

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Romans 5:12

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. This week, we will read Romans 5:12–21. Today, we will read verse 12.

Romans is the Gospel book for Christians. The starting point of the Gospel is that Jesus Christ accomplished the judicial redemption, fully satisfying God's requirements of holiness, righteousness, and glory, so that man, by believing, may receive the grace of the forgiveness of sins and be freely justified by God. The verse we read last week, Romans 5:10, says, "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Sinners are saved by grace, justified by God, and reconciled to Him—all accomplished through the death of Jesus Christ.

Our sins have been legally placed upon Jesus Christ, and through His shedding of blood and giving of life, every single case of sin has been cleared. Thus, we can come boldly to the throne of grace to meet with God. This is what justification by faith has accomplished for us.

Now we may ask: from this point on, do we become holy and never sin again? Our experience tells us this is not the case—we still continue to sin. Therefore, Paul says that since we have been reconciled to God, we must "much more... be saved by His life." Only as we continue to be saved in the life of Christ can we be helped not to sin. This opens the second stage of the full Gospel—experiencing the organic salvation. This organic salvation includes two parts: sanctification and glorification.

Let us first look ahead to near the end of this organic salvation. Romans 8:30 says, "Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." Here it is clearly stated that those whom God justifies will certainly be glorified; sanctification lies

between justification and glorification. This is the process that every believer must go through in their lifetime.

From Romans 5:13 to 8:17, Paul gives a detailed description of this process of sanctification. These passages are ones that every believer should understand and put into practice in daily living. Sadly, these verses are somewhat difficult and, under different theological frameworks, receive different interpretations. As a result, many believers remain only on the surface of these scriptures and cannot enter into their depth; thus, they do not bring these truths into their daily experience. Consequently, many believers remain only in the state of having been saved by grace and never truly walk the path of sanctification—this is a great loss to the church.

Brother Watchman Nee's best-known work among Western Christians, "The Normal Christian Life", is a record of his messages in churches throughout England on Romans chapters 5–8. He emphasized that these chapters describe the normal life every Christian should have. His messages drew great attention and helped many believers understand what a sanctified life is. These messages were first compiled and published into a book by the brothers in England, and later translated into Chinese.

In general, I follow the interpretive framework of Brother Watchman Nee, supplemented by the help of Brother Titus Chu's work "Studies in Romans", especially in his definition of "gift" based on several different Greek words Paul uses. This brings a new understanding of gifts, including several different levels. Gifts are the expression of life growth; a deeper understanding of gifts helps us see that different stages of life growth produce different expressions of gifts. This, in turn, further helps us recognize the stages of life growth—a light I have not seen in other commentaries.

Let us first make a general division of Paul's description of the experience of sanctification. In the lifelong experience of a Christian's sanctification, Paul first, in chapter 5, uses a contrast to describe what we inherited in Adam and the gifts in Christ. Chapter 6 brings out union with Christ; chapter 7 speaks of the bondage of

sin and release; and chapter 8 speaks of living in the law of the Spirit of life, following the Spirit in living and acting, and finally bringing out the hope of glory. Today we will read 5:12 and make a preliminary introduction to sanctification as the foundation for our future discussion.

Verse 12: “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.”

The words “just as” show that what follows is the same matter as in 5:1–11, but from a different angle. The most obvious difference is the word “sin.” In the discussion of condemnation and justification, Paul uses the plural form—sins—which we can understand as sinful acts. It is relatively easy to deal with sinful acts, because for every act of sin we commit, Jesus Christ has already paid the price with His life; we only need to apply His blood, and the sinful acts are forgiven, the case cleared.

However, beginning from 5:12 through chapter 8, in this section on organic salvation, Paul uses the singular—sin. Verse 12 is an example: “sin entered the world through one man.” Here, “sin” is singular, no longer referring to sinful acts but to the sinful nature—the inward inclination to sin. The sinful nature causes people to sin. This concept is not found in Chinese philosophy.

In Confucian moral thought, people are judged good or bad based on their actions, and people are encouraged to do good deeds to make up for occasional wrongs, while being warned not to commit great wrongs, which cannot be remedied. Confucius said, “If you offend Heaven, there is no one to whom you can pray.” If one commits a great wrong and offends Heaven, even prayer is useless.

But the Bible’s concept of sin is different. First, good cannot offset evil; every sin must be paid for, and “the wages of sin is death.” It is not a proportional principle, for “whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.” The Confucian concept of sin begins from man and applies a relative standard; the Bible’s concept of sin begins from God and applies an absolute standard.

Here in Romans, we also see the concept of the sinful nature: sin can have a disposition—in other words, sin is personified; only a personal entity can have a disposition. Sin entered the world through one man—Adam. In Genesis 1, God created the world and all things, including man, and all that He created was perfect; even God Himself said it was good. Thus, in God’s creation there was no sin, and therefore no death.

But in Genesis 3, Adam, tempted by the serpent, disobeyed God’s command, and sin entered the world through Adam. The serpent was the embodiment of Satan, the source of sin. When Adam sinned by eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, this personified sin entered the world. Do not think eating a piece of fruit was a small matter—it opened the door for sin to enter. This sin had both personhood and disposition. Once it entered, it caused man to sin, making man a sinner; this sin was the embodiment of Satan, and the sinful nature was Satan’s nature.

Sin not only made man a sinner but also reigned over him, and Satan usurped the world God created, becoming its ruler. “And death through sin”—death came because all sinned. Sin is not created by God, and neither is death, but “the wages of sin is death.” When sin entered, death came in with it. Satan constituted man as a sinner, and the descendants of sinners are also sinners. Because they are sinners, they commit sins; the wages of sin is death, and thus death spread to all men.

Earlier we said the source of sin is Satan. How did Satan come to be? Isaiah 14:12–14 says,

“How you are fallen from heaven,

O Lucifer, son of the morning!

How you are cut down to the ground,

You who weakened the nations!

For you have said in your heart:

‘I will ascend into heaven,

I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;

I will also sit on the mount of the congregation
On the farthest sides of the north;
I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,
I will be like the Most High.”

Satan’s original name was Lucifer, meaning “morning star.” Before creation, Lucifer was an archangel, the bright morning star, a glorious and beautiful messenger. But he was not content—he wanted to exalt himself above the stars of God, to ascend higher, to be equal with the Most High.

This ambition to be equal with God caused his fall and made him Satan. Angels are created beings and can never be above the Creator. Satan knew he could not surpass God, yet he vainly desired to be equal with Him, to have the same glory and receive the same worship. This led to his fall, making him the source of sin. When he slipped into the Garden of Eden to tempt Eve to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he used the same argument: in Genesis 3:5, “For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” Man’s desire to be like God in knowing good and evil led to sin.

Dear brothers and sisters, man can never be worshiped as God is; the desire to be equal with God was the cause of Satan’s original fall. We must keep our place and not covet glory that is not ours. After man sinned, Satan, in the form of sin, entered to dwell in man’s body, turning the body into the flesh. The body, created by God, was good; but the flesh exaggerates and inflames the body’s normal needs into endless greed—for the finest food, the most expensive drink, the most luxurious clothing.

The normal needs of the body, once exaggerated and inflamed, become lusts, which move the soul. The soul—comprising mind, emotion, and will—forms the main part of a person and determines character. Although external moral, legal, and cultural

norms exist, the soul itself has no power to resist the pull of lust, so man follows the lusts of the flesh and sins, manifesting the sinful nature from the soul.

After a person is saved by grace, he is regenerated—his spirit is made alive, and the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in his spirit. His sinful acts are forgiven by the blood of Jesus Christ. But further, the Holy Spirit works from the spirit to lead the soul to gradually be freed from the sinful nature—this is sanctification. Sanctification is entirely a matter of the soul.

God, in His wisdom, chose Greek for the New Testament because of its precision. A saved person has three different kinds of life, and the Bible uses three different Greek words to describe them: “bios” for physical life (the root of “biology”), “psuche” for the life of the soul (the root of “psychology”), and “zoe” for the life of the spirit.

Reading the Bible with awareness of the Greek text, we see which kind of life is referred to—spirit, soul, or body. Unfortunately, the Chinese Union Version often translates both “soul” and “spirit” simply as “life,” “heart,” or “soul,” losing the original meaning. I highly recommend believers read with an electronic KJV Bible that can display the corresponding Greek words, so it is clear whether the text refers to the spirit or the soul. This distinction is important, for the whole process of sanctification is a process of the spirit leading the soul. Salvation begins with the spirit—regenerated to receive God’s eternal life through judicial redemption.

The process of sanctification then proceeds as the riches of the Holy Spirit are transmitted from the regenerated spirit into the soul, helping us think about God’s matters, love God’s things, and make decisions according to the spirit’s leading. Thus, we gradually put off the sinful nature and partake of God’s nature. Of course, there is warfare in this process, for sin dwells in the body, seeking to influence the soul through the lusts of the flesh. Galatians 5:17 says, “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.” As long as we live in the flesh, this battle continues. But as we age and the body’s functions decline, fleshly lusts also

decrease, and the work of sanctification may increase—until physical death ends the struggle.

When Christ returns, we will be resurrected for judgment. The fire of judgment will burn away all that in the soul has not been sanctified, and the sanctified part will be glorified and expressed in the spiritual body. Then each person's glory will be manifested, just as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:41, "There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory." We are Abraham's heavenly descendants, the stars of the heavens; each star's glory will differ. The measure of sanctification we reach in this life will determine the degree of glory in the age to come.

Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, after we are saved, our time on earth is precious. We can use this temporary time to form within our soul the beautiful virtues of Jesus Christ. These virtues will be the glory we display in eternity. This is why Paul calls Christ our hope of glory—it is through the process of sanctification that the fruit of the Spirit is formed in our soul. We must all passed through trials allowed by God, for "tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope." Dear brothers and sisters, let us encourage and support one another on the path of sanctification. In the church life today, let us manifest mutual love; in the coming kingdom, each will display the glory of God.

Let us pray together: Lord, how we thank You for revealing so clearly through the book of Romans the process of a Christian's life growth. After being saved, we must walk the path of sanctification. Help us, in the weeks ahead as we study Your Word, to understand how to walk this path. Grant me the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to gain light and insight from the Scriptures, to guide my daily living. Bless my church with a fitting environment where the saints may be supplied in life and manifest a good testimony in living. Such prayer, petition, and thanksgiving we offer in the holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ.