

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

Romans 6: 5-6

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. We'll continue reading Romans Chapter 6, today we'll read verses 5 and 6.

Becoming holy is not by our own resolve and effort to overcome the sinful world and the lusts of the flesh. For the probability of success in this way is extremely low; even if one happens to succeed once, the result is that the old self rises up, full of pride, which leads to an even deeper failure. We must recognize that a person with a sinful nature cannot overcome sin by himself. Therefore, the first step of sanctification is to be united with Christ.

For the saints who have received grace and salvation, they have already experienced the fact of union with Christ. That is, when they were baptized, they were immersed into the water, buried into the death of Christ Jesus, and hidden away so that no one could find them anymore. When they came out of the water, they were raised together with Christ Jesus. This resurrected life leads them to live a new life, with every action manifesting the newness of life.

Although most saints, at the time of baptism, did not truly realize that they had entered into the realm of a new life, this does not diminish the fact that they have died with Christ and now live with Christ. When Paul wrote the book of Romans, he brought us back to this fact and added a special revelation. He helped us to see that the starting point of the path of sanctification lies in the fact of union with Christ at baptism — being buried together with Him in death, and being raised together with Him in resurrection. This brings us to the final declaration of this union.

Verse 5: “For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.”

First, let us look at a few of the words Paul used: the likeness of His death and the likeness of His resurrection. The Chinese Union Version translates this word as “shape,” while in English it is translated as likeness. When God first created man, He created man according to His image and likeness; and likeness emphasizes the outward form and appearance. Two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ passed through death and resurrection—this is a historical fact. Today, through baptism, we are brought into that realm of death and resurrection. We have passed through death and resurrection together with Christ. This is not an abstract kind of identification, but a real and actual passing through with the Lord. Therefore, Paul deliberately used the word likeness—which means that outwardly it looks exactly the same.

Second, united with Him. In Greek, the word is *sumphutos*—*sum* means “together with,” and *phutos* means “to grow, to spring up, to bud or to increase.” The NIV and ASV both translate it as united; the KJV translates it as planted together; Darby translates it as identified. The KJV is the closest to the original meaning, since the word originally refers to a grafted life—a branch that is grafted onto the trunk, growing together with it. Therefore, a better translation would be “united in growth.”

This verse has two parts. The first part: we are united in growth with Christ in the likeness of His death. Through the fact of baptism, we are identified with the death of Christ and have passed through it together with Him. But that is not enough. The experience of dying with Christ must also grow and increase in us. The purpose of Jesus Christ’s coming to the earth was to fulfill God’s plan of redemption. Therefore, His whole life was one of suffering, moving toward death; and His experience on the cross summed up His entire life.

How then do we grow together with Christ in the likeness of His death? Philippians 3:10 says, “that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.” The Lord Jesus Christ went through death in order to be resurrected. But our experience is the reverse: first we must know the power of His resurrection; then we are able to suffer with Him; and finally, be conformed to His death. The word “being conformed” is better than “imitate,” because in the original text it is in the passive form, not active. A

more accurate translation is “being molded into the likeness of His death.” The death of Christ is the mold, and we are being molded into the likeness of His death. In every circumstance of our daily life, this Scripture can be applied so that the experience of dying with Christ may grow in us.

Dear brothers and sisters, if there is something in our lives that we cannot overcome, the reason is actually very simple: we are unwilling to let go. Either we cannot swallow our pride, or we cannot suppress our impulses. But the root cause is that we are unwilling to die to ourselves. If in every matter we practice being united with Christ in the likeness of His death, in that matter we will become a person without self; and when there is no self, there will be no difficulty. Quarrels between husband and wife, conflicts between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, or tension between parents and children—all these fundamentally come from not growing together with Christ in the likeness of His death in those matters.

The second part is growing together with Christ in the likeness of His resurrection. Saints are willing to die with Christ because they know that death is not the end; beyond death there is resurrection. 2 Corinthians 4:11 says, “For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.” Dying with Christ surely brings forth living with Christ in resurrection. If we can continually experience growing together with Him in the likeness of His resurrection, then as Paul says in Philippians 3:11, “if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

Surely saints may wonder: when Christ comes again, all of us will be resurrected—this is a basic truth of the faith. Then why does Paul sound uncertain, saying “if” he might attain the resurrection from the dead? Could it be that Paul did not understand this basic truth? Of course not.

The answer lies in the accuracy of the translation. In this verse Paul uses a very special word: exanastasis. The word anastasis means “resurrection.” But Paul places the prefix ex- before it, meaning “out” or “outstanding.” Thus, a more accurate translation is “an outstanding resurrection,” a resurrection that is extraordinary—not the general resurrection we normally speak of. Therefore, what Paul is speaking

of here is not the common resurrection of all saints at Christ's coming. That is the general resurrection. Rather, before Christ's return there will be overcomers who are raptured, and their resurrection will be this outstanding resurrection.

If today we have a share in growing together with Christ in the likeness of His resurrection, then in our daily living we are able to let the resurrection life produce a holy living. Before the return of Christ, we may possibly partake of that resurrection of the overcomers, which is the reward for the overcomers. After speaking about the fact of being united with Christ through baptism, Paul goes further to tell us how this should be applied in our daily life.

Brother Watchman Nee's book, *The Normal Christian Life*, is one of the most highly regarded books among Western believers. It was originally a record of his messages in England on Romans chapters 5 through 8. When he came to the subject of baptism and union with Christ, Watchman Nee pointed out three verbs that describe the practice we ought to have. In Romans 6:6–10 it is “knowing”; in 6:11 it is “reckoning” or “considering”; and in 6:12–23 it is “presenting” (or “offering”). These are the three verbs that we need to practice and emphasize in our daily life. Generally, I am following the framework of Brother Nee, but in his messages, there are many points that are not easy to understand. Today, through some knowledge of the Greek language, perhaps we may be helped to enter into Paul's thought.

Verse 6: “Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.”

First, we need to understand who the “old man” is. In philosophy, there is a most basic question: Who am I? Only after knowing “myself” can I begin to explore anything that relates to me. Theologically, it is the same— “I” has always been a difficult concept to define.

Before a person is saved, it is still relatively simple: I am one destined for the Lake of Fire, without the hope of eternal life; after finishing this earthly life, I will perish forever. That is plain and clear.

But once a person is saved, “I” becomes very complicated. Sometimes one lives like an angel, but more often one lives like the devil. Although the life of God dwells within, the outward living frequently looks no different from before salvation. At times we even wonder whether we are truly saved. I believe this is a troubling issue for many believers. After salvation, the question of “I” becomes very complex—which one is the real me? We will try to use today’s Scripture to understand ourselves.

Who is the old man? And where does he come from? From God’s perspective on humanity, throughout all of human history, He sees only two men: the first Adam and the last Adam, who is Christ. The first Adam brought forth all of humanity, collectively called the “old man”—a corporate person. The last Adam, Christ, brought forth a new creation, a new race of people, collectively called the “new man”—also a corporate person.

How then did the Adam whom God originally created become the “old man”? Genesis 2:7 says, “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” God used the dust of the ground to form the shape of man—that was man’s body. Then He breathed into man the breath of life. In Greek, the word for breath and spirit is the same; therefore, the spirit is the breath of life. When God breathed the breath of life into man’s nostrils, that breath of life entered into man and became man’s spirit. As a result, the Bible says that man became a living soul.

The Chinese Union Version already includes interpretation: that man had a spirit within and became alive, thus becoming a living spiritual being. But if translated directly from the original text, the English is “a living soul,” meaning he became a living soul. Man’s body was originally formed from the dust of the ground. The elements that make up our body can all be found on earth. That is why our body comes from dust and will return to dust. But this is not the most important part of us.

When God’s breath entered into man, it formed man’s spirit, enabling him to fellowship with God and to understand God’s will. Then how was the soul formed?

The Bible does not state it directly. Brother Watchman Nee believed that when the spirit entered into the body, it formed an interface between the spirit and the body, and this interface is the soul. Man's soul is the most representative part of man. It is the part that makes decisions. It includes how a person thinks, what he desires, and how he makes choices.

The value of the body is not high, because once it dies it returns to dust. The spirit is the organ that can fellowship with God; its value is high, but it cannot represent man, because God gave man free will, and man can choose not to follow God. Therefore, in the Bible, the soul is used to represent man. For example, Adam became a living soul. In Genesis 46:27, when Jacob took his family of seventy to join Joseph in Egypt, the Bible says Jacob took seventy souls into Egypt.

In the beginning, Adam was created and placed in the Garden of Eden. Before man's fall, man's spirit was alive, able to fellowship with God, and able to understand God's will and commandments. The soul of man, which includes the mind, emotion, and will, was able to follow the leading of the spirit; thus, there was no barrier between man and God. The spirit was the head, and the soul took the role of the wife, submitting to the leading of the spirit. The soul, in turn, was the master of the body. Once the soul made a decision, the body acted accordingly. This was God's original creation.

Later, God built a counterpart for Adam—Eve, to help him. Adam was the head of Eve, just as the spirit is the head of the soul. Eve was to submit to Adam, just as the soul was to submit to the spirit. But when man fell, the entire human race became the old man. According to Genesis chapter 3, Eve was the first to be deceived by the serpent; she took the lead and did not submit to Adam. Although Eve sinned first, the Bible says Adam sinned, because Adam was the head, and the head must bear the responsibility. Since the two had become one flesh, the wife's sin was counted as the husband's sin. This is the principle of the Bible.

Romans 5:12 says, "Through one man sin entered the world," and that one man was Adam. According to the command God gave Adam, "In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." Adam ate, and was driven out of the Garden of Eden, no

longer able to fellowship with God. His spirit died. Because of this one sin, the entire human race became the old man, in English, old man. The spirit died and no longer had any function; the body became the body of sin, or the body of sin's slavery, meaning sin dwells in man's body. Sometimes this is also called the flesh.

Eve's position was to be the wife, and she should not have taken the lead. But once she did, she declared independence, no longer acknowledging Adam as her head, and thus brought about the fall of mankind. In the same way, when the old man declares independence and is no longer joined to God, man's spirit dies and ceases to function, no longer able to direct the soul. After the fall of the old man, the soul became the head, and even assumed for itself an identity, called the self. The natural talents and abilities within the soul then began to serve the old man.

The body of sin includes two parts. The first part is the body created by God, which can be used to sustain human life. The second part becomes the dwelling place of sin, the instrument of sinning. Here lies a paradox: the old man should be the master of the body of sin; the things decided by the soul of the old man are then carried out by the body of sin. On the surface, the old man is the master of the body of sin. But in reality, once the human soul becomes independent from God, thinking it can take the headship and freely do whatever it pleases, the moment it sins, it becomes subject to sin, further drawn and enslaved by sin, losing its freedom.

This is much like teenagers at home who, when reaching a certain age, declare that they are grown up, independent, and free, able to do many things as they wish. Yet some things, such as drug use, once addicted, they no longer have the freedom to abstain. For true freedom is not that you can do anything, but that you have the freedom to not do what you do not wish to do.

After understanding the old man, here it says that our old man was crucified with Christ. Christ's crucifixion was a historical fact that happened 2000 years ago. Paul says that in that event, the entire old man was crucified with Him. We have said before, the old man is a collective term, including all the descendants of Adam—those before Christ and those after Christ. The entire race of Adam was crucified together with Christ on the cross.

The old man is a collective term, while our “self” is a part of the old man. Even though at that time we had not yet been born, we were already included in the old man. The old man was crucified with Christ, and our “self” was also crucified on the cross, which brings the body of sin to nothing. The body of sin is the body used for sinning; it includes the body created by God, and also the part incited by sin, becoming the dwelling place of sin.

The word “destroyed” (used in some translations) is too strong and not the meaning of the original text. The Greek word here is *katargeo*, which comes from two parts: *kata*, meaning “down to the point,” and *argeo*, meaning “idle” or “inactive.” In other words, the body of sin has come to the point of unemployment. Earlier we said the sinner is the master, and the body of sin is the servant, who listens to the master’s will and acts. Now the old man was crucified with the Lord. Our “self” is a part of the sinner, and our “self” also died. The master has died; the body of sin has become unemployed; it has ceased operation. In this way, we are no longer slaves of sin.

Dear brothers and sisters, Paul here provides us with the way to overcome sin. It is not by our own determination, effort, or struggle to change ourselves, but by laying hold of the fact that took place 2000 years ago. When Christ was crucified on the cross, the entire old man was crucified together with Him, and of course, this includes our old self. Since the old self has died, the body of sin has become unemployed. When our body of sin was still active, we had absolutely no way to overcome it and could only be enslaved by sin. But now that the old self has died and the body of sin has been rendered unemployed, only then are we no longer slaves of sin, and we can be set free from sin.

This is a very important realization: the secret of our victory is to die together with Christ. As Galatians 2:20 says, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

Let us pray together: Lord, help us to truly see the fact of being united with You—that we must grow together with You in the likeness of Your death, and also grow together with You in the likeness of Your resurrection. Our secret of victory does not lie in our own effort, but in taking hold of the fact that our old man has already been crucified with You. Our old self has died, and our body of sin has been put out of work, so that we may no longer be slaves of sin. Lord, help me not only to understand this truth, but also to experience release from sin in reality. For the “I” that sinned has already been crucified on the cross, and the one now living is the resurrected new self. Help me to experience this in my daily life. Bless my everyday living. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!