

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

Romans 11: 30-32

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. Today, we will continue reading Romans chapter 11, verses 30 to 32.

Salvation comes from Israel; the Israelites are God's elect people in the Old Testament. Although they were stubborn, rebellious, and forsook God, repeatedly falling into states of depravity and failure, God nevertheless repeatedly chose a remnant from among the Israelites to bring about Israel's restoration. Ultimately, this enabled the Israelites to fulfill the commission God gave them: to produce Jesus Christ. Christ executed God's plan of redemption, ushering in the New Testament.

In the New Testament, the gospel of Jesus Christ also began with the Israelites. Jesus' disciples were all Israelites, and they followed Jesus Christ's command before His ascension to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth and bear witness for Christ. Later, God specially raised up the apostle Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles to preach the gospel and establish churches in Gentile lands. As the gospel began to flourish among the Gentiles, the Israelites could not keep up; because of their unbelief, they stumbled and were set aside by God.

Yet God has not rejected the Israelites. In this chapter, Paul reveals the mystery of God's plan: when the full number of the Gentiles has come in and the Gentile church has grown to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, at a specific time—namely, Christ's return—all Israel will be saved. At that time, the church and the Israelites will together bear witness for God's kingdom, ushering in Christ's reign for 1,000 years in the millennial kingdom.

Paul then concludes that God's gifts and calling are without repentance—toward the Israelites and toward the Gentiles alike. In today's age of grace, God has already

given His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life—this is God’s gift. God has also sent His saints to every corner of the world to proclaim the gospel—this is God’s calling to the Gentiles.

God’s gifts and calling are irrevocable. At the end of the age of grace, the Israelites will go through many tribulations; when they have no way of escape, Christ will split the heavens and descend to save the remaining Israelite remnant. At that time, they will recognize that the Messiah who saves them is Jesus Christ, whom their ancestors pierced. All surviving Israel will repent and be saved—this once again proves that God’s gifts and calling are without repentance.

Verse 30: “For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience,”

Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles; writing to the Roman church, he speaks directly to the Gentile saints in the Roman church. You were once disobedient to God, for the Gentiles originally had no share or part in salvation, so they did not know God and naturally did not obey Him. Yet because of the Israelites’ disobedience, the gospel turned to the Gentiles, and thus you obtained mercy.

What Paul speaks of here is not only God’s plan of redemption but emphasizes even more that when God executes His plan of redemption, He shows mercy to those being saved. The word “mercy” here is a verb, an action of God’s love. Mercy originates from love; when unworthy people can come to receive God’s love, this is God’s grace toward them, for grace is receiving what is undeserved. When a person’s condition is even worse—like the Gentiles being shut up in disobedience, with no ability to draw on God’s grace—then God goes further: He personally comes to show mercy to people.

God comes into people’s lowly condition with a heart of compassion, enabling them to obtain God’s mercy. Dear brothers and sisters, recalling the condition when we were saved—was it not exactly like this? When we were poor, blind, and pitiful, with no way out, God sent messengers of the gospel to our side; they came,

bringing God's mercy and the salvation of Jesus Christ, so that we could be saved by grace. From disobedience to obtaining God's mercy—what a marvelous transformation.

Verse 31: “even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy.”

“Even so these also have now been disobedient”—Paul turns the focus to the Israelites. Now they are disobedient; is this not the same as your former disobedience? You could obtain God's mercy, and they too can obtain God's mercy, though in different ways: you obtained mercy because of their disobedience; they will obtain mercy because you, through obedience, have received mercy. Because you have obtained mercy, they too will repent, obey, and obtain mercy.

This is what Paul says in 11:11, “to provoke them to jealousy.” (NKJV) Why different ways? Because they were originally God's elect, yet because of unbelief and disobedience, they were “cut off.” Now seeing the Gentiles, through belief, obtaining God's rich mercy—these are things they could have obtained but lost—they will be provoked to jealousy. As long as they repent and obey, they too can obtain God's mercy.

Paul tells us here that the best way to preach the gospel and bear witness to the Israelites is not verbally proclaiming the gospel message; because they were originally God's chosen people and already know the gospel message, verbal proclamation has little effect. The most effective way is to live a life saturated with God's mercy. These were things inherited from their ancestors but unknowingly replaced by legalism, making them stubborn and unyielding; or unknowingly compromised with the world, becoming pleasure-seeking—they lost the promises God gave their ancestors. Now seeing these promises realized in Gentile saints, they will be provoked and stirred to zeal; as long as they are willing to repent, they can obtain God's mercy.

Verse 32: “For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.”

This is truly God’s arrangement in mercy: to shut up all in disobedience, that He might have mercy on all. The “all” here includes both the Israelites and the Gentiles. God’s redemption is truly unique: when we see people’s disobedience, we feel they have no hope and it is not worth spending time on them; but God’s way of salvation is the opposite—He specially shuts up all in disobedience in order to have mercy on all.

The Gentiles, shut up in disobedience, lived in the valley of the shadow of death, with absolutely no hope. In God’s mercy, they saw the morning light and were willing to accept the salvation of Jesus Christ. The Israelites, shut up in disobedience, seeing the Gentile church enjoying the promises given to their ancestors, were willing to turn to God and obtain God’s mercy.

Dear brothers and sisters, the next time we preach the gospel, let us use God’s perspective, especially toward those who are disobedient—do not be deceived by appearances. Beneath their shell of disobedience, their hearts are lost and helpless; they especially need God’s mercy. God wants to use their disobedience to show mercy to them.

Let us pray together: Dear Lord Jesus, how grateful we are! We were once all disobedient, busy every day with pursuits yet unable to find life’s direction or obtain rest. Thank You! Because of Your compassionate heart, You sent messengers of the gospel into our condition, letting us see hope, experience God’s mercy, and helping us accept Jesus Christ as our lifelong Savior—this is our testimony. Dear Lord, thank You for Your grace toward us; we also ask You to show grace to the seekers around me —perhaps my relatives, perhaps my friends, perhaps my colleagues. Please also send me as a messenger of the gospel to help them obtain God’s mercy from disobedience. For You truly desire all to be saved and none to perish. We ask You to bless the seekers around me, shorten their time of testing, and enable them to accept You early as their lifelong Savior. This prayer, petition, and thanksgiving is in the holy name of my Lord Jesus Christ.