

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

Heb. 3: 12-14

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 Heb. 03: 12-14.

Yesterday, we read about how the author of Hebrews referenced Moses leading the congregation of Israel, who wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. It serves as a warning that if we harden our hearts, even after witnessing God's works for 40 years, we may still fail to understand His ways and fall into testing God and provoking His anger. As a result, even though they left Egypt, they could not enter the promised land and ultimately perished in the wilderness—a truly tragic outcome. Egypt symbolizes the world, and the present world lies under the sway of the wicked one, with Satan holding the power.

Therefore, in 1 John 2:15–16, it says: “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.” John not only tells us not to love the world but also clearly defines what the world is: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

The lust of the flesh relates to indulgence of our emotions; the lust of the eyes, which appears slightly more noble on the surface, originates from various pursuits in our minds; and the pride of life stems from the stubbornness of our will. These three aspects represent our soul. If our soul is merely connected to this world, we will ultimately become enslaved by it.

In Matthew 16:26, Jesus told His disciples, “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” In this verse, the word "soul" is translated from the original text as “soul” in English, referring to the human soul. If a person remains in the world, they may

not necessarily gain the whole world; however, even if they do gain the whole world, the cost would be the loss of their soul. What benefit is there in that?

Thus, Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt symbolizes how each saint must be delivered from the dominion of the world. However, it is significant that leaving Egypt does not immediately lead to entering the promised land. Although the distance between Egypt and the land of Canaan is not far, Moses once sent 12 spies to scout the land, and in Numbers 13:25, the spies returned after 40 days. Yet, the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years.

To enter the promised land requires faith—not just the faith of one or two individuals, but the collective faith of the entire congregation of Israel. Such corporate faith is not easy. God desires not a few spiritual giants but an entire nation of Israel, just as today He desires an entire church. Because Israel's collective faith could not keep up, God allowed them to wander in the wilderness for 40 years, which was a period of testing their faith.

As it says in 1 Peter 1:7, “that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” After 40 years of wandering, the first generation of Israelites failed the test of faith and died in the wilderness. This symbolizes that our old self must die in the wilderness. The second generation of Israelites represents our resurrected new self, which can follow Joshua into the promised land. Joshua is a type of Jesus, and only by entering the promised land can we attain true rest.

The wilderness symbolizes the place where our faith is tested. When each saint is baptized, they testify that they have crossed the Red Sea, left the world under Satan's dominion, and been transferred into the kingdom of the Son of God's love. However, this relocation is positional; they must still experience subjective growth and maturity in faith to truly settle into God's kingdom of light. Their actual condition is that they have entered the wilderness and are journeying toward the promised land.

So, what is the promised land? This question is not easy to answer. Many Bible scholars believe it represents heaven. I trust that many saints have also been taught and believe this—that one day, when we die, we will cross the Jordan River, enter the promised land, and that is heaven. While I would not dare to say this interpretation is incorrect, it raises some difficult questions: Why does entering the promised land still involve battles? Why is it necessary to drive out the Canaanites from the land, and who do the Canaanites represent? If the promised land symbolizes heaven, it should be a place of rest, not one of further warfare.

Personally, I am more inclined to interpret the promised land as representing the realm of the new creation. This concept may be unfamiliar to some saints, so I will take some time to explain.

Today, the realm of the new creation is the reality of the church. Outwardly, the church is composed of us, the redeemed and saved saints, gathered together. However, the essence or reality of the church is the collective new creation of the saints. Paul defines the church this way, which is why he describes the church as holy and without blemish. In other words, the church has an outward appearance and an inward reality.

This realm of the new creation will, at Christ's return, develop into the heavenly portion of the Millennial Kingdom. It is the place where all the overcoming saints will dwell, reigning with Christ. In the new heaven and new earth, this realm of the new creation will further develop into the New Jerusalem.

Within the realm of the new creation, all battles are spiritual in nature. As stated in Ephesians 6:12, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." In the wilderness, our faith is gradually perfected through trials, and we shed the old self. Only by entering the promised land—joining the corporate new man—can we rest with Christ and battle alongside Him.

Today, we are all still incomplete, and therefore we experience the wilderness. Some mature saints may already have the experience of entering the promised

land; or more practically, within the church, we can have a foretaste of the promised land today. Throughout this process, we are living out John 3:30, "He must increase, but I must decrease." Or, as a more direct translation would render it, "He must grow, and I must diminish." With this understanding, let us read verse 12.

Verse 12: "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God."

The passage begins with the address "brethren," a warm and familial term that reminds us that we all share eternal life from God. We are brothers of Christ, who is the captain of our salvation and our Joshua, leading us into rest. The exhortation to "beware" warns us to be vigilant, lest anyone among us harbors an evil heart of unbelief.

It is essential to understand that God's purpose is found in His church. Individual spiritual giants cannot satisfy God's heart; He desires the collective manifestation of the church. Therefore, we must particularly cherish the brothers and sisters around us—none can be neglected.

We must be vigilant for them, continually looking out for the saints around us, lest anyone falls behind. A chain's strength is determined by its weakest link, and the brightness of a church's testimony is determined by its weakest saint. Thus, we must always pay attention to the weaker saints around us, ensuring that no one harbors an evil heart of unbelief.

The "unbelief" mentioned here does not refer to the initial faith in Christ as personal Savior. Once someone has crossed the "river," they have already accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior for life. Instead, it refers to the continued faith necessary for the ongoing expansion of salvation in one's heart, enabling the conquest of the "unclaimed territories" within. Therefore, every saint must possess a persevering faith.

To maintain persevering faith, the most crucial aspect is to keep one's conscience pure. The conscience is the channel between the Holy Spirit and the heart; when the conscience is pure, this channel remains open and unobstructed. Unbelief is sin, and the first thing unbelief blocks is the channel of the conscience. When the conscience is blocked, one loses sensitivity to sin and can even become numb. This leads to an evil heart of unbelief, which ultimately departs from the living God.

Note that God is referred to here as "the living God," 永生神, the God who lives forever. One of God's greatest attributes is that He is ever-living. Since He is alive, He provides fresh supply daily, reveals Himself more beautifully, draws us higher, and leads us in more wondrous ways. If you do not have an evil heart of unbelief, your understanding of God will be renewed daily, and your walk with Him will continually advance. Your life will not stagnate, and your days will be filled with vitality.

Dear brothers and sisters, have you, perhaps unknowingly, also departed from the living God? If today you find yourself worse off than yesterday, you need to repent. If today you are the same as yesterday, you also need to take heed. Christ is always the present Christ; He desires to give you grace and supply you now. If you follow Him, you will not remain the same as yesterday—you will certainly move forward.

Not only should we examine and reflect on ourselves regularly, but we should also care for the brothers and sisters around us, ensuring that no one departs from the living God.

Verse 13: "But exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

The phrase "while it is called 'Today'" reminds us to seize the present moment. Each new day we wake up with breath in our lungs is a gift of grace, a precious opportunity to live for God. We should approach each day with gratitude and expectation, recognizing it as an irreplaceable blessing. This is why the verse exhorts us to encourage one another daily.

Living the Christian life in isolation can lead to weariness and a loss of motivation. Therefore, Scripture emphasizes mutual encouragement. When we gather, let us not fall into shallow conversations about food, clothing, or material things that ultimately do not matter. Instead, we should share fresh experiences of God, new insights from His Word, and the Spirit's recent guidance in our lives. These spiritual exchanges inspire mutual love and encourage us to pursue holiness together.

The latter part of the verse warns against being deceived by sin, which leads to hardness of heart. The word "heart" is not explicitly present in the original text, as indicated in translations like the KJV: "lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Sin, personified here, uses various forms of deception to ensnare us. When a person falls for sin's lies, the most noticeable change is a hardening of their attitude. A hardened person becomes stubborn, insisting on their own way, unwilling to accept correction, and resistant to aligning their steps with God's direction.

God is the living and present God, and His guidance is active and timely. Only those with a soft heart can continually follow His leading. Jacob in Genesis exemplifies this transformation. Initially, he was self-reliant, calculating, and clever, making it difficult for him to follow God. It was not until his encounter at Peniel (Genesis 32), where God touched the socket of his hip, causing him to limp, that Jacob became a softened man. Losing his natural strength enabled him to truly follow God.

Verse 14: "For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end."

The phrase "the beginning of our confidence" is significant. The Greek word for "confidence" here is *hupostasis*, which is composed of *hupo* (under) and *stasis* (to stand). It conveys the idea of standing under a guaranteed agreement. This agreement is the new covenant established through the blood of Jesus Christ. This covenant is reliable and eternally effective, giving us absolute assurance.

Hebrews 11:1 uses the same Greek word, *hupostasis*, stating, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for.” Our faith is grounded in the assurance provided by the new covenant. When we first heard the gospel and believed, our faith was rooted in the certainty of this covenant: Jesus Christ shed His blood and gave His life so that we no longer need to bear the burden of sin. His covenant is firm and secure, and if we hold fast to this assurance to the end, we become partakers of Christ.

The term “partakers of Christ” is written in the perfect tense, indicating that Christ’s work of salvation is complete. He has become the captain of our salvation, and by believing in Him, we partake of what He has accomplished. His grace becomes our enjoyment, and His provision becomes our experience. As we continue to follow Him steadfastly, we partake more deeply in Christ.

This phrase can also be translated as “companions of Christ” or “partners of Christ.” As companions, we share in His abundant life and partake of His divine nature, as mentioned in 2 Peter 1:4: “...that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature.” Through the transformation of our soul, Christ’s beautiful character is formed in us, and the fruit of the Spirit grows in our lives. We not only share in His nature but also in His mission, becoming partners in His work.

Jesus Christ, having completed the work of redemption, ascended to heaven, where He now carries out His heavenly ministry. Part of this ministry is fulfilling His Oneness plan, as described in Ephesians 1:10: “...that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ.” This grand plan begins with the church, where all saints are to be headed in One —not under any individual but in Christ alone. As participants in this oneness, we help both ourselves and others to align with Christ. The church’s oneness is the first step, paving the way for Christ’s return. At His return, He will judge and remove all sin and impurity, ultimately bringing everything under His rule.

Many people on earth strive to become partners in prestigious companies that last only a few decades before they eventually dissolve. In contrast, Christ is orchestrating an eternal and glorious Oneness plan across the universe, and we

have the privilege of being His partners in this work. What an honor! May we all value and live up to this identity.

Let us pray: Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for reminding us to seize the opportunities You give us today. Help us to grow through reading Your Word, praying, and spending time in Your presence. May we lay aside our old ways and embrace the new creation You desire us to be. Bless my church and my brothers and sisters in Christ, that we may encourage one another daily and grow in unity, reflecting Your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.