

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

**Romans 15: 17-19**

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 15. We will read verses 17 to 19.

Romans 15:16 is Paul's best definition of his own ministry. We know that God called Paul to be an apostle to the Gentiles, to preach the gospel among the Gentiles and to establish churches. Today, the vast majority of the saints are an extension of the fruit produced through Paul's ministry. This is our understanding of Paul's ministry; although it is accurate, it remains somewhat superficial.

Paul himself tells us the intrinsic content of his ministry: its object was the Gentiles, those who had not yet believed in the Lord. For the sake of the Gentiles, Paul became a minister of Christ Jesus; he was a servant who listened only to the commands and commission of his Master, Christ Jesus. The Lord sent him to serve the Gentiles—but how was he to serve them? He was to be a priest of the gospel of God: first proclaiming the gospel of God to people, and then bringing those who had received grace and salvation to offer them to God. In the Old Testament, the sacrifices offered by the priests had to be without blemish; in the New Testament, the Gentiles offered by the priest of the gospel must likewise undergo the work of the Holy Spirit, being made holy, so that they may be presented to God and be pleasing to Him.

Once we understand Paul's definition of his own ministry, everything suddenly becomes clear. We then see why Paul devoted so much space—from Romans chapter 1 through chapter 8—to telling every saint who has received grace and salvation that after repentance, confession of sins, and accepting the accomplished judicial redemption of Christ, and after being justified by God, they must still walk the path of sanctification and live under the regulation of the law of the Spirit of life. This is because the law of the Spirit of life is able to overcome the law of sin in

our members and also overcome the law of doing good in the mind, enabling us to live a life that conforms to God's law.

In order to help the saints walk on the path of sanctification and allow their spiritual life to grow unto maturity, Paul deliberately used four different aspects of the experience of the Holy Spirit to define four milestones of the growth of life.

The first is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This brings forth eternal life and produces the operation of the Spirit of life; it is the beginning of salvation for every person who has received grace, and it is also the beginning of the path of sanctification. If we set our mind on the Spirit, we can arrive at the next milestone. The second is that the Spirit of God makes His home in us, causing us to become people who habitually live in the Spirit, so that we are able to overcome the temptations and enticements of the flesh.

The third is having the Spirit of Christ, becoming a person who belongs to Christ; in this way, the virtues of Jesus Christ are formed and expressed in us, which are the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. The fourth aspect is experiencing the Spirit of the resurrected One, enabling us even in our present daily life to experience the Spirit of the resurrected One, who gives life to our mortal bodies, so that our weak and weary bodies may be renewed in strength and able to carry out the commission and mission God has entrusted to us.

The details of these four milestones have all been covered before, and the saints may review the daily reading of Romans 8:9–11; I will place the daily reading website in the comment section, as this site integrates both audio and text, making it convenient for the saints to look things up.

Paul's ministry is not only about preaching the Gospel and bringing people to salvation; it is not only about establishing the church so that the saved saints have a spiritual home. Paul's ministry also seeks to help each saint walk the path of sanctification, allowing their lives to grow and mature, so that he can offer saints who have become holy to God, pleasing Him. This is precisely what Paul says in Romans 12:1, that the saints in the church are to present their bodies as a living

sacrifice; this is the sacrifice that the priests of the Gospel offer to God. Paul's understanding of his ministry is extraordinarily profound, and then he begins to explain how he faithfully fulfills his duties.

**Verse 17: "Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God."**

Paul was born into a devout, wealthy, and noble Jewish family. He received the finest education in the Jewish law and originally had the opportunity to become a top rabbi; yet after he was graciously saved, he regarded what he once considered beneficial as harmful. Not only that, he counted all things as loss in order to know the Lord Jesus Christ as his greatest treasure. He had nothing to boast of in worldly matters because he had let them all go. But concerning the things of God, he had reason to boast in Christ.

The work of God was the calling of his entire life. He devoted all his time, energy, and available resources to this one task, and therefore he had reason to boast. Yet Paul says he only boasts in Christ Jesus. He was fully aware of his identity as a servant of Christ Jesus. Christ Jesus is the Master; if it does not come from Christ, he does not act; if it comes from Christ, he will act. But it is not he himself who acts—it is Christ working through him.

**Verse 18: "For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient."**

Everything Paul did was from Christ and through Christ; if it did not come from Christ, he did not dare to mention it. Beloved brothers and sisters, we must understand why God was able to accomplish so much through Paul, even spreading the Gospel to the farthest regions known at that time. It was because he was a wholly devoted person. He could declare, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me," and he could also declare, "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and when

I die, it is gain.” Apart from what Christ did through him, he did not dare even to mention anything else. He was so single-minded that what he boasted of is worthy of our full attention. He was the best servant of Christ Jesus, the finest priest of God’s Gospel, and the matters he brought forth are precisely the examples and models for us to learn from.

Paul’s ministry was to present mature Gentiles, acceptable to God. How did he make the Gentiles obedient? He mentioned three important points: first, through his words and actions; second, through the power of miracles and wonders; third, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us examine them one by one.

First, Paul says he fulfilled his ministry through his words and actions. The Greek word for “words” is *logos*, and for “actions” it is *ergon*, which is often translated as “work” or “labor”; a more precise translation is “words and works.” *Logos*, words, is connected to God’s eternal purpose. We see that Paul’s words were controlled; everything he spoke concerned God’s eternal will. When Paul stood up to preach, he did not use lofty human rhetoric to attract people or gain their respect; he did not use human wit or humor to entertain people so they would enjoy listening to him; he simply faithfully conveyed God’s will, allowing God’s words to speak directly to the people.

Beloved brothers and sisters, when we speak for God, we do not need to mix in too many human words. We may think that doing so lowers the threshold, making it easier for people to accept, but in lowering the threshold, we also dilute the power of God’s Word. We must have faith in God’s Word, because once it is released, it carries God’s great power. Too much idle talk only risks losing the life that the Word imparts.

After words come works. Works are connected to his words; they are the extension of words. Wherever the words go, the works follow. Words are spiritual, and works are spiritual; words help people see God, and works help people experience God. In Paul’s three missionary journeys, preaching was his primary ministry. Once his words bore fruit, he then worked among those who believed and were saved, gathering them together to form a church.

Paul served people with his words and works; this is the first aspect of Paul faithfully fulfilling his ministry. He did what he could do, and the rest he entrusted to God. This leads to the second aspect of his service: God confirming Paul's words and works through the power of miracles and wonders. For example, on Paul and Barnabas's first missionary journey, they came to Paphos on the island of Cyprus and encountered a false prophet who practiced sorcery and continually opposed their work. In Acts 13:10-11, we see that Paul, "being full of the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, 'You son of the devil, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop perverting the straight ways of the Lord? Now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.' Immediately, mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking someone to lead him by the hand." We see that after Paul spoke, God immediately confirmed his words, and the man's eyes were instantly darkened—this is the power of miracles and wonders.

Performing miracles and wonders is God's sovereign work. We cannot define for God when or how miracles should occur; only by being spiritually sensitive and understanding God's will can we see God confirm the message we proclaim through the miracles He performs. During his three missionary journeys, Paul performed many miracles, all done by God through Paul's hands, entirely according to God's sovereignty. If we, like Paul, wholly dedicate ourselves to God, I believe that in areas where our words and works cannot reach, God will also use miracles and wonders to bear witness for us; the purpose is to introduce the third aspect: the power of the Holy Spirit.

If miracles and wonders emphasize confirming Paul's words and works, the power of the Holy Spirit focuses on working within people's hearts. When the Gentiles heard the message of the Gospel, the Holy Spirit immediately followed, working in their hearts—convicting, encouraging, or even piercing them. It is like Peter's message on the day of Pentecost; all who heard it were cut to the heart—this is the power of the Holy Spirit at work in the human heart. Almost everyone who hears the Gospel and believes experiences the Holy Spirit's power working in their hearts, bringing peace and release. Only in this way can a person be saved. What Paul

boasted in Christ was his words and works, the God-ordained miracles and wonders, and the Holy Spirit working in people's hearts—only then could the Gentiles become obedient.

**Verse 19: “in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.”**

The progress of the Gospel was to begin in Jerusalem and ultimately be preached to the ends of the earth. When Paul wrote Romans, he had already completed three missionary journeys, spreading the Gospel throughout Galatia, Asia Minor, and then to various cities in Macedonia and Greece. At the same time, Paul raised up many co-workers and sent them out to preach the Gospel and establish churches. Here Paul mentions Illyricum, a city also called Dyrrachium, which is in present-day Yugoslavia. In 2 Timothy 4:10, it is mentioned that Paul sent Titus to Dyrrachium. The Book of Acts does not record Paul going to Dyrrachium, but perhaps during the two years of co-worker training in Ephesus at Tyrannus' lecture hall, he sent many co-workers out to preach the Gospel and establish churches; perhaps someone had already gone to Illyricum and established a church there. Therefore, later Paul sent Titus to visit the saints in Illyricum. As the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul faithfully fulfilled his ministry, spreading the Gospel of Christ everywhere.

Beloved brothers and sisters, we all admire the results that came from Paul faithfully fulfilling his ministry. Yet Paul himself tells us that he boasts in Christ Jesus and does not mention anything else. His fruitfulness came from being a faithful servant of God. If we are also willing, like Paul, to wholly dedicate ourselves to God, then we can see how much God entrusts to us and how He wants to accomplish His specific mission through us.

Let us pray together: Dear Lord Jesus Christ, today we are graciously saved because of the fruit borne by Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles. And through generations, many faithful servants of God have faithfully fulfilled the ministry of the Gospel priesthood, so that we have the opportunity to hear the Gospel and be graciously

saved. Having received such grace, with the Gospel baton now in our hands, we ask for Your mercy, Lord, and help us also become priests of the Gospel. Through our words and works, let us proclaim the Gospel to those around us who do not yet know it. Just as Paul faithfully fulfilled his ministry, grant us the same heart, that even in the last days of this generation, we may respond to Your calling and bring the Gospel to those in need around us. May God bless my life and work so that they may bear a beautiful testimony for the Gospel. We pray, ask, and give thanks in the holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ.