

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

Romans 3: 1-4

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. This week, we are going to read Romans Chapter 3, verses 1 to 4.

Last week, we read Paul's condemnation of the Jews: they relied on the Law and boasted in God. Though they were the chosen people of the Old Covenant and held such an exalted identity, they did not live a godly life, causing God's name to be blasphemed among the Gentiles. Therefore, Paul made a bold declaration: a Jew outwardly is not a true Jew; and circumcision of the flesh is not true circumcision. He also presented an important conclusion: what matters is of the Spirit, not of the letter. Because in the New Covenant, those who believe in Jesus Christ all have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; the Spirit brings reality and replaces the letter of the law. Thus, "of the Spirit, not of the letter" is a very important characteristic of the New Covenant.

Paul was a very rigorous apostle, and his argument was well balanced. He condemned the false godly and unrighteousness of the Jews, because their lives bore no testimony. But after issuing condemnation, Paul began to speak of the strengths of the Jews—for after all, they were the chosen people of the Old Covenant, and salvation is from the Jews. Their ancestors left a good example. The Jews played an irreplaceable role in God's eternal plan, and indeed they fulfilled the function they were meant to have. Let us look carefully at Paul's discourse and also learn from his attitude: balanced, inclusive, and uncompromising in the truth entrusted to him by God.

Verse 1: "What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision?"

Paul said that a Jew outwardly is not a true Jew, and circumcision outwardly is not true circumcision. This is because they boasted in outward forms, yet failed to manifest the testimony of God's chosen people in their lives. But the Jews are not without value—we must look at the Jews from the perspective of God's eternal plan with a balanced view. God had already chosen the Jews, and the Jews fulfilled the mission and commission God gave them, which led to the birth of Jesus Christ and the beginning of the New Covenant.

Dear brothers and sisters, this should also be our attitude. On one hand, we must faithfully hold to the commission God has entrusted to us. But on the other hand, we must also recognize God's infinite greatness and power. Besides us, God will raise up many different ministries to reach different people; and in different times, He will raise up specific ministries to meet the needs of that generation.

Therefore, we must learn to be broad in acceptance, inclusive in application; unwavering when it comes to truth, and yet humble. For truth is not defined by man—truth is actually Jesus Christ. He is the embodiment of truth; He is also the way, so that all kinds of people may come to know the truth through Him; and He is the life, enabling everyone who receives Him to obtain eternal life and live a life that is pleasing to God. That being said, what advantage then has the Jew? What is the benefit of circumcision? Paul's question is likely the same one most people would have after reading his previous chapter. And so, Paul proceeds to ask and answer it himself.

Verse 2: “Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God. “

Paul's direct answer is that in every way, there is much advantage—that is to say, the Jews have many benefits. Here, Paul mentions only the most important one: that the Word of God was entrusted to them. Later, in chapter 9, when Paul speaks of the mystery of God's plan of redemption, he gives a more detailed and expanded explanation regarding the Jews. In Romans 9:4–5, he writes: “Who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the

service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.” When we reach chapter 9, we will slowly see that the Jews indeed have an irreplaceable mission. But here in chapter 3, we follow Paul's train of thought and focus on this one matter: that God entrusted His Word to the Jews.

First, the Greek word for “oracles” used here is *logion*. This word appears only four times in the New Testament, and in the Chinese Union Version it is translated consistently as “holy word”. There is another related word: *logos*, which we are more familiar with, and which appears frequently throughout the New Testament—331 times. In the Chinese Union Version, *logos* is most often translated as “Word”. Let’s look at the difference between *logos* and *logion*. *Logos* is masculine, dynamic, living, full of purpose and intent. The word *logos* emphasizes the operation of God’s Word—because this Word is Christ Himself. In John 1:1, it says: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” The Word is the expression of God. The Word is God’s manifestation—full of power, able to work, able to shine, enabling man to know the eternal will of God.

However, in this verse, Paul does not use *logos*, but *logion*. *Logion* is neuter in gender and refers specifically to the statements or utterances of God's Word. The other three occurrences of *logion* in the New Testament are found in: Acts 7:38, where it speaks of Moses receiving the living oracles (*logion*) of God. Hebrews 5:12, which refers to the elementary principles or oracles of God for believers who are still spiritual infants. 1 Peter 4:11, where Peter encourages those who speak in the church to speak “as the oracles of God.” All four of these verses refer to the recorded declarations of God’s Word—that is, the written Scripture, the black-and-white text we now hold in our hands.

In God’s eternal plan, one of the most important missions of the Jews was this: God entrusted His written Word to them. It is through these written statements—*logion*—that God’s Word could be preserved completely and accurately.

In the Old Testament, among the Jews, there was a group called the scribes. Their responsibility was to copy the Scriptures. Before the invention of the printing press,

the preservation and transmission of the text depended entirely on the meticulous work of scribes. This required people who were extremely careful and patient. In Jewish society, this was considered a task of great importance.

Before copying Scripture, devout scribes would bathe, change their clothes, cleanse themselves, and worship God. Only then would they begin their work. During the copying process, if they were interrupted or distracted by any stray thought, they had to stop immediately and start over. Only in this way could the Word of God be preserved accurately.

The famous Dead Sea Scrolls were copied by a group of scribes known as the Essenes. These men lived celibate lives in caves near the Dead Sea, devoting themselves entirely to copying the Scriptures as their life's vocation. The Dead Sea Scrolls contain almost the entire Old Testament, with some of the manuscripts dating back as early as the first century. When these scrolls were discovered in 1947, scholars compared them with the oldest copies of the Bible then available, which dated only to the ninth century. Because of this time gap, the accuracy of the Bible had often been questioned. However, after comparing the texts, scholars found that the discrepancies were minimal—this confirmed the Bible's authenticity and reliability. The Jews were a people specially chosen by God to transmit His Word. They were meticulous, reverent, and full of respect for God's Word. It was because of this that the Holy Scriptures could be faithfully preserved and passed down.

Paul said this was the Jews' greatest advantage—they were the people most suitable to safeguard God's Word. His use of the word *logion* shows that, to them, the Word of God was neutral, objective, and not operative in itself. The same can be true for us today. If the Bible is merely black-and-white printed text to us, if it does not operate in our lives or restrain us, then what we have is only *logion*—not *logos*. And that would be a great pity.

Hebrews 4:2 (the second half) says: "But the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it." When we read the Bible, if we can mix it with faith, *logion* can be transformed into *logos*—and in our reading of the Scriptures, we can encounter the Lord. When the Lord comes, He brings light.

And when light comes, it causes us to see our own wretchedness and, at the same time, see the preciousness of the Lord's salvation. This twofold seeing leads us to appreciate the Lord, and we become willing to offer ourselves to Him. In this way, the Bible becomes a living book to us, and what we read becomes logos—the living, operating Word of God.

Verse 3: “For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?”

Paul had just said that the advantage of the Jews is that the Word of God was entrusted to them. He then immediately pointed out their shortcoming: even if some did not believe, what does it matter? Here we see Paul's deep intention in using the word *logion*. The Jews possessed the Holy Word of God, yet they failed to mix it with faith, and as a result, they could not believe that Jesus was the Messiah foretold by the prophets of the Old Testament—they simply could not believe.

Paul himself often used the words of Moses and the prophets to prove the gospel to the Jews, but what he received in return was their persecution. Paul didn't complain for his own sake; rather, he felt pity for them. But still, what does it matter? Would their unbelief nullify the faithfulness of God? The word for "faith" and "unbelief" here is the same Greek root word—unbelief is simply the negative form of faith. God is faithful. If they had truly experienced the faithfulness of God, it would have produced faith within them. However, if they were closed toward God and could not experience His faithfulness, then naturally they would remain in unbelief. But would their unbelief cancel out the faithfulness of God? Paul again answers his own question.

Verse 4: “Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: “That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged.”

Paul responds with a strong declaration: Certainly not! If God offers you a gift and you refuse to receive it, can you then say the gift doesn't exist? Absolutely not. Jesus Christ is the greatest gift God has given to mankind. The Jews held the Word of God in their hands, yet they did not believe in Jesus. Jesus also said in John 5:39–40, "These are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life." Because of their unbelief, they could not receive life. They could not receive the benefit of the Word—but neither could they prevent others from receiving life.

2 Timothy 2:13 says, "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself." Man's unbelief cannot nullify the faithfulness of God, because God cannot deny Himself. Then Paul continues, "Let God be true but every man a liar." Here Paul reveals the true condition of man: all are liars, all are unreliable—so man's unbelief is actually a natural result. But God is true. God will not change Himself because of man's condition.

Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." Jesus Christ never changes; man's unbelief does not alter His faithfulness. Likewise, even though God entrusted His Word to the Jews, their unbelief is their own loss. It does not diminish the faithfulness of God's Word. As it is written: "That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged." This quote is from Psalm 51:4.

Psalm 51 is David's psalm of repentance after he had committed a great sin by sleeping with Bathsheba. He acknowledged his wrongdoing and that he had sinned against God. The second half of Psalm 51:4 says: "That You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge." This is David acknowledging that when God rebukes, He reveals His righteousness; and when God judges, He shows His justice. Paul slightly adapts this verse to tell us that unbelievers still bear their guilt. When God rebukes them, He is righteous; and when people argue or question Him, God will prevail.

Dear brothers and sisters, we see a world full of injustice and unrighteousness—disasters, wars, chaos everywhere. People then ask, "Where is God?" But in truth,

salvation has long been prepared. It's simply that people refuse to receive it. The natural consequence of rejecting salvation is disaster. And yet people still turn around and blame God. Paul is saying that man's accusations only prove the falsehood of humanity, while God remains victorious, for He is forever true.

Dear brothers and sisters, we are truly blessed to have received Jesus Christ as our lifelong Savior. God's Word has become logos in our lives, leading us to live in a way that pleases Him. For this, we offer our thanks and worship.

Let us pray together: Lord, we thank You! You truly used the Jewish people—for among them were godly scribes who faithfully preserved Your Word. In our hands today, through our daily reading of the Bible, Your Word becomes logos to us: guiding, leading, correcting us. Bless our daily Bible reading, that in the Scripture we would encounter You, experience Your illumination, and be brought into growth in life. We pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!