“So Close Yet So Far!”

Galatians 6:7-10

**Intro.** – You’ve heard those one-liners before: “Close doesn’t count except in: 1) horseshoes, 2) grenades, 3) skunks.” The Bible is filled with illustrations of individuals who were so close, yet so far.

Ahab would be one of these. The 7th king of Israel was one of the strongest and at the same time one of the weakest kings. God’s dealings with him are proof of God’s desire is that none would perish but that all would repent/come back to Him. Through military successes, constant warnings, and stern rebukes uttered through Elijah and four other prophets, God made it clear to Ahab what direction he should go… These divine overtures were of no avail, however. Ahab’s marriage to Jezebel was his undoing. It was she who persuaded and convinced Ahab to persecute the prophets of God, tear down the altars of God, and to literally phase out all worship of the true and only God. 1 Kings 21:25 says, “Surely there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the Lord, because Jezebel his wife incited him.” Scripture makes clear that Ahab was filled with potential to be a great king, all with God’s blessings. He was so close; yet, he was so far away.

Judas Iscariot would be another example. Here was one who walked, talked, observed and was taught by the Son of God. He too was filled with potential… He too was so close; yet, so far.

Agrippa, King of Judea, heard the testimony of Paul, observed the power of God in his life and said, “In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.” Secular history makes clear that he did not. Again, so close; yet so far.

These three examples all have something in common – they simply reaped what they had sown. They could have followed, repented, and obeyed! So close were they; yet, so very far away.

**Purpose:** to see we reap exactly what we sow.

Many are in the presence of God’s finest…, many have the appearance of dedication and commitment…, many are close; yet, so very far away. We all reap what we sow. The proof really is in the pudding. We’ll see this from the text which develops this theme with three universal truths:

I **GOD IS NOT MOCKED**

- ΜΩΚΤΗΡΙΖΩ = Greek word literally means turn up the nose at, treat with contempt
- one commentator used the idea “God cannot be outwitted.” = indeed God cannot/will not be outwitted:

A. His Presence is Inescapable

1. Illus. – Walla Walla, WA years ago built a new state penitentiary. No expenses were spared. The new section which was for the toughest of the tough guys was called “The Intensive Management Unit.” State Prison Director, Calfski called it, “The most secure cellblock ever built…” This super tight, isolation facility cost millions of dollars. One inmate was challenged to try to escape. His name was Thomas Freeman. He worked a light fixture loose and hoisted himself through that hole into a crawl space and then wiggled like a worm to move himself along the pipes in the ceiling. He got out! He then turned himself in and told embarrassed prison officials he just wanted to prove he could do it.”

2. Thomas Freeman may have escaped the WA State Pen., but there is no way he can escape the presence of God…

3. All of us can and do run from God, but we can’t hide – Illus. – husband/wife living in WA state had had enough. Steps were made to find the perfect spot to get away from it all. Sold all they owned. They then headed for their happiness haven. Where was that you may ask? The Falkland Islands – two weeks before the war erupted on that island!

4. Jonah, another Bible example of one so close yet so far, ran from God, but he couldn’t hide… Don’t you see? Jonah reaped what he had sown.

5. The Creator of all is present with all, all the time. Like it or not His presence is inescapable – Proverbs 15:3 “The eyes of the Lord are in every place, watching the evil and the good.”
B. His Authority is Incontestable
1. God’s authority has been, is being and will be challenged, but nobody, has, is or will usurp God!
2. He who created all, sustains all and watches all has the authority to say what is moral/immoral, good/bad, right/wrong, uplifting/not uplifting etc.
3. His wisdom and power far exceeds man’s greatest accomplishment. It is utter foolishness to think God can be outwitted!

C. His Purposes Are Immutable
1. God’s purposes focus around His desire to be at fellowship with His highest creation – man.
2. This purpose will not change even though man continues to ignore and rebel against it.
3. Thus, His purpose for the Church stands – win those who are lost and build each other in Christ!
4. Tragically enough many seek to outwit or mock God by “playing church” instead of being church!
   - Illus. – Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) they were so close… but reaped what they sown...
Do note and give careful heed – God cannot and will not be outwitted. May outwit your friends, parents, mate, church… but God will never be mocked!

II WE REAP WHAT WE SOW
- this will not take a lot of explaining. If you plant corn, grow corn… Plant wheat, get wheat… Plant sin you reap corruption, plant righteousness you reap incorruption. Look more closely at this truth:

A. We Sow in Our Individual Lives
1. Sow to the flesh – reap the flesh i.e. our sins will find us out (Numbers 32:23)
   a. Illus. – 3 safecrackers found the safe in Vang, Norway. They placed a small explosive charge on it. Calmly they lit the fuse and sheltered in the next room. Then came the bang. The whole building came down on the trio. The safe did not contain money – it contained explosives.
   b. harvest fleshly life it will manifest itself in this life – health (many health problems today are a result of loose living yesterday…
   c. harvest fleshly life it will manifest itself in life to come… eternal separation from God!
2. Sow to the Spirit – reap eternal life in His presence
   a. he who follows the leading and cultivates the affections of God will produce fruit!
   b. harvest of a Spirit filled/led life will manifest itself in this life = fruit of Spirit.
   c. harvest of a Spirit filled/led life will manifest itself in the life to come

We sow individually, we shall also reap individually…

B. We Sow in the Lives of Others
1. Sow seeds of distrust, envy, hate, jealousy, backbiting – guess the kind of harvest you can expect?
   - Illus. – behind a lady at a store one day… she was nasty, inconsiderate, rude…Maybe if she treated people the way she wanted to be treated she’d get a better reception…
2. The question is: “What do you want planted in the field of your life and in the lives of those in your influence?”
   - this principle is so simple, so clear; yet, so many are so far from it. We need to see, we really do reap what we sow.

III WE REAP MORE THAN WE SOW
- in nature this is evident… all the more true in spiritual realm – 3 areas illustrate this:

A. As Individuals
1. We ought to earnestly be concerned for family, friends, and others whom we know are lost
2. You sow the seeds of the flesh in your life and see what happens to your influence… = reaping what you sow…

B. As Parents
1. Parents who plant seeds of lies, indifference or no commitment for Christ and His Church reap the same fruit in their kids…
2. Set the example – kids know what is important in their parent’s lives…

C. As Churches
1. We ought to earnestly desire to see His church go ahead unto His glory…
2. Local church is a prime illustration of those who reap what they sow:
   a. if there is lack of concern for the lost… lost won’t be won…
   b. if there is an inward focus… church will eventually fade away into fruitlessness…
   c. there is an ever present need of staying focused, getting on purpose and staying on purpose… mark my words this confronts every faithful church every moment of every day…

   God desires us to evaluate constantly – are we sowing to the flesh or are we sowing to the Spirit. Remember, we reap MORE than we sow!

Conclusion: In 1901, at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York, a victim was brought into the Emergency Hospital. The victim’s name was Bill. He had taken two bullets at close range. One had glanced off his rib and deflected out of his body. The other bullet entered his stomach. There was no exit wound.

   Doctors realized there was no time to waste. Anesthesia was administered. Bill did not count backward; instead, he began, “Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name…”

   The incision was made. The bullet had slashed the front wall of the stomach and had exited out the back wall. The bullet, however, was nowhere to be found. It was imperative that they find that bullet, but Bill was weak. They closed him up and hoped for the best. Bill was taken to a private residence where he died a week later.

   “If” is a big question, but, in this case “if” the doctors had been able to find that bullet, there is a good chance that Bill would have lived.

   Yes, it was at the 1901 Pan-American Exposition that Bill was shot. On exhibition at that time, not far from the shooting was a new invention that most definitely would have helped. It was and still is called an X-Ray machine. That machine – so near yet so far – was working, but the doctors were totally unaware of it.

   Because of this, Bill – William McKinley, 25th President of the United States died with that assassin’s bullet still inside his body.

   So close, yet so far. Many today are in much the same circumstances… Remember, God will not be mocked, we reap what we sow, we reap more than we sow!