

Work of the Spirit and Our Work

Romans 8:11—12

From birth, we were all bound by sin, death and the Law. We were born with Adam's sinful nature, which means we were spiritually dead and ultimately we will be lead unto physical death. There are actually two laws that condemn us. First, there is the built-in law that is a part of every human, telling us what is right and wrong (Romans 2:14—15). When a man goes against this built-in law, that has been given to all of us from God, he comes under condemnation. The same is true of the Mosaic Law, which spells out what God expects. When men go against what it contains, they also come under condemnation (1 Timothy 1:8—11). Notice how 1 Timothy 1:11 asserts that this is a new idea, which was revealed to the Apostle Paul by Jesus Christ. In the past, under Israel's prophetic program, the Law was put into place for the righteous to follow. If the nation of Israel followed the Mosaic Law, they were rewarded (Exodus 19:5; Leviticus 18:5; 26:3—12). During the Millennial Kingdom, the Law will be taught by Israel to the nations (Isaiah 2:3; Micah 4:2). In contrast, Paul condemns those who desire to be teachers of the Law today since we are no longer under Law, but under the program of Grace (1 Timothy 1:7). The righteousness of the Law is now fulfilled when we walk according to the Spirit (Romans 8:4).

Being under the program of Grace, believers are no longer under the condemnation of sin or of the Law. However, we now need to decide if we will walk in the power of our flesh, the carnal mind, or walk according to the new nature, by the power of the Spirit. To walk in the Spirit is a decision that we make with our mind. This is not about outward activity, however when we are walking in the Spirit we will naturally produce the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22—23). This will lead us to doing good works (Ephesians 2:10; Colossians 1:10). When we are walking in the Spirit we are fulfilling God's perfect will (Romans 12:1—2; Colossians 1:9—10; Ephesians 1:9). This is not possible until we renew the mind by taking in God's word, specifically that which was written for the Body of Christ, and allow the Holy Spirit do His work in us (Ephesians 4:23; Titus 3:5).

Promise and guarantee (verse 11)

One of the promises given to a believer is that he will be raised to life after death, or that he will be raptured unto eternal life. This is not just lip service given to us by God to make us feel good for He proved that He is able to do so through the raising up of His Son, Jesus Christ. The same Spirit who raised Jesus Christ from the dead is our guarantee that He will do the same for us. It is interesting to see that the three persons of the godhead were involved in raising Jesus from the dead, the Father (Acts 10:40; 1 Corinthians 6:14), the Son (John 2:18—19; 10:17—18), and the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:11; 1 Peter 3:18). Likewise, we will also be given life by the Father (John 5:21), the Son (John 6:40) and the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:11). This isn't surprising since we are in Christ and we are fully identified with Him, therefore we can expect to be raised in like manner as Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:12—17; 1 Thessalonians 4:14).

The Holy Spirit also acts as a seal that guarantees that we will forever remain in our position in Christ. We are absolutely secure in Christ because of the sealing of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30). The Holy Spirit guarantees that we will be given eternal life (2 Corinthians 5:5). Our position in Christ is so secure that we are already seen as being seated in the heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6), and already glorified (Romans 8:30). It's only when we realize our secure position that we are able to move toward spiritual maturity. Those who struggle with who they are in Christ are always standing at the front door of salvation, unable to enter into the fulness of what that really means (Colossians 1:27; 2:2—3; 3:16).

Our obligation (verse 12)

Not only should we walk by the Spirit, we are obligated to do so. We are bought with the price of Jesus Christ's death (1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23). God did everything for us so that all we needed to do was reach out in faith. As believers, we became slaves of righteousness instead of to the flesh (Romans 6:16—19) so we are obligated to serve Him in response to His great demonstration of love and mercy.

Paul had a good understanding of God's love, perhaps like no one else. Even after he was hunting down, imprisoning and killing members of the Little Flock, God reached down to save him and use him for His glory. Paul understood his unworthiness in being able to serve the God he was attempting to obliterate. This is why he writes that the love of God constrained him to serve Him (2 Corinthians 5:14). To be constrained is to be confined, pushed into a corner. Paul felt he had no other choice other than to serve God faithfully because his understanding of God's love forced him to become His servant. This is one reason why it is so important for us to gain knowledge of God through the study of Scripture. The more we understand Him, the more we will feel obligated to serve Him.

Our obligation to the Lord is much different from what Israel's obligation to Him was. They were compelled to follow the Mosaic Law or else they would suffer the consequences of no doing so. Israel's relationship with God was more fear-based than ours is. Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 exemplify fear-based motivation to serve. They lied to the Holy Spirit and were immediately condemned by God, struck dead for going against Him. This great fear of God was conferred to the whole Hebrew church because of their deaths (Acts 5:5, 11). This does not happen today. Instead, we are driven to serve God with an understanding of His great love for us, and with the knowledge of what it took for Him to save us from our hopeless, sinful condition.

Since it is our obligation to serve God, we need to know how to do that. This is why it is important to rightly divide Scripture. We will not find out how God wants us to serve Him from the Old Testament, or from Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The only source of information that tells us how to serve Him is in what the Apostle Paul has written in his 13 epistles. Those who do not understand this will try to serve God by praying for our nation (2 Chronicles 7:14), working for a special revival in our church (Ezekiel 37:1—14); trying to heal people (James 5:15) or any number of ways contrary to how God is working today. We need to serve in a dispensationally pleasing manner.

Servants of Jesus Christ are those who are walking in the Spirit, allowing Him full control. We serve when we give up...give up pleasing self to allow the Holy Spirit to control us. We are only able to serve Him, and produce good fruit, when we relinquish control and walk a proper walk. Romans chapters 12—16 speaks of the practical application of our walk. These chapters are summarized in Romans 12:9—18. The things we do become good works unto the Lord when we are walking in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is what Paul means when he says that whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Redeeming the time

As believers, we are to be aware of how we use our time. Ephesians 5:16 says that we are to live "redeeming the time because the days are evil." If we are to use our time wisely, then we need to understand how we are to use our time. When we are walking in the Spirit, we are redeeming the time. When we are walking in the flesh, we are squandering the time given to us by God. This wasted time is something that we are unable to retrieve and use properly. Once past, it is gone forever. This is why it is so important to live a life controlled by the Spirit, because we only have one chance to do it properly.

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