected it, will reap a much greater harvest of damnation than will those who never heard. There *will* be degrees of punishment in hell. Jesus said that “***it shall be more tolerable***” in the Judgment Day for the wicked people of Sodom and Gomorrah, than for the outwardly religious and moral people of His day who heard Christ’s preaching, yet refused to believe on Him.

If you have not received Jesus Christ as your Saviour, what will God have to do with *you* some day, if you pass out of this life without receiving His way of salvation? I urge you: Don’t wait around and find out! Repent of your sin and put your trust in Him today!

The last principle of sowing and reaping is that **you reap much later than you sow**. Sadly, many people live their lives as though there is no tomorrow. They sin with impunity, and they *seem* to get away with it. In fact, they begin to convince themselves that their sin isn’t so bad, because, “After all, everything is going well with me.” But the third law of sowing and reaping is that you reap *later* than what you sow. It’s not harvest *yet*. Even if you seem to prosper in this life, it does not change the fact that the Judgment Day is drawing nearer and nearer. There will be no getting out of the harvest that you will reap on that terrible Day!

“Pastor,” you may say, “you’re painting a dark picture. I’m not sure that I’m saved. What can I do?” God’s answer is: Repent! Place your confidence for salvation in Christ alone, and in the sacrifice that He made for you on the cross. Jesus said, “***Repent ye, and believe the gospel***” (Mark 1:15). Put your faith in the Gospel (the “good news”) that Christ died for your sins, was buried, and rose again to pay for your sins. Make Christ your Lord, and hand the throne of your life to Him. There may be some natural consequences from sins in this life, which cannot be reversed in this lifetime on earth; but Jesus Christ will lift the awful penalty of sin (the condemnation to hell), and will put you on the road to heaven, if you will only believe on Him! He will also destroy the *power* of sin in your life. He will literally come into your body, give you a new nature, and help you to begin to live a new life. He will help you to begin to “sow to the Spirit” instead of to the flesh. And this brings me to our last point.

II. The saved man's harvest

We've seen that an unsaved man can sow only to the flesh, and can reap only the flesh. He cannot sow or reap to the Spirit, because he does not have the Spirit.

Now, let's look at the *saved man's* harvest. A believer, unlike the lost man, *has* the ability to sow and reap to the Spirit, because the Spirit of God dwells within him. Now, the most blessed harvest that a believer will reap is salvation. The Spirit *has given, and will continue to give* everlasting life to all who believe on Jesus. However, salvation from the penalty of sin is not the only thing Christians will reap through the Spirit. There is much more that God desires to produce in and through you, Christian! Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Christians *can and will* produce spiritual fruit in their lives, to some degree or another. The Spirit has given the believer a new nature, which desires to glorify God; and God *will* get glory from His new creation. However, the amount of fruit you will produce, Christian, depends on how consistently you yield yourself to God, and "walk in the Spirit."

Read Matthew 13:3-8, 18-23.

In this parable, the first three types of ground represent the hearts of unbelievers. The stony ground and thorny ground *seem*, at first glance, to represent the hearts of believers, because the seed takes root, and a plant actually begins to spring up. Jesus even said that these two grounds represent those who "**with joy**" receive the word...*at first*. Perhaps they begin to come to church, and to read the Bible; and they enjoy it. They even seem to be changing for the better. But then, they suddenly fall away—either because people are mocking them for hanging around the "born agains," or because they figured that comforts of this life are more important than being identified with Jesus Christ. They suddenly want nothing to do with the Lord, or church, or the things of God. Why? Because these are people who were never truly saved. They only *appeared* to be saved. No fruit was ever produced in their lives, because they never had true faith in Christ. But the "good ground" represents the heart of someone who has truly been saved. The proof that this person is saved is that he *brings forth fruit*. Some Christians bring forth thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, and some one hundred fold; but there *will be* fruit. Those who truly put their faith in Christ will *not* fall away.

How is your spiritual harvest coming along, Christian? How much are you sowing to the Spirit? How much are you allowing the Spirit to produce "**love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness,**" and "**temperance**" in your life? Are you endeavouring to plant the Gospel in people's hearts, so that you might see a harvest of souls springing up unto salvation, and bringing forth fruit for God? Instead of just one "grain" (yourself) possessing eternal life, scores, hundreds, or even thousands of other "grains" may possess eternal life, through you! You may not see a huge number of people saved through your witness; but the people you lead to Christ can lead *other* people to Christ; and those people will lead *other* people to Christ. As succeeding generations roll by, *thousands* of souls may be saved through the seed you sowed in your lifetime; and one day, in heaven, we will all be able to rejoice together. **Psalm 126:6** says, "**He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.**"

Now, we've talked about a believer's sowing to the Spirit; but what about sowing to the flesh? *Can* a believer sow to the flesh? He certainly can. A believer can sow to the Spirit, *or* to the flesh! Now, maybe you're thinking, "Hold on, Pastor! You just got done saying that those who are lost sow to the flesh, and they ultimately reap eternal destruction in hell. So how can a Christian sow to the flesh, and not end up reaping eternal destruction in hell, too?" The

answer to this question is simple: The believer is not accepted in God's family on the basis of *his own* righteousness, but on the basis of *Christ's* righteousness, which has been imputed to his account. It is *Christ* who saves a man, and keeps him. Jesus said, "**He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life**" (John 5:24). He also said, "**All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out**" (John 6:37). Paul wrote that the believer is "**sealed with that holy Spirit of promise**" until the resurrection day (Ephesians 1:13-14). The only reason why a true, born-again child of God doesn't reap eternal destruction in the Lake of Fire is that Christ has paid his sin debt in full.

So, what does this mean? It means the "corruption" that a Christian reaps from his sin is all in *this* lifetime. When a Christian stands before God to be judged, his sin will not be held against him, because it is all under the blood of Christ. However, there *will* be earthly consequences for sin. There *will* be chastisement from the Lord. The rules of sowing and reaping still apply to the Christian: but the ill harvest is reaped in *this life* on earth.

Let's see how these rules of sowing and reaping affect the Christian. First of all, Christians will reap *what* they sow. If you sow lies, your lies will come back to bite you. If you sow lustful thoughts, you will reap horrible consequences. Proverbs 6:27-28 says, "**Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?**" Be assured, Christian, that the law of sowing applies to you! God says, "**Be sure your sin will find you out**" (Numbers 32:23).

The second rule of sowing and reaping is that you **reap more than what you sow**. Let's see how this played out in the life of a believer whom God called a "man after mine own heart."

Read 2 Samuel 12:1-14.

David was a humble man, who loved the Lord deeply. Yet, in a moment of weakness, he sowed a lustful glance at a woman; and he reaped a harvest of adultery and murder of that woman's husband. His heart was filled with shame and guilt. But that wasn't all. He reaped a child that died in infancy. He reaped a son named Amnon, who committed incest with one of his sisters. He reaped a son named Absalom, who murdered his brother Amnon; who committed incest with some of David's own wives; and who tried to overthrow his father from his throne. David also reaped constant threats to his throne from other enemies. David was a saved man; and God forgave him of his terrible sin, and used him again. Yet, his sin brought forth an evil harvest upon him, and upon his entire family.

How severe can a Christian's harvest be when he sows to the flesh? Well, the consequences can go so far as physical *death*!

Read 1 John 5:16.

In **1 Corinthians 11**, Paul rebuked the believers in the church of Corinth because they were partaking of the Lord's Supper without first confessing their sins. In fact, Paul informed them that many of them were sick, and many "slept" (in other words, had died), because of their abuse of the Lord's Table! The Bible makes it clear that there *is* a "sin unto death" for disobedient Christians. A Christian will never experience *spiritual* death (separation from God) again; but God *can* choose to remove a disobedient Christian from this world *early*. Remember Ananias and Sapphira, in **Acts 5**? God struck them dead on the spot for lying to their pastor about the price of a piece of land which they had sold and given to the church.

Their sin was *not* that they didn't give the whole price of the land to the church. No one told them that they should sell their land, or give any portion of the money to the church: that was their *own* choice. Their sin was that they *lied* about what they had given (probably because they wanted others to admire the sacrifice they had made). We have no reason to believe that Ananias and Sapphira weren't saved; yet, they sowed to the flesh, and they reaped early death.

There is an old saying that is very true: "Sin always keeps you longer than you want to stay; and it always costs you more than you want to pay." Christian, are you grieving the Lord with a sin, and are not getting it right? If so, you'd better go to the Lord for cleansing!

The last law of sowing and reaping is that **you always reap later than you sow**. You may not see the consequences of sin straightaway; but in time, the harvest *will* spring up and bring forth ill fruit. You know, as life rolls on, lost people become increasingly confident that they will never suffer any consequences for their sin, because all *seems* to be well with them. Yet, a Christian can have that same false confidence. No chastisement *seems* to be forthcoming; therefore, they flatter themselves that God won't do anything to punish them. But remember: God says, "**Be sure your sin will find you out.**" You *will* reap what you sow. Even when you repent and get right, there are often irreversible consequences for your sin in this lifetime.

On the other hand, you can be sure that you will reap *reward* for what you have sown to the Spirit. God *will* reward you, if you be not weary in well doing. You *will* reap, if you faint not. Even if the acts of love that you do for the Lord are never known or appreciated by anyone else, you may be sure that there *is* a reward reserved for you in heaven. God *will* bring your service to light; and He *will* reward you for it when you stand before Him. Scripture says, "**Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.**"

Read 1 Timothy 5:24-25.

Conclusion: The laws of sowing and reaping cannot be avoided. My friend, if you have not been saved, I am here to warn you that God is a just Judge. His justice will not slide. Ultimately, the wages of sin is death—eternal separation from God in the Lake of Fire. In order to avoid that awful harvest, you *must* receive God's gift of salvation, which He has provided for you. Now, for those of you who *have* received God's gift of salvation, the condemnation of hell has been lifted. You will never hear the awful words, "**Depart from me, ye cursed.**" Yet, sin still has consequences. Sowing to the flesh *will* yield a harvest of corruption in this lifetime. As a Spirit-indwelt believer, you *have* sown to the Spirit already, and will continue to do so; but how *much* will you plant? Will you have a meagre harvest to present to God? I urge you to surrender your will to the Lord fully, so that you might bring forth *much* fruit for the Lord.