

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

Romans 7: 22-23

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 22-23 today.

After Paul was saved by grace, he still struggled with the sinful nature of greed, resulting in him not doing the good he desired but instead doing the evil he did not desire. He discovered that there are certain laws governing his behavior. Since they are laws, they cannot be overcome by willpower or effort. For example, the law of gravity on Earth is a law, and we cannot rely on our own efforts to leave the ground. We can jump upward with effort, but after two or three seconds, we will fall back to the ground unless we use another law, such as boarding an airplane or a hot air balloon, allowing the law of buoyancy to overcome the law of gravity, enabling us to stay aloft for an extended period. After this discovery, Paul realized that he could not rely on personal determination or effort to overcome the law that causes us to sin; the way to overcome it must involve using other laws. Through Paul's understanding of human composition, he began to describe several laws that govern human behavior.

Verse 22: "For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man."

Before delving into the scripture, I must first make a clarification. When the Bible was translated into the Chinese Union Version, the translators often rendered it based on their own understanding rather than accurately reflecting the original meaning of the Greek text. Therefore, reading only the Chinese Union Version can easily lead to misunderstanding Paul's intended meaning. This is because some concepts in Paul's description are not inherent to Chinese culture, and the translators used more general terms, losing Paul's original intent. Generally

speaking, English translations, especially the KJV and ASV, tend to follow the Greek text more closely; thus, we need to refer to various translations. This verse begins by saying, “according to the inward man,” but this translation is inaccurate. The word for “inward” in English versions is translated as “inner man” or “inner being,” meaning the inner person.

After a person is saved by grace, their spirit is made alive, and the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within their spirit, forming the inner man. Their conscience becomes sharp, and the conscience, as a part of God’s work, serves as an interface between the spirit and the soul, influencing the emotions in the soul. Thus, the inner man delights in the law of God. Here, the law of God refers to the law given by God through Moses. To humans, it may be commandments, statutes, and ordinances, but to God, it is the principle of His actions, serving as a testimony for God; thus, it can be called the law of God. The law of God is good and spiritual. The inner man naturally aligns with the law of God and, through the conscience, influences the emotions in the soul. Therefore, the inner man, or the new self, delights in the law of God.

The three functions of the soul begin to work in harmony: first, delighting in the law, then the mind begins to consider how to obey God’s law. After mature consideration, it is handed over to the will, which resolves to act according to the mind’s plan. Here, we see that a person saved by grace, according to their inner man or new self, desires to obey God’s law. This desire to obey God’s law comes from the delight in their soul, influenced by the conscience, but it lacks the empowerment from the Holy Spirit. This is a common situation for relatively immature believers: when God’s law is presented, the first reaction in the soul is delight and a willingness to obey.

Verse 23: “But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”

In this verse, Paul explains why believers struggle with sin. He begins by saying, “But I see,” where the Greek word for “see” is *blepo*, which can be translated into English

as “see” or “perceive.” I saw, or I perceived, meaning that while his soul delights in the law of God, he simultaneously perceives another law in the members of his body. The former law comes from his soul, while this law comes from the members of his body. Following the translation of the subsequent text, we call it the law of sin in the members.

We must understand that after Adam’s fall, sin entered and dwelt in the human body, turning the body into flesh and the members of the body into instruments of sin. Paul now clearly tells us that in our bodies, there is a law of sin in the members. Since it is a law, sinning happens naturally. It does not require human effort or planning; as long as a person does not resist, their members will naturally sin.

This law of sin in the members wars against the law of the mind. The Chinese Union Version’s translation of “the law of my mind” as “the law of the heart” is also inaccurate because the word “heart” is too vague and encompasses too much. All English versions translate it as “the law of my mind,” and “mind” should not be translated as “heart” but as “mind,” because the mind is a function within the heart. We call it the law of the mind.

In the previous verse, we saw that the inner man delights in the law of God, and the soul’s delight, which is the function of emotion, leads to the function of the mind, which is to plan how to act. The mind is the most important function of the soul. In a person saved by grace, their soul has the law of the mind that desires to do good because they want to obey God’s law. However, the law of sin in the members seeks to violate God’s law. Thus, the law of sin in the members wars against the law of the mind that desires to do good, and the battlefield is the soul, with both sides vying for control of the soul.

What is control of the soul? It is gaining the soul’s will, causing the will to submit either to the law of sin in the members or to the law of the mind that desires to do good. Once the will submits, it directs and governs the actions of the body. In this battle, almost always, the law of sin in the members overcomes the law of the mind that desires to do good. As a result, the will is taken captive to submit to the law of sin in the members, and the person sins.

In the earlier verses, when Paul said, “For to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find” (NKJV), behind this statement is a process of conflict among three laws. When God’s law is revealed, the law of the mind that desires to do good in my soul immediately seeks to obey God’s law. At that moment, the law of sin in the members begins to act. The law of sin in the members is always stronger than the law of the mind that desires to do good, and as a result, it takes the will of my soul captive. The will of my soul submits to the law of sin in the members, leading to sin.

Dear brothers and sisters, if you compare this to your past experiences of failure, isn’t it exactly as Paul described? Let’s take an example: God’s law tells us that husbands are to love their wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. I believe every brother who is a husband, upon hearing this law of God, has the law of the mind that desires to do good in his soul immediately activated, saying that he truly wants to love his wife. However, the law of sin in his members also begins to operate, warring against the law of the mind that desires to do good. This law of sin magnifies the wife’s shortcomings, adding fuel to the fire, listing them one by one, telling the husband that such a wife is not worthy of love.

The law of sin presents various pieces of evidence, rationalizing why the husband does not need to love his wife. The law of the mind that desires to do good may counter, saying that Christ loved us even when we were unlovable, so we should love our wives with the same love. But the law of sin immediately responds, “Who do you think you are? How can you compare yourself to Jesus?” Upon hearing this challenge from the law of sin, the law of the mind that desires to do good reflects on its own condition, and images of its failures and weaknesses immediately surface. Thus, the law of the mind that desires to do good is silenced. The law of sin prevails, and the husband begins to speak harshly to his wife. This outcome gives the law of sin more leverage to control the husband’s flesh.

The same applies to the wife’s perspective. God’s law tells the wife to submit to her husband, as the church submits to Christ. The law of the mind that desires to do good in the wife’s soul is immediately activated, willing to submit to her husband. Unfortunately, the law of sin in her flesh also operates simultaneously, vividly

presenting the husband's weaknesses and failures before her eyes, whispering, "Is such a person worthy of your submission? He is so weak and ignorant, yet thinks himself clever. If you listen to him, isn't it like the blind leading the blind, and your whole family will fall into a pit? You are far more capable than he is; why should you listen to him?" Of course, the final result is that the wife's flesh prevails, and so the drama of husband and wife's quarreling continues to play out in Christian homes.

Paul clearly tells us here that we must acknowledge that the law of the mind that desires to do good cannot overcome the law of sin in the members. If we cannot get past this point, we have no hope of victory. This is why, at the beginning of chapter 7, Paul compares believers to a woman. We must note that Paul is not referring to women in terms of gender but in terms of the relationship of authority and submission, where believers stand in the position of a woman, which is to submit.

Before being saved by grace, every person was in submission to the old husband, Satan. This old husband is cunning; he does not require people to openly declare their allegiance to him. He only needs people to declare independence from God, refusing to submit to God. A person who does not follow God naturally becomes a follower of Satan. How many people think they are independent, free to indulge their flesh, only to unknowingly become Satan's accomplices? This is the condition before salvation.

When a person accepts the redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ on the cross, not only is their old self crucified with Christ, but their old husband is also defeated on the cross, and the marital relationship with the old husband is annulled. The believer saved by grace becomes the bride of Christ. As Christ's bride, they should stand in the position of a woman, submitting in all things and not taking the lead. Once they take the lead, even after salvation, the law of the mind that desires to do good still cannot overcome the law of sin in the members.

Therefore, in the face of God's law, do not let the law of the mind that desires to do good take over. The proper position is to hide in Christ Jesus, acknowledging

that we are utterly incapable and seeking Christ's grace and the supply of the Holy Spirit's life to enable us to naturally live a life that aligns with God's law as we grow in life. That is, we must always be a submissive believer, not independent of Christ. This is the key to our victory.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You! Through Paul's detailed description, we realize the many intricacies within us. Our past struggles in sin were because the law of the mind that desires to do good could not overcome the law of sin in the members. If we rely on ourselves to try to obey Your law, we simply cannot do it. Lord, help us recognize this reality and learn to constantly hide in Christ Jesus. Through the grace of Jesus Christ and the full supply of the Holy Spirit, may we always live in Your presence and unknowingly overcome the law of sin in the members. Bless our daily lives. We pray in the holy name of Jesus Christ.