

The Principle of Sowing and Reaping

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Toward a Better Understanding of the Sovereignty of God
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Sometimes incorrectly equated with the blessings and curses of the law is the principle of sowing and reaping. Here are some observable examples of this sovereign principle that exist apart from the law.

In nature, we plant seeds and reap a harvest (Gen. 8:22).

We extend kindness to others, and they usually reciprocate (Lk. 6:38).

If we live recklessly, we might be injured or die or harm others.

By exposing our minds to constant strife, immorality, gruesome images, and constant worry, we can develop anxiety (Phil. 4:8).

In most societies, if we break a law, we will be held accountable. We could be charged a fine or be incarcerated (Rom. 13).

While we thank God that seeds miraculously grow, we cannot blame God if our actions have natural negative consequences. This principle of sowing and reaping is apparent under the New Covenant.

Galatians 6:7-10

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. ⁸ For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, ¹ but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. ⁹ And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. ¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

This principle of sowing and reaping does not override the fact that Jesus took away our sins and remembers them no more. Christians who "sow to the flesh" will still be saved, but their eternal salvation does not exempt them from the consequences of their actions while here on earth. A Christian who is involved in immorality is not immune from getting a disease related to that activity, for example. One who drinks alcohol to excess might develop a disease related to that habit.

¹ Corruption: decay, ruin

What Paul is saying is that God is not mocked about such things. While we remain loved, forgiven, and redeemed, dangerous behavior has consequences. Even Jesus resisted the devil's temptation to jump off the pinnacle of the temple to prove He would be saved. He said, "Thou shall not put the Lord your God to the test" (Matt. 4:5-7).

Sowing to the Spirit is doing good to all men but especially to the household of faith. He encourages us that sowing to the Spirit by doing good will cause us to reap everlasting life—in this world and the one to come. This does not mean we are saved by good works. It refers to reaping benefits either while on earth or after we pass away.

Another mention of the kingdom principle of sowing and reaping is found in Paul's letter to the Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8

But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

Some Christians are offended by this statement: The more you give, the more you will receive. But this is clearly stated in this passage. If you give sparingly (stingily), you will receive little. If you give bountifully, you will reap bountifully. God loves it when we give cheerfully, not grudgingly. This passage isn't meant to condemn but to encourage. In the kingdom of God, we are not mandated to give a certain percentage but "as we purpose in our hearts," and God is not looking at the amount but the heart. He assures us that giving will result in God's grace abounding toward us so that we will not only have all we need but also an abundance (superabundance) for every good work.