

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

Romans 5: 20-21

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 5. We will read verses 20 and 21 today.

In the discourse on the organic salvation, Paul makes a comparison between what we inherited in Adam and the gift we received in Christ, and his conclusion is that the gift in Christ is far greater than the inheritance in Adam. In this passage, Paul specifically uses three "much more": in verse 15, the grace and the gift of Christ have abounded to many; in verse 17, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life; in verse 20, grace abounded much more.

In the organic salvation, Paul emphasizes the grace and the gift of Christ. The gift of Christ is far greater than the inheritance of Adam, and this is very evident. Yet what is comparatively hidden but equally important is that Paul reveals the path of the growth of life. We should be thankful that Paul wrote in Greek, for the Greek language is very precise—when expressing the same meaning, it makes a distinction in word form between describing the process and describing the result; such a distinction does not exist in either Chinese or English.

From this perspective, when Paul speaks of the inheritance in Adam, he describes the process of man's fall—from the trespass in verse 14, which emphasizes a single act of transgression, to the offense in verse 15, which emphasizes the result produced by the transgression, to the judgment and condemnation in verse 16, and finally to the disobedience in verse 19. The final outcome is that man is constituted a sinner. In other words, in such a person sin reigns as master, and the disposition that is manifested in this person is the sinful nature. This is also the condition of each one of us before we were saved.

Next Paul goes on to describe the gift in Christ. We often speak in very general terms about being saved by grace, but in Romans Paul carefully unveils each step. First, with respect to Christ's "one righteous act," as we noted earlier, "righteous act" is not an accurate rendering—the Greek term denotes the result of justification. In other words, the ultimate outcome of Jesus Christ's earthly ministry was that He was justified by God. Because Jesus Christ completed redemption entirely according to the Father's arrangement, He opened the way into the Most Holy Place and brought the mercy seat into effect—this is a realm of grace. This then became the very source by which people can be saved.

When a sinner, through believing, enters into this realm of grace, he first receives a standing of justification. This is what Paul says in Romans 3:26, "that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus," and also what Paul says in Romans 4:3, "For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.'" God granting man a standing of justification is the first step. After this, God desires man to remain in the realm of grace so that he may grow from the justification of standing to what Romans 5:18 speaks of as the justification of life. This justification of life is our experience of the organic salvation, which brings forth the growth of the spiritual life and ultimately manifests the disposition of righteousness in us.

And this process of the growth of life Paul describes with the perfecting of the gift. In this passage, Paul very skillfully uses three different Greek words to describe the gift, and these correspond precisely to the steps of the saints' growth in life.

First, we must recognize that the source of life is grace. When we experience the abundant grace of Christ, we are able to receive the gift of life, *dorea*. The gift of life brings the supply of life, which enables a person to grow in life. And the growth of life has a definite direction and purpose—namely, to overcome certain aspects of the sinful nature we inherited from Adam, until we arrive at the matured gift, *dōrēma*. Because we all have weaknesses in various aspects, this step is a repeated process. In fact, this corresponds to the experience in Song of Solomon 2:8–3:5, which we read in the first half of the year, continuing until we can overcome our

own limitations within the circumstances measured out to us by God. At that point, we then have the capacity to fulfill the commission God has entrusted to us.

When we overcome the sinful nature we were born with, our talents and abilities are released, and we then have the operating gift, charisma. With this we are able to serve the church, minister to God, and fulfill the commission God has entrusted to us. Generally speaking, the gifts for service in the church are referred to with charisma. However, our service often falls short of Paul's standard. A proper service is what Jesus speaks of in Matthew 25:14–29: the one who received two talents gained two more, and the one who received five talents gained five more; that is, we are able to fully redeem the talents and abilities God has given us and employ them in our service.

Jesus Christ's obedience as one man obtained justification from the Father; in the same way, we also must obey the leading of the Holy Spirit upon us, and we too will obtain the justification of life. The final result of justification is that we are constituted as righteous men. Beloved brothers and sisters, may we keep firmly in our hearts the path of life's growth revealed by Paul, so that it may become the guidance for our daily living.

Verse 20: "Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, "

In the last two verses, Paul brings out the comparison between grace and the law. The law is added externally. The Chinese Union Version translation makes this sound a bit too strong, as if it were not God's intention but something added later from outside. In the original text, it is a more neutral description: the law was added, or the law appeared, which caused the trespasses to increase.

God gave the law about 500 years after calling Abraham, and the purpose of the law is told to us in Romans 3:20: it is to make man know sin. For man had already been constituted a sinner, and the sinful nature had dulled his conscience and

driven him to act arbitrarily. Without the law, the boundaries of behavior had not been established; although man sinned, it could not be accounted.

Now the law has come and marks out man's transgressions, and therefore the offenses became more numerous. Yet where sin increased, grace abounded even more. Notice that the word "sin" here is singular, referring to the sinful nature, not to individual acts of sin. The sinful deeds require forgiveness through the blood of Jesus, but the sinful nature requires the grace of Christ.

When, through the revelation of the law, we examine our various offenses, we come to realize how corrupt our disposition truly is, how deeply it has been hidden, and how all-encompassing it is. Once we recognize our corruption, we can do nothing but come before the throne of grace according to our true condition—that is, the realm of grace opened for us by Christ.

The statement "where sin increased, grace abounded even more" is conditional. First, we must know our sin and confess it. Second, we must come to the throne of grace to seek mercy. In other words, after a person's sin is revealed, he must take the initiative to seek grace, and only then will grace abound even more.

In the justification of standing, everything is accomplished by Christ, and man only needs to passively believe and receive in order to be saved. But in the organic salvation, man must actively participate in order to experience that "where sin increased, grace abounded even more." By the time we reach Romans 6:1, it becomes very clear that one cannot remain passively in sin so that grace may abound.

Verse 21: "so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

This verse tells us how grace abounds even more. Sin reigning brings death; sin reigning as master over a person and the sinful nature driving him to commit all

kinds of lawless acts leads man toward death—this is the condition of every person before being saved.

In the same way, grace also reigns through righteousness. How does grace reign through righteousness? We know that sin reigns as master in our soul, causing our soul to manifest the sinful nature. Likewise, grace reigning through righteousness also takes place in our soul. Grace reigning through righteousness has two steps. The first is in standing: through faith we are justified by God, for Christ has already paid the redemption price for us, and Christ becomes our righteousness. We are clothed with Christ, and when God sees Christ, He counts us as righteous. This is the first step of grace reigning through righteousness.

Next, we are to remain in the realm of grace and enjoy the supply of grace. In us, we can receive the gift of life, then grow into the matured gift, and finally receive the operating gift. We are then able to obey the leading of the Holy Spirit and serve in the church. Through our service, we can manifest the disposition of righteousness. Ultimately, we are clothed with the fine linen robe of righteousness. As Revelation 19:8 says, “And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.” We not only have the standing of justification, but we also manifest the disposition of righteousness, living out a life of righteousness in our service, and in this way we are constituted as righteous men. Grace truly reigns through righteousness, granting eternal life to people through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Chinese Union Version translation renders this as “obtain eternal life,” but this is not accurate, because the moment we believe, we have already received eternal life. According to the original text, unto eternal life, it means to reach or attain eternal life. This is not referring to the eternal life we already have within us, for we receive that the moment we believe. Rather, it is under the operation of this eternal life that we are able to live a righteous life and allow grace to truly reign through righteousness.

Here, what is spoken of is the realm of eternal life that we are ultimately to attain. In other words, one day we are all to grow into the New Jerusalem, a realm of

eternal life, living forever with God in the new heavens and the new earth. This refers to the scene described in Revelation 21:1–4, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no more sea. I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.’” This is the glorious scene that the saints will ultimately reach.

In the discourse on organic salvation, Paul, by making a strong contrast between the gift in Christ and the inheritance in Adam, gives us a firm confidence to walk on the path of sanctification, ultimately to dwell with God in the New Jerusalem—what a glorious scene this is.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You! Through Paul’s discourse, You allow us to see the greatness of salvation. We were originally hopeless sinners, yet through faith we have received great grace. Not only are our sins forgiven, but furthermore, God desires to lead us on the path of sanctification, perfecting us through our gifts, and guiding us by the Holy Spirit to ultimately live a righteous life. May grace reign through righteousness, so that all of us, through our Lord Jesus Christ, may dwell with God in the New Jerusalem.

Thank the Lord! On one hand, He has placed such a great salvation before us, and on the other hand, He provides us with sufficient grace in our daily lives, helping us overcome every difficulty so that we can walk on the path of sanctification. Remind us, Lord, that in our daily lives we may, by grace, surpass our own limitations, overcome our weaknesses, and release our talents and abilities to serve the saints around us, especially our spouses and our children. Help us, in our everyday life, to bear witness to the greatness of Your grace. We pray in the holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ.