

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

Song of Songs 2: 10-12

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 reading Song of Songs chapter 2, verses 10 to 12.

In the first stage of a saint's journey of life, the most crucial foundation is establishing the practice of inner chamber fellowship—a face-to-face communion with the Lord within the veil. In this intimate fellowship, we can understand the Lord's will and the commission He entrusts to us. However, after entering within the veil, one must “go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach.” This is a verse from Hebrews 13:13. This simple phrase from Hebrews, “go forth to Him, outside the camp,” is, in fact, the lesson of the second stage of spiritual growth. Saints who have walked through this stage can testify that it is not an easy matter. I myself spent five years learning to step out. Spiritual growth is never cheap; it always requires a cost, and sometimes that cost is quite significant.

I hope that saints will read the Song of Songs with a prayerful heart, asking the Lord to make the experiences described in the text a reality for you, and even more, pleading for the Lord's mercy to grant us a willing heart to keep pace with His leading. Having passed through the first stage and tasted the beauty of being with the Lord, this saint is reluctant to move forward. He builds thick walls, hiding within them to focus on enjoying the Lord's grace and blessings, shutting out all other things to avoid disturbance.

This life within the walls seems joyful and satisfying to him, yet he does not realize that the Lord has already departed and is leaping over mountains and hills outside. When he is awakened from his slumber by the Lord's call and sees the Lord outside the wall, the Lord, to commune with him, has opened a window of grace, looking in through it. He quickly adds lattice to the window from within, and this Lord framed by the lattice is the Lord he knows. This is how he has known the Lord in the past. The Lord does not remove his lattice but begins to speak to him.

Verse 10: “My beloved spoke, and said to me: ‘Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away!’”

It begins with “My beloved spoke, and said to me.” The KJV translates it as: “My beloved spoke, and said unto me.” If translated directly, it would be: “My beloved spoke, and He said to me.” The first Hebrew word for “spoke” originally means “respond, testify,” implying a response and a bearing of witness. The saint has not spoken, so the Lord’s response addresses his actions of building walls and adding lattice, speaking to him solemnly in the manner of bearing witness. The Lord first calls him “my love,” a term used for him in the past, meant to stir his memories. Then the Lord calls him “my fair one.” The Lord once praised him as the fairest among women; now, addressing him directly as “my fair one,” the Lord shows that He still treasures him.

Then comes the Lord’s call: “Rise up, and come away!” He has lingered too long in self-satisfied enjoyment—he must rise up. He has dwelt too long in the sensation of the Lord’s presence—he must rise up. He has been asleep too long—he must rise up. The Lord further calls him, drawing him, saying, “Come away!” The Lord wants to lead him to the next step, to continue advancing on the path of growth. The Lord is not calling him to rise up and work or serve but to rise up and follow, to come away with Him.

Dear brothers and sisters, we must recognize that in the many spiritual activities we engage in, if the Lord is not present, they have no value. Whether it is your Bible reading, prayer, hymn singing, devotion, evangelism, church service, or leading activities, if the Lord’s presence is absent, they hold no eternal value.

Verse 11: “For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone.”

The Lord tells him the reason to rise up and come away with Him: the winter is past. He has been living within the walls in what he thought was comfort, but the Lord says that was winter. In the land of promise, winter is not particularly cold—not like Chicago winters, which can drop to minus ten degrees Celsius, causing small

animals to hibernate. Winters in the promised land rarely fall below five degrees Celsius, so animals do not hibernate. The Lord seems to be reminding him: How could you sleep so soundly? How could you fall into hibernation? If someone loves the Lord, they follow Him and do not hibernate. If someone falls into the feeling of loving the Lord, the enjoyment of loving the Lord, or a state of rest, it's likely that the Lord is no longer there, yet they remain stuck in that feeling, that enjoyment, that rest. These manifestations of the Lord's presence, without the Lord Himself, can truly lead one into a cold winter, even a long hibernation.

Now the winter is past, and spring has come. The passing of winter and coming of spring signifies the experience of death and resurrection. The lessons of the first stage taught him to treasure Christ's death, regarding his Beloved as a sachet of myrrh resting close to his heart. Experiencing the Lord's death and valuing its worth are good, but now is the time for death and resurrection. Dying with the Lord is not the goal, only the process; living with the Lord, rising up to follow Him, is the goal. Not only is winter past, but the rain is over and gone. In Israel, the rainy season is in winter, and by late February, the rain ceases. Winter rain feels especially cold; it prefigures environments and things that restrict life's activities. Winter rain makes people prefer staying indoors. These restrictions and difficulties have ceased, have passed—now is the time for the earth to spring back to life.

Verse 12: “The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.”

This verse is very rich and has two distinctly different interpretations. Let's start with the common interpretation, which depicts the arrival of spring, a scene of all things thriving. “The flowers appear on the earth”: in the promised land, winter is the rainy season, saturating the earth with ample moisture. As temperatures rise, all kinds of plants and trees quickly take root, sprout, and burst into vibrant blooms. The earth is covered with flowers, radiantly beautiful. Nature displays abundant life, each flower expressing life's beauty in its own way. A variety of flowers

gathered together paints a vivid picture overflowing with life. This tells God's children that God's ordained spring has come.

"The time of singing has come": not only do the flowers and plants on the earth bloom with life, but all sorts of birds, with abundant food, rapidly multiply, flitting among the red flowers and green leaves. Flowers are silent, quietly praising God, but birds call to one another, their incessant chirping weaving into a grand chorus, offering joyful praise to God.

"The flowers appear" and "the time of singing" prove that spring has arrived. This is a new beginning arranged in God's natural order. It reminds this saint, emerging from hibernation, to rise up and go with the Lord. Do not linger in past experiences, past enjoyments, past blessings, past knowledge, or past revelations. The Lord is full of resurrection power, ready to give him fresh supply, to lead him to experience more grace and see higher revelations.

Do not stay in the past; rise up quickly to follow the Lord, for "the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land." The turtledove is a bird of love, and its voice is naturally a love song. It is the Lord, through nature, issuing a loving invitation to this stagnant saint. This love song is heard in "our land," the realm of the Lord's presence, which is not within the walls but in the nature outside. The turtledove's song carries from outside the walls to within, inviting this saint to rise up and go with the Lord.

Indeed, the thriving of spring—flowers blooming, birds singing—serves one purpose: the Lord, through the turtledove, extends a loving invitation to the saint hiding within the walls. Spring has come; it is the time of death and resurrection. Do not hibernate any longer—rise up to embrace the next chapter of life. The realm of the Lord's presence is no longer within the walls; rise up and go with the Lord to continue experiencing His presence. Most commentators interpret it this way, and this interpretation is beautiful and reasonable, but it may not reflect the experience of spiritual growth and might lack depth.

Let's consider another interpretation, perhaps more aligned with the spiritual intent of this song. The main difference lies in the phrase "the time of singing has

come.” In the original text, there is no mention of “birds.” Some translations note that “birds” is not in the original, added because the Hebrew word “zamer,” translated as “singing,” can mean singing, leading to the addition of “birds” to indicate birds singing.

But this Hebrew word can also mean “pruning,” so some translations include a footnote: “or, the time of pruning the vines has come.” With this translation, the whole sentence becomes: “The flowers appear on the earth; the time of pruning the vines has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.” Why is this translation preferable? Because it forms a strong contrast with verses 1:14-15 from the first stage. In the first stage, the Lord was the henna flower bloom in the vineyard, and he served in the Lord’s vineyard with eyes fixed on that henna flower, earning the Lord’s praise for having dove’s eyes.

Let’s examine the contrast between the first and second stages: henna bloom versus many flowers; vineyard service versus vine pruning; turtledove versus dove. Recognizing this contrast, let’s explore the growth from the first stage to the second.

In the first stage, the Lord was the singular henna flower in the vineyard, beautiful and striking yet somewhat solitary. In the second stage, the Lord’s manifestation grows from a henna flower into many flowers. This signifies that many saints, having been shaped by the Lord’s hand, can display the Lord’s beauty. Each saint, perfected according to their unique qualities, embodies aspects of the Lord’s virtues. This growth blossoms into a beautiful flower in spring, and hundreds or thousands of saints gathered together create a stunning scene of many flowers blooming. If you look closely, each flower is a testimony of life, a display of Christ’s glory.

Next, consider vineyard service versus vine pruning. Every saint serves in the vineyard of En Gedi, but in reality, the Lord is the one true vine, and the saints are the branches; those abiding in Him bear much fruit. John 15:5 says: “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit.” This

was the scene of the first stage. However, at the end of the first stage, this saint who loves the Lord built a thick wall around himself, stagnated, and failed to heed the Lord's call. John 15:2 says: "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit."

"Every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit." This saint had borne fruit before, but now the time for pruning the vine has come—a necessary process to move from the first stage to the second. No one enjoys pruning; it inevitably involves pain, the growing pains that cannot be avoided. The vine exists solely to bear fruit. Its appearance is twisted and winding, unlike the straight, admirable cedar. Its flowering period is short and hidden, unlike roses or peonies that captivate onlookers. When the vine begins to bear fruit, it must be pruned—removing fruitless branches and clearing fruitful ones to ensure ample sunlight, space, and nutrients for larger, fuller fruit. As the fruit nears maturity, the leaves gradually wither, leaving only clusters of robust, abundant grapes.

Brother Watchman Nee wrote a poem about the life of a vine, a beautiful and lengthy piece with 16 stanzas, vividly depicting the vine's life. I'll include the lyrics in the comments for saints to read on their own. Here, I'll read only stanzas 14 and 15:

Stanza 14:

From its branches, the vine yields wine, blood, and sap.
Does it grow poorer for having given all?
The world's drunkards, the wayward of earth, drink freely from it, reveling in it.
Does their enjoyment make them richer?

Stanza 15:

The principle of life is measured not by gain but by loss:
Not by how much wine is drunk, but by how much is poured out.
For love's greatest power lies in its sacrifice.
He who suffers most deeply has the most to give.

The Lord is the vine, and we are the branches, so we should understand the life of the vine. This saint failed to keep up with the Lord's call—has the time for pruning arrived? Pruning's purpose is positive: to enable him to bear more fruit. The process may be painful, but he is not alone—the Lord is with him. In the first stage, the Lord praised his dove's eyes for his singular, pure devotion to the Lord. Now, at pruning time, he hears the turtledove's voice—a gentle, comforting song filled with affection. It's as if the Lord is saying: Are you hurting? I am with you. Hold on a little longer; the pain is brief, and this brief pain will yield a rich harvest. With your dove's eyes, gaze solely at Me. I will be your supply, your comfort, your love.

Dear brothers and sisters, the Lord's pruning is always full of love, accompanied by the turtledove's love song. In Scripture, doves and turtledoves first appear together in Genesis 15, in the context of God promising Abraham the land as an inheritance. Abraham struggled to believe, so the Lord made a covenant with him. Genesis 15:9-10 says: "So He said to him, 'Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.' Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds." The heifer and goat were cut in two, laid opposite each other, but the dove and turtledove were not cut. The cut animals prefigure Christ's death; the uncut dove and turtledove prefigure Christ's resurrection. As we are pruned, Christ bears the death, while resurrection works in us. The Lord grants us strength to savor His love even amidst pruning.

Dear brothers and sisters, comparing these two interpretations, I prefer the pruning of the vine and hearing the Lord's love song during pruning. What do you think? Otherwise, I worry that amid the singing of many birds, I might miss the turtledove's voice and thus miss the Lord's expression of love. Enduring some pruning pain in exchange for the Lord singing a love song to comfort me alone is truly worth it.

Let us pray together: Lord, winter has passed, and spring has come—it is the time of death and resurrection. The blooming flowers and singing birds remind us to keep moving forward; our life must not stagnate. Lord, we open ourselves fully to You. Please examine every detail of our lives. If anything hinders our growth, Lord,

prune it away. We know this brief pain will yield eternal, incomparable glory. When we fall behind, Lord, do not give up on us; keep calling us. Thank You for providing many spiritual companions in my church life—we encourage and support one another, walking together on the path of growth. Continue to bless my church and church life. I pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.