

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

Romans 7: 24-25

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 24-25 today.

We thank Paul for his willingness to so candidly record his struggles with sin and for carefully analyzing the reasons behind these struggles, enabling us to see their cause. Paul's experience is universal; every saint who has received grace and salvation will face the same struggles on the path to sanctification.

Paul not only describes the process of struggling but also identifies three laws interacting in this process. Externally, there is God's law, which is the principle of God's actions; for us, this refers to God's commandments, statutes, and ordinances. When we see God's law, the law of the mind desiring to do good responds within our soul, urging us to obey God's law. At the same time, within our flesh, there is the law of sin in our members, and when this law is activated, it is far stronger than the law of the mind desiring to do good. As a result, it takes us captive, causing the will in our soul to submit to the law of sin in our members, and we sin. Paul went through the same struggle and arrived at the same result, leading to verse 24.

Verse 24: "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

This is Paul's emotional outcry — "O wretched man that I am!" This "wretchedness" stems from an inner turmoil, as if pierced by a knife. After receiving grace and salvation, our soul desires to submit to God and obey His law, but the law of sin in the flesh is so powerful that our will must submit to the law of sin. The mind and will are in conflict, and our emotions feel as if pierced, causing great pain. Thus,

Paul cries out: “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”

“This body of death,” as translated in the KJV, is “the body of this death,” or literally, “this body belonging to death.” The root of the problem lies in this body, which, due to Adam’s fall, has been corrupted and become a body belonging to death. This body cannot resist sin, and the outcome of sin is death, making this body a body of death. It serves sin, becoming an instrument of sin, and the ultimate result is death. Therefore, Paul cries out: “Who will deliver me from this body of death?”

Up to this point, Paul has described the interaction of three laws. Externally, there is God’s law, the principle of God’s actions in the universe. Within our soul, there is the law of the mind desiring to do good, which seeks to obey God’s law. But within our body, there is the law of sin in our members, which is far stronger than the law of the mind desiring to do good. As a result, the will in our soul cannot follow the mind’s desire to obey God’s law and is instead taken captive by the law of sin in our members, leading to various sinful deeds. This makes us feel truly wretched! We resolve to do good, but we cannot carry it out.

Dear brothers and sisters, is this not the condition of those who have received grace and salvation? The good we want to do, we are not able to do; the evil we do not want to do, we do. God allows saved saints to go through such painful experiences for a divine purpose. God wants us to exhaust our own strength and still be unable to escape the sinful nature we were born with. God wants us to truly know, not just objectively understand but subjectively experience, that we cannot overcome our sinful nature on our own because the law of sin in our members is far stronger than the law of the mind desiring to do good.

Man’s end is God’s beginning. As long as we still have hope in ourselves, we cannot truly rely on God, always wanting to add a bit of our own effort to God’s grace to prove our worth. However, this small effort prevents God’s salvation from being perfected in us. God wants to bring us to a point where we recognize and treasure Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ

lives in me.” Likewise, we can proclaim Galatians 5:24, “And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

Galatians was the first epistle Paul wrote, during the 18 months he spent in Corinth on his second missionary journey. He learned that the churches in Galatia had been influenced by brothers from Jerusalem, abandoning the gospel of grace for the law of rituals. Paul wrote a stern letter, calling the Galatians “foolish Galatians.” At that time, Paul had already seen the truth of justification by faith and encouraged them to crucify the flesh and its passions and desires with Christ on the cross.

Years later, before concluding his third missionary journey, Paul returned to Corinth, where he wrote Romans. It builds on the framework of Galatians, adding many details. By this time, Paul had a deeper understanding of human nature and richer experiences with the gospel of God’s grace, especially regarding the sanctification process of saints. Thus, Paul meticulously describes this sanctification journey based on his own experience.

We must treasure the Book of Romans. It is the spiritual legacy Paul left us. We must go through the process he describes alongside him and share his lament: “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”

Verse 25: “I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.”

At this point, Paul begins to give us the answer: I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord, we can be delivered from this body of death and from the law of sin in our members.

At first glance, Paul’s answer seems to be something we already know—to rely on the Lord. But precisely because we know it yet cannot do it, Paul tells us we must go through the painful process described in chapter 7 to truly recognize the corruption of the flesh and the powerlessness of the soul. Only then can we learn not to rely on ourselves but to fully rely on the Lord Jesus Christ. When we can fully

rely on the Lord Jesus Christ, the fourth law—the law of the Spirit of life—can begin to operate. This law overcomes the law of sin in our members, which is the theme of chapter 8, which we will explore in detail next week.

Paul spends so much space and time laying this foundation to tell us that the experiences of chapter 7 are indispensable. Without going through chapter 7, without these helpless conditions and painful sighs, we would not treasure what the Lord has accomplished or fully rely on Him. Thus, according to chapters 7 and 8, four laws govern our behavior: externally, God's law; within our body, the law of sin in our members; within our soul, the law of the mind desiring to do good; and most importantly, within our spirit, the law of the Spirit of life.

When the law of the Spirit of life begins to operate, we can overcome the law of sin in our members. But this law operates only on the condition that the law of the mind desiring to do good does not take over, and we fully rely on the Lord Jesus Christ. If we try to rely on ourselves to keep God's law, the law of the Spirit of life cannot operate. In fact, Paul saw this insight when he wrote Galatians, as he states in Galatians 5:16–17, "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish."

The law of the Spirit of life and the law of sin in our members are in conflict, both vying for control of the soul. This description is entirely consistent between Galatians and Romans. However, in Galatians, Paul had not yet seen the experience described in Romans 7, where one resolves to do good but cannot carry it out. Thus, in Romans, Paul goes further, explaining that for the Spirit to triumph over the flesh, a prerequisite is that our soul must not take over. If we try to keep God's law by our own strength, the outcome is that we will lament: "O wretched man that I am!"

Thus, the next sentence summarizes chapter 7: "So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." Serving the law of God with the mind: the word "mind" is often translated as such in English, and "mind" is

more accurate. The word “serve” in Greek means “serve as a slave,” so the KJV translates it as “serve.” Here, it is not merely submission but also service. Our mind seeks to serve the law of God, but our flesh serves the law of sin.

We must understand that when God’s law comes, it distinguishes between good and evil. What aligns with God’s law is good; what violates it is evil. Our mind wants to serve God’s law, desiring to do good, while our flesh seeks to violate God’s law, committing evil. In the conflict between these two laws, the law of sin prevails, and we commit evil. God’s law is good and righteous, yet it leads to the result of sin and death. Therefore, we cannot use the mind to serve God’s law.

When we live in the realm of good and evil, when we have the opportunity to choose, though our mind wants to choose good, it cannot overcome the flesh, and the outcome is inevitably evil. In other words, we are simply incapable of bearing the right to choose. We must completely surrender our sovereignty and fully rely on the Lord Jesus Christ to be delivered from the law of sin in our members.

Dear brothers and sisters, we must recognize that life transcends good and evil. In the beginning, God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden and warned him not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God’s original intention was for Adam to eat from the tree of life, for with life, one naturally does good. Eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil gives knowledge of good and evil but no ability to do good, resulting in piercing oneself with pain.

Now, through the salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ, we can return to the choice in Eden: we can choose to rely on the Lord, or we can choose to rely on our own mind. Only by relying on the Lord can we be delivered from the dominion of sin. If we rely on our own mind, the result is serving the law of sin in our members. This is what Paul instructs us at the beginning of chapter 7: to remain in the position and status of a wife, not taking over, fully relying on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans chapter 6 speaks of our union with Christ: the old man has been crucified with Christ, and the new man has been raised with Christ. Chapter 6 should lead directly to chapter 8, experiencing freedom in the Spirit after union with Christ. However, based on his own experience, Paul inserts chapter 7, describing how,

under the law, one resolves to do good and keep the law but is always taken captive by the flesh, committing evil.

In this chapter, Paul vividly describes the reason for human failure: it is not that the mind does not desire to do good, nor that the emotions do not hate sin, nor that one does not resolve to do good, but that doing evil is beyond one's control. The inner man delights in God's law, and the mind desires to serve God's law, but these are useless because the law of sin in the members is too powerful. Thus, the only way to victory is to not take over but to fully rely on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Chapter 6 tells us that the old man has been crucified with Christ; chapter 7 tells us to be delivered from the law and from good and evil. For when we desire to do good, it results in doing evil. Only by being delivered from the law and from good and evil, fully relying on the Lord Jesus Christ, and letting the spiritual life reign in us can we live a life that transcends good and evil.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for placing Romans chapter 7 before us. Paul's description of his struggles with sin helps us recognize that our old man must be crucified with Christ, and we must be delivered from the law, for knowing good and evil does not help us do good. Only by fully consecrating ourselves to the Lord, placing ourselves on the altar, and letting the Holy Spirit reign in us can we be delivered from the dominion of sin.

Lord, not only help us see this truth but also enable us to apply it in life. Help us learn, in every matter we face, to first return to our spirit in prayer, letting the Holy Spirit reign and rule in us, so we can be delivered from the law of sin in our members and truly enjoy the joy and peace of life. Bless my life! I pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.