

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

Hebrews 8:7-9

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 7 to 9.

The author of the Book of Hebrews has a meticulous and logically structured mind. He first successfully lays out the argument that Christ is a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, which is far superior to the priesthood of the order of Aaron. Christ serves in the true tabernacle in heaven, which is far more honorable than the earthly tabernacle. The service of the high priests of the order of Aaron was merely a shadow of the heavenly ministry; therefore, it is evident and indisputable that the ministry of Jesus Christ is far superior to that of Aaron. From this universally accepted argument, the author then shifts to discussing the relationship between God and man.

The priesthood of Aaron was established through the Law of Moses, which was the Old Covenant God made with Israel through Moses. In Exodus 19:4-6, it is written: "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel." This Old Covenant established the relationship between the Lord and the Israelites.

The relationship between God and man had a completely new beginning after Jesus Christ accomplished redemption. Jesus established the New Covenant with His own blood, a covenant that is far better. From verses 7 to 13, the author continues this line of reasoning, quoting from Jeremiah to prove that the New Covenant is superior to the Old. In verses 7 to 9, which we will read today, the argument is made that the Old Covenant is inferior to the New. Then, in verses 10 to 13, it is shown that the New Covenant surpasses the Old. The author, like a meticulous

lawyer, presents his argument from both a positive and a negative perspective, making it irrefutable.

Verse 7: "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second."

The original text for "first covenant" refers to the Old Covenant, and "second" refers to the New Covenant. If the Old Covenant were without fault, there would be no need or room to seek another covenant. This argument was extremely challenging for the Jews, as they had lived under the regulations of the Old Covenant and regarded it as a defining mark of their identity.

On what basis does the author claim that the Old Covenant had faults? A covenant involves two parties and the content of the agreement; all three elements must be flawless for the covenant to be perfect. First, let us consider the content of the covenant. The Law given to Moses reflects the nature of God. Since God is perfectly righteous and holy, the Law, which testifies to Him, must also be righteous and holy, without any flaw. Second, let us consider the two parties in the covenant. On God's side, He is righteous and faithful, fully capable of keeping the covenant without any doubt. The problem lies with man—humanity is incapable of keeping the covenant, which makes the Old Covenant flawed.

Verse 8: "Because finding fault with them, He says: 'Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—'"

God found fault with His people. This statement is part of the author's argument and serves as his conclusion regarding Jeremiah. Because of the people's failure, God not only rebuked them but also pointed out the deficiency of the Old Covenant—it could not help the people avoid failure. Therefore, the Lord declared that the days were coming when He would establish a new covenant with the house

of Israel and the house of Judah. This is a direct quote from Jeremiah. The phrase "the days" in the original text is plural, indicating not a specific day but a period of time—referring to the era that began when Jesus came to earth and established the New Covenant. The Lord would establish a new covenant with both the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

After King Solomon, Israel was divided into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. The kingdom of Israel consisted of ten tribes, while the kingdom of Judah included the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The prophet Jeremiah began his ministry during the reign of King Josiah of Judah and continued through the reigns of five kings until Judah was destroyed. The mention of both the house of Israel and the house of Judah here is meant to include both the northern and southern kingdoms, that is, all Israelites. The Lord intended to establish a new covenant with all the Israelites. The author deliberately quotes the prophecy of Jeremiah to prove that this was God's eternal plan, predetermined over 600 years earlier through the prophet Jeremiah.

Verse 9: "Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord."

This verse is a quotation from Jeremiah 31:32, but there is a slight difference from the Old Testament text of Jeremiah, as the author of Hebrews is quoting from the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) rather than the Hebrew text. The first half of the verse is exactly the same: "Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt." This refers to the historical event when God sent Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage. Three months after their departure, they arrived at Mount Sinai, where they received God's law.

However, the way God describes this event reveals the nature of His relationship with Israel: God took the initiative to lead them by the hand. The Israelites, having grown accustomed to a life of slavery, were passive in following God, unable to

comprehend His intentions, and unable to keep up with His guidance. We see God eagerly taking them by the hand, while the Israelites passively followed.

During the Exodus, God performed many miracles through the hand of Moses. Like an eagle, He bore the Israelites on His wings and brought them out of Egypt. Upon reaching Mount Sinai, He made a covenant with them, repeatedly instructing them to keep His covenant and to be His people among all nations.

The second half of this verse contains a textual difference: "Because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord." In contrast, Jeremiah 31:32 in the Hebrew text states: "Though I was a husband to them, yet they broke My covenant, says the Lord." From the Hebrew text, we see the deep emotions of our Lord. Not only did He take Israel by the hand and lead them out of Egypt, but He also regarded Israel as His wife, loving and protecting them. However, Israel broke the covenant made with the Lord and betrayed His love and care for them. Here we see that while Israel followed the Lord passively, they actively abandoned His covenant. This brings out the rendering in the Septuagint: since Israel could not remain faithful to God's covenant, God, in turn, disregarded them.

The author of Hebrews quotes the prophet Jeremiah to clearly highlight the flaw of the Old Covenant: Israel broke the Lord's covenant and could not keep it, and as a result, the Lord disregarded them. Although Israel had entered into a covenantal relationship with God, their inability to uphold it led to God's reproach. Even though it was Israel's failure to keep the covenant, this failure also demonstrated the deficiency of the Old Covenant.

As for the saints under the New Covenant, before they were saved, they had no covenantal relationship with God, so they were not required to abide by the Old Covenant. Once they received grace and were saved, they entered into the New Covenant, which was established through the blood of Jesus. This is a far better covenant, and how blessed we are to partake in it! The author quotes Jeremiah 31:31-32 to prove that the Old Covenant was inferior to the New. Although it was Israel who broke the covenant, this also revealed the flaw of the Old Covenant. Therefore, God established a new and better covenant.

Let us all come together in prayer: Lord, thank You! How blessed we are! The moment we received Your grace and were saved, we entered into the New Covenant that You established with Your own blood. This New Covenant has no flaws like the Old Covenant. Even though we often fail to keep it, our transgressions have already been forgiven through the precious blood You shed. You also supply us daily with Your word, helping us grow in life so that we may live in a manner worthy of the grace we have received. For such great grace, we once again offer our thanks and worship to You. We also ask for Your blessing upon our lives, that we may never depart from Your grace. We pray in the holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.