

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

Romans 10: 16-21

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 10. We will read verses 16-21 today.

God is a God full of sovereignty; He, according to His own heart's good pleasure, established an eternal plan, which includes God's Old Testament chosen people, Israel, and also includes God's New Testament chosen people, the church.

In Romans chapters 9 to 11, Paul, from God's revelation, recognized the steps of God's plan: salvation is to come from Israel, and then from Israel, it is to be preached to the Gentiles. In this process of proclamation, Israel is to be temporarily set aside until the end of the age; when Christ returns, all Israel will be saved, and Christ will establish the millennial kingdom on earth.

In Ephesians 1:3–14, Paul revealed that this plan is accomplished through the cooperation of the Triune God, which includes the Father's election and predestination, includes the Son's redemption, reconciliation, and obtaining of the inheritance, and also includes the Spirit's seal and guarantee. Although God's eternal plan is in God's sovereignty and will surely be accomplished, in the process of executing this plan, God, in His love and mercy, exercises much patience and forbearance.

Paul, as the apostle to the Gentiles, valued the ministry God gave him; he labored much among the Gentiles, preaching the gospel and establishing churches. But Paul himself was a Jew, and because his kinsmen according to the flesh were set aside by God, Paul had great sorrow and constant grief in his heart.

He knew that God's plan cannot be altered and will surely be accomplished; he also knew that in God's mercy, there must be the principle of a remnant. Therefore, he hoped to awaken the Israelites. For this reason, he wrote Romans chapter 10,

explaining that as long as one believes in their heart that God raised Christ from the dead and confesses with their mouth that Jesus is Lord, they can be saved. At the same time, God also sends those who preach the gospel and bring glad tidings, enabling people to believe through hearing and, through believing, to call on the name of the Lord. Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Paul was sent by God to preach to the Gentiles, causing the Gentiles to believe and become the church, as God's New Testament chosen people. Likewise, God has not rejected the Israelites; God also once sent prophets to preach to the Israelites. Therefore, Paul specifically quoted Old Testament scriptures to prove the preaching of the prophets, but the Israelites were unwilling to hear the word. Paul's purpose was to awaken the sleeping Israelites, that perhaps some among them could become the remnant of Israel and be saved.

Verse 16: "But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?"

Paul specifically quoted Isaiah 53:1 to remind the Israelites. We know that Isaiah chapter 53 is the Messianic poem, the entire chapter describing how the Messiah, like a lamb, was led to the slaughter, how God purposed to bruise Him, to make Him suffer, so that He could become a sin offering to bear the sins of people.

Isaiah's description may not have been understood by the Israelites in his time, but by the time Paul wrote Romans, Jesus Christ had already been crucified on the cross and had risen and ascended to heaven. The gospel began to spread, not only among the Israelites but also among the Gentiles. Therefore, at this time, if the Israelites carefully read Isaiah chapter 53, they would know that God sent Isaiah to preach the gospel to them.

But, just as Isaiah 53:1 records Isaiah's sigh, "Who has believed our report?" Paul also had the same sigh; therefore, Paul also said, "Lord, who has believed our report?"

Verse 17: “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

Paul knew that the Israelites could not believe Isaiah chapter 53, because the Messiah they always expected was a glorious king, one who would come to save the Israelite people. Paul himself previously had this expectation, which is why he persecuted and arrested those who called on the name of Jesus everywhere. Because in his traditional Jewish perspective, he thought that their calling Jesus the Messiah was blaspheming God.

He was previously blind, but now God opened his eyes, and he could see. It turns out that the Jesus who hung on the tree was the Messiah, just as Isaiah chapter 53 says. It was God who sent Him to atone for people’s sins and grant the grace of forgiveness; and all these details were already recorded in Isaiah chapter 53. He previously could not understand it, but now he understood. He himself received help, and he also wanted to challenge the Israelites.

Faith is by hearing, which is hearing the word about Christ. If people cannot believe, it does not matter; the word of Christ is to become people’s faith. Therefore, the Israelites only need to carefully listen to the message about Christ preached by the prophet Isaiah, especially the message of Isaiah 53. Verses 4–6, “Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Is this not what Jesus Christ did for those who believe in Him?

He challenged the Israelites to lay aside the Jewish rabbis’ teachings about the Messiah, because those pertain to the end of the age, when Christ comes again the second time; at that time, He will establish the kingdom on earth. However, before that, Christ must first come to earth as a lamb to atone for people’s sins, enabling people to receive the grace of forgiveness. These are clearly recorded in Isaiah chapter 53. Why do the Israelites not listen to the word preached by Isaiah?

Verse 18: “But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: ‘Their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.’”

God not only preached through the prophet Isaiah; Paul again quoted the words of Psalm 19:4 to prove that the preachers’ sound has gone out to all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.

If we read Psalm 19, it turns out that the psalmist David praised that the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims His handiwork. David’s original meaning was that God, through the universe and all things created by His hand, bears witness to God’s glory. This passage of scripture should be familiar to the Israelites from childhood, but Paul quoted their familiar scripture to make them hear a new message—the gospel about Jesus Christ.

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He specifically instructed His disciples: in Acts 1:8, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” By the time Paul wrote Romans, Paul had already traveled throughout the Mediterranean coast, which was the world they knew at that time. And Paul hoped to visit the church in Rome and be sent by them to Spain. Spain was the end of the earth they knew at that time. Therefore, now the whole earth is to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the Israelites have also heard it.

Paul here clearly tells the Israelites: the gospel of Jesus Christ is to be preached throughout the earth, and the words about Jesus Christ are to reach the ends of the world. If the Israelites do not listen, they must bear responsibility for their unbelief. Now the disciples of Jesus Christ have spread the gospel throughout the earth; you should all have heard it, so why do you not believe?

Verse 19: “But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: ‘I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.’”

We see that Paul truly hoped that his kinsmen according to the flesh, the Israelites, could be saved; he was unwilling to give up on the Israelites. Paul himself was well-versed in the Old Testament; previously, when he was taught under Gamaliel, there was a veil over everything he read in the Old Testament. Now, having received grace and salvation, the veil was removed, and he could read the Old Testament anew with an unveiled face. Now he saw the light about Christ everywhere; he truly wished to help his fellow countrymen.

He quoted the scripture from Deuteronomy 32:21 in the Pentateuch of Moses: "They have provoked Me to jealousy by what is not God; they have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols. But I will provoke them to jealousy by those who are not a nation; I will move them to anger by a foolish nation." This was originally when Moses finished speaking Deuteronomy, knowing he had completed the ministry God entrusted to him; he specially wrote a song to praise God and to remind the Israelite people.

Therefore, Deuteronomy 32:21 was originally Moses warning the Israelite people not to follow the Gentiles in worshipping vain idols. If the Israelite people used these "not God" idols to provoke God's anger, God would use those "not a nation" Gentiles to provoke the Israelites' anger. That is to say, God would raise up the Gentiles to teach and discipline the Israelites.

But Paul now quoted Deuteronomy 32:21, giving it a new meaning. Paul said that God would use the "not a nation" Gentiles to provoke the Israelites' jealousy and use the "foolish Gentiles" to move the Israelites to anger. Because the salvation of Jesus Christ has come to the Gentiles, and the Gentiles who believed and accepted it became the New Testament church. They are the children of the Father God, the Father God's New Testament people.

The Israelites, because of unbelief, were set aside. Paul said this is God provoking the Israelites' jealousy. The Gentiles were originally ignorant in matters concerning God, but now they have the wisdom of salvation, accepted the salvation of Jesus Christ, and became a people who know God. This is to move the Israelites to anger, because the Israelites in the Old Testament were God's exclusive people, distinct

from the people of the world; now, because of their unbelief, they were set aside by God. Paul said this is God moving the Israelites to anger.

Verse 20: “But Isaiah is very bold and says: ‘I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me.’”

Paul here quoted Isaiah 65:1, “I was sought by those who did not ask for Me; I was found by those who did not seek Me. I said, ‘Here I am, here I am,’ to a nation that was not called by My name.” Paul applied this scripture to the Gentiles. The Gentiles originally did not seek God, but God sent apostles to preach the gospel and bring glad tidings among the Gentiles, and through believing in Jesus Christ, the Gentiles could find God.

They originally did not ask for God or seek God, but God was made manifest to them. Because Jesus said, “I am the way.” The Gentiles can, through simply believing in Jesus Christ, come to the throne of grace, where they meet God, where they see God’s manifestation, and where they enjoy God’s presence.

The Gentiles were originally without any share or relation to God, but because they believed in Jesus Christ, they became the people of God’s kingdom. Not only that, according to Ephesians 2:19–22, they are also members of God’s household, and they are being built into the Lord’s holy temple, to become God’s dwelling place in the Spirit.

Paul very skillfully quoted Isaiah 65:1 to describe how the Gentiles, through believing in Jesus Christ, could find God and receive God’s grace. Conversely, Paul quoted Isaiah 65:2 to describe the Israelites.

Verse 21: “But to Israel he says: ‘All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people.’”

As for the Israelites, Paul used Isaiah 65:2 to describe them: “I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, after their own thoughts.” Paul likened the Israelites to a disobedient and contrary people. Although the Israelites abandoned God, God, like a loving mother, stretched out His hands to them all day long, calling them, hoping that as long as they turn back, they can fully experience God’s lovingkindness.

Here we see that the God full of sovereignty, in executing His plan, toward those Israelites who are to be temporarily set aside, is still full of compassion and mercy; He stretches out His hands to them all day long, hoping they can turn back. Dear brothers and sisters, may we, through today’s message, have a deeper understanding of God. God is a sovereign God; He, according to His own heart’s good pleasure, established an eternal plan, and this plan will surely be accomplished.

However, God, in executing the plan, is still full of compassion and mercy. Toward those people who are to be temporarily set aside, God still repeatedly gives them opportunities, hoping they can turn back. God is so toward the Israelites; how is it not so toward the Gentiles?

Therefore, if there are some seekers around us who seem to have heard the gospel for a long time but still have not turned, we must recognize that God, in His love and mercy, is willing to be patient and forbearing. Therefore, we cannot easily give up on any seeker. Perhaps it is the next proclamation that will enable them to turn their hearts. May we all learn from Paul, having such an urgent burden for his kinsmen according to the flesh. We should have the same feeling toward the seekers around us.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You! You desire that all people be saved and none perish. We were originally also a rebellious people, fundamentally not knowing You, but Your salvation could come to us; what a great grace this is! We have tasted the benefits of salvation and truly wish to share such grace. Lord, have mercy on the seekers around me, and grant me, like Paul, spiritual wisdom to use the words of the Bible to preach the gospel to them. Because when Your word is unlocked, it

becomes people's faith. The Lord's word is the source of faith; we only need to faithfully proclaim God's word. When the time comes, God will gather those who belong to Him. May God bless and have mercy on the seekers around me. I pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.