

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

Romans 11: 7-11

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 are going to read Romans Chapter 11 and today we will read verses 7 to 11.

Paul pointed out that God's principle of working is to choose a remnant by grace to accomplish His eternal purpose and to carry out His predetermined plan. Those who become the remnant are people who take God's Word seriously—those who receive God's calling through His Word and rise up to follow that calling, being supplied and strengthened by His Word.

Such people, though few in number—the remnant—are the most honorable ones, because they are those who cooperate with God. Although Paul used the Israelites as an example—showing that the majority of them could not follow God's new covenant calling and that only a remnant of Israel became the chosen ones by grace—the same principle applies to the saints of the New Testament age. Jesus also said in Matthew 22:14, "For many are called, but few are chosen." The context of this saying is the parable of the kingdom of heaven, referring to the time when Christ returns to establish His millennial kingdom on the earth.

In the parable, the king prepared a wedding feast for his son and sent out servants to invite those who were called, but they refused to come. Those who were called refer to the Israelites. That means the gospel was first sent to Israel, but they would not come to the feast. So the king then sent his servants to the crossroads to invite everyone they could find to the feast—this signifies that the gospel turned to the Gentiles.

If we think back on our own experience of salvation, wasn't it also at a "crossroad" in our life that we heard the gospel and came to attend the Lord's feast? As the parable continues, the wedding hall was filled with guests, but before the feast began, the king came in to look at the guests and saw one man who was not wearing

wedding garments. The king said to him, “Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?” This scene corresponds to Revelation 19:7–8, “Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. 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.” At the marriage of the Lamb, every believer must be clothed in fine, clean, and bright linen—which represents the righteous acts of the saints. This means that after being saved by grace, believers must still walk the path of sanctification, weaving the virtues of Christ into their daily living, so that their “fine linen” garment is prepared.

When we first received grace, Christ became our first garment of righteousness, and God justified us positionally. Yet after salvation, we must still “weave” our own fine linen—that is, we must live out righteousness practically—to become overcomers. Thus, “many are called” refers to the many who are saved by grace; “few are chosen” refers to the few believers who become overcomers. This shows that God also selects from among the saved believers a group of overcomers—this too is an election of grace.

Just as God chose a remnant from among Israel, so He also chooses a remnant from among the New Testament saints. Paul first explained the nature of these chosen remnants; next, he went on to tell us about those who were not chosen—and what their outcome would be. Likewise, the unbelieving Israelites serve as a mirror for us today. Let us now look at verse 7.

Verse 7: “What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded.”

What then? God, by His grace, chose a remnant of Israel—so what happened to the rest? The Israelites did not obtain what they were seeking. Paul tells us in Romans 9:31 that Israel pursued righteousness through the law, but failed to attain it, because they sought to achieve the law’s standard by their own works—which is impossible. Paul had already proven in Romans 3:10, “There is none righteous, no, not one.” The purpose of the law is to make people conscious of sin. Once a person

realizes they are sinful, they will no longer rely on their own works to be justified before God, but will instead seek the grace of forgiveness—which ultimately leads them to Christ.

Most Israelites, however, refused to admit that they could not fulfill the law's requirements. Instead, they modified the law into a set of trivial regulations and outward observances, adorning themselves externally while deceiving their own hearts—but they could not deceive God. Because they would not turn to the Lord of grace, they could not receive righteousness. Only those who were chosen and accepted the grace of forgiveness through Christ were justified by God. A small number of the chosen received righteousness, but the rest became hardened.

The word “hardened” is quite significant. In Greek it is *porroo*, which means “to harden” or “to petrify.” The original sense of the word is “to become like stone,” as in “petrified wood.” Petrified wood forms when a tree falls and becomes buried in mud. Groundwater seeps into the trunk, and over time, the organic material decays, leaving empty spaces that are gradually filled with minerals from the water. These minerals accumulate little by little, preserving the original structure of the wood. After a long period, the wood becomes completely transformed into stone. From the outside, it still looks like wood—but in substance, it has become stone.

Paul used this word to describe the Israelites: they were once God's chosen people, full of the humanity that God created, yet by stubbornly relying on their own works for justification, they lived continually under the rigid atmosphere of the law. Over time, their humanity was gradually replaced by the legal code itself. They became rigid and lifeless—like living statutes of law. Not only did they become hardened themselves, but they also judged others by those same legal standards, becoming unyielding and unmerciful toward others.

Verse 8: “Just as it is written: ‘God has given them a spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, to this very day.’”

In the Chinese Union Version, it is translated as “a spirit of stupor,” while the KJV translates it literally from the original text as “the spirit of slumber.” If translated directly, it would mean “a spirit of deep sleep.” When Paul said, “as it is written,” he was actually merging several Old Testament passages and expressing them in his own words: Isaiah 29:10, “For the LORD has poured out on you the spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes, namely, the prophets; and He has covered your heads, namely, the seers.” Deuteronomy 29:4, “Yet the LORD has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this very day.” Isaiah 6:10, “Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes.”

Because the LORD gave them a spirit of slumber, and since the spirit is the organ by which man communes with God, when their spirit is asleep, they naturally cannot understand God’s will. Therefore, although they held God’s word in their hands, they turned it into legal codes and used these regulations to restrict and control people. Their hearts became dull, unable to understand God’s word; their eyes could not see, and their ears could not hear — even to this day.

What Paul described here perfectly fits the Pharisees of his time. They were extremely conservative, devoted to tradition, and tried to promote the law of Moses through their own strength. They exalted the 613 commandments codified by the rabbis and demanded that Jews observe them strictly in daily life. They prided themselves as the guardians of the Law and regarded this as the highest calling of the Jewish people. Yet they did not realize that they were spiritually blind, deaf, and asleep. Jesus rebuked them sharply in Matthew 23:13, saying, “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.”

Dear brothers and sisters, we also need Paul’s reminder not to become modern Pharisees. When God’s word comes to us, it is meant to be received in our spirit and understood in our heart — so that our eyes may see God’s works and our ears may hear the still small voice of the Holy Spirit. Only then can we become the remnant chosen by God. In modern churches, there are often movements with

political overtones that aim to promote “Christian values” and try to legislate these spiritual principles as civil laws that all citizens must obey.

Let the saints remember: our God never initiates mass movements. He does not seek to control people through external forms but rather looks for a few who will follow Him wholeheartedly and seek Him sincerely. The mission God has given to the church is to preach the gospel and lead people to salvation — to change people from within through the life of Christ and the leading of the Holy Spirit. Those who are saved by grace gather together to form the church, bearing witness for God in every place and attracting those who are willing to repent and truly follow Him.

May the Lord help us to always maintain a pure heart toward Him, a teachable spirit, and a close following of His leading. And may we, together with the saints around us, diligently run the heavenly race, hoping to be among the remnant chosen by grace. May God help us.

Verse 9-10: “And David says: ‘Let their table become a snare and a trap, A stumbling block and a recompense to them. Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, And bow down their back always.’”

Here, Paul quotes Psalm 69:22–23, “Let their table become a snare before them, and their well-being a trap. Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see; and make their loins shake continually.” If we read only these two verses, we might not quite understand why Paul chose to quote them. But if we look at the previous verse, Psalm 69:21 says, “They also gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” Psalm 69 is a psalm of David. Although David wrote it to poetically describe his own sufferings in an exaggerated way, it is also an accurate prophecy of Christ’s experience on the cross.

Matthew 27:34 records, “They gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted it, He would not drink.” The wine mixed with gall had a numbing effect, but since Jesus was willing to bear the sins of all mankind, He refused the

anesthetic. He chose instead to fully and consciously experience the pain of suffering.

Then in John 19:28–30 we read: “After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, ‘I thirst!’ Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth. So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, ‘It is finished!’ And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.” John specifically notes that Jesus said, “I thirst,” in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled — referring precisely to David’s prophecy in Psalm 69. The soldiers offered Him vinegar to mock Him, since vinegar only increases thirst. After Jesus tasted it, He declared, “It is finished!” The great work of redemption was completed — exactly according to the prophecy written in the Old Testament.

Paul quoted David’s psalm to highlight the condition of the unbelieving Jews at the time of Jesus’ suffering. I believe Paul was particularly referring to the Sadducees among the Jews. They viewed offering sacrifices to God as a means of profit, monopolizing the priestly service system and cooperating with the Roman authorities. Among the Jews, they held power, influence, and wealth. When Jesus carried out His ministry on earth, He cleansed the temple twice, which threatened their interests — so they resolved to get rid of Him.

They loved feasting and pleasure, and Paul quoted David’s psalm to describe their outcome: “Let their table become a snare, a trap, and a stumbling block.” A snare is used to catch birds, a trap to capture beasts, and a stumbling block causes people to fall. These unbelieving Jews, who indulged in pleasure and comfort, would find that their feasts would turn into their own downfall — just like birds caught in a snare and beasts trapped in a pit, they would be ensnared by their own indulgence.

This is also a serious reminder for Christians today. Many churches, influenced by the “prosperity gospel,” think that believers can both prosper in this life and inherit eternal life in the next — but this is not the gospel that Paul preached. When Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, he said in 1 Corinthians 2:2, “For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” Paul made it

very clear: the cross is the central message of the church. When Christ came to fulfill His ministry on earth, the final thing He gained was the cross. To man, the cross represents suffering, but to God, it represents glory. If we share in Christ's sufferings in this life, we will also share in His glory when He returns.

Regarding those Israelites who loved feasting and pleasure, Paul quoted David's psalm again: "Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see; and bow down their back always." A person who is bent over and stooped can only see what is on the ground — the things of the earth. They cannot see the peace and joy that are in heaven, nor can they see the snares, traps, and stumbling stones lying ahead of them.

Verse 11: "I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles."

Because of their unbelief, the Israelites stumbled over Christ—He who was meant to be the Rock of salvation became a stumbling stone to them. They stumbled and fell, just as a person might trip and lose their footing. But did God cause them to stumble so that they might fall completely? Certainly not. To "stumble" and to "fall" are not the same. The word fall means to descend from a higher place to a lower one and to remain there, unable to rise again. The Israelites stumbled and missed salvation because of unbelief—but did God intend for them to remain fallen? Absolutely not. Rather, through their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles.

The Gentiles, having received salvation through faith, are gathered together as the Church—the new covenant people of God—enjoying all the riches God has prepared for them. God intends for the Israelites to see the blessing of the Gentiles and to be stirred with jealousy, so that they too might be provoked to repentance and receive the gospel. God's temporary setting aside of Israel is not His rejection of them. God's purpose will surely be fulfilled, and His plan will surely be carried out.

When Israel fell behind, the salvation of Christ came to the Gentiles. The Church was raised up to accomplish God's purpose and carry out His plan. When the appointed time is fulfilled, Israel will once again repent and turn back to God. This is God's plan and arrangement throughout the ages. The same principle also applies to the new covenant believers. Looking at nearly 2,000 years of church history, we can see that God's revelation has always been advancing. God's purpose remains the same—to spread the gospel and to build up the Church. The gospel must reach every inhabited place, and the redeemed saints must gather together to build up the Church in oneness.

In 1 Timothy 3:15, Paul tells us that the Church is “the pillar and ground of the truth.” Only within the life of the Church can truth take root and be established. The building up of the Church must continue to advance until we reach the condition described in Ephesians 4:13, “Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” That will usher in the return of Christ.

Throughout the past two thousand years, some churches have been raised up to bring God's revival, while others seem to have been set aside—having become hardened or indulgent, forgetting the Church's original mission. Paul's warning to Israel must also serve as a solemn reminder to the Church today. Therefore, brothers and sisters, let us remind and encourage one another: remain in the grace of Christ, be among God's chosen remnant, humbly fulfill our service and calling, and wait for the Lord's return.

Let us pray together: Lord, we thank You. Through Paul's warning to Israel, You have given us a reminder for the saints in today's Church. We have received grace and salvation, and we are walking on the path of sanctification. Lord, have mercy on the church I belong to—that all the saints may love You with a pure heart, humble themselves, and remain in Your grace, hoping to become part of Your chosen remnant. Bless the church I belong to and our church life. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen!