

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

Song of Songs 6: 11-13

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 06. We will read verses 11-13 today.

The journey of a saint's growth in life concludes in chapter 6, verses 11 to 13. This saint, from the beginning of loving the Lord, treasuring the Lord's death, and accepting the initial dealings of the cross, progresses to receiving the Lord's fivefold calling in resurrection. Each calling brings him through a deeper dealing of the cross until he experiences being crucified with the Lord. This stage of the journey is exactly Paul's experience described in Philippians 3:10, "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." Saints, please pay special attention to the order Paul describes: it is first to experience the power of His resurrection, then to have fellowship with His sufferings, and finally to be conformed to His death. For if the power of resurrection is not operating within us, we simply do not have the strength to endure suffering or to be conformed to the Lord's death.

The second stage is a repeated cycle of increasingly higher experiences, which spans the entire course of our lives. The third stage is an elevation of spiritual realm. At this point, he has grown into spiritual maturity, his being filled with the fragrance that comes from knowing God. He is able to become the couch of rest for the Lord and also the palanquin for the Lord's move. The Holy Spirit also bears witness that he has set his seal upon the Lord and has entered into a marriage covenant with Him. In this stage, the Lord calls him to ascend with Him to the heights, to see the spiritual reality behind the material world. He has matured into a locked garden, emitting fragrance, producing beautiful fruits, bringing satisfaction to both God and man.

The fourth stage is exceedingly rare and, from a human perspective, an entirely unreasonable experience. The Lord requires him to lay down his spiritual gains and

accomplishments and to learn the lesson of humility. In this process, he is wounded, stripped of his mantle, and ultimately receives help from younger saints. At this point, his life has matured, his experiences have deepened, and his functioning has become seasoned. The Lord praises him as more precious than sixty queens, eighty concubines, and countless virgins. He has completed the four stages of the growth in life.

At the conclusion, the Song of Songs skillfully arranges four kinds of voices. The first voice is the Holy Spirit acting as a third-party witness—this is in verse 10, which we read yesterday. At this point, he has completely forgotten himself; he looks outward, appearing like the morning dawn. He is now fully one with the Lord, and there is no more night—dawn has already come, and it will shine brighter and brighter until the noonday.

Next, the testimony that the Holy Spirit bears for him is completely aligned with the Lord's praise of him. To man, he is as beautiful as the moon—he can reflect the Lord's glory and shine upon those seeking light in the darkness. They all see that he is as beautiful as Tirzah. To God, he is as clear as the sun—he has become fully one with the Lord. The Lord is the sun, and he is as radiant as the sun, just as the Lord praised him: he is as lovely as Jerusalem. To the enemy, he is as awesome as an army with banners. The Holy Spirit's description of him is identical to the Lord's description—word for word, unchanged. He has triumphed over all his enemies.

The second voice is his response after hearing the testimony of the Holy Spirit, along with his own realization and understanding of himself. The third voice is the cry of the daughters of Jerusalem, which represents the call of the many saints within the church. The fourth voice is the Lord's response to the cry of the saints in the church—it is also His reminder and encouragement to all. This brings to a close the four stages of life growth in the Song of Songs.

Verse 11: "I went down to the garden of nuts, to see the verdure of the valley, to see whether the vine had budded, and the pomegranates had bloomed."

In response to the Lord's praise and the Holy Spirit's testimony, this mature and seasoned saint shows no sign of delight. He has already let go of himself, and he has been delivered from his work and from the sense of accomplishment and satisfaction that work brings. His service is no longer labor but the natural outflow of life, and it has become his daily living. The Lord's praise and the Holy Spirit's testimony seem, to him, like something unrelated—he simply continues living his life as usual and fulfilling his duty.

I went down to the walnut grove. Previously, there were mentions of the vineyard, the fig tree, the pomegranate tree, and various spice trees; but the walnut grove appears here for the first time. The walnut is a type of nut, with a hard shell protecting the kernel inside. Walnuts are strong, durable, not easily damaged, and not easily wounded—symbolizing the overcomers. His going down into the walnut grove means he is entering into the garden of the overcomers. The verb used is “went down,” just as in chapter 6 verse 2, where the Lord goes down into His garden. In chapter 5 verse 1, during the third stage, the Lord enters into His garden. That garden was hers, and she invited the Lord to enter into it. Though her garden also became the Lord's, His coming and going didn't seem completely free. But by the fourth stage, the Lord has full freedom; therefore, it is the Lord going down into His own garden.

Now, at the conclusion of the fourth stage, he is fully one with the Lord. His going down into the walnut grove is the Lord's going down—it has become a part of his daily life. He no longer seems to hear the Lord's praise or the Holy Spirit's testimony. He regularly goes down into the garden of the overcomers and does three things there: he looks to see if the valley plants are green, if the vine has budded, and if the pomegranates are in bloom. The green plants are in the plural, the vine is singular, and the pomegranates are plural. This mature and seasoned saint does not concern himself with the scale of the work or the number of people, but rather with how the life growth is progressing in each saint he has served.

Regarding the young saints, they are like the green plants; he goes down to the valley to check whether they are receiving proper care, whether their life has begun to grow, and whether the church's environment is healthy. Can the young saints

grow freely? Is there room for them to operate? Have they been delivered from the dangers of false prophets and false teachers? First, he looks to see the green plants in the valley; then he looks to see whether the vine has budded.

The vineyard is the place where the saints serve, and in this vineyard, there is only one grapevine. John 15:5 says, “I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit.” In the vineyard, the Lord is the one and only grapevine, and the saints are the branches of the vine. For those saints who are faithfully fulfilling their duties and serving, He comes to see whether they have budded—whether they are connected to Christ, and whether they are bearing the fruit of life. When the Lord comes to prune the vine, do they need comfort and encouragement?

After checking whether the vine has budded, he also looks to see if the pomegranates are in bloom. The pomegranates are plural and symbolize saints who are rich in life. For these seasoned saints, he wants to see if they have blossomed, if they have manifested the glory of life. In 1 Kings 7:20-21, it says, “On the top of the two pillars was a network, and opposite the nets were two hundred pomegranates in two rows, and he set up the pillars before the temple: one on the right and the other on the left. He named the one on the right Jachin, and the one on the left Boaz.” In the temple, there were two pillars, each surrounded on top by two rows of pomegranates.

These seasoned saints are the pillars of the church. The bronze pillars symbolize that they must go through judgment before they can become the support of the church; furthermore, on the tops of these pillars grow two rows of pomegranates, manifesting the glory of abundant life. This saint carefully tends to the young saints, supports those who are faithfully serving, and guides the seasoned saints to reveal the fullness and glory of life. He faithfully carries out his entrusted responsibilities every day. The Lord’s praise and the Holy Spirit’s testimony seem to be spoken to others—as encouragement for them—but he himself pays little special attention to them. He understands his role clearly and faithfully fulfills his duty.

Verse 12: “Before I was even aware, my soul had made me, as the chariots of my noble people.”

The unconsciousness expressed in this verse is truly beautiful. It reveals that this is neither his pursuit nor his goal of effort; he simply faithfully fulfills his duty every day. He has already become fully one with the Lord, and the life he lives is what pleases the Lord. Thus, each day he goes into his walnut grove to see if the green plants are growing, if the vine has budded, and if the pomegranates are in bloom. In this very unconsciousness, my heart places me in the chariots of my noble people. The Chinese Union Version translates the word as “heart,” while the KJV translates it as “soul.” The phrase “my noble people’s chariots” in the KJV is “the chariots of my noble people.” Therefore, the whole sentence can be translated as: “My soul has brought me into the chariots of my noble people,” which testifies to his oneness with the Lord.

Every day, his service aligns perfectly with God’s heart. Serving in this way, almost unconsciously, his soul is transformed, and he grows into the Lord’s most noble people. These are the saints who receive the Lord’s praise and the Holy Spirit’s testimony—they have grown into a life and position of honor. He has joined the chariots of God’s noble people, a triumphant procession of the victors, marching toward eternity, toward glory, into the infinite, and finally disappearing into God’s infinity. Remember when he first began to love the Lord, the Lord compared him to the swift horses harnessed to Pharaoh’s chariot—strong, beautiful, and running proudly, yet unaware that behind them was Pharaoh. He had placed himself among the world’s chariots, but now, through the Lord’s leading and working, having completed the four stages of his life’s journey, he has joined the triumphant ranks of the victors.

This saint has joined the chariots of God’s noble people, and the chariots ascend continuously, just like the scene in 2 Kings 2:11-12 where Elijah was taken up by a whirlwind in a chariot of fire and horses of fire. "And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha saw it, and he cried out, 'My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!' So he saw him no more."

When Elijah was taken up, Elisha was deeply distressed and cried out because Elijah was like a father to him and was Israel's spiritual warrior and protector. With Elijah gone, who would guard Israel properly? Therefore, Elisha cried out with urgency. Now, seeing this saint in the chariots of the noble, the daughters of Jerusalem likewise feel as Elisha did.

Verse 13: "Return, return, O Shulamite; Return, return, that we may look upon you!"

The daughters of Jerusalem are the saints within the church. Under his ministry, these saints' lives slowly grow, their experiences gradually deepen, and their operation becomes increasingly mature. Now, seeing him in the chariots of the noble people ascending continuously, they become anxious and cry out, saying, "Return, return, O Shulamite! Return, return, that we may look upon you." His name first appeared in the Song of Songs—Shulamite is the feminine form of Solomon, representing his life and character now matched with Solomon's; he has become the Shulamite. In the last days, before the Lord's return, some saints in life and character will be able to match the Lord, and they will join the rapture.

It is exactly like Matthew 24:40-42, "Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. Therefore, you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." The watchful and prepared saints will be raptured, but the saints in the church, unwilling to part, cry out loudly, "Return, return, that we may see you." This saint is so good, so beautiful. He supplies the saints, helps the saints, guides the saints, ministers to the saints; with him present, everyone feels at peace. Now that he is about to be taken, everyone is reluctant to let him go. He is about to enter into God's abundant glory, into eternal infinity, to enjoy the unfathomable riches of God.

So what should we do? We will never see him again, never receive his help and support. "Return, return." At this moment, the Lord speaks, "Why do you look at the Shulammite, as at the dance of Mahanaim?" The saints in the church call him

Shulammite, and the Lord also calls him Shulammite—his life and character have matched the Lord's. "Why do you look at the Shulammite, as at the dance of Mahanaim?" The Lord is asking the saints in the church. Has he not been with you for a long time? Have you not seen enough? Now his life is mature, his character holy; he is a person the world does not deserve. He is about to be caught up into the riches of God's glory; his time has come, and we must let him go. The Lord encourages the saints in the church by asking them why they look at the Shulammite as if watching the dance of Mahanaim.

To understand the Lord's words, it is necessary to know the background of Mahanaim. In Genesis 32, Jacob had just returned from Padan-Aram. He had stayed there for twenty years, during which time he was deceived by Laban and treated harshly, yet under God's protection, he was able to return to the land of Canaan with four wives and concubines, eleven sons, and much wealth. Although Laban was unwilling to let him go, God warned Laban, and Laban was compelled to make a covenant with Jacob at Gilead, agreeing not to harm each other. Only then did Jacob return to Canaan.

Now he had to face his brother Esau. Twenty years before, he had taken Esau's birthright and blessing. Esau was angry and wanted to kill Jacob, which forced Jacob to flee to Padan-Aram. Now, after twenty years, Jacob did not know if Esau's anger had subsided; his heart was filled with fear, and his steps were heavy. At this moment, the angel of God met Jacob. Genesis 32:2 says, "And Jacob said, 'This is God's camp!' So he called the name of that place Mahanaim." Jacob saw that God had sent two camps of angels to protect him, so he named that place Mahanaim, meaning "two camps of soldiers."

Now Shulamite is in the chariots of God's noble people, ascending to heaven. The Lord tells the saints in the church that when you look at Shulamite, it is like watching two camps of angels dancing in heaven; soldiers dance only at times of joy, at times of victory. Now Shulamite has joined the ranks of the victorious, just like the two camps of heavenly warriors dancing—the dance of the victorious. Now all of you see him dancing joyfully, but do not forget the hardships he endured among you in the past.

Just as Jacob suffered for twenty years in Padan-aram, enduring hardship while willing to bear his cross and allowing his life to grow, only then could there be the beautiful scene of the two camps of angels dancing—the glorious rapture vision we see today. You too must walk through the process of life's growth as he did, so that you can also share in the victorious celebration of the two camps of angels dancing. The Lord uses this opportunity to encourage all the saints in the church to firmly remember the dance of Mahanaim. This is the joyful scene of every victor joining the victorious ranks; it is a glory and hope we all share. For the hope set before us, we willingly undergo the four stages of life growth here on earth.

Dear brothers and sisters, we have finished reading the revelation from Song of Songs chapters one through six, which unveils the four stages of the saint's life growth. Many details within serve as a guide for our spiritual growth, and the ultimate glory we can attain is the dance of the two camps of angels in heaven. May we all be encouraged together and be willing to move forward together on the path of life.

Let us pray: Lord, thank You! Through Song of Songs chapters one to six, You have so clearly laid before us the necessary journey of life's growth. On one hand, You help us to be aware of the stage we are at; on the other hand, we ask for Your grace to help us be willing to walk this heavenly path. Though we may suffer some hardships outside, inwardly we experience peace and joy, for these momentary and light afflictions are working for us an eternal and incomparable glory. Help us, because of the joy set before us, to count shame as nothing and to endure the sufferings of the cross; ultimately, that we may join the victorious triumphal procession. Bless my daily life. I pray in the holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.