

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

**Romans 6: 17-18**

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. We are continue reading Romans Chapter 6, and today, we'll read verses 17 and 18.

The reality of being united with Christ requires a subjective realization: we have already been raised together with Christ. This resurrected life dwells within us. It also requires an objective realization: our old man was crucified with Christ 2000 years ago. This is a fact that took place 2000 years ago; however, this objective realization must become our subjective experience, and this step is not so easy. We first need the next step of reckoning, or, in other words, accounting in faith—by the resurrected life, seeing ourselves as alive. That is to say, allowing the spiritual life to supply our soul through the conscience, so that the spiritual life may govern our mind. In this way, we can go beyond the covering of material things and gain a spiritual vision from God, truly seeing that the old man has died and that I am no longer under the slavery of sin.

Having such a vision, we then need to go one step further—to present ourselves to God, and to present our members to God as instruments of righteousness. That is to say, both our person and our members must stand together with God, so that our whole being may obey God, becoming slaves of God, in order to become righteousness.

**Verse 17: “But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.”**

At the very beginning, Paul uses the word “thank God,” because God is the source of all grace. Since we have received such great grace, it is only natural that we should give thanks to God. To give thanks to God continually is the mark of a

Christian, because we are all sinners who have received grace. Without God's deliverance, we would still be dead in trespasses and sins.

Just as this passage says, we were once slaves of sin, but now we obey from the heart the pattern of teaching delivered to us. Here the word "teaching" in English is often translated as teaching or doctrine, that is, instruction or teaching. These were preached to us through the word of the Scriptures, we heard them, and our hearts obeyed. The soul is the main part of the heart, meaning that our mind understood, our emotions, after weighing it, also liked it, and as a result, in our will, we decided to obey.

The next step is to act according to the teaching we heard. This sequence of actions is not difficult to understand. What is more difficult is that Paul here adds one particular word: pattern. What exactly is the "pattern of teaching"? The Greek word for "pattern" is tupos, which means type or model, pattern, model, or more accurately, standard. To truly understand this word, we need to look at its verb form, tupō, which means "to strike repeatedly, to beat." Thus, tupos refers to something that is formed through repeated striking, eventually becoming a mold or model.

The best picture of this in the Old Testament is the golden lampstand. In Exodus 25:31–40 we are told how to make the golden lampstand: it was to be made from one talent of pure gold, hammered out with a hammer little by little—hammered into seven branches, each branch with three cups shaped like almond blossoms, with knobs and flowers. The golden lampstand's structure was relatively complex, requiring the skillful hand of a craftsman, who, stroke after stroke, hammered it out until it finally became the form of a golden lampstand.

We know that the golden lampstand in the Bible prefigures the church. The final form of the church is something that the Holy Spirit produces, according to God's will, by hammering again and again. This is a process of striking, a process of carving, and also a process of shaping. Therefore, in this verse, when Paul speaks of the "form of doctrine," it means that after we have heard the doctrine preached to us, we as people still need God's hand to work on us. Outwardly, God arranges all things in the environment so that we might be struck, pressed down, and even to the point

of being covered with wounds. At the same time, inwardly, the word we hear supplies us with life—on one hand soothing the outward wounds, and on the other hand producing an inward constitution, which becomes a rule or pattern for us to obey.

If we really enter into the depth of Paul's thought, we will discover that for a person to obey God's word from the heart is a process—from hearing God's word, to having that word become the pattern and rule of our living. Too often we easily say that we have already obeyed, but that is not true obedience. Real obedience means that in every circumstance God's word holds the same authority and the same binding power upon us. It is so in times of prosperity, and it is also so in times of adversity.

Therefore, when we receive a fresh moving or new understanding from God's word, God will surely raise up an environment to test us, so that our faith concerning that word may be tried and may remain steadfast and unshaken. At the very moment God gives us such a trial, His word also operates in our spirit, and then reaches into our soul. Finally, in the soul it forms a pattern—impressing itself upon our mind, gaining the love of our emotion, and bringing the submission of our will. In this way, our heart becomes obedient to the form or pattern of doctrine. And this pattern then comes to regulate our conduct and manner of life.

**Verse 18: "And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."**

We are freed from sin because we are no longer slaves of sin; sin no longer rules or has dominion over us, and we are released from it. Man is actually very complex: he can be the old man or the new man, and often the change happens very quickly. A few minutes ago, perhaps one was singing hymns and praising God, but upon hearing a few unpleasant words from a spouse, immediately falls from heaven to earth, turning from the new man into the old man, and according to the flesh and stirred-up lusts, begins to quarrel with the spouse.

This is how we are—sinful people who shift and change so quickly. Although we change rapidly, at any given moment, we are either the new man or the old man. It is impossible to be both the new man and the old man at the same time, nor is there some neutral ground outside of them. Therefore, what we must endeavor to do is to examine ourselves in the present moment: are we in Christ, or are we in the world? Are we enjoying God’s grace, or are we toiling in sorrow? Once we discover that our standing is wrong, we must immediately turn back.

As long as we are certain that we are now in the realm of grace, then we are freed from sin and have become slaves of righteousness. Notice, in the original text, both “freed from sin” and “became slaves of righteousness” are in the passive perfect tense. When God’s word becomes the rule within us and begins to reign, then sin can no longer rule over us, and we are thus set free from sin.

Righteousness is the attribute of God, and the Word of God is naturally righteous. When we fall under the regulation of God’s Word, we naturally become slaves of righteousness. This is still in the passive tense. Seeing this point is very important: when God’s Word has not yet become the regulation in our hearts, we often need to use our will to choose to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Many times, when we are not careful, our soul wanders away, leaving the realm of grace without us even realizing it. But when we grow to a certain measure, becoming mature, we learn to let God’s Word become our regulation. Then our hearts naturally submit to the Word of God, and we passively become slaves of righteousness.

For example, if a saint is involved in the ministry of preaching, they may have this experience: when preparing a message, sometimes once you sit down, three or four hours pass in full concentration—reading the Bible, researching materials, listening to messages, sensing the Spirit’s leading, and building up your train of thought, especially concerning how to share in a way that can meet the needs of the saints. During this long stretch of time, we remain within the regulation of God’s Word. Although we are not intentionally trying to overcome sin and the world, by staying in the realm of grace under the regulation of the Word, we passively become freed

from sin and the world. We also passively become slaves of righteousness, living out a period of life filled with righteousness. In this passage, Paul tells us the secret of presenting: it is to live under the regulation of God's Word.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for helping us to understand how to turn the fact of our union with You into our subjective experience. We need to know, we need to reckon, and we also need to offer. We offer our whole being, we offer our members, so that we may be joined to God, joined to God's Word—especially that God's Word may become the regulation in our hearts. If we can remain under the regulation of Your Word, we will naturally be separated from the world, separated from sin, and become slaves of righteousness, living out a life filled with righteousness. Bless me that my daily living may have such an experience, so that I may become more holy and more belonging to God. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!