

The inward not outward, the the Spirit not letters

Romans 2:28 - 29 says: “ For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart, in the Spirit and not in the letter; whose praise is not from men, but from God.”

In these two verses, there are three extremely crucial expressions, which are also very important principles throughout the entire New Testament.

- First, what is outward is not real.
- Second, what is inward is what truly is.
- Third, it is in the Spirit, not in the letter.

God’ s salvation is not to make us resolve to do good

Today, although we are saved, our understanding of the Lord’ s salvation is still not clear or accurate enough. We need to temporarily set aside traditional Christian teachings, doctrines, and inherited concepts.

Generally speaking, people today view Christianity as a religion that encourages moral improvement — a proper religion that helps people correct their behavior, become better individuals, and contribute positively to society. This is reasonable from a social perspective. However, according to the standard of the Bible, this understanding is not accurate.

The Bible shows us that the result of God’ s salvation coming to us is that we become full of light, goodness, and righteousness, then we can be transformed to be a good person. However, this light, goodness, and righteousness are from God and do not come from human effort.

The Bible tells us that God gives us salvation, and the result of receiving this salvation is that it brings forth goodness in us, makes us full of light, and causes us to do what is right. Yet none of this requires human striving, self-cultivation, or reform.

Such prayers and resolutions to do good are ineffective

We say that we have received salvation, yet when we pray, we say,

“God, help me not to lose my temper today. Make me a gentle person. I must not lose my temper.”

Another person believes in God and feels that smoking is not appropriate, so he prays,

“O Lord, I have never been able to quit smoking. Now that I am a Christian, I must give it up.”

Others, every day, try to remind and restrain themselves, saying, “I am a Christian. I should have good conduct.” But do these prayers really work?

Paul once also resolved to do good, but he failed

When a person believes in Christ, the desire to do good is natural. Even Paul experienced this. Therefore, in Romans 7:14 - 24, we can see Paul's inner struggle:

“What I want to do, I do not do; but what I hate, I do. I find then a law: when I desire to do good, evil is present with me. For according to the inward man, I delight in the law of God. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and taking me captive to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”

From this, we can see that resolving to do good—Paul failed. Every time we resolve to do good and fail, not only do we condemn ourselves, but we also fall into a state of misery.

**Give up resolving to do good & receive deliverance
from sin and death in the Spirit**

However, when Paul let go of his determination to do good and instead, through his spirit, came into Christ Jesus—through his spirit he contacted the Spirit of the Lord—all the problems disappeared.

Just as it says at the beginning of Romans chapter 8:

“There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death.”

**God’ s salvation — allowing God to enter into us
and letting His life reign within us**

The salvation spoken of here is God Himself coming into us; He personally becomes man’ s salvation.

Brothers and sisters, we must be clear about one fact: the reason we face negative circumstances outwardly today is that the life within us has drifted away from God.

I believe that when God created Adam at the beginning, if Satan had not caused trouble through the serpent and sin had not entered into Adam, Adam would never have sinned.

Many times we do not understand what sin is. Sin is not merely about our conduct or behavior. Whether you act well or poorly today, without God, it is all sin.

For in the Bible, sin means missing the mark. If we are not living toward God today, we are missing the mark. Therefore, sin has nothing to do with worldly goodness or badness.

Some people are morally upright, and everything they do is seemingly good, yet they do not have God within them. All they do is for themselves. Such people are sinners—those who have missed the mark.

So brothers and sisters, we must see this clearly today: if we want to resolve the problem of sin, it is not by improving our own conduct. Instead, we must let God's life come into us anew, and allow His life to transform and influence us.

It is just like when our body feels thirsty outwardly—it is because we have not drunk water. Once we drink water, our thirst is satisfied.

Likewise, the reason we sin outwardly is that God's life has drifted far away from us, or His life within us remains undeveloped and negligible.

The moment we allow God's life to grow within us, let His life influence us, and let Him reign as Lord in our inner being—at that very moment, we become people who walk in the spirit. We are set free from the law of sin and death, and we are no longer those who live in sin.

The Reality of God's Salvation

God is not limited by time or space. He is within us as our power, becoming our goodness and the very source of our goodness. This is God's salvation. God's salvation, in its fullest sense, is God Himself becoming our salvation.

When we need love, He is love. When we need gentleness, He is gentleness. When we need humility, He is humility. When we need goodness, He is goodness. When we need comfort, He is comfort. He is everything. Whatever we need, He is.

When you are lonely, He is your companion. When you are sick, He is your physician. When you are weak, He is your strength. Whatever your need is, He is able to meet that need.

It is like electricity: when it touches a fan, it produces wind; when it touches a lamp, it gives light; when it touches a machine, it generates power; when it touches a heater, it produces heat. The same salvation works in the same way. When it reaches a person without patience, God becomes his patience; when it reaches one without humility, God becomes his

humility; when it reaches one without love, God becomes his love.

Oh, this is God's salvation—not human behavior, not human effort, but entirely God Himself. Whenever we touch God, every problem is resolved; whenever we touch God, every need is supplied. What is lived out is no longer our love or our conduct, but God's love and God's nature. We become one with Him.

This is the reality of God's salvation.

Lay aside your own ability to do good, and receive God's power

Brothers and sisters, when we come before God today, we must first understand one thing: we have to lay aside the thought that we are capable of doing good by ourselves.

More often than not, the reason we cannot let God come into our lives is that we still think we can do good on our own. Once we are enlightened by God and come to realize that we are utterly unable to do good in His presence, and that everything we do counts for nothing before Him, we will naturally open our hearts and come before God in prayer:

“Lord, I am a person beyond saving. I cannot help myself at all. Even if I am willing to reform and better myself, I am powerless to do so. For all salvation comes from You alone. Only You can help me; only when Your life dwells within me and works in me can I truly be transformed. Set me free from my humble and fallen self, and fill me fully with Yourself once again.”

The Two Trees in the Bible: The Choice of Source

Concerning man's resolution and God's salvation, let us look at Jeremiah chapter 2 verse 12-13. “For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain

of living waters, and dug out cisterns for themselves, cracked cisterns that cannot hold water.”

It speaks of two evils: one is forsaking the fountain of living waters—turning away from God; the other is digging out cisterns for oneself—trying to reform and do good by one’s own efforts.

When a person repents and turns to God, a thought naturally rises up within them: from now on, I will strive to do good and walk righteously with all my strength. This seems like an entirely natural response. This kind of thinking is man’s resolution. They may even pray to the Lord: “Once I lived however I pleased, but now I have repented and been saved. I make up my mind before God that I will never go astray again, and from this day forward, I will only follow the will of God.” This is man’s resolution and man’s own desire.

When we talk about resolving to do good, we need to turn to Genesis chapter 2. It mentions two trees: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We all know that the tree of life has its source in God, while the tree of the knowledge of good and evil has its source in Satan.

Satan is very crafty, and he loves to keep people lingering under the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Throughout history, philosophers and religions across all times and nations have all been entangled in choosing between good and evil. Everyone wants to escape evil, pursue goodness, improve their conduct, perfect their character, and find a way to live an upright life by their own reasoning and self-discipline. They keep setting moral standards for themselves, trying their best to restrain their flesh and do what is right, yet all of them remain within the realm of the knowledge of good and evil.

But brothers and sisters, for us who have truly received God’s salvation, we must understand this: if we keep thinking about how to do our best and become better, focusing on escaping sin and improving our conduct through self-effort, our standing is still under the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and we still belong to Satan.

We are just like a light bulb. To shine normally, we must connect to the right power source. If

we remain connected to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, we can never shine steadily and normally. Only when we connect ourselves to the tree of life, plugging into the spiritual power source, will our life shine naturally. All of this happens spontaneously, with no need for forced human striving.

Brothers and sisters, the reason we experience failure and weakness, and do things that trouble our conscience, hurt others, and offend God, is that we are connected to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil instead of the tree of life. We must understand that God's salvation is not about us striving to correct ourselves or doing good deeds every day. Rather, whether we are able to do good or not, we ought to come before the Lord, draw near to Him alone, and enjoy Him. Only when we take the Lord into us like food and living water can our inner being and spiritual nature be transformed. When the very essence of our life is changed, we will naturally turn away from evil and walk in goodness. In this process, man's own resolutions, willingness, self-striving and self-compulsion have no place at all.

Therefore, we must not only look at our outward behavior, whether it is good or bad. We need to examine our inner condition: are we standing under the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, or are we willing to partake of the fruit of the tree of life?