

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

Romans 15: 7-9

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. We'll continue to read Romans Chapter 15 and today we will read verses 7 to 9.

In church life, how do we receive others according to Christ? Paul first reminds the strong saints in the church to bear with the those who are not strong in faith. Second, all the saints must have the same mind and the same purpose according to Christ, so that they may with one accord glorify God together.

Verse 7: "Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God."

Therefore, this verse is the conclusion of the previous six verses: you must receive one another, just as Christ also received you. Before we knew the Lord Jesus Christ, we all lived in darkness and sin, having no part or connection with Christ, and were even hostile toward Him. Yet Jesus Christ unconditionally received us—not only accomplishing the grace of redemption for us, but also preparing the church life for us, so that we may be nurtured and equipped in the church.

The purpose is that we may receive one another, and do so according to how Christ received us: the strong bearing the weak, the older caring for the younger, and the experienced accompanying those who are in need. In this way, we can help all the saints to take Christ's mind as their mind and Christ's intention as their intention. Then everyone, in one accord, can function according to the measure of life within them; in this way, the Body of Christ can be built up. When the church becomes the testimony of Christ, it brings glory to God.

In the Westminster Catechism, the very first question asks: What is the most important and most noble purpose of human life? The answer is simple: to glorify God. But what exactly does it mean to glorify God? Today, we often see people using the name of God to achieve their own goals: politicians seeking power, businessmen pursuing profit, athletes striving for championships, and scholars seeking reputation. After they have reached their goals, if they still remember God, they often casually say one sentence—“Glory be to God!” It seems this is how many people understand what it means to glorify God.

Of course, it is always good that they are willing to mention God’s name. But in the process of reaching their goals, did they use improper methods? Did they rise to the top by stepping on others? These critical questions are not asked by people, but God will ask them. Because what God cares about is not whether they win, nor whether they mention His name, but whether they have manifested the virtues of Christ throughout the entire process.

The wealth, fame, and power that people can obtain on earth—these earthly things are worthless before God. God’s value system is eternal; anything that cannot withstand the test of time has no value in eternity. What truly glorifies God is our expression of the virtues of Jesus Christ in our living. As Paul says here, if we can receive one another just as Christ received us, then we can express Christ’s virtues in our lives, and in this way bring glory to God.

This verse not only summarizes the previous six verses but also opens the discussion for the following six verses. Paul then applies “receiving one another according to Christ” to the mutual reception between Jews and Gentiles. Of course, in Paul’s time, Gentile churches all had some Jewish believers, so Paul particularly emphasized the reception between these two groups. Most Bible commentators also interpret the following verses from this angle. However, in today’s churches, there are few or almost no Jews. Therefore, interpreting from this angle is not easy to apply to today’s church life. I would like to take another perspective.

If we follow Paul’s prophecy in Romans 11:25–26, he says: “Brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery (lest you should be wise in your own opinion),

that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved.” Today, we have already reached the end of the age, and the day when all Israel will be saved is drawing near. Perhaps we can interpret the following passages according to the progression of the gospel.

That is, how the gospel began with the Jews and then turned to the Gentiles. When the gospel became prosperous among the Gentiles, very few among the Israelites received grace and were saved. This will continue until the end of the age. When Christ returns, all Israel will be saved. From this perspective, we will interpret the passages that follow.

Verse 8: “Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers.”

At the beginning, Paul uses the phrase “I say,” indicating that the argument that follows is Paul’s own view. Regarding the development of the gospel, in Romans 11:17–24 Paul uses the example of the good olive tree to explain that the ancestors of Israel—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—are the root of this good olive tree. Jesus Christ is the descendant of Abraham; therefore, the gospel of Jesus Christ originates from Israel and is also for Israel. The rich sap of the olive tree refers to the riches of Jesus Christ.

However, because of the unbelief of the Israelites, those branches that did not believe were broken off. The Gentiles were originally branches from a wild olive tree, but because they believed, these wild olive branches were grafted into the good olive tree. Therefore, Paul warns the Gentile believers not to boast and not to exalt themselves, because it is the root—the patriarchs—that supports these grafted branches. Paul also reminds the Gentile believers to remain in God’s kindness; otherwise, they too will be cut off. One day, the Israelite branches will be grafted back in again because they will believe. Since they are the natural branches of the original tree, being grafted back in will be a glorious thing.

In all the writings of the New Testament, this is Paul's particular insight, so he adds the phrase "I say."

Let us read the following passage according to Paul's light. "Christ has become a servant to the circumcised for the truth of God." The "circumcised" refers to the Jews. Jesus Christ was born among the Jews, and during His earthly ministry, His primary mission was to serve the Jews, although He did also go to Gentile regions. In Matthew chapter 15, it records that Jesus entered the region of Tyre and Sidon and cast out a demon from the daughter of a Canaanite woman. In His conversation with the Canaanite woman, recorded in Matthew 15:24, "Jesus said, 'I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'" Jesus very directly made it clear that He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and that He was sent to reveal God's truth to the Jews.

After the last prophet in the Old Testament, Malachi, was sent to convey God's will to Israel, God became silent for 400 years. During those 400 years, God did not speak. The Israelites continued offering sacrifices and worshiping God, and as a result, the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees emerged. They became the religious leaders among the people and developed a priestly service system rooted in religious traditions combined with worldly elements. This deviated from God's original intention. But Jesus Christ is the truth, and He served the Jews with the truth in order to confirm the words God had promised to the patriarchs of Israel and to bring the Jews back to God's purpose.

Many prophets in the Old Testament prophesied that the Messiah would come and restore the kingdom of Israel. In Jesus' first recorded message, in Luke 4:16–19, He quoted Isaiah 61:1–2, declaring that He was the Anointed One and that He came to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

Later, in Matthew 16:16–20, Jesus acknowledged that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Messiah long expected by Israel. Jesus also said in Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Jesus needed to correct the Jews' mistaken understanding

of the Messiah, because the Messiah's first coming was to become the Lamb of God for the atonement of sins.

In John 3:13–15, Jesus explained that He is the bronze serpent lifted up by Moses in the wilderness, so that everyone who looks to Him and believes in Him may have eternal life. Jesus also directly proved to the Jews in John 8:56–58 that He is the Christ whom Abraham looked forward to. In John 5:39–40, Jesus rebuked the Jews openly: “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.” Jesus Christ truly confirmed the words God promised to the patriarchs and testified to God's faithfulness. Although most Jews did not believe, Jesus still gained the twelve apostles and five hundred disciples; and they were sent by the Lord to spread the gospel to all the inhabited earth.

Verse 9: “and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: “For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, and sing to Your name.”

“And that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy.” Christ revealed God's faithfulness to the Jews in order to fulfill the promises God had made to the patriarchs, and Christ revealed God's mercy to the Gentiles. When Christ carried out His ministry on earth, He deliberately traveled into the region of Tyre and Sidon. He was like a loaf of bread—the food God supplied for the Jews. Some crumbs fell from the table, and Christ, like those crumbs, in His mercy met the need of the Canaanite woman.

In John 12:20–24, when Philip brought some Greeks who wanted to see Jesus, Jesus declared that He was the grain of wheat that must fall into the ground and die, and would bear much fruit. This indicates that in His merciful heart, salvation was also for the Gentiles. In Acts 1:8, before His ascension, Jesus specifically commanded the disciples that the gospel must begin in Jerusalem, then be preached throughout all Judea, then to Samaria, and finally to the ends of the earth—meaning all the places where Gentiles dwell.

Although the gospel began with the Jews, in God's mercy the gospel would be preached among the Gentiles, so that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy. As it is written: "Therefore I will give thanks to You among the Gentiles, and sing praises to Your name." This is quoted from 2 Samuel 22:50. Second Samuel chapter 22 is the psalm of praise, David offered to God on the day he was delivered from his enemies and from the hand of Saul. Today, Christ is the true David. He will gain many brothers from among the Gentiles, and He will lead all the brothers together to praise and worship the Father. The gospel is no longer an exclusive grace for the Jews. The Gentiles also will glorify God because of His mercy.

Let us pray together: Dear Lord Jesus Christ, we were originally all Gentiles, having no part or share in God's grace; yet because of God's great love in His mercy, this salvation that came from the Jews has also reached us. On one hand, we praise Your ways; on the other hand, we also thank the apostles and the saints of the early church. They were sent by You to spread the gospel throughout all the inhabited earth of their time. And according to Your command, they received the Gentiles into the church and learned to accept one another according to Christ. It was only by removing the distinction between Jew and Gentile that the truth of the gospel could be passed down from generation to generation. Thus, today—two thousand years later—we have the opportunity to hear the gospel and, through believing, become children of God, the Father. This is God's tremendous mercy. Help us to both experience God's grace and learn to build up the church where we are, according to Christ. May the church become a beautiful testimony, so that all whom God has chosen may know grace, receive the gospel, and join us in building up the church as we await Christ's return together. Bless the church where I am. We pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!