

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

Romans 2: 25-27

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. Today, we'll continue reading Romans Chapter 2, verses 25-27.

What the Jews were most proud of was that they were the chosen people of God in the Old Covenant. They held in their hands the Law given by God, which was the covenant God made with them. Not only that, every Jewish male had to be circumcised on the eighth day after birth—this was a mark on their body, proving that they were God's people.

Paul first dealt with the Jewish understanding of the Law. Merely possessing the Law was not enough; they also had to be able to keep the Law. Otherwise, they would be blaspheming the name of God among the Gentiles. Next, Paul addressed the Jews' mistaken concept of circumcision. Before diving into the main text, we need to first review how circumcision came about—this will help us understand the true meaning God intended for the Israelites in being circumcised.

The establishment of circumcision is found in Genesis chapter 17. Prior to this, God had promised Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the earth. But Abraham's wife Sarah was barren, so she gave her maidservant Hagar to Abraham as a concubine, and she bore him a son, Ishmael. At that time, Abraham was 86 years old. This matter greatly offended God, so much so that He did not appear to Abraham for thirteen years.

Genesis 17:1–2 says this: “When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, ‘I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.’” At this time Abraham was already 99 years old. After 13 years, God finally appeared to him and said, “I am Almighty God”—in Hebrew, El Shaddai, or directly translated, “I am the mighty provider.” God told Abraham, “You must be blameless before Me.” Here God directly told Abraham why He had not appeared to him for 13 years—because Abraham was not blameless.

The giving of descendants to Abraham was to be according to God's method and in God's timing. However, Abraham could not wait. He acted on his own, according to the flesh, and had a child with his maidservant Hagar. Therefore, God said that Abraham was not blameless. But God also revealed that He Himself is the mighty provider, and He is able to make Abraham blameless. Only the offspring that comes forth under God's provision is the offspring that God has promised.

Then God made the covenant of circumcision with Abraham. In Genesis 17:12–13, it says, "He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant."

The covenant that God made with Abraham continued into the time of Moses. God told Moses to build the tabernacle, and He spoke to Moses from within the tabernacle, instructing him on what the Israelites were to do. Moses recorded God's words, and this became the Book of Leviticus, which served as the Law for the Israelites. In Leviticus 12:1–3: "Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel, saying: If a woman has conceived and borne a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days; as in the days of her customary impurity she shall be unclean. And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.'"

From that point on, circumcision became a statute to be kept by the Israelites throughout their generations. Every Jewish male would bear the mark of circumcision on his body. This is what set the Jews apart from the Gentiles, and they all took pride in the circumcision of their flesh. Later, some rabbis even developed teachings about the many health benefits of circumcision. This, however, caused the Jews to forget the original purpose of circumcision established by God: that Abraham was to cut off the flesh and become blameless before God. If a person does not restrain the flesh and walks according to the flesh, it will eventually result in consequences that violate God's law. Now that we understand the origin and original meaning of circumcision, let us continue reading verse 25.

Verse 25: “For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. “

If a Jew keeps the law—and circumcision is included in the law—then circumcision is beneficial to him. Just as God wanted Abraham to be a blameless man, Abraham’s ability to be blameless came from God’s mighty provision, not from his own effort. After Abraham became blameless, God left the mark of circumcision on his body as a reminder for him to continue living as a blameless man. It is the same for the Jews: if they keep the law, then the mark of circumcision is beneficial to them, proving that they are truly Jews. But if they break the law, then circumcision is counted as uncircumcision—it becomes of no benefit to them.

However, the Jews liked to exalt circumcision, thinking that circumcision was above all else, believing that simply having the physical mark of circumcision proved they were God’s people. They boasted in circumcision. Paul, however, honestly told the Jews that if they broke the law, then circumcision was counted as nothing. As James 2:10 says, “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.” God’s judgment is based on an absolute standard—breaking one commandment is as if one has broken them all. Therefore, even having the physical mark of circumcision is of no benefit.

Dear brothers and sisters, the circumcision of the Jews corresponds to the baptism of Christians. And in terms of typology, baptism is a big step forward. God wanted Abraham to receive His mighty provision and become a blameless man. After that, God placed on him the mark of circumcision. In the New Covenant, God’s mighty provision is that He gave His only beloved Son to the world. Whoever believes in Jesus Christ should be baptized into the name of Christ. The spiritual meaning of baptism is to die together with Christ. This is the most complete circumcision, because a dead person no longer sins. Then, one must also be resurrected with Christ, meaning that it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. Therefore, every saint who has received grace and salvation must be baptized—this is the spiritual reality they experience in their own being. But the prerequisite is that they must believe in Jesus and receive the salvation of Christ.

Conversely, Paul's rebuke of the Jews for boasting in circumcision can also be applied to Christians. If baptism becomes merely a ritual for the saints and lacks spiritual reality—that is, if after being baptized they continue to act according to their own will, with their flesh remaining completely unrestrained, committing sin without being willing to confess and repent—then baptism is of no use to them.

In the West, many churches still practice infant baptism today. We must clearly understand that infant baptism is only meaningful to the parents; they are making a commitment to raise, nurture, and discipline the child according to biblical principles. It does not mean that the child has already received grace and salvation. The child must still grow up and, when they have the ability to think and judge independently, must personally decide whether or not to accept Christ as the Savior of their life. After making that decision, they still need to be baptized, publicly testifying that they have become a member of God's household, to bear responsibility together and to share in the heavenly blessings.

Verse 26: “Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?”

Paul, like a meticulous and logically rigorous lawyer, approaches a proposition by first presenting it from the positive side, directly addressing those Jews who had received circumcision. Then, he takes a step back and uses the example of uncircumcised Gentiles to emphasize once again that keeping the law is more important than being circumcised. If an uncircumcised person can keep the requirements of the law—this is a hypothetical proposition, because under heaven, apart from Jesus, there is no one who can fully keep the entire law—so this is merely a supposition. If he could keep the whole law, fully restraining his flesh, would that not be the original intention of circumcision? That is, to cut off the flesh. Even though his body bears no mark of circumcision, he would be living out the reality of circumcision. Would he not then be counted as one who is circumcised? Paul's argument is that the reality of circumcision is far more important than its outward appearance.

Verse 27: “And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law? “

Paul does not stop at the point that the reality is more important than the outward appearance; he goes further and brings out the next step of God’s will—that those who are uncircumcised, if they are able to keep the whole law, will judge those Jews who are circumcised according to the letter but break the law.

Let us first look at the Jews. They were circumcised according to the ordinances of the Law; they had the outward form of circumcision but lacked its inward reality. They broke the law and must be judged according to the law.

Here, Paul goes a step further by pointing out who the judge is. First, the judge must, of course, be greater than the one being judged. Therefore, the judge must be able to keep the whole law. Among all people under heaven, only Jesus is able to keep the whole law. He is certainly qualified to be the Judge. In John 5:22, Jesus Himself also declared: “For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son.” When Jesus Christ receives His kingdom, He will return to judge.

Not only that, Jesus also told His disciples that they would judge the Jews as well. In Luke 22:29–30, He said: “And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” This will take place when Jesus returns to earth to establish His kingdom. At that time, those overcomers who have followed Christ will also sit on thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel.

This passage is a foretelling that in the Millennial Kingdom, the Jews will all repent and no longer be merely from the tribe of Judah, but will be restored as the twelve tribes of Israel. In the Millennial Kingdom, they will become God’s people on earth; and Christ, together with the overcoming saints, will sit on the throne to judge the twelve tribes of Israel.

You may ask, how can these followers of Jesus be qualified to judge the Jews? Did they keep the whole law? For according to Paul’s logic, only those who keep the

entire law are qualified to judge. The answer is yes. In Romans 2:7, we have read, “Eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality.” These who seek glory, honor, and incorruptibility are those who seek God. To those who seek, they will find, and God will reward them with eternal life. Not only have they received eternal life, but they also continue in doing good—that is, they are committed to doing what pleases God. Their life begins to grow, and they live out a life that is in harmony with the law.

In them, the fruit of the Spirit is manifested. When Christ returns, this will be the glory revealed through them—and this glory will differ from one another, “for one star differs from another star in glory.” Yet these people, in whom the fruit of the Spirit is manifested, still have areas of imperfection. These imperfections can be dealt with through confession and repentance, and Christ will become their righteousness. Therefore, in Christ, they truly have fulfilled the whole law—some parts they can live out, and what they fall short in is covered by the blood of Christ. God counts them as righteous, and so they are qualified to judge the Jews.

Dear brothers and sisters, although Paul’s discourse is aimed at the Jews, between the lines Paul also shows us how blessed we, the New Testament saints truly are. The outward mark that the Jews bore on their bodies becomes a spiritual reality in the New Testament saints. If we are willing to wholeheartedly seek God and live a life that pleases Him, then when Christ returns, we will be able to reign with Him. Because the spiritual reality is present in us, we will be able to rise and judge the Jews—this is God’s highest will for every New Testament saint. For this, let us give thanks to God.

Let us pray together: Dear Heavenly Father, we thank You. You have ordained a beautiful purpose for each one of Your children—not only that we may receive grace and be saved, but also that we may live out the life of the new man. What Adam once lost in the Garden of Eden, You desire to gain back in us. When Jesus Christ returns to receive His Kingdom, the overcoming saints will sit with Him on the throne, reigning and ruling over the nations of the earth. For this glorious purpose, we offer our thanks and worship. We ask for Your mercy, Father. In times when we fall behind, come to help us and strengthen us. Through union with the

death of Jesus Christ, may we overcome the temptations of the world and the lusts of our flesh. And in His resurrection, may we live the life that befits citizens of the heavenly kingdom. You have placed us in the church so that together with many of Your children, we may learn, grow, and become Your testimony. Please bless my church and the church life I am part of. We pray in the holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!