

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

Luke 23 : 33-43

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 23; today we'll read verses 33 to 43.

Verse 33: "And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left."

In the other Gospels, it is mentioned that when He was being crucified, soldiers gave Jesus wine mixed with gall to drink. The wine mixed with gall had an anesthetic effect, so that when one was nailed and hung on the cross, the pain would not be so severe. Jesus tasted it and would not drink it. He would rather bear all kinds of physical suffering, because this was the price for redeeming all people from sin.

Verse 34: "Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.' And they divided His garments and cast lots."

This is the first of the seven final sayings Jesus spoke on the cross. He first prayed to God the Father for those who nailed Him to death on the cross, asking God the Father to forgive them, "for they do not know what they do." This is the greatest prayer, and only the Son of God could have such a prayer. When He was suffering all kinds of unreasonable treatment and unjust punishment, and when He was hung on the cross, His first prayer was: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." Yet the response of the people around Him to this great prayer was: "And they divided His garments and cast lots." This was to fulfill the word of Psalm 22:18, "They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots."

Verse 35: “And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, ‘He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God.’”

Toward such a great prayer of Jesus, they almost heard without hearing. What they cared about were some despicable interests: dividing Jesus’ outer garments and casting lots for His inner garment. Not only so, they also mocked Jesus, saying that He saved others, yet had no way to save Himself. Precisely because Jesus was not willing to save Himself, He was able to save others. This is the deepest meaning of the cross: being willing to sacrifice oneself and being willing to let others receive benefit.

Verse 36: “The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine,”

Because when one was hung on the cross, his mouth would very quickly become extremely thirsty. Yet they did not give Him water to drink; instead, they used sour wine. The more one drinks sour wine, the thirstier one becomes, increasing His physical suffering. On the one hand, outwardly they mocked and ridiculed Him; on the other hand, they also said:

Verses 37-38: “and saying, ‘If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself.’ And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

On this “inscription” there was a line of small words, written in Greek, Roman, and Hebrew letters. In other words, when Jesus was nailed to the cross, there was an inscription on the cross explaining His charge. What was His crime? He was the King of the Jews. And this inscription was written in three different languages: Hebrew, Greek, and Roman letters. Hebrew typifies religion, Greek typifies culture, and Roman typifies politics and military power. This was equivalent to declaring to

culture, to religion, to politics, and to military power that Jesus is King, that Jesus is the Christ, that is, the Messiah.

When the Messiah first came to the earth, He rode on a meek young donkey and humbly entered Jerusalem to become King. He came to redeem all people from sin and to save those who were willing to believe and be saved. These people would slowly grow in life and become the people of God's kingdom. Therefore, the purpose of the Messiah's first coming to the earth was to prepare His people. As a result, He was persecuted and betrayed by the religious leaders, looked down upon by the cultured Greeks, and ultimately nailed to the cross by the Roman political power.

Yet the inscription on His cross spoke in advance that one day He will come again. When He comes again, He will become King. At that time, He will not only be the King of the Jews; in the religious realm, in the cultural realm, in the political realm, and in the military realm, He will be King.

The first saying Jesus spoke on the cross was: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." The soldiers around Him seemed not to have taken it in at all, but Jesus must have had a special intention in speaking this word. Next, let us look at the two robbers crucified with Him.

Verses 39-40: "Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, 'If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.' But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?'"

That robber saw something in Jesus' prayer, something completely different from himself. They were both hung on the cross and were about to reach the end of their lives. Perhaps he began to be filled with regret over his life. But when he looked at Jesus, who was crucified with him, His behavior was completely different from that of ordinary people. When He was suffering extreme physical pain, what He cared about was not Himself, but those who had placed this punishment upon Him. In

this one act, the robber discovered God. Therefore, he said to the other robber, we are under the same condemnation; do you not even fear God? His conscience began to work within him.

Verse 41: “And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.”

Thank the Lord, this robber who was hung on the cross together with Jesus, through the final words Jesus spoke on the cross, had his conscience touched. He began to repent, and he began to pray.

Verse 42: “Then he said to Jesus, ‘Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.’”

Do not underestimate this prayer. This prayer was full of revelation. Because he was about to die, he knew that death was not the end of everything, especially when he heard Jesus pray to God the Father and ask God the Father to forgive those who had brought all kinds of persecution upon Jesus. In revelation, he discovered that although Jesus was now condemned, and although His body seemed about to pass away, he seemed to see that Jesus would rise again, that Jesus would receive the kingdom, and that after He received the kingdom, one day He would come again. Therefore, he asked Jesus, saying, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”

This remembering is very meaningful. He was about to finish the journey of his life. He no longer had the opportunity to do good works. He no longer had the opportunity to practice good deeds. He no longer had the opportunity to make any compensation for any wrong thing he had done. He had nothing. The only thing he had was that, at this moment, he could believe in Jesus; and through his believing, he asked Jesus to remember him when He came into His kingdom. He recognized

that although his life had already come to its end, it was still not too late. He could still ask Jesus. This too was a great prayer.

Verse 43: “And Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.’”

This is the second saying Jesus spoke on the cross, and this saying was His response to the prayer of a robber who was crucified with Him before death. When this robber asked Jesus to remember him when He came into His kingdom, the answer Jesus gave him was even more direct. He said, Assuredly, I say to you, today—that is, today, after you breathe your last here—you will be with Me in Paradise. You do not need to wait until I receive the kingdom and come again. Today, once you rest from your earthly life, your soul will enter Hades together with Me.

We know that Hades has two parts: one part is Paradise, and one part is the place of suffering. Through the example of the rich man and Lazarus, we know that the rich man was in the suffering part of Hades, suffering all kinds of torment; but Lazarus was in Abraham’s bosom. Jesus very clearly told this robber that today, you will be with Me in Paradise.

This also tells us very clearly that a person’s salvation depends only on believing. Believe in all that Jesus did on the cross, so that we may receive redemption from sin. Such believing does not require doing any good works, does not require making any compensation for the wrong things you have done, and does not even require baptism. Believe, and you receive eternal life. Believe, and you can be with Jesus in Paradise. Through Jesus’ conversation with this robber on the cross and His answer to the robber’s prayer, we come to know a very important truth: the way to obtain God’s life is very simple: believe. Repent and believe, and you are regenerated and receive the life that comes from God.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You. The words You spoke on the cross clearly tell us that believing and repenting are the only way to receive grace. Thank You for giving us the wisdom of salvation. We are a group of Your children who believe in Your redemptive work on the cross and belong to You. Around us, there are still many of our relatives and friends who do not yet know You, and have not yet believed in and received You as the Savior of their whole life. At this time, we ask You to give us such a burden, so that we may be able to speak the message of the gospel to the relatives and friends around us.

As we speak, we also ask You to give them, like this robber, a repentant will, willing to receive this gospel of grace. There is no need to do anything; simply repent, simply believe, and they can receive the divine life. Help me become a channel of the gospel, bringing people before You to believe and to know You. Bless my living. I pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.