

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

Romans 6: 19-21

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 verses 19-21 today.

Yesterday, we read that we must let God's word become our standard, not only understanding it but submitting to it from our heart, so that our whole being becomes a slave of righteousness. In this way, we naturally gain freedom from sin. The objective fact that our old man was crucified with Christ 2,000 years ago becomes our subjective experience today. Paul, a clear-thinking, meticulous, and persuasive lawyer, considers this matter so crucial for saints to be freed from the dominion of sin that he describes it again in another, more practical way.

Verse 19: "I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness."

Fearing that our spiritual life is too immature and weakened by an active flesh, Paul speaks in human terms, meaning in a way that immature saints can understand, repeating it once more. Every saint weakened by the flesh has many experiences of failure. If described only from a positive perspective, they might lack such positive experiences and thus fail to grasp Paul's intended meaning. Therefore, Paul speaks from a negative perspective: just as you previously presented your members as slaves to uncleanness and lawlessness, leading to more lawlessness. Previously, when we were slaves to sin, we submitted to the power of sin, and as a result, our members were offered to sin as instruments of unrighteousness. This echoes the statement in 6:13, meaning our members became tools for sin.

However, in this verse, Paul says the members were presented as slaves to uncleanness and lawlessness. In 6:13, the emphasis is on the act of sinning, resulting in members becoming tools of sin. In this verse, Paul focuses on the driving force behind the members' sinning. Thus, he says the members became slaves to uncleanness and lawlessness. Uncleanness emphasizes the nature of impurity, filth, and defilement; lawlessness emphasizes actions that cross the boundaries of the law. With the driving forces of uncleanness and lawlessness, the result is becoming lawless.

Paul appeals here to our past experiences: when we were slaves to sin, our members committed lawless acts, and we became lawless persons, meaning our actions crossed boundaries, and we became unclean persons, meaning our nature became corrupted.

I believe we all have had similar experiences: when we did something wrong, it was not just an external violation of good customs or legal rules; inwardly, we truly felt dirty and impure. These negative experiences from our past correspond to our present state: having received grace and salvation, we have become slaves of God, presenting our members as slaves to righteousness. In 6:16, it says this leads to righteousness, but here, Paul says it leads to holiness, or reaching holiness, because the emphasis is on the process of becoming holy. Have saints noticed that Paul shifts from righteousness to holiness?

Righteousness and holiness are attributes of God: righteousness is the principle of God's actions, while holiness is God's essence. Just as members committing lawless acts make a person unclean, so too, members doing righteous acts make a person holy. A person's holiness means being fully set apart for God. Presenting our members as slaves to righteousness leads to holiness. This is a crucial truth, making our sanctification no longer abstract or elusive but offering a practical path: presenting our members as slaves to God's righteousness.

Many times, we present our members as slaves to our own righteousness, doing what we want, what benefits us, or what we think is right; as a result, we align with Satan, becoming lawless and unclean. If we are willing to present our members as

slaves to God's righteousness, the result is holiness. I believe experienced saints will know that once we present our members to God as slaves of righteousness, what ultimately sustains us on the path of sanctification is God's righteousness.

Because we ourselves are unreliable, when we present our members to God's righteousness, we may, after a time, become preoccupied with worldly matters and forget. But as long as we have once offered ourselves to God, God will never forget. God's righteousness compels Him to use every opportunity to help us fulfill that act of offering.

Dear brothers and sisters, do not fear offering yourself to God or worry that you cannot follow through after dedicating yourself. As long as we are moved and prompted by the Holy Spirit within, we should boldly follow and offer ourselves. In this way, we will experience that it is ultimately God's righteousness that helps us reach holiness, meaning being fully set apart for God.

God's righteousness is our assurance of following the Lord throughout our life. Though we may change, weaken, or fail, God's righteousness ensures that He cannot abandon us, cannot fail to lead us, cannot withhold His blessings, and cannot refrain from helping us, because He is a righteous God. Though our personal journey may be winding and long, God's righteousness will ultimately prevail. Thus, God's righteousness is our assurance, and God's righteousness will lead us to holiness.

Verse 20: "For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness."

Paul continues his reasoning, helping immature saints by starting with a negative example. When we were slaves of sin, our members were presented to uncleanness and lawlessness, and thus we were free from righteousness. This was our past experience. Now that we are slaves of God, we must present our members as slaves to righteousness, coming under the constraint of righteousness. This is a process of sanctification, ultimately leading to the result of holiness.

Verse 21: “What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.”

This verse continues the thought of the previous verse, referring to the time when we were slaves to sin. The things we did then, when viewed now, cause us shame. If we had not been saved or offered ourselves to God, and had continued living under the slavery of sin, the ultimate outcome would be death—this is obvious.

Dear brothers and sisters, perhaps following Paul’s reasoning, we can reflect: before receiving grace and salvation, do the things we did then make us feel ashamed today? Perhaps we were busy with eating, drinking, and pleasure, living day to day without knowing our future, and compared to today’s eternal hope, we indeed feel ashamed. Perhaps we schemed against others for personal gain, and looking back, we truly feel ashamed. If we harmed others, how could we share the gospel with them? Perhaps we acted recklessly, following our lusts and hurting family and friends around us—thinking of it today, we truly feel ashamed.

Not controlling our flesh, often getting angry, saying things we shouldn’t, doing things we shouldn’t, and hurting those who love us—we truly feel ashamed. Perhaps we used our intelligence to skirt the edges of the law, even taking pride in crossing boundaries without being caught—thinking of it today, we truly feel ashamed. As slaves of righteousness, with our members as slaves to righteousness, doing unrighteous things naturally causes shame. Though everyone’s experiences differ, there are always things we recall today that make us feel ashamed.

Yet, thank the Lord! Because God’s mercy has come upon us, granting us the wisdom of salvation to accept Jesus Christ as our lifelong Savior, all our transgressions are covered by Christ’s precious blood. Not only are our sins forgiven, but we have received eternal life and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit leads us on the path of sanctification, and the most crucial and practical step is to offer ourselves to God, presenting our members as slaves to righteousness. In this way, we can walk the path of sanctification, setting ourselves apart for God.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You! You are a holy and righteous God; holiness and righteousness are Your attributes. When we offer ourselves to You, our members become slaves of righteousness. In this process, we gradually become holy—this is Your ordained path of sanctification. Help us realize that we belong to You, and our members should no longer be defiled by uncleanness or lawlessness. Help me in daily life, in everything I need to do, to follow the Holy Spirit's leading and align with Your righteous principles. Through such practice, we can gradually partake in Your nature, which is the path of our sanctification. Bless my daily life. I pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.