



Break up the
Fallow Ground
Plowing

Matthew 9:37

*Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous,
but the labourers are few;*

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Table of Contents

Forward		3
Chapter 1	When plowing, never look back.	4
Chapter 2	Does the farmer plant continually?	8
Chapter 3	Sow with a view of righteousness.	12

Forward

Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting. Psalms 126:5

The beginnings of mercies encourage us to pray for the completion of them. And while we are in this world there will be matter for prayer, even when we are most furnished with matter for praise.

Suffering saints are often in tears; they share the calamities of human life, and commonly have a greater share than others. But they sow in tears; they do the duty of an afflicted state.

Weeping must not hinder sowing; we must get good from times of affliction. And they that sow, in the tears of godly sorrow, to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting; and that will be a joyful harvest indeed.

Blessed are those that mourn, for they shall be forever comforted. When we mourn for our sins, or suffer for Christ's sake, we are sowing in tears, to reap in joy.

And remember that God is not mocked; for whatever a man soweth that shall he reap, Gal 6:7-9. Here, O disciple of Jesus, behold an emblem of thy present labour and future reward; the day is coming when thou shalt reap in joy, plentiful shall be thy harvest, and great shall be thy joy in the Lord.

Chapter 1



When plowing, never look back.

Luke 9:62

But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Looking back, leads to drawing back, and drawing back is to perdition. He only that endures to the end shall be saved.

Elisha leaves his plowing to follow Elijah.

1 Kings 19:19-21

So he departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, while he was plowing with twelve pairs of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth. And Elijah passed over to him and threw his mantle on him. He left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, "Please let me kiss my father and my mother, then I will follow you." And he said to him, "Go back again, for what I have done to you?" So he returned from following him, and took the pair of oxen and sacrificed them and boiled their flesh with the implements of the oxen, and gave it to the people and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah and ministered to him.

Elijah found Elisha by Divine direction, not in the schools of the prophets, but in the field; not reading, or praying, or sacrificing, but ploughing. Idleness is no man's honour, nor is husbandry any man's disgrace.

An honest calling in the world, does not put us out of the way of our heavenly calling, any more than it did Elisha. His heart was touched by the Holy Spirit, and he was ready to leave all to attend Elijah. It is in a day of power that Christ's subjects are made willing; nor would any come to Christ unless they were thus drawn.

It was a discouraging time for prophets to set out in. A man that had consulted with flesh and blood, would not be fond of Elijah's mantle; yet Elisha cheerfully leaves all to accompany him. When the Saviour said to one and to another, Follow me, the dearest friends and most profitable occupations were cheerfully left, and the most arduous duties done from love to his name. May we, in like manner, feel the energy of his grace working in us mightily, and by unreserved submission at once, may we make our calling and election sure.

Some are appointed to plowing and some to reap the harvest.

1 Samuel 8:12

"He will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and of fifties, and some to do his plowing and to reap his harvest and to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots.

If they would have a king to rule them, as the eastern kings ruled their subjects, they would find the yoke exceedingly heavy. Those that submit to the government of the world and the flesh, are told plainly, what hard masters they are, and what tyranny the dominion of sin is.

The law of God and the manner of men widely differ from each other; the former should be our rule in the several relations of life; the latter should be the measure of our expectations from others.

These would be their grievances, and, when they complained to God, he would not hear them. When we bring ourselves into distress by our own wrong desires and projects, we justly forfeit the comfort of prayer, and the benefit of Divine aid. The people were obstinate and urgent in their demand. Sudden resolves and hasty desires make work for long and leisurely repentance.

Sow in tears, reap in joy.

Psalm 126:5

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All of Israel went down to sharpen their plowshare, ax and hoe.

1 Samuel 13:19-21

Now no blacksmith could be found in all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, "Otherwise the Hebrews will make swords or spears." So all Israel went down to the Philistines, each to sharpen his plowshare, his mattock, his axe, and his hoe. The charge was two-thirds of a shekel for the plowshares, the mattocks, the forks, and the axes, and to fix the hoes.

See how politic the Philistines were when they had power; they not only prevented the people of Israel from making weapons of war, but obliged them to depend upon their enemies, even for instruments of husbandry. How impolitic Saul was, who

did not, in the beginning of his reign, set himself to redress this. Want of true sense always accompanies want of grace. Sins which appear to us very little, have dangerous consequences. Miserable is a guilty, defenseless nation; much more those who are destitute of the whole armour of God.

The sluggard does not plow after the autumn.

Proverbs 20:4

The sluggard does not plow after the autumn, so he begs during the harvest and has nothing.

He who labours and endures hardship in his seed-time for eternity, will be properly diligent as to his earthly business.

Chapter 2



Does the farmer plow continually?

Isaiah 28:24

Does the farmer plow continually to plant seed? Does he continually turn and harrow the ground?

In God's professing people, like Israel, it is worse than in any other. And he is just in taking away the plenty they thus abuse. The plenty they were proud of, is but a fading flower. Like the early fruit, which, as soon as discovered, is plucked and eaten.

You will be cultivated and sown.

Ezekiel 36:9

'For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you will be cultivated and sown.

Those who put contempt and reproach on God's people, will have them turned on themselves. God promises favour to his Israel. We have no reason to complain, if the more unkind men are, the kinder God is.

They shall come again to their own border. It was a type of the heavenly Canaan, of which all God's children are heirs, and into which they all shall be brought together. And when God returns in mercy to a people who return to him in duty, all their grievances will be set right. The full completion of this prophecy must be in some future event.

The plowman will overtake the reaper.

Amos 9:13

"Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "When the plowman will overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; When the mountains will drip sweet wine and all the hills will be dissolved.

Christianity will receive a more glorious fulfilment in the events which all the prophets foretold, and may be understood of the happy state when the fulness both of the Jews and the Gentiles come into the church. Let us continue earnest in prayer for the fulfilment of these prophecies, in the peace, purity, and the beauty of the church.

God marvelously preserves his elect amidst the most fearful confusions and miseries. When all seems desperate, he wonderfully revives his church, and blesses the church with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus

On the seventh year, you will let your land rest.

Exodus 23:10-11

"You shall sow your land for six years and gather in its yield, but on the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, so that the needy of your people may eat; and whatever they leave the beast of the field may eat. You are to do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove.

Every seventh year the land was to rest. They must not plough or sow it; what the earth produced of itself, should be eaten, and not laid up. This law seems to have been intended to teach dependence on Providence, and God's faithfulness in sending the larger increase while they kept his appointments. It was also typical of the heavenly rest, when all earthly labours, cares, and interests shall cease for ever.

On the seventh year, you shall rest.

Exodus 34:21

"You shall work six days, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even during plowing time and harvest you shall rest.

We must show that we prefer our communion with God, and our duty to him, before the business or the joy of harvest. Thrice a year they must appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel. Canaan was a desirable land, and the neighboring nations were greedy; yet God says, they shall not desire it.

Do not plow with an ox and a donkey together

Deuteronomy 22:10

"You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together.

God's providence extends itself to the smallest affairs, and his precepts do so, that even in them we may be in the fear of the Lord, as we are under his eye and care. Yet the tendency of these laws, which seem little, is such, that being found among the things of God's law, they are to be accounted great things.

If we would prove ourselves to be God's people, we must have respect to his will and to his glory, and not to the vain fashions of the world. Even in putting on our garments, as in eating or in drinking, all must be done with a serious regard to preserve our own and others' purity in heart and actions.

Those who sow trouble will harvest the same.

Job 4:8

"According to what I have seen, those who plow iniquity and those who sow trouble harvest it.

Our worst mistakes are occasioned by drawing wrong views from undeniable truths. That wicked men were often thus ruined: for the proof of this, Eliphaz vouches his own observation. We may see the same every day.

A time of war will cease.

Isaiah 2:4

And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war.

The calling of the Gentiles, the spread of the gospel, and that far more extensive preaching of it yet to come, are foretold. Let Christians strengthen one another, and support one another. It is God who teaches his people, by his word and Spirit. Christ promotes peace, as well as holiness.

If all men were real Christians, there could be no war; but nothing answering to these expressions has yet taken place on the earth. Whatever others do, let us walk in the light of this peace. Let us remember that when true religion flourishes, men delight in going up to the house of the Lord, and in urging others to accompany them.

Do not sow among the thorns.

Jeremiah 4:3

For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem, "Break up your fallow ground, And do not sow among thorns.

An unhumiliated heart is like ground untilled. It is ground which may be improved; it is our ground let out to us; but it is fallow; it is over-grown with thorns and weeds, the natural product of the corrupt heart.

Let us entreat the Lord to create in us a clean heart, and to renew a right spirit within us; for except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Chapter 3



Sow with a view of righteousness.

Hosea 10:11-12

Ephraim is a trained heifer that loves to thresh, but I will come over her fair neck with a yoke; I will harness Ephraim, Judah will plow, Jacob will harrow for himself.

Sow with a view to righteousness, Reap in accordance with kindness; Break up your fallow ground, For it is time to seek the LORD Until He comes to rain righteousness on you.

Because God does not desire the death and ruin of sinners, therefore in mercy he desires their chastisement.

The children of iniquity still remained in Israel. The enemies would be gathered against them. It is just with God to make those know what hardships mean, who indulge themselves in ease and pleasure. Let them cleanse their hearts from all corrupt affections and lusts, and be a broken and contrite spirit. Let them abound in works of piety towards God, and of justice and charity towards one another: herein let them sow to the Spirit. Seeking the Lord is to be every day's work, but there are special occasions when to seek him. Christ shall come as the Lord our righteousness, and grant us of it abundantly.

If we sow in righteousness, we shall reap according to mercy; a reward not of debt, but of grace.

Even the gains of sin yield the sinner no satisfaction. As our comforts, so our confidences in the service of sin will certainly fail us. Come and seek the Lord, and thy hope in him shall not deceive thee. See what cruel work war makes.

Whatever mischief is done, it is sin that does it. What miseries men's sins bring on them, even in this world!

Israel are turned the fruit of righteousness into wormwood.

Amos 6:12

Do horses run on rocks? Or does one plow them with oxen? Yet you have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood.

How dreadful, how miserable, is the case of those whose eternal ruin the Lord himself has sworn; for he can execute his purpose, and none can alter it! Those hearts are wretchedly hardened that will not be brought to mention God's name, and to worship him, when the hand of God is gone out against them, when sickness and death are in their families.

Those that will not be tilled as fields, shall be abandoned as rocks. When our services of God are soured with sin, his providences will justly be made bitter to us.

Men should take warning not to harden their hearts, for those who walk in pride, God will destroy.

The plowing ought to plow in hope

1 Corinthians 9:10

Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops.

It is not new for a minister to meet with unkind returns for good-will to a people, and diligent and successful services among them. To the cavils of some, the apostle answers, so as to set forth himself as an example of self-denial, for the good of others.

He had a right to marry as well as other apostles, and to claim what was needful for his wife, and his children if he had any, from the churches, without laboring with his own hands to get it. Those who seek to do our souls good, should have food provided for them. But he renounced his right, rather than hinder his success by claiming it. It is the people's duty to maintain their minister.

Matthew 11:28

**Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest.**



To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Verse Concept: Matthew Henry's Concept Bible Commentary.