

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

Romans 10: 5-8

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 10. We will read verses 5-8 today.

The Law was given by God through the hand of Moses to the Israelites, and God commanded the Israelites to diligently keep it. On one hand, the Law serves as a testimony for God, reflecting the nature of the One who gave it; therefore, the Law is holy, just, and good. On the other hand, the Law is also full of demands upon man.

God clearly knew that man had no ability to keep the Law, so why did He still give it? I think there are at least two reasons. First, although the Israelites could not fully keep the moral law, the ceremonial law could set them apart from the Gentiles. Through this separation, the purity of the Israelites' lineage could be preserved. When the appointed time set by God came, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, could be brought forth from among the Israelites according to the prophecies of the prophets.

Second, from Moses to Jesus, there were about 1,500 years. This was the period allotted by God to the Israelites, for them to realize that they had no ability to keep the moral law, to know that they were condemned and could not escape, and thus turn to Christ to seek the grace of forgiveness. During these 1,500 years, the nation of Israel went through many afflictions, but they also had brief periods of glory: the kingdom of Israel was established during the reign of King David, and it reached its peak when King Solomon completed the building of the temple.

However, in the long course of history, that glory was only brief. After Solomon, the kingdom of Israel was divided into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. Both kingdoms were eventually destroyed, and the people of Israel were taken captive to foreign lands. It was not until more than 400

years before the Lord's coming that God raised up the remnant of Israel to return to Jerusalem, rebuild the temple, restore the priestly service, and repair the walls of Jerusalem, so that they could barely maintain the Law of Moses while waiting for the Messiah to be born among these returning remnants.

The nation of Israel is perhaps the people who have suffered the most afflictions in the world; if it were not for God's deliverance, it would have been impossible for them to survive. After Israel was destroyed as a nation, the Israelites were scattered among all peoples, yet they were still able to remain faithful and pure toward God—even if only a small remnant—which was truly remarkable. In human history, there has never been another nation that could be restored after being destroyed for more than two thousand years. The Law of Moses was the main reason the Israelites could stay united as a people. Therefore, the Israelites who carefully kept the Law of Moses held it in the highest regard, and asking them to abandon the Law was by no means an easy thing.

Before the Apostle Paul was saved, he too exalted the Law, even to the extent of persecuting those who followed Jesus. In the traditional religious concepts he held at that time, these people who did not keep the Sabbath, did not observe dietary regulations, and called Jesus the Messiah were truly blaspheming God. It was not until he himself was struck by a great light, repented, and was baptized that he began, under the light of Stephen, to reread the Old Testament and gradually understand the will of God. He then realized that the truth concerning Christ as the Messiah had long been hidden in the prophecies of the prophets, and from that point on, he began to truly understand the words spoken by Jesus.

Jesus said, "I did not come to destroy but to fulfill the Law." He then began to understand that the purpose of the Law was to make people aware of their sins. A person who sincerely tries to keep the Law will inevitably realize that he cannot keep it perfectly, for whoever offends in one point is guilty of all. The result is condemnation and death. Christ is the end of the Law; the Law brings death, but Christ has risen from the dead. He first bore the punishment for man's sins so that our sins could be forgiven, and He also gives us eternal life.

The Israelites pursued the law of righteousness but were condemned because they could not keep the whole law, while the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, obtained righteousness through faith in Christ. Paul saw this and was filled with great sorrow and anguish in his heart for his kinsmen according to the flesh, his fellow Israelites. He longed deeply for the Israelites to have true knowledge, to believe and receive Christ, so that they might obtain the righteousness they had been earnestly striving for.

Paul himself was well versed in the Old Testament, and after receiving grace and being saved, he began to look at the Old Testament again in the light of Christ. He then discovered that the interpretations passed down by the rabbis for fifteen hundred years all had blind spots—they failed to see that the Messiah would first come to earth as the Lamb to solve the problem of man’s sin, and that the Messiah had already come, who is Jesus Christ. In order to help his kinsmen according to the flesh, the Israelites, Paul found evidence in the Pentateuch (five Books of Moses). The passage we are going to read today, Romans 10:5–8, is where Paul quoted from Leviticus and Deuteronomy and gave them a new interpretation. Paul’s interpretation was indeed bold, yet profoundly spiritual. Since all Scripture is inspired by God, including both the Old and New Testaments, we must accept Paul’s interpretation as God speaking through him—this is the Word of God.

Verse 5: “ For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, “The man who does those things shall live by them.”

This is a quotation from Leviticus 18:5, “Therefore you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the Lord.” Moses led the congregation of Israel out of Egypt and came to the wilderness of Sinai, where they stayed for nearly a year, receiving the Law and constructing the Tabernacle. God, through Moses, told the Israelites that they must not follow the ways of the Egyptians, the traditions they had accumulated over the past 400 years; nor must they follow the ways of the Canaanites, the people of the land God was bringing them to; they also must not follow the ways of the Canaanites dwelling in

the Promised Land. The Israelites were to keep God's commandments, statutes, and judgments, and by practicing the righteousness of the Law, they would live—this was God's command to the people of Israel. Such instructions guided the life of Israel for nearly 1,500 years, until the birth of Jesus Christ brought the New Covenant; the Law's fulfillment is Christ. Those who are in Christ are no longer under the dominion of the Law and can receive true freedom.

For the Israelites, who had kept the Law for nearly 1,500 years, this turning point was indeed not easy to accept. Paul himself had gone through this transition, and therefore he longed to help his fellow Israelites. He began with what they were familiar with, which is why he quoted Leviticus 18:5. Indeed, Moses commanded them to keep the Law and promised that if they practiced the righteousness of the Law, they would live by it—but could man actually do it? Paul does not answer this question here.

But Paul already answers this question in Galatians 3:10–12. The Law requires people to live by their deeds and to be able to fully keep it in order to live. Yet no one who relies on keeping the Law can perfectly observe everything written in the Law in their daily life. If one breaks even a single command, they are under a curse; therefore, no one can be justified before God by the Law. That is why the prophet Habakkuk foretold, “The just shall live by faith”—life cannot come through works, but only through faith. Paul first points to the passage they were familiar with, then continues to quote Deuteronomy 30:11–14 from the Pentateuch, skillfully giving it a new interpretation.

Verse 6: “But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, ‘Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down from above)”

This verse originally quotes Deuteronomy 30:12, “It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’” In this passage, Moses was telling the Israelites that the commandments God had given were neither too difficult for them to keep nor far from them. On the surface, it seems that Moses was encouraging the Israelites to

obey the Law, and that following the Law was not at all difficult. Yet after 1,500 years, the Israelites found that they simply could not keep it. Did Moses speak incorrectly? Or did the Israelites misunderstand?

After receiving grace and being saved, Paul reread the passages in Deuteronomy and realized that the rabbinical interpretations of the past were mistaken, because the Israelites had striven for 1,500 years and still could not succeed. Therefore, Paul boldly reinterpreted the passage: it was not calling people to keep the Law through their natural ability, but was speaking of the righteousness that comes by faith, and this righteousness by faith is not far from us.

The original words in Deuteronomy say that it is “not in heaven,” so we do not need to ask, “Who will go up to heaven and bring it down for us?” Paul, however, transforms this statement to teach us about the righteousness of faith. If this righteousness of faith were in heaven, then who could ascend to bring it down for us? Paul immediately gives the answer: Christ must be brought down. This righteousness of faith is Christ Himself. He originally sat on the glorious throne in heaven, but God sent Him to become flesh and come to earth as a man—Jesus. Since man cannot fulfill the Law by his own deeds and would be condemned, God gave His only begotten Son to bear the punishment for man’s sins. This is the first step in obtaining the righteousness of faith: man’s sins are forgiven.

Verse 7: “or’ “ Who will descend into the abyss? ” ’(that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). “

This is Paul quoting Deuteronomy 30:13, “Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’” In the Chinese Union Version, the word translated as “beyond the sea” is the Greek word *abussos*, which corresponds to the English abyss or can be translated as “the deep.” In the New Testament, this word appears nine times. Once, in Luke 8:31, it refers to the event when Jesus cast out demons in the region of the Gadarenes, allowing the demons to enter the herd of pigs. There, the demons spoke to Jesus, begging Him not to command them to go into the abyss,

which is why the Chinese Union Version translates it as “bottomless pit.” The other seven occurrences are in Revelation, and in all of them it is translated as “bottomless pit.”

In Revelation 9:1, 2, and 11, it speaks of the fifth angel sounding his trumpet, and locusts coming out of the abyss. Revelation 11:7 mentions the beast coming out of the abyss. In Revelation 20:1 and 3, during the Millennium, Satan is bound and thrown into the abyss. Therefore, except for Romans, in all other passages the Chinese Union Version translates *abussos* as “bottomless pit.” The bottomless pit is believed to be the original dwelling place of Satan and his angels, so in this verse, the Chinese Union Version’s translation as “Sheol” or “the realm of the dead” is also appropriate.

Additionally, in Genesis 1:2 it says, “The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep.” In the Greek Septuagint of the Old Testament, the word for “deep” is also *abussos*, which somewhat supports the gap theory—that is, at the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth (verse 1), and in verse 2, the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, with a long period of time in between. This refers to the previous age, when Satan was judged because of his rebellion, resulting in the condition of darkness over the deep. Therefore, we adopt the Chinese Union Version translation: Sheol or “the realm of the dead” is Satan’s dwelling place. And according to the original words in Deuteronomy, it refers to the depths of the sea, so there is no need to ask who can go down to the sea to bring it to us.

Similarly, Paul transforms this statement into the righteousness of faith: it descended into the realm of the dead, yet Christ rose from the dead, overcoming the power of Sheol. This is completely consistent with what Peter preached on the day of Pentecost. Acts 2:24 says, “Whom God has raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.” Acts 2:27 says, “For You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.” Jesus Christ has already broken through the limitations of Sheol and risen from the dead. This also becomes the second step in obtaining the righteousness of faith. Because of Christ’s resurrection, we can be justified by God.

Paul skillfully quotes the passages from Deuteronomy and imparts a New Testament meaning to them. In truth, God, through the Pentateuch, spoke a prophecy: man cannot ascend to heaven, yet God gave His only begotten Son to descend from heaven, bearing the sins of man so that man's sins could be forgiven. Man also cannot descend into Sheol, yet God caused Christ to rise from the dead, breaking the dominion of Sheol, ascending to the heights, and being accepted by God. Thus, God can declare righteous those who believe in Jesus Christ, allowing them to obtain the righteousness of faith. It is not by their own works, but through believing in Jesus Christ that they can receive the redemption and justification accomplished by Him.

Verse 8: “But what does it say? ‘The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith which we preach):”

This is a quotation from Deuteronomy 30:14, “But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.” Regarding this verse, Paul also adds his own commentary: it is the message of faith that we preach—the Jesus Christ who became flesh, died, and rose again, who has become the righteousness of our faith. The Greek word translated as “word” in the Chinese Union Version is *rhema*, referring to the timely word concerning Christ. This means that the Holy Spirit dwelling within us supplies the truth about Christ, helping us meet the needs of daily life. This word can operate and work within us, and we can draw upon it and apply it. Therefore, this word is not far from us; it is in our mouth and in our heart.

The Greek word for “not far” is *eggus*, which means near. This nearness can refer to time or space. When we fall into affliction, Christ—the timely word—is right there with us, going through the trial alongside us and providing help and support. When the enemy's attack comes suddenly, and we have no time to prepare, Christ—the timely word—is immediately present with us, becoming our shield and protection. As long as we call upon Him with our mouth, Christ immediately

provides timely help; as long as our heart turns to the Lord, Christ immediately fills our heart.

Christ is the righteousness of our faith; we no longer need to go up to heaven or down to the earth to seek Him, for He is in our mouth and in our heart. John 6:63 says, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.” Christ, the word of life, becomes our timely provision, supplying us with all spiritual riches from the Spirit, guarding our hearts from straying, and keeping our mouths to speak only edifying words. In this way, we not only obtain the righteousness of faith but are also able to live a life consistent with righteousness.

Let us pray together: Dear Lord, thank You. Through Paul’s writing of the Book of Romans, he was able, in the light of the New Testament, to reinterpret the passages of Deuteronomy, full of revelation. It shows us that the incarnation and resurrection of Christ were already hidden in the Pentateuch. Man cannot fulfill the requirements of the Law by himself, yet Jesus Christ has accomplished it for us. All we need is the righteousness that comes by faith, so that we can take Christ as our timely word, helping us and guiding us in our daily life; and this word is not far from us, but is in our mouth and in our heart.

Lord, how greatly we thank You. What the Israelites sought for fifteen hundred years and could not obtain, we can receive through our simple faith—the righteousness that comes by faith. If we remain in Jesus Christ, we can also live a life in accordance with righteousness. Thank You for all that You have accomplished for us; we only need to believe, accept, and obey, which truly is an easy and light path. Lord, help us, through our daily time of reading Your Word, to help us learn to always dwell in Your Word; let my life be holy and pleasing to You. I pray in the holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ.