

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

Song of Songs 2: 15-17

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 are reading the second half of the second stage in following the Lord and growing in life, from Song of Songs 2:15 to 3:5. Today we will read verses 2:15–17.

A saint who loves the Lord has passed through the first stage of life growth. He now rests in the feeling of the Lord's presence and thinks, "This is so wonderful—there's nothing better than this." He no longer feels the need to go further. He does not realize that this is only the first stage of life experience. The Lord charges the daughters of Jerusalem not to stir him up nor awaken him until he pleases. Who would have thought that he would become addicted to this feeling of presence, and his life would stagnate, no longer progressing?

Dear brothers and sisters, if you have had a charismatic experience—tasting release in the spirit and overflowing grace—you need to be watchful. That kind of feeling can become a stumbling block to your further progress. It's quite possible that the Lord is no longer in the kind of felt presence you assume He's still in.

If you are a more rational believer, and in your pursuit of truth you've discovered a perfect theological framework—one that can resolve all the contradictions you know—you need to be watchful. You may be so impressed by its flawless logic, and your heart may be filled with joy and admiration. But even this kind of feeling can become a stumbling block to your further progress. When you find certain Scriptures that don't quite fit into this framework, you may start persuading yourself and twisting the Scriptures just to preserve the structure you believe is perfect. Unknowingly, you begin to replace God's Word—especially His timely speaking to you—with this theological system. Once you fall into this kind of feeling, the Lord will no longer be able to give you new light and fresh revelation.

When we are immersed in past spiritual experiences and gains, the Lord has already left. He is outside, leaping over the mountains and skipping upon the hills. He comes to the wall and calls us to rise and go with Him. This is a call in resurrection—the Lord desires a new beginning in you.

Last week, we already read the first half of the second stage. The Lord comes calling and reminds us that winter is past and spring has come. This is a scene of life and resurrection ordained by God. Flowers are blooming, birds are singing. Now is the time to prune the vines—because the vines are blossoming. If they are not pruned now, there will not be an abundant harvest of grapes. The fig tree has brought forth her green figs. This testimony of the fig also needs to ripen slowly to release a fragrance from the Lord.

The Lord especially mentions the spiritual lessons learned in the first stage: to have dove's eyes—to fix our gaze solely on the Lord. We rested in the clefts of the rock—the smitten rock, indeed, is the hiding place prepared by the Lord for us. Yet we found a little cave for ourselves in those clefts. We rested in the secret places of the steep path—enjoying heavenly provision in an ascended environment. But the Lord is no longer beside us. He humbly pleads with us — “Let Me see your face, let Me hear your voice. For your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.”

Verse 15: “Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes.”

"Catch us the foxes." The verb “catch” here is in the masculine plural form. It's not easy to be sure who is speaking this sentence. Last week we read it from the Lord's perspective—as a reminder to the saint hiding behind the wall to deal with his flesh and the lusts that arise from it. Today, we'll read this verse again, but from the saint's perspective.

When a saint becomes fixated on his own understanding and past spiritual experiences, he easily elevates certain practices and insists that his way of following

the Lord is the only right one. Anything that does not align with him, he sees as a “fox”—something ruining the Lord’s vineyard.

Therefore, he does not hear the Lord’s call to rise and go with Him. Instead, he roughly commands the Lord to help him catch the foxes. He ought to be a submissive maiden, but now he speaks like a harsh man. The word “catch” is usually used in the masculine plural. A saint who has received grace and been saved is hidden in the bosom of the Lord. The Lord is that smitten Rock, which was cleft and from which living water flowed, making it a place where man can take refuge. There are two kinds of caves a saint may dwell in—the cave of Moses and the cave of Edomites. The cave of Moses is where God placed him, but the cave of Edomites is one we find for ourselves. Those who dwell in the cave of Edom—those are the foxes.

Dear brothers and sisters, a true follower of the Lord is one who gives Him full sovereignty—where to live and serve must be led by the Lord, without personal plans or escape routes. I’ve seen many preachers who, when sent by the Lord to serve in another place, still try hard to reserve a position for themselves, so they can “return” later. They say it’s for the benefit of the saints, but it’s actually just a hole they dug for themselves. This kind of scheming always becomes an obstacle to church unity. In the end, they become the foxes who ruin the vineyard, and those in the church who elevate and follow them become the little foxes.

The damage caused by foxes is great, but at least they won’t harm themselves in the process. The little foxes are different—they act recklessly. Once the vines bloom, the little foxes eat the blossoms, making it impossible for the vine to bear fruit. This saint hiding behind the wall cannot keep up with the Lord’s call. He asks the Lord to stay behind to catch the foxes with him, without realizing that he himself is the fox—dwelling in the cave of the Edomites. The Lord, facing such a stubborn saint who refuses to follow, must make one decision: to leave.

God’s greatest judgment on unbelievers is to give them up. In Romans 1:24, for those who knew God but did not glorify or thank Him as God, “God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts.” In verse 26, for those who worshiped

idols, “God gave them up to vile passions,” to do shameful acts against nature. Then, in verse 28, for those who deliberately rejected the knowledge of God, “God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting.” Though God gives them up, in His mercy, He does so in three progressively severe stages. The last stage—giving them over to a debased mind—is the most dangerous, because it means they lose the ability to feel guilt. At this point, salvation becomes extremely difficult.

For unbelievers, God’s greatest judgment is giving them up. But for believers, God’s greatest discipline is withdrawing His presence. Of course, from the perspective of truth, once someone is saved and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, eternal life begins to take root and grow. As he passes through the first stage of life growth, the Lord says he is like “a lily among thorns.” He is like the third kind of soil in Jesus’ parable of the sower in Matthew 13:1–8—where the seed fell among thorns. The spiritual life has taken root and grown, but the thorns also grew and choked it. Thus, the vine cannot bear fruit, and the fig cannot ripen. Though he possesses eternal life from God, in the end, he cannot bear the fruit of the Spirit. Though saved, he cannot be sanctified—and this is truly a pity.

Verse 16: “My beloved is mine, and I am his. He feeds his flock among the lilies.”

This saint, hiding behind the wall, has not kept up with the Lord’s call. He is content to remain in the cave and even commands the Lord to stay with him to catch foxes—unaware that he is the fox and that he lives in a self-chosen cave. Now the Lord turns and leaves—this is the greatest discipline the Lord can give: to withdraw His presence. This time, the saint is aware of the Lord’s departure. He says, “My beloved is mine, and I am his.” His understanding of the truth is accurate—the Lord is his, and he is the Lord’s. The Lord does not truly leave him just because he can’t keep up. His theology is correct, but he lacks experiential reality.

In experience, one must first belong entirely to the Lord before one can possess the Lord more deeply. When he reaches the fourth stage of life growth, he will then say

with more accuracy, “I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine. He feeds his flock among the lilies.” (Song 6:3)

But here in the second stage, He has not yet come to this understanding. He says, “My beloved is mine, and I am his; He feeds his flock among the lilies.” He sees the Lord has left—to pasture the flock among the lilies. The Lord leads the flock during the time when winter has passed and spring has come—that is, the time of resurrection life. He brings them to green pastures, to the valleys, and there He shepherds His sheep. All those who belong to the Lord are like lilies, relying solely on Him, and they are lilies among lilies. But this one saint who lags behind is a lily among thorns. At this moment, he seems to begin understanding what the Lord meant by calling him a “lily among thorns.” Watching the Lord leave, he cries out to Him.

Verse 17: “Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag upon the mountains of Bether.”

He cannot keep up, so he begs the Lord to return quickly. He says, “Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved.” Perhaps as the Lord’s figure fades into the distance, he cries out in desperation—addressing the Lord directly: “My beloved, return at daybreak.”

The Chinese Union Version translates this as “when the day cools and the shadows flee,” but this is not accurate. The KJV reads: “Until the day break, and the shadows flee away.” Literally, this means until dawn breaks and the shadows vanish. There is no “cool wind” or “setting sun” in the original Hebrew. He realizes that the Lord’s departure has brought him into a time of darkness. He is unable to keep up with the Lord’s footsteps, so he asks the Lord to wait until the night has passed and the dawn breaks, and then to return.

Dear brothers and sisters, if you’ve never truly loved the Lord, you won’t have this kind of experience. From a doctrinal standpoint, the Lord will never leave you—but you can always maintain a kind of objective relationship. In this type of relationship,

you always feel the Lord is distant—because you’ve never been intimate with Him, you won’t notice the absence. Only when you truly experience the sweetness of love with the Lord can you feel, subjectively, that you’ve fallen behind, and subjectively sense His departure—His closeness is no longer there. This saint cries out, “Turn, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag upon the mountains of Bether.”

At the beginning of the second stage, in Song 2:7–8, the Lord came skipping over the mountains like a gazelle or young stag, calling the saint to rise and follow. In the beginning, the saint was unaware of the Lord’s departure. But now, he clearly sees it, and he begs the Lord to appear again at dawn like a gazelle or a young stag upon the mountains of Bether.

“Bether” in Hebrew means separation or division. In Genesis 15:10, when Abraham offered sacrifices, he divided the animals in half and laid each part opposite the other. That word “half” is the same root. Earlier, when the saint was hiding behind the wall, the Lord came leaping over the mountains like a gazelle. Now that the Lord has left, the saint begs Him to come again, leaping over these “mountains of separation” to reach him.

Dear brothers and sisters, is there something in your life that you are tightly holding onto? The Lord asks you to let go, but you can’t. Every time you have devotions or prayer, this matter keeps coming to mind. If you remain hard-hearted, you’ll find that the Lord no longer feels near. In devotions, you don’t sense His presence; in prayer, He doesn’t respond. The Lord seems far away—that is the experience of this stage. When you fall behind the Lord’s steps, He temporarily departs. I’ve had this experience many times—when I realize I love something more than I love the Lord, the Lord will deal with it. Only when I let go can intimacy with Him be restored. The Lord truly desires that each of us would belong entirely to Him.

The second stage of experience is this: when your life stagnates and no longer grows—usually because you are attached to something more than the Lord. You fall behind, and the Lord comes in resurrection to call you. Most of the time, we cannot immediately follow, and so the Lord has no choice but to withdraw for a time. Even

His departure is positive—it reminds us not to remain in the feeling of His presence but to follow Him in every matter.

Let's pray together: Lord, truly have mercy on us. Our vessels are too small, and our experience of You is too shallow. As a result, when we gain some spiritual experiences, we easily become content and stop moving forward. But You are the Lord of life, the Lord of resurrection. You are continually calling us to follow You in resurrection. Dear Lord, help us—to continually fix our eyes on You, to always rely on You, and to give us a deeper longing for You. Even when we fall behind, Lord, grant us a sensitive spirit to know where we have stagnated and where we have fallen behind. Don't let us remain in the night too long. Give us strength to rise and seek You. Bless my daily walk. We pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.