

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

Song of Songs 1: 9-11

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank God, it's time to read the Bible again. Let's continue to read Song of Songs chapter 1. We will read verses 9-11 today.

A saint who loves the Lord has had experiences with the Lord in the inner chambers. He responded to the Lord's calling, came to know his commission, and began to serve the Lord earnestly. He learned how to lead people to salvation, and around him were a few young saints whom he had nurtured. At this point, he realized that the church's leadership and supply could no longer meet the needs of his service. When he went to fellowship with the church leaders, it instead stirred up intense anger from his brothers of the same mother. Left with no choice, he came before the Lord and poured out his grievance in sorrow, seeking the Lord's leading. In his intimate and open fellowship with the Lord, he unknowingly revealed his complaint: Isn't the church supposed to be a home? Then how is it that I feel like a displaced person, with no place to call home? Is not the Lord the Shepherd of the flock? Then how has the church become a flock that belongs to the Lord's companions?

We need to recognize that this saint, who has just begun to love the Lord and serve Him earnestly, may not have entirely accurate feelings, and his understanding may not be fully balanced. Although his questions are quite sharp, this is also a situation commonly encountered by anyone who sincerely serves the Lord in the church. We should view the Song of Songs as a guide for a saint's growth in life. During the stages of life growth, his understanding may be inaccurate, but his feelings and experiences are real. When he brings all the thoughts in his heart before the Lord—even when he is complaining to the Lord—the Lord does not rebuke him at all. On the contrary, He calls her the most beautiful among women and encourages her from a broader perspective. The Lord tells her that there is indeed only one flock, and for two thousand years this flock has left behind a trail of footsteps. These footsteps have formed a path—the path of the cross, and also the path that leads to the heavenly Jerusalem.

We cannot follow man; we can only follow the Lord. But how exactly do we follow the Lord? Many times, it feels too abstract. If we don't know how, then we simply need to follow the footsteps of the flock—that is, to extensively read the writings and testimonies left behind by the saints who have gone before us, and to properly gather them all together to form a trail of footsteps. There are many theological schools that at first glance may seem irreconcilable, or interpretations of the Bible that appear entirely different; but if we extend the timeline and take into account the historical background of the writings of various spiritual people, if we truly have God's perspective, we will discover that they actually complement and complete one another.

On one hand, the Lord allows this saint who loves Him to recognize the path by which God has been leading the church over the past two thousand years. At the same time, on a very practical level, the Lord also tells him that even in his immediate surroundings, there are many shepherds with tents. He is to pasture the young female goats under his care beside the tents of these shepherds. Then, the Lord speaks a few words to this saint who loves Him—words that will help him grow in life.

Verse 9: “I have compared you, my love, to my filly among Pharaoh's chariots.”

At the beginning, the Lord calls her “my love”—a very intimate expression. The NIV translates it as “my darling,” and the KJV also renders it as “my love.” Compared to the Chinese Union Version's translation of “佳偶” (beloved companion or spouse), these English versions feel more fitting; perhaps rendering it as “my dear” or “my beloved” would be even better. Hearing the Lord call her in this way, her heart melts. Her heart is completely opened to the Lord, and she is able to receive the words the Lord is about to speak to her—words that truly help her grow in life.

The Lord says, “I have compared you, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.” The Hebrew word translated as “horses” here is unique in the Old Testament—it specifically refers to a female horse, a mare. Pharaoh, as we know, is the king of Egypt. In the time of Solomon, the finest horses and the best chariots came from Egypt. As it says in 1 Kings 10:28–29 (NKJV), “Also Solomon had horses imported from Egypt and Keveh; the king's merchants bought them in Keveh at the current price. Now a chariot that was imported from Egypt cost six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse one hundred and fifty. And thus, through their agents,

they exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Syria.” The Lord compares this saint who loves Him to a mare harnessed to Pharaoh’s chariot.

The horses harnessed to Pharaoh’s chariots were all top-quality stallions, carefully selected from among hundreds. They were not only physically strong but also specially trained, swift in movement, and graceful in form—so much so that anyone who saw them would be filled with admiration. Pharaoh represents the king of this world, and his chariots determine the course and direction of the world’s trends. Every horse attached to Pharaoh’s chariot runs with all its might for the sake of future glory. Yet among this group of stallions, there is one mare found in their midst.

That saint who loves the Lord is specially chosen by the Lord for the purpose of nurturing and cultivating life. Every person who is chosen by God, called by Him, and rises up to follow Him must walk a path that is different from the world. However, when someone first begins to follow the Lord, it is not easy to be separated from the world, because up until that point, they have lived in the world and become accustomed to its currents. As a result, when they first begin to learn to serve in the church, they often unconsciously bring the ways of the world into the church. Many times, they serve very diligently, believing they are serving the Lord, yet they fail to realize that the carriage they are driving is carrying Pharaoh, not the Lord.

Dear brothers and sisters, this is also a mistake we often make in serving the church. When we work in a company, design products, or produce goods, these all require standard specifications, and once the specifications are determined, efficiency becomes the focus. There is no problem with doing this for products, but the product of the church is not goods; it is people, and every person is different.

In the production of goods, items that do not meet the specifications are called defective products and are discarded. But in the church, every saint is precious to God, and there are no defective products; every saint is a member of the body of Jesus Christ, with different functions, varying specifications, and the body parts complement each other. The weaker they are, the more indispensable they are. Therefore, we cannot bring the management system of a company into the church. The church is a living organism, and we must help every member of the body within the church to grow in life and fully exercise the function they are meant to have. This is from the perspective of the body.

From the perspective of the master, if you are serving Pharaoh today, Pharaoh uses people until they are exhausted. When a person is no longer valuable to Pharaoh, he is discarded. This is why companies have retirement systems; to put it nicely, it's retirement, but to put it bluntly, it's because you are no longer valuable. But our Lord does not use people in this way. Our Lord is always about nurturing people, and in God's hands, a person always has value. In fact, the older a person gets, the more seasoned and mature their life becomes, and in God's hands, they become even more valuable. Caleb, at the age of 85, was still able to fight for God. What a difference there is between being in the Lord's hands and in Pharaoh's hands! The Lord first compares this saint who loves Him to the fine horse in Pharaoh's chariot, reminding him to be separated from the world.

Verse 10: “Your cheeks are comely with plaits of hair, your neck with strings of jewels.”

Let us first look at the two cheeks, which are made beautiful by braids. When sisters apply makeup, they often put blush on their cheeks to make their face appear more three-dimensional, making their cheeks look more beautiful. A person's cheeks largely determine their beauty or ugliness. This saint who loves the Lord, because their cheeks are not particularly beautiful, braided their hair along the sides of their face. On one hand, this covers up the imperfections, and on the other hand, it adds a touch of decoration, making their cheeks beautiful because of the braids. But the Lord sees immediately that this beauty is merely an outward adornment.

Your neck is adorned with a necklace of beads. The neck symbolizes a person's ability to submit to God. The prophets of the Old Testament often rebuked the Israelites for being a people with stiff necks because they did not listen to God's words and repeatedly betrayed Him. They lacked the ability to submit to God. For a saint who loves the Lord, knowing that they are unable to submit to God, they wear a necklace made of beads to make their neck appear softer. In reality, their obedience is also something they have adorned externally.

After we are saved by grace, beyond our old life, we receive a new life from God. If this new life grows and develops, naturally, our cheeks will be beautiful, and our neck will be gentle and submissive. When this new life has not yet fully grown, we know that we lack submission to God and the manifestation of spiritual beauty in

our lives. Therefore, we use human methods to make our cheeks beautiful with braids and our neck adorned with a necklace of beads.

Dear brothers and sisters, do not look down upon such adornment. The reason for the adornment is because one recognizes their own inadequacy. As long as we have this awareness and are willing to spend time to adorn ourselves, to decorate ourselves, showing that we care deeply to present the best side of ourselves to the Lord, as long as we are willing, or rather have the willing heart, the Lord will truly be able to work in us.

The two sons of Isaac, Esau and Jacob, are the best examples. In terms of character, Esau was honest and straightforward, and seemed more likable compared to Jacob, who was known for his scheming ways. However, Esau was careless and did not value the birthright, while Jacob valued the birthright deeply and worked hard to obtain it. Because Jacob had the heart to strive for it, God was able to work in him, and ultimately, under God's shaping, Jacob became a very spiritual person. Similarly, although the Lord pointed out that his cheeks were made beautiful by braids and his neck adorned with a necklace of beads—both of which were human-made adornments—yet the Lord continued to say...

Verse 11: “We will make you ornaments of gold, with studs of silver.”

This is still the Lord's response to this saint, but at this point, the subject changes to "we," referring to the Triune God. We see that the growth of every saint is the result of the joint cooperation of the Triune God. The path of a person's life was long ago predestined by God the Father: what will happen, who they will encounter, all is within the will of the Father. After the Father's determination, the Son comes to carry out the Father's plan.

When Jesus Christ fulfilled His duty on earth, He experienced every problem and challenge that one might face in life, living out a perfect human life. These experiences are recorded in the four Gospels. What Jesus Christ went through is meant to be our help. How can it become our help? It requires the realization of the Holy Spirit. Every person who is saved has the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. When we face situations, the Holy Spirit supplies us with the grace of Christ. Not only does He help us understand God's will, but He also gives us the power to obey God's will. Therefore, the Lord here says, "We will braid your hair with gold braids." Gold represents God's nature. When you use human methods to braid your hair,

making your cheeks appear more beautiful, the Triune God weaves the divine nature into the braid. In other words, during our process of adorning ourselves, God weaves into us the true, divine nature. Not only does He braid gold into the hair, but He also sets silver pins in it.

Silver in the Bible represents the redemption of Jesus Christ. This indicates that the divine nature can be woven into us based on the redemption that Jesus Christ has already completed. Our fallen human nature has been redeemed by Christ; on this foundation, God adds the divine nature to us. This is exactly what Peter speaks of in 2 Peter 1:4, "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." The Triune God wants to braid gold into our hair and set silver pins in it.

Dear brothers and sisters, when you encounter difficulties in your service in the church, just like this saint who loves the Lord, bring your problems before the Lord. The Lord will not only help you deal with the difficulties, but He will also work in you. He will show you that there are many influences from the world still present in your life, and the Lord will help you to be separated from the world. Of course, the Lord knows that when we come before Him, we always try to present our best side, which may not be the true side of us, but rather our outward adornment. However, as long as we have the heart to adorn ourselves, the Lord will add the true things. Based on His redemption, He will weave His divine nature into us. This is a lifelong process of learning for us.

This saint who loves the Lord has at least begun the journey, and God can now work in him. God can weave some truly eternal and divine qualities into this saint's life. If we are willing to serve the Lord in this way, over time—whether it be a few months for some, or a few years for others—our lives will gradually grow, and the true beauty will begin to emerge.

Next week, we will read the second half of the first stage, so that we can understand what condition we must grow into when we first follow the Lord.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You! You are so beautiful and lovely, and You have given us keen discernment to appreciate Your love in all its forms. We ask You to help us love You more, for our love for You is the foundation of the work You are doing in us. Although we are still immature and our lives are still filled with the flavor of the world, You are braiding gold into our hair and setting silver pins in it.

We ask You, in our daily lives, to bring us eternal spiritual blessings that we can experience and enjoy, so that our lives may be pleasing to You. We pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.