

“The Mine Factor”

Romans 12:1-3 & 9-16; Matthew 11:28-30; Romans 7:14-25; Mark 1:15

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Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus said, “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.”

Are you tired? Worn out? Hopefully tomorrow you can enjoy some physical rest from your labors. Rest, Sabbath, is so important that it makes the top in the Ten Commandments. God designed us to live by the unforced rhythms of grace. There are times to work and rest, times to be awake and sleep. When we force too much work into our lives, we disrupt the rhythm and become tired and worn out.

What about your soul? How do you become spiritually tired and worn out?

Almost all of us experience spiritual fatigue by our failure to love. Listen to a group of two year olds and a word you are likely to hear is “mine”. Watch them and you will likely see them take hold of a toy, guarding it from others, trying to keep it to themselves. As adults we become more polite and cleaver, however we still like to declare things and sometimes even other people or groups as “mine”. The quest to possess, to say “mine” is very fatiguing to our soul.

The greatest commandment is to love. At the root of most sin, that which fatigues our soul, is our heart that turns in on itself rather than loving God and others; our arms cling rather than open wide to give and receive blessings.

Even though it may feel good for a moment it takes tremendous energy to declare something as “mine”. In addition when we put barriers up to protect our stuff, ourselves, we limit the renewing love we can receive. When our focus is on our stuff we divert our focus from God, the source of all love, blessings, and renewal.

In the book of Romans, the apostle Paul explains how sin wears us out, leaving us utterly exhausted. Living in sin is like living in slavery. Our love for God, others, and ourselves becomes twisted and bent back upon ourselves. We disregard others so we can look out for ourselves. We rationalize our behavior and closely guard our possessions. In essence we declare “mine”, “mine”. Praise God that through Jesus sacrifice on the cross we are now all free from sin by our faith in Jesus. The Holy Spirit enables us to truly love God, others, and ourselves.

The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Roman's, tells us that there is no room for the word mine in a Christian's life. We are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. Everything we have, all the things, abilities and gifts that we are tempted to label as mine, are to be offered to God as an offering.

The letter of Romans reads. **Romans 12:1-3 & 9-16** “**And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all God has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice--the kind God will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship God. Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us. Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!”**

The Apostle Paul makes it sound so easy. Jesus summed it up in one just nine words. **Mark 1:15** “**Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!**” However this is really difficult to live, sort of like our physical life. We know we need rest. Most of us believe that God, family, and friends, are all more important than our work, yet how often do we let our work take away precious time from God, family, and friends, who all rejuvenate us and even make us more efficient at work.

Paul struggled in getting his physical and spiritual rest as well. Paul wrote. **Matthew 7:14-25** “**I can anticipate the response that is coming: "I know that all God's commands are spiritual, but I'm not. Isn't this also your experience?" Yes. I'm full of myself—after all, I've spent a long time in sin's prison. What I don't understand about myself is that I decide one way, but then I act another, doing things I absolutely despise. So if I can't be trusted to figure out what is best for myself and then do it, it becomes obvious that God's command is necessary. But I need something more! For if I know the law but still can't keep it, and if the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I obviously need help! I realize that I don't have what it takes. I can will it, but I can't do it. I decide to do good, but I don't really do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don't result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me**

and gets the better of me every time. It happens so regularly that it's predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge. I've tried everything and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn't that the real question? The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. Jesus acted to set things right in this life of contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different."

I can relate to Paul. Two ways that I scream mine and despise myself are blaming and negative reactions. When something goes wrong, my initial reaction is to blame someone or something. Sometimes it is absurd. The car is old and breaks down when Leslie is driving. My initial reaction is, Leslie what did you do to the car? Another time was when I fell off the yard waste container and hurt myself. When I started to climb it, to reach something high, I knew it was a bad idea and thought I should get the ladder, but I didn't want to take the time. When I fell I blamed that stupid yard waste container. Spencer who came running to check on me and asked if I was alright heard me exclaim, "Why did you put this yard waste container back here?" As soon as I say it I despise myself, apologize and feel terrible. It makes me tired, worn out. Another way I scream mine is to defend the current way I am doing something when someone suggests another way. Later after I think about it I realize they have given me a wonderful gift in sharing their idea. I feel guilty about my negative reaction, apologize and feel terrible. It makes me tired, worn out.

How do you scream "mine"? What do you keep doing that which makes you feel guilty, terrible? What is it that makes you tired and worn out?

The Apostle Paul realized that trying hard to change his behavior was not enough he needed Jesus. He needed the Holy Spirit to enable him to change into the person he wanted to become. Jesus is asking you if you are burned out on religion? Perhaps this burnout comes from trying to correct our behaviors, to rid ourselves of sin on our own. Religion tells us certain behavior is wrong. The more we focus on not doing that behavior often the more obsessed we become, leading us to keep doing that behavior. It burns us out. We look around at church and we see others struggling in similar ways. We hurt each other. It burns us out. It makes us tired, worn out, and more susceptible to more and more sin and a downward spiral.

How does one reverse this trend? How does one rid them of screaming "mine"? How does one live a loving life? **Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus said "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything**

heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

First we need to come to Jesus. Get away with Jesus in your soul to recover your life. Shift your focus from trying to avoid a certain behavior to Jesus. Fill your thoughts with goodness, love, praise and thanksgiving, then God will help squeeze these sinful behaviors out of your life. Read scripture, pray, worship, nurture your relationship with Jesus and Jesus will show you and enable you to take a real rest. Jesus will renew you. You are invited to learn the unforced rhythms of grace. You are forgiven. Let go of your guilt. Break the cycle of trying not to do something you despise, doing it, feeling guilty, apologizing, and being exhausted. You can do this with God's grace. Open yourself to the unforced rhythm of grace. Hang in there with Jesus over time and you will learn how to live freely and lightly.

Another translation puts Jesus words this way. **Jesus said Matthew 11:28-30** **"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke fits perfectly and my burden is light."**

A yoke connects two people so the weight of the load can be equally shared, that is, if each person works in harmony with the other. My Dad farmed with horses when he was young. Some of the strongest horses were a disaster when yoked to another. The strong horse pulled to hard, pulling the implement in circles, twisting the yoke, accomplishing nothing. Other horses were competitive, each trying to take the lead, which resulted in the yoke seesawing. Great effort was exerted with little affect. Two below average horses in strength who worked together easily, out worked these other types of horses and were highly valued on the farm.

Jesus is inviting you to be yoked with him. Not to take the lead and try to do it yourself. Not to hold back and rely on Jesus to do all the work, rather to live, play, work and rest in harmony, in a partnership. There is a sweet spot in loving between forcing yourself to love and feeling nothing; between beating yourself up over your mistakes and sinning boldly knowing that God's grace will forgive; between being obsessed with ridding or adding a behavior and not striving to live like Christ at all. God created all of creation with rhythm. God created you with a unique rhythm that Jesus is eager to match as Jesus walks beside you. Jesus is inviting you to discover the unforced rhythms of grace. Jesus is inviting you to let go so you can let come. Jesus is inviting you to stop declaring "mine" and find the joy of sharing, harmony, peace, rhythm and love.

The Apostle Paul put it this way. **Romans 12: Select Verses** **"So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life –your sleeping, eating, going to work, and walking around life and place it before God as an offering. Fix your attention on God. You will be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what God wants from you, and quickly respond to it. God brings the best out of you and develops well-formed maturity in you. Keep a smile on your**

face. Love from the center of who you are; don't fake it. Be good friends who love deeply. Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant. Don't quit in hard times pray all the harder. Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality. Discover the beauty in everyone" Amen