

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

Romans 7: 14-15

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 will continue reading Romans chapter 7, from verses 14-25. Today we will read verses 14-15.

Romans chapter 7 is a very special chapter in the Bible. Paul, by sharing his own experience of struggling with the sinful nature, tells us how sin operates in man. This chapter is not easy to read. The main reason is that what Paul describes is very different from, and in many ways completely opposite to, what the world teaches about ethics. When man does not understand God's word and does not submit to God's truth, the result is that he falls into a struggle with sin, and suffers repeated defeats. Paul himself came out of such struggles, and obtained the secret of overcoming; then he looked back to tell us how sin operates in us.

In verses 1–6, Paul first tells us from the root that the saints should take the position of the woman, being released from the old husband and the law of the husband, to belong to the new Husband, who is Christ. Therefore, the most important thing for man is first to stand in the right position, to guard the standing of the new man, and to let Christ be the Head. In verses 7–13, Paul tells us the relationship between sin and the law. For the saints who are saved by grace, sin makes us know sin, and also makes us know that we cannot overcome the sinful nature by keeping the law, because sin hides behind the law to deceive man. As soon as the law comes in, sin immediately comes in to deceive and stir up the old self, to rely on itself to keep the law. The result is that once the old self comes out, the new self is dead.

Although the law is holy, just, and good, sin can use the holy, just, and good law as a tool to kill man. This all the more shows the deceitfulness and abominableness of sin. The passage we will read this week, verses 14–25, Paul further explains how sin operates in man in the form of laws. If we read carefully, we can see the operation

of the three parts of man—spirit, soul, and body—as well as the function of each part.

The whole Bible does not give a very direct definition of the constitution of man; therefore, in theology there is debate between dichotomy and trichotomy. Of course, theological viewpoints may differ, but what really matters is that we must come back to the Scripture itself. Personally, I adopt trichotomy, and I have three main reasons:

The first reason is based on 1 Thessalonians 5:23, “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” In this verse it is very clear that spirit and soul and body are mentioned. Spirit, soul, and body are joined together by the conjunction word “and,” showing that these are three specific and distinct parts. This is the clearest verse in the Bible pointing out that man has a spirit and a soul and a body.

The second reason is in Hebrews 4:12, “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” The verse clearly states that the word of God is able to divide soul and spirit, just as it divides joints and marrow. This verse goes even further to tell us that the spirit is within the soul, just as marrow is within the joints. Spirit and soul are often confused, and only by the word of God can they be clearly distinguished. Therefore, saints who are not sufficiently equipped with the word of God are not able to easily distinguish the soul from the spirit within themselves, and often mistake their thoughts in the soul for God’s leading in the spirit. As a result, they think they are following God, but do things that do not please Him. Thus, not discerning between soul and spirit is a mark of spiritual immaturity.

The third reason is Romans chapters 7 and 8. Here Paul speaks of several laws operating in man. As we read, I will emphasize them one by one. Paul especially speaks of the operation of sin in man, and the leading of the Spirit in man. He uses the way of laws to explain why it is so difficult for man to overcome the law of sin.

It turns out that within the three parts of man—spirit, soul, and body—there are three corresponding laws: the law of the body, the law of the soul, and the law of the spirit.

Among Chinese Christians, Brother Watchman Nee is the teacher who explained spirit, soul, and body most thoroughly. Especially in his book, *The Spiritual Man*, he studied the entire Bible and concluded that man has these three parts. In *The Spiritual Man* he quoted hundreds of verses and clearly listed them, many of which come from Romans chapters 7 and 8. Some people, without ever reading Brother Watchman Nee's writings, maliciously criticize him, saying that his teaching on trichotomy comes from Greek philosophy. This is completely unfounded. In all of Brother Nee's writings, he never discusses Greek philosophy; everything he taught comes purely from the Scripture.

I fully accept that there can be different interpretations of Scripture. But if one disregards the facts and maliciously criticizes, this falls short of the character that a minister of the word should have. I hope that as we read about the operation of sin in man this time, the saints can first follow my line of thought, to understand how sin influences man's soul through the body, and how the Spirit directs man's soul through the spirit. My explanation is fully based on trichotomy, to describe how sin and the Spirit operate in man. After you understand my presentation, you may then compare with the teachings of other ministers. In the end, the saints still need to personally seek the Lord to see which explanation meets your need. With this background introduction, let us read verse 14.

Verse 14: "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin."

The law is spiritual. Romans 7:12 tells us that the law is holy, just, and good. It reflects what the Lawgiver is and does; therefore, the law is spiritual. But I am carnal; here the "I" refers to the old self, which belongs to the flesh, and is constituted of the flesh. Therefore, the spiritual law is naturally not something a carnal man can keep. Since I am carnal, I am sold under sin. The word "sold" means to provide service in exchange for value.

Man was originally created by God. God's purpose in creating man was that man might represent Him, express Him, and exercise dominion over the creation for Him. But Satan, seeking to usurp man whom God created, offered all kinds of services to exchange for man's value.

We know that God is the Triune God. God being Triune is not for theological discussion, but is for man's practical need. In the process of receiving salvation, man must first submit to the will and plan of God the Father; then, through the redemption accomplished by God the Son, man receives grace; finally, the Spirit applies and makes real all this in man.

Satan, the greatest counterfeiter in the universe, also seeks to usurp man from three aspects. He first usurped the world created by God, and systematized it to be under his control, so that he became the ruler of this world. All the good things in the world are also under his control, and he uses them to tempt man. He also took the form of sin, dwelling in man's body, and thus made man's body into the flesh, which produces lusts. The lusts of the flesh and the temptations of the world correspond to one another, working together from within and without. Here we see that indwelling sin, the lusts of the flesh, and the temptations of the world together constitute Satan's evil trinity.

Satan also provides man with various services in exchange for man's value. Once a person is attracted, the value God originally placed in man at creation is replaced by Satan's services. Man then indulges in the pleasures of sin, and in the end becomes enslaved by Satan, unable to escape. When man is sold under sin, he becomes a slave of sin, subject to its control and domination, having no ability to keep the spiritual law. How then do we know that man has been sold under sin?

Verse 15: "For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do."

Here Paul is describing that in the old self, man is already sold under sin. The evidence of man being sold under sin is this: what he does, he does not understand;

what he wills, he does not practice; what he hates, that he does. Paul vividly describes the condition of one sold under sin—what he does is what he does not understand, what he does not will, and what he hates. We see that such a person is truly in contradiction. How many times, when we remain in the old self, are we also in such a condition?

Paul is a very logical writer. The three statements he makes here reveal the structure already present in his thought. When a man is sold under sin, what he does is what his mind does not understand, what his will does not will, and what his emotion does not like. Paul clearly lists these three functions: mind, will, and emotion—all are in disagreement, and yet he still does it. Mind, will, and emotion are the three main functions of our soul. Thus, when a person is sold under sin, sin completely controls his soul and drives his soul to do what he does not understand, does not will, and does not like.

Since sin controls man's soul, why then does he still not understand, not will, and not like? It is because man still has a conscience. The conscience belongs to man's spirit, and is the interface between man's spirit and man's soul. The law is spiritual, and man's spirit naturally resonates with the spiritual law. The conscience in the spirit knows what God requires, which is exactly the opposite of what sin desires. The conscience is able to transmit this knowledge to man's soul—his mind, will, and emotion. However, when man is sold under sin, the conscience is reduced to mere awareness, without any ability to take the lead. Thus, man is driven by sin to do in his soul what he does not understand, does not will, and does not like.

Beloved brothers and sisters, although we have already been saved by grace, the Holy Spirit dwells within our spirit. If our spirit is strong enough to take the lead over our soul, we will not be enslaved by sin, but will follow the leading of the Spirit to live a life of the new man. But whenever our old self comes out—the old self which should have been crucified with Christ, but is now alive again—the old self is already sold under sin. Then our soul is brought under the bondage of sin, and we do the things we do not understand, do not will, and do not like. Whenever our soul cannot freely follow the leading of the Spirit, it indicates that we have fallen back into the old self. Our soul is then sold under sin, and we become slaves of sin, doing

what we do not understand, do not will, and do not like. May God have mercy on us.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You! Through Paul's description, You have shown us, on the one hand, the constitution of man; on the other hand, You have also shown us that the old self is indeed corrupt and has already been sold under sin. Therefore, it must be crucified with Christ, that we may be delivered from sin and also from the law, and be free to follow the Spirit in life and walk. Help us not only to understand this in knowledge, but also to experience it in life; that our soul may be led by the Spirit to do the things that we understand, that we will, and that we love. May we live and walk in the new man, full of life and peace. Bless my daily life, that it may be full of life, joy, and peace. We pray all these in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.