

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

**1 Peter 03: 10-15**

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 1 Peter 3: 10-15.

The theme of the passage is about living in the light of judgment during our sojourning in this world. In 1 Peter chapter 3:1-7, Peter addresses the relationship between husbands and wives, emphasizing that wives should submit to their husbands, and husbands should show honor to their wives, dwell together with understanding. Moving on to verses 8 to 12, Peter addresses the relationships among the saints, emphasizing the importance of unity as the most crucial element in church life. If saints cannot be united in heart, our ministry and development of the work will ultimately be in vain. Secondly, there is an emphasis on loving one another and then blessing one another. Even if you have been wronged or offended, you should bless the one who wronged you, because in your blessing, you will first receive the blessing of your own soul's salvation.

Continuing from verses 10 to 12, Peter quotes from Psalm 34:12-16, but not verbatim; he uses his own words to convey the message. Here we see that Peter is very familiar with Old Testament scriptures. Indeed, the best application of scripture is to have God's word richly stored in our hearts, so that when needed, we do not have to search the scriptures, but it naturally flows from our hearts.

Let's first read Psalm 34:12-16, "Who is the man who desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry. The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth." Now let's read 1 Peter 3:10-12, you'll notice that Peter references many phrases from Psalm 34:12-16, but he presents them in the context of his own thoughts and applies them to the relationships among saints in the church's life.

**Verse 10: “For ‘He who would love life, and see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit.’”**

Based on the original text, there are no specific phrases like "the Scripture says," so it's clear that Peter had the scripture memorized and incorporated some of its phrases into his own letter. The phrase "whoever would love life and seek good days" is more of an interpretive addition by translators. In the NIV translation, it reads "Whoever would love life and see good days," and if translated directly into Chinese based on this English version, it would mean "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech."

Here, the word "life" in Greek is "Zoe," which refers to life that comes from God. Saints in the church all have life that comes from God, and they come together to live in the church. If every saint can control their tongue, not speaking evil or deceitful words, the church life will be peaceful, and they will be able to enjoy good days every day.

Talking about controlling the tongue, James 3:1-12 provides a profound discussion. Verse 3:2 says, "For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body." This highlights the importance of speech. Verse 3:6 further states, "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell." This shows us that if the tongue is not controlled, it can have immense destructive power.

Dear brothers and sisters, in church life, not only must we refrain from hurtful or deceitful speech, but also from idle gossip. We have all received God's grace and have been redeemed by Christ, becoming one family. Therefore, let us speak words that build up one another, using gracious speech to edify and encourage each other.

**Verse 11: “Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it.”**

To avoid evil and do good has both passive and active dimensions. Passively, it means steering clear of sin, not giving the devil a foothold, especially within the church where sin should not be tolerated. We must preserve a clean and holy environment for the saints, allowing God's children to grow appropriately. Actively, it means doing good—not merely performing acts of kindness, but helping every saint to grow in life and live a virtuous life, bearing the fruit of the Spirit as described in Galatians 5:22-23: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."

Seeking peace and pursuing it leads to harmony in the church, as described in Psalm 133:1: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" True harmony is unity, not just maintaining surface-level peace but each saint being united with Christ. Therefore, seeking peace involves not only setting up mechanisms to eliminate friction or resolve disputes among believers but actively helping saints grow spiritually, progress on the path of sanctification, and change their souls. It means being willing to sacrifice oneself and pay the price to help others or restore saints who have gone astray.

If all saints in the church earnestly seek and pursue unity, placing harmony as the highest priority—even willing to set aside their own ministries for the sake of unity—the church life will surely be sweet. When unbelievers come to the church, they cannot help but acknowledge that God is truly among you.

**Verse 12: "For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil."**

The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and there are two aspects to righteousness: an objective aspect, where we are justified by God through the precious blood of Jesus Christ; and a subjective aspect, where we experience salvation in our souls along the path of sanctification, growing in life to live a life that aligns with God's righteousness. In our subjective aspect, we are not yet complete, but God promises that His eyes will be upon us, and His ears will be open

to us. Therefore, in our weaknesses, we can pray to God confidently, coming before Him to seek His help. God will grant us grace to live a righteous life.

If we continue to do evil after receiving grace, failing to live a righteous life commensurate with the grace we have received, the Lord will turn His face away from us and show us His displeasure, prompting us to repent quickly. Here, Peter tells us that if we walk in the path of righteousness, though imperfect, God will help us in our areas of inadequacy. If we stray from this path, the Lord will extend His hand of discipline to help us turn back.

Continuing from verses 13 to 17, Peter encourages believers to endure suffering for the sake of righteousness. Here, Peter is very practical. Despite believers receiving grace, he instructs them to seek unity and mutual love within the church. On the other hand, believers still live in this world where Nero's cruel reign has begun to persecute Christians extensively, causing many believers to face hardships. Therefore, Peter specifically encourages them to endure suffering for righteousness and advises them on how to prepare themselves to face such situations.

Dear brothers and sisters, we are now in the end times where global conditions will only become more perilous, and moral degradation among people will continue to worsen. Living in such times, persecution of Christians is inevitable. Therefore, we must heed Peter's instructions on how to prepare ourselves and keep them close to our hearts.

**Verse 13: “And who *is* he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?”**

Peter begins this passage with a question: "If you are zealous for good works, who will harm you?" Here, being zealous for good works doesn't mean merely performing surface-level actions like the Pharisees, but genuinely following the lead of the Holy Spirit from within, undergoing transformation in the soul, and sincerely helping those in need. If you can do good in this way, who will harm you? Peter's

question here resonates with Paul's statement in Romans 8:31, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" This question reflects a similar sentiment.

Peter's intention here is not to say that people won't harm you, because this passage is about suffering innocently for righteousness' sake, indicating that people will harm you, but they cannot truly harm you. What does this mean? It means that when you do what God requires of you, God naturally stands with you. People may be able to harm your body, but they cannot harm your soul; they cannot take away your living hope, nor can they take away the inheritance God has stored up for you in heaven.

**Verse 14: “But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you are blessed. “And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.”**

If circumstances bring suffering for righteousness' sake, we should recognize that these afflictions are temporary in this life, intended to test and strengthen our faith, which is more precious than refined gold. When our faith is tested and strengthened, we can receive more grace, experience more of God's favor, and bear the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. What may appear as virtue today in human eyes will become our inheritance in heaven. Therefore, Peter says this is blessed.

So, do not be alarmed or intimidated by suffering; at most, it may result in temporary loss in this life. Yet, these momentary and light afflictions will accomplish for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. The founder of the Salvation Army, William Booth, penned a poem with a line that says, "Arise, and reckon this transaction done; Exchange the fleeting for the infinite." What a worthwhile exchange.

**Verse 15: “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;”**

When you suffer unjustly for righteousness' sake, set apart the Lord as holy in your heart—dedicate your heart to Him, allowing Him to reign on the throne of your heart, so that He can govern your thoughts, emotions, and will. This way, when you encounter difficulties and experience suffering, you won't be shaken or afraid of intimidation and persecution. Those who persecute us will see God's peace reflected in our faces and will recognize that there's something special about us. They will find it strange and inquire about the reason for our hope.

Peter instructs us to be prepared to respond to everyone with gentleness and respect. Responding with a gentle and respectful heart is the attitude, and the content of our response is the reason for our hope. We can share our testimonies of salvation, our experiences of spiritual growth, and especially our hope for the glory we will inherit in the future. If we have these testimonies prepared, we can use them at the right time to help those who persecute us.

The best example of this verse is the martyrdom of Stephen, which is recorded in Acts chapter 7. Stephen was persecuted by the Jewish council, but he used this opportunity to give a lengthy discourse from Acts 7:2-53, totaling 52 verses. This discourse is perhaps the longest and most comprehensive in the Bible, starting from Abraham, moving through Joseph, Moses, and David, and ultimately pointing to Jesus Christ. Stephen directly confronted those who persecuted Him and accused them of killing Jesus Christ.

Stephen's testimony enraged those who persecuted him, including Saul. However, what about Stephen? In Acts 7:55-56, it says, "But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, 'Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!'" Stephen's declaration was accompanied by the glory of God shining on his face. Stephen was prepared, and Jesus Christ was standing at the right hand of God, ready to receive Stephen.

At that moment, the crowd rushed upon him and stoned him. Before his martyrdom, Stephen's prayer to the Lord is recorded in Acts 7:59-60: "And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'"

Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not charge them with this sin.'" His words echoed two of Jesus' seven sayings from the cross. Although Stephen was martyred, he had a glorious hope for eternity. His face at the moment of martyrdom and his prayer deeply impressed Paul's heart.

At the time, Saul might not have fully understood, but the impact on his heart was unforgettable. Later, on his way to Damascus, Saul encountered a great light, was saved, and became the apostle Paul to the Gentiles. During Paul's first missionary journey in Pisidian Antioch, he delivered his first recorded sermon in Acts 13:16-41. The structure of this sermon closely resembles Stephen's discourse, and its content is a continuation of Stephen's message. We can infer that Stephen's sermon had a profound impact on Paul, and perhaps it was from Stephen's testimony that Paul found the reason for his hope.

Dear brothers and sisters, in the end times, Christians often face unfair treatment. The apostle Peter teaches us not to resist but to endure suffering for righteousness' sake and to be prepared to testify to the hope within us.

Let us pray together: Lord, in these last days, we thank You for not only saving us by Your grace but also placing us within the church. Bless the church we belong to, that our brothers and sisters may be of one mind and heart, loving one another, and that our church life may be filled with joy each day. May this sweet fellowship in the church be our support and help us through our days as temporary residents in this world. In this evil generation, where we may face unfair treatment, grant us sufficient grace to endure suffering for righteousness' sake and prepare us to articulate the reasons for our hope so that our lives and testimonies may glorify Your name. We pray in the holy name of Jesus Christ. Amen!