

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

Hebrews 8:3-5

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. Today, we will continue reading Hebrews chapter 8, verses 3 to 5.

The author of Hebrews spoke many words to the Hebrew believers—words that expound on the truth, words of encouragement, and words of warning. Among these, the most important message is that there is a heavenly, majestic High Priest who has already sat down at the right hand of the Father's throne and is ministering in the true tabernacle in heaven. This tabernacle was not made by human hands but was established by the Lord Himself. This is an extraordinary matter.

Just like those Hebrew believers, we live our lives on earth and will inevitably encounter temptations and trials. When we feel that we cannot overcome or endure, we must remember the exhortation in Hebrews. The foremost truth is that we have a heavenly, majestic High Priest who is ministering in the true tabernacle in heaven. He sits at the right hand of the Father's throne, possessing supreme authority far above all earthly powers. He is also our High Priest, interceding for us and personally supplying our needs.

We must detach ourselves from this chaotic material world and turn to the spiritual realm. Through our daily reading of the Bible, prayer, and singing of hymns, we should refocus our souls on this heavenly, majestic High Priest. If at this moment you feel a guilty conscience, you must quickly confess and repent to remove the barrier between you and God. When the passage of your conscience is open, you can move from your soul into your spirit, just as the high priest in the Old Testament entered from the Holy Place into the Most Holy Place. Within your spirit, the Holy Spirit dwells, and through the Holy Spirit, you can receive all the supply from the true tabernacle in heaven.

Dear brothers and sisters, our High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, sympathizes with our weaknesses. He was tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. He holds the secret to victory. Therefore, we should come boldly to the heavenly sanctuary, to the throne of grace, to receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. This is the key to overcoming the world.

If we learn how to turn from this troubled material world to the true tabernacle in heaven, we will be able to live a life on earth as it is in heaven. However, this requires much practice, especially setting aside time each day to be quiet before God and to transition from our soul into our spirit, receiving directly from heaven. When we cultivate this practice, we will have a portion of each day in which we live a life on earth as it is in heaven—how beautiful that is! May God grant us His grace.

The author knew that the Hebrew believers lacked such practice, so he returned to their level of understanding and explained the role of the High Priest in the New Testament by using the Old Testament priestly system, which they were familiar with.

Verse 3: "For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore, it is necessary that this One also have something to offer."

The high priests of the Old Testament were appointed for the purpose of offering gifts and sacrifices. In those days, Moses led the congregation of Israel in constructing the tabernacle. When the tabernacle was completed, the glory of the Lord filled it. The Lord descended in the cloud into the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle and called out to Moses from there, speaking to him. Moses recorded all the Lord's instructions, which became what we now have as the book of Leviticus. In Leviticus, God first revealed five fundamental offerings: the burnt offering, the grain offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering. Then, He revealed the statutes for the priestly service. In chapters 8 and 9, through Moses, God instituted and trained the priests.

A priest serves as a mediator between God and man, allowing sinful and defiled people to come before a holy, righteous, and glorious God. Before approaching God, one must first offer a sin offering and a trespass offering through the priest to remove the obstacles between man and God. These are the sacrifices mentioned in this verse. However, removing the obstacle is only a passive step; man must also be accepted by God. Therefore, one must continue to offer the burnt offering and the grain offering, and ultimately, the peace offering, which is shared between God and man. The high priest of the Old Testament was responsible for helping the people offer sacrifices so they could be brought before God. The Hebrew believers were well acquainted with these priestly duties.

Now, Jesus Christ serves as the High Priest in the true tabernacle in heaven, and He must also have something to offer. What, then, does Jesus Christ offer? The author has already hinted at this in 7:27, "Who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself." The high priests of the Old Testament had to continually offer bulls and goats—first for their own sins, then for the sins of the people—because these animals could not truly take away sins, only temporarily cover them. But Jesus Christ is different. He offered Himself once for all, thereby permanently accomplishing the removal of sins.

The author will develop these details further in chapters 9 and 10. Here, he is only introducing the idea that, like the high priests of the Old Testament, Jesus Christ also had to offer something, as this is the duty of a high priest. However, the difference is that the Old Testament high priests continually offered bulls and goats, while Jesus Christ offered Himself.

Verse 4: "For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law."

Jesus Christ is now the High Priest in the true tabernacle in heaven. If He were still on earth, He would not be a priest because the priests on earth were established according to the Law of Moses. Only those born into the family of Aaron, from the

tribe of Levi, could serve as priests. Jesus was born from the tribe of Judah, so He could not be an earthly priest. Furthermore, there were already priests of the order of Aaron serving on earth, offering sacrifices and gifts according to the Law of Moses.

This verse once again emphasizes that Jesus is the High Priest in the true tabernacle in heaven, and what He offers is naturally different from what the earthly priests offer. Though the author will fully explore what Jesus offers in chapters 9 and 10, he has already told us in 7:27 that Christ offered Himself once for all. This fulfills His role as High Priest in heaven, distinguishing the priesthood of the order of Melchizedek from that of Aaron.

The Old Testament priests were appointed according to the law of fleshly commandments—that is, based on lineage. Only those from the family of Aaron, of the tribe of Levi, could serve as priests, which excluded all New Testament believers. However, the priesthood of the order of Melchizedek comes from the tribe of Judah and carries both kingly and priestly authority. Jesus Christ is a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Hebrews 7:16 also tells us that He was made a priest "according to the power of an endless life." When New Testament believers receive grace and salvation, they also receive eternal life from God, which is the "endless life" mentioned in 7:16—this is a life that reigns as king. Therefore, Peter says in 1 Peter 2:9, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people." This means that just as Christ is a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, New Testament believers also serve as priests according to this order.

We are all learning to serve as priests under the teaching and leadership of our High Priest. Since our High Priest offered Himself, we, as those learning to be priests, must also offer ourselves. That is why Paul exhorts us in Romans 12:1: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." Paul clearly urges us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. The term "living sacrifice" is singular, meaning we must become a corporate living sacrifice. This is our service.

When we serve God, it is not about doing many things for Him. Serving God means becoming a living sacrifice, placing ourselves on the altar like a burnt offering, producing a fragrant aroma that pleases God. Only then can we truly be pleasing to Him. May this understanding transform our mindset. We are not merely working for God, only to find in the end that we have built something outside His will. Instead, we must place ourselves on the altar, allowing God to have full sovereignty over us, so that we can completely submit to His will. Only by fully consecrating ourselves on the altar are we qualified to work for God.

So, what is the content of our work? Paul sets himself as an example in Romans 15:16: "That I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit." We are all called to be ministers of the gospel, not only to preach and lead people to salvation but also to help them undergo the work of the Holy Spirit, to grow, mature, and become sanctified. Only at this stage can we offer them to God as an acceptable offering.

Dear brothers and sisters, may God adjust our mindset. Being ministers of the gospel is not just about leading people to salvation but also about helping them become sanctified so that they may be presented to God. The first step is easy, and everyone enjoys doing it, but the second step is difficult, and few are willing to undertake it. This is why today's church is full of spiritual infants—many of whom have been saved for years yet remain as infants in Christ. This does not please God.

Verse 5: "who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, 'See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.'"

The priests of the Old Testament helped the people offer sacrifices and gifts, and the things they did were a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. The Jews upheld the priestly service for 1,500 years, until A.D. 70, when the Second Temple was destroyed, and the priestly service ceased. The services they performed according to the Law of Moses were a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. At

that time, the appointed period had not yet been fulfilled, and the Son of God had not yet become incarnate. Therefore, God first established the priestly service system through Moses and set forth the ordinances of sacrifice. These things were merely a copy and shadow, while the true reality was that the Son of God would come to complete redemption, rise from the dead, ascend to heaven, and serve as High Priest in the true tabernacle in heaven.

The One who serves as High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek performs a ministry in heaven that is the true reality, whereas the priestly service according to the order of Aaron was merely an earthly copy and shadow. Before the reality came, the copy and shadow were important because they served as a foreshadowing. But once the reality arrived, people could recognize it because they had already seen its copy and shadow. However, from another perspective, once the reality had come, the shadow and type no longer had any value for existence.

Although the copy and shadow were temporary and their value was in pointing to the true reality, God still solemnly warned Moses to be careful when constructing the tabernacle, ensuring that every item was made according to the pattern shown to him on the mountain. Thus, in building the tabernacle, Moses had no freedom of choice—its dimensions, weight, materials, colors, construction techniques, and even which craftsmen were to build it were all predetermined by God. Moses had to follow God's instructions on the mountain with absolute precision, without deviating in the slightest, because the earthly tabernacle was a foreshadowing of Christ's true tabernacle in heaven. Moses was faithful in all God's house, and he faithfully completed his task by constructing the earthly tabernacle, which later developed into the Temple.

The Old Testament tabernacle was also a foreshadowing of today's church. However, the church stands between the Old Testament tabernacle and the true heavenly tabernacle. The Old Testament tabernacle was entirely material, while today's church already has some measure of spiritual reality. Paul was the master builder of the New Testament church, and in 1 Corinthians 3:10-12, he said, "According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how

he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw," Paul tells us that he has already laid the foundation, and that foundation is Jesus Christ—this is indisputable. But every believer must build upon this foundation, and the materials they use in building are their own responsibility.

Paul was speaking of the church on earth today—some churches are filled with gold, silver, and precious stones, while others are full of wood, hay, and straw. God does not judge today but allows various types of churches to develop simultaneously. However, when Jesus Christ returns, God's judgment will begin with His house. At that time, Christ will test each person's work with fire. Those who have built with gold, silver, and precious stones will receive a reward, while those who have built with wood, hay, and straw will see their work burned up. Yet they themselves will still be saved, though as through fire. Paul was speaking about the building of the church on earth today.

Similarly, when speaking about building, Peter encourages believers from the perspective of the true tabernacle in heaven. In 1 Peter 2:5, he says, "you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." Peter tells us that one day we will all be transformed into living stones and be built by Christ into a spiritual house. Each of us is a royal priest, offering up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God.

Dear brothers and sisters, if Moses was so careful and meticulous in constructing the Old Testament tabernacle, which was only a shadow, then how much more should we be careful in building the church today, which already contains some spiritual reality? Just as Moses followed God's instructions on the mountain precisely, we must also follow God's revelation in the New Testament. Paul's epistles, especially Ephesians, clearly reveal God's will concerning the church. May we all be faithful priests, living the church life according to God's revelation in the New Testament, and together build up the house of God.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for being the High Priest in the true tabernacle in heaven today. Though we are building the church on earth, grant us wisdom to see it from the heavenly perspective. We are living stones, and we must build with gold, silver, and precious stones. Bless my church to be one that follows Your will, so that what we build may endure the test of fire on that day. Bless my church and my church life. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.