

A summary of John 7:25-52.

In reading the Bible, we always need to ask ourselves how the verses we are reading relate not only to us but also to the brothers and sisters around us, people around us, and our relationship with them. If we only read the Bible in order to understand it, we may understand certain parts, but there will be many parts that we will not understand, which may stumble us and cause us to give up. On the other hand, if we read in light of the church life, our relationships with brothers and sisters, and people in the world, the Lord may speak His instant (rhema) words to us. With this in mind, there are a few burdens which we may consider in this chapter.

- 1. How do we come to the Lord? (v. 37-39). Inner thirst (v. 37):** Do we have an inner thirst to contact the Lord and the brothers and sisters? Or do we come in a routine way to the gatherings? We may come to receive a blessing, to meet friends, because we are in the habit of coming, or, on a higher level, because we feel uncomfortable or not at peace if we do not come. Indeed, it should be our habit to come to the church gatherings. But in coming, are we thirsty for the Lord? Are we thirsty to find Christ in the saints? Are we thirsty to lay hold on one more aspect of the Lord, to receive one more revelation of who Jesus Christ is? Inner thirst should propel us to come to the Lord, to His word, and to the gatherings. Our thirst should be an echo of Jesus' desperate cry as He stood in the temple, reflected in our eagerness not to miss one word of the Lord that He may speak to us.
- 2. How do we come to the Lord? Come to the Lord Himself (v. 37).** It is not enough to have inner thirst. Such a thirst must drive us to the Lord, to be satisfied by the Lord Himself. We must not be passive and wait for the Lord to come to us. Rather, we need to actively seek the Lord and find Him for ourselves. Do we come to the Lord Himself, or do we come to His blessing in giving us a job or a good grade or a good name in the world, or even to the spiritual gifts that He may give us? Our prayer should be to come to the Lord alone, to find Him and to contact Him. Everything, of course, is relative, depending on our level of life. For example, I may come to the Lord because I failed my exam. Or I may come because I got a good grade. In either case, either in sorrow or joy, I must struggle to come to the Lord Himself, regardless of my circumstance.
- 3. How do we come to the Lord? To drink (v.37).** To drink is to take in. When we come to the Lord, we must take or receive Him into our being. Am I desperate to take in the Christ in the saints, to drink the words spoken by the saints? Often, we may subconsciously take the words spoken by the saints for granted. We may view the fellowship among us as common talk or exchange of good ideas and opinions. Do we realize that the words spoken are opportunities to hear the Lord Himself? One practical exercise to drink the Lord is to write down the words shared by the saints, and then to read the sharing later. Such an exercise may help us to retain, to a certain extent, the words of life that we may have heard, and reinforce them during our daily life.
- 4. How do we come to the Lord? Believe in Him (v. 38, 34, 36).** After we have taken the Lord into our being, do we believe in Him and His words? Yes, I may have an inner thirst. I may come to the Lord Himself. I may even hear His words spoken to me through the Bible and through the brothers and sisters, and even take them into me. But how much faith do I have in the Lord's words? Jesus' four brothers were with Him, accompanied Him, witnessed His miracles, and heard His teachings for at least twenty years. But they did not believe in Him! How then can we believe what the brothers and sisters say about Jesus? It is extremely challenging to follow Jesus. In v. 34, Jesus told the Pharisees that they would seek Him, but not find Him. We may have a seeking heart, but we may not find Him. We may have an inner thirst, but we may not find Him. We may come to the Lord and even drink of Him, but we may not find Him. We may even believe in Him, especially on Sunday morning during the church gathering, then go home and not believe because something happened to make us anxious or troubled. Easily, we forsake the Lord and the church life to try to take care of our problem. We see how difficult it is for people

to believe in Jesus, as seen in six categories of people represented in John 7. Some believed in Him because of the signs that He performed (v.31), some heard His speaking and believed Him as the Prophet (v.40), some heard His instant speaking and believed in Him as the Christ (v.41), some heard His speaking and marveled at it (v.46), some went to the feast of Tabernacles (church gathering), heard His speaking but did not believe in Him, and one person (Nicodemus), who was a Pharisee, believed in Him because he went to fellowship with Christ personally and privately. How can we believe? Nicodemus is an excellent pattern for us. As we saw in chapter 3, he took the initiative, forsaking his private interests (he was a Pharisee and risked his career, and perhaps even his life in seeing Jesus), to actively seek Jesus. In a sense, he denied himself in order to receive the words of Jesus. This aspect will be developed further in point 6.

5. **The outcome: rivers of living water flowing out from our inner being (v. 38).** We may be inwardly thirsty, we may come to Jesus, we may drink, and even believe in Him. We may hear much sharing concerning Him which strengthens our faith. But do we experience the joy and peace from within? Do we have a testimony, a word, a response that wells up within us and flows out to others in the church life? The drinking of and believing in Jesus should issue in a flowing out. However, it should not stop there. Most of the time, we are satisfied if we speak some words of life in the church gatherings. We feel satisfied, nourished, joyful and refreshed. But what about others? Has anyone even listened to what we shared? It is not usually our habit to ask such a question. Maybe those sitting in the first row heard us, and a few even grasped our burden. But what about those in the back rows, on the side, those who came late? What is their receptivity level? Do we even care? The rivers of living water flowing from the speaker(s) should not stop there, but should reach other saints, and in turn flow out of them. If others do not listen or receive, then there is not much impact in our believing and flowing out. That does not mean that the living water did not flow out from us, but the effect may be minimal. This is a reality check for those who share the word. Indeed, they believe, they have a pure heart, they testify, and they are joyful and living. But it must not stop with them. Their speaking should impact others, cause others to believe, to love the Lord and give themselves to Him. How can this happen?
6. **We need to experience the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (v.39).** The Spirit was not yet because Jesus was not yet glorified. Jesus had not yet died and resurrected. Therefore, He could not yet impart the Spirit into His believers. This is also our case. If we do not experience the death and resurrection of Jesus (which is a glory to God), we may not touch the Spirit. The genuine touching of the Spirit is predicated on whether or not I denied myself or my soul life. Do I put Christ's interests and the church's interests above my own interests and my own needs and my family's needs, which are endless? If not, I may go through all the necessary steps of coming to the Lord, coming to the word, praying over the word, even calling upon the Lord, and sharing the word. But if all that is not based on my dying to myself, much of what I share may remain knowledge and doctrine, and lack impact.
7. **We must listen to the brothers' and sisters' speaking in order to hear the instant speaking of the Lord(7:27-29, 42, 52).** Those who knew the Scriptures knew that no prophet came from Galilee. They knew that Christ came from the seed of David and from Bethlehem. They knew the physical Jesus of Nazareth outwardly (v.27, 28). But they did not know that He actually came from the Father. Nathanael, we will recall, had a similar reaction in 1:46. He did not believe that anything good could come from Nazareth. How is he different from the religious "Bible scholars" in chapter 7? What caused him to change? Nathanael heard the instant speaking of the Lord through the speaking of Philip ("Come and see, 1:46) and then Jesus (1:47-48). What about us? So often, we hear the speaking of the brothers and sisters. Who is speaking? Are we only hearing the speaking of young brothers or young sisters, or are we hearing the Lord Himself speak through them? Do we realize that the Lord sent them to speak to us? We may know them physically or outwardly, but are we touched by their speaking? We must listen to every brother and sister's speaking, even though they may be younger, and even saved for a much shorter time than us. We must never despise anyone. Otherwise, we may miss the Lord's instant speaking to us.