

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

2 Peter 03:14-16

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 2 Peter 03:14-16.

Peter focuses the hope of the saints on the new heavens and new earth, which he calls the day of God. At that time, God's creation will dwell in righteousness forever. The clearest revelation of this new heavens and the new earth is found in John's description in Revelation chapters 21 and 22. However, the transformation from the existing heavens and earth to the new ones is briefly mentioned by John in Revelation 20:11: "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them." But how exactly do they flee? John does not provide the details.

The author of Hebrews also mentions the transformation of the old heavens and earth into the new ones. In Hebrews 1:11-12, it says, "They will perish, but You remain; And they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will fold them up, and they will be changed." This description is more vivid, suggesting that the heavens and earth will be folded up like old clothes and then changed. However, unlike clothes, the heavens and earth are solid. How can they be folded up?

In comparison, Peter provides the most detailed depiction in 2 Peter 3:10-12. He describes the heavens passing away with a great noise, and the elements melting with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. The heavens, being dissolved, will be folded up, and the earth and its elements will be melted and burned. This suggests that the elements of the heavens and earth will be reconstituted and renewed. When the new heavens and new earth are ready, as stated in Revelation 21:2, the New Jerusalem will come down from God out of heaven into the new heavens and new earth.

Revelation chapters 21 and 22 provide a detailed description of the New Jerusalem. Revelation 21:18 tells us, "The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass." In our current world, gold is yellow and opaque. But in the new heavens and new earth, after the elements are reconstituted, materials will present in different forms. There, pure gold will be like transparent glass, suggesting a completely new structure of gold, much like how carbon becomes a diamond with a distinct appearance and physical properties under certain conditions. This reminds us not to use our current understanding to explain eternal matters. Instead, we should approach them with humility, gratitude, and a sense of wonder, ready to rediscover, re-experience, and enjoy the eternal blessings God has prepared for us.

Verse 14: "Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless."

Peter has reached the end of his life and is about to be martyred. He wrote 1 and 2 Peter to the saints in the church at that time, having already shared his burdens, and now only his final words remain. Once again, he affectionately calls out to the saints: "Therefore, beloved," and tells them to look forward to these things. The Greek word translated as "look forward to" in this context originally means "to expect" or "to wait," and these things refer to the events related to the Lord's return. The church was widely persecuted at that time, and the saints were in the midst of tribulation, all expecting and waiting for the Lord's return.

Dear brothers and sisters, in the last days, the church will be persecuted, and the saints will face tribulation; this is inevitable. In the face of such circumstances, the saints of the early church did not resist or strive for their legal rights. Instead, they expected and waited for the Lord's return amidst their tribulations. Should we not also learn from the saints of the early church, turning our eyes to Jesus Christ and waiting for His promised return?

Peter then encourages them to be diligent. This is the third time in 2 Peter that he urges the saints to be diligent. The first two instances are in 2 Peter 1:5 and 1:10,

and between these two instances, he describes the eight steps of spiritual growth: starting with faith, adding virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and finally, divine love. This illustrates that in the matter of spiritual growth, the most crucial attitude is diligence, meaning to make every effort and not to be slack.

Although spiritual growth is entirely a matter of grace and does not rely on our natural efforts, a diligent attitude is absolutely necessary. It is not about pursuing spiritual matters through our natural abilities but being alert and ready, prepared to wait for God. When God moves, we can follow Him immediately. In this verse, Peter again encourages the saints to be diligent in pursuing holiness. To be without spot means not to be tainted by any impurity or defilement. To be blameless means not giving anyone a reason to accuse us, maintaining a clear conscience at all times so that we can meet the Lord in peace.

Verse 15: "And consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you."

Peter says to regard the longsuffering of our Lord as salvation. Here, the mention of the Lord's longsuffering refers to the fact that although the Lord promised to return soon, this has not yet been fulfilled. This is not because the Lord is delaying, but because He is patient with us, giving us more opportunities to preach the gospel and bring people to salvation. In this verse, Peter emphasizes that the Lord is patient for a long time.

God's righteousness demands that the Lord returns to execute judgment. However, in His love, the Lord is willing to be patient, providing an opportunity for salvation. The original meaning of this translation is that it gives people the chance to receive salvation. When the Lord returns, the door of grace will be closed, and people will no longer be able to receive salvation through faith and gain eternal life. When the Lord comes, judgment will begin, and people will be rewarded or punished according to their deeds, whether good or evil. Today, the Lord's longsuffering

continues, giving us the opportunity to bring salvation to those in need, especially to those we care about.

Peter then commends Paul, saying that Paul has written about the same things. Peter calls Paul "our beloved brother" and states that Paul wrote to them according to the wisdom given to him. At this time, Peter was likely in Rome. Paul, during his third missionary journey, had also come to Rome in chains, so the saints there would have known Paul. As the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul established many churches among the Gentiles and had written nine letters to these churches, which were widely circulated among them. Therefore, Peter takes this opportunity to recommend Paul's writings and acknowledges that the wisdom given to Paul was from God, indicating that these writings were inspired by God.

Peter, being a leading apostle who had personally followed Jesus, was instrumental in establishing the church in Jerusalem through his powerful preaching and opening the door to the Gentiles at Cornelius' house. He held a high position among the saints. By recommending Paul's writings, Peter shows his broad-mindedness and selflessness.

Although Peter's ministry initially focused on the Jews and Paul's on the Gentiles, Peter often visited the churches where Paul ministered. According to the Acts of the Apostles and the epistles, Peter visited the Corinthian church, which resulted in some difficulties due to the Corinthians' lack of spirituality. Some claimed to follow Paul, while others claimed to follow Cephas (Peter's original name). Although Paul corrected this error in 1 Corinthians and condemned their divisions, it did not affect the friendship and cooperation between Peter and Paul.

When Paul was at the Antioch church, Peter visited and ate with the Gentile believers. During that time, James sent some strict Jewish Christians to Antioch. To avoid conflict with these brothers from Jerusalem, Peter stopped eating with the Gentiles. Young and vigorous Paul publicly rebuked Peter for this.

Paul recorded this incident in Galatians 2:11-14: "Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they

came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, 'If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?'"

In this matter, Paul was entirely correct in his stance on the truth. However, Peter, being a senior apostle, had practical reasons for avoiding direct conflict with the Jewish Christians who upheld circumcision. Yet, being publicly rebuked by a younger brother and having the incident recorded in Galatians, which was circulated among the churches, Peter did not get angry or defend himself. He accepted Paul's rebuke. Paul's commitment to the truth is commendable, but Peter's acceptance of the rebuke in front of everyone demonstrates his mature and broad character. This incident did not leave any bitterness in Peter. When he wrote 2 Peter, he even recommended Paul's writings, showcasing his impressive maturity and graciousness.

Verse 16: "as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures."

Peter continues to say that Paul speaks of these things in all his letters. The term "these things" in the original Greek is plural, referring to multiple topics. Peter is endorsing Paul here, stating that what Paul writes in his letters aligns with the topics covered in the eight chapters of Peter's writings. What are these topics? They pertain to God's eternal plan: the Father's election before the foundation of the world, the Son's redemption, and the Holy Spirit's sanctification. What Peter writes and what Paul writes are completely consistent.

Peter talks about the salvation of the soul that comes through the testing of faith, which is about partaking in God's divine nature. He specifically describes the eight steps of spiritual growth—starting with faith and adding virtue, knowledge, self-

control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and divine love—which lead to the sanctification of the soul. This process is completely consistent with Paul's discussion of the sanctification of a saint in Romans 5-8.

Peter also mentions that we are living stones being built into a spiritual house, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. This aligns with Paul's discussion of the church's construction in Ephesians.

In 1 and 2 Peter, there is a special emphasis on God's governmental administration. God will judge angels, the wicked, mankind, the saints, and even the whole old creation, leading to the new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells. This is also consistent with Paul's writings. Although they both discuss God's will and the fulfillment of His will, there is no contradiction between them. However, their descriptive methods differ. Peter writes from the perspective of his own life experiences, condensing his message into eight chapters, making it very concise and precise. In contrast, Paul expands God's will across 13 epistles, providing a systematic and logical understanding with many details.

Therefore, when we read Peter's and Paul's writings, we must do so with a tolerant attitude, recognizing that they reveal God's will from different perspectives. Peter especially points out that some things in Paul's letters are hard to understand. Here, we see Peter's sincerity; he openly admits when he doesn't understand something and acknowledges that it is wisdom from God. Peter doesn't force his understanding but still recommends Paul's writings, demonstrating his broad-mindedness.

Peter is a man who knows God and His work. He knows that God can use all things to accomplish His will, so success does not have to come from him alone. He values the commission God has given him and faithfully carries out his duty. However, he also clearly understands that God is all-encompassing, and our understanding is only from one angle or one aspect. Even though Peter did not understand many things Paul wrote, he knew it was from God and thus recommended Paul's writings and defended them.

Peter states that the untaught and unstable twist Paul's letters to their own destruction, just as they do the rest of the Scriptures. By placing Paul's writings on par with the Old Testament Scriptures, Peter is elevating Paul's work to a high position. Therefore, Peter warns those without learning and stable faith not to distort Paul's writings, lest they bring destruction upon themselves.

Dear brothers and sisters, when we read the Bible, we must recognize it as God's word. It is normal not to understand everything in the Bible immediately. We shouldn't force our understanding but keep these things in our hearts and meditate on them. When needed, the Holy Spirit can guide us into the experience of God's word. Peter, a mature apostle, had a very healthy attitude towards God's word. He openly admitted when he didn't understand Paul's writings and did not reject them. He knew that the wisdom given to Paul was from God.

May we also maintain this attitude towards interpreting the Scriptures. Different interpretations are not necessarily contradictory; they may just come from different perspectives. If we can be more tolerant and appreciative of different interpretations within various theological perspectives, it will make God's word more comprehensive and beautiful.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for placing such a mature apostle like Peter before us. His sincere attitude, broad-mindedness, and respect for God's word are examples for us to learn from. Please grant us light in our daily Bible reading, helping us understand the richness of Your word. For the parts we do not understand, give us a broad spirit not to force interpretations but to wait for the Holy Spirit to reveal the mysteries of Your word at the right time. Use our daily Bible reading time to let Your word dwell richly in us, becoming our timely help. Bless our lives today. In Jesus Christ's holy name, we pray.