

Sow What?

The prophets were special spokesmen of God. They could see far into the future and forecast things that were to come. Sometimes, their predictions were pleasant, as when they told of the coming Messiah, the Savior of the world. Other times, their prophecies warned of something more devastating that God would send down out of heaven.

Hosea was charged with the responsibility of telling God's own people of His displeasure with them. He spoke for the Lord when he said, "They have transgressed My covenant and rebelled against My law" (Hos. 8:1). Israel had appointed their own rulers and princes without consulting the King in heaven. They had taken God's gifts of silver and gold and fashioned them into false idols for worship. Because of their sins, Hosea foretold the Lord's pending punishment and destruction upon them. In short, "they sow the wind, and they reap the whirlwind" (Hos. 8:7).

It is simple law of nature that when you put a certain seed in the ground, there is only one kind of crop you will reap. You don't sow corn seed and look to harvest potatoes. You don't plant an acorn and wait for a palm tree to sprout up. You reap what you sow. Israel had sown the wind: vain, futile and worthless worship. They reaped the whirlwind: an agent of violence and desolation. They received back what they had planted.

Before we are too quick to complain about how far things have strayed in the religious world, we must see that much of it is the result of seeds we have sown in the ground. These choices, sometimes small and with good intentions, have grown and flourished and are now bearing fruit. We can see the whirlwind; oh, that we had first seen the wind.

We have sown entertaining worship, we are reaping contemporary Christians. It is not uncommon to drive by a church building and see a sign advertising one assembly with "traditional worship" and one at a later time with "contemporary worship." I wonder which service the Lord attends? How can both be acceptable to God? This is nothing more than a dangerous sign that we are taking a man-centered approach to a God-centered activity. Worship must now give to me instead of me giving to God (see Psa. 96:7-10).

Entertainment is chosen according to what fits my tastes and preferences. If one television show doesn't keep my interest, I'll just keep pressing the button on the remote until I find another one that does. Once you *convert* a man with entertainment, you're going to have to keep him entertained with brighter lights and louder music. Otherwise, he'll just go a little further down the road until he finds a church that will. Israel was punished for worshiping idols. How shall we escape the sin of worshiping ourselves?

We have sown casual dress, we are reaping an informal attitude toward God. It is amazing to me what people will wear in public. They eat in restaurants sporting attire that leaves little to the imagination. They arrive to board an airplane looking like they're still in their pajamas. Even many of the business who experimented with "casual Fridays" have abandoned the practice due to a noticeable decrease in employee productivity.

But that hasn't stopped us from casual Sundays. This "come as you are" philosophy can rob us of a reverent, dignified worship service. The person who argues otherwise would never dress down to go to a funeral. Why do so when commemorating the death of the Lord? God sees the heart; He is interested in what is on the inside (Matt. 15:8; 23:27). But when you make no distinction between worship clothes and casual clothes, you are less likely to address the importance of the Lord's day over every other day of the week.

We have sown lack of discipline, we are reaping irresponsibility. Many children are treated with kids' gloves in our day. They are often found innocent in the parent-teacher conferences. If the preacher calls them down in services, *he* gets in trouble. And even when they are brought to justice, the judgment rendered is a mere slap on the wrist.

This has produced a generation who thinks they can do whatever they want to do. If they see something they'd like to have, they just take it. No one has stopped them before. If they know something is wrong, they do it anyway and wait for mom and dad to swoop down and rescue them again. What they need are parents who love them enough to discipline them. That is certainly the purpose behind the spiritual correction from our heavenly Father (Heb. 12:4-11). He directs our paths away from the wind to avoid the destruction of the whirlwind. Let parents show the same responsibility in this regard.

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap” (Gal. 6:7). Harvest time is coming. Whatever seed you put in the ground, you will have to face what comes up.

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