

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

Romans 03: 22-24

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 Romans chapter 3, verses 22 to 24.

"Justification by faith" is a crucial truth that every Christian must understand and personally experience; otherwise, the foundation of being a Christian is unsteady, and the journey of faith will not be smooth. Yesterday, we read about the preparation for justification by faith: God's righteousness has been revealed apart from the law. Righteousness, on one hand, is God's attribute, His righteous principle, which has been revealed apart from the law; it can be seen as a path of righteousness that has been pointed out. On the other hand, righteousness is God Himself, or more precisely, the second person of the divine Trinity, the Son of God, who has been revealed as that path of righteousness. Thus, in John 14:6, Jesus Himself declared: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Jesus Christ has completed the great work of redemption, preparing the way to the Father, and God has made ready to justify people.

From verses 22 to 24, we find the definition of justification by faith, the core scriptures on this truth. I hope every saint can understand, keep it in their heart, and experience it in daily life.

Verse 22: "even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe, for there is no difference;"

This verse is very rich and can be approached from different angles. Let's first understand it according to the Chinese Union Version's translation, which is similar to the NIV, easier to grasp but less deep. We'll start with the simpler explanation.

Justification, at its most basic definition, is that God's righteousness is granted to us who believe in Jesus Christ. We were originally condemned under the law, having no part in God's righteousness, but now, apart from the law, by believing in Jesus Christ, God grants His righteousness to us.

According to the Chinese Union Version, there are two verbs here: "believe" and "granted." In the original text, there are no verbs, making it harder to understand. For now, we'll follow the Union Version's translation, which is not incorrect and is easier to comprehend. This verse clearly tells us that believing is the only condition. As long as we believe, regardless of our origin, background, status, culture, education level, or even moral standing, it makes no difference; if we are willing to believe in Jesus Christ, God's righteousness will be granted to us.

We never imagined that a simple declaration — "Lord, I am willing to accept You as my lifelong Savior!"—could have such profound effect: we receive God's righteousness. A sinner, once hopeless, now has their life, status, existence, pursuit, hope, and belonging transformed because God has justified them, and this is according to the highest standard—God's righteousness. This is truly immense grace; we need do nothing but believe in Jesus Christ to receive the grace of being justified by God.

In this world, when others call us good, we feel honored, but we must recognize that such honor is worthless because those who praise us are also sinners, and their praise holds little value. But by believing in Jesus Christ, we are justified by the Most High, holy, righteous, and glorious God—what an honor! Dear brothers and sisters, we must have a deep understanding and experience of God's justification; it is immense grace.

Next, let's delve deeper. Some introspective and thoughtful saints may ask: How do we know we have believed, and how can we perceive God's righteousness granted to us? If we're honest, we admit there are many biblical declarations we struggle to believe—what then? As mentioned, the Union Version's translation uses "believe" and "granted" as verbs, but the original text lacks them. The KJV is closer to the original: "through the faith of Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe."

The original uses two prepositions: *dia*, translated as “through,” meaning “by” or “via”; and *eis*, which can be translated as “into,” “onto,” or “toward,” with the KJV using “to” and “on.” If translated directly into Chinese, it would be: God’s righteousness, through the faith of Jesus Christ, enters or is imputed to those who believe.

According to the original, it’s not our faith in Jesus Christ but the faith of Jesus Christ. We thought we could believe, but that overestimates us—we lack the ability to believe; it is Jesus Christ’s faith. This raises a question: How does Jesus Christ’s faith operate in us? This is a good question with a profoundly mysterious answer. We’ll return to what faith is shortly. For now, let’s acknowledge that we have Jesus Christ’s faith, and as a result, God’s righteousness enters us who believe through this faith.

Justification is not merely God’s external declaration, like a judge in a courtroom saying to a criminal, “I justify you”; rather, this external declaration confirms a reality that has occurred within the person—God’s righteousness has entered them. In this process, Jesus Christ’s faith plays the most critical role.

Now, let’s explore what faith is. In Chinese, we often use “faith” (信心), but I prefer the simpler “belief” (信), as “heart” in the Bible has a specific meaning, and “belief” is an operative term that produces an effect in the heart. Using “faith” can blur the interaction between belief and the heart. So, what is belief, and where does our belief come from? This is truly a mystery, and mysteries are hard to understand but can be experienced. Let’s try to understand from the angle of experience.

Recall before you believed in the Lord, when someone preached the gospel to you. The gospel is God’s word, carrying His power. When we heard it, we might have felt it was good but didn’t respond immediately; the feeling faded, and we forgot over time. Yet the word preached to us was Christ: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” This Word entered our heart through our ears. Perhaps our mind couldn’t comprehend it, so we didn’t respond, but emotionally, we felt good, and this positive feeling was our most direct response to the Word. Remember, the Word is Christ; when Christ comes, His faith

comes too. Through this positive feeling, Christ's faith passes through our conscience, leaving a mark in our non-functional spirit.

Generally, few believe the gospel the first time, but each time we hear it and feel good, Christ's faith deepens its mark in our spirit, though the spirit remains non-functional. Eventually, the gospel message truly enters our spirit, quickening it, and our spirit is reborn. At that moment, Christ's faith takes root in our spirit, not only rooting but also conveying peace and joy to our heart. Then, our mind understands, our will decides to accept the gospel, and this decision affects our body, enabling us to confess aloud and accept Jesus Christ as our lifelong Savior.

As Paul says in Romans 10:9: "that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." Thus, true salvation requires believing in the heart and confessing with the mouth; then we are born again and saved. Understanding the relationship between Jesus Christ's faith and our regeneration and salvation, we realize that when we preach the gospel and someone publicly confesses belief in Jesus, we must not think it's our achievement. Generally, Christ's faith has already left deep impressions in their spirit, and we happen to be the one reaping the harvest.

Thus, Jesus said in John 4:37-38: "For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor." So, sower and reaper rejoice together. Recognizing this, if our gospel preaching bears no fruit, we shouldn't be discouraged, as we are sowing. We must believe God's word is powerful and does not return void. Thus, human belief comes from Jesus Christ's faith, and after many times, when His faith takes root, people realize they believe. After believing in the heart, they must openly confess with their mouth, declaring Christ as Lord, to be saved.

I believe churches often encounter long-term seekers who attend for years but can't cross the threshold. Usually, they are relatives or friends of saints, with a positive impression of the church, so they keep coming. Over many meetings and hearings of God's word, Christ's faith has, to some extent, entered their spirit, and

their heart believes, but their mouth won't confess. For some, the gap between heart and mouth spans decades.

For these long-term seekers, preaching gospel facts may have little effect, as they already know them and could even explain them to others. They likely have obstacles they can't overcome—perhaps pride, idols, or unyielded desires. We must ask God for wisdom to identify these obstacles and pray earnestly for God to work, removing them.

One must believe in their heart and confess with their mouth to be saved, as God never forces anyone. Once saved, a great migration occurs in them: from darkness to light, from earth to heaven, from material to spiritual, from death to resurrection. God's righteousness is granted to all who believe, without distinction. In the previous section on condemnation, Paul divided people into three groups: the ungodly and unrighteous, judgmental Greeks, and Jews with a form of godliness. Regardless of the type, all can receive God's righteousness through Jesus Christ's faith—this is justification by faith.

Verse 23: “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”

This verse explains why there is no distinction. In human society, people are often divided into classes: noble and lowly, free and enslaved, cultured and barbaric, those with the law and those without, circumcised and uncircumcised. But in God's eyes, all are the same because all have sinned. They not only committed evil acts, violating God's law; in human society, we classify people as relatively good or bad, with bad people varying in the extent of their sins. But God doesn't see it this way; He values only His glory. When people fall short of God's glory, they sin. Thus, Paul declares that all have sinned because all fall short of God's glory; no one meets His standard.

What is God's glory standard? We must return to the beginning, to God's mission for humanity at creation. Genesis 1:26 says: “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the

sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” Thus, God’s purpose and mission for humanity were to manifest Him, represent Him, and manage His creation on His behalf.

We know Adam failed, and all his descendants failed too. God sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, as the last Adam, restoring in Him the glory humanity was meant to have; glory is God’s manifestation. Jesus Christ’s life on earth was one that manifested God’s glory. If people cannot live out Jesus Christ’s life on earth, they fall short of God’s glory and have sinned.

Verse 24: “being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,”

This verse tells us that the source of God’s justification is His grace; the basis and foundation of justification is Jesus Christ’s redemption. For us, justification’s price is free. Let’s examine this closely. We are all sinners, deserving condemnation and perishing, yet God justifies us, which we utterly don’t deserve—this is entirely His grace. Grace is not just God giving us what we don’t deserve; in the giving, it reveals His love, lets us experience what Christ did for us, and through the Holy Spirit’s work, incorporates Christ’s attributes into our nature—that’s the true meaning of grace. Grace, without fail, is the Triune God working in us, letting us enjoy this undeserved gift. This grace is the source of justification, and its basis is Jesus Christ’s redemption.

The word “redemption” originally means the price paid to buy a slave. We were utterly corrupt sinners, condemned under the law, stripped of freedom, and enslaved to sin. Jesus Christ paid the full price to redeem us, buying us back so we are no longer sin’s slaves. He paid with His life as the redemption price. 1 Corinthians 6:20 says: “For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body.” Jesus Christ paid a great price to redeem us, that we might glorify God in our body; this means living like Jesus Christ, fulfilling God’s original purpose and mission to manifest His glory in us.

Christ's redemption is not only the basis but the foundation of justification. God does not change His original will and purpose. His justification is steadfast because Jesus Christ's redemptive work overcomes our deepest, most shameful sins, even our double-mindedness. Though we are unfaithful, God remains faithful; His redemption is our firmest foundation, while all else is like shifting sand. What are selfish desires, the flesh, the world, or even Satan before Christ's steadfast foundation? They flee, and we are justified freely! Such a great, precious redemption is ours freely, just by believing.

As we saw earlier, even believing is based on Jesus Christ's faith; we pay no price. Honestly, we couldn't afford any price. The best things in life are free and priceless. Entirely by God's grace, through Jesus Christ's redemption, we are freely justified. For such great grace, we thank God.

Let us pray together: Dear Lord, thank You. On the cross, You shed Your precious blood, paying the price of Your life to redeem us. By believing, we are justified by God. In doctrine, we seem to understand, but in experience, we fall short. We confess that in daily life, we often fall short of Your glory. We admit our faith is weak, unable to live victoriously. How we need Your faith! Through reading Your word, may Your faith be added to us, helping us draw from Your abundant riches. In every matter where we fall short of Your glory, strengthen us with Your faith, enabling us to live a life pleasing to You, bearing a beautiful testimony for You on earth. I pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.