

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

Romans 8: 5-8

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. We'll continue to read Romans Chapter 8 and today we will read verses 5 to 8.

At the last stop of Paul's second missionary journey, he came to Corinth, where he remained for 18 months. He heard that the churches of Galatia had been disturbed by the Old Testament ceremonial law, so he wrote a letter with severe wording—the Epistle to the Galatians—to lead the saints of the Galatian churches to turn back to the gospel of grace. That should have been around AD 53. At that time, Paul had a preliminary understanding of the truth of justification by faith, and he also had a structural grasp of the full gospel that Christians had received.

He said in Galatians 4:4–5, “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” We see here Paul's framework of truth: in order for us to receive the adoption as sons, Christ had to be born of a woman and born under the law, so that He could redeem us from under the bondage of the law. Therefore, Galatians can be regarded as the outline of Romans.

With the framework of truth in place, there were still missing details. On Paul's third missionary journey, he first stayed in Ephesus for nearly three years, and there he established the school of Tyrannus, where he taught daily, debated the truth, trained many coworkers, and sent coworkers out to establish many churches in Asia Minor. Later, because of the riot in Ephesus, Paul had to leave Ephesus, and he went to Macedonia and the various cities of Greece to visit the churches he had previously established. He came again to Corinth, where he remained for three months, probably around AD 57, and there he wrote the Epistle to the Romans.

Generally speaking, it was based on the outline already present in Galatians, but with many details added, thus fully expounding the complete gospel of God.

In Romans we see that Christ was not only born under the law, but also came in the likeness of sinful flesh, and in the flesh, He condemned sin, so 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. Here Paul directly points out the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, a conflict that had already appeared in its early form in Galatians.

Galatians 5:16–17 says, “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 translation in the Chinese Union Version is not very precise, for it is the flesh that stirs up lust; therefore, it is the flesh that strives against the Spirit. The Spirit and the flesh are opposed to each other, both contending for the ruling authority over man, man’s soul.

Of course, when we come to Romans, Paul more comprehensively lays out the four laws: the law of God outwardly, making man know good and evil; within man, the law of sin in the members of the body; in the soul, the law of the mind willing to do good; and in the spirit of man, the law of the Spirit of life. At first glance, the law of the mind willing to do good seems favorable, for it appears to delight in the law of God. Yet this law of the mind cannot withstand the law of sin in the members. And whenever man relies on the law of the mind to will to do good, he in effect declares independence from the law of the Spirit of life in his spirit. Inevitably, he ends up being defeated by the law of sin in his members, and falls into the misery of “to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.”

Therefore, in the end, it is a contest between the law of sin in the members and the law of the Spirit of life. The law of the Spirit of life can certainly overcome the law of sin in the members, but this overcoming requires one essential condition: man must walk according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh. The question then

remains: how can man walk according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh? This is the theme of today's passage.

Before entering into this subject, I would like to remind the saints of a few things: when reading the Bible, it is best to go back to the original text, or at least to consult an English translation. This is because, when the scholars first translated the Chinese Union Version, most of them did not differentiate between spirit, soul, and heart. As a result, these three words were often used interchangeably in translation, making it impossible for readers to understand the original meaning of the Scriptures. At the same time, in many verses where the original text simply says "in man," the Union Version adds the word "heart," turning it into "in the heart of man." There is a great difference between the two. Moreover, the Union Version often emphasizes literary elegance, frequently adding in Chinese cultural concepts or even creating new terms, which can make what was originally a very direct statement become abstract, or even give readers a mistaken understanding.

In this section of chapter 8, which speaks about walking according to the spirit, most of the translators' theological framework did not distinguish between the human spirit and the soul. As a result, every occurrence of the word *pneuma* was translated as "Holy Spirit," whereas its basic meaning is simply "spirit." And in this passage, most of the occurrences actually refer to the human spirit—that is, the human spirit that has been made alive by the Holy Spirit and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. In the Scriptures, when the person of the Holy Spirit is specifically mentioned, as in Matthew 1:18, "Mary was found with child of the Holy Spirit," the Greek text uses two words, *hagios pneuma*, which English versions consistently translate as "Holy Spirit."

In this passage of chapter 8, every time the word *spirit* appears, the English versions translate it as "spirit," sometimes with a capital letter. But in the original Greek text there is no distinction between upper and lower case. Therefore, I hope that the saints will at least keep an English Bible at hand. As I explain this passage, I will also often return to the original text or to the English versions, in order to try to go beyond the limitations brought about by translation, and to understand exactly what Paul is saying to us.

Verse 5: “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. “

This verse explains how one can walk according to the spirit and not according to the flesh. Those who walk according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh. The word *tītīē* (“considerate”) sounds beautiful, but it is abstract and lacks a definite definition. If you ask a wife what kind of husband counts as a considerate husband, you may get many different answers. Paul’s choice of words, generally speaking, is very precise; he does not leave us in vague uncertainty, lest we misunderstand his meaning. The Greek word for “consider” is *phroneo*, which in English is “mind” or “set the mind on.” A more direct translation would be “to place the mind upon something” or “to take something as one’s thought.”

For example, in Matthew 16:23, Peter had just received revelation from the Father, identifying Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus then felt it was the right time to tell His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, be killed, and be raised again on the third day. Peter quickly pulled Jesus aside and said, “This shall not happen to You.” Jesus immediately called Peter “Satan,” because he was not mindful of the things of God—that is, he did not set his mind on God.

Jesus, in His conduct on earth, was entirely mindful of the Father, setting His thoughts on the Father. All that He did was according to the Father’s will, with His mind always fixed upon the Father. Therefore, to be mindful of the flesh is to set one’s mind on the things of the flesh—constantly thinking about how to make the flesh comfortable. Such a person becomes one who follows after the flesh. Those who walk according to the spirit, however, must set their minds on the things of the spirit—that is, to place the mind upon matters concerning the spirit. Only in this way can a person walk according to the spirit.

The mind is the most important part of the human soul. If one sets the mind on the flesh, taking fleshly matters as one’s thought, he will naturally walk according to the flesh and submit to the law of sin in the members. On the other hand, if he sets his mind on the spirit, taking the things of the spirit as his thought, then the spirit will

be able to rule the mind, and he will walk according to the spirit, submitting to the law of the Spirit of life.

Verse 6:” For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. “

The first half of the verse says, “To be carnally minded is death.” If we translate it directly from the Greek into English, it is actually very simple: “mind of flesh, death.” To be carnally minded, in the original text, is literally the mind of the flesh. The mind of the flesh is death. The second half of the verse is the same: directly translated, “mind of spirit, life and peace.” The mind of the spirit is life and peace. The Chinese Union Version brings out the progression between verse 5 and verse 6. To set the mind on the flesh means to place one’s thoughts on the flesh, that is, to continually think about fleshly matters. But when it becomes the mind of the flesh, that is another step further—not just that the mind thinks about the things of the flesh, but that the mind itself becomes the mind of the flesh. In other words, the entire mind is occupied and taken over by the flesh. This is the condition of the old man: the mind of man being filled with the lusts of the flesh, and eventually submitting to the law of sin in the members, with the result being death.

Therefore, Paul repeatedly emphasizes that our old man was crucified with Christ; the place of the old man is on the cross. To set the mind on the spirit is to place one’s thoughts upon the spirit. But in verse 6, when it speaks of the mind of the spirit, that is another step further: the mind is ruled and directed by the spirit. This is the condition of the new man. What is thought in the mind is spiritual; what is loved in the emotions is spiritual; and ultimately, what is chosen in the will is to obey the leading of the spirit. When the will submits, it brings forth actions in the body, so that the whole living and conduct of the person follows the guidance of the spirit. The ultimate result is life and peace.

Dear brothers and sisters, we must be careful and always know who is the master of our mind. The mind of the flesh means the flesh has become the master of the mind, and then the law of sin in the members will capture us and bring us into the

condition of sin and death. Once we realize that the flesh has taken lordship in our mind, we must quickly turn to the spirit, to set our thoughts on spiritual things—through reading the Word, prayer, and singing hymns. In this way, our mind is once again joined to the spirit and immersed in the spirit, letting the spirit be the master of the mind. This is the key to our sanctification. As long as we remain in the mind of the spirit, letting the spirit be the master of our mind, we will experience life and peace. The whole person will feel full and satisfied, the conscience will have no accusation, and naturally, we will be filled with joy and peace.

Verse 7-8: “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

In this verse, the carnal mind in the original text is literally the mind of the flesh—that is, the mind being occupied, dominated, and governed by the flesh, listening to the flesh. This mind of the flesh is enmity against God; it is opposed to God.

In Romans 7:22–23, it is said that in our mind there is a law of good, and this law delights in the law of God. However, the law of good in the mind is not as strong as the law of sin in the flesh. Once the law of good in the mind is stirred up, it provokes a counterattack from the law of sin in the flesh. The result is that the human mind becomes the mind of the flesh, turning a person into one who is hostile and opposed to God. Such a person does not submit to the law of God, nor indeed can he. This brings out the conclusion of the previous verse: the mind of the flesh is death. When a person’s mind is taken over by the flesh, he becomes a carnal man. He lives in the flesh, and all the thoughts of his heart are only evil continually—how to satisfy the lusts of the flesh. Such a person cannot be pleasing to God.

Saints, if you still remember, in Genesis chapter 6 a great event took place—God judged that generation with a flood. The reason is found in Genesis 6:3, God saw that man was flesh, or more directly translated, belonged to the flesh. Then in Genesis 6:5–6 it says that every intent of the thoughts of their heart was only evil continually. They became fleshly men, living and acting in the flesh. Therefore, God

judged that generation with the flood, and only Noah and his family of eight were saved through the ark.

Dear brothers and sisters, we must realize that the flesh is incompatible with God; it is enmity against God. Therefore, do not think that giving way to the flesh is a small matter—it is the greatest stumbling block in our path of sanctification. This is why Paul repeatedly exhorts us to set our minds on the spirit, not on the things of the flesh. If all we think about day after day are things related to the flesh, sooner or later our mind will become the mind of the flesh, bringing about sin and the result of death. Only by setting our minds on spiritual things can we receive life and peace. May it be that through our daily time in the Word, we set our minds on God's word, asking Him to govern our day. Let us often remind ourselves with the words we have read, to set our minds on spiritual nourishment.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for such a clear truth—that to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. We truly desire that the things we think upon throughout the day would be spiritual, and that the result would be life and peace. Whenever we lose the sense of peace, or lack the supply of life, Lord, remind us: is it because our mind has been occupied with fleshly things? Help us to repent and return to the spirit, to experience the rich supply that the Holy Spirit brings. Enable us to continually live in the condition of joy and peace. Bless this day of mine. I pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!