

We Have an Obligation

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What is Our Obligation?

Romans 8:1-17 (NIV) ¹Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ²because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. ³For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, ⁴in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. ⁵Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; ⁷the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. ⁹You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. ¹¹And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. ¹²Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation--but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. ¹³For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, ¹⁴because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

So, what is our obligation? To Walk in the Spirit. Why?

- The mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace. v 8:6
- Those led by His Spirit are sons of God. v 8: 14

However, in contrast to that:

- The mind of sinful man is death. v 8:6
- The sinful mind is hostile (or an enemy of) God. v 8: 7
- The sinful mind does not submit to God's law. v 8: 7
- Nor can it (submit to His law) v 8: 7
- Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. v 8:8

This can bring up several questions:

- Do you mean I'll go to hell if I sin?
- Do you mean I'll die immediately?
- Do you mean I'll die spiritually?
- Do you mean I'll backslide?

All of these questions present their own theological and philosophical debates. However, I don't care to address any of those. I'd rather ask this question:

- Do you mean I can live in life and peace?
- What all does it mean to be a son of God?
- If all that is true, and it is, then how do we walk in the Spirit?

How do we walk in the Spirit?

Simply put, we walk in the Spirit by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our helper or counselor.

John 14:16 (NIV) And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever

In Greek the word is *paracletos* or *Paraclete*, which means to come along side. The Holy Spirit comes along side of us and helps us walk.

How do we know we are walking in the Spirit?

By what we are reaping. In other words, by the fruit that is evident in our lives.

Galatians 5:16-6:10 (NIV) ¹⁶ So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. ¹⁷ For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. ¹⁹ The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. ^{6:1} Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. ² Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. ³ If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴ Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, ⁵ for each one should carry his own load. ⁶ Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor. ⁷ Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. ⁸ The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. ⁹ Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. ¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

How do we Sow?

Well, in general we sow simply through our daily activities. We sow when we pray, when we worship, when we show kindness, when we deny ourselves, when we serve, when we put entertainment before our eyes (good or bad), when we put others first, when we put ourselves first, when we put music in our ears (good or bad), when we sin.

You see, we sow when we do good or evil. However, I believe the PRIMARY way that we sow is through another means...

Enemy at the Gate

We have an enemy at the Gate. This enemy:

- Can destroy your life.
- Can harm the lives of others.
- Has the power to kill you.

The gate is our lips. The enemy is our untamed tongue.

Proverbs 18:20-21 (NIV) ²⁰ From the fruit of his mouth a man's stomach is filled; with the harvest from his lips he is satisfied. ²¹ The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

We sow in a major way by the things that come out of our mouth. Jesus said those things can defile us.

Matthew 15:16-20 (NIV) ¹⁶ "Are you still so dull?" Jesus asked them. ¹⁷ "Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body?" ¹⁸ But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.' ¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. ²⁰ These are what make a man 'unclean'; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him 'unclean.'"

Look at this familiar passage for what James said about the tongue:

James 3:1-18 (NIV) ¹ Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. ² We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check. ³ When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. ⁴ Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. ⁵ Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. ⁶ The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. ⁷ All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, ⁸ but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹ With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. ¹¹ Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? ¹² My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water. ¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵ Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. ¹⁶ For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. ¹⁷ But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

What are we to do?

If no man can tame the tongue, and it has this power in our lives, then what hope is there? What are we to do?

We truly can't tame our tongue. But something can:

Matthew 12:33-37 (NIV) ³³ "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. ³⁴ You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. ³⁵ The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. ³⁶ But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. ³⁷ For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

You cannot tame your tongue. But the Word of God can. The Spirit of God can. What is "stored up in our heart" will overflow out of our mouth.

That is our hope. A perfect man can tame his tongue. I happen to know a perfect man, Jesus, and I believe that he can tame my tongue.

So, this brings us full circle. We sow with our tongue. It brings a harvest (Proverbs 18:20-21). However, it only has the power to sow what we put into our hearts, for out of its abundance we will speak (Matthew 12: 33-37).

If we focus on the heart, by the Holy Spirit, then we will be walking in the Spirit more and more and we will be putting the seed in our heart that our tongue will be sowing into our lives.

Hebrews 13:15 (NIV) Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise--the fruit of lips that confess his name.

Psalms 51:15-17 (NIV) ¹⁵ O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. ¹⁶ You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. ¹⁷ The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

So ultimately, what is the primary way to walk in the Spirit?

Proverbs 3:1-8 (NIV) ¹ My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, ² for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity. ³ Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. ⁴ Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. ⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. ⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. ⁸ This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.