

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

Romans 7: 16-18

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 7. We will read verses 16–18 today.

The law was given by God through Moses, the law bears witness to God and reflects what kind of God He is. The law can be regarded as God's law, which should be able to operate throughout the universe that God created; God's law is good, it is spiritual. But ever since Adam's fall, the descendants of Adam are born with an inherent sinful nature, and thus all of Adam's descendants are constituted as the old man. The old man is of the flesh, and has already been sold under sin. The manifestation of being sold under sin is that man's soul—including the mind, will, and emotions—is dominated by sin, becoming a slave to sin, under its bondage, so that one ends up doing things that he does not understand, does not desire, and does not delight in.

This is Paul after he was saved by grace: his spirit was made alive, he now had the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and his conscience also became sensitive, knowing that God's law is good, that it is righteous, that it is spiritual, and therefore he was willing to keep God's law. But somehow there was a stronger power compelling him to do the very things he did not understand, did not desire, and did not delight in.

Verse 16: "If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good."

"If I do what I will not to do," this is still Paul describing his condition after being saved. He truly desired to act according to his conscience, yet what he carried out was not what he desired. In other words, his conscience did not agree with his actions. For the conscience corresponds with the law, and the conscience and the

law are in harmony. This acknowledges that the law is good, and that in following his conscience he wanted to keep the law, but unfortunately he could not; what he ended up doing was what he did not desire.

Dear brothers and sisters, is this not also our condition after we have been saved by grace? Before being saved, the conscience was still faintly present; when we did wrong, when we broke the law, perhaps there was still a slight sense within us that what we did was not right. Yet in our hearts, because we were not caught in our wrongdoing, there was a kind of pleasure in having taken advantage, and thus we were willing to continue taking advantage, even to the point of enjoying the pleasures of sin. This was our condition before we were saved by grace.

But after we have been saved by grace, our spirit was made alive, we received the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and our conscience became more sensitive, clearly knowing that we should not do things that go against the law. Unfortunately, our spiritual life is still very immature, and we often cannot overcome, so we end up doing things we do not want to do. Even though we may not be caught after doing them, inwardly our hearts are bitter, not joyful, because we know we have done what we should not have done, we know we have sinned.

The greatest difference between being saved and not being saved lies in the response after sinning. A person who is truly saved by grace has the indwelling of the Holy Spirit: the Holy Spirit is holy, righteous, and incompatible with sin. Yet a saint whose spiritual life is still immature does not have a spirit strong enough to govern his soul, so his mind, will, and emotions are still led by sin, and he still falls into sin. But after sinning, the Holy Spirit reproves him through the conscience, making him not only know that he has sinned, but also grieve over the sin he has committed.

Verse 17: “But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.”

Paul, through his own experience, helps us understand the constitution of man and how man functions. “But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.”

Paul discovered that sin indeed dwells in him. In Romans 7:14, Paul says that the fleshly “I” has been sold under sin. Then in this verse, he goes a step further to explain that after being sold under sin, sin came in and dwelt in his body; it turned his body into the flesh, making the members of his body instruments of sin. So in Romans 6:6, Paul says that our body is a body of sin, which has thus become the flesh. As long as I am still alive, this flesh will remain, continually seeking to dominate my soul, so that my mind, will, and emotions cannot follow my conscience to do what accords with the law.

Here Paul makes a tremendous discovery, that sin dwells in my body and forces me to do what I do not want to do. Since this is the case, strictly speaking, it is not I who commit these evil deeds, but the sin that dwells in the flesh. Paul’s way of speaking here is in complete agreement with what Jesus said. In Matthew 12:43–45, Jesus gave an example: when an unclean spirit goes out of a man, it goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then it says, “I will return to my house from which I came.” And when it comes, it finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Therefore, after being saved by grace, it is not enough merely to have our heart swept clean; more importantly, we must have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to make His home in our hearts. Otherwise, after being swept clean, even more wicked spirits will come in, leading us to commit even greater sins.

Here Paul says, it is not I who do it, but the sin that dwells in me. Paul is not giving people an excuse to shirk responsibility, for the “I” that sins is still me. What Paul is doing here is helping us to recognize the real problem, so that we can address the problem directly and seek the answer for overcoming.

In Paul’s letters, there is a general concept that when God looks at all humanity, He essentially sees only two men. In 1 Corinthians 15:45, it mentions the first Adam and the last Adam. The first Adam, after man sinned, was constituted as the old man; the last Adam, through His death and resurrection, was constituted as the new man. This new man has Christ as the head and the church as the body of Christ.

For every saint, there are two men within him; today we often refer to these two as the old self and the new self.

If we use Paul's terminology, it is the outward man and the inward man. In 2 Corinthians 4:16, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day." This verse is the best example. Unfortunately, the translators of the Chinese Union Version often prefer to translate according to what they can understand, rather than translating directly according to the Greek. Therefore, it was rendered as "Though the outward man is perishing, yet the heart is renewed day by day," which actually follows the NIV's approach of dividing it into outwardly and inwardly. But according to the original text, the KJV renders it, "outward man perisheth, yet the inward man is renewed day by day," translating it as the outward man and the inward man. Here there is a Greek word, *anthropos*, meaning human being, that is, man. Therefore, the ASV translates it as outward being and inward being. A more accurate translation of this verse is: the outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

What, then, is the outward man? Because sin dwells in our body, and our body can directly interact with the external world, which today is under the power of Satan, our body, by virtue of sin dwelling in it, becomes the flesh. When the flesh interacts with the world, it produces the lusts of the flesh. These lusts directly dominate our soul—that is, our thoughts, emotions, and will. As a result, our soul drives the members of our body to act according to the desires of the flesh, doing all kinds of things, and this constitutes the outward man.

The inward man is the person after being saved by grace, whose spirit has been made alive and in whom the Holy Spirit dwells. The Spirit works through the person's conscience to govern the soul, and the soul then brings forth the actions of the body, thus constituting the inward man. In Ephesians 3:16, "that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man," the Chinese Union Version translation here is still inaccurate. The KJV renders it, "to be strengthened by His Spirit in the inner man," meaning that His Spirit strengthens our inward man. When the Holy Spirit

comes in, He can govern our soul and bring forth bodily actions, thereby strengthening the inward man. Thus, Paul uses the outward man to represent our old self and the inward man to represent our new self.

Verse 18: “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for the will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.”

Even after being saved, we still sin. Most of us may take this for granted, since before and after baptism, outwardly we may not appear much different. But Paul was a very serious person; he knew that baptism declares that the old man has died with Christ and that the new man has been raised with Christ—this is a foundational truth. Yet after baptism, Paul still sinned. Does this not seem contrary to the fact that had been declared? Because of his serious nature, Paul had to investigate thoroughly. He discovered that sin dwells within him, and this sin is still able to dominate his soul, causing him to sin again. Upon careful examination, he realized that there is no good in his flesh. Therefore, while the will to do good is present in him, the actual doing of it is not under his control.

The Chinese Union Version translation is very elegant and also aligns well with Chinese ethical teachings. The KJV translation, however, follows the original text more closely. “The will is present with me,” meaning the desire to do good is beside me. In the original Greek, the word is *para keimai*, composed of two parts: *para*, meaning close beside, and *keimai*, meaning to lie down. A literal translation from the Greek would be: the will to do good lies beside me. It does not mean I do not want to do good; I do want to do good, but what comes out of me is always evil.

Here Paul vividly and clearly describes the outward man, or the old self. The desire to do good lies beside me, weak and powerless, completely unable to resist the sin that dwells in the flesh. As a result, when the lusts of the flesh are stirred, they are far stronger than my weak and powerless will. Therefore, the willing to do good is present with me, but the actual doing of it is not under my control. This “me” here is the old self, that is, what Paul calls the outward man.

Because there is no good in the flesh, and the human will is weak and powerless, I end up doing evil according to the sinful nature of the flesh. Before being saved, perhaps I did not have such strong awareness, and sinning had become habitual. Now, after being saved, my conscience has become sensitive, and the desire to do good is stronger, yet this will seems ineffective. I can repeatedly resolve to do good, but what comes out of me is always wrong.

Here Paul describes his struggle in great detail. I believe many saints have had the same experience: every time we sin, we come before the Lord to confess and repent, and the Lord is always full of grace. As long as we confess, the precious blood shed by the Lord on the cross cleanses us from all sin. After confessing, we all say to the Lord, “I will not sin again.” Yet when the next trial comes in the same circumstances, we fall into the same situation again, and we can only humbly come once more to the throne of grace, asking the Lord for forgiveness in His grace. This was Paul’s experience, and it is also our condition.

I believe that after a few experiences, we will, like Paul, sigh, “There is no good in my flesh; the willing to do good is present with me, but the doing of it is not.” The real answer comes in chapter eight, where we learn the secret to victory. But through this process, we must recognize that the old self is truly worthless and can never be improved. This is also why human ethical education—especially the teachings of Confucius in China—while philosophically very refined, cannot truly elevate human morality. After thousands of years, Chinese people have not been morally superior to others, because the old self can never be made good; the place of the old self can only be at the cross of Christ.

Let us pray together: “I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.” Dear Lord, this is our declaration, and we ask You to help me put this declaration into practice in my daily life. When we face situations, let us not react through the old self, for that self has already been crucified with Christ. Teach us to take refuge in Christ, not responding to every circumstance according to our natural instincts, but first connecting with Christ in prayer, seeking His will in each matter. Help us learn to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit in everything. Bless my daily life. We pray in the holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ.