

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

Romans 6: 4

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank God, it's time to read the Bible again. Let's continue to read Romans Chapter 6. We will read verse 6 today.

The first step of sanctification is union with the Lord Jesus Christ, because we ourselves have no ability to be sanctified. Only by being united with Jesus Christ and relying on the mighty supply of His power can we overcome sin, the world, and the lusts of the flesh. Then how are we to be united with Jesus Christ? Paul first sets forth the fact of our union with Him, for after we believe, our baptism is the declaration of the fact that we have already been united with Jesus Christ.

Beloved brothers and sisters, believing and being baptized are fundamental truths, and I hope every saint will have a proper understanding of them. As soon as we believe, we receive eternal life. John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Since believing grants us eternal life, then why do we still need to be baptized? Mark 16:16, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." One must believe, and in addition be baptized, in order to surely be saved. Although by believing we have received eternal life, we still live in this world and must face the temptations of a sinful world as well as the pull of fleshly desires, which often cause us to fail and stumble. Therefore, we must be baptized, for through baptism we can be delivered from sin, the world, and the flesh.

The Gospel of Mark does not tell us how we are delivered from sin, the world, and the flesh, but Paul makes it very clear in Romans 6:3–5 what baptism has accomplished for us. First, baptism is the declaration of the fact that we are united with Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ came to the earth to fulfill His ministry, to complete God's plan of redemption, and the core of His ministry was to die on the cross for the sins of man, and on the third day God raised Him from the dead. Therefore, through baptism we are united with Jesus Christ, and this has two aspects. The first

aspect is that baptism is into the death of Christ Jesus. In English it is “baptized into His death,” but in fact a better translation would be “immersed into the death of Christ.” Baptism emphasizes the washing away of our filth and sins, while immersion emphasizes our entering into a realm—that is, we are immersed into Christ Jesus and united with Him, and in reality, this is the true meaning of immersion.

It is not that our filth and sins are washed away, but rather that through immersion we enter into a realm—the realm of the death of Jesus Christ. Only the dead can be freed from the power of Satan. The power of Satan, of course, includes the slavery of sin, the temptations and allurements of the world, as well as the lusts of our flesh and the preferences of our natural being. These things are not washed off from us, but we are immersed into the realm of death, and once a person has died, he is naturally freed from the power of Satan.

Generally speaking, people in the world keep their distance from death, even avoiding any mention of it. But for Christians, death is a glorious release. This does not mean that our physical body must literally die, but that through immersion we are enabled to enter into the death of Jesus Christ, or in other words, to be identified with the death of Jesus Christ. All the negative things upon us—including the sins that entangle us, the temptations of the world, and the pull of our lusts—when we enter into the death of Jesus Christ, we are released from them all.

Beloved brothers and sisters, the next time your spouse or your child makes you angry, do not blame them, but realize instead that the real issue is that you have not fully died yet—for a dead person naturally does not get angry. We must also recognize that the root cause of every weakness and failure is simply that we have not thoroughly died. We must immediately return to Christ Jesus, on the one hand confessing our sins, and on the other hand declaring that we have already been immersed into the death of Christ. Since we have died, there should no longer be any kind of reaction.

Verse 4: “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

This verse is exceedingly rich, and we must carefully break it down, for it clearly sets forth the truth of baptism or immersion. When we are baptized into death, or immersed into death, it means that through immersion we have entered into the realm of death. Our old self has already died and should not react to any provocation; not only has it died, but it has also been buried together with Him. Death is directed toward ourselves—it is to tell ourselves that we have already died. A dead person does not fight for his own rights, a dead person has no emotions, and a dead person is truly at rest. Burial, however, is for the sake of others—it is so that others can no longer find you. After you have been immersed, when those former companions with whom you used to eat, drink, and indulge in worldly pleasures come looking for you again, they will no longer be able to find you, because you have already been buried. This is a great protection for newly immersed saints, sparing them from many temptations.

Not only have we died and been buried, but when the one who is immersed comes up out of the water, he is raised together with Christ Jesus, becoming a completely new person, with every conduct and action bearing the likeness of new life. The phrase “every conduct and action” comes from the Greek word *peripateo*, which is made up of two parts: *peri*, meaning “around,” and *pateo*, meaning “walk.” This refers to our daily behavior and actions. However we lived before immersion, after immersion our actions in the same daily life should now carry the likeness of new life. In English it is rendered “in newness of life,” or more directly, “with the new likeness of life.” The word for life here is the Greek *zoe*, which is spiritual life, the divine life. Formerly, it was the old self living our daily life, manifesting the lifestyle of the old man. But now, since we have received the new life in our spirit, we must let this new life live out a new kind of living. We are to live and act in the new likeness of spiritual life, which means supplying the life in our spirit—*zoe*—into our soul, so that it governs our mind, emotion, and will, and thereby manifests a new life in our living.

This is a very crucial understanding, which is completely opposite to the education we received from childhood, and it is also where many Christians misunderstand what sanctification truly is and frequently fail. We must recognize that sanctification is not about making resolutions in our soul to improve ourselves and become better. This is what our upbringing has taught us—to change ourselves, to resolve to be good people, and to do good deeds. If that were effective, we would not need to be saved by grace. In fact, it simply does not work. The world's method is to present examples of good people and good deeds for others to learn from and imitate, but no matter how much you study or imitate, it remains superficial and cannot endure. True change does not come from learning and imitation; it comes from a change of life. Our old self has no ability to live out the life of a new person. Therefore, the old self is only fit to be crucified with the Lord, because no matter how much one paints or adorns the old self, it remains the old self and cannot manifest the likeness of new life. The old self must be identified with the death of Jesus Christ, and after the old self has died, the new life—zoe, the spiritual life—can take residence and exercise authority in us.

The life of the Holy Spirit has three main functions: conscience, intuition, and fellowship. Conscience is a function of the spirit, but it operates at the interface between the spirit and the soul, and it corresponds to the will in the soul. When we decide to do something, we should not act immediately. We should pause for a moment, pray, and sense what our conscience is feeling. If the conscience feels uneasy or does not permit the action, we must immediately stop what we are doing. If the conscience does not present any objection, it indicates that the channel between the spirit and the soul is open and smooth at that moment. We should then continue in prayer, enjoying fellowship with the Lord in our spirit.

We know that when we are saved by grace, the Holy Spirit has already come and dwells in our spirit. The Holy Spirit is sent by the Father and Christ, so when the Spirit comes, He brings with Him the will of the Father as well as the grace and all the riches of Christ. Through fellowship in the spirit, on one hand we enjoy the abundant supply of Christ's grace, and on the other hand, the will of the Father becomes our intuition. This intuition must pass through the channel of the

conscience to guide the thoughts in our soul. When intuition comes, our mind begins to organize a logical understanding and line of reasoning according to it. Once our mind is clear, fellowship must also pass through the channel of conscience to guide the emotions in our soul, filling us with joy regarding this new logic and line of reasoning. Finally, the will in our soul decides to act according to this new logic and reasoning. Once the will is determined, it can then bring forth action in the body.

The process described above is, in fact, the process of our sanctification. This enables our daily conduct and actions to align with God's will and to manifest the virtues supplied by Christ in fellowship when interacting with others. This is what Paul refers to when he speaks of "every conduct and action having the likeness of new life," just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father. According to God's plan, Christ became the Lamb of atonement; He bore the sins of man, became weak for our sake, was crucified by men, and was even buried in a tomb. Yet He was raised from the dead in the glory of the Father, and glory is the manifestation of God.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who took on the form of a man. He stood in the position of the Son of Man and bore the sins of humanity, dying on their behalf. As the Son of God, He possessed resurrected life and great power, and in His resurrection He manifested the glory of the Father. John 12:23–24 says, "Jesus answered them, saying, 'The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.'" Jesus compared Himself to a grain of wheat that falls into the ground, dies, is buried, yet grows into a new stalk of wheat and produces many seeds. His life passed through weakness to death and burial, yet in the resurrection it manifested an increase of life—this is glory. Likewise, every weakness in our daily life, if it passes through death and burial, can also experience an increase of life and manifest the glory of God.

Paul, in a single passage of Scripture, clearly reveals the meaning of immersion. Each of us, when immersed, first goes down into the water, identifying with the death of Christ; we are submerged, buried together with Christ, and then come up

out of the water, resurrected together with Him. This is not merely a ritual but a declaration of the fact that we die, are buried, and are raised together with Christ. This experience of immersion is meant to be a lifelong help for us. Titus 3:5 says, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.” Here Paul tells us that this one experience of immersion is meant to repeatedly save us in our daily life, helping us to continually revisit the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. The fact of a single immersion is to produce a lifelong effect, continuously bringing about the washing of regeneration and the renewing work of the Holy Spirit.

I know that most saints, at the time of their baptism, are still quite ignorant, not fully realizing the immense blessing and treasure they have received. Therefore, at each immersion, we must help the saints so that immersion does not become merely a ritual, but brings forth some practical spiritual reality. For example, have the saints pray for one another, so that their hearts may sense a new belonging, new rest, and new joy. They can also be encouraged to pray for themselves. Their prayer may not be deep or skillful, but for many saints, this may be the first time they feel the prompting of the Holy Spirit and experience the joy and rest that come from Him. The Christian life is long, and there is no guarantee that in the days ahead they will not stumble or fall. Yet the experience of a single immersion serves as the motivation and support for them to rise again. Furthermore, this experience is meant to bring about repeated washing of regeneration and the renewing work of the Holy Spirit throughout their life.

In the Old Testament, there are three illustrations connected to immersion, each representing different aspects of what immersion accomplishes for us. The first is Noah’s ark, which helped Noah and his family of eight to be saved from the destruction of humanity. 1 Peter 3:20–21 says, “who formerly were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) through the

resurrection of Jesus Christ.” This passage tells us that immersion signifies that our names are already written in the Book of Life, that we have already been delivered from eternal destruction, and that we have a share in the new heavens and the new earth. It is also the guarantee that the salvation we receive once is eternal.

Second, Moses led the Israelites through the Red Sea. At that time, the Egyptian pursuers were closely following the Israelites and also entered the Red Sea. When the Israelites came out of the Red Sea, the waters closed over them, and all the Egyptian pursuers were drowned. This foreshadows that after our immersion, we are delivered from the power of the world. This foreshadowing is a once-for-all fact, yet it is also an experience for our entire life. Just like the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, throughout our lives we must continually experience how to be delivered from the power of the world.

Third, Joshua led the second generation of Israelites across the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Moses led the Israelites wandering in the wilderness for forty years until the entire first generation died in the wilderness, including Moses and Aaron. Only Joshua and Caleb led the new generation of Israelites across the Jordan. The first generation of Israelites symbolizes our old self, while the second generation symbolizes our new self. A single immersion allows us to experience a fact: the old self dies with Christ, and the new self lives with Christ. Of course, this one experience must be repeatedly lived out throughout our lifetime in order to help us put off the old self and live and act in the new self, in the likeness of the new life.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You. We truly did not realize that through a single baptism we receive such abundance. Not only are we delivered from eternal destruction, but we are also delivered from the power of the world, and from the lusts of our old self, our old man. Although it is a single experience, the fact of dying and rising together with Christ is to be continually lived out throughout our lifetime, repeatedly experiencing the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. Lord, thank You for allowing us, through immersion, to receive the reality of being united with Christ, and for enabling us in our daily life to continually turn this

reality into our everyday experience. Bless my daily life. I pray in the holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ.