

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

1 Peter 03: 20-22

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 chapter 3, verses 20 to 22.

Peter encourages the saints in their suffering, teaching that it is blessed to suffer for righteousness' sake. Jesus is righteous, while we are unrighteous. Christ once died for us, taking on our sins and sinful nature upon Himself, so that He bore the judgment of Father God for these sins. This is the righteous standing in for the unrighteous. This substitution accomplished our redemption, aiming to bring us before God. Jesus Christ was born of Mary through the Holy Spirit, appearing fully human outwardly but fully divine within. By becoming sin for us, Jesus Christ's body was put to death, but His spirit remained alive and continually imparted life, enabling His resurrection three days later. We often think of resurrection as an instantaneous event after three days, but Jesus Christ's resurrection was also a process. After three days, this eternal life within Him continually brings forth the resurrection.

In John 11:25, during the instance where Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, Jesus first said to Martha, "Your brother will rise again," but Martha did not fully believe. Jesus then said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live." If we translate this according to the original text, Jesus' declaration "I am the resurrection" and "I am the life" both use the present tense. In other words, Jesus was the resurrection even before He went to the cross because He possessed eternal life within Him.

Peter specifically highlights that before Jesus' resurrection, in the spirit, He proclaimed to the spirits in prison—specifically those who were disobedient during the time of Noah when the ark was being built. Angels were originally ministering spirits, sent by God to serve mankind. However, some angels fell and disobeyed God's will, following Satan, and they did not stay in their positions of authority but

committed sin. God did not spare them but cast them into darkness, awaiting judgment. After His death and before His resurrection, Jesus Christ proclaimed victory over them.

Verse 20: “Who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.”

In the days of Noah, people had fallen into corruption and their thoughts were always evil. As a result, God's Spirit no longer contended with humanity, and God decided to judge that corrupt age with a flood. Yet God was still full of mercy and patiently waited for 120 years. During this time, Noah preached to that generation and built an ark on the mountaintop and testified to them that the flood was imminent. However, in that fallen and rebellious generation, no one believed Noah's testimony.

Dear brothers and sisters, Jesus said that His coming would be like the days of Noah. Noah and his family of eight stood as a lonely witnesses to their generation, receiving mockery and ridicule in return. Now, at the end of this age, those who sincerely follow Christ also stand alone and are often scorned and mocked by the world. The difference is that Noah's family worked together in unity to build the ark and provide a counter-witness to that generation.

Today's church, as described in 2 Timothy 2:20, has become like a large household with a variety of vessels. “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor.” Those who are sincere and love the Lord, desiring to follow in Christ's footsteps, not only face attacks from Satan and temptations of the world but also encounter false apostles, prophets, and teachers within the church. These individuals cause divisions from within, attempting to deceive believers and lead them away from the pure gospel. Therefore, we must pay close attention to Peter's message.

When Noah's 600 years old, the flood came, and the time of judgment arrived. As a result, only eight people, those who followed Noah into the ark, were saved through the water. In this passage, Peter mentions these eight individuals, using the Greek word "psuche" for "people," which can also mean "soul" in reference to individuals. This contrasts with the disobedient spirits mentioned earlier in the verse. These eight people were Noah, his wife, his three sons (Shem, Ham, and Japheth), and their wives—exactly eight individuals who were saved through the floodwaters in the ark. The Chinese term for "ship" conveniently translates to "ark," and with the significance of eight individuals, it seems to testify to this historical account in the Bible. While these eight were saved in the ark through the judgment waters, thousands of thousands outside the ark faced judgment and perished. After the judgment, these eight individuals began a new generation, and Shem, Ham, and Japheth became ancestors of Asians, Africans, and Europeans, respectively.

Verse 21: "There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,"

Initially, Peter explains that the water symbolizes baptism, which corresponds to the salvation of Noah's family of eight in the ark through the judgment of water. This event serves as a type or foreshadowing of baptism. Similarly, every believer in Christ, through water baptism, is saved. Christ is our ark—just as the ark passed through water and emerged from it, so did Christ pass through death but could not be held by it; Christ emerged from death, resurrected.

Today, through baptism, we are immersed in water, symbolically united with Christ's death, and then brought out of the water, symbolizing our union with Christ's resurrection. The ark floating on the water's surface signifies that Christ's resurrected life continually supplies life until the completion of resurrection. Therefore, Peter emphasizes that our salvation is through Christ's resurrection.

The following passage is explaining the efficacy of baptism: "not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God". This means

that baptism does not physically cleanse the body from sin. Though our sins have been redeemed through faith in Christ's salvation, and we have been forgiven by God, the power of sin still remains within us. Our flesh may still commit sins, and the impurity of our flesh will continue to manifest. Therefore, baptism does not remove the impurity of the flesh.

In Romans 8:2, it says, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." To break free from the power of sin, we must rely on the life-giving Spirit and continuously receive life in our spirit, which enables our soul—our thoughts, emotions, and will—to be renewed and freed from the law of sin. Originally, our soul was influenced by the flesh, leading us naturally to sin and obedience to the law of sin and death. But now, through the supply of life from the Spirit, we begin to delight in spiritual things, think about spiritual matters, choose obedience, and pursue spiritual things. This is how we can break free from the law of sin.

Peter is very candid in telling us that baptism does not remove the impurity of the flesh. This means that even after being baptized, you will still sin and be subject to the impurity of the flesh. So, what does baptism do for us? Why should we undergo baptism? The next part of the verse says, "but the answer of a good conscience toward God." First, in the original text, there is no "but" in this sentence. This is a misleading translation that might make it seem like a minor matter, when in fact it's very important. It would be more appropriate to translate it as "rather," emphasizing the significance: "rather the answer of a good conscience toward God." A good conscience is easily understood. The verb is translated in the Chinese Union Version as "appeal" which has a rich meaning in Greek word. KJV translates it as "the answer of good conscience"; NIV translates it as "the pledge of good conscience"; ASV translates it as "appeals of good conscience"—these three versions offer three different translations. If we consider these together, baptism is our response, testimony, and appeal of a clear conscience before God.

Previously, we mentioned that the conscience is the pathway between the spirit and the soul. The richness within the spirit must flow through a clear conscience to assist our soul. Baptism serves as a response, testimony, and appeal to keep this

pathway clear. What does this mean? We know that the prerequisite for baptism is belief. If you do not believe, baptism will not be of any help to you. Therefore, you must first believe before you can be baptized. Belief is internal, unseen by others. After believing, you undergo baptism.

The first layer of meaning in baptism is a response to your belief. This means that inwardly, you have accepted Jesus Christ's salvation, and outwardly, you demonstrate this salvation through baptism. Jesus Christ Himself commanded that people be baptized in the name of the Holy Father, Son, and Spirit. Even though He had no need for baptism, He did so to fulfill all righteous requirements. When we believe in Jesus Christ's salvation, the first response to this salvation is to obey Christ's command and publicly testify through baptism to believers in the church, unbelievers in the world, and even to angels, heavenly hosts, and fallen Satan, declaring, "I believe in Jesus Christ!" You have made a response.

The second layer of meaning in baptism is testimony. Response may occur at a specific moment through baptism, where you publicly witness your salvation. Testimony is the statement of this fact; afterward, wherever you go, you have testimony that you are a saved person. Generally, after baptism, every church issues a baptismal certificate as proof. It typically contains the signatures of the baptizer and elders as witnesses, which can help local churches accept you when you move.

The third layer of meaning in baptism is appeal. I particularly like this translation. Appeal reminds us continually: "You have been baptized! Maintain a clear conscience." This is crucial for the sanctification process. Although baptism itself cannot remove the impurity of the flesh, the sanctification process aims to free you from the lure of fleshly desires. The key to overcoming these desires in the soul is allowing the Holy Spirit to control it, which requires maintaining a clear conscience and keeping an open pathway between the spirit and the soul.

Mark 16:16 says, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." When a person believes and is baptized, they are saved from the judgment of the lake of fire and eternal perdition. Believing and being baptized together can help us overcome Satan's power, resist worldly temptations, and conquer fleshly desires. Mark does

not explicitly explain how we are saved from Satan, the world, and the flesh, but Peter here tells us the path to salvation: continually maintaining a clear conscience and keeping an open pathway between the spirit and the soul. This is a crucial key. The salvation of the soul comes from the supply of the Holy Spirit, controlling, leading, and even transforming our soul through the pathway of the conscience. This transformation enables us to think about heavenly things, delight in heavenly things, choose heavenly things, and pursue heavenly things, thus delivering us from Satan, the world, and the flesh.

Dear brothers and sisters, after believing, it is God's command to be baptized. If you believe but refuse baptism, it's like having one foot in God's kingdom but not willing to fully enter. Internally, you have a heart willing to believe, but externally, there is no obedient action. In this way, how can anyone know that you truly believe? Therefore, Peter wisely tells us that baptism is our response, testimony, and appeal to a clear conscience.

Verse 22: "Who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him."

After Jesus Christ passed through death and resurrection, He ascended to the highest heaven and sat at the right hand of God. In the Chinese Union Version, it says He entered into heaven. I personally prefer not to use "heaven" this word, because of its connotations with traditional Chinese religion. Essentially, it refers to "heaven," which is the same concept as in English. According to Jewish belief, heaven has three levels: the first heaven is the sky we see above us; the second heaven is the space beyond the sky where the stars reside; and the third heaven is the dwelling place of God, an abstract or non-temporal space outside our dimensions. Jesus completed His earthly ministry, passed through death and resurrection, and ascended to the third heaven, sitting at the right hand of the Father, where all angels, authorities, and powers obey Him.

What Peter says here is almost identical to what Paul describes in Philippians 2:6-11, but Paul provides more detailed descriptions: "Who, being in the form of God,

did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore, God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Dear brothers and sisters, in these challenging days faced by Christians, Peter encourages believers to suffer for righteousness and uses Jesus Christ as an example of how He passed through death, resurrection, ascension, and received glory. Any saint willing to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ will also walk a similar path. This process of suffering is not only a purification of our faith but also a journey where we store up hope in heaven. When Christ returns, we will inherit the eternal inheritance in heaven. Peter presents this future hope before us, enabling us to face difficulties with positivity as we run the race towards heaven, knowing that our hope is glorious.

Let us pray together: Lord, help us to lift our eyes to heaven each day, seeing You seated on Your glorious throne. You have opened a new and living way for us; all we need to do is follow in Your footsteps as we live our days on earth with hope. In times of trouble, may we look to You, and You will give us sufficient grace to faithfully follow You. Bless my life today, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen!