

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

Romans 10: 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 will read Romans chapter 10. Today, we will read verses 1-4.

Romans 9:30 onward, Paul expounds man's responsibility; he uses Gentiles and Israelites as examples. The Gentiles did not pursue righteousness, yet obtained righteousness by faith in Christ; but Israel pursued the law of righteousness, and did not attain the law's requirement. The most fundamental reason is the distinction between faith and works.

The Gentiles entered by faith—believing in Christ and thus obtaining Christ; and righteousness is an attribute of Christ, therefore they obtained righteousness. The Israelites entered by works, hoping to keep the law in order to attain righteousness; yet they lacked the ability to keep the entire law. The Gentiles were saved through Christ; thus Christ became their rock of salvation. But to Israel, Christ became a stumbling stone, because their understanding of the Messiah was incomplete—they could not believe that the One hanged on a tree was Christ. Chapter 10 follows Chapter 9's discourse, and still explains man's responsibility in salvation.

Verse 1: “Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.”

Paul indeed loved his fleshly kinsmen, the Israelites. At the beginning of Chapter 9 he described his great sorrow and continual grief, hoping Israel might be saved; if for them he would even be accursed, he was willing. And at the beginning of Chapter 10 he states his desire and what he prays to God: that Israel might be saved. Paul not only loved his countrymen and often prayed for their salvation, but he also put his love into action. On his missionary journeys, every time he entered a new

city, he first went to the synagogue of the Jews to preach and reason the gospel. Although many Jews were not saved, and the unbelieving Jews even brought great persecution on him, his longing for their salvation never changed.

When Paul wrote Romans, he was still in Corinth, and it was the end of his third missionary journey. At this time Paul had already seen God's purpose: to temporarily set aside the Jews. Therefore he prayed more earnestly for the Jews—and directly pointed out their problem—hoping they would overcome their barrier.

Verse 2: “For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.”

To “bear them witness that they have zeal for God”—the Jews were indeed uniquely privileged. In Romans 9:4-5 Paul lists their heritage: the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, the promises, and the fathers; and according to the flesh, Christ came from them. They had such a wonderful heritage, and were zealous for God. Yet they were not saved—and the reason is that they did not act according to true knowledge.

We see here: heritage is not enough, zeal is not enough; one must have true knowledge of God. Logically, the Israelites had been God's chosen people since the Old Testament; God had spoken to them through many prophets, and those words were recorded, forming a thick Old Testament. They had heritage, they had zeal, they studied Scripture—how then can it be said they lacked true knowledge of God?

Indeed, Paul himself was likewise: from youth he received full Jewish education—at six entering rabbinical school; at ten studying the Law; at thirteen becoming a son of the Law; at sixteen he went up to Jerusalem and studied under Gamaliel, the best teacher of the time. He should have been someone who had knowledge of God—but that knowledge was not true knowledge. So he became a persecutor of Jesus' disciples. Only when he was on the road to Damascus, struck by the great light, hearing the Lord say, “I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you are persecuting,” did

his outward eyes go blind and his inner eyes open—then he began to actually know God, and he began to have true knowledge.

The Greek word for “true knowledge” is *epignōsis*, comprised of *epi* (“upon,” “above”) and *gnōsis* (“knowledge”). According to Greek lexicons, it means “contact knowledge” or “first-hand experiential knowing”—knowledge born of encountering God in experience; it is complete knowledge, and it is correct knowledge. At that time Paul (Saul) was full of zeal for God, yet lacked true knowledge, which resulted in his persecuting the disciples.

Paul uses his own experience to tell Israel: zeal without true knowledge is very dangerous—it is religious fanaticism, resulting in persecuting truly spiritual people. Beloved brothers and sisters, may we all pursue true knowledge of God—not just reading biblical knowledge and doctrine, but applying them in life, so that we actually encounter God; so that God’s word becomes our subjective experience—then we can obtain true knowledge.

In Philippians 3:7-8 Paul says, “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.”

In his youth Paul had a complete scriptural education; he once counted those things as beneficial—but they made him a persecutor of the disciples. Now, because of Christ, he counts them as loss; moreover, he counts all things as loss, and regards the knowledge of Christ Jesus as his supreme treasure. For the sake of this knowledge he can discard all things, regard them as rubbish, that he might gain Christ.

Paul truly understood that Christ is the only way to know God; only through Christ can we truly know God. Apart from Christ, all Scripture becomes dead letters—and letters that kill. Therefore every time we read Scripture, we must encounter Christ, to receive true knowledge of God. Israel’s greatest difficulty was that they left Jesus Christ; thus they failed to gain true knowledge.

Beloved brothers and sisters, each time we read Scripture, let us pray to God—to meet Him; so that from the Scripture we might read out Christ. Then the Bible becomes a living book to us, bringing out life-applicable truth. May our daily time of Scripture reading yield true knowledge of Christ.

Verse 3: “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”

Because they did not know God’s righteousness, they sought to establish their own righteousness—and did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. The Israelites had zeal but lacked true knowledge. They were ignorant of God’s righteousness. Righteousness is an attribute of God; since Adam sinned, sin entered the world through one man, and Adam’s descendants are born with sinful nature—thus have no capacity to reach God’s righteousness.

In the Old Testament, God through Moses gave the law to Israel; that law testified of God—it was not God Himself. And the law’s function was to make men aware of sin, and to turn them to God’s salvation. When the fullness of time came, God sent His only-begotten Son to fulfill salvation.

John 3:16 tells us, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” This verse clearly tells us that God gave Christ as a gift to mankind; whoever believes and receives Him not only receives the forgiveness of sins but obtains Christ, and is justified by God—this is God’s righteousness.

Israel “did not know God’s righteousness, sought to establish their own righteousness,” meaning they attempted by their own efforts and ability to build their own righteousness. Man’s own righteousness is opposite to God’s righteousness. One’s own righteousness arises from natural ability, by one’s own standard, by one’s own effort, doing some righteous acts as one’s righteousness.

Once one establishes one's own righteousness, one begins to judge others by it, seeking to show one is superior. When Christ came to earth to fulfill His duty, He encountered the scribes and Pharisees—those men had established their own righteousness and thus did not submit to God's righteousness. The life of Jesus on earth represented God's righteousness coming among men and showing what God's righteousness is. Those who established their own righteousness did not submit to it and ended up crucifying Christ.

Among the Israelites there were still a few genuinely seeking God—one of them Nicodemus, who came to Jesus at night because he recognized from Jesus' works that God must be present. Jesus used that opportunity to reveal to him regeneration—that one must be born of the Spirit. In that conversation came the famous verse John 3:16. This verse shows us that the only path to attaining God's righteousness is through Christ. And those who attempt to establish their own righteousness—to replace Christ with themselves, to exalt their own righteousness, and to show their distinctiveness—end up refusing God's righteousness.

Beloved brothers and sisters, while Paul is referring to the Israelites' refusal to believe Christ, this also serves as a good reminder to us Christians. Indeed we entered in through Christ; for this we give thanks and praise the Lord. But on the pathway of sanctification, we must go through Christ and through the supply of the Holy Spirit if we would live a life consistent with righteousness of God.

Every saint to some degree has religious notions—always trying by his own effort to accomplish something, to show his exceptional nature, his distinctiveness; this is also building one's own righteousness. Once built, one refuses God's righteousness. This condition arises not only in young believers but also in well-known ministers. Young saints are often pulled by the lusts of the flesh and the lusts of the eyes, and try to build their own righteousness. Famous ministers often out of pride build their own denomination, using their own righteousness to attack other believers of different denominations.

From God's perspective, there are no denominations. What each denomination has is one aspect of knowing God, not true, complete knowledge of God. Paul nearly

wrote half of the New Testament—his knowledge of God should have been very complete. Yet in 1 Corinthians 13:12 he still said, “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.”

Paul acknowledged his knowledge was limited—in the face of the Lord we shall fully know God. May we adopt a posture of humility and appreciation toward differing interpretations; may we not build our own righteousness. Only with a humble heart can we obtain true knowledge—and only then can we truly live in God’s righteousness.

Verse 4: “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”

“The end of the law is Christ.” The Greek word *telos*, translated “end,” means the goal reached after a process. That is to say: if we would truly know the law, at the end the knowledge is Christ; if we truly would experience the law, at the end the experience is Christ. Jesus Himself said in Matthew 5:17, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.”

Jesus came not to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. How did Jesus fulfill the law? The best answer is in Galatians 4:4-5, “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

Jesus was born under the law, and lived a life fully according to the law; that life is the life all of God’s children on earth should live—but of course we cannot. Therefore Jesus Christ, being sinless, bore the penalty for us, so that we might be redeemed from the condemnation of the law, obtaining the adoption as sons. Jesus Christ has fulfilled the requirements of the law, and the function of the law has come to an end in Christ. Therefore, those who are in Christ Jesus have already satisfied the demands of the law, have been released from its dominion, and have become truly free persons.

The law's function is that of a tutor. First, before Christ's coming, the law was given to Israel in order to protect, preserve, and guide them toward Christ. Today still, spiritual children—immature saints—need the law's protection, the aim being to lead them to Christ. Once they enter into Christ Jesus, they no longer need to be under the law's dominion.

"The end of the law is Christ for righteousness to everyone who believes." The phrase "*for righteousness*" in the original Greek uses the preposition *eis*, which literally means *into*. Therefore, a more precise rendering would be: "so that everyone who believes in Him may enter into righteousness."

The end of the law is Christ; Christ is not only the Savior who accomplished everything for us—after His redemption He also establishes a realm. That realm is one of love, into which those who are loved may enter; it is also a realm of righteousness, so that everyone who believes in Jesus Christ may already have the forgiveness of sins and may enter into that realm of righteousness. This is not only a spiritual fact, but a spiritual experience.

Paul himself walked this journey. After his salvation, he was still troubled by the law. Because he knew the law was holy, just, and good, he tried to keep it, and the result was what Romans 7:15 describes, "For what I do, I do not understand; for what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do." He found himself in extreme distress, Romans 7:18, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find." To the point that he said in Romans 7:24, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" At last he came to realize that the end of the law is Christ—and Christ created a realm of righteousness. So in Romans 8:2 he said, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."

Saints, please note: in Christ Jesus—that is the realm. After Jesus Christ completed the great work of redemption, a realm of righteousness was produced. Only in Christ Jesus does the law of the Spirit of life free us from the law of sin and death. If we depart from that realm, we still fall under the dominion of sin and death. The

law leads us toward Christ; those who believe in Jesus Christ must remain in that realm of righteousness in order to have righteousness in actual experience.

Understanding this, we can truly appreciate why John in John 15:4 said, “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.” And again John 15:7, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire and it shall be done for you.” Jesus repeatedly emphasized that we must abide in the Lord.

In John 17, Jesus Himself prayed for His disciples and for all believers. John 17:20-21, “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.” Beloved brothers and sisters, abiding in the Lord is the lifelong lesson we learn on earth.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You! You have told us that the end of the law is Christ, and that Christ has established a realm of righteousness. We must abide in Christ that we may live in the experience of righteousness. Thank You for Your mercy to us. The Israelites had such wonderful heritage and zeal toward God, yet because they did not know Christ they lacked true knowledge of God, and thus built their own righteousness and refused God’s righteousness. We, though Gentiles, simply by believing and receiving—not only obtain Christ as our lifelong Savior but live in Jesus Christ—this indeed is tremendous grace. Help us each day, through our time of Bible reading and prayer, to abide in Christ in practice. And because we come to know the Lord Jesus Christ more fully, help us to be willing to pay any price to gain Christ. Bless our daily life, we pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.