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Sowing and Reaping

Dwight Lyman Moody

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SOWING AND REAPING

BY

D. L. MOODY.

'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.'
Gal. vi: 7.

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1.

SOWING AND REAPING

SOWING AND REAPING.

CHAPTER I.

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” Galatians vi: 7, 8.

I think this passage contains truths that no infidel or sceptic will dare to deny. There are some passages in the Word of God that need no other proof than that which we can easily find in our daily experience. This is one of them. If the Bible were to be blotted out of existence, the words I have quoted would be abundantly verified by what is constantly happening around us. We have only to take up the daily papers to see them being fulfilled before our eyes.

I remember giving out this text once when a man stood right up in the audience and said:

“I don’t believe it.”

I said, “My friend, that doesn’t change the fact. Truth is truth whether you believe it or not, and a lie is a lie whether you believe it or not.”

He didn’t want to believe it. When the meeting broke up, an officer was at the door to arrest him. He was tried and sent to the penitentiary for twelve months for stealing. I really believe that when he got into his cell, he believed that he had to reap what he sowed.

We might as well try to blot the sun out of the heavens as to blot this truth out of the Word of God. It is heaven’s eternal decree. The law has been enforced for six thousand years. Did not God make Adam reap even before he left Eden? Had not Cain to reap outside of Eden? A king on the throne, like David, or a priest behind the altar, like Eli; priest and prophet, preacher and hearer, every man

must reap what he sows. I believed it ten years ago, but I believe it a hundred times more to-day.

My text applies to the individual, whether he be saint or sinner or hypocrite who thinks he is a saint; it applies to the family; it applies to society; it applies to nations. I say the law that the result of actions must be reaped is *as true for nations as for individuals*; indeed, some one has said that as nations have no future existence, the present world is the only place to punish them as nations. See how God has dealt with them. See if they have not reaped what they sowed. Take Amalek: "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; how he met thee, by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God." What was to be the result of this attack? Was it to go unpunished? God ordained that Amalek should reap as they sowed, and the nation was all but wiped out of existence under King Saul.

What has become of the monarchies and empires of the world? What brought ruin on Babylon? Her king and people would not obey God, and ruin came upon them. What has become of Greece and all her power? She once ruled the world. What has become of Rome and all her greatness? When their cup of iniquity was full, it was dashed to the ground. What has become of the Jews? They rejected salvation, persecuted God's messengers, and crucified their Redeemer; and we find that eleven hundred thousand of them perished at one time. Look at the history of this country. With an open Bible, our forefathers planted slavery; but judgment came at last. There was not a family North or South that had not to mourn over some one taken from them. Take the case of France. It is said that a century ago men were spending millions every year in France in the publication and distribution of infidel literature. What has been the harvest? Has France not reaped? Mark the result: "The Bible was suppressed. God was denied. Hell broke loose. Half the children born in Paris were bastards. More than a million of persons were beheaded, shot, drowned, outraged, and done to death between September, 1792, and December, 1795. Since that time France has had thirteen revolutions in eighty years; and in the republic there has been an overturn on an average once in nine months. One-third of the births in Paris are illegitimate; ten thousand new-born infants

have been fished out at the outlet of the city sewers in a single year; the native population of France is decreasing; the percentage of suicides is greater in Paris than in any city in Christendom; and since the French Revolution there have been enough French men and women slaughtered in the streets of Paris in the various insurrections, to average more than two thousand five hundred each year!"

The principle was not new in Scripture or in history when Paul enunciated it in his letter to the Galatians. Paul clothes it in language derived from the farm, but in other dress the Law of Sowing and Reaping may be seen in the Law of Cause and Effect, the Law of Retribution or Retaliation, the Law of Compensation. It is not to my purpose to enter now into a philosophical discussion of the law as it appears under any of these names. We see that it exists. It is beyond reasonable dispute. Whatever else sceptics may carp at and criticise in the Bible, they must acknowledge the truth of this. It does not depend upon revelation for its support; philosophers are agreed upon it as much as they are agreed upon any thing.

The Supremacy of Law.

The objection may be made, however, that while its application may be admitted in the physical world, it is not so certain in the spiritual sphere. It is just here that modern research steps in. The laws of the spiritual world have been largely identified as the same laws that exist in the natural world. Indeed, it is claimed that the spiritual existed first, that the natural came after, and that when God proceeded to frame the universe, He went upon lines already laid down. In short, that God projected the higher laws downward, so that the natural world became "an incarnation, a visible representation, a working model of the supernatural." "In the spiritual world the same wheels work—without the iron."

Our whole life is thus bounded and governed by laws ordained and established by God, and that a man reaps what he sows is a law that can be easily observed and verified, whether we regard sowing to the flesh or sowing to the Spirit. The evil harvest of sin and the good harvest of righteousness are as sure to follow the sowing as the harvest of wheat and barley. "Life is not *casual*, but *causal*."

We shall see, as we proceed, that *the working of the law is evident in the earliest periods of Bible history*. Job's three friends reasoned that he must be a great sinner, because they took it for granted that the calamities that overtook him must be the results of his wickedness. "Remember, I pray thee," said one of them, "who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off? Even as I have seen, they that plough iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same."

In the book of Proverbs we find it written: "The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward." And again: "He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity."

In Isaiah we find these words: "Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him."

Hosea prophesied regarding Israel: "They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind." "Sow to yourselves in righteousness," he advised them, "reap in mercy."

Teaching from Analogy.

The Bible is full of analogies drawn from nature. When Christ was on earth, it was His favorite mode of teaching to convey heavenly truths in earthly dress. "Truths came forth from His lips," wrote one, "not stated simply on authority, but based on the analogy of the universe. His human mind, in perfect harmony with the Divine mind with which it was united, discerned the connection of things, and read the eternal will in the simplest laws of nature. For instance, if it were a question whether God would give His Spirit to them that asked, it was not replied to by a truth revealed on His *authority*: the answer was derived from facts lying open to all men's observation. 'Behold the fowls of the air'; 'behold the lilies of the field'—learn from them the answer to your question. A principle was there. God supplies the wants He has created. He feeds the ravens—He clothes the lilies—He will feed with His Spirit the craving spirits of His children."

This is the style of teaching that Paul adopts in the text. He takes the simple process of sowing and reaping, a process familiar to all,

and reads in it a deeply spiritual and moral meaning. It is as if he said that every man as he journeys through life is scattering seed at every step. The seed consists of his thoughts, his words, his actions. They pass from him, and by and by (it may be sooner or later), they spring up and bear fruit, and the reaping time comes.

Life a Seed-Time.

The analogy contains some solemn lessons. Life is to be regarded as a seed-time. Every one has his field to sow, to cultivate, and finally, to reap. By our habits, by our intercourse with friends and companions, by exposing ourselves to good or bad influences, we are cultivating the seed for the coming harvest. We cannot see the seed as it grows and develops, but time will reveal it.

Just as the full-grown harvest is potentially contained in the seed, so the full results of sin or holiness are potentially contained in the sinful or holy deed. "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

Just as we cannot reap a good harvest unless we have sown good seed, so we cannot reap eternal life unless we have sown to the Spirit. Weeds are easy to grow. They grow without the planting. And sin springs up naturally in the human heart. Ever since our first parents broke away from God, the human heart has of itself been thoroughly vile, and all its fruits have been evil. "The heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Do you doubt it? If you do, ask yourself what would become of a child if it was left to itself—no training, no guidance, no education. In spite of all that is done for children, the evil too often gets the upper hand. The good seed must be planted and cared for, often with toil and trouble: but the harvest will be sure.

Do we desire the love of our fellows in our seasons of trial? Then we must love them when they need its cheering influence most. Do we long for sympathy in our sorrow and pain? Then we shall have it if we have also wept with those who weep. Are we hoping to reap eternal life? Then we must not sow to the flesh, or we shall reap corruption, but to the Spirit, then the promise is that we shall reap its immortal fruits.

Dr. Chalmers has drawn attention to *the difference between the act of sowing and the act of reaping*. "Let it be observed," he says, "that the act of indulging in the desires of the flesh is one thing and the act of providing for the indulgence of them is another. When a man, on the impulse of sudden provocation, wreaks his resentful feelings upon the neighbor who has offended him, he is not at that time preparing for the indulgence of a carnal feeling, but actually indulging it. He is not at that time sowing, but reaping (such as it is) a harvest of gratification. This distinction may serve to assist our judgment in estimating the ungodliness of certain characters. The rambling voluptuary who is carried along by every impulse, and all whose powers of mental discipline are so enfeebled that he has become the slave of every propensity, lives in the perpetual harvest of criminal gratification. A daughter whose sole delight is in her rapid transitions from one scene of expensive brilliancy to another, who dissipates every care and fills every hour among the frivolities and fascinations of her volatile society,—she leads a life than which nothing can be imagined more opposite to a life of preparation for the coming judgment or the coming eternity. Yet she *reaps* rather than *sows*. It lies with another to gather the money which purchaseth all things, and with her to taste the fruits of the purchase. *It is the father who sows*. It is he who sits in busy and brooding anxiety over his speculations, wrinkled, perhaps, by care, and sobered by years into an utter distaste for the splendors and insignificancies of fashionable life." The father sows, and he reaps in his daughter's life.

"Painting for Eternity."

A famous painter was well known for the careful manner in which he went about his work. When some one asked him why he took such pains, he replied:

"Because I am painting for eternity."

It is a solemn thing to think that *the future will be the harvest of the present*—that my condition in my dying hour may depend upon my actions to-day! Belief in a future life and in a coming judgment magnifies the importance of the present. Eternal issues depend upon it. The opportunity for sowing will not last forever; it is slipping

through our fingers moment by moment; and the future can only reveal the harvest of the seed sown now.

A sculptor once showed a visitor his studio. It was full of statues of gods. One was very curious. The face was concealed by being covered with hair, and there were wings on each foot.

“What is his name?” said the visitor.

“Opportunity,” was the reply.

“Why is his face hidden?”

“Because men seldom know him when he comes to them.”

“Why has he wings on his feet?”

“Because he is soon gone, and once gone can never be overtaken.”

It becomes us, then, to make the most of the opportunities God has given us. It depends a good deal on ourselves what our future shall be. We can sow for a good harvest, or we can do like the Sioux Indians, who once, when the United States Commissioner of Indian Affairs sent them a supply of grain for sowing, ate it up. Men are constantly sacrificing their eternal future to the passing enjoyment of the present moment; they fail or neglect to recognize the dependence of the future upon the present.

Nothing Trifling.

From this we may learn that there is no such thing as a trifle on earth. When we realize that every thought and word and act has an eternal influence, and will come back to us in the same way as the seed returns in the harvest, we must perceive their responsibility, however trifling they may seem. We are apt to overlook the results that hinge on small things. The law of gravitation was suggested by the fall of an apple. It is said that some years ago a Harvard professor brought some gypsy-moths to this country in the hope that they could with advantage be crossed with silkworms. The moths accidentally got away, and multiplied so enormously that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has had to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars trying to exterminate them.

When H. M. Stanley was pressing his way through the forests of Darkest Africa, the most formidable foes that he encountered, those that caused most loss of life to his caravan and came the nearest to entirely defeating his expedition, were the little Wambutti dwarfs. So annoying were they that very slow progress could be made through their dwelling places.

These little men had only little bows and little arrows that looked like children's playthings, but upon these tiny arrows there was a small drop of poison which would kill an elephant or a man as quickly and as surely as a Winchester rifle. Their defense was by means of poison and traps. They would steal through the darkness of the forest and, waiting in ambush, let fly their deadly arrows before they could be discovered. They dug ditches and carefully covered them over with leaves. They fixed spikes in the ground and tipped them with the most deadly poison, and then covered them. Into these ditches and on these spikes man and beast would fall or step to their death.

A lady once writing to a young man in the navy who was almost a stranger, thought "Shall I close this as anybody would, or shall I say a word for my Master?" and, lifting up her heart for a moment, she wrote, telling him that his constant change of scene and place was an apt illustration of the word, "*Here we have no continuing city,*" and asked if he could say: "I seek one to come." Tremblingly she folded it and sent it off.

Back came the answer. "Thank you so much for those kind words! I am an orphan, and no one has spoken to me like that since my mother died, long years ago." The arrow shot at venture hit home, and the young man shortly after rejoiced in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of peace.

An obscure man preached one Sunday to a few persons in a Methodist chapel in the South of England. A boy of fifteen years of age was in the audience, driven into the chapel by a snowstorm. The man took as his text the words, "Look unto me and be ye saved," and as he stumbled along as best he could, the light of heaven flashed into that boy's heart. He went out of the chapel saved, and soon became known as C. H. Spurgeon, the boy-preacher.

The parsonage at Epworth, England, caught fire one night, and all the inmates were rescued except one son. The boy came to a window, and was brought safely to the ground by two farm-hands, one standing on the shoulder of the other. The boy was John Wesley. If you would realize the responsibility of that incident, if you would measure the consequences of that rescue, ask the millions of Methodists who look back to John Wesley as the founder of their denomination.

BE NOT DECEIVED; GOD IS NOT MOCKED.

"Let no man deceive you." —Eph. v: 6.

"As one man mocketh another, do ye so mock Him?" —Job xiii: 9.

CHAPTER II.

Be Not Deceived: God Is Not Mocked.

We have all lived long enough to know what it is to be deceived. We have been deceived by our friends, by our enemies, our neighbors, our relatives. Ungodly companions have deceived us. At every turn of life we have been imposed upon in one way or another.

False teachers have crossed our path, and under pretence of doing us good, have poisoned our mind with error. They have held out hopes to us that have proved false; apples of Sodom, fair without, but full of ashes within. They have told us that there is no God, no future life, no judgment to come; or they have said that all men will be saved, that there is ample time to repent, that we may be saved by doing the best we can.

Sin has deceived us. Every sinner is under a delusion. Sin meets him smilingly, and holds out to him pleasures and delights that are not pure and lasting.

During our meetings in Boston a young man came into the Tabernacle. He looked around, and he thought to himself the people that came there were great fools—those who had business, and comfortable homes, and good clothes. He had nothing in the world—he was a tramp, and went in there to keep himself warm. But to think that people who had homes would come and spend their time in listening to such stuff as I preached was more than he could understand.

One night after he had been coming there for two weeks, I happened to point right down where he was sitting, and I said, "Young man, be not deceived!" God used that as an arrow. He began to think about himself. His mind went back to the time when he had a

good situation in Boston; when he was a young man getting a good salary; when he was in good society, and had a great many friends.

Then he looked at his present condition. His friends were all gone, his clothes were gone, his money was gone; and there he was, an outcast in that city. He said to himself, "I have been deceived," and that very hour God waked him. He wanted to get friends to pray for him; but as he was not able to buy a piece of paper, or pay for a postage stamp, he got an old piece of soiled paper, stood up in the street, and wrote a request to be read in the Tabernacle, that if God would save a poor, lost man like him, he wanted to be saved. That prayer was answered. As in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, his friends gathered around him again, and the Lord restored him to position and to society. His eyes were opened to see how he had been deceived.

Satan.

How many men all over the world are being deceived by the god of this world! It has been asserted that during the late Franco-German war, German drummers and trumpeters used to give the French beats and calls in order to deceive their enemies. The command to "halt," or "cease firing," was often given by the Germans, it has been said, and the French soldiers were thus placed in positions where they could be shot down like cattle.

Satan is the arch-enemy of our souls, and he has often blinded our reason and deceived our conscience by his falsehoods. He has often come as an angel of light, concealing his hideousness under a borrowed cloak. He says to a young man: "Sow your wild oats. Time enough to be religious when you grow old." The young man yields himself to a life of extravagance and excess, under the false hope that he will obtain solid satisfaction; and it is well if he awakens to the deception before his appetites become tyrants, dragging him down into depths of want and woe. Satan promises great things to his victims in the indulgence of their lusts, but they never realize the promises. The promised pleasure turns out to be pain, the promised heaven a hell.

Beware lest Satan deceive you as he deceived Eve in the beginning. "There is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar, and the father of it."

Our Heart.

But we have been deceived by our own heart most of all. Who has not proved the truth of the Scripture: "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?" "How many times we have said that we never would do a certain thing again, and then have done it within twenty-four hours! A man may think he has fathomed its depths, but he finds there are further depths he has not reached. What gross self-deception is due to it! "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool," said Solomon. Luther once said he feared his own heart more than the Pope and all the cardinals.

Many a weeping wife has come to me about her husband, saying: "He is good at heart." The truth is—that is the worst spot in him. If the heart was good, all else would be right. Out of the heart are the issues of life. Christ said: "From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness." That is Christ's own statement regarding the unregenerate heart.

Some years ago a remarkable picture was exhibited in London. As you looked at it from a distance, you seemed to see a monk engaged in prayer, his hands clasped, his head bowed. As you came nearer, however, and examined the painting more closely, you saw that in reality he was squeezing a lemon into a punchbowl!

What a picture that is of the human heart! Superficially examined, it is thought to be the seat of all that is good and noble and pleasing in a man; whereas in reality, until regenerated by the Holy Ghost, it is the seat of all corruption. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men *loved darkness rather than light.*"

A Jewish rabbi once asked his scholars what was the best thing a man could have in order to keep him in the straight path. One said *a good disposition*; another, *a good companion*; another said *wisdom* was the best thing he could desire. At last a scholar replied that he thought *a good heart* was best of all.

“True,” said the rabbi, “you have comprehended all that the others have said. For he that hath a good heart will be of a good disposition, and a good companion, and a wise man. Let every one, therefore, cultivate a sincerity and uprightness of heart at all times, and it will save him an abundance of sorrow.” We need to make the prayer of David—“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me!”

God Is Not Mocked.

Bear in mind, the God of the Bible has never deceived anyone, and never can, and never will; that is the difference between the God of the Bible and the god of this world. He beholds the ways of men; He looks into their hearts; He knows their secret ways; they need not tell Him or try to conceal anything from Him.

However successfully we may deceive or be deceived by ourselves or others, we cannot deceive Him. Adam and Eve tried it in Eden when they hid themselves from the presence of Jehovah amongst the trees of the garden. Saul tried it when he spared the best of the sheep and oxen of the Amalekites under the pretence of sacrificing them to God. Ananias and Sapphira tried it when they kept back part of the price of the land they sold. “Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie unto (deceive) the Holy Ghost? * * * Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.”

Men try it every day. They have got it into their heads that God can be mocked. Because they can deceive their pastor, and their employer, and their friends, they think they can deceive God. They put on false appearances, they use empty words, they perform unreal service, they make idle excuses, they indulge in all kinds of hypocrisy. But it is of no avail. God cannot be imposed upon. He sees the corruption inside the whited sepulchre.

Warning to Christians.

It is worth noticing that this warning was given by Paul to Christian men—converts in the Galatian church. After all, a man is not all the time deceived about the grosser sins. The drunkard realizes in his sober moments what must be the end of a course of intemperance. Loss of self-respect and of the esteem of friends, the marks he