

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

Hebrews 3: 15-19

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. Let's continue to read Hebrews chapter 3. We will read verses 15-19 today.

The author of Hebrews, from the perspective of truth, emphasizes the surpassing greatness of Christ, and from the perspective of burden, reminds the saints that they must not only understand the truth but also enter into the truth—allowing the truth to become their experience and application. In chapters 1 and 2, the author highlights that Christ, as both the Son of God and the Son of Man, is far superior to the angels. In this passage, he exhorts the saints not to neglect so great a salvation and to follow Christ, the Captain, into glory. In chapters 3 and 4, the author underscores that Christ, as a leader, is far superior to Moses. In this passage, he reminds the saints to strive to enter into rest while it is still called “today.”

Yesterday, we read that while it is still called "today," we should exhort one another daily and hold firmly to the confidence we had at the time of salvation, so that we may partake in Christ. This partaking can be divided into three aspects:

The first aspect is partaking of Christ in the spirit. John 3:5-6 says, "Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.'" This means being born again through the Holy Spirit, thereby partaking of the life of God.

The second aspect is partaking of Christ in the soul. 2 Peter 1:4 says, "by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." This refers to our soul being renewed and transformed by the Holy Spirit, with God's nature being constituted into our soul. In this way, we partake of the divine nature.

The third aspect is partaking of Christ in the body. Romans 12:1 says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." To bear God's commission, we must present our bodies. Just as Christ offered Himself to accomplish God's will, we too must offer ourselves as living sacrifices to fulfill the commission God has given us. This is the service we ought to render.

From these three aspects, partaking of Christ is truly a profound truth, as it encompasses the entire journey of every saint in following the Lord: being born again in the spirit, sanctified in the soul, and finally redeemed in the body. Today's passage reminds the saints, within this grand framework, to learn from the failures of the Israelites in the wilderness. In chapter 4, still within the same framework, the author exhorts the saints to strive to enter into rest.

Verse 15: "while it is said: 'Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.'"

This refers to the words quoted from Psalm 95:7-8. They were already quoted in Hebrews 3:7-8 and are quoted again here, and will be referenced once more in 4:7. It is evident that the author's burden is to emphasize that if we hear God's voice today, we must not harden our hearts. God is a speaking God, and He desires that His children know Him, understand His will, and follow His leading. At every step of this process, God's speaking is essential. Indeed, God has spoken, and His words are recorded in the Scriptures.

Today, through our reading of the Scriptures, God speaks to us afresh. Therefore, we must not rush when reading the Bible; instead, we should approach it with a prayerful heart, seeking God's timely word. After reading, we should quietly wait for the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit. "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." In truth, our heart is like soil. In Mark 4:1-9, through the Parable of the Sower, Jesus compares our heart to four types of soil: the wayside, stony ground with little earth, thorny ground, and good ground.

The wayside is where many vehicles pass by, and the ground, after being trampled for a long time, becomes hard. When the seed is sown, it cannot take root and is quickly devoured by birds. If we harden our hearts, we become like the wayside soil—God's word has no effect on a hardened heart. The Israelites in the wilderness hardened their hearts, provoking God's anger. Here, the author reminds the Hebrew saints: "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts," as the Israelites did in the wilderness.

In the following three verses, the author uses questions to warn the Hebrew saints not to make the same mistakes. The author carefully traces the journey, beginning with the Exodus, moving through the wilderness, and ultimately highlighting the failure to enter the Promised Land of Canaan. Let us read through each verse one by one.

Verse 16: “For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses?”

The passage begins with a question: Who provoked God to anger? It was those Israelites whom God had used Moses to bring out of Egypt. These Israelites had been slaves in Egypt, suffering greatly and crying out to God. In Exodus 3:7, it says that God saw their affliction and heard their cries, so He sent Moses to deliver them. Pharaoh, however, was unwilling to let them go, so God used Moses' hand to bring down ten increasingly severe plagues. It was not until the tenth plague, when the angel of death struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, that Pharaoh finally agreed to let the Israelites leave.

The Israelites, protected by the blood of the lamb on their doorposts, were spared from the angel of death. Leaving Egypt was not an easy task for the Israelites. Afterward, Pharaoh changed his mind and sent his army to pursue them. When they reached the Red Sea, God parted the waters through Moses' staff, allowing the Israelites to pass through on dry land, and then the waters closed back, drowning Pharaoh's army. All of this was God's miraculous work. Despite

experiencing all these wonders, the Israelites still hardened their hearts, failed to recognize God's ways, and tested Him at every turn, provoking God's anger.

This reminds us that having received the salvation of Jesus Christ, we have already passed through the Passover. We have also been baptized, having passed through the Red Sea. These are all personal experiences of God's miraculous works. How can we still harden our hearts?

Verse 17: “Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness?”

What displeased God? It was the Israelites who wandered in the wilderness for forty years. Every day, they ate the manna that God provided from heaven, and drank the water that flowed from the rock. Their clothes and shoes, brought out of Egypt, did not wear out over forty years. They faced many attacks from enemies, but God protected them. They had God's law and the tabernacle. During the day, they were led by the pillar of cloud, and at night, the pillar of fire illuminated their camp. God showed them great mercy, yet they still hardened their hearts and did not obey God's commandments. When faced with difficulties, they longed for the pleasures they had in Egypt and even considered returning there. They murmured, tested God, committed various sins, and provoked His anger. As a result, God grew weary of them, and their bodies fell in the wilderness.

This serves as a reminder for us today in our church life. Every day, we have the supply of God's Word, the leading of the Holy Spirit, and the powerful protection of God. How can we still harden our hearts? How can we continually long for the pleasures of the world and refuse to live a holy life, so that our souls remain unchanged? This would also cause God to become displeased with us. We must repent in time to avoid perishing in the wilderness of our souls. We cannot be satisfied simply with our salvation; we must continue forward on the path of sanctification, striving to achieve the salvation of our souls, which is sharing in God's divine nature.

Verse 18: “And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey?”

The purpose of the Exodus was to enter the Promised Land, and the wilderness was an inevitable process. In the wilderness, we especially need to rely on God's guidance and leading. Hardening our hearts in the wilderness and provoking God's anger is very dangerous. Since God led them out of Egypt, He will surely bring them into the Promised Land. The Israelites left Egypt in faith, but they could not continue to follow in faith. It was precisely because of their unbelief that they provoked God's displeasure, and God swore that they would not enter the Promised Land to enjoy His rest.

Dear brothers and sisters, this is a very serious reminder. We have been graciously saved and have already left Egypt. If we do not hold fast to the initial faith and persevere to the end, we are easily prone to fall into unbelief, and this is a very dangerous situation. There will be difficulties and trials in the wilderness, but we must firmly believe in God's promises, closely follow the Captain of our salvation, and walk the path of sanctification. Only then can we reach the end, enter the Promised Land, and enjoy His rest.

Yesterday, we mentioned that the Promised Land represents a realm of new creation. After being saved by grace, our old self remains, which refers to our outward man, but at the same time, we have received a new man, which refers to our inward being. Paul encourages us to remain faithful and keep moving forward without hesitation as in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. In these three verses, the Chinese Union Version translates "outer man" for the word that originally refers to "the outward man," and "inner man" for the word that originally refers to "the inward man." Let us read these three verses with a new translation: "Therefore, we do not lose heart. Though the outer man is perishing, yet the inner man is being renewed day by day.

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are

temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Every difficulty we face in the wilderness is a light and momentary affliction, working for us an exceedingly great and eternal weight of glory. Therefore, we must move forward with faith to reach the goal and enjoy rest.

Verse 19: "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief."

This is the conclusion of the author in this section: Without faith, we cannot enter into rest. Faith is the means by which we draw upon the grace of Christ. Without faith, we cannot access that grace. On our own, none of us can make it through the wilderness. If we do not believe, we will inevitably fall in the wilderness and fail to enter into rest. Therefore, if we find ourselves in doubt, we should quickly pray to God, asking Him to have mercy on us and remove the evil heart of unbelief.

Doubt always comes from Satan's attack; this is one of his consistent tactics. Remember, in the Garden of Eden, the first thing the serpent said to Eve was, "Has God indeed said?" Satan always seeks to sow doubt about God's word in our hearts. Then, the next step is to tempt us to disobey God's word. Therefore, we must never give Satan a foothold. An evil heart of unbelief is the result of Satan's attack. We must be vigilant and reject any doubts that he tries to plant in our minds.

That's a powerful example from Mark 9:14-29. When the father brought his son to Jesus, he was honest about his struggle with faith. Jesus told him that all things are possible for those who believe. The father's response was profound: "I believe; help my unbelief!" He acknowledged that while he had faith, he still struggled with doubt, and he asked for help. This shows that it's okay to admit when our faith feels weak. We can always turn to Jesus and ask Him to strengthen our faith, just like this father did. Jesus, in His grace, responded to the father's honest plea and healed his son, demonstrating that even when our faith feels insufficient, God is faithful to help us grow.

Today, it is the same for us. Once we discover that we have unbelief, we must immediately pray to God, asking Him to remove our unbelief. We must not let this

unbelief slowly ferment within us. It will take root, it will sprout, and it will grow, ultimately causing our hearts to become hardened. Once you harden your heart, you will lose rest. May God help us.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You. We have all been blessed with salvation, and now we walk on the path of sanctification; this is a journey through the wilderness. Help us to hold fast to our initial faith, remove our unbelief, so that we can faithfully press forward and support and encourage one another with the saints in the church. Help us all to attain the salvation of our souls and enter into the rest You have prepared for us. Bless my daily life. We pray in the holy name of Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.