

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

Song of Songs 1: 12-14

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. This week we will continue reading the Song of Songs, from 1:12 to 2:7; today, we will read verses 1:12–14.

The revival of a saint who has received grace and salvation begins with a longing to love the Lord and to build an intimate relationship with Him. He has experienced the Lord's love, which is better than all the good things of the world. He has come to know the person of the Lord, as fragrant ointment. He enjoys everything the Lord has accomplished in His name. Deeply attracted by the Lord, he also influences a group of saints to rise up and run after the Lord together.

He is brought by the Lord into the inner chamber, where there is intimate and open fellowship between him and the Lord. Not only does he recognize the corruption of his natural disposition, but he also sees that in the new creation he has been justified by God and is comely and beautiful. He discovers his burden and God's commission for him. He preaches the gospel and leads people to salvation, and he begins to serve several newly saved saints. At this point, he starts to feel that the leading and supply of the church can no longer meet his needs in service. The leaders in the church once taught him how to pray, how to read the Bible, how to serve, and were once a great help to him. But now, not only can they no longer help him, they often become interruptions.

"They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept." He is left with no choice but to come to the Lord in grievance, pouring out his heart, even with some complaints: "Why should I be as one who veils herself by the flocks of your companions?" The Lord is completely tolerant toward him, with no reproach at all, and even responds with a tone of praise, telling him that the Lord has only one flock, and that the footsteps of that flock have already walked out the way of the cross — the way to the heavenly Jerusalem. Moreover, the Lord has arranged

many shepherds with tents around him and wants him simply to feed his little female goats beside their tents.

The Lord appreciates his diligent labor and zealous service. He also reminds him that service is not merely work, but a flowing out of life. The Lord also appreciates that he knows his inadequacy. He braids ornaments into his hair to beautify his cheeks and wears strings of jewels to adorn his neck. Although these are artificial decorations, because of his willing heart, the Lord can begin to do some initial work in him — this is the elementary lesson of the cross. The Lord braids strings of gold into his hair, replacing human natural strength and vain glory with divine power and glory. The Lord sets studs of silver in his strings of jewels, so that through the Lord's redemption he may have genuine obedience.

This lover of the Lord has experienced the working of the Lord's hand and has woven some divine attributes into his life on the foundation of redemption. His service is no longer mere work, no longer dependent on natural ability, no longer for personal glory — he begins to learn to co-labor with the Lord. Typically, from the time a saint begins to love the Lord until he reaches this point takes about two or three years; of course, for some it may take only a few months. If you have been saved for over ten years and have not had these experiences, you should come before the Lord — on one hand to confess, and on the other hand to earnestly ask the Lord for these experiences.

Verse 12: "While the king is at his table, my spikenard sends forth its fragrance."

In verse 4, the king already brought him into the inner chamber, and there they had very intimate and open fellowship. The inner chamber is secret, and the experience in the inner chamber leads to God's working in him. He also experiences the breaking of the Lord in him and the weaving of divine attributes into him. He has also experienced obedience that comes through Christ's redemption. Now the Lord is about to bring him into a new level of experience.

It starts with, "While the king is at his table." When Solomon was king, it was the most glorious and prosperous time of Israel. In 1 Kings 4:22–23, it is recorded: "Now

Solomon's provision for one day was thirty kors of fine flour, sixty kors of meal, ten fattened oxen, twenty oxen from the pastures, and one hundred sheep, besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fattened fowl." We can imagine how lavish Solomon's feast must have been. In 1 Kings 10:5, when the Queen of Sheba visited Solomon in Jerusalem and saw "the food on his table, the seating of his servants, the service of his waiters and their apparel, his cupbearers, and his entryway by which he went up to the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her." This was when Solomon held a banquet to entertain the visiting Queen of Sheba.

However, the "table" mentioned in verse 5 uses a different Hebrew word. It is not the kind of long rectangular table we see in the palace, filled with exotic delicacies. The word used here has a root meaning of "round," so this likely refers to a round table — not the kind used for feasts with guests in the palace. A round table is different from a long one. In a long table, the positions of host and guest are clearly distinguished, but in a round table, there is no distinction of rank. This shows a scene of domestic life, where the king and his beloved dine together.

Previously they were in the inner chamber, speaking of the hidden, intimate fellowship between two persons. Now they are at home, seated together at a round table — a semi-public scene. Although it is domestic life, in the king's house the table is still full of rich delicacies. The king and his beloved sit together at the round table, without any distinction of rank, dining closely together. Although the table is full of fine food and aroma, what truly captures the king's attention is not the food — it is the fragrance of my spikenard.

Spikenard comes from a small shrub native to the Himalayas, at altitudes of around 3,000–5,000 meters. Originally from Nepal, its root and stem have a strong fragrance. After drying, crushing, and distilling, it produces a suitable essential oil that was a very precious spice in ancient times. Spikenard represents the heavenly fragrance that results from one's suffering and refinement.

"My spikenard sends forth its fragrance." This lover of the Lord has already undergone the Lord's initial working. The gold braids and silver studs have been added to him, and he emits a heavenly fragrance. While he dines with the Lord — though the table is full of delicacies with various aromas — what the Lord smells is

the fragrance from my spikenard. The Lord Himself is already full of the fragrance of ointment, but now this lover also emits the fragrance of genuine spikenard.

In Mark 14:3–9, it is recorded: “And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head.” That oil was worth a year’s wages — very precious. Mary broke the flask and poured all the oil on Jesus. Dear brothers and sisters, if we want the fragrance of genuine spikenard to come forth from us, we must be willing to pay the price. We must also go through the work of the cross, letting our outer man be broken so that the fragrance of spikenard can be released from us.

Here we see a very beautiful picture: a saint who loves the Lord sitting at the table with Him. Although the table is filled with delicious dishes, what the Lord cherishes is not what is on the table, but the fragrance of the true nard ointment that comes from this saint who loves the Lord. This saint has reached a point where he matches the Lord to some extent; the fragrant anointing oil on the Lord's body, he too emits the fragrance of true nard ointment from his own body.

Verse 13: "A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me, that lies all night between my breasts."

Myrrh is produced in the tropical desert regions, a small shrub. When its trunk is cut, it will release resin; it is a semi-liquid, semi-transparent, slightly yellow myrrh juice. After drying, it crystallizes into myrrh chunks. In ancient times, myrrh was a very important spice and had preservative functions. In John 19:39, after Jesus was crucified, Nicodemus brought a hundred pounds of myrrh and, according to Jewish burial customs, wrapped Jesus’ body in fine linen with myrrh.

In the Bible, myrrh often symbolizes the death of the Lord. When Jesus was born, the wise men from the East brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The life of the Lord Jesus was like a myrrh tree, growing in a desert without water, which is why Isaiah describes Jesus as “a root out of dry ground, He has no form or comeliness”. His purpose for coming to the earth was to go to the cross to complete

redemption, and in this process, He was wounded, and myrrh-like resin flowed from Him.

This saint who loves the Lord has had some experiences with the cross. At this point, he begins to treasure the death of the Lord. He says, "A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me, that lies all night between my breasts." The translation in the KJV is closer to the original, "lies all night between my breasts." Of course, "between my breasts" refers to the chest area. We need to slowly get used to the expressions in the Song of Songs, especially when it describes parts of the body, which are very direct and have spiritual meanings. Here it speaks of a saint who loves the Lord, and he deeply treasures the work of the cross of Jesus Christ, particularly His all-encompassing death, and he places the death of Jesus Christ between his breasts all night.

What are the "two breasts"? 1 Thessalonians 5:8 says, "But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation." Here it speaks of "putting on the breastplate of faith and love," which covers the two breasts. How should we treasure the death of Jesus Christ? By accepting it with faith and holding it with love. Brother Watchman Nee interpreted the "two breasts" in Song of Songs as faith and love. That is, we experience dying with Jesus Christ in faith and hold on to this experience of dying with Christ in love.

This saint who loves the Lord clearly understands that after Jesus died, was resurrected, and ascended, the entire generation entered into the night, waiting for the second coming of Christ. When we are in the night, we must treasure Christ's death. When we are willing to walk the road of the cross, we will face difficulties and persecution, but as long as we have the determination to die with the Lord, these difficulties and persecutions will not change our resolution to follow the Lord.

Dear brothers and sisters, do you treasure the death of the Lord? In 1 Corinthians 11:26, it tells us, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes." Before Jesus ascended, He said He would come again. The time without the presence of the Lord is the night, and during the night we should remember the death of the Lord.

If we truly treasure the death of the Lord, there will no longer be difficulties in us. Why do you still love the world? Because the death of the Lord is not manifested in you. Why do you still argue with your spouse? Because the death of the Lord is not manifested in you. Why are you still reckless, impulsive, and angry? Because you have not manifested the death of the Lord. This saint who loves the Lord, he treats his beloved as a bundle of myrrh, continuously drawing by faith, continually holding on by love. He is united with the death of Christ and truly treasures the Lord's death.

Verse 14: "A cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of En Gedi."

Henna, also known as "nail flower," is a very ordinary and common flower. Throughout the Song of Songs, there are no precious flowers. Its petals are red, and women at the time often crushed the petals of henna and used the red juice to paint their nails.

En Gedi is an oasis on the west side of the Dead Sea. The salt content of the Dead Sea is very high, and there is no sign of life around the Dead Sea, only barren wilderness. When David was fleeing from Saul's pursuit, he also hid in a cave in En Gedi. The word "En Gedi" means "spring of the kid," and in the wilderness, such a spring is rare. Because of the irrigation from this spring, En Gedi became a fertile oasis. En Gedi has vineyards, and through the irrigation of the spring of the kid, a rich and dense vineyard grows. In the wilderness surrounding the Dead Sea, where there is no sign of life, En Gedi becomes a fertile oasis because of the abundant supply from the spring of the kid. There are vineyards in this oasis, and in this vineyard, there is a henna flower.

In the vineyard, everything is green, and a single red henna flower stands out. This henna flower represents the Lord Himself. "A cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of En Gedi." This saint who loves the Lord is also laboring in the vineyard. This vineyard is irrigated by the spring of the kid. Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life". The vineyard is abundant and dense, not because of my natural

ability, nor because of my diligent labor, but because of the abundant supply from the spring of the kid.

At this point, this saint who loves the Lord knows that the vineyard belongs to the Lord. It is no longer my vineyard, nor the vineyard of my fellow brothers, but the Lord's vineyard. Therefore, when he labors in the vineyard, his focus is no longer on the work or the results of the work. His eyes are continually fixed on the red henna flower. In the wilderness around the Dead Sea, where there is no sign of life, the vineyard exists solely because of the living water supply from Jesus Christ. We are privileged to serve in the vineyard, and the results of our service are completely the Lord's responsibility. We simply need to keep our eyes fixed on the Lord.

Dear brothers and sisters, if we learn to treasure the death of Christ, we will be freed from the control of the old man. Today's church is like the vineyard of En Gedi. Although it is in a wilderness with no life, because it is irrigated by the spring of the kid, the church is full of vitality and flourishing. In the vineyard, the saints who labor are no longer looking at their own work or the results of their work. They are simply gazing at Jesus Christ, who died and rose again for us. He is the henna flower, the most beautiful one. It is hard to imagine that from the love for the Lord, the willingness to commit oneself into His gracious hands, a series of experiences would follow.

Let us pray together: Lord, bless us not only to have the experience of the inner chamber but also the experience of sitting at the table with You. Through Your working in us, let the fragrance of true nard ointment also emanate from us. Because of our initial experience of the cross, we treasure the opportunity to die with You, to draw by faith, and to hold on in love. Elevate my service, knowing that our service is not work, but the expression of life. Bless the church where I am, that it may be like the vineyard of En Gedi, filled with the rich supply of Your life. We pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.