

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

Romans 7: 6

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 are going to read Romans Chapter 7 verse 6.

Romans chapter 7 speaks about a saved saint who still struggles with sin. The reason for the struggle is not made clear until the very end of chapter 7, when Paul tells us. It turns out that within us there are several different laws constantly warring against each other, and the real answer—the law that can overcome sin—is revealed in chapter 8.

Paul shares entirely from his own experience, telling us of his struggles. Even such a great apostle struggled, and he recorded it in the Scriptures. This truly helps us to examine ourselves more honestly, and to admit that we face the same struggles, feel the same helplessness, and even, at times, come to a point of being utterly disappointed with ourselves. But ultimately, just like Paul, we can also find in our experience the secret of victory.

Dear brothers and sisters, perhaps by taking this opportunity to read Romans chapter 7, we can directly confront those sins that have long troubled us. May we, like Paul, finally arrive at that turning point where light breaks through the darkness. Romans 7:6 is the conclusion of the first five verses. In order to deal with sins that we cannot overcome, Paul helps us by directing us to address the problem from the very source.

In verses 1–5, Paul speaks of a woman who has an old husband and a new husband. If the old husband does not die, and this woman joins herself to the new husband, she is called an adulteress. But if the old husband dies, and this woman joins herself to the new husband, she is not an adulteress. For the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives; but once the man dies, the law loses its binding power.

Every saved saint is this woman. Humanity's ancestor Adam was tempted by Satan and disobeyed God, choosing instead to obey Satan. Thus, sin entered and came to dwell in man's flesh. The descendants of Adam—that is, all mankind—turned away from God and obeyed Satan. Satan then became the ruler of this world, and mankind was constituted as the “old man.” The husband of the old man—Satan—became the old husband.

From a spiritual standpoint, the relationship between woman and husband is not defined by gender, but by obedience and authority. The old man obeyed Satan, thereby taking Satan as husband. Yet Satan is cunning—he does not openly demand people to obey him, but rather entices man to be “independent” from God: not listening to God's word, claiming self-sufficiency, and desiring to be like God. But the moment man leaves the position of obeying God, thinking he has gained true independence, he actually falls into bondage under sin and death, becoming a follower of Satan.

The old man still cannot escape the position of a woman, being under authority. He takes Satan as his husband, for he is under the dominion of sin and death. Sin and death are precisely the powers by which Satan enslaves man, forcing him into unwilling submission. Because of His love for mankind, God sent His only begotten Son to the earth to accomplish His redemptive plan. Through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, the problem of sin was solved once for all. This includes the source of sin—the devil Satan—who was destroyed at the cross. It also includes the old man, who was under the power of sin, being crucified together with Christ.

The old husband has been annulled; the old man was crucified on the cross. This is an accomplished historical fact. Three days later, Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and He gave the Holy Spirit, producing the new man. Every saved saint, by believing in Jesus Christ, receives the full redemption accomplished by Him. This includes union with Christ's death and union with Christ's resurrection. Union with His death means acknowledging that we were members of the old man, crucified on the cross, and thereby released from the old husband. From the perspective of the law, the old husband has been annulled, and we are freed from the law of the husband. The

old self and the old man have died, and the law can no longer bind the old self that has died.

Union with His resurrection means acknowledging that we are members of the new man. The new self has already been raised together with the new man, and the new man takes Christ as the new Husband. The new self must obey Christ and belong to the new Husband. In Romans 6:6, Paul wisely used the word for objective knowing—*ginosko*—to describe that “our old man was crucified with Christ.” Because this happened 2,000 years ago as a historical fact, and we were not present at that time, for us it is an objective knowing.

For this historical fact to become our subjective experience, there must be a process. This is what Romans 6 tells us: moving from objective knowing to subjective knowing, then proceeding through the reckoning of faith, and finally presenting ourselves and our members to God. Only then can the fact of having died with Christ become our present subjective experience.

In other words, the old self should have died together with Christ, and this was also the declaration we made at baptism. Yet in experience, whenever the old self rises up, it brings us back to the condition before salvation. Whenever the new self rises up, we return to the position of being saved by grace. This is the lifelong struggle every saint must face, and Romans chapter 7 helps us face this struggle directly. Romans 6:1–5 makes it very clear: after being saved by grace, we become members of the new man, and the old man to which the old self belongs has already been crucified with Christ.

Verse 6: “But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.”

This verse is the conclusion of verses 1 through 5. The first “we” here refers to the old man, which is a corporate man; the old man is to be bound under the law. Since the old man has died with respect to the law that bound us, we are now released

from the law. That is, we have been delivered from the bondage of the law, for the authority of the law has no effect on one who has died. That we should serve the Lord—this “we” here refers to the new man. The new man is to serve the Lord, and it is according to the newness of the spirit. The Chinese Union Version translates this word as “heart”, but in the original text it is actually “spirit.”

The translators of the Union Version did not understand the distinction between spirit, soul, and heart; these three terms are often confused and used interchangeably. When reading the Union Version and encountering the words spirit, soul, or heart, it is best to check the original text; if the Greek text is not at hand, English can also be used. English translations are usually very clear: spirit refers to the human spirit, soul is the soul, and heart is the heart.

The service of the new man must be in the newness of the spirit, not in the oldness of the letter. The meaning of “letter” is literally the written code, or the word-for-word ordinance, more directly, the outward regulation. Here Paul makes a very direct contrast between the old man and the new man. To put it more closely, it is also a contrast between the old self and the new self. Let us first explain this contrast and then look at the details: The old man is under the bondage of the law; the new man is not under the bondage of the law. The old man serves sin; the new man serves the Lord. The old man has already died on the cross; the new man has already been resurrected. The old man acts through the flesh; the new man walks in the spirit. The old man is restricted in the oldness of the letter, or condemned by the written code of the law; the new man serves in the newness of the spirit.

In principle, the distinction between the old man and the new man is not hard to understand, but in practical application, the experiences of the old self and the new self are often mixed together. The old self ought to have died on the cross, yet often comes down from the cross to disturb us. The new self ought to be busy serving the Lord, yet is often idle and inactive. At every moment in us, the new self and the old self cannot appear together; either the new self comes forth, or the old self comes forth. Therefore, we must examine ourselves: is it the old self or the new self that is living now? And the above contrast provides a very good way of testing this.

In the same matter, we often habitually let the old self come forth without even realizing it. For example, in daily life, there may be a certain matter that particularly displeases us. Whenever that matter comes, we lose our temper and cannot control ourselves. In this matter, the old self is especially hard to put to death. What should we do? Suppression does not work; perhaps we can suppress it once or twice, but we cannot suppress it every time or for the long term. The only way is for the old self in this matter to completely die.

Experienced lifeguards all know that when saving a drowning person, they must not attempt to save too early. As long as that drowning person still has strength, once he grabs hold, he will not let go. If the lifeguard tries to save him at that point, he may be seized by the drowning man's arms and legs, and then both may drown. Only after that drowning man has struggled for a while and exhausted his strength can the lifeguard safely save him. The old self is the same way—it must completely lose its strength in a matter, die, and then the new self can replace the old self.

And the new self must serve the Lord according to the newness of the spirit, not according to the oldness of the letter. Christ is the new Husband of the new man, and the new self is a member of the new man, so naturally it must serve the Lord. How can we know that we are serving the Lord in the new self? This depends on whether our service is in the newness of the spirit or in the oldness of the letter.

The new self, after being born again, has the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can transmit how we should serve the Lord from our spirit to our soul, and then from the soul bring it forth into the action of our members. That is to say, in every act of service, we must seek the leading of the Holy Spirit in prayer.

When the Holy Spirit gives a prompting, that prompting must be worked out through the mind in the soul, transforming it into executable steps, and then, through the will, bringing it forth in the action of the members. In the same service, the prompting of the Holy Spirit is different each time. Our responsibility is that in every service we seek the leading of the Holy Spirit, and, through the operation of the mind and will, follow the newness of the spirit to serve, and never fall into the oldness of the letter.

For example, a brother responsible for the bread and the cup may have served dozens of times and become very experienced. If he serves merely according to his past experience, without seeking the leading of the Holy Spirit before the service, and during the service only follows a set form, treating the bread and the cup as a ritual, performing it formally, then such service will not bring resonance in the spirit of the saints. This is an unqualified service. Service in the oldness of the letter is to serve the Lord in the old self. Such service does not please God. May God help us.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for letting us know our present position. Regarding the old self, because it was a member of the old man, it has already been crucified with Christ on the cross; and now the one who lives is the new self, who has been resurrected with Christ. And this new self must serve the Lord, and it must be according to the newness of the spirit, not according to the oldness of the letter.

Lord, help me in every service to seek the leading of the Holy Spirit, and to always have the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Teach me, in service, how to use my mind and will to cooperate with the prompting of the Holy Spirit, to bring forth a service in the newness of the spirit. Such service can meet the various needs of the saints. For the one truly serving is no longer our old man, but the new man under the leading of the Holy Spirit. Through such service, the grace of the Holy Spirit can be imparted to every saint who receives the service. Bless the church where I am, that every Lord's Day service would be full of freshness, vitality, and the supply of life. Bless the church where I am. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!