THE LAW YOU CAN NOT BREAK OR AVOID

G. Michael Cocoris

There is a law you cannot break and, for that matter, cannot avoid. It is operating in your life right now and you can't stop it. It is going to work. That could be a good thing, or that could be a bad thing. Like any law, it has consequences. In other words, if you break this law, there is a penalty. At the same time, this law is different because if you keep it, you are rewarded. It's not just a local law; it's bigger than that. It's not the law of the land; it's bigger than that. It's not the law of the United Nations, but anywhere you go on earth, it's a law. It could be called "the law of the universe." This law of the universe is the law of sowing and reaping. It is mentioned throughout the Bible (Job 4:8; Prov. 11:24- 25; 19:17; 22:8; Ps. 126:5-6; Hosea 8:7; 10:12; Lk. 6:37- 38; 1 Cor. 9:11; 2 Cor. 9:6-8; Gal. 6:6-8). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talks about it in detail (Lk. 6:37-38). He gives four commands: two are negative and two are positive.

Do Not Judge

Do not Judge Others "Judge not, and you shall not be judged" (Lk. 6:37a). The Greek word translated "judge" means "to decide, determine, to judge, pronounce judgment." Jesus is not forbidding all judgment (1 Cor. 5:12; 6:2). Believers are to judge false doctrine (Titus 1:13), serious sins in a saint (church disciple), and, in some cases, whether or not a person is a believer (see: "unequally yoked" in 2 Cor. 6:14).

In a sense, the discussion concerning judging is a further development of love. Godet says Jesus is teaching a true judgment inspired by love, as is implied in Luke 6:42. He says that Jesus desires "to banish a judging spirit." "A critical, fault-finding spirit violates the law of love" (MacDonald). Jesus' disciples are not to hold personal animosity toward those who injure them and are not to judge others, respecting any supposed misconduct. "Not only vengeance, but judgment belongs to God" (Plummer).

M. R. De Haan said, "One of the most common and destructive sins among believers is jumping to conclusions about others when we do not know all the facts, motives, and circumstances involved" (*Our Daily Bread*, 3/3/1970). "We must not impugn motives or assassinate character" (MacDonald).

You will not be Judged If you judge, you will be judged. Think of the most negative person you know. Now ask, "Does that person get judged by others? Judgmental people get judged.

Do Not Condemn

Do not Condemn Others "Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned" (Lk. 6:37b). Strong says the Greek word translated "condemn" means "pronounce guilty." Jesus is not forbidding all condemnation. Believers are to condemn false doctrine, serious sins in a saint, and, if serving on a jury, those who are proven guilty in a court of law. Jesus is not referring to the legal system. Jesus

is talking about the practice of people who assumed the right to criticize and condemn others (Morris). Those who are merciful (Lk. 6:36) will not want to condemn people.

You will be Condemned If you condemn, you will be condemned. Disciples who judge and condemn others will be judged and condemned by God, not just their fellow man (Creed). An old adage says, "There is so much bad in the best of us and so much good in the worst of us that it ill behooves any of us to find fault with the rest of us."

This is the law of sowing and reaping. Here, it applies to sin. "Even as I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same" (Job 4:8). "He who sows iniquity will reap sorrow" (Prov. 22:8). Those who sow seeds of wickedness will reap a harvest of sorrow. The Hebrew word translated "sorrow" means "trouble, sorrow, wickedness." Those who live by the sword will die by the sword (see Mt. 26:52). In the movie "The Godfather," the mafia lived by the sword and they died by the sword.

Forgive

Forgive Others "Forgive, and you will be forgiven" (Lk. 6:37c). Disciples of Jesus should not judge or condemn; they should forgive. Paul says, "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you" (Eph. 4:31-32).

You will be forgiven This sounds as if you must forgive to be forgiven. Is that true? Yes. There are two kinds of forgiveness. One is judicial. When we trust Christ, God the Judge declares us forgiven based on Christ's payment for our sins (Lk. 24:46-47). The other kind is parental. God the Father forgives His children when they confess and forsake their sins (1 Jn. 1:9). In this passage, Jesus is talking about parental forgiveness. If you, as a child of God, forgive, you will be forgiven.

This is the law of sowing and reaping. If you forgive, you will be forgiven. James applies this principle to the Judgment Seat of Christ. He says, "So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment" (Jas. 2:12-13).

If you do not forgive, you will be in trouble with the Father (Mt. 18:21-35).

Give

Give to Others "Give" (Lk. 6:38a). Jesus is talking about money. Giving is an act of love.

You will Receive "and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom" (Lk. 6:38b). Those who give will receive. The expression "good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over" is a metaphor taken from "measuring out grain in such a way as to ensure a full volume is given" (Morris). "The picture is of a man with a large apron-like fold in the front of his garment. He uses it for carrying seeds. The more widely he broadcasts the seed, the greater his harvest. He is rewarded with good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. He receives it into his bosom, that is, into the fold of his garment" (MacDonald).

Jesus goes on to explain, "For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you" (Lk. 6:38c). This is the point of the passage. It is the principle of sowing and reaping. It is

the law of the harvest. It is the universal law of the universe. In Luke 6, the law of sowing and reaping applies to giving.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul applies the principle of sowing and reaping to sowing spiritually and reaping materially. He tells the Corinthians that he and others have sown spiritual things to them, so it is not wrong for them to reap material things from them. He says, "If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?" (1 Cor. 9:11). They ministered to the Corinthian's spiritually. Therefore, it is not wrong for them to be paid materially.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul applies the principle of sowing and reaping to sowing materially and reaping materially. He says, "But this *I say:* He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one *give* as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:6-7). Giving is like sowing seed. If the sower only plants a small amount of seed, he will harvest only a small crop. On the other hand, if he sows a great deal of seed, he will reap an abundant crop. It is the law of the harvest.

In Galatians 6, Paul applies the principle of sowing and reaping to giving money now and reaping spiritually in eternity. He says, "Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. Do not be deceived; God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life" (Gal. 6:6-8).

Sowing to benefit the flesh means spending money on material things (Burton). Corruption is the corruption of material things, including the body. Believers reap life from the Holy Spirit. Those who trust Christ *already* possess eternal life (Jn. 3:36), yet here it is spoken of as a future acquisition (see also Titus 1:2). Eternal life, like physical life, is free at the beginning, but that life can be barren or abundant (2 Pet. 1:8; Jn. 10:10). Those who sow to the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16) by doing things like giving, reap the reward later in the Kingdom (Gal. 5:21; 2 Pet. 1:11), described here as eternal life. So, if you use your money on material things, it will all be for nothing because material things will all be destroyed. You will reap the reward if you use your means for spiritual things (Mt. 6:19-20).

Now, look at 2 Corinthians 9. "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" (2 Cor. 9:8). Instead of giving and having your resources decrease so that there may be a time when you don't have money to perform any good works, God can provide you with more at all times so that you can perform other good works. In other words, God is able to see to it that the generous givers will not suffer lack but will have their needs met and have enough money left over for generous participation in every good work. Charles Hodge comments, "The apostle assumes that the liberal and cheerful giver will always have something to give. Giving is, to the natural eye, the way to lessen one's store, not to increase it. The Bible says it is the way to increase it. To believe this, it is only necessary to believe in God's power, providence, and promise."

A man told his pastor he was committing himself to the Lord to give a certain percentage of his income as long as he lived. At first, the percentage came to a dollar a week. Then, the percentage increased so that he was giving $10 a week. Before long, he was giving $100 a week, then $200, and in time $500 a week. At that point, he called the pastor and said, "Please come see me; it's urgent!" When the pastor arrived, the fellow said, "You remember that promise I made to God years ago? How can I get released? When I made the promise, I only had to give a dollar a week, but now it's $500. I can't afford to give away money like that." The pastor looked at his

friend and said, “I am afraid you cannot get released from the promise, but there is something you can do. You can ask God to shrink your income so you can afford to give a dollar again.”

The law of sowing and reaping applies to righteousness. Hosea 10:12 says, “Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy.”

Summary: What we sow in judging, condemning, forgiving, and giving, we reap.

You reap what you sow. Jesus said, “For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you” (Lk. 6:38). You reap more than you sow. Hosea 8:7 says, “They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind.” They not only reap what they sow, but they also reap more than they sow. One seed produces many seeds. It is like sowing to the wind. What is sown to the wind piles up. You reap later than you sow. There is a lapse of time between sowing and reaping.

The Psalmist says, “Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (Ps. 126:5-6). He is talking about the Jews who had been in captivity in Babylon and who were going to return to Jerusalem. MacDonald explains and applies the passage. “The first year after their return would be especially difficult. There would be no crops to harvest right away. They would have to start fresh by planting crops and waiting for harvest time. It would be a period of austerity, of doling out the meager food supplies as frugally as possible. There would be a certain sorrow or frustration about sowing the seed for that first crop.

“Here is a farmer whose barrel of grain is low. He can use the grain to feed his family now or sow most of it in the hope of an abundant supply in days to come. He decides to sow it, but as he dips his hand into his apron and scatters the seed over the plowed land, his tears fall into the apron. He is thinking of his wife and children, of the skimpy bowls of porridge, of how sacrificially they will have to live in the days till harvest. He feels as if he is taking food out of their mouths. But a cheering word goes out to the returned exiles: ‘He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.’ So they go forth and sow the seed. Their present anguish will be more than compensated by the joy of bringing their sheaves of ripened grain to the barn.

“The principle also applies, of course, in the spiritual realm. Those who live sacrificially for the spread of the gospel may endure present deprivation, but what is that compared to the joy of seeing souls saved and in heaven worshiping the Lamb of God forever and forever?”

You can sow weeds or wheat, but you cannot sow weeds and reap wheat.