

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

2 Peter 03: 17-18

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. We will continue to read 2 Peter chapter 3. Let's read from verse 17 and 18 today.

Peter, the Apostle of hope, wrote 2 Peter before his martyrdom, reminding the saints to be vigilant while waiting for the Lord's return. During this waiting process, he particularly emphasized paying attention to two things:

First, it is to recognize and experience the exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature. Peter reminds the saints that after receiving grace and salvation, they have obtained spiritual life, which is only the beginning. This life must grow, and the standard for measuring this growth is our participation in the divine nature. The natural disposition of our natural life must be replaced by the divine nature produced by God's life, which is a metabolic process. Using the function of our body as a metaphor, it is a process of metabolism.

The natural disposition of the human life must lose its dominant position in us through the work of the cross and be gradually replaced by God's nature. Based on his own experience of spiritual growth, Peter clearly lists eight steps in this replacement process: these eight steps "begin with faith," which signifies that everything is by grace, allowing us to receive it in faith; "add to the faith virtue," this virtue is not external imitation but the manifestation of spiritual life; then "to virtue knowledge" life experiences must be guided and regulated by the Word of God. The words of this knowledge help us understand God's will and His guidance for us today; "to knowledge self-control," Knowledge can easily lead to pride, so as our knowledge increases, God wants us to learn the lesson of self-control, not allowing ourselves to surpass the guidance of the Holy Spirit within us; "to self-control perseverance," Our Heavenly Father arranges many experiences in our daily lives that lead us through hardships and challenges. These trials are meant to

strengthen our faith, and in various tests, we should count it all joy, learning the lesson of endurance through the diverse trials we face; "to perseverance godliness," living a life that reflects a Christian character so that people recognize you as a person of God, your life is filled with testimonies of God, and full of praise and worship for God; "to godliness brotherly kindness," Christians cannot live alone but need to worship and serve in the church, true spirituality is not personal piety towards God but the ability to "love the brothers and sisters around you," especially those who are troublesome, prone to causing trouble, or incompatible with your disposition; "to brotherly kindness love," which is the unconditional, selfless, and eternal love that comes from God. At this stage, God's nature replaces our natural disposition, allowing us to transcend the narrow and flawed love of our natural disposition and respond to daily life with God's love.

Second, it is to be mindful of false teachers and the heresies they preach. They follow their own lusts and walk in the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness. For the sake of profit, they bring various snares into the church. The young, those with weak faith, and those unclear about the truth are easily influenced and entangled in lusts and corruption. Peter received special revelation, clearly depicting that the old heavens and earth will be dissolved, melted, and reassembled at the most fundamental level of their structure to produce a new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. All the saints who have received grace and salvation will also dwell in it according to God's promise. This is our hope.

Peter in this letter, which is like his last will, particularly recommends Paul's writings and affirms that what Paul said is also true. The apostles all received revelations from the same Holy Spirit, so their writings naturally harmonize with each other without contradictions. However, each apostle has a different ministry, so the emphasis and details they describe will naturally vary. Peter, this elderly, mature, and seasoned apostle, personally acknowledges that some of Paul's letters are difficult to understand. What a broad mind, humble attitude, truly touching.

Today, teachers from different theological schools often attack each other and readily label others as heretics, which is indeed offensive to God. Peter's definition

of heresy is to deny the Lord who bought them, to stumble over matters of salvation, and to be unable to acknowledge the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ, as well as His death and resurrection. Such people naturally cannot be saved.

Peter labels as heretics only those who have difficulty with these most fundamental truths. Differences in understanding, interpretation, application, or practice of the truth do not constitute heresy. Peter not only esteems Paul's writings but also warns people not to distort them or listen to those who do. The Greek word for "distort" or "twist" used here appears only once in the New Testament. It means to twist or turn, and in English, it is translated as "distort" or "misinterpret." This happens when we read scripture and, although we might not fully understand its meaning, it is evidently inconsistent with our existing theological framework. We then twist the meaning of the scripture to fit it into our framework, which is distortion. This is translated as "forceful interpretation" in the Chinese Union Version. In such cases, we should learn from Peter's broad-mindedness and humility. If we do not understand, we should admit it, keeping the scriptures in our hearts and pondering them. Perhaps at the appropriate time, the Holy Spirit will reveal their meaning to us. We do not need to force it. Peter specifically reminds people not to distort Paul's letters.

Verse 17 : “You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked;”

Dear brothers, this is Peter's affectionate call once again, indicating that he is about to conclude his letter and these are his final words. "You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware," Peter fulfills his duty by forewarning the saints about false teachers and heresies so that they can be on guard and not "fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked." Salvation is our firm foundation, and upon this foundation, our life begins to grow. This growth should manifest in our partaking of the divine nature, which gradually makes us

holy. The erroneous teachings of false teachers aim to lead us away from this path of life growth, even causing us to fall from the firm foundation.

Dear brothers and sisters, I hope that we can all worship and serve in a church that is according to God's heart. If you faithfully pray, read the Bible, and wholeheartedly participate in church service, your spiritual life will surely grow, and God's nature will be somewhat formed in you. We should also regularly examine ourselves before God to see if our spiritual condition is progressing or if it has become stagnant. If we find that our spiritual life is not moving forward, we must carefully review and repeatedly seek God's guidance to identify where the issue lies. If it is the condition of the church that hinders your worship and service or demotivates your pursuit of life, you should honestly seek God's direction on how to proceed. I firmly believe that every saint's responsibility is to find a church where you can commit yourself, where your life can be built up and your gifts perfected through worship and service. May God lead you.

Verse 18: " but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen."

Peter not only urges the saints to be vigilant against the errors of false teachers but also actively encourages them to progress in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Peter's language is never simple; each of his words carries deep spiritual significance. Let's first consider progress in grace. Grace is our subjective experience of Jesus Christ, and this experience should become our grace that we enjoy.

And this experience has two levels. First is experiencing the grace of our Savior Jesus Christ, which is all that Jesus Christ has accomplished for us, freely available for us to receive, becoming our salvation. The grace of Jesus Christ is so rich, and we should experience more and more of it, going deeper and deeper. This is the first level of progress.

Then comes progress in the grace of our Lord. After experiencing the deep grace of our Savior Jesus Christ, we are to let Christ reign as Lord over us. This is the second level of grace. This level of experience is no longer just about accepting and enjoying; it involves some experiences of the cross. These lessons of the cross enable us to yield the sovereignty of self and our natural inclinations, allowing Christ to truly reign as Lord in our souls.

After making progress in both aspects of grace, let's now consider progress in knowledge. Grace leans toward subjective experience, while knowledge emphasizes our objective understanding of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Progress in both grace and knowledge complements each other, advancing together. On one hand, we should progress in our knowledge of our Savior Jesus Christ. His actions, deeds, and accomplishments are clearly recorded in the four Gospels, and our understanding of the Gospels should become more complete and elevated.

On the other hand, we should also progress in our knowledge of the Lord, understanding His eternal purpose, His workings within that eternal purpose, His commands for us today, and His guidance. This level of knowledge requires the entirety of the Bible, especially the teachings of the three apostles who continued the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament: Paul, the apostle of faith, who taught about truth; Peter, the apostle of hope, who taught about the way; and John, the apostle of love, who taught about life. This way, we can be complete in both grace and knowledge.

Peter instructs us to progress in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ so that we can give glory to Him, both now and forever. Everything we experience, enjoy, and succeed in, from beginning to end, is ultimately for the glory of God. In his final words in 2 Peter, Peter declares, "To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen." Peter boldly lived out his life, bearing witness to the glory of God, and this glory extends from today into eternity.

Dear brothers and sisters, This year, we spent 16 weeks reading the Gospel of Mark, which is Peter's testimony written down by Mark. Afterwards, we spent another 8

weeks reading through Peter's epistles. We can say that over the past 24 weeks, we have been in daily companionship with Peter, and I hope each of us has gained a deeper understanding of him. I encourage each one of us to take some time to reflect on the scriptures we have read and to seek God's guidance. What new insights and revelations have I gained? How is God leading me differently? Am I willing to follow His leading into a changed life? Let's each record these new insights as reminders for ourselves.

Let's pray together: Lord, we are so thankful for how clearly You have presented the life of the apostle Peter before us. We have seen Peter in the Gospels and in his epistles, and we see the tremendous change in his life! His testimony inspires each of us to rise up and follow You. Especially in his epistles, Peter's earnest exhortations to the church and to the saints remind us of the salvation of our souls, of partaking in your divine nature, and of eagerly awaiting the return of Jesus Christ. Peter's words are a timely reminder for us, the saints in the last days. Help me to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and to surrender completely to His lordship, leading me toward glory. Thank You for speaking to me through Peter's life and helping me to actualize these new insights and revelations in my daily life, growing in holiness and living to please You more each day. We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.