

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

1 Peter 1:20-25

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 to read 1 Peter Chapter 1, verses 20 to 25.

From the moment of rebirth until the return of Christ, Christians are able to fully enjoy the inheritance reserved for us in heaven, with the salvation of the soul being the process we must go through. As we traverse this journey, we carry with us a living hope, and the more complete our experience of the salvation of soul, the higher our hope becomes. To achieve the complete salvation of our souls, we must undergo various trials, and through these trials, our faith becomes even more precious, strengthening our ability to receive God's abundant grace. The grace we experience is to be transformed into our hope, leading to praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

In the first chapter, Peter crystallizes his lifetime experience of God's grace into a single long sentence, described from verse 3 to 12. Without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, how could a fisherman from Galilee have such a comprehensive description? For this, we must offer thanks and praise to God. Then, from verse 13 to 19, Peter tells us that through the precious blood of Christ, we are born again. After being born again, we should have three practices: firstly, to restrain our minds, focusing on waiting for the revelation of Jesus Christ; secondly, to be obedient children, learning the holiness of God; thirdly, to live our days as sojourners in the world under the light of judgment. These three practices are what a person should have after being born again, and it's truly difficult to imagine such a profound transformation in a person after being born again.

Dear brothers and sisters, have you experienced a great transformation before and after your salvation? We often wonder why a simple decision to believe in Jesus,

which seems like a momentary thing, could have such profound effects. In fact, after a person is born again, they immediately undergo a marvelous transformation. The real reason lies in verses 20 and 21 of the first chapter, so let's read these two verses first.

Verses 20-21: "He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God."

These two verses tell us that behind our momentary decision, God had foreseen it since before the creation of the world. According to God's foreknowledge, He made a comprehensive plan, and then patiently waited until the end times to reveal it to us. What may seem momentary to us is actually a detailed plan and long wait for God. We need to understand that human sin and fall were not unexpected to God; He knew about it long ago. When the triune God convened and decided to create humanity, He already knew about the fall. Therefore, the triune God also made a plan of redemption. The second person of the Trinity, namely Christ, was to be sent to redeem fallen humanity through His precious blood.

Therefore, the scripture here says that Christ, before the creation of the world, was foreknown by God, meaning He was predestined by God to become the sacrificial lamb for redemption, and He came to complete the salvation. Here we see that God not only foreknew the Redeemer, He also predestined each and every one to be redeemed, including you and me. Therefore, no one's salvation is accidental; it's not a spontaneous decision or choice by a person. In fact, each one is chosen by God beforehand, and then God patiently waits until the end times to reveal Himself to us one by one. How does He reveal Himself? God uses the most suitable environments, the most appropriate messengers of the gospel, and at the same time, God prepares your heart to be receptive so that when you hear the gospel, there is a wonderful stirring within you. And this stirring enables you to see the grace of Jesus Christ's redemption, to see that Jesus died for your sins, to see that

Christ was raised by God for your justification, and to see that Jesus Christ ascended to glory and sits at the right hand of the Father, which is the manifestation to you in the last days. Through such revelation, you believe in Jesus Christ. And through Jesus Christ, you become a child of God, and through Jesus Christ's effectiveness on the cross, when He breathed His last, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. Today, we can come boldly before the Heavenly Father, seeking grace, seeking mercy, asking for our timely help. This is the shared story of every saved person.

Peter makes a conclusion here: "so that your faith and hope are in God." Our faith originates from God and returns to Him; similarly, our hope comes from God and returns to Him as well. Faith is the starting point of our spiritual life, and hope is its endpoint. Indeed, God is the God who starts and completes for us. From verse 13 to 21, the emphasis is on every believer being born again through the blood of Jesus Christ, focusing on our relationship with God. Then, from 1:22 to 2:10, the focus is on the salvation of the soul, which is the path of sanctification we embark on after being born again.

Verse 22: "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart."

Here, it speaks of obeying the truth and purifying one's heart. The Chinese Union Version translates the word as "heart," but in the original Greek text, the word used is "psuche," which is translated as "soul" in English versions. Therefore, a more accurate Chinese translation should be "魂" (soul), indicating that through obeying the truth, one purifies his soul. From this verse onward, it discusses the salvation of our souls and the purification of our souls.

In the preceding passage, we see that our rebirth comes through the blood of Christ, which is the first step of salvation. Our spirit is quickened, and our spirit is revived. However, to further cleanse our soul, it is no longer through the blood of Christ but

through obedience to the truth. Here we see that in the step of rebirth, we completely accept the grace accomplished by Jesus Christ. And now, regarding the salvation of the soul, we have our responsibility, which is that we must obey the truth. And how is the soul cleansed? Our soul, including our thoughts, emotions, and will. The way to cleanse our thoughts is to set aside all distorted and erroneous thoughts and simply obey the truth, which is the word of God. The path to cleanse our emotions is to detach from worldly pleasures and temptations and solely love the truth, which is the word of God. And the way to cleanse our will is in every decision we make, we choose to obey the truth alone, which is the word of God. When the soul is cleansed, it will produce a result, and that result is genuine love for our brothers without falsehood.

According to our natural selves, we have our own will, preferences, and choices. Generally speaking, we only love those who are like us, and within this love, there is often an element of pretense. That's why a couple, following their natural inclinations, may love each other initially, but after marriage, they may experience constant quarrels because their natural love is tainted with falsehood. However, if our soul is cleansed by the truth, we can understand others according to the mind of Jesus Christ, love others with the affection of Jesus Christ, and strengthen others with the will of Jesus Christ. Only then can we truly love our brothers without any falsehood.

Peter then says, "You should earnestly love one another from the heart." The heart refers to our soul, along with the window of conscience, which is connected to the spirit. Once our soul is cleansed, we can respond to the promptings from the spirit and through the conscience reach into our soul. This enables us to truly love one another earnestly. To love earnestly means to genuinely seek the benefit of others, offering practical help, whether material or spiritual. Here we see the manifestation of soul salvation, which is the ability to love one another earnestly. Why can the saints in the church love each other so genuinely, even though they have no blood relations?

Verse 23: "having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever."

The rebirth of saints originates from the same incorruptible seed. The seed signifies the source of life, and this source is incorruptible, meaning it is not of this earth but of heaven. The rebirth, as stated in John 3:5, comes from the Spirit; being born of the Spirit is through the incorruptible seed, which is the living and enduring word of God. The word "word" in Greek is, *logos*, concerning God's eternal purpose, which remains unchanged. Prior to this word, Peter uses two adjectives: living and enduring. "Living" implies it is alive, full of vitality, and able to supply life. "Enduring" means abiding, residing within us. According to John 1:1, this Word, existing from the beginning, refers to the second person of the Holy Trinity, Jesus Christ. When we hear the Word and accept Christ, He comes to dwell within us, vibrant and full of life-giving supply.

In John 6:55-56, Jesus says, "For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him." Jesus' discourse completely contradicts human natural thinking. Many could not understand His words and turned away, even among His disciples who said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?" Thank God, Jesus then explains to His disciples. In John 6:63, Jesus says, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life." Jesus' words are full of life; when they enter us, they abide and continue to supply life. Thus, the process of every saved saint is the same—they are quickened by the word of God, indwelt by His word, and continually supplied with life. Therefore, in terms of spiritual life, every saint's life comes from the same source, the same life, and produces the same nature, enabling them to naturally love one another without pretense. This is also the manifestation that should occur after the soul of the saints has been purified.

Verse 24: "because all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away,"

Peter then contrasts spiritual life with life from the flesh. "All flesh," referring to what is natural to humans, is like grass—weak, transient, and without value, unable to withstand trials. His beauty, like that of a flower on the grass, earthly natural things also have their moments of beauty and glory, attracting others to pursue them. However, their beauty and glory are just like the flowers on the grass: the grass will wither, and the flower will fade away; this is an inevitable law. Because what is from human flesh, what is natural to humans, is temporary.

Verse 25: "But the word of the Lord endures forever." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

In contrast to what is from flesh, from the natural, like flowers on the grass, which wither and fade, the word of the Lord remains eternal. What is this word? It is the gospel preached to you. The true gospel speaks of one person, Jesus Christ, who is the Word from the beginning. The previous verse speaks of the glory of what is from flesh, which is temporary. In contrast, when we receive the word of the Lord, it is eternal; it is the imperishable seed. Peter emphasizes here not only that this word is eternal, but also implies further that this word should be able to grow, develop, bloom, and bear fruit in us.

The seed is eternal, and the fruit it bears is also eternal. Just as in Mark 4:4-9, the parable of the sower that Jesus spoke, Jesus is the one who sows the seed, likening Himself to the Word that is sown. Some seed fell by the wayside, some on stony ground, some among thorns, and finally, some fell on good ground. In Mark 4:8, "But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred." How can we bear abundant fruit? We must purify our souls by obeying the truth, so that we can genuinely love one another with sincerity among all the saints. What's particularly noteworthy is that Peter speaks of the purification of the soul, and its inevitable result is the ability to love the brethren without hypocrisy.

Beloved brothers and sisters, in your church community, observe the saints around you. Can you love each saint genuinely, without any hypocrisy? The extent to which

you can love reflects the purity of your soul. In John 13:34, Jesus also told His disciples, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another." These are the words of Jesus. If we can obey His words, we can purify our souls. This is a crucial lesson on the path to sanctification for every saint.

Let's pray together: Lord, we thank You for Apostle Peter, who clearly tells us the indicators of the path to sanctification from his own experience: that is, to love our brothers and sisters genuinely. Help us, on our journey to sanctification, to have our minds, emotions, and wills purified by the truth. Let the seed of life not only fall into our hearts but also help our hearts become good soil, capable of bearing fruit thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold. Bless my life, filled with the fruits of the Holy Spirit; I pray in the name of Jesus Christ.