

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

Romans 6: 1-3

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 6:1–11. Today, we will read verses 1-3.

In his discourse on organic salvation, Paul first explains that every saint who has been saved by grace has received in Christ a gift far surpassing what he inherited in Adam. Moreover, by using several different Greek words to describe “gift,” Paul implies that the path of sanctification is a path where gifts are perfected. Along this pathway of life growth, there are several important milestones: beginning with the gift of life, dorea; growing into the matured gift, dorema; then advancing into the operating gift, charisma; and, if there is God's special blessing, one may further mature into the constituting gift, doma, becoming a blessing to all the churches.

Chapter 5 is written in a bird's-eye manner. Then, in chapters 6 to 8, Paul gives a very practical description of this process of life growth and character sanctification. Chapter 6 emphasizes union with Christ. Verses 1–5 speak of the fact of being united with Christ, which concerns our being. Verses 6–11 speak of our knowledge of union with Christ, which concerns our experience. Verses 12–23 speak of the practice of union with Christ, which concerns our living.

Verse 1: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?”

Paul begins with the phrase “What shall we say then?” indicating that this follows directly upon the discourse in chapter 5, especially verse 20: “Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.” As we have said, Paul's meaning is that through the law we come to know sin, which should then lead us to confess sin and seek the grace of forgiveness. Thus, sin abounds, and grace abounds much more.

Here Paul uses the singular “sin” to represent our sinful nature. Our self-knowledge is shallow—we often think we are not too bad. Only when we begin to know sin and confess sin do we discover the corruption of our nature.

Every person’s sins are like an iceberg floating on the sea. The part above the water represents our visible sins—just a small portion. The unseen part below the surface represents our sinful nature, which is the main body of the iceberg, far greater than our perception. Through the knowing and confessing of sin, we gradually deal with this hidden sinful nature. To overcome the hidden sin, grace must increase in us, so that the gift of life may grow and eventually mature. Only then can we gradually overcome the hidden sinful nature. This is the process of life growth, which is also the process of character sanctification.

Two brothers once prayed before the Lord. Both began by confessing sins. The younger brother finished within five minutes, while the older brother remained on his knees for thirty minutes. Outwardly, it may seem that the elder brother sinned more. But in reality, he knew himself more deeply, especially the hidden sin not yet manifest. Paul was afraid that we might misunderstand his point: since where sin abounds grace abounds much more, then should we sin freely, even habitually remain in sin, so that grace may abound?

The CUV translates this word as “remain,” but the Greek is *epi meno*. *Epi* has the sense of intensification, and *meno* means “remain” or “abide.” The meaning here is a habitual, continual dwelling in sin, enjoying the pleasures of sin. This “remaining in sin” does not refer to occasional weakness, when we fall into sin through the pull of sinful nature. Rather, it refers to deliberately living in sin—continuing, habitually practicing sin—with the thought that this would make grace abound more. It is to treat the grace of forgiveness as a license to sin: first to sin, then to ask God’s forgiveness.

Verse 2: “Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?”

“Certainly not!” Paul’s reply is firm and decisive, leaving no room for ambiguity. We cannot habitually, continually remain in sin. We are those who have died to sin—how then can we live in it any longer?

To say that we died to sin also means we are dead to sin. Sinful nature forms a power; as long as we live, this power of sin can tempt and even enslave us. The only escape is death. When we are dead to sin, the sinful nature loses its power, and we are free from sin.

Before salvation, our condition was as described in Ephesians 2:2–3, “in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.” We lived in sin, unable to resist its bondage, indulging the lusts of the flesh, even taking pleasure in sin. Though alive, we were destined to die in trespasses and sins.

But Ephesians 2:5 says, “Even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).” We were saved by grace and made alive together with Christ. Here, being “made alive” refers to our spirit being quickened. Our soul must therefore live according to the spirit and die to sin. We cannot continue to live as before, in sin.

Generally, there are three categories of sin in us: 1) sins we have already overcome; 2) sins we know but have not yet overcome; and 3) unknown sins. This last category is broad—it includes anything that hinders us from living a life like Jesus. To die to sins we have already overcome is relatively easy. To die to sins we are still struggling with is much harder. As for unknown sins, even more so. How then can we die to sin? This is a crucial question in the path of sanctification. Paul now points us to a fact that has already taken place in us.

Verse 3: “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?”

Paul brings us back to the time when we were saved and baptized, to a fact that had already taken place. From the early church until today, there has been a common practice: after believing in Jesus Christ and receiving Him as Savior, the next step is baptism. This is the Lord’s command, and it is the believer’s first act of obedience. Although in truth salvation is received by faith, baptism is a testimony—it declares our faith to be genuine and acted upon. Paul seizes this common practice to remind us of the fact signified by baptism.

First, we were baptized into Christ Jesus. The KJV translates this as “baptized into,” meaning baptized so as to enter. Formerly, we were all in the world, in the kingdom of darkness under Satan’s rule. All descendants of Adam are born into this dark kingdom. Baptism signifies a once-for-all move: out of Adam and into Christ Jesus, into the kingdom of the Son of God’s beloved. This move is eternal—we now have a heavenly address. With this new address, we no longer fear death, for we have been delivered from its power.

The famous evangelist Billy Graham once adapted Mark Twain’s words: “Reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated. I have only changed my address.” This may also be the declaration of every saint. Death no longer has dominion over us, for our new address is in the kingdom of the Son of God’s love. This is an accomplished fact.

But Paul further tells us that this fact has three aspects:

(1) Baptized into Christ —toward God. Christ means “the Anointed One.” Being baptized into Christ joins us to His resurrection, enabling us to know God’s will for us. This resurrection life also empowers us to fulfill His mission. Our life now has direction and meaning, and we are energized to live fruitfully for God’s purpose.

(2) Baptized into Jesus —toward man. Jesus lived on earth with human virtues. Being baptized into Jesus joins us to His human virtues. Though He was despised, misunderstood, and persecuted, He still healed, cast out demons, and preached.

His life on earth was full of human virtues. In Matthew 11:29 He said, “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” We too must be gentle and humble, enduring persecution with a smile, manifesting Jesus’ human virtues in our dealings with others, so that they may see we are in Jesus.

(3) Baptized into His death —toward Satan. Only death delivers us from Satan’s power. Only death brings true rest in God’s will and enables us to face persecutions with a smile. The first lesson in dying to sin is to recognize that in baptism we were baptized into Christ’s death. This fact has already been accomplished. By it, we are delivered from the world, from the lusts of the flesh, and from our self.

Let us look more closely:

(1) Delivered from the world. Satan uses the world to tempt us with “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16). Once dead, these worldly things lose their attraction, and we are delivered from the world.

(2) Delivered from the lusts of the flesh. Our fleshly lusts combine with the world’s temptations, making it hard to die to sin. But in Christ’s death we are delivered from both. Galatians 5:19–21 lists them plainly: “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

(3) Delivered from self. Man’s greatest problem is “self.” Self is the expression of the soul-life. The lusts of the flesh are negative and obvious, but self often manifests in seemingly positive, natural qualities. The world encourages people to develop self-worth—but this is self. Yet Matthew 16:24 says, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” To deny self is to put it down, to take up the cross. A person who does not deny self serves God in natural strength. Though temporarily effective, this service quickly runs into two problems: 1) it cannot endure praise, leading to pride and stealing God’s glory; and

2) it cannot last, for natural strength is limited, while serving God is lifelong. True service must come from Christ's resurrection life. Such service endures and overcomes difficulties.

Baptism into Christ's death is a great deliverance for every saint. In following the Lord, every negative situation can be solved by this fact—that we were baptized into His death. When Jesus hung on the cross, God laid upon Him the sins of all. His death was all-inclusive. Our baptism places us into that death. Every negative thing in us, every hindrance we face, has already died with Christ. This is an accomplished fact.

To learn to be one who is dead to sin, the first thing we must know is this fact: we have already been baptized into Christ's death. Since we have died, it is only natural that we should no longer live in sin.

Let us pray together: Lord, we thank You for reminding us again of the meaning of baptism. When we were immersed in water, we died with Christ. This death solves every problem in us. Since we have died, it is no longer we who live, but Christ lives in us. Lord, help us not only to know this fact, but also to practice it in daily living. Make us those who are dead to sin. Bless our daily life. We pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.