

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

Romans 3: 25b-26

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. Today we read from the second half of verse 25 to verse 26.

Yesterday, we already read the first half of verse 25, understanding that God has set forth Jesus as a propitiation, which is a space of grace, or rather, a realm of grace. In this realm, God's wrath is appeased because Jesus Christ has shed His precious blood, paying the full price for human sin. Thus, God can be reconciled with humanity, and people, through faith, can enter this realm of grace, come into God's presence, seek mercy, and receive timely help.

Above the mercy seat are two cherubim, with their wings spread out, looking down at the mercy seat. Below the mercy seat is the ark of the covenant, which contains the tablets of the Ten Commandments, the golden pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded. These three items correspond to God's righteousness, holiness, and glory. The eyes of the cherubim gaze upon the mercy seat, bearing witness that in this place, everything aligns with God's righteousness, holiness, and glory, completely free from sin. This also reveals that, although we were once utterly corrupt sinners, through a righteous and lawful process, we can now boldly enter this realm of grace, restoring God's original purpose and mission for creating humanity. In this, God demonstrates His righteousness in us. Let us read the second half of verse 25 and verse 26.

Verses 25–26, “because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

The Chinese Union Version translates this as “because He, with a forbearing heart, tolerated the sins previously committed.” This translation is not very accurate, as the original text does not mention “forbearance” nor “heart.” A more precise translation, based on the original, is that God, in His forbearance, passed over the sins previously committed. As we mentioned earlier, God’s forbearance refers to His delay of judgment for an era until human sin provokes God’s righteous wrath to the limit of His forbearance, at which point God executes judgment. When God does execute judgment, it is severe and large-scale, not targeted at individuals.

For example, in Noah’s time, the thoughts of people were continually evil, so God judged that era with a flood, destroying all humanity. Yet, even in His judgment, God saved Noah and his family of eight through the ark. In Abraham’s time, the sin of Sodom was so great that it completely violated God’s created order, necessitating God’s judgment. However, because of Abraham’s intercession, God first sent angels to lead Lot, his wife, and daughters out of Sodom before raining down sulfur and fire from heaven to destroy the city.

We see that, in God’s forbearance, He continually gives people opportunities to repent. Even when humanity’s corruption reaches its peak, surpassing the limit of God’s forbearance, and God must execute judgment, He first rescues the righteous in the city. In His forbearance, God temporarily passes over human sin, giving people the opportunity to repent.

For instance, the city of Nineveh was steeped in sin, nearing the limit of God’s forbearance. God sent the prophet Jonah to warn the Ninevites, giving them a chance to repent. However, the Ninevites were enemies of Israel, and Jonah, a patriotic prophet, perhaps foresaw that the Assyrian Empire would later destroy Israel. Thus, he was unwilling to obey God’s command. He fled from God’s presence, boarding a ship to Tarshish—modern-day Spain. As a result, God sent a great fish to swallow Jonah. After three days and nights in the fish’s belly, Jonah repented before God, and the fish spit Jonah out onto the dry land.

God’s command came to Jonah a second time, and he traveled three days to reach Nineveh. After walking one day into the city, he simply proclaimed God’s word: “Yet

forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” Remarkably, this reluctant prophet’s unwilling preaching brought tremendous results. The entire city, from the king to the smallest child, put on sackcloth, turned from their evil ways, and humbly cried out to God. Because of the Ninevites’ repentance, Nineveh was spared from judgment—an example of God’s forbearance.

In God’s forbearance, He temporarily passes over human sin to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time. God does not immediately deal with human sin because He intends to deal with it through His own Son. When the fullness of time came, God sent His only begotten Son into the world as a man. He lived a perfect human life and ultimately died on the cross for humanity’s sins. God transferred all of humanity’s sins onto His beloved Son and dealt with those sins in His Son’s body. Thus, God has now demonstrated His righteousness.

God’s demonstration has two aspects. First, it shows that God is righteous. Everything He does fully aligns with the principles of righteousness. Therefore, His forbearance is righteous, His judgment is righteous, and His righteousness is absolute. To uphold this absolute righteousness, God made the greatest sacrifice—giving His only begotten Son to bear the punishment for sin. In this way, God has demonstrated His righteousness to the entire universe. Second, God justifies those who have faith in Jesus. Not only is God Himself righteous, but He is also the justifier, declaring righteous those who believe in Jesus, imputing His righteousness to everyone who believes in Him.

Dear brothers and sisters, God’s justification is entirely by His grace, and this grace is none other than Jesus Christ. As long as a person is willing to believe and accept the redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ, God can declare them righteous. This has nothing to do with our works, and we do not need to make any effort. God has fully prepared everything; we only need to believe to receive His justification.

We often fail to truly see this. Sometimes, when we commit a grave mistake, we feel unworthy to come before God and even doubt whether God can forgive such a great sin. If we truly understand God’s grace and His justification, we will hear God say to us: “My child, do not doubt. No matter how great your sin, I can forgive

it. You may think you are wretched now, but that only shows you do not yet know yourself. If I had not been sustaining you, you would be far worse. I am a righteous God, and I am the justifier. My justification of you is not based on what you do but on what you believe. Jesus has paid the full price for all sins, so I can declare you righteous.”

This understanding is already profound, but we can go deeper. In the Greek text, it does not say “those who believe in Jesus.” According to the Greek, translated into English as “the one of the faith of Jesus,” it is not about those who believe in Jesus but those who have the faith of Jesus. We mentioned earlier that humans lack the capacity to believe. When we hear the Word, the Word comes in, bringing with it the faith of Jesus. As Jesus said in the parable of the sower, the faith of Jesus is sown into us, becoming the source of our faith. This faith is eternal and incorruptible. Our faith is born from Jesus’ faith, and through our spiritual experiences and practices, our faith can continue to grow.

However, our faith is often unreliable. Even after believing in the Lord, we may still love the world or be led astray by sinful desires, causing us to stumble in weakness. But the source of our faith—Jesus’ faith—never fails. Seasoned saints can testify that sometimes, in moments of extreme weakness or overwhelming circumstances, we may feel like giving up or even doubt whether the Lord is still with us. Yet, no matter how dire our situation, deep within us, there is always an inexplicable sense of stability and peace. This feeling sustains us, preventing us from completely giving up. This is the faith of Jesus. This faith is not only eternal but can also, in the right circumstances, rekindle our faith, enabling us to draw upon the riches of the Spirit through faith. This helps us overcome various sinful desires, transforming our inner being to align with righteousness. Our inner righteousness corresponds with God’s external justification, enabling us to live a godly life that accords with righteousness. We must treasure the faith of Jesus.

We can go even deeper. If we have the faith of Jesus, shouldn’t the preposition be “with,” as in “the one with the faith of Jesus”? However, in the original Greek, it is “the one of the faith of Jesus.” The preposition “of” implies belonging to a certain kind or race. For example, if I say, “I am of the Chinese,” it means I belong to the

Chinese race. Here, Paul seems to introduce the concept that those who have the faith of Jesus form a race. In this race, everyone is justified. This concept of a race lays the groundwork for chapter 4, where it is explained that New Testament saints are the descendants of Abraham's faith, forming a race of faith. This introduces the idea of a life relationship. This is why, in the church, despite having no natural blood ties, we call each other brothers and sisters. We all belong to the race produced by the faith of Jesus, sharing the same eternal life from God. How precious this is!

Let us pray together: Dear Lord Jesus, we confess that in matters of faith, we lack the wisdom to truly understand. We never imagined that the words of the gospel could bring the faith of Jesus into us. The faith of Jesus not only gives birth to our faith but also constitutes all who believe in Jesus Christ as a race, justified by God. Lord, help us, especially in the many areas where our faith falters—perhaps in our family life, our relationships with our children, or our relationships with the saints in the church. So often, we feel we cannot trust or want to give up. Lord, help us see that the source of our faith is the faith of Jesus. By our own strength, we truly cannot do it. But You are faithful, able to overcome all our difficulties and weaknesses. Help us see that our faith comes from Jesus, for Jesus Christ is the author and perfecter of our faith. Thus, we can simply look to the salvation of Jesus Christ to accomplish what we thought impossible and bless our lives. We pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.