

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

1 Peter 04: 17-19

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 4: 17-19.

Peter encourages the saints who are in tribulation that they are suffering together with Christ, and therefore should rejoice in sharing Christ's sufferings. In this way, the Spirit of glory and of God will rest upon them. When Christ is revealed in His glory, they will also share in that glory.

Verse 17: “For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?”

The time has come for judgment to begin with the house of God. Throughout Peter's epistles, he frequently mentions judgment. In Peter's understanding, judgment is a crucial element of God's governmental administration. After God created the universe, He has continuously governed all created beings with principles of righteousness and justice. This is God's governmental administration. In this administrative governance, He has always used judgment to deal with anything that exceeds the boundaries of His righteous and just principles.

In the Old Testament, God judged the fallen angels; during Noah's time, He judged the earth with a flood; in Abraham's time, He judged Sodom and Gomorrah with fire; during Moses' time, He first judged Egypt with ten plagues and then judged the first generation of Israelites who came out of Egypt in the wilderness. Ultimately, only Joshua and Caleb were able to enter the promised land; even God's faithful servant Moses could not enter the promised land because he violated God's governmental administrative. Here we see the strict aspect of God's administrative governance.

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ came and initiated the age of grace. By believing in Jesus Christ's redemption, we freely receive grace and become children of God. Although we enter through grace, our lives after being saved must still conform to God's righteous principles. Therefore, Peter mentions in 1 Peter 1:17 that God judges each person's work impartially, and thus we should live out our time as foreigners here in reverent fear.

This verse further states that the time has come for judgment to begin with the house of God. The house of God is a house of righteousness and holiness, and those in God's house must also meet the requirements of righteousness and holiness. Hence, Peter says judgment must begin with the house of God. Today, God uses discipline as a means of judgment for the church, which is what Peter repeatedly refers to as the trial by fire. God's purpose in discipline is positive; it is to help us remove impurities from our faith, much like gold being refined by fire. With pure faith, we can rely solely on the grace of Jesus Christ and no longer depend on our flesh and natural talents and abilities.

This trial by fire may manifest as persecution, calamities, or diseases, causing our bodies to suffer. Such trials aim to prevent our fleshly desires from enticing our souls, allowing our souls to be fully open to the supply from the Holy Spirit and to complete the salvation of our souls. This is the sanctification journey for every saved believer: becoming holy within so that we can live a life of righteousness outwardly. This is God's governmental dealings today in the church. He frequently uses discipline to help believers stay on the path of sanctification. This governmental administration will continue until Christ returns. According to 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17: "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven, with shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."

The saints who have died in Christ throughout the ages will be resurrected first. When the Lord comes, the living saints will also be caught up, and they will meet the Lord in the air. But where will they be taken after meeting the Lord in the air? According to 2 Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat

of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." After being caught up, we will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive His judgment, based on what each person has done after being saved, whether good or bad.

Our deeds after salvation are compared to a building project in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15. After being saved by grace and believing in Jesus Christ, we build upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. Some build with gold, silver, and precious stones, while others build with wood, hay, and straw. At the judgment seat of Christ, He will judge our works with fire. The fire will test the quality of each person's work. If someone has built with gold, silver, and precious stones, their work will withstand the fire, and they will receive a reward, which is to enjoy the presence of Christ in the Millennial Kingdom. However, if someone has built with wood, hay, and straw, their work will be burned up, and they will suffer loss, meaning they will lose the reward of reigning with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom. Nevertheless, they will still be saved, having a part in the new heaven and new earth. Paul adds that they will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames, implying that in eternity, they will not carry much glory.

So, to summarize, God's judgment of New Testament saints begins today with governmental dealings within the church. These are like tests, similar to quizzes in school, helping us understand where we stand and what areas need improvement. Peter refers to these as fiery trials, which today burn away the wood, hay, and straw in our works, prompting us to build with gold, silver, and precious stones instead. God's governmental dealings will continue until one day we fall asleep (die), at which point our building work stops. At the end of the time, when Christ returns, some saints will still be alive and will be caught up. All saints will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and receive His judgment. This final exam determines whether we will be rewarded or suffer loss in the Millennial Kingdom.

Dear brothers and sisters, after we are saved, our path to sanctification lasts a lifetime. On this path, there will be many trials that help us build our works with gold, silver, and precious stones, so we should cherish these trials. The saints, who have been justified by God, still need to undergo His judgment, including today's

governmental discipline and the judgment at Christ's judgment seat when He returns.

Peter then asks, if God's judgment begins with us, what will be the end for those who do not obey the gospel of God? The Father has committed the judgment of mankind to the Son, and before Christ's return, there will be a great tribulation on earth, marking the beginning of Christ's judgment of the world. Those who ally with the Antichrist to attack God's chosen people will all be killed.

After Christ's return, He will establish His glorious throne and sit on it to judge the nations that survive. Then, Christ will reign on earth for 1,000 years. The saints who enter the Millennial Kingdom and sit with Christ will reign with Him until the end of the Millennium. After that, Christ will judge all the dead before the great white throne. The dead will first be resurrected and then judged, which is known as the resurrection of judgment. These people, who did not obey the gospel, still have their sins upon them, and the wages of sin is death. Anyone whose name is not found in the book of life will be thrown into the lake of fire, which is the second death.

Verse 18: "Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?""

The Chinese Union Version translates "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved," but the NIV says, "It is hard for the righteous to be saved." A better translation is, "If the righteous are barely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" What does it mean that it is hard for the righteous to be saved? There are two aspects to righteousness: one is objective righteousness, and the other is subjective righteousness. The salvation of every righteous person begins with objective righteousness, which means that by simply believing in the redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ, they are justified by God and possess objective righteousness. This is the first step in the salvation of the righteous. This step is not difficult at all; it is received freely by simple faith.

From objective righteousness to subjective righteousness is the lifelong path of sanctification for every believer. Subjective righteousness means living a righteous life in Christ. Sanctification is internal, referring to the purifying of the soul and the complete salvation of the soul. Living a righteous life is external and is the manifestation of sanctification. Until Christ returns and judges each person's works at His judgment seat, the overcomers will receive rewards, and the defeated will suffer loss.

So when Peter says it is hard for the righteous to be saved, he is referring to the difficult path a believer must walk from salvation to ultimate being an overcomer. This path is challenging because it requires enduring many fiery trials. These fiery trials are positive, as they burn away the wood, hay, and stubble in our works today, and produce the gold, silver, and precious stones in our building. Gold refers to God's nature, silver to Christ's redemption, and precious stones to the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. Due to the difficulty of this path, Paul encourages us in 1 Corinthians 10:13, "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

Paul tells us that although the road is difficult, God in His faithfulness will also protect us. When we cannot endure, He will provide a way out to help us bear it. Paul's life was filled with many fiery trials, so much so that in 2 Timothy 4:7-8, he could declare, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."

Paul was very confident that the crown of righteousness was laid up for him, and he encourages us to also love the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that the crown of righteousness may be laid up for us as well. Dear brothers and sisters, do not have the mistaken notion that once you believe in the Lord, everything will be smooth sailing and you are just waiting to be carried to heaven in a flowery sedan

chair. In fact, it is quite the opposite. The process of sanctification is difficult, but on this difficult road, God continuously provides help, making a way for us to endure.

God has also prepared the church for us externally, where brothers and sisters are our companions in running this heavenly race together. We can support and encourage each other, and the hope we ultimately attain is glorious. Peter says, "Now if the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" This phrase "the ungodly and the sinner" certainly includes all worldly people. This is similar to what Paul says in Romans 1:18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness." Ungodliness and unrighteousness include all people of the world. Gentiles, because they do not have God, are ungodly; Jews, having God yet living sinful lives, are unrighteous. Because God's ultimate standard for judgment is righteousness, if it is so difficult for those who are saved by grace to reach the level of overcomer, where can the unbelievers stand?

Verse 19: "Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator."

This phrase "according to the will of God" directly responds to 1 Peter 4:1, which says, "Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin." Peter first encourages the saints to have the same attitude as Christ, who suffered, and then through suffering in the flesh, they can cease from sin. This is indeed the will of God. Those who are willing to suffer according to the will of God are saints walking on the path of sanctification. Their outward expression is to continue to do good, meaning they live a righteous life. By doing so, they commit their souls to the faithful Creator. The phrase "commit their souls" in the original Greek is composed of two words: "para," meaning alongside, and "tithemi," meaning to place. It implies placing one's soul alongside the faithful Creator. This Greek word also carries the meaning of deposit, like depositing money in a bank. Peter is saying that saved believers stand alongside God; as they journey through the salvation of their

souls, they will undergo trials, which purify their souls. Each trial is a deposit of hope, and by willingly suffering according to God's will, they store up the hope of glory in God. When Jesus Christ is revealed, they will receive praise, honor, and glory. This is a difficult path but also a path to glory.

Let us pray together: Lord, we thank You for the persistent encouragement through the apostle Peter to share in the sufferings of Christ, for this is Your will for us. Thank You for reminding us that judgment begins with Your household, and today You discipline us within Your family, helping us to have teachable hearts and ears to hear. May we willingly let go of the things in our lives that are like hay, wood, and straw, to be refined by the redemption of Jesus Christ, allowing divine qualities to be constituted within us. Let us be transformed into living stones, fit for building Your spiritual house, through the work of the Holy Spirit. Thank You for preparing many companions for us on this challenging journey, enabling us to remind and encourage one another as we run the race. Bless the church I belong to, that it may become a holy sanctuary. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen!