Monday

SCRIPTURE:
"God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows." **Galatians 6:7**

KEY POINT:
People reap what they sow.

READING:
Now so far in this series, we've learned some really good news. We're saved by grace, a free gift of God. And there's nothing you have to do to earn that gift; it's by faith alone. You simply believe in Jesus as the One who offers forgiveness and eternal life, and you become his child - and that means your place in heaven is secure – forever. You can't ever lose it. Not by doing bad stuff, not by doubting, not by becoming an atheist, not by killing people. Nothing you do can change the fact that God has given you eternal life.

So once you put your faith in Jesus, you're God's child, you're forgiven, and heaven is secure. That's the good news. Now sometimes people will ask: ***'Is Grace a License to Sin?'*** Well the answer is **yes** and **no**. It's **yes** if you mean your sin can't land you in hell. We talked about that last week. But the answer to: ***'Is Grace a License to Sin?'*** is **no** if you think there won't be serious consequences for your sin. Being saved by grace and never losing the gift of eternal life doesn't mean you can get away with stuff. It means you won't end up in hell, but it's not a license to sin. You know why? Because **God is a just God.** Here's our main principle for today. It's very simple and very biblical. **People reap what they sow.** You've heard that before, haven't you? It's not new. And you know what? It's as true as any other principle, and it's true every single time. Now even if you're not a Christian, you've probably heard that saying before. But you might be surprised to know it was written in the Bible 2,000 years ago.

Now this principle is not good or bad; it just is. I'd argue it's kind of a law of the universe – similar to the law of gravity. And you can leverage it for good and benefit from it, or you can ignore it and there are going to be consequences. If you sow good stuff, you're going to get good stuff – good relationships, rewards on earth, rewards in heaven, that kind of stuff. But if you sow bad stuff, you're going to reap bad stuff.

Now this principle is actually going to explain to you why God is not against you, why God is not angry with you. God is simply given you a principle to leverage - but if you ignore it, there are going to be consequences. And it's not like God is up in heaven, indiscriminately deciding... *Punish, bless, punish, bless, punish, punish, punish, bless, bless, bless.* It doesn't work that way. God has given us this awesome spiritual principle that we can leverage to our advantage - and it's true for all people, everywhere. And it's true every time.

QUESTION:
Can you think of a time where you sowed something (good or bad) and reaped what you sowed? Think about how that process went down.

APPLICATION:
Pray that God would reveal some area of your life where you may be sowing something bad, so that you can change and sow something good instead.

Tuesday

SCRIPTURE:
"If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load." Galatians 6:3-5

KEY POINT:
I need to take responsibility for my own actions and not compare myself to others.

READING:
At the end of the book of Galatians, Paul contrasts two things - our responsibility to help others with the tendency on our part to allow ourselves to be helped, simply because we don't want to take responsibility for our lives. It's both things. On the one hand, I am responsible to help people in need - but at the same time I am responsible for me. And I can't use the Christian value of: *'Oh we should love one another and help each other'* as an excuse to be irresponsible. In other words: *I'll just be irresponsible, because if you're a good Christian, you'll come and help me with my homework; if you're a good Christian, you'll cut me some slack; if you're a good Christian, you wouldn't judge me, even though I'm acting irresponsibly.* Paul says: *No, it doesn't work that way.* You are responsible for serving other people, but that Christian value is *never* an excuse for acting irresponsibly.

In **Galatians 6:3, Paul says: *"If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves."*** In other words, you're comparing yourself to other people and going: *Hey, compared to him or her, I'm way ahead.'* Here, Paul introduces us to the idea of self-deception. It's easy to deceive yourself when you're comparing yourself to people around you, saying: *'I don't need to work too hard, because I'm way ahead of them.'* Or you compare yourself to others, and go: *'Well I'm not doing as well as them, but after all, they had some big-time advantages over me.'* Paul says as long as you compare yourself to people on either side of you, you run the risk of deceiving yourself.

He goes on to say in Galatians 6:4 - ***"Each one should test their own actions..."*** In other words, you need to kind of draw in your focus and evaluate yourself and your actions against you - not against the people around you. Because as long as you compare yourself to the people around you – you're better than some, and not quite as good as others – you'll always run the risk of deceiving yourself into being irresponsible. You might practice self-talk, like: *'Hey, I can kind of cut myself some slack and not take these things too seriously, because I'm way better than them.* But at the same time, when I look at people who are doing better than me, I can say: *'Well yeah, but if I was married to her, if I was married to him. Well if my dad owned that deal, or if I was that talented...'* Any time we begin to compare and look out the window instead of in the mirror, it's easy for us to cut ourselves too much slack, slough off and be irresponsible. This is how Paul puts it: ***"Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else..."*** As long as I'm comparing myself to other people, I'll make excuses. Only when I tune all that out and compare myself to me - my potential, my responsibility, the opportunities God has brought my way – will I begin to make progress.

QUESTION:
Have you ever cut yourself some slack (and make excuses for yourself) by comparing yourself to someone who's doing worse? How did that play out in your life?

APPLICATION:
Pray about an area of your life where you need to take responsibility rather than making excuses. Then come up with an action plan to change your behavior.

Wednesday

SCRIPTURE:
***"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked..."* Galatians 6:7**

KEY POINT:
You cannot fool God.

READING:
In **Galatians 6:7, Paul says: *"Do not be deceived..."*** Now this is the second time Paul has said that in this discussion, because we're good at deceiving ourselves, aren't we? We deceive ourselves when we look around and compare and make excuses. ***"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked..."*** God cannot be outwitted. God cannot be outsmarted. God is not your mama.

When you were young, you deceived and outwitted and outsmarted your mama - and so you think you can deceive and outwit and outsmart God. You called your mom and said: *'Mom, I didn't know there was going to be beer at that party, and I explained that to the officer, but he just arrested me anyway. So I'm down here at the police station.' 'Oh don't you worry, Honey, I'll come down there and I'll get you out.'* Or… *'Daddy, I don't know what happened; I think the bank made a mistake in my checking account. I've got plenty of checks but no money. And Dad, I'm going to work it out, but in the meantime I need some money. I think it's the bank's error.' 'Don't you worry son, we'll take care of that.'* Right? And... *'I don't know what happened. The teacher didn't tell us that was going to be on the test.' 'Oh, that mean old teacher. I'll make an appointment and come down there this afternoon and get in that teacher's face.'*

Paul is saying: *'Look - God is not your mama; God is not your daddy.'* Remember how you mocked them; remember how you got around. You told them a story, and then you sat down with your friends and chuckled and said: *'My parents are so gullible. I slid that piece of paper under there, and they were signing things, and the next thing they knew they signed something saying I didn't have to come to school the next day because of a doctor's appointment, and they didn't even see it.'*

Paul's going: *OK, God is not that way.* You may have been able to slough off your responsibility and your parents came in and filled in the gap for you... but God cannot be mocked. Paul's saying: *Look, this is a warning, it's a promise, it's an opportunity, it's an explanation - it's a lot of things. But God cannot be fooled.* God is never fooled.

Your irresponsibility - whether it's with your money, your family, your morality, your ethics, whatever it might be - it's not a mystery to Him. There is no game to play. There's nothing you can pull on Him where He goes: *Oh - you got me again! OK, I'm going to have to watch you, young man.* It just doesn't work that way. Don't be deceived. God is not mocked. And c'mon, most of us have been guilty of this. We've all tried to mock God.

QUESTION:
Have you ever treated God like your mom or dad or grandparents (as if He could be fooled)? Why do some people try to do this?

APPLICATION:
Ask God to reveal any area of your life where you may be fooling yourself into thinking you can fool God.

Thursday

SCRIPTURE:
***"God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows."* Galatians 6:7**

KEY POINT:
Confession doesn't erase the law of sowing and reaping.

READING:
I don't know what religious system you grew up in (if you did grow up in one). But here's one I'm familiar with… There's a verse in the Bible (I John 1:9) that says if we confess our sins, God is faithful to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. So somebody once told me, that if you confess your sins, God doesn't remember them anymore. He has like amnesia. It's an awesome system. It means on the weekend I can go out and sin, and then on Sunday morning I just pray the magic prayer, and all of a sudden God's going: *'I don't even know what you're talking about.'* And I'm like: *'Whew!'* And God looks at me as if I'm as white as snow, as pure as silk, and wonderful and great. God's saying: *'Bryan has never done anything wrong that I can remember,'* because I prayed that magic prayer. It's awesome. Folks, there's a little truth in that, mixed with a good dose of lies.

Or maybe your system was that you went out and sinned like crazy, and then got into a booth with a priest. And you were told to say some magic words through the screen, and the priest listens and absolves you of all your guilt, and you walk out and your sin bucket is empty. And you're going: *Dang, I've got to go fill it up again and come back next Sunday.* This is awesome. Paul goes: *God is not stupid. He doesn't have amnesia.* When the Bible says God remembers your sins no more, it has to do with the ultimate forgiveness of sin, not the consequences of your sin. It doesn't set aside the law of sowing and reaping. Let me just ask you a quick question. Did David confess his sin with Bathsheba to God? Yes he did. Did God forgive David? Yes. Did he still reap enormous, painful consequences in his life because of his slip up with Bathsheba? Oh yes!

In fact, let me say a word about David here. Sometimes the consequences for our sins are paid during our life here on earth, and sometimes we may not see all the consequences here on earth, but we lose potential rewards in heaven. David committed adultery and murder, right? And does anyone know what the penalty for that was supposed to be, according to God in the Old Testament? Death. So why wasn't David put to death for his sin? I have a theory, and I think it's a good one.

David had been promised massive rewards in heaven – the Bible has already said that David is going to be highly exalted in heaven. In fact, do you know the name of the throne Jesus sits on in heaven? It's called the throne of David. So if David was immediately put to death, he'd go right to his massive rewards in heaven, and there would be no justice – no reaping for the evil he sowed. So what did God do? He kept him alive here on earth – and the rest of his life he paid a price for those sins. Because of his adultery, he watched his own son, Absalom commit adultery with his wives and concubines on the roof top, in broad daylight – in front of God and everyone. Ouch! And because of his murder, he watched one of his sons kill another one of his sons. Which brings us back to what Paul is saying. Don't manufacture a religious system where you think you can pull one over on God. Does God forgive sin? Of course. I'm a good dad and I forgive my kids' sins. But that doesn't mean there are no consequences for their actions. I don't stop loving my kids and I don't treat them differently because they sinned. But there's still the consequence of reaping what you sow.

QUESTION:
Have you been taught that confession will somehow magically erase the consequences of your sin?

APPLICATION:
Ask God to remind you daily of the law of sowing and reaping… as a means of protection against sin.

Friday

SCRIPTURES:
"Look, I am coming soon, bringing my reward with me to repay all people according to their deeds." Revelation 22:12

KEY POINT:
The law of sowing and reaping works both ways – for bad or for good.

READING:
In Galatians 6:7, when Paul says: ***"God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows,"*** it's a principle. It's not good or bad, it just is. Paul says what we all know intuitively - that life is connected. Where you are today is the result of decisions you made in the past. And where you'll be tomorrow is connected to what you did yesterday and what you do today. And let me tell you what Paul does *not* say. He doesn't say: *Don't be deceived, God is not mocked; whatever people sow, they reap… **unless** they ask for forgiveness.* No. Forgiveness doesn't erase it

You see, in my world, I run into this all the time. People say: *'Well Pastor Bryan, I'm doing my best.'* And I say: *'OK, that's great; you're doing your best now, but for 5 years you didn't do your best. You sinned, big-time. And you see, that was sowing, and now you're reaping. And doing your best now doesn't erase all of that sowing.'* And they'll say: *'But doesn't God love me?'* And I say: *'Exactly - He loves you so much He let you know about this principle ahead of time.'* God loves you so much that He made it somewhat predictable. You don't have to get up every morning and say: *I hope there's gravity today. I hope I stick to the ground. You can count on that.* It's a law, a principle. And in the same way, God says this sowing/reaping thing is dependable. He has graciously taught us: *'Here's the way the world works. Here's a formula. Here's a principle. People always reap what they sow.'*

Now you might argue: *But Bryan, there is one exception to the law of sowing and reaping. Our sin is supposed to land us in hell, right? But it didn't.* That's true. And do you know why? Not because God changed His standard. It's because Jesus reaped that particular penalty of hell for you. So there was still reaping and sowing – it's just that Someone else reaped it for you. So you won't land in hell if you're a Christian, but you'll still pay a price for your sin – even after you're a Christian. Maybe here on earth, maybe in a loss of eternal rewards – but the law of reaping and sowing still stands true.

And do you want some good news? This sowing and reaping thing works both ways. It can work for you as well. You sow a loving spirit, you'll get love coming back your way. You give generously to people and God's work here on earth, God promises you'll be blessed. It may be physical blessings, emotional blessing, material blessings, spiritual blessings, blessings here or blessings in heaven. It's a law, a principle. God is a rewarder of those who do good. In Revelation 22:12 Jesus says: ***"Look, I am coming soon, bringing my reward with me to repay <u>all</u> people according to their deeds."*** And nothing is too big or too small. This law of reaping and sowing covers everything.

In Matthew 10:24, Jesus said: ***"If you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers, you will surely be rewarded."*** So it is what it is. And we need to be aware of it, if we somehow think grace is a license for sin… but we also need to take advantage of it, and go after God's rewards - to be blessed here, and enjoy the best life possible in heaven one day. Let's sow good stuff, so we'll reap good stuff – here on earth and for the rest of eternity!

QUESTION:
How have you seen the law of sowing and reaping work in a positive way in life?

APPLICATION:
Find a way to sow a blessing in someone else's life this week.