

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

**Song of Songs 8: 13-14**

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 8. We will read verses 13-14 today.

The Song of Songs is written in poetic form to describe the love story between King Solomon and a country girl, with most of it consisting of a dialogue between the two. We read the Song of Songs allegorically. Solomon represents the Lord Jesus Christ, and every believer who has received grace and salvation is represented by this country girl.

Every saint, from the moment they begin to love the Lord and accept His nurturing in life, goes through four stages of spiritual growth, developing a stature that matches the Lord and eventually joining the ranks of the overcomers. This forms a blueprint of life growth. Although each person's growth trajectory is different, the critical checkpoints that must be passed are the same. With this blueprint, one can know where they currently stand, how much further they have to go, which checkpoints they still need to pass through, and how glorious the final height they can attain truly is.

Dear brothers and sisters, perhaps many of these experiences are too deep for us to comprehend today; that's okay—spiritual growth is something that comes through experience and cannot be forced. What we don't understand today can be set aside for now and revisited next year. If we are serious before the Lord, He will use our circumstances to help us grow. What we may not understand today, we may be able to understand more fully next year.

I know that many saints begin to feel lost starting from the third stage, but I will still do my best to continue reading. Here, on one hand, I want to thank the saints for their companionship and patience; on the other hand, I also hope that the saints

can at least grasp a general outline and retain a rough impression, so that when they revisit the Song of Songs in the future, the threshold for understanding will be a bit lower. Perhaps the saints can make an agreement with their spiritual companions to set aside a week next year to reread the Song of Songs and see how much they have grown in life over the course of the year.

Our physical bodies require a check-up every year, and reading the Song of Songs once a year serves as our spiritual check-up. It helps us see where we are in our journey, what experiences and checkpoints we still need to go through. This refers to chapters 1 through 6 of the Song of Songs, which reveal the four stages of life growth. Chapters 7 and 8, on the other hand, describe a mature saint and how he serves. Or perhaps more accurately, it shows the spiritual stature that a saint is able to develop through service.

From his feet to his head, there are a total of ten parts, each needing to develop a specific spiritual function. He must supply the younger saints in the church, influence those who are actively serving, and work together with the seasoned saints. Outwardly, it may appear that he is serving, but what he truly longs for within is the love between him and the Lord. Though he is already mature and experienced, he knows that he is still in the flesh, and the flesh remains, preventing him from being fully united with the Lord. This brings forth a groaning within him while in the body, longing for the Lord to return soon.

Verses 5 to 14 of chapter 8 describe a saint who is waiting for the Lord's return, waiting to be raptured, and how he continues to fulfill his function in the church life. He bears witness to how deeply he loves the Lord, and he asks the Lord to set him as a seal upon His heart and as a seal upon His arm. From an objective standpoint, he knows that the Lord's love is as strong as death, and the jealousy it produces is as cruel as the grave. This love is like a blazing flame, burning away everything in him that is not pleasing to God. This fiery love cannot be quenched by many waters, nor can floods drown it; no amount of wealth could ever be exchanged for it. He knows the Lord has already placed His seal upon him; he knows how deep, how wide, how high the Lord's love is toward him—he knows all of this. But knowing is not enough; he desires to experience it subjectively. In other words,

he wants to love the Lord as the Lord loves him. He also asks the Lord to set him as a seal upon His heart, and so he testifies to the Lord that his love for Him is also as strong as death, and that the jealousy it produces is as cruel as the grave.

For every thought, emotion, or will within him that hinders his love for the Lord, he is willing to cut it off ruthlessly. He is willing to open himself fully to the Lord, allowing the Lord's holy love to burn within him, consuming all the sorrowful and lowly things in his being. His love for the Lord is also like a blazing fire; many waters cannot quench it, nor can floods drown it. He is willing to forsake all treasures, desiring only to love the Lord purely and solely. His testimony of love for the Lord is also the testimony he lives out in the church life; he is someone who has laid everything down for the Lord in order to follow Him.

He nurtures the younger saints in the church—this is a service of life—helping them grow into a wall and into a door. He also leads the co-workers, faithfully keeping the vineyard, so that when the Lord returns, he may give an account to Him. He is also able to share in the Lord's reward together with the co-workers. Such a mature and serving saint is a treasure in the church, a blessing to all—it is truly a good thing. And now, we have come to the final two verses of chapter 8 in the Song of Songs.

**Verse 13: “You who dwell in the gardens, the companions listen for your voice—let me hear it!”**

It is uncertain whether this sentence is spoken by the Lord or by the saint. If it is the Lord speaking, "You who dwell in the garden" refers to this saint; during the time he waits for the Lord's return, he diligently serves in the vineyard, living within the vineyard. The words that follow are not easy to understand—we must enter into the Lord's emotions in order to slowly grasp their meaning.

“Let your companions listen to your voice; let me hear it also.” Because his ministry is very fruitful, the saints in the church all enjoy hearing him share, and his co-workers also delight in hearing his voice. As a result, the Lord adds a request, asking

that He Himself may also hear his voice. This request from the Lord can be understood from three different levels.

First, the Lord truly loves him and delights to see him faithfully fulfilling his duties in the church. Therefore, when he preaches God's Word and shares his testimony, the Lord also desires to hear his voice. Second, we know the Lord is omnipresent. When he shares the message, everyone enjoys listening, and of course, the Lord also hears it. When the Lord says, "let me hear it also," He is reminding him that He is present and listening. While he is diligently serving, does he still have the Lord with him? Does he still remember the Lord? The Lord is reminding him not to forget Him amid the work of ministry.

The third level is deeper: when he faithfully serves, everyone enjoys hearing his voice. So where is the Lord's voice in all this? When everyone admires his ministry, where is the Lord's ministry? It seems the Lord is reminding him that the Lord has only one vineyard, and only one New Testament ministry; all the saints' ministries should be included within the Lord's New Testament ministry. It's as if the Lord is cautioning him here—perhaps his ministry has become so special that everyone praises it, yet he has forgotten that his ministry is only a part of the New Testament ministry.

This saint's spiritual stature has already matured and developed a very good ministry. The Lord does not at all want to rebuke him; He only gently reminds him, "Let me also hear it." Dear brothers and sisters, this is a very high realm, yet it is also a boundary that many spiritual giants throughout history have often crossed. If we look at the history of Christianity, almost all of these great spiritual men, after they have passed away, have left behind their own flock of followers. The Lord truly does not want to rebuke these spiritual giants—they were indeed very good. But why is it that the companions they leave behind cannot simply follow the Lord alone? Instead, they end up lifting up the name of this spiritual person above the Lord?

It's like Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:4-6, "For when one says, 'I am of Paul,' and another, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos,

but ministers through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.” Paul wrote this to rebuke the Corinthians, because they were elevating Paul’s ministry or Apollos’s ministry. These things actually mean nothing, for only God can make things grow.

But if we look at the churches around us, the pattern of following men still repeatedly happens. Of course, this cannot be blamed on the spiritual leaders themselves; it is the ignorance of the followers. Yet the Lord adds a request, “Let me also hear it.” This is the Lord’s reminder to all saints who already have a ministry: they must bring people before the Lord; do not let your own voice be louder than the Lord’s voice, and do not make your ministry so special that it becomes separated from the Lord’s New Testament ministry.

In the fourth stage of life growth, which is the call to humility, a saint with a ministry who has passed through that stage is less likely to leave behind a flock of followers. Verse 13—if it is this saint speaking—then “You who dwell in the garden” refers to the Lord; the companions all hear the Lord’s voice, and this saint also asks the Lord to let him hear it, not wanting to miss a single word the Lord says. Some interpreters understand it this way. However, when life has grown to this level, still calling the Lord “the one who dwells in the garden” seems somewhat too rough. At the same time, a saint who has reached this degree of maturity in life should not miss the Lord’s words. Therefore, comparatively, I still prefer the earlier interpretation.

**Verse 14: “Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle, or a young stag, on the mountains of spices.”**

This is the final plea of the saint who waits for the Lord’s coming: “My beloved, hurry and come.” He knows that the Lord’s return is conditional. In Matthew 24:14, we are told, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations.” In Luke 21:24, we learn, “And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” Romans 11:25-26 tells us

that when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, then all Israel will be saved. Revelation 6:11 also tells us that the number of martyrs must be fulfilled.

Before these conditions are fulfilled, the Lord will not return. These conditions are not under his control, so he can only patiently wait. During this waiting period, he nurtures and perfects the saints in church life. He knows the Lord has His own timing, yet he still cries out to the Lord, "Lord, please come quickly."

"Like a gazelle or a young stag on the fragrant mountains," the fragrance of the herbs represents the aroma of Christ's death and resurrection. When the saints have all experienced Christ's death and resurrection, they emit the sweet fragrance of knowing Christ, and the saints have grown into fragrant herbs. When these herbs gather together into a mountain, the Lord will appear like a gazelle or a young stag on the fragrant mountain. In the end, a mature person in life is one who waits for the Lord's coming.

Brother Watchman Nee was a person who waited for the Lord's coming. He wrote many songs about waiting for the Lord, all of which are very beautiful and deeply moving. I would like to use the seventh verse of the song "Since You Departed from Us at Bethany" as the conclusion of Song of Songs. This verse expresses Brother Nee's heart during his waiting for the Lord's coming.

When I look back, I have waited for so long,  
I can't help but sigh, bowing my head and weeping alone,  
I pray You no longer delay or refuse my request,  
Come now to receive me, that we may meet.  
Come, my Lord, this is the church's plea!  
Come, my Lord, please hear the saints' urging!  
Come, the resonance accumulated through all generations,  
My Lord, may I ask You to listen today together!

Dear brothers and sisters, thank you for your companionship over these past ten weeks. Together, we have walked through the eight chapters of Song of Songs. I believe that during this process, God has spoken to each of you, more or less. We are all still in the journey of life growth, so let us encourage one another, support

each other, and continue moving forward together on the path of life, serving together in the churches where we belong.

Let us together offer prayer and praise to the Lord: Dear Lord Jesus Christ, thank You for leading us through the eight chapters of Song of Songs. We see how deeply You love us, not only granting us the wisdom of salvation to believe in You and accept You as our Savior for life, but also nurturing us in our life's journey. Help us to understand the four stages of life growth, and the experiences and checkpoints we must pass through in this process of life.

We thank You for the church You have prepared for us, where many saints are around us learning together and sharing experiences. Lord, thank You. How deeply You have loved us. In response to Your love, we desire to answer and also hope to love You with the same selfless devotion, willing to forsake all to love You. In the places where we still fall short, Lord, please have mercy on us, allowing us to experience Your love more deeply and personally. Let Your love inspire us, adjust us, and transform us. Help our lives to gradually grow until we bear the stature that matches You and become a blessing to the saints around us. Lord, guide the path ahead of me. I pray in the holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ.