

Serving in Spirit—Not in Letter

Key Verse: “Now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.”

—Romans 7:6, New King James Version

*Selected Scripture:
Romans 7:4-13*

ALTHOUGH OUR KEY

Verse mentions being delivered from obligation to the Mosaic Law, few Christians presently come from that situation. However, the importance of the lesson remains valid for us. We have been delivered from bondage to sin. This former condition manifested itself in various undesirable traits, such as covetousness, lust, hate, bigotry and other works of our fallen flesh. We now walk in newness of life—the “newness of the Spirit”.

Apostle Peter’s exhortation to the elders of the church informs our understanding of what it means to serve in the spirit. “The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory

that does not fade away.”—I Pet. 5:1-4, *NKJV*

One word is especially pertinent to our subject—compulsion. Those who serve the flock should do so willingly. They do not take on the care of the church due to coercion. They are motivated by love for God, commitment to Christ, and the working of the spirit in their lives. Many challenges will arise for those who would serve God’s people. Yet, we get the message that Peter is sending—serve willingly. That is the spirit of Christ.

We are not under compulsion of a legal contract, such as the Law of Moses. We note the moment in history when Israel agreed to the Law. “Then [Moses] took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words.” (Exod. 24:7,8, *NKJV*) Paul notes that the agreement thus entered into brought sin to the forefront by revealing the depths of sin in us. “What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, You shall not covet.”—Rom. 7:7, *NKJV*

The Law was a constant reminder of man’s sinfulness. Christ ever lives to make intercession for us, a reminder of our justification in him. Therefore, “the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. ... Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” (II Cor. 5:14-17, *NKJV*) Thus it is that we may serve God in newness of spirit. ■