

Sowing and Reaping

Before we can understand any of the responsibilities we have as believers, including giving, we need to understand God's working in man, what He has planned for us, what He requires of us and how He has planned for this to take place. To do this, we must of necessity commence from the right premise or starting point.

The Eternal Viewpoint:

We must start in the Father's heart and mind before the foundation of the earth, where Eph 1:4 sets the stage: *"He chose us in Him (Christ) before the foundation of the world."*

This makes it clear that the Father planned way back before creation that we would be in Christ and Christ in us. His plan was that we would be containers of His Life, His seed, Christ and that He (Christ) would be the life by which we would live. Also, 1 Peter 1:23 says: *"for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable."* This "seed", speaking of Christ, is also the grain of wheat referred to in John 12:24 *"unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit"*. This one "seed", who died and was buried, but who rise again to produce many sons, is Christ *"The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"* (Rev 13:8). The Father's plan, from the beginning, was not that we should live by our own life and thoughts carrying out our actions in an attempt to obey a set of laws to please Him, but that we would live and act by the life of His Son, His Seed. Way back then, He gave His Only begotten Son to be the one Seed that would die, be buried, but who would rise again and be multiplied many times over and be the source of life in us all. This is the reality and true meaning of Gal 2:20: *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me"*.

So our starting point is in the Father's heart and mind, before the foundation of the world, where we find the *principle of the cross*, the *principle of sowing and reaping*, is the very basis of His plans for us. This is where Love determined that His life would be given for us and that it would be the means by which we would live. For this is where and when the Father determined that we would be birthed into His family, to be born of His Seed, and fellowship and live in communion with Him in a Father - son relationship.

So we must start from the premise or eternal viewpoint where the decision and provision was made for us to be inhabited by the Seed, the Son (Christ), so that we might become sons of the Father and walk in a Father-son relationship with Him, living by His life. We are containers of Christ the Son. This means we are containers of life, of love, of joy, of peace, of righteousness. *"We are partakers of the divine nature"* (2 Pet 1:4). We contain a Person, Christ, and His nature and character are to flow out of us according to the plan and purpose of the Father, established before the foundation of the world.

Now the key thing about a Father and a son is *obedience*. This is the relationship whereby the strongest acts of reciprocal love are demonstrated; fulfilled through *obedience*, when a son obeys the Father. It is Christ in us, as us, responding to the Father in loving *obedience* that will warm the heart of our Father.

So whatever it is we are to do or say, giving, helping, a smile, ministering, and so on, we should do it only in response, as obedient sons, to the direction of our Father. Jesus said *“For I did not speak on my own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak”* (John 12:49). So He showed us that all His actions and sayings were in obedient response to what He saw and heard from the Father for the situation at hand. Christ now lives in you and me, we are the Father’s birthed children, we are containers of Christ and He continues to operate in the same Father-Son relationship, walking in obedience.

You may ask, “how does this all work”? The simple answer is that the Holy Spirit has been sent to teach us Christ, to reveal the Son in us (John 14:26 and John 16:13-15). He will reveal to us the mind of Christ. This is how we can know Christ, to hear what He is saying and see what He is doing, so we can in obedient response let His words and actions flow out of us to touch others. We are containers of Christ; we are His hands, His feet, and His mouth. We listen to Him, who is One with the Father, and obey. It is so important, that we must first give ourselves to the Father, to ask Him for a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, to ask Him to pour out the Holy Spirit on us that He, the Teacher, may teach us Christ so that then, and only then, as a result of what we have seen in Christ and heard of Him, can we act and as a result, whatever we give out to others, whether it is a smile, money, service, or whatever, it will be Christ in action. It will be Him, who is Life, flowing out of us to touch others. It will be the Word, His will, in action at the right time and place bringing blessing to the recipients. Anything else we do apart from this will not bring life. Eph 2:10 says *“we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them”*. Seek Him, seek His will, then in loving obedience and submission allow Christ to flow out through your lips, thoughts, and actions to bless others.

So now, as we look into the subject of giving – sowing and reaping – we do it through the understanding that we are containers of Christ the Son, the Seed, and we live in a loving Father – son relationship, walking in obedience to Him to bring about His will in our lives and that of others.

Obedient Sons of the Father:

Sowing and reaping is an eternal principle established throughout God’s word:

“The generous man will be prosperous, and he who waters will himself be watered” (Prov 11:25)

“Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap” (Luke 6:38)

“... God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed ... Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness ...” (2 Cor 9:7-10)

When we give in obedience to the Father, blessing will result. But if we choose not to obey His prompting, a problem arises. Consider the following scriptures:

"Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it. Do not say to your neighbour, 'Go, and come back, and tomorrow I will give it to you.' (Prov 3:27, 28)

"There is one who scatters, yet increases all the more, and there is one who withholds what is justly due, but it only results in want. (Prov 11:24, 25)

Delayed obedience is disobedience and disobedience is sin. This will result in want and leanness of soul.

"Therefore, to one who knows the right (good) thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin." (James 4:17)

So the why do we resist Him? Why do we disobey? Basically the motivation will be one of *fear* or *greed*. Fear that we won't have enough if we give what we have, or, greed for more than that which we already have. Fear and greed are our two worst enemies. But remember, perfect love casts out fear.

Our giving should be in obedience to the leading or prompting of the Spirit. If we have submitted ourselves to the Holy Spirit to reveal Christ in us and we have seen and heard from Him and understand what He wants to do or say in the situation, our loving response should be one of obedience and submission so He can achieve His will through us. It's if we know the right thing to do and don't do it that we sin and grieve God.

Obedience is so important because only the Father knows what He has planned for us and for others. If we step outside of His plans and timetable we may bring a curse instead of blessing, because Jesus said "apart from Me you can do nothing", nothing beneficial, nothing of eternal value, just dead works of the flesh. For example: there may be a person going through a testing, a situation of need, which is being used of the Father to train the individual concerned (for He used situations and circumstances to help us learn Christ) and then, if we, without first consulting with the Teacher, just see the need and give, even if it is from a heart of generosity, we may, by doing so, prematurely abort the training session and put that person back a few steps instead of really blessing them. What the Father wants is that we seek Him, hear Him, and only act or speak when He gives the command. Only He knows the right time for us to act and speak into a particular situation to bring about blessing. He wants us living in the abiding union where it is Christ, who is our only life, as us, acting in obedience to Him, to bring about His plans.

Obedience will result in blessing, both on the giver and the receiver. Our obedience will bring pleasure to our Father. So our giving, or any other actions or words, should be the outcome of having *first* communed with the Father and *then*, as obedient sons, allowing Christ to flow out of us in word and actions.

Vessels Filled with Love and Overflowing:

"And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing." (1 Cor 13:3)

If it's not Love's obedient response to our Father, if it is simply a legalistic action, a begrudged giving, even "good works giving", or giving because that's what everyone else is doing, then it is

in vain. How many times have you put money in the plate just because others are watching and you feel guilty and don't want them to think you're not "spiritual"? Well, sad to say, if you did that, it was in vain.

Way back in the garden of Eden God made it clear that the knowledge of good and even actions that come out of that good knowledge would not bring life, for the *"Life is in the Son"* (1 John 5:11). So doing good in itself is not what pleases the father, for John 15:5 states *"he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit: for apart from Me you can do nothing"*. It's only by living (abiding) in a loving union with Him and obeying Him that will release His life to flow out of us to touch others and bring pleasure to our Father.

Christ is love. Love is a Person. We are vessels that contain Love. Love is the character and nature of Him who is our Life. If we are believers, the only life we have is Christ, who is Love (Gal2:20). All we do and all we say should be only that which we have heard Him say and what we have seen Him do. If we're living with our minds set on Him, listening and seeing what He is doing and saying we will know what to do and say. We are the hands, the feet and the mouth of Love. That and only that will bring pleasure to our Father. He wants fully submitted vessels filled with His Love spilling out His life and love to others.

Love from Beginning to End

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

"He chose us in Him (Christ) before the foundation of the world"(Eph 1:4)

"we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10)

We are sons of the Father, birthed by Him, containers His Seed, containers of Christ.

We walk in a Father – son relationship, submitting to Him, hearing what He has planned for the situation at hand.

Giving, or any other action, must be borne out of **unquestioned obedience**.

Giving is the natural out-flowing from **the life and heart of Love**.

Love casts out all fear. Love deals a death blow to greed and fear.

Love never fails.

Obedient, loving giving is God's pattern for blessing on giver and receiver.