

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

2 Peter 01: 08-11

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. This week we'll be reading 2 Peter chapter 1, and today we'll read from verse 8 to verse 11.

Peter presents the process of following the Lord throughout his life, his spiritual growth, and the manifestation of virtues in his life in a very orderly manner. Paul, in Romans chapters 5 to 8, uses four chapters to explain the theory and experience of Christian sanctification. There, Paul extensively cites scripture, adds detailed analysis and reasoning, and provides a complete depiction of the process of Christian sanctification. However, most believers find that passage difficult to understand, causing them to hesitate in their faith journey. Even Bible teachers, due to differing theological frameworks, have various interpretations and often engage in endless debates.

In 2 Peter 1:4-8, Peter uses just five verses to clearly explain the lifelong process of Christian sanctification. However, Peter does not use the term "sanctification" but instead says "partakers of the divine nature." Peter's way of speaking is very direct and straightforward, making it easy for us to understand. When Peter says "partakers of the divine nature," he is actually giving the best definition of sanctification. According to Peter's own life experience, this process of sanctification starts with faith. We believe in Jesus Christ, accept His grace of redemption, and thus receive eternal life, becoming children of God. This is the starting point of all holy matters and all spiritual experiences. Without this step, all other knowledge, labor, and exercises are in vain.

From the starting point of accepting life through faith, the next step is to develop the virtues of Christ. These virtues are not an external imitation but a natural manifestation of the growth of life. On the other hand, if someone claims to believe but continuously shows no virtues and remains the same as before his salvation, he must seriously consider whether he truly believe and are genuinely saved. This

is a very serious matter because it concerns whether he will partake in God's eternal kingdom or fall into eternal perdition—two completely different outcomes. Therefore, this must be a very clear and confirmed matter.

After developing virtues, on this foundation, one must also grow in knowledge. This knowledge is not merely objective doctrine but the truths in the Bible that become the guidance and assurance of our life experiences. The words in the Bible regarding God's eternal will are certain and cannot be abolished in any way. Sometimes our experiences can be too subjective and biased, which requires God's word to guide and correct us. This knowledge of God should lead us to continue moving forward.

After gaining knowledge, one must also develop self-control. Knowledge can easily make a person arrogant, especially knowledge without life experience, which can make one puffed up and forget who they are—we are all sinners saved by the Lord's grace. Therefore, Peter wisely tells us that after acquiring knowledge, we need to develop self-control. This self-control comes from the adjustment and restraint of the Holy Spirit, curbing the arrogance and pride that come from the flesh.

After self-control, one must grow in perseverance. Self-control is directed towards one's flesh and old self, while perseverance is directed towards external circumstances, including people, events, and things. God uses His mighty hand to precisely measure out various environments for us to learn lessons and develop enduring perseverance. Peter emphasizes suffering in his epistles and tells us to treasure these trials because they help us grow in perseverance.

After perseverance, one must develop godliness. This means living a life that resembles God's, a life full of virtues. Knowing how to face difficult environments, how to deal with different people, events, and things, and always displaying an appropriate attitude in various situations, making others feel comfortable and without fault.

After godliness, one must develop brotherly kindness. Godliness is the outward expression of a pious life, while brotherly kindness is our inner acknowledgment. Church life is a beautiful and pleasant life where brothers dwell together in unity,

and it is also an expression of a pious life. Every saint in the church must expand their capacity to truly love each saint. 1 Peter 1:22 tells us that only those whose souls are purified can genuinely love their brothers without deceit.

After brotherly kindness, one must grow in divine love. This is to love everyone around us with God's unconditional, unrequited, and eternal love, which is the final step in the growth and manifestation of virtue. When we love those around us with God's love, we are truly united with God. This is what Jesus prayed for His disciples in John 17:21: "That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us." If we can love those around us with God's love, we will be united with God.

Dear brothers and sisters, I hope we can remember this process of spiritual growth and frequently examine ourselves to ensure that we are always walking on the path of sanctification.

Verse 8: "For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Peter begins by saying that one must have these qualities in abundance, referring to the process of growing from faith to virtue, then to knowledge, then to self-control, then to perseverance, then to godliness, then to brotherly kindness, and finally to divine love. This growth experience encompasses many different aspects and perspectives, which is why Peter emphasizes experiencing them fully. Such a comprehensive experience is complementary to knowing the Lord Jesus Christ. The more we experience, the more we know the Lord Jesus Christ; the more we know the Lord Jesus Christ, the deeper we can experience. Ultimately, this results in bearing the fruit of the Spirit, as described in Galatians 5:22-23: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." Peter uses the concept of bearing fruit to convey that this series of qualities is the process and result of spiritual growth. Without life, all of this is illusory. Verse 8 speaks of having these qualities in abundance, and verse 9 shows us the opposite.

Verse 9: “For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.”

If one lacks these qualities—this growth from faith to divine love through the seven steps of spiritual maturity—then they are spiritually blind. Here, "blindness" refers to spiritual blindness, meaning you can only see what is near, but cannot see the eternal; you only see the temporary things of this life, but not the eternal glory; you focus on the pursuits of this life without realizing that these are ultimately empty in eternity. Today, the gradual growth of our spiritual life will become an exceedingly great hope in eternity. If we forget the eternal for the sake of today, we are spiritually blind.

Peter further says that such a person is "forgetful of being cleansed from past sins." How are our sins cleansed? Not by our own efforts, but entirely by the redemption of Jesus Christ. He sacrificed His life and shed His blood on the cross to redeem us. We have been sanctified, separated from this vain world, and freed from corruption and sin. If you forget this and instead focus on the temporary comforts and pleasures of the world, you are spiritually blind.

Peter understands that we often need to be reminded that we belong to God, that we possess God's life, and that we should partake in God's nature, walking on the path of sanctification. On this path, we may temporarily lose our way or forget the pain of being entangled in sin in the past, thereby only seeing what is near and forgetting the eternal. In such times, we need to be reminded and brought back on the right track, following a path of spiritual growth: from faith to virtue, to knowledge, to self-control, to perseverance, to godliness, to brotherly kindness, and to divine love—these seven steps of spiritual maturity.

Verse 10: “Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things, you will never stumble”

Here, Peter encourages us, brothers, to be all the more diligent. Diligence refers to our attitude. At the beginning of the life experience in verse 5, Peter tells us to have

a diligent attitude. By verse 10, Peter once again reminds us to be even more diligent. Paul also reminds us in Romans 12:11, "Not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." This tells us to be wholehearted, to strive tirelessly, to pursue with zeal, and not to be lazy.

So what does diligence mean? It means to make the most of our time. God gives each of us only one lifetime. In the past, many of our years were devoured by locusts. Therefore, in the remaining days, we must make the most of our time. What does it mean to make the most of our time? It means seizing every opportunity to experience growth in our life. Our attitude must be positive and wholehearted, not like a couch potato lying on the sofa without moving. We must seize every opportunity that God has prepared for us to preach the gospel, lead others to salvation, and grow our spiritual life. Often, we might not feel strongly about idleness, but in God's perspective, laziness is a sin.

In Matthew 25:14-30, the parable of the talents, the servant who received one talent hid it in the ground. He did not steal, rob, or squander the money; he merely buried it and waited to return it to his master intact. In 25:26, the master calls him a "wicked and lazy servant" because he was lazy and unwilling to put the talent to work through trading. This laziness rendered him wicked. Jesus gives talents according to each person's ability and expects them to use these talents productively, encouraging us to have a business-like perspective, seeing every talent as an opportunity to generate profit. By hiding the talent, the servant missed the opportunity and thus became a wicked and lazy servant. This parable teaches us that every saved believer must be diligent and strive earnestly in their spiritual pursuits.

Peter urges us to be all the more diligent in confirming our calling and election, saying, "Therefore, brothers and sisters, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election." Every saved individual has already been called and chosen by God's will, which is unchangeable. However, on our part, we must be diligent and strive earnestly, as this is our responsibility. By combining God's will with our diligence and earnest pursuit, Peter assures us that our calling and election can be firmly established. This firmness implies a strong personal assurance, which then

becomes our motivation to move forward. This assurance also serves as a witness to others, who can see and testify to the steadfastness of our calling and election, thereby further encouraging us. Peter emphasizes that if we practice these qualities—faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly affection, and love—we will never stumble.

Dear brothers and sisters, Peter's words remind us that in our journey of sanctification and spiritual growth through these seven steps, we may sometimes get stuck at a particular point. We need to be more diligent and make a concerted effort to overcome these obstacles. Otherwise, if we remain stuck for too long, we may become weak, fall, or stumble. If we are willing to be more diligent and strive earnestly, our diligence and pursuit can help us avoid stumbling.

Verse 11: “or so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

At the outset, Peter says "or so," meaning that you are willing to be diligent, wholehearted, and zealous in pursuit. If you can maintain this attitude consistently, you will be able to grow in virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly affection, and divine love in your life's journey. On one hand, these are the seven steps of spiritual growth, and at each step, you will have corresponding life testimonies and manifestations.

If you can continue on this path, Peter tells us, "you will never stumble." In the previous verse, it speaks of a negative aspect, not stumbling, but in this verse, it tells us of a positive aspect, to enter abundantly into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Peter introduces a new concept here, suggesting that by diligently pursuing the order of spiritual growth, we will eventually enter the eternal kingdom abundantly, meaning that your entrance into that eternal kingdom will be filled with glory.

Since some will enter abundantly, others may enter meagerly. What does this mean? In John 3:3, Jesus discusses rebirth with Nicodemus, saying, "Unless one is born

again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." In other words, being born again allows one to enter into God's eternal kingdom. Therefore, rebirth is the minimum requirement; once reborn, you can enter God's kingdom. Here, Peter tells us that a person who is reborn, if they do not strive, do not walk the path of sanctification, and do not experience spiritual growth, will ultimately remain in a state of mere salvation. At this point, they can still enter into God's eternal kingdom, but they cannot enter abundantly; instead, they enter meagerly.

This shows us that in God's eternal kingdom, saints will experience varying degrees of glory. Of course, this eternal kingdom refers to the ultimate manifestation of God's kingdom, which is depicted in Revelation chapters 21-22 as the new heaven and new earth. Some biblical scholars argue that Peter here refers to the millennial kingdom, which is the reward for the victorious. However, Peter clearly tells us here that this is God's eternal kingdom, whereas the millennial kingdom is temporal, lasting only a thousand years. Therefore, what Peter speaks of should refer to God's eternal kingdom.

However, Peter here has buried a clue that may sound cumbersome when we read it. In the Chinese Union Version, it is translated as "entering into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," which seems to equate "our Lord" and "Savior Jesus Christ" as appositives. But in fact, there is a conjunction "and" between these two terms. The translation in the NIV is "into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." If translated grammatically correctly, it should be "the kingdom of our Lord and the Savior Jesus Christ." According to the revelation of the Bible, we know that when Jesus returns, He will establish the millennial kingdom, which lasts for a thousand years and remains within the bounds of time. After the millennial kingdom, the new heaven and new earth will come, which is the eternal kingdom, representing the fulfillment of the kingdom in two stages.

During the period of the millennial kingdom, it can be seen as the kingdom of our Lord, where a person, after receiving grace and salvation, surrenders sovereignty to Christ, allowing Christ to be the Lord over their lives. Christ will then lead them to walk the path of sanctification according to God's will, passing through the seven

stages and steps of spiritual growth. When Christ comes again, they will become victorious. The promise to the victorious is found in Revelation 20:4, "And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years." This is the reward for the victorious, because they have made Christ their Lord throughout their lives.

The second part is the kingdom of our Savior Jesus Christ, where these people have experienced Jesus Christ as their Savior. They have been born again, they will not perish forever, and they will also enter the new heaven and new earth, which is entering into the eternal kingdom of God. Peter here is talking about those who are willing to diligently pursue, those who have experienced the complete salvation of their souls, and have gone through the seven stages of spiritual growth. They will be able to reign with Christ for a thousand years in the millennial kingdom, and then receive glory in the new heaven and new earth. How worthwhile and how profitable this is.

Dear brothers and sisters, we have all been saved by grace. We must walk the path of sanctification. On this path, we must be diligent, we must pursue, we must strive. Because the rewards and glory prepared for us by God are great.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for repeatedly encouraging us and reminding us through the letters of Peter not to be mere saved saints; You have given us such great grace, and we should be diligent, we should diligently pursue. On one hand, we enjoy the salvation You have prepared for us, and on the other hand, we let our lives grow, so that through faith, we can grow into divine love and help me cherish time, seize every opportunity, so that we can all bear witness to a good life. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ.