

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)
Numbers 6:5–8

Peace be with you, brothers and sisters, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it is time for our Bible reading again. We will continue reading Numbers chapter 6. Today, we are reading verses 5 through 8.

Among the ancient Israelites, only males from the tribe of Levi could serve in the tabernacle, and only males from Aaron's family could serve God as priests; this was God's decree. Yet beyond this divine decree, God opened a back door allowing any Israelite, whether male or female, to make a Nazirite vow and set themselves apart for God. Most Nazirites took the vow for a specific period of time, during which they had to strictly observe the Nazirite regulations. These rules were even stricter than those for priests, meaning their consecration was meant to be even more complete.

In the entire Bible, only three individuals were dedicated from birth to be set apart to serve God for life. The first example is in Judges 13:7, where Samson's mother set him apart for God for his whole life. The second example is in 1 Samuel 1:11, where Samuel's mother vowed to set him apart for God for all his days. The third example occurred at the transition between the Old and New Testaments in Luke 1:15–16, where John the Baptist's father set him apart for God to be the forerunner of Jesus and turn many Israelites back to the Lord.

Among these three instances, Samson became a tragic figure in Israelite history due to his indulgence in lust. In contrast, Samuel and John the Baptist became great men used by God to shift entire eras. To be set apart for a lifetime as a Nazirite serving God guarantees that one becomes a truly precious vessel in His hands. However, such cases are rare; far more common are those who set themselves apart for a period of time—putting aside all kinds of sensible, reasonable, and lawful pleasures to purely pursue the Lord and understand His will. Those willing to do so will carve out a whole new path and become a blessing to many.

Before he believed in the Lord, the Apostle Paul was a persecutor of Christians who received grace and salvation when he encountered the great light on the road to Damascus. Immediately after his salvation, he went into the Arabian wilderness and stayed there for three years, completely setting himself apart to re-understand the Old Testament scriptures he was already so familiar with. The light, revelation, and truth he gained during those three years became the foundation for his later ministry in following the Lord and serving the church. We might view this as the New Testament application of the Nazirite vow.

For Old Testament Israelites to become Nazirites, they had to observe three major regulations. Yesterday we read about the first: staying away from wine and similar drink, abstaining to an absolute degree. As wine ferments into vinegar, vinegar—derived from wine—had to be avoided too. Furthermore, since grapes are the source of wine, anything related to grapes had to be abstained from as well. This regulation was far stricter than the requirements placed on priests.

Looking at it through the lens of New Testament application, this extends beyond literal wine to abstaining from all earthly pleasures, allowing oneself to be completely set apart: desiring only the Lord, meeting only the Lord, enjoying only fellowship with Him, and maintaining absolute simplicity and purity toward God. In Matthew 5:8, Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.” Today, we will look at the second and third regulations, starting with the second one.

Verse 5: “All the days of the vow of his separation no razor shall come upon his head; until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to the Lord, he shall be holy. Then he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow.”

The second regulation is that during the period of his vow of separation, no razor shall touch his head; he must let the locks of his hair grow until the vow is fulfilled. Looking first at the literal meaning, letting one's hair grow without shaving doesn't seem too difficult, yet it does not mean becoming unkempt or disheveled. The Chinese Union Version renders this as 髮留 (locks of hair), and the KJV uses "the

locks of the hair"—meaning that as the hair grows long, it must be gathered into neat, distinct locks that remain clean and orderly rather than a chaotic mess. Letting these locks grow long until the vow expires is the literal sense.

What is the spiritual meaning behind the letter? To understand this, we must look at the Hebrew text. As mentioned yesterday, "Nazirite" comes from the Hebrew word *nazir*, which means one set apart for the Lord. In this verse, where the CUV translates "vow of separation," the KJV reads "the vow of his separation"—separation translating the Hebrew word *nezer*. This word is linked to *nazir* and carries a rich depth of meaning.

First, as it relates to the Nazirite, *nezer* means "Naziriteship"—the condition and qualification of being a Nazirite, which requires being set apart and completely devoted to God. This corresponds to "separation" in English. *nezer* also extends to two additional meanings, which hold the key to interpreting this verse. The first appears in Exodus 29:6, "You shall put the turban on his head, and put the holy crown on the turban." This refers to the holy crown worn on the High Priest's head. The Hebrew word for "crown" here is also *nezer*. The underlying reason a Nazirite did not cut his hair is that his hair served as a crown on his head, echoing the High Priest's crown as a testimony of his separation to God.

The second meaning appears in Jeremiah 7:29, "Cut off your hair and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on the desolate heights; for the Lord has rejected and forsaken the generation of His wrath." This verse speaks of Jerusalem cutting off her hair—a personification of Jerusalem as a woman shaving her head. The Hebrew word used here for "hair" is also *nezer*, referring to a woman's long hair. In 1 Corinthians 11:15, Paul says: "But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering."

A woman's hair is her glory, which indicates that the Nazirite's hair is likewise his glory. Yet in 1 Corinthians 11:14, Paul asks: "Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him?" A Nazirite could be a man or a woman. Paul adds in 1 Corinthians 11:11–12, "Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. For as

woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God.” There is "woman" in man because men are born of women, a matter of common knowledge; but there is also "man" in woman because Eve originally came out of Adam. Thus, both man and woman originate from God.

If we synthesize these scriptures, we can summarize four spiritual meanings behind why a Nazirite must not shave and must let their hair grow long. First, it is a glorious testimony, like the crown upon the High Priest's head. Second, it is a mark of reproach: a man wearing long hair signifies his willingness to endure reproach for the Lord's sake. In Acts 5:41, when Peter and John were arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin for preaching, they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.

Third, it is a sign of submission to authority. A man wearing long hair takes the position of a woman; his long hair becomes a head covering for him just like a woman's, and this head covering is the symbol of his submission to authority. This symbol of submission becomes the woman's glory, as well as the Nazirite's glory. Fourth, it is the source of power. When a person submits to God's authority and lives entirely under His control, God's power can be manifested through them. Samson possessed great power while his long hair remained; when his hair was cut off, he lost his power.

In reality, these four spiritual dimensions do not exist in isolation—they complement one another. For New Testament believers, to be a Nazirite, we must first carry a testimony of separation upon ourselves. This testimony will bring us reproach because living out a testimony counter to the world causes the world to despise us and heap shame upon us. What serves as a mark of reproach to the world, however, is to God a sign of our submission to His sovereignty. God's authority will govern our whole being, becoming the source of our power so that we can stand firm for Him continuously and embody the testimony of a Nazirite. Next, let us look at the third regulation.

Verses 6–8: “All the days that he separates himself to the Lord he shall not go near a dead body. He shall not make himself unclean even for his father or his mother, for his brother or his sister, when they die, because his separation to God is on his head. All the days of his separation he shall be holy to the Lord.”

The third regulation for a Nazirite is that he must not go near a dead body. We know that the wages of sin is death, making death the ultimate culmination of sin. When sin accumulates, it results in death; therefore, death is even more defiling than sin itself. During the period of his vow, a Nazirite must not approach a dead body and must keep far away from uncleanness. The text specifically emphasizes that throughout all the days of his separation to God, he must not go near a corpse without exception—every day and every moment must be kept far from death.

Generally speaking, when a person sins, their conscience feels uneasy, making them aware of their transgression. Death, however, is different; the defilement brought by death is passive, and people often have no particular perception of it. This allows the defilement of death to quietly accumulate until a person falls into a state of death themselves. Therefore, a Nazirite must stay away from death—even if his closest relatives, such as his father, mother, brother, or sister pass away, he cannot approach them lest he become unclean. This requirement was even stricter than the one given to priests.

Leviticus 21:1–3 tells us that while priests had to stay away from death, they were permitted to defile themselves for their immediate family—their parents, brothers, or sisters. Becoming a Nazirite called for greater strictness than becoming a priest. From a human perspective, this requirement might seem overly harsh or unfeeling; yet it illustrates that during this period of consecration, the Nazirite had to give God preeminence to such an extent that he had to deny himself, completely set aside the entanglements of natural affection, and let God reign fully over his life. Jesus said similarly in Matthew 10:37: “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.” A Nazirite could not contract defilement from death for any reason during his period of separation.

Verse 8 states that this is because the pledge of his separation to God is on his head. The KJV translates this as "the consecration of God is upon his head." What the CUV renders as "pledge," the KJV translates as "consecration," and the underlying Hebrew word is *nezer*. As discussed earlier, this word carries rich meanings, so it can be translated as God's testimony being upon his head, God's glory being upon his head, the evidence of his separation to God being upon his head, or the consecration of his separation to God being upon his head. Consequently, he could not allow his head to be defiled by the uncleanness of death; he had to be entirely set apart, holy to the Lord.

Dear brothers and sisters, this is not an easy lesson to learn. When we are willing to set aside a period of time to be completely devoted to God, we must give Him absolute preeminence during that time. We must lay down our natural feelings and preferences, abstaining not only from earthly pleasures, but also guarding God's glory and holiness. The locks of hair on one's head represent God's crown, which must never be defiled at any moment—not even by the uncleanness brought by the death of a loved one. It must remain fully sanctified and set apart for God.

If we are willing to practice this discipline, God will surely open the windows of heaven and pour out every kind of spiritual blessing: granting us fresh light, fresh revelation, and fresh guidance, allowing our spiritual experience to take a quantum leap forward. As long as we are willing to yield ourselves completely to the Lord, He will lead us up to the high mountain to behold His glory.

Let us pray together: Lord, we thank You. Through the regulations of the Nazirite, help us see that New Testament believers are called to willingly set themselves apart for God, abstaining from all earthly pleasures, bearing the mark of submission to Your authority upon our heads, and giving You preeminence in all things. As we offer ourselves so completely, may we receive every spiritual blessing, know You more deeply, understand Your will more clearly, and follow Your leading more closely. Grant me such a heart—willing to consecrate myself to serve You, that I may become a blessing to the saints in the church. In the holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.