

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

Romans 15:10-12

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 15. We will read verses 10-12 today.

Paul applies "receive one another as Christ received us" specifically to the relationship between Jewish and Gentile believers. It seems Paul is following the progression of the gospel, describing the Jews' and Gentiles' responses to the gospel, and reminding the saints to receive one another just as Christ has received us.

In 15:8, the gospel first came to the Jews in order to confirm the promises made to the fathers of Israel, thus proving God's faithfulness. Christ Himself is God's truth, and through Jewish apostles the greater part of the New Testament was completed. Among the New Testament writers, only Luke was a Gentile, and Luke constantly followed and served Paul. We may say that the truth of the New Testament came entirely from the hands of the Jews.

15:9 then says that, because of God's mercy, the gospel also came to the Gentiles, so that God's name might be praised and glorified among the Gentiles. As the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul fulfilled God's historical commission concerning the gospel going to the Gentiles.

Verse 10: "And again he says: 'Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!'"

Here Paul quotes Deuteronomy 32:43 (NKJV): "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people; For He will avenge the blood of His servants, and render vengeance to His adversaries; He will provide atonement for His land and His people."

The background of Deuteronomy 32 is that Moses faithfully completed the commission God gave him, yet he himself could not enter the good land of Canaan; the second generation of Israel was about to enter the good land under Joshua's leadership. Moses specially composed a song to declare God's heart to the children of Israel. The very last verse of that song says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!"—this is Moses' prophecy.

This prophecy seems never to have been fulfilled in Israel's history. The closest instance was probably in 1 Kings 10. After King Solomon finished building the temple, the queen of Sheba, a Gentile, heard of the name of the LORD and came to visit Solomon. 1 Kings 10:4–5 (NKJV) records: "And when the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, the food on his table, the seating of his servants, the service of his waiters and their apparel, his cupbearers, and his entryway by which he went up to the house of the LORD, there was no more spirit in her."

The queen of Sheba was completely overwhelmed; she was beside herself with astonishment. She admired and appreciated the wisdom, riches, and glory displayed by Solomon. Here we see a Gentile's respect and submission, but we do not see the Gentiles rejoicing together with His people.

A thousand years after Solomon, in Paul's time, Paul was called by God to be the apostle to the Gentiles and established many churches among the Gentiles. At that time there were always some Jews in the Gentile churches, so Paul truly witnessed "the Gentiles rejoicing with His people." This is the actual fulfillment of Moses' prophecy. Therefore this verse describes church life in the Gentile regions in Paul's day.

Verse 11: "And again: 'Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!'"

Here Paul quotes Psalm 117:1 (NKJV): “Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!”

When Paul quotes it, he directly changes “all you Gentiles” (nations) into “Gentiles.” In this verse Paul no longer mentions the Jews, because by the time he wrote the prison epistles he saw the church as God’s new creation, where there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile.

Ephesians 2:14–15 (NKJV) says, “For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace.” Colossians 3:10–11 (NKJV) says, “and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.”

Paul clearly declares that there is no longer Greek nor Jew, no longer distinctions of race, class, political status, or cultural tradition; rather, Christ is all and in all.

From church history we know that after Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70, the Jews were scattered among the nations and seemed to disappear from the stage of history; even in the Gentile churches the Jews gradually faded away. On the other hand, when Constantine the Great came to power in the Roman Empire, he issued the Edict of Milan in A.D. 313, recognizing the legality of Christianity. He then convened several councils at Nicaea to help resolve doctrinal disputes in Christianity. Thus Christianity gradually became the mainstream of Western society. The church gained respect, and the gospel was widely spread. Truly, just as the psalm Paul quotes here says: “Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you people!”

Verse 12: “And again, Isaiah says: ‘There shall be a root of Jesse; and He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, In Him the Gentiles shall hope.’”

This verse is very rich; we need to spend more time and try to explore Paul’s heart. Here Paul quotes Isaiah 11:10 (NKJV), “And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious.”

Jesse was the father of King David, and David was the greatest king in Israel’s history; therefore Jesse represents the Israelites of the tribe of Judah who sat on the throne. This verse speaks of “a Root of Jesse”—who does this refer to? To understand this, we must go back to Isaiah 11:1 (NKJV), “There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.”

“The stem of Jesse” refers to the stump left near the roots after a tree has been cut down. Though the tree has been felled, the roots are not yet dead; after a time a new shoot grows out of that old stump, and this shoot will grow into a new tree and bear much fruit. What does this mean?

In Matthew chapter 1, the genealogy of Jesus Christ shows that from David onward the royal line sat on the throne until Matthew 1:12, after the deportation to Babylon, when David’s descendants no longer sat on the throne—Israel’s great tree was cut down. Then after another fourteen generations, Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit and bore Jesus; Jesus is the shoot newly sprouted from the stump of Jesse.

Next, Isaiah 11:2–5 describes Jesus Christ; let us look verse by verse.

11:2: “The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.” Here it speaks of fourfold Spirit upon Jesus Christ: the Spirit of the LORD, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, and the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

Jesus Christ must have this fourfold Spirit, which exactly corresponds to the prophecy of the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 9:6–7 (NKJV), “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”

Here we see that Isaiah’s prophecy focuses on Christ’s second coming to reign on earth, sitting on David’s throne and ruling the millennial kingdom, with righteousness and justice as the foundation of the kingdom. Therefore Isaiah 11:2 speaks of the fourfold Spirit upon Jesus Christ.

Then Isaiah 11:3–5 describes how Christ will reign in the millennial kingdom (NKJV): “His delight is in the fear of the LORD, and He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist.”

Next, the prophet Isaiah tells us what the scene on earth will be like in the millennial kingdom. Isaiah 11:6–9 (NKJV), “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb; the leopard shall lie down with the young goat; the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper’s den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.”

When we read this we all long for it: everything restored to the pattern of God’s original creation—this is what God’s kingdom should be like. Only with Isaiah 11:1–

9 do we reach 11:10: the Root of Jesse—Christ who comes again to reign—is raised up as a banner to the peoples; this is a banner of grace that will attract the Gentiles to seek Him. Paul quotes Isaiah 11:10 with slight modification, but the meaning is the same: Christ will be raised up to reign over the Gentiles, and the Gentiles will hope in Him. Of course, we are certain that this will be fulfilled when Christ returns.

Here we see how vast Paul's pattern is. When he speaks of "receiving one another as Christ received us," he brings in the historical progression of the gospel: first to the Jews, to confirm the promises made to the fathers of Israel; then to the Gentiles because of God's mercy. This began when Peter went to the house of Cornelius, preached the gospel to the Gentiles, and opened the door of the gospel to the Gentiles. Then in Paul's time he established many Gentile churches, and in those churches Gentiles rejoiced together with His (Jewish) people. Then after A.D. 70 the Jews gradually disappeared, while the gospel began to prosper among the Gentiles, and in Gentile lands tens of thousands praised and magnified God. This situation will continue until the end of the age, when Christ returns.

When the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, the remaining entire house of Israel will be saved, and this will bring in Christ's return. When Christ returns, the saints of the New Testament church will be raptured and judged before Christ's judgment seat: if a person's lifelong work can stand the fire, he will receive a reward and reign with Christ in heaven for a thousand years; the repentant and saved Israelites will lead the nations on earth to worship God. Just as Zechariah 8:22–23 (NKJV) describes: "Thus many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."'"

So in Paul's concept, receiving one another as Christ received us ultimately brings in the heading up of all things in Christ. How great is Paul's vision, how high is Paul's view! And today, as we practice according to Paul's charge in the church how to receive one another as Christ received us, we are preparing for the heading up of

all things in Christ. Therefore do not belittle our church life. As the saints in the church life are all willing to exercise themselves and receive one another according to Paul's teaching, the change that begins with each one of us will ultimately bring in the heading up of all things in Christ—this is also the ultimate purpose of church life.

Let us pray together: Lord, raise our view and enlarge our vision; teach us to see today's church life with Paul's vision. Of course, on one hand church life is for us to be nourished, to grow properly, and to serve properly; yet on the other hand it also contributes to the entire gospel progression of the universe, because God's plan is ultimately to head up all things in Christ. May this heading up of all things begin from us. May every one of us resolve to present our bodies a living sacrifice, be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that our church life may be filled with the reality of receiving one another in Christ; may the church truly display a beautiful testimony and attract all peoples to return to Christ. Bless the church where I am. I pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.