“THE LAWS OF THE HARVEST”
Hosea 8-10
Lesson for December 15-16, 2012
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INTRODUCTION

We can rationalize when we sin, can’t we? We can excuse our sin; we can wink at sin but if we do... all the while we are gradually slipping down a slippery slope to disaster.
This is what had happened to Israel in the days of the prophet Hosea...

Hosea 8:1(read) – this is the “big idea” of the book in a nutshell; simple and straightforward. The watchman blows the trumpet of warning. The enemy, Assyria, is like an eagle that will swoop down on them – why? They have broken their covenant with the Lord God and rebelled against His Law.

Now, I don’t want this to happen to you! I’m blowing the trumpet of warning for you – you can avoid the discipline/judgment of God! You can avoid it by understanding the laws of the harvest. You see, oftentimes we choose to sin because we don’t believe there will be any consequences. Oh, but there are, compadre!
We are free to do what we want but we are NOT free from the consequences.
ILLUSTRATION: You are free to step off the roof of a 10 story building but you are not free from the consequences – gravity will take over!

BIBLICAL/HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Hosea’s name means “salvation” in Hebrew (Hebrew spelling is “Hoshea”). He was the weeping prophet to the Northern Kingdom (Israel), while Jeremiah was the weeping prophet to the Southern Kingdom (Judah). Hosea prophesied in the 8th century B.C. Hosea had the unique privilege of his life and marriage being a visual aid to the nation of their sin. God commanded him to take “a wife of harlotry” to illustrate the spiritual adultery the nation was committing against the Lord. Scholars are in disagreement as to the meaning of “wife of harlotry”. Some believe that his wife Gomer was a prostitute when he married her. Others say she became a prostitute after they were married. Either way, his marriage demonstrates 2 things...
  i. The spiritual unfaithfulness of Israel.
  ii. The faithfulness and continued loyal love of God.
The Bible often pictures idolatry as spiritual adultery. 21 times the word ‘prostitution’ or ‘promiscuity’ is used in the book.
The Book of Hosea breaks into 2 sections....
Chapters 1-3: a description of Hosea’s marriage to Gomer, the unfaithful wife. Hosea could feel as God felt – his marriage was a mirror of God’s pain and His affection for Israel.
Chapters 4-14: various prophecies about Israel’s sins, a call for repentance and the promise of restoration.
In this lesson we will draw principles from Hosea for our lives under the heading of: *laws of the harvest.* Understanding these Biblical laws will help keep us from sin and its consequences.

**LAW # 1: WE REAP EXACTLY WHAT WE SOW**, Hosea 8:7; Galatians 6:7

[read Hosea 8:7 to the class]

There are many Biblical examples of this law. Let’s break it down...

To sow means to plant. In our everyday lives sowing refers to how we live, how we invest our lives, how we spend our time, the choices we make, etc.

Reaping is what we get back as a result of the sowing. It is the return on our investment, the rewards or the consequences.

The third dimension of this law is that we reap *in kind* what we plant. We reap exactly what we plant.

**ILLUSTRATION:** This is a simple principle of farming - a farmer does not plant seeds of wheat and expect a crop of corn!

In Job 4:8 Eliphaz says “According to what I have seen, those who plow iniquity and those who sow trouble harvest it.”

**ILLUSTRATION:** Albert Einstein had a great definition of insanity: doing the same thing over & over again but expecting different results. Another way to say it is...if you do what you’ve always done, you’ll get what you’ve always gotten.

Galatians 6:7 is a New Testament version of this law. It begins with 2 statements...

*“Do not be deceived...”* – When we are tempted to sin, Satan wants to deceive us into thinking that there are no consequences to what we are about to do. He never wants us to consider the consequences, only the benefits.

*“God is not mocked...”* – In other words, you cannot fool God! When we consider ourselves an exception to these laws the result is that we fall into sin every single time.

In Hosea 8:7 he mentions sowing “wind”. Wind is Scripture can mean something vane, senseless, and empty. He uses the word “whirlwind” as something we reap, which introduces us to the next law.

**LAW # 2: WE REAP MORE THAN WE PLANT**

Hosea 8:7 goes from “wind” to “whirlwind”. A whirlwind would mean a tornado or a hurricane – a disaster! This is the disastrous result of sin. We start with something vane, futile (wind) but it results in disastrous consequences that we never anticipated. We get much more than we bargained for!

**ILLUSTRATION:** It starts “innocently” with flirting with the wrong person; it moves to an affair and results in totally ruined lives – divorce, financial ruin, etc. Sin always causes us to go farther, stay longer and pay a much higher cost than we had ever imagined possible.
The other dimension of the law is that sin becomes its own punishment. If you seek satisfaction in something other than the Lord, that thing will eventually enslave you: alcohol, pornography, adultery etc. This is the very thing that had happened to Israel. The irony is that they had looked to Assyria for help and Assyria became their enemy. Result: No standing grain (8:7); what little is left is taken by the invading army.

**LAW # 3: WE REAP IN A DIFFERENT SEASON THAN WHEN WE PLANT**

**ILLUSTRATION:** The farmer plants but he does not have an instant crop. There is a period of waiting. In the same way, as we live our lives, we do not always see instant results nor do we see instant consequences.

Hosea 8:14 – Israel had forgotten God. There were seemingly no consequences for their sin so they thought all was well. They lived as if God did not exist but it was only the waiting period. We, too, can be lulled into a false sense of security thinking that there are no consequences for our sin. God’s laws are not suspended for you!

Luke 12:16-21 (read). This man is called a fool by the Lord because he had only laid up earthly treasures for himself thinking that he would live for many years. He had done nothing in regard to eternity. How wrong he was!

Israel in Hosea’s day should have known better. They had God’s laws, the prophets – every advantage and yet they squandered it and went after other gods.

**LAW # 4: WE CAN DO NOTHING ABOUT LAST YEAR’S HARVEST BUT WE CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT NEXT YEAR’S**, Hosea 10:12; Philippians 3:12-14.

Hosea 10:12(read) This is a call to repentance – to change their mind and change their behavior; to turn once again and trust the Lord. With all of their sin and idolatry, it is never too late to turn to the Lord and follow Him. Read also Hosea 12:6 – I love that phrase, “...wait for your God continually”.

**APPLICATION:** don’t get bogged down in the “C.O.W.S.”. Do you know what the COWS are? It is the syndrome of “Coulda” “Oughta” “Woulda” “Shoulda”. Those things are all in the past – we can’t change them – we must look to the future. Last year’s harvest is gone, done, over with! This year’s harvest is coming up!

See also Philippians 3:12-14 (read) – notice what Paul says: forget what lies behind. Now, forget what? We need to forget our past failures and our past successes. Our past failures can drag us down, make us feel guilty and discourage us. Our past successes can cause us to be lazy and complacent. Those are over and done with – we can’t do anything about them. We must press on. Granted, some things are beyond our control but many things are within our control. Focus on the future and what YOU can do in the Lord’s strength!
CONCLUSION

Hopefully, prayerfully – I have sounded the alarm before you have fallen into a disastrous situation. Regardless, remember, that who & what you are today is largely the result of decisions you have made in the past. As a believer in Jesus Christ - what is behind you or what is in front of you is not nearly as important as Who is within you! It is never too late to start doing the right thing!