

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

Romans 8: 3-4

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 8. We will read verses 3-4 today.

Romans chapter 7 describes the condition of a saved believer struggling with sin. Paul also went through such an experience and testified, "For to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find." Therefore, in chapter 7 Paul sighed, saying, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" Paul later discovered that the problem actually lay in the resolve to do good. When a person resolves to do good, he is in the law of the mind that wills to do good, which means he is living in the life of the soul. When the soul takes the lead, it shows that he is living in the old man; and the flesh of the old man will immediately operate, activating the law of sin in the members, and this law is far stronger than the law of the mind that wills to do good, so that he falls under the dominion of sin. The key to victory is to rely on the Lord Jesus Christ; when a person resolves to do good, he is relying on himself and not on Christ.

We must understand that our old man can never be improved; the old man deserves only to be crucified with Christ on the cross. It is only when the old man has died that we can be released from the law, and only then can we truly rely on Christ and live in the reality of the new man. The new man always has Christ as the Head. When we say that we rely on Christ, yet at the same time we resolve to do good, we are not truly relying on Christ; what we call reliance is nothing more than deceiving ourselves. Only when we cease from all our own efforts and wholeheartedly follow the Lord can we enter into the victorious condition of Romans chapter 8.

For those who abide in Christ Jesus, there is no longer any condemnation. This is not only that we are free from condemnation in the objective position, but also that we are free from condemnation in our subjective experience. For we are living

in the law of the Spirit of life, and the Holy Spirit imparts the eternal, divine, powerful, and resurrected life into us, through our spirit and by way of the channel of the conscience, dispensing it into our soul. Our mind no longer seeks to do good, but under the supply of the powerful life we see our own inability and dare not act independently of God. We are wholly focused on God's eternal will: our emotions enjoy everlasting joy and peace, and our will is able to submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit. In this way we are freed from the law of sin and death and released from the flesh.

Verse 3: "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,"

The law is God's law, the principle by which God operates; it was given by God, therefore it is good and spiritual. Yet the law is limited because of the weakness of the flesh; the problem is not with the law itself, but with the weakness of the flesh, for the flesh has no ability to keep the law. When the law is set forth, it exposes the sin of the flesh. Since the law has no power to enable man to obey it and not sin, this is what the law cannot do. The law can only make man aware of sin, but it cannot keep man from sinning. In the matter of saving man, the law is powerless, weak, and ineffective. Because the law cannot accomplish this, God sent His own Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the likeness of sinful flesh, as a sin offering, and in the flesh He condemned sin.

The Chinese Union Version is very beautiful in its translation, but it loses the force and impact of the original text. When it says that God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, the KJV is closer to the original, rendering it as "in the likeness of sinful flesh," or it could be translated as "in the form of the flesh of sin." The word "likeness" refers to the outward appearance, not the inward essence. But the word Paul used is very direct—"the flesh of sin"—unlike the Chinese Union Version's "sinful body," which is more reserved.

In Romans 7:18, Paul says that in the flesh nothing good dwells. Now he also says that Jesus came in the likeness of the flesh of sin. When did Jesus become in the likeness of the flesh of sin? And why did He have to become in the likeness of the flesh of sin? To answer these two questions, we must look at three parts of man's story.

The first part takes place in the Garden of Eden. Genesis 2:7 says, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." The Chinese Union Version translates it as "a living being," while the KJV renders it "a living soul," which could also be translated as "a living soul" in the sense of a living person whose essence is the soul. When God breathed into man, God's breath entered into him and became man's spirit, and man became a living being with a spirit. The part of man that represents him is his soul, and therefore he can also be called a living soul. We must understand that what truly represents a person is not his appearance, outward look, height, weight, and so on. These are external, they change, and they cannot constitute the essence of a person; and in creation, they came from the dust of the ground, therefore their value is not high.

The soul is how a person thinks, what he loves, and how he makes decisions; this is the part of man that truly has value. After man was created, God placed him in the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 2:17, God told man, "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." The phrase "surely die" in the original Hebrew is a doubling of the word "die," which could be translated as "die, you shall surely die," to intensify God's warning. As a result, Adam and Eve were deceived by the serpent and failed to keep God's commandment; they ate the fruit they should not have eaten, and on the very day they ate it, man's spirit died, and they were driven out of the Garden of Eden. Afterward, Adam lived another 930 years, and then his body died.

Because of Adam's sin, sin entered the world through one man, and death followed sin. Therefore all of Adam's descendants live under the dominion of sin and death. Man's spirit also lost its function and could no longer govern the soul, leaving only the awareness of the conscience to discern between good and evil and to establish

basic social customs to sustain human existence. Yet these social orders and customs fall far short of God's law, and according to the law God gave to Moses, all have sinned, so that there is none righteous, not even one.

The second part of man's story takes place in the time of Moses. Moses led two million Israelites wandering in the wilderness. In Numbers 21:5-6, "And the people spoke against God and against Moses: 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless food.' So the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died." At this time, the people realized they had committed a grave sin, and they came to Moses to confess and requested him to pray to God to remove the fiery serpents from them. Moses prayed for the people, and in Numbers 21:8-9, "And the Lord said to Moses, 'Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.' So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived."

Although the second story describes what happened with Moses leading the Israelites in the wilderness, in reality, all of humanity is like the Israelites wandering in the wilderness: bitten by the poisonous serpent, having sinned, and heading toward death, completely without hope. In those days, Moses, following God's command, made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole, and all the Israelites who looked upon the bronze serpent were able to receive salvation.

So where is our bronze serpent? We must look at the third part of man's story. Fifteen hundred years after Moses, God sent His only beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to become man and to save mankind. In John chapter 3, Jesus revealed to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, that one must be born again in order to enter the kingdom of God. In His conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus brought up a very important verse: John 3:14-15, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."

Jesus directly tells us that He is the bronze serpent—having the outward appearance of a serpent, yet without its poison. Bronze symbolizes judgment, and Jesus foretold that He Himself would be judged by God and lifted up on the wooden cross. Everyone who was bitten by the serpent could be saved simply by looking at the serpent; likewise, anyone bitten by Satan, the poisonous serpent, can be saved by looking to Jesus on the cross. Today, every person has been bitten by this serpent; we all carry sin within us, and our only salvation is Jesus Christ, who is lifted up on the cross.

After seeing these three parts of man's story, we come to what is happening to you and me today. Romans 3:23 says, "for all have sinned," which shows that each of us has been bitten by the serpent. Romans 8:3 says, "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Christ is that bronze serpent—having the form of a serpent, in the likeness of the flesh of sin—yet He is without sin, for He carries no poison of the serpent.

He became the sin offering, and only one without sin is qualified to be a sin offering. Though He Himself had no sin, God placed upon Jesus the sins of all of us. On the cross, He bore God's judgment, and in this way He became our sin offering. Thus, He condemned sin in the flesh. The KJV translates it as "condemn sin in the flesh." Here the word "sin" is singular, referring to the sin nature itself. Not only was the sin nature within us condemned, but also the source of sin, Satan, was likewise condemned.

What does it mean to "condemn" sin? It means that after a trial, with the evidence fully established, the verdict is set, awaiting only the time of execution. As Hebrews 2:14 says, "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil." The devil was defeated in Christ's death, and only then could we be set free. Here we see that God's salvation is truly complete, permanently resolving the problem of sin once and for all.

The precious blood that Christ shed on the cross has already borne the punishment for our sins, and our transgressions have been forgiven. Our sin nature, together with its source, Satan, has also been condemned on the cross, though the execution of the judgment has not yet taken place. The timing of the execution will be after the end of the millennial kingdom. The reason it has not yet been executed is actually for our benefit—to help us be freed from the dominion of sin. So how can we be released from the dominion of sin? The answer is given in verse 4.

Verse 4: “that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

It turns out that God intends for the righteousness of the law to be fulfilled in us first. The law has requirements: it demands that man satisfy God’s righteous nature and character, that is, the righteousness according to the law must be realized in us. The word “fulfilled” in Greek is *pleroo*, which is translated into English as “fill” or “fulfill”—to fill to the full, to the point of completeness. The purpose is for the righteousness of the law to be fully realized in us, resulting in the full expression of righteousness.

How can the righteousness of the law be fulfilled in us? First, this righteousness of the law must be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. In Matthew 5:17, Jesus said, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.” Jesus came to fulfill the law. The word “fulfill” here uses the same Greek word, *pleroo*.

Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in Mary, and His birth into the world was God dwelling with man. Within Him were God’s attributes, filled with God’s righteousness. Throughout His life, He never violated God’s righteousness; therefore, He fulfilled the righteousness required by the law—He fulfilled the law. Jesus Christ, to accomplish redemption, was crucified, and three days later rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in the saved saints. When the Holy Spirit comes, He brings the full salvation accomplished by Christ, which naturally includes the righteousness Christ fulfilled—the

righteousness according to the law. Thus, the righteousness of the law now dwells in our spirit with the Holy Spirit and is meant to be fulfilled in us, to actualize the righteousness of the law in our lives.

However, this comes with a condition: we must not follow the flesh, but follow the Spirit. In other words, in our daily life and in everything we do, we must follow the Spirit rather than the flesh. How can we follow the Spirit? As we have said before, our heart has two “eyes”: the conscience is the good eye, connected to our spirit, while the lusts are the bad eye, connected to our flesh. To follow the Holy Spirit is to open our good eye so that the Spirit can flow from our spirit, through the conscience, supplying our heart with all spiritual riches.

Here I have used the terms “Holy Spirit” and “our spirit” interchangeably. In the original Scripture, the word *pneuma* simply means “spirit,” without specifically distinguishing between the Holy Spirit or the human spirit. According to 1 Corinthians 6:17, “But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.” When the Holy Spirit indwells our spirit, He unites with our spirit to become one spirit. Because He is inherently the Holy Spirit, He brings all the riches of the Lord. Today, being united with our spirit as one spirit, He is able to supply the Lord’s riches to our heart.

The riches of the Lord include light, and this light comes to illuminate our heart, removing every darkness within us. Especially the corrupt thoughts arising from the pull of our lusts are dispelled by this light. The riches of the Lord also include grace, which comes to comfort, uphold, and fill the emptiness left when lust is removed. The riches of the Lord also include joy and peace, which fill our emotions, satisfying us so that we have no other needs. The riches of the Lord further include God’s righteousness. When this righteousness comes, it focuses our mind on God’s righteousness, shapes our emotions to love God’s righteousness, and aligns our will to obey God’s righteousness, ultimately filling our whole heart with God’s righteousness. In this way, the “bad eye,” the lusts arising from the flesh, have no place in our heart, and we are fully filled with God’s righteousness.

Therefore, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the person who follows the Spirit. Conversely, if a person follows the flesh, he opens the “bad eye” of his lusts, allowing his whole heart to be filled with the lusts of the flesh; in this case, the righteousness of the law cannot be fulfilled in him.

Dear brothers and sisters, within us there are still overpowering lusts and temptations, causing us to sin repeatedly and often leading us to Paul’s lament in chapter 7: 24, “O wretched man that I am!” Some are troubled by lust, some by pride, some by anger, some by gambling. Every saint can add his own struggles that bring suffering. Truly, there is nothing new under the sun; 1 John 2:16 summarizes it into three things: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. These struggles cannot be overcome simply by resolving to do good. The secret to victory is to follow the Spirit in daily life, allowing the law of the Spirit of life to govern our heart, so that in the light we can encounter God and are no longer led by our lusts. In this way, God’s righteousness can fill our heart, and the righteousness of the law can be fulfilled in us.

Let us pray together: Dear Lord, thank You. To save us from the dominion of sin, You personally took on the likeness of the flesh of sin and condemned sin in the flesh, opening a way for us. As long as we do not follow the flesh but live and act by the Spirit, the righteousness of the law can be fulfilled in us. How grateful we are that You have accomplished everything; all we need to do is to look to You, follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit within us according to what You have accomplished, and we will be freed from the dominion of sin. Help me to experience this personally every day in my life, to be delivered from the temptations of lust and the dominion of sin, so that I may truly become a free person, enjoying the peace and joy that come from You. Bless my daily life. I pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.