

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

Romans 3: 27-31

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank God, it's time to read the Bible again. Let's continue to read Romans Chapter 3. We will read verses 27-31 today.

Justification by faith is a very important truth. Every Christian is justified by God because of their faith in Jesus. Paul leads us to see even deeper—that even our believing begins with Jesus, because on our own, we have no ability to believe. The source of our faith is the faith of Jesus. It is His faith that enters into us and takes root through the word of the Gospel, and only then can our own faith be brought forth.

Jesus is righteous, and the faith of Jesus carries His righteousness. It forms righteousness within us, so that while God declares us righteous outwardly, we also have a righteous life within. Only then is it possible for us to live a righteous life. Thank the Lord! Paul's teaching on justification by faith is truly clear and profound. On the level of truth, after finishing his explanation of justification by faith, Paul now begins to draw his conclusion.

Verse 27: "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. "

Where then is boasting? There is no room for it. Justification by faith is purely by grace. Even our believing began with Jesus—we merely received it. Therefore, there is nothing for us to boast about. Paul wisely brings up boasting as a way to test ourselves. If there's anything you feel you can boast about, then you're already off track—you are no longer standing in the principle of grace. Dear brothers and sisters, this is a very simple yet powerful test.

How many times have we heard preachers speak of their miraculous experiences and great achievements, and we truly admire them in our hearts? If Paul were present, he would ask, "What is there to boast about? Isn't it all by grace?" If someone boasts, they have already deviated from the principle of grace. Paul also says that if a person boasts in matters of grace, then they are using the wrong approach. So Paul follows up with a question: by what method? By the law of works, or by the law of faith? The Chinese Union Version translation is rather awkward, but the English is very straightforward— "the law of works or the law of faith." Perhaps we could render it: the law of deeds, or the law of faith.

A law is a kind of natural principle—it functions effortlessly and brings about its effect naturally. For example, gravity is a natural law; if a person simply let go of something in their hand, it naturally falls downward. That's a natural law. Here, Paul is asking: by which law is a person justified by God? Is it by the law of works? Of course not. It is by the law of faith.

This is actually one of the key differences between Christianity and other religions. Almost all religions encourage people to do good, and thus carry the concept of accumulating merit. They teach that doing good will lead to good rewards, and so they motivate people to perform good deeds to store up merit for themselves— only then will the god they worship reward them for their good actions. But Christianity is entirely different. God first comes to act on behalf of man, resolving the problem of sin. Once a person believes, they receive a life that comes from God. This life naturally produces a living that is full of good works. It is God who gives people the ability to do good, not people striving to do good in order to earn something back from God.

Therefore, on this point, Paul speaks very strongly: it is not by the law of works—that is, we do not obtain God's grace through our own efforts. For example, the offerings given by the saints are a voluntary expression of gratitude to God; they are not meant to earn God's praise, gain the respect of others, or secure a position in the church. That's why saints must live by the law of faith.

The law of faith can feel a bit abstract—what exactly is the law of faith? Many people mistakenly think that self-confidence is the same as faith. We often hear certain saints who are extremely self-assured firmly declare that they’ve received direction from God in faith to do something that seems nearly impossible; and often, they gain the admiration of many onlookers. I wouldn’t dare say that such things are never from God, but personally, I think the chances are not very high.

First of all, those who boast are most likely acting out of works, not out of faith. Secondly, the source of our faith is the faith of Jesus. When Jesus was carrying out His ministry on earth, He performed many miracles, but not a single one was for Himself. He could feed five thousand with five loaves and two fish, but when He was hungry, He simply sent His disciples to buy bread. Jesus lived His own life in complete submission to the natural laws set by God. When someone forces themselves to attempt something nearly impossible, it's very likely not from the faith of Jesus. Thirdly, the law of faith usually operates through following the leading of the Holy Spirit. In the Bible, the Holy Spirit is symbolized by a dove—gentle and delicate. When someone makes an aggressive and assertive declaration, it’s most likely connected to the flesh and blind self-confidence. Paul, in his wisdom, gives us a simple way to discern whether something is from works or from faith: boasting. If it truly comes from faith, there is nothing to boast about.

Verse 28: “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.”

So, we have made it certain— “made certain” is from the Greek word *logizomai*, which is the verb related to logic; in other words, it means to think through and reason carefully, ultimately arriving at a conclusion. Perhaps translating it as “counted” or “reckoned” would be better. Based on what Paul said earlier, we reach a conclusion—that we count it certain: a person is justified by faith, not by observing the law. Observing the law depends on works, not faith, and therefore cannot justify anyone. Following the law offers no help at all in justification.

Verse 29: “Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also,”

Paul then asks a rhetorical question: If justification comes through the law, the Jews have the law, but the Gentiles do not—does that mean God is only the God of the Jews? Of course not. God is also the God of the Gentiles; He shows no partiality. God desires to be the God of both Jews and Gentiles. Therefore, God would not require people to follow the law in order to be justified. This is another proof of justification by faith.

Verse 30: “since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.”

God is one; that is, we have only one God, the only true God. He is the God of the Jews, and He is also the God of the Gentiles. The Jews were circumcised according to the law, while the Gentiles, having no law, were not circumcised. Yet whether one is circumcised or not, justification comes through faith. Therefore, Paul confidently declares that God justifies the circumcised Jew by faith, and He also justifies the uncircumcised Gentile by faith.

In Chinese, Paul can sound a bit repetitive, saying the same thing over and over, but some of the finer details aren't obvious in the Chinese text. Both Jews and Gentiles are justified by faith, and in Chinese it simply reads “by faith,” but in the original Greek two different prepositions are used. For the Jews, justification by faith uses *ek*, while for the Gentiles, it uses *dia*. *Ek* means “out of,” which can be translated as “from faith,” whereas *dia* means “through,” which can be rendered as “through faith.” So, Jews are justified from faith, and Gentiles are justified through faith.

Because the Jews were God's chosen people in the Old Testament, they already belonged to God. But in the New Testament, God took a step further—He sent His only begotten Son to accomplish redemption for mankind; these things were foretold to the Jews through the prophets in the Old Testament, though most of

the Jews were too dull to perceive them. However, their dullness does not change the promises God made to them. Therefore, the Jews are justified from faith, because God's promises were originally given to them.

The Gentiles originally had no part or connection with God, but through Jesus Christ's sacrifice and shedding of His blood to accomplish redemption, the Gentiles can also be justified by faith. Though both are justified by faith, there is a subtle difference. This difference is revealed in Romans chapters 9 to 11, where Paul unfolds the mystery of God's order in salvation. Here, a foreshadowing of that mystery is first laid down.

Verse 31: "Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law."

Since both the Jews who have the law and the Gentiles who do not have the law can be justified by faith, it might seem that the law is useless. Should we then reject the law by faith? Paul often uses this method of asking and answering questions himself to explain the truth. He is like a careful and logical lawyer who anticipates every possible question and then provides us with the answer. This broadens our understanding and helps train us to have comprehensive thinking, enabling us to resist the enemy's various sophistries.

Should we reject the law by faith? Paul's answer is a definite no—absolutely certain and unequivocal. It is not to abolish the law, but to uphold it. As we mentioned before, the law reflects the character of the One who gave it: God is good, and naturally, His law is good as well. The law bears witness to God, revealing His righteousness and holiness. Therefore, justification by faith is not meant to abolish the law, but to strengthen it.

Paul's statement is based on what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5:17-18: "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is

fulfilled.” Jesus came and, through His death, satisfied God’s righteous demands in a negative way. All that the law condemns is included in Jesus’ death. Through faith, we are united with Jesus’ death; thus, we are included in His death, and our debt of sin is fully paid.

On the other hand, Jesus also came in a positive way—through His resurrection, His faith can enter into people, becoming the source of their faith. This enables people, through faith, to receive the full supply of the Holy Spirit and live a life that is righteous. In this way, the law is fulfilled and also upheld.

Dear brothers and sisters, justification by faith is not about obeying the law; it simply requires that we, through faith, receive all that Jesus Christ has accomplished. Then God the Father will declare us righteous. This gives us an identity and a status that has nothing to do with our actions. However, once we have this identity and status, we must continue to rely on faith to receive the supply of the Holy Spirit, enabling us to live a life that aligns with the law. In doing so, we fulfill the law and uphold it.

Let us pray together: Dear Lord, thank You! Through Paul’s teaching, You have made the truth of justification by faith very clear to us—that everything about us is entirely by grace, and we only need to receive it to be justified by God. This leaves us no room to boast, because we have no merit of our own; it is all because of the Father’s love for us. Jesus Christ paid the price of redemption for us, so we can receive justification in grace. And by this simple receiving, we gain the life that comes from God, become children of the Father, and are declared righteous by Him. This is a simple yet deeply profound truth. Help us, after experiencing such great grace, to worship You with grateful hearts and to praise You. Knowing that we are but sinners saved by grace, we dare not boast but can only give all honor and glory to the Lamb who sits on the throne. We pray in the holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

