

# **NEW, POSITIVE LOOK at SOWING AND REAPING**

## **The Laws of the Harvest.**

### **It's how we end up that counts.**

Light on the Rock     Oct 2008

by Philip Shields

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We hope this message will lift you up, in Messiah, to plant new seed in your life, to end up right. This message is tied in to the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the Feast, after the Feast of Tabernacles. It pictures the time when the Eternal resurrects the dead and gives them the opportunity to have a new life. Our opportunity is to change course now in Him, plant new seed and have a new, good harvest.

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Greetings again, brothers and sisters in Messiah. Please be turning to Galatians 6, and I will be using a familiar passage as the basis for a sermon today that I'm tying in to the 8<sup>th</sup> Day Feast, what is commonly called The Last Great Day, though I prefer to call it "the 8<sup>th</sup> day", as Scripture does. In fact, in even a general sense, I'm tying this topic into the Feast of Tabernacles before the 8<sup>th</sup> day Feast. Eight is the number used over and over in Scripture for new beginning, new opportunity, and a fresh start. I love it, as the concept means so much to me and I trust you will feel the same way.

(For a full explanation of the 8<sup>th</sup> day Feast, see my notes in [www.LightontheRock.com](http://www.LightontheRock.com) for October 2006. It is also referred to in Lev. 23:39; Numbers 29:35; Nehemiah 8:17-18).

Today I'm talking about taking a new, positive look at sowing and reaping – and how this has everything to do with our calling now, our new life in Christ, and has everything to do with the 8<sup>th</sup> day feast. Please turn to Galatians 6, a well known passage, and we'll look at it positively today.

This sermon is about being seen in new light by the One Being whose opinion about you and me is the only one that ultimately matters. Whether you are living a new life and need to stay on that course, or if you want to live a new life, or need to live a new life – this message is for you.

#### **Galatians 6:7-10**

***"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for **whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.** 8 **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.** 9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, **for in due season we shall reap** if we do not lose heart."***

Usually this passage is often used in sermons as a somber warning – and it certainly contains that somber element. But notice it also speaks of sowing to the spirit and reaping everlasting life. It also speaks of not growing weary, and it assures we *shall* reap in due season if we don't lose heart. Why this passage is so often used in a negative, warning kind of way – rather than a hopeful, uplifting kind of message, is beyond me. Certainly it is also true that "we reap the fruit of our own way" – Proverbs 1:31 - - and that's true whether positively or negatively.

I'm giving this in the context of "the 8<sup>TH</sup> Day feast". In the Bible, the number 8 is a symbol of new beginning. The 8<sup>th</sup> day after the Feast is also all about hope, new beginnings. So "eight" is very significant and inspiring.

- David was the 8<sup>th</sup> son of Jesse

- There were 8 people in Noah's ark to begin a new world
- Circumcision was done on the 8<sup>th</sup> day, a new relationship. In Abraham's day, everyone 8 days old and older had to be circumcised (Gen. 17:12)

Our time for newness is now. YHWH loves newness. He is "into" making all things new – starting with you and me. Making the universe new is the easy part for Him – but changing free moral agents takes time. All of us need to make some changes, maybe even drastic changes in our lives.

Today we'll remind ourselves that it is not what we have done in the past – good or bad – that will determine our future as much as how we end up. It's what we're doing now that matters more than what we did before. In fact, the Almighty is more concerned with the way *we end up* rather than what we did – good or bad – 10-15-20-30 years ago.

Now back to the topic of Galatians 6 and sowing and reaping. Isn't it interesting, that as we read of Adam's creation out of the dust of the ground, we soon read about a Garden of Eden, a garden of Delights, where God put the man. He was created outside the garden and then invited into God's presence. Mankind was not created in the garden, but outside – and then invited in, just as we today have to be invited, or called, into a relationship with Almighty.

The first thing Elohim says (Gen. 2:15) to the man alone, before Hawah (Eve's true name) was formed, was to maintain their habitat – the Garden. He is shown two trees, two ways of life, two kinds of fruit. This has everything to do with today's sermon.

Then after Hawah is created, the command Elohim gives them is to become one (Gen. 2:23-24), which results in being fruitful – again, something related to gardens and seed—and to bring all things on the earth under their dominion, to rule the earth like God would (Gen 1:26-28). Mankind is not to rape the earth, not to abuse it, but to use it rightfully and the way its Creator would. (Remember "man" or "mankind" comes from the word "Adam").

The Feast of Tabernacles is about the time when the Eternal's dominion will truly, finally, be over the earth, which the first Adam and the first Hawah (Eve) failed to do. So "the last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45) and His Bride – the church-- will restore all things. (I don't think Scripture says the Bride of Christ is the "last Eve", but I think that's an acceptable concept) Before *we* can have dominion under God in the original intention of the Garden of Eden, we *too* have to first be created in His image, in the new creation that we are.

God is the Creator of His New Creation. He created all things, without exception. There is only one true Creator God, and we sometimes forget that God is also the creator of the New Creation. He doesn't need our help creating us anew. Some of you will disagree with that. If you are part of your coming into existence spiritually, that makes you a co-creator with God. When you were conceived the first time as a little embryo – did you have anything to do with it? Then why do some feel we are part of the new creation? Some of us want to "help" God, advise God, on how to create us anew. Think about that.

So we are being transformed into His image, into what He is like (2 Cor. 3:18; Col 3:10). "Likeness" has more to do with *looking* like someone externally, but "Image" has more to do with *being* like someone, looking like them from the *inside* out, and that is why our Master kept talking about cleaning the inside of the dish, having a pure heart and all that. God's original intention was for mankind to be in His image, as well as His likeness (Gen. 1:26).

We cannot strive ourselves into that new birth, any more than you could bring yourself to existence the 1<sup>st</sup> time (Eph 4:24). Then we must become one with one another and with our Maker – that's why my recent sermons about being "in Him", and one body, when we become "one Spirit" with our King (1 Cor. 6:17). After that we can fulfill the original order to bring all things under His dominion, but we don't yet see that (Heb. 2:6-9), but we will see that over time during the Millennium, pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles.

The Fall holydays are ultimately about the one true God restoring the Garden's conditions with mankind before he and she sinned. It's "the Restoration of all things". We're all sons and daughters of Adam. It's a very positive picture: being able to walk and talk with our Maker again in a beautiful, open environment like the Garden of Eden, as Adam and Hawah did. To have access to His holy presence and gifts. To have our past completely forgiven by Him – and to therefore be able to also forgive ourselves even as we forgive all others of any hurts they've caused us – and to produce new fruit, new life, a new future.

Those who have never been called will have their one first chance to come to know YHWH, the one true eternal God, after the Millennium (Rev. 20). They will repent, they will have to give up the old ways of life, and the vast majority will – and as they sow new seed, they will reap a new crop of joy, righteousness and peace. God speed that day.

But our time for this newness is now.

The Autumn feasts really are focused on the rest of the world. We, the children of God and Bride of Christ – are going to enjoy that time as spirit beings. We will truly be in the Kingdom of God, for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom (1 Cor. 15:50). The lion and the lamb motif (Isa 11) is the physical part of Christ's reign. We need to see beyond that – to the spiritual. Spiritual life and the spiritual world is far more real than the physical world. The physical world will be ruled by the kingdom of God, and in that sense it is a part of that kingdom, but ultimately the true kingdom is the spirit kingdom of spirit beings headquartered from heavenly Jerusalem – but who will also have a physical headquarters here on earth at Jerusalem during that time. But don't forget: heavenly Jerusalem is the Bride's city. That's so clearly spelled out in Hebrews 11, as a good elder friend of mine has so clearly shown in his speaking too.

Remember the Kingdom of God is also your kingdom. It is also the kingdom of Christ (Ephesians 5:5). We are citizens of Yahweh's kingdom now and in that sense it is also our kingdom, just as the USA is my country since I'm a citizen of this country. Remember Yahushua says "Inherit the kingdom prepared for you". If you inherit something, it's yours. Let that sink in. Being new in Christ makes you an inheritor of God's great kingdom and it becomes ours.

***We should stop thinking of the Millennial time as "our time".*** It isn't. It's the rest of humanity's time. Our time for renewal and fruit bearing is now. I'll speak more about this later. The Day of Atonement onwards is primarily about how Savior is going to save the rest of the world. We are part of His body, and we will certainly be heavily involved in that, but the focus then is about the rest of the potential family that still needs saving. We have had our atonement with our Maker already – pictured by Passover. The feast of Trumpets pictures when Christ returns as King of Kings and Lord of Lords over the world. We should have Him already as our King and Lord in all aspects of our lives, pictured by the 1<sup>st</sup> day of Unleavened Bread, when we left Egypt under the leadership of YHWH, went through the Red Sea and we had a new king and the one true God

So the Feast of Tabernacles and 8<sup>th</sup> day, picture the time of great harvest of souls, when lives everywhere will be converted and a new world will finally be here—the true one world, one government, a truly working United Nations God's way – not the failed attempts of man to try to create one world at peace. The Millennium pictures the whole world planting the seeds of the new Way of life and then reaping the wonderful harvest of that new Way over time.

***Again, our time for new fruit, new lives, a new way, a new relationship-- is now.*** Our time to plant new seed of a new way – is now. Our time to reap the fruit of a new way – is now. But some of us have really messed up our lives in the past. But the message of this sermon – and one that has taken me years and years to really, deeply believe – is this: even the most weed-infested garden can change. Even the most sinful life can be redeemed. Even yours. Yes, even mine. That is the greatness of our Redeemer. We can have a new life, we can put our past behind us, we can be new, we can be different, we can have this hope, and we can change. That's the message of this sermon, and that's the message of the 8<sup>th</sup> day feast. And change we will – as God's spirit will be like a refiner's fire cleansing us of all our past and fashioning a new life created by God in His image.

### **EIGHT POINTS ABOUT THE LAWS OF THE HARVEST**

Now – 8 points about the Laws of the Harvest. Eight points about sowing and reaping. It has everything to do with newness, the Feast, the 8<sup>th</sup> day, having a wonderful ending to our lives, and the newness we have in Christ, or as I prefer to use the name He heard on the earth: in Yahushua.

I hope you want positive change in your life. We all stumble, fall, sin, crash – we all do. Scripture says “though a righteous man may fall seven times, he shall rise again” (Proverbs 24:16). God is in the business of helping us become His children who bounce back, and bounce back strongly even after a horrible defeat, after feeling like we just want to give up and die, or even after terrible sins – and this bouncing back will be by the power and grace of the eternal God.

#### ***(TRACK 2)***

#### **TRUE NEWNESS, NEW FRUIT, ONLY POSSIBLE IN YAHUSHUA, IN JESUS CHRIST**

- 1) Let me say from the start: there will be NO true spiritual fruit whatsoever, unless this entire message is heard or seen from the context of sowing/reaping In Him – not our own efforts (John 15:5). Remember John 15:5?***

**John 15:5**     “I am the vine, you are the branches. *He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing*”

The kind of fruit that Jesus wants is from abiding in Him, not from exhaustive effort on our part apart from Him. Verse 8 says our heavenly Father is glorified when we bear much fruit.

Note: I will more and more be using the name that Jesus actually heard while on earth – something more like “Yahshua” or “Yahushua”. The Hebrews did not have a “J” sound, but more like a Y sound. His name was the equivalent to what we call “Joshua” – but again that should be pronounced Yahshua or Yahushua. Scripture indicates it is important to know His name. I will refer to God the Father, more and more, as either Abba meaning dear Father, or Yahweh. I will distinguish either One from false gods by saying “the Almighty God” or “The Eternal” or “the one true God”.

*A new life cannot start without acknowledging we desperately need Yahweh's help*, forgiveness and blessing on our lives. We start that process with deeply contrite repentance – and acknowledging we need Him every day. We repent of leaving Yahushua outside the door, knocking (Rev. 3:20) and now we invite Him into our lives. We repent of our overweening pride, vanity, lust, greed, envy – and acknowledge we need the Creator to create some new fruit in our lives and create a New Creation in us. There can be no resurrection with Him (Gal. 2:20) until we are first crucified with Him, and are buried with Him in baptism. Now we can be in Him and produce His fruit in our lives.

Remember the fig tree that bore no fruit was cursed and withered (Matthew 21:18-20), as an object spiritual lesson to all of us that we are not just to have a lot of showy leaves, or look good, but to have fruit, results, something beneficial, from our new walk.

This new fruit must be the fruit of His Spirit, not a fruit of my efforts or yours. It must be the evidence of His life, not mine. His will, not my desires. My recent sermons have dwelt heavily on the topic of being In Him, in Christ, In Yahweh himself. But the fruit has to be His fruit, His vine, from His vineyard. Yahushua, Jesus the Christ, is the Vine. We are just the branches (John 15:1-8) dependent on His life as the Vine.

Our Master says more about seed and fruit in John 12:24. Though it's about Him specifically in context, the point is clear from it. And remember we are part of His body, and are One Spirit with Him now (1 Cor. 6:17). So in a sense, because we are part of His body, this also speaks to us.

**John 12:24** “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and *dies*, it remains alone; but *if it dies, it produces much grain.*”

I spoke at length about this in my series on Gal.1:20, and being crucified with Him. Newness cannot start until the old way is buried (see Romans 6) and we rise with Christ in baptism. We do that in deep, heartfelt repentance that produces new actions, new desires, and a new purpose in us. Look at the Ninevites, who were slated for extermination for their wickedness, and after hearing Jonah they repented, got on a new path, and reaped new results.

**Jonah 3:10** —“**Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way;** and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it”

So this new harvest, new way of life, better yet - is in Him, as I've been speaking about a lot lately.

We can't change our past, and we will have some consequences to continue to deal with – but we can change the trajectory of our lives. We can change where we're headed, where we'll end up. If you've really messed up, listen – because I'm an experienced expert on messing up. But I'm also getting some experience through Yahweh, in turning a wretched life around. You *can* change the way you're headed, you *can* change where you'll end up. There is hope for you - - even if you're in jail, or divorced, or your kids hate you, or you're broke, or even if you feel distant right now from your Maker. There is hope. It takes time to end up where God wants us, but let Him do it in you.

The 8<sup>th</sup> day Sabbath feast, after the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:39), is all about newness, new opportunities. By the time we go through the Feast of Tabernacles – picturing the time when Satan is bound and gone—the whole world is then worshiping the King of kings. The world is well on its way to a new life and new start. By the 8<sup>th</sup> day, the rest of humanity who has ever lived is given the chance to do it right. They're resurrected, their minds are opened, the books are opened to their

understanding, and they will choose life. The message of the 8<sup>th</sup> day – 8 is all about new beginnings remember – is that it is how we end up that counts, and the true God is going to make sure the vast majority do end up beautifully!

**[TRACK 3]**

**2) Our present lives are reflecting what we (or somebody) have sown.**

I said “we or somebody” because sometimes we suffer along with others who have sown seed in our garden without our permission. Remember the parable of the wheat and tares – and how the enemy had sown some tare seeds in the wheat field (Matthew 13:33-34). This is truly what can and does happen. A Downs Syndrome baby did nothing to cause his or her condition. Like the man born blind from birth, it wasn't his sin or anything like that – but for the glory of God (John 9:1-3).

If you are hit by a drunk driver, and rendered disabled, that was sown seed in your life that you didn't appreciate, but sometimes seed sown by others still affects us. So I don't mean to imply in this sermon that everything happening to you is because of some stupid or brilliant thing you did – but, everything happening is because someone, or Someone, did do something that has affected you, or it is something YHWH Himself is allowing for HIS divine purposes. So, often we're reaping what we have sown, but sometimes it is because of what *others* have sown.

*But the point stands: there can be no plant, no fruit, without a seed having been planted first somehow, by someone.*

Another example: modern descendants of ancient Israel are enjoying blessings of the land largely because of the relationship of Abraham and His Maker. Another example, when our forefather Adam and Hawah (Eve) sinned, all of us were thrown out of the garden through them (Rom 5:12-17). And in like manner, when the Last Adam paid our penalty, and lived a righteous life which we can choose to accept, in Christ we come back into relationship with Abba (Romans 5:18-19). But only through Yahshua, Jesus the Christ. There's no other way. I've spoken much about all that lately.

So in a sense we are reaping what was sown by our forefathers. Parents, be aware of this. Our actions and decisions will affect our children's lives for a long, long time. It can be for a positive effect. Or not. Almighty promises that He is going to be far more focused on what we individually do though, and not what our forebears did. We'll read that soon.

So sometimes we're reaping what others have sown – whether its weeds or a bountiful crop of wheat. But it all still goes back to sowing and reaping.

One more thought: nothing is happening to you or can happen to you when you are in Christ that is outside of God's will or God's permission. *Since we are His body, when something is about to happen, or is happening to ANY one of us, it is happening directly to Yahshua. Jesus FEELS it, KNOWS it, and is involved in it.*

So point 1 – realize seed we're planting may well be affecting others. My wife and I went kayaking on the river recently. Power boats like to frequent the area too, so there are signs to “**Be aware of your wake**”. Some power boaters weren't so aware and they'd create a wake, or a wave, that could swamp us in the little kayak.

In a similar way, as we pass by in life, we are leaving a wake of consequences for others – for good or bad – long after we’ve passed. If the wake or waves have been bad, we can slow down now and start producing a more gentle wake that doesn’t capsize the small boats and kayaks. You get the point. I’ve had times of good wake and times of bad wake. So have you. It’s high time now to live life on purpose, with purpose.

[points 3-4 will be TRACK 4]

**3<sup>rd</sup> point: Be aware that WE’RE ALWAYS SOWING – either for good or bad. ALWAYS.**

**Romans 2:5-11** states there is no partiality with God and He renders to every one according to his deeds. Some will be given everlasting life and some will be given indignation and wrath, depending on what they’ve sown.

*So we must be aware that we are always sowing seed* – whether we do so knowingly or not. Sometimes we carefully prepare the ground, make a hole, put in a seed or two, cover it up and water it. That’s planting and sowing with careful forethought. Other times seeds are broadcast without much thought on our part, but the seeds are still being sown: each time we bump a WEED, for example, or each time we spit out apple seeds or watermelon seeds.

Our lives are always sowing either good seed or bad seed – whether intentionally or not. If we are not deeply aware of this, we will miss some good opportunities or cause some dreadful consequences without meaning to do so. As we’re conscious of the fact every thought, every action, every email, every letter, every note we write is like a seed being thrown out – we will see what a great opportunity we have. We won’t fear action, but be aware of possible consequences of our actions.

Sometimes we may be unaware of the seed we are planting, and yet there are people – perhaps our children – watching what we do, what we say, how we say things, or how we react to life’s stresses. Those seeds can take root far from the original action, or much later in time – but those were indeed seeds that were sown.

#### **4) ONE OF THE LAWS OF REAPING SAYS WHATEVER WE REAP – GOOD OR BAD- - WILL BE MUCH BIGGER, MUCH MORE, THAN WHAT WE SOWED**

**Hosea 8:7** – sow the wind, reap the whirlwind. A whirlwind is a windstorm multiplied many times over. That’s the point. **Hosea 10:12-13** says something similar. We sow righteousness and in time Yahweh *rains* down righteousness upon us, by the bucketful. Sow wickedness and we will reap the result of lies and iniquity, it goes on to say.

But did you get what Hosea 10 says? *Elohim* rains down HIS righteousness on us. But remember the point: even just one seed planted can turn into 100 or more. Yahshua says so. Remember the parable of the sower? Some seed grew 100-fold, remember. One hundred times more!

Mark 4:8 KJV

“And other [seed] fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.”

So one seed, one action, produces 30x, 60x or 100x. Now think what that means for us today, as we through the Spirit of Almighty start to change our lives. We see a vast field ahead of us, our lives – and we have a bag of seeds. The field seems barren right now. Take heart and realize the few seeds we have will spring up to a wonderful harvest many times over the amount of seed we put in.

If our lives need turning around, take heart! Even seemingly small steps taken now will bear fruit. Need a better marriage? For example, even just helping out a bit more is new seed. Listening more, sharing your plans and asking for input more, going for a walk together 4-5x a week – these are all tiny seeds, but if we plant even small seeds now, they will grow into a harvest many times bigger – in a happier, better marriage.

**This is why I get a kick out of Time Travel movies.** I know they're science fiction, but they make an interesting point: a little act, a trivial decision—makes all the difference if you're at a certain place at a certain time, and what happens as a result that could impact thousands of lives. The "Back to the Future" series. Other titles were "Somewhere in Time", "Déjà vu", "Final Countdown", "It's a Wonderful Life". "Groundhog Day" made the great point that if we could redo a day – how vastly different could we make it, with just little changes in the moment-by-moment decisions we make.

These movies make the point dramatically how deciding to be somewhere – or not – changes the whole course of your life and hundreds of other people. If I hadn't gone to the UK for my college, almost on a whim it seems looking back at it, I would not have met Carole, I would have my wonderful children, these particular grandchildren they in turn have brought us, and so on. If we weren't going to a particular feast site, Heather may have never met Matt – and their lives together. Of course, if Almighty wanted it so, somehow they would have met, I guess. But you get the point.

**One seemingly tiny seed that we must understand is so powerful – is the seed of our thoughts,** what we allow ourselves to think about. "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he" (Prov 23:7). We become what we think about. We do what we focus on.

So, many of our new actions start with our **thoughts**. Our thoughts affect how we feel, our moods. Our feelings and moods tend to make certain actions – good or bad – easier. Those actions have consequences. A repeated action becomes a habit. A habit becomes our life – and what we're reaping. And it all started with a thought. Thoughts are seeds that can sprout and bear fruit later in our lives, for good or bad – depending if the thoughts were good or bad.

That's why our Maker warns us to **bring every thought into captivity** to the obedience of Jesus Christ our Master (2 Cor 10:4-5). His word is a discernor of our thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12). In James 1:14 it says we sin when we let thoughts and desires get out of hand, instead of capturing them. Positively, we're taught by Scripture to think about, or "meditate on these things" – whatever things are true, noble, just, pure, good report, if there is any virtue -- and so on (Philippians 4:8).

But what do we tend to invite into our living rooms? Music, movies, shows that are anything but things pure, noble, praiseworthy. I do it too, and am learning how important it is not to let the Adversary plant his evil seeds into my mind. We get scared as we hear negative things. We get lustful as feed lustful thoughts into our minds. We get dissatisfied, as we let those thoughts get in.

Why can't we plant good thoughts, good intentions, good ideas, uplifting moods instead? That takes some work! The Adversary won't make that easy to do, so we have to fight him and his thoughts.



My wife and I try now to study together more, rather than watch as much TV. God's word will produce better fruit. We need to sow good thoughts; good seed now every chance we have.

Brethren, we should challenge our thoughts. ***We should be aware that thoughts get in there*** from every conceivable angle – including from trusted friends and relatives! When Peter told Yahushua (Jesus) that He wouldn't be crucified, our Master recognized that thought as having been planted by the Adversary Satan. Jesus replied to Peter, "Get behind me, *Satan!*" (Matt. 16:21-23). Wow! Did you get that? We need to do the same thing – be on guard constantly even from good friends.

***So challenge every thought.*** If it's not what Philippians 4:8 says, replace it. Ask yourself, "Is this true? And if it's true, is it noble, pure, praiseworthy, is it good news, is it uplifting? I'm not overstating the importance of this: challenge your thoughts daily and constantly. Our thoughts have more to do with our lives than we realize. We are what we think about. We become what we focus on. We do what we ponder on a lot. ***That's why Yahshua says not to allow hate in our hearts, or lust, or envy – because if acted on, would result in actual murder, adultery and other sin. By saying not to even allow any lust in our hearts, He is telling us – our thoughts matter!*** And since Yahweh sees our hearts, that's where it all comes together. That also applies to positive things. Dwell on serving, forgiving, sharing, and being uplifting, giving – and put in positive thinking.

In Isaiah 55:8-13 the Eternal makes it clear that His word is like seed that He is planting in our lives, and "*it shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish what I please*, and it shall prosper for the thing for which I sent it." And He goes on to say how He wants us to have a life of joy and peace and rejoicing. Read it in Isaiah 55:8-13. When we plant seed, not all of them spring up. The True God says seed He plants "shall not return to me void". Hallelujah!

I think even more important than thoughts are our moods and feelings. I now monitor my feelings, and I've even asked my wife to help me back up if she sees me slipping into feelings of anger, depression, envy, inferiority, superiority, dissatisfaction, and so on. I do the same for her.

The worst times of sin in my life were the times I let my thoughts go wildly uncontrolled. Let's learn from our past and move on to harvesting better fruit this time, by planting better thoughts.

[track 5 – points 5-6]

### **5) DRAMATICALLY NEW GARDENS (OUR LIVES) OFTEN REQUIRE DRAMATIC ACTION.**

Remember Jesus' words? If your right hand, your best hand, causes you to sin, cut it off and CAST it far from you (Matthew 5:30). I think He means it as a figure of speech, but He's saying: do whatever it takes!

When we first bought our lot on which we were going to build, it was a thistle and weed filled sloping ground, the soil was solid clay and where there wasn't solid clay, it was rocky. So we drew up a plan and bulldozed down, dug up some of the big rocks, leveled the front, brought in some top soil by the truck load – and we had a plan of what we wanted in the end. My point: we couldn't dab away at it here and there with a trowel. This 1/3 acre was a Garden of Weedin' and it needed a total overhaul. The change today from what it was when we bought it: dramatic. But it's taken quite a while. Our lives can be like that.

We needed help! If you need drastic changes and new fruit, get a fellow believer to work with you. Someone who mentors you. Run together, play ball together, diet together, call each other up if you've decided to study God's word as a new habit every morning at 6 am. Two are better than one, for if one falls, the other is there to pick him up. Woe to him who is alone when he falls, and needs help. Three is better yet, for a 3-fold cord is not easily broken (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

Brethren, we're a nation on drugs, antidepressants, and everything under the sun. A recent study said that depressed people felt as good after 12 weeks of exercising almost every day, as they did with prescription anti-depressants! My point is this: if we have trouble exercising, or studying, or praying – get someone to do it with you.

The change has to be drastic at times. If you have a problem with alcohol abuse, become abstinent. Don't go anywhere near the temptations, or even people who draw you back into sin. Get help if you're getting addicted to, and wasting time with, and sowing gobs of bad seed with – internet addiction to video games, sex videos, chat rooms, webcams, instant messaging. I've heard of so many who have ended even in divorce over these things. Admit the problem and take drastic action.

One drastic action is to hang out more with uplifting people. Continue to be a light to a darkened world, continue to be – like Jesus was – a friend of sinners, without participating in their way of life, but overall, spend more and more time with people who have God's way of life and can inspire you. You in turn seek to be an inspiration to others.

## **6) PRODUCING good, new FRUIT TAKES TIME.**

One of the reasons we don't change faster, or permanently, and maybe you can identify with this – is that we don't see any results, or enough results, right away. We diet, and only 1 pound comes off, and we have 80 to lose. It seems too long, too fruitless, too hard. So we give up.

Brethren, we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13). With God, all things are possible. Yes, he can make even a cranky old guy a gentle spirit-filled person. He can turn a womanizer into a faithful husband. Yes He can break the shackles of your prison – whether in a real prison or an emotional one. Sometimes these changes are immediate and quick – but more often it seems like it can take time.

Psalm 1 says the tree planted by the rivers of water – God's Spirit – bears fruit in its season.

### **Mark 4:26-29**

"And He said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, <sup>27</sup> and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. <sup>28</sup> For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. <sup>29</sup> But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

### **Galatians 6:8-10 again:**

"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. 9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, **for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.** 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith"

In a different house, I had dug up part of the yard for what I hoped would be a beautiful vegetable garden. I did all the preparation work, planted new seed, in a couple weeks in fact, there was some visible growth – some little leaves coming up as the new carrots and potatoes sprung to life. But so did some weeds that I thought I had removed! Apparently many of the weed seeds had become dislodged while I was weeding and it seemed like thousands of little weeds were coming up too! Sure, I got discouraged at first. But over time, as I kept watching the garden and digging out weeds, it turned out OK.

**LIFE is like that too! Even as we change, even as we grow, there will be lingering consequences of our past sins and actions. Sometimes it's a matter of lingering habits.** We fall into the old ruts and old way of thinking. Our carnal nature never seems to sleep. We can revert back to thoughts and ways of carnality – vanity, lust and greed. Carnal anger, bouts of lust, periods of resentment and envy. You know what I mean. Even the most converted of people, if they could really see themselves, would have to admit like Paul, “That which I hate, I still do”. We hate the sin, we hate the wrong – but because the flesh is weak, we too often give in. It's because we're sowing to the carnal nature, to the flesh – instead of to the spirit nature.

And even if we are trying to be a more loving, God-like father or husband or wife – it takes time for anyone to see and believe in the change. And consequences of our past will continue to spring up from time to time.

But – back to my garden I was transforming: As these weeds would spring up, I'd carefully dig them out being careful not to disturb the new plants I had put in. Long story short – in the end of that first year, there were still some weeds here and there, but we also had a lot of carrots and potatoes and tomatoes. The next year there were fewer weeds. The 3<sup>rd</sup> year even fewer still, as we were catching the weeds this time before they went to seed. Over time, my weed-filled weed garden that had a few vegetables in it really did become a beautiful vegetable garden that had a few weeds that would spring up here and there – but I'd pull them out and we had a wonderful vegetable crop.

Let me say this about the weeds of life: **there is a place for weeds.** Yes, they choke the good seed. That's true. Yes, they have to be weeded out, and that's true. But weeds can also tell you what's missing in the soil so you can do something about it. Weeds can be used for teas, medicines and so forth. Weeds can create a new base of soil in arid areas. In life, the sinful times of our lives show us what's missing too.

The trials and hard times – even those brought on by sins – give us a soberness to life, help us understand how wrong it is to go against God's way.

Other trials, not brought on by sin – but still things we would normally not choose to have – are developing real gold for us. That's why Scripture says to rejoice in our trials (James 1:2), which is so hard to do. I grant you that. But trials are forming in us what God wants (1 Peter 1:6-7). We get a depth and a perspective that would be missing in our lives, without the trials, what some might call the “weeds” of life. I'm not so sure Almighty would call them “the weeds of life” though.

God can use all the times we have had and make it all work out for good in the end. . For example, Joseph told his brothers who sold him as a slave to Egypt, “you meant it for evil, but God has turned it into good, so I could save many people alive” (Gen 50:20). A huge lesson there.

Even our spiritual life is like that: Almighty can change our lives – and yes, it takes time, and yes we still have to pull out the weeds of the old life, the pulls of the flesh that still spring up. Some times we still do the things we now hate- the weeds of life. Weed it out. And in time, we reap a new harvest of a new life in Christ. It takes time. Paul talked about working “**UNTIL Christ is formed in you**” (Gal. 4:19). We grow over time into a beautiful temple of the Almighty. In time, God wins.

[track 6]

**7) IF WE WANT A DIFFERENT CROP, WE HAVE TO PLANT DIFFERENT SEED. We can't keep planting the same seed and hope for a different harvest.**

**If we don't like our marriage, but continue to be the same kind of husband or wife we've always been, continuing to do the same things – we're going to get the same results.** It's like letting weeds go to seed, and then wondering why there are no fruitful tomatoes or zucchini in your garden! It's because we did nothing – so the winds carried the seeds of weeds into your ground.

A definition of insanity is: “Doing the same thing over and over but expecting and hoping for different results”.

By that definition many of us are sometimes spiritually insane, because we mope about how bad we have it, but we keep doing the same things over and over. Trust me. I've been there. I know all about that. And its time for the insanity to stop! It's time to be an Overcomer and to plant new seed, new crops, new fruit – and it's time to reap good fruit.

We can't keep sowing dandelion seeds and think we'll ever harvest tomatoes, potatoes and carrots!

**8) IT'S HOW WE END UP THAT COUNTS.**

**God sees the way we end up, not the way we MESSED up.** Yahushua gave a parable about 2 sons who were asked to work in the vineyard (Matthew 21:38-32). One said no and one said yes. The one who at first said “no”, decided to get out and do it. The one who originally said “yes”, changed his mind too and didn't go. Which one did the will of his father?

The answer: whoever did the right thing in the end, did His Father's will, and he is the one who is commended. Jesus used that parable to condemn the religious people of his day and to commend the repentant whores and thieves who were responding and changing. In Matt 21:31 Yahushua says to the religious folks of his day, “Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you.”. Why? Because of how they ended up, or will end up, repentant and all that-- and not because of all their evil sins along the way.

I need that story frankly. And frankly, so do you.

**Ezekiel 18:21-32---** "But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. 22 None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live. 23 Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" says the Lord God, "and not that he should turn from his ways and live?

24 "But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the

righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die.

[now let's jump to verse 31 for time.]

***31 Cast away from you ALL the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? 32 For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord GOD. "Therefore turn and live!"***

All your sins, no matter how bad – can be and must be cast off, and our Creator is inviting us to get a new heart and a new spirit from him. Sometimes we use a horrible expression as we gossip about another part of the body of Christ. What we say is “oh, what she did is simply unforgivable”.

Is that so? Cut that phrase out of your vocabulary. In Christ, all things are possible and in Christ all things are made new.

- Forgive yourself – and others – so you can move on. I've come to realize that I largely wasted, threw away, about 15 years of my recent life, by not being able to forgive myself of some pretty awful stuff. It was made harder to forgive myself because so few of the so-called people of God were willing to forgive me of the gossip they'd heard. When we forgive others, never forget it makes it easier for them to forgive themselves too. And then everyone is liberated from the bondages of their past.

This very minute in your life is a new minute that has never before existed, will pass away in 60 seconds, will never be here again, and should not be squandered. It will be, if you don't forgive yourself and forgive others.

Too many of us are squandering this wonderful gift, the “present” from Almighty that we have. That gift is the present moment of life God has given us. “Present” – that's a gift, and the present moment we have, especially if it is in Christ, is a precious gift.

Too many of us waste time – years, even – stewing over the stupid past mistakes we've made. We stew in the “I wish I coulda, shoulda, woulda” conversations of life.

Or, some are wasting their present by sitting on past laurels. We live as if the glory days of our high school championship still matter. Past is past. Good or bad. The Apostle Paul had to put under the blood of His Savior all those people he arrested, beat, tortured and maybe even murdered. And he also put into the past even all the wonderful things he could boast about. All I want to know now, he says in Philippians 3, is to know Him, and the righteousness of God by faith through Christ Jesus our Lord. Another place he wrote, “forgetting the past”, as he reached forward to the things which lay ahead (Philippians 3:13).

**\* “If I could do this or that over...”**

Have you ever thought to yourself that if only you could have a chance to re-live a particular moment, and do it over, do it better? Maybe you wish you had spent more time with your kids or honored your wife more. Maybe you wish you could be more gentle, or a harder worker, or not work as hard and focus on other things instead. Some things we even excuse as a bad habit – and now we excuse ourselves as “stuck” in the rut of this habit of smoking, illicit sex, unfaithfulness, over drinking, or our hot temper, or whatever we want to excuse away.

Listen carefully: Here's the good news: if you're still breathing, you still have time to start changing a few things – and time to eventually reap a new harvest! But don't continue wasting your life by excusing yourself because "it's too late, I'm hooked" and garbage reasoning like that! I know, I've fallen into that reasoning at times myself. I know what a trap it can be.

If you wish you had been a better father – be a better father now, right now, even to your grown kids! Be a better GRANDfather than you were a father. I intend to do that. I think we all wish we had been a better father or mother than we were. Even if your kids praise you, you know you wish you had done even better than you did. So start now being an awesome dad to them even if they're already 30 or 40 or 50. It's not too late. Plant those new little seeds of being the kind of Dad or Mom you wish you had been. Be that kind of Dad or Mom now. In fact, in some ways, you'll see that they appreciate you more now than they ever did when they were 15 or 17 – IF you start to plant a new garden of life, sow new seed of being a superb Dad or Mom, now.

If you wish you had exercised when you were younger, exercise now. If you wish you hadn't ever taken up smoking, make the decision now to quit. Remember the weeds of life that will spring up and yes, we may still fall back from time to time – weed those times out, start over. In time a new garden emerges in Christ.

Are you getting the point of this message? If we have had weeds, we can change. We can – In Him – produce God's way of life, God's fruit of His spirit, a new life in Christ.

Yahshua promised us in John 10 that He came to give us the abundant life, a life overflowing with spiritual joy and peace and love. When God sees our hearts change, He blesses us. I promise you that. I'm living that in some areas of my life.

For example, I just about ruined my marriage 15-20 ago. Well, my wife and I have just celebrated our 33<sup>rd</sup> anniversary a month ago and it was a glorious anniversary. There is a love and commitment to each other – and a JOY in our marriage – that would be the envy of many people. I've seen my wife change a lot too. She's a wonderful wife, a godly person, and one of my greatest sources of joy and good feelings. Though at times in my marriage I found fault, I now realize she is one of God's greatest blessings to me. I want GOD to be my *greatest* source of joy and blessing – but my wife is right up there too.

When we fail a test, the True God has a way of making us face that same kind of test all over again, until we pass the test.

So now we walk with Christ, led by His mind and His will – and in time we can change our health, our finances, our marriage and everything in our lives. Most of all, we change what we ARE. When we realize we are now children of the Highest, and change what we see ourselves as being – what we are – then what we do will change too. If we've been bitter in the past, but now are experiencing the joy of the Eternal's salvation, we will become joyful people. Change what you ARE, by God's spirit, and what we DO, and what we reap, HAS to also change.

Brethren, I'm out of time. But I hope you got the point: plant new, good seeds – and in God's time, there will be a wonderful harvest. **Sometimes, the harvest comes after your life – and comes in the lives of grandchildren.** Sometimes God even uses the weeds in your life to make all things work out for good.

Remember the lesson of time traveler movies: they make a good point that little things done or not done can have a huge consequence later.

- Remember these things: all this new sowing must be In Christ or it will go nowhere permanently. True newness is possible only in the Almighty (John 15:4-5)
- We are reaping generally what has been sown by someone, somewhere – oftentimes by ourselves. We reap what has been sown.
- Remember we are always sowing seed – good or bad – whether we know it or not. Every action, or lack of action, is like seed that will have a consequence later on.
- Remember the harvest will be many times bigger than what we sowed – good or bad. So be planting a lot of good seed, a lot of good changes in your lives.
- We also talked about how so often dramatic action is often required to make dramatic changes.
- Remember having a crop takes time from the time the seed was planted. Don't be discouraged – for we shall reap in due season if we don't lose heart. Remember in time, even a weedy garden can become a showplace of God's mercy, power and love. Yes, it takes time – but don't give up and in time, Yahweh is glorified.
- We discussed that to have a different crop – we have to plant a different seed than what we had been planting. We discussed the importance of challenging our thoughts – for they become seed for new actions. We can't keep doing the same things and be expecting things to change. If we want change, we have to start doing different things than usual.
- Remember – most of all – with Yahweh, it's how we end up that counts. Forgive yourself, move on, live a new life – regardless of those who won't forgive you or welcome you back into their fellowship.

And remember to share this concept with the billions who will be resurrected after the millennium. Our job will be to share that “if Yahweh could save me, chief sinner, He can save you”.

We can change. We must change. So brethren, remembering the 8<sup>th</sup> day after the Feast of Tabernacles, the Great Day – start planting new seeds – and watch how God can help you turn your life around, even with the current weeds around your feet. It's how you end up that counts. Dig out those weeds, commit them to God, plant new seeds of the righteousness of God – and enjoy the new garden, the new life in Christ. And come back into, as it were, the Garden of Eden, and enjoy the fruit of the Tree of Life.

Blessings to you from Yahweh and His Son to all the children of the Highest. Til next time, your brother Philip, saying – enjoy a new spiritual garden of your life in Him.

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So don't decry the weeds in your life. **Even weeds have meaning and serve a purpose.** I did a study about weeds recently and its amazing how needed weeds can be. Many of our **medicines** come from weeds. Some excellent **foods, herbal** remedies, salads, and so forth, come from weeds. To a person educated about soils and plants, the type of weeds growing in a patch of dirt will tell him what is lacking in the soil. Weeds can also break down hard clay and in time improve some soils. Weeds can also act as a top cover for some kinds of growing plants. Weeds produce better soil. Every time I pull out a weed, there's a clump of GOOD soil attached to its roots.

So though we tend to think of weeds as bad things, GOD uses them! HE created them. There are things in our lives that are weeds. God can use them too – even to His glory in the end – if we in faith turn them over to Him.

ONE way God uses the painful times in our lives is to MELLOW US so we can encourage OTHERS as well.

**2 Corinthians 1:3-5 TEV**

Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the merciful Father, the God from whom all help comes! 4 He helps us in all our troubles, *so that we are able to help others who have all kinds of troubles, using the same help that we ourselves have received from God.*



When you have had weeds of life that you've had to work with – you understand others who later face the same weeds in their life. And you've learned. You've survived them. You can share that love and hope that all is not lost. So THANK GOD for the weeds of your life, because God will use them too! God will use those periods of your life as well.

So often, it's in the times of our lives characterized by spiritual WEEDS – when we decided we didn't WANT THIS sinful way ANYMORE! It is in the PAINFUL times of our lives, the times of discipline, the times of being spanked, the times of WEEDS, if you will – when we often smarten up and decide it's time to grow up, time to repent, time to get with it, time to ask God to help turn our lives around. And it becomes a time of GROWTH, a time of KNOWING GOD, and knowing ourselves. These can become the times of our lives when we GROW UP.

Don't misunderstand me: even Yahushua said thorns can choke the growth out of the good seed (Matt. 13:32). So thorns, weeds and tares must eventually be taken out – but as you'll see, there are times even weeds can be used by God. Remember the story of the tares – and how God said to let them remain for the time being, for God's reasons. There are times even God leaves tares, or thorns or weeds in place.

We can't go to the Master Potter and question Him, “why have you made me like this?” (Rom. 9:19-24). We dare not accuse God of not knowing what He is doing (Isa. 29:16). Also see Isa 45:9-10. Almighty does what He wants to do and He knows best. He's telling us to trust Him, even in the times of our lives characterized by disaster, death, pain, suffering – the weeds of the garden.

OUR job is to commit the weeds of our lives to GOD, pull out the weeds we can – and sometimes like **Joseph** – we have to live in the spiritual weeds of our lives until GOD pulls US out of those weeds, those difficult times and circumstances, as He did for Joseph.

**Job's life** is another example. Though we know Satan was the one who brought those painful trials, it was Yahweh who let him. Nothing happens to you or me outside of God's permission. Job was one of the most righteous men to ever live. In fact he thought he was as righteous as God (Job 35:2) and he maintained HIS own righteousness (Job 27:6), instead of looking to God's righteousness. Remember we must NOT have our own righteousness, but the righteousness of God which is by FAITH (Phil. 3:9) and is given to us as a GIFT from God (Romans 5:17). I spoke about all that not long ago. But back to JOB.

It's how we end up that counts. Even righteous Job had to come to see GOD, and not just himself. God used SATAN to practically destroy Job, really so that GOD could build Job back to the kind of person and to the life GOD wanted for Job. In the end, JOB came to see it that way. But while you're losing everything, suffering bad health as well, everything seems hopeless!

Job 42:11 says God consoled Job and blessed him with double – after all “**the adversity that the LORD had brought upon him....**”

My point is this: no matter how bad the garden of your life seems now – COMMIT your life to King Jesus and to our heavenly FATHER. Implore God to let you learn what you have to learn, if anything. Or thank God for allowing your pains and sufferings to be used to His glory somehow, some way even if you don't yet see how. \*\*\* I preach to myself, believe me.

God so often used the rejects of society:

- Moses – an escaped murderer, a felon, ended up leading Israel out of Egypt under God's hand
- Mary of Magdala – 7 demons in her were cast out; the first to see the risen Christ.
- The Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), the first to tell the story of the Son of God in her city.

If anything, **OUR GOD IS A CHAMPION OF THE FORLORN, THE REPENTANT SINNER WHO TURNS TO HIM.**

Another example: **THE SONS OF KORAH** – end up writing some of the **PSALMS**. The rebel **Korah's children** ended up right. We don't have to worry about ourselves even if Dad or Mom messed up really badly. Korah was destroyed by God (Num 16:23-34). How would you have liked to have been known as "Korah's son" after that? The **SONS of KORAH** became **FAMOUS** in the Bible. They didn't change their name. You may recognize them as Korahites, or Korhites, or Kohathites – all referring to the same people.

Korah had 3 sons and those 3 sons used their God-given talents and God used **THEM**, in spite of their rebellious Dad.

**The most famous Son of Korah? SAMUEL**, the Prophet. His father was a descendant of Korah, and though Elkanah lived in the mountains of Ephraim, and was therefore called an Ephraimite, he was actually a **LEVITE**, and a descendant of **KORAH**. You can check that out yourself.

**Lesson: Sometimes there are FAMILY problems that run in our family tree for generations:** alcoholism, suicide, divorces, sexual problems, anger management issues. OK, now what about **YOUR** family? **WE** are the generation in Christ which says "ENOUGH! As for me and my house, we will serve the Eternal!" – and with God's Spirit, we **REBUKE** the family traits of sin, and now take hold of the traits of the family of **GOD** and of **HIS SPIRIT**. Are you getting the message? **YOUR** story doesn't have to be the story of your family so far. It can be righteous. It can be clean. It can be happy. Even **IF** you've failed so far. If you're breathing, you can **TURN IT AROUND** in Christ.

- **Another example is Paul. Hurt, imprisoned and killed God's children.**

**But Yahweh used Him to write much of the New Testament.** ). Paul himself said, "I persecuted this Way to the death..." (Acts 22:4), saying he even cast his vote to kill them (Acts 26:9-11). Even Paul moved on and ended up wonderfully – in Christ. God was able to turn Paul around, to plant seeds of grace all over the Roman empire. This man who had planted so many weed seeds – now used to spread the **GOOD NEWS** of the Kingdom of God and of Jesus Christ.

**But I'm not really talking about Paul. I'm talking about you, and about me, and the potential still that is left in your life and mine – if we let God take over and if we start planting new seed.**

- **King David** – moved on after stealing another man's wife, and then having the man - - who was a personal bodyguard – killed. David repented, and allowed himself to once again experience "the joy of salvation" (Psalm 51:12). **Almighty continued to let David be king**, even though murder and adultery were normally a death sentence by stoning. He continued to let David write portions of the Bible. Why? Because it is the way David ended up that counted. It's not over – until its all over! God can turn your life around.

- King Manasseh, said to be the most evil of the kings. God restored the throne to him after he repented – even though he offered children in the fire and many other abominations. It's how we end up that counts. You can read the moving story in 2 Chron 33:10-17.

Sometimes WE have to help one another start over by being willing to give someone a fresh start. Sometimes God's people are the hardest. I think some don't believe in the power of the Holy Spirit to really change someone for good. It is SO much easier to forgive ourselves, and to move on, when we see that forgiveness in the eyes of the people of God. When they let you come around, when they let you fellowship.