

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

Luke 11: 45-54

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank God, it's time to read the Bible again. We continue to read Luke chapter 11, today we'll read verses 45-54.

Yesterday we read about Jesus accepting the invitation of the Pharisees to join them at their meal, and as a result, Jesus pronounced three woes that the Pharisees would face.

Verse 45: "And one of the lawyers answered and said to Him, 'Teacher, by saying these things You reproach us also.'"

When facing the truth and the corruption in people's hearts, Jesus spoke without sparing feelings—directly and straightforwardly. Among those seated at the table, one of the lawyers felt offended, and so he said to Jesus, "By saying these things You reproach us also." Because the Pharisees were those who kept the rules, while the lawyers (experts in the law) were the ones who interpreted and established those rules.

Verse 46: "And He said, 'Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers.'"

Then Jesus directly pronounced three woes upon the lawyers. The first woe: Originally, the law was given to the Israelites through Moses; the law always reveals God's own character. When people come before the law and realize they cannot keep it, they should return to God and seek His help. But these lawyers, using their position of interpreting the law, imposed many hard-to-bear burdens. They took

the originally simple law from Moses—we need to love God, we need to love our neighbor as ourselves—and developed it into 613 detailed rules, meticulously telling people what to do and what not to do, thus adding many burdensome requirements that people had to follow. This is the first aspect.

The second aspect: yet they themselves would not move even one finger. Of course, they probably lacked the ability to keep the rules they themselves established, but more than that, they had no willingness to keep them, so they wouldn't lift even one finger. In fact, the role of the lawyers back then is somewhat similar to that of the saints today who speak for God in the church. Jesus condemned these lawyers for loading heavy burdens on others while not touching them themselves. So how should brothers today who speak for God conduct themselves? Many times, what we preach, we ourselves cannot do. Does that mean we should stop preaching?

Actually, the real difference lies in the theme of this chapter: the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. When we rise to speak for God, moved by the Holy Spirit within, we faithfully proclaim according to the Holy Spirit's prompting. But on the other hand, we ourselves must remain humble, knowing that many things the Holy Spirit wants us to say, we ourselves probably cannot fully live out. Therefore, we need to humble ourselves before God. When we speak for God, we are filled with the anointing of the Holy Spirit. What comes out are words of comfort and encouragement, not words of condemnation. Words that come from the Holy Spirit are always seasoned with salt and grace, full of comfort and full of encouragement—this is instruction that comes from life. And life is always connected to the Holy Spirit.

Next, Jesus pointed out the second woe to the lawyers.

Verses 47-48: “Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. In fact, you bear witness that you approve the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and you build their tombs.”

Here Jesus very directly pointed out that these lawyers' ancestors killed the prophets, yet they themselves went and built the tombs of the prophets. On the outside it looked like repentance, but inside there was none, because they were still persecuting the prophets God sent. Truly respecting the prophets means listening to the prophets' words, not merely building their tombs. Building the tombs of the prophets does nothing to help with the prophets' message.

Verse 49: “Therefore the wisdom of God also said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute,’”

The original can also be translated as: “Therefore the wise one of God said.” Actually, Jesus, this wise one of God, this person of wisdom, was referring to Himself. Jesus told these lawyers: Although you are now building the tombs of some past prophets, God is still continuing to send His prophets and His apostles among you, yet you do not listen. Some of them you will kill, and some you will persecute. On one hand you appear very pious, building the tombs of former prophets; on the other hand, you refuse to listen to God's word right now. Because God is still sending His prophets, still sending His apostles among you, and you kill some and persecute others.

Verse 50: “that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation,”

Jesus' condemnation here is extremely serious and heavy: the blood of all the prophets shed from the foundation of the world. Jesus loved His people, so He often sent prophets to speak the words of His heart to the people; especially when the people fell into various kinds of corruption and depravity, and when they refused to listen, they killed these prophets. From the foundation of the world, all the blood of the prophets shed would be required of this generation—all accounted for together.

Verse 51a: “from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple.”

Abel was the first righteous man whose blood was shed, killed by his brother Cain, so it begins from the first prophet Abel. Zechariah is recorded in 2 Chronicles 24:20, The priest Zechariah, son of Jehoiada, said to the people, “Thus says God: ‘Why do you transgress the commandments of the LORD, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, He also has forsaken you.’” Verses 21-22, “So they conspired against him, and at the command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the LORD. Thus Joash the king did not remember the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but killed his son; and as he died he said, ‘The LORD look on it, and repay!’”

In the arrangement of the Hebrew Bible for the Jews, 2 Chronicles is the last book; the account of Abel is in the first book, Genesis, and Zechariah is in the last book, 2 Chronicles. Therefore, when Jesus says from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, it encompasses the entire Hebrew Old Testament.

Verse 51b: “Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation.”

On one hand, Jesus' words here are extremely serious, and the burden is very heavy, but in reality, all the prophecies of the prophets in the Old Testament point to Jesus Christ, because He is the Messiah, He is the fulfillment of all the prophets' prophecies. And when the Messiah came among the Israelites, these Jews actually crucified the Messiah on the cross—this precisely fulfilled what Jesus said here. All the sins of killing the prophets and shedding the prophets' blood would be required of this generation. Because Jesus Himself is the summary and fulfillment of all the prophets' prophecies. Jesus continued with the third woe to the lawyers:

Verse 52, “Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered.”

The law was in the hands of the lawyers; they were the interpreters of the law. In other words, they held the key of knowledge in their hands. They could use the key to open up and help people understand the meaning of the law; the law is meant to make people aware of sin and then lead them to the eternal God.

But what did they do? They took away the key of knowledge. They themselves did not enter, and they hindered those who were trying to enter. Here, Jesus very solemnly told the lawyers that they faced three woes.

The first woe: they were dishonest. They loaded many heavy burdens on others while not moving even one finger themselves. The second woe: they were hypocrites. They appeared to be building the tombs of the prophets, yet they themselves continued to persecute God's prophets and apostles. The third woe: they were negligent in their duty. Because God entrusted them with the ministry of interpreting the law, they held the key of the law, yet they themselves did not enter, and they also prevented others from entering. They failed in their duty.

Verses 53-54: “And as He said these things to them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to assail Him vehemently, and to cross-examine Him about many things, lying in wait for Him, and seeking to catch Him in something He might say, that they might accuse Him.”

Facing the challenges from the Pharisees and lawyers, Jesus was very courageous, very upright, and very direct in describing their condition and telling them the woes they would face. After speaking, Jesus left there. Of course, we believe Jesus' purpose in saying these things was to lead these people to genuine repentance, so that perhaps they could be saved. But these scribes and Pharisees did the exact opposite: they vehemently pressed Him, trying to provoke Him to say more, secretly listening, seeking to catch something from His words to use against Him.

In this passage of teaching against the lawyers, it also allows us to examine ourselves. In the process of speaking for God and explaining God's word, if the Holy

Spirit is not present within, how many times do we ourselves become like the lawyers Jesus condemned? May God help us.

Let us pray together: Lord, yes, help us not to fall into the condition You have condemned. When we come to read Your word and explain Your word, we ask the Holy Spirit to help us—on one hand, to truly face our own condition, and on the other hand, to have the anointing of the Holy Spirit constantly with us. May our words come forth as anointed teaching, so that when others hear, they do not feel discouraged but instead feel drawn, encouraged, and willing to return to You in prayer, seeking the outpouring and filling of the Holy Spirit. We know that by ourselves we truly cannot meet any requirement of the law, but through the help of the Holy Spirit, we can naturally live a life that accords with the law's requirements in the light of life. Help me always turn to You, help me always seek the Holy Spirit's help in prayer. Through the abundant Holy Spirit You give, may my life be guided by the Holy Spirit and live a holy life. Bless me, I pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.