

## A summary of John 12:27-50

- 1. How can we glorify the Father's name? By living a crucified life (vv.24-28).** How did Jesus glorify the Father's name? In verse 24, Jesus says that "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." Jesus is that grain that fell into the ground to die. Not only did He die on the cross, but His whole life was a crucified life. Even though He was sinless (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15), He denied His soul life (John 12:25). The words that He spoke, He did not speak from Himself, but from the Father who had sent Him (John 12:49). It was such a crucified living that bore much fruit. If we desire to glorify God, we must take the same way. Often, we may say that we love the Lord and that we want to serve Him. Such a declaration is commendable, but may be made without our realizing the true implications involved. In 12:26, Jesus says that if anyone serves Him, he must follow Him (Jesus), and that where He (Jesus) is, there will His servant be also. Where was Jesus? Spiritually speaking, Jesus was on the cross. Even when He was not physically on the cross, He was on the cross spiritually. If we want to serve Jesus, we must follow Him, and to follow Him, we must not only do things for Him, but be where He is. Are we on the cross? Is our soul life on the cross? For example, when we come to the Lord's Day gathering, are we exercised to come on time? Or are we content to live according to our habit of coming late? When we come to the gathering, do we offer praises to the Lord? Or do we live according to our natural preference of keeping quiet. Conversely, when we do offer praises, are we one with the Lord, or do we praise the Lord out of our zealously or natural enthusiasm? Or do we like to be praised by others for being a "good" brother or sister (12:43)? When we preach the gospel, do we realize that if someone believes in Jesus Christ, it is not because of our own ability or diligence, but because His crucified life in us will produce fruit. Our natural zeal and ability are only good to be crucified. It is Christ's crucified and resurrected life that will bear fruit in us. How will people believe in Jesus? What kind of testimony do we have? In vv.32-33, Jesus said that when He would be lifted up from the earth (referring to His death on the cross), He would draw all men to Himself. Are we willing to be lifted up on the cross, so that our friends and our classmates may be drawn to Jesus?
- 2. Not only receive the Lord's words, but believe in and keep them (vv.47-48).** The Greek word for "words" in v.47 is *rhema*, which is the instant word of the Bible, the written word that has touched us and spoken to us. We may read the Bible or the *logos* word (the constant word) without that word becoming *rhema* and having an effect on our lives. However, in v.47, Jesus is referring to those who have received the *rhema* word. Curiously enough, we may not believe or abide in the words that we have heard. When we experience the *rhema* word, we should not stop there. For example, we may attend a Christian conference or training, and receive rich speaking, revelation and even visions from the word of God (the Bible) through the speaking of God's servants. We may return home and testify how the Lord spoke to us during that time, how impressed we were, how much we realize we need to put into practice what we heard, and even encourage others to do so. Then we may go home and live the same way we lived before. What was lacking? Our desire was good, our heart may have been pure, the speaking of the Lord's servants was undoubtedly rich, and our response was sincere and genuine. Yet we may lack one crucial element, namely to keep or abide in what we heard. How can we keep what we heard? By outlining the next step that we need to take to make the *rhema* word practical and long lasting. For example, I may hear a word about preaching the gospel (2 Timothy 4:2 where Paul exhorts us to preach the word in season and out of season). What do I do with that word? Do I determine how to carry that out? This coming Sunday, after the gathering, I will go out to preach the gospel with my companions, at such and such time, for so many minutes. Without this step, all our good heart and good intentions will remain exactly that. Our testimonies will remain good testimonies, and our declarations will remain noble wishes or dreams, without a concrete, visible outworking.

- 3. Which realm are we in: light or darkness? (vv.35-36, v.36).** In the Bible, there are only two realms or spheres: light and darkness. The ruler or authority of darkness is Satan (Acts 26:18). What does it mean to live in darkness? To live in darkness is to live in the world, to be caught in the world system. In John 12:31, Jesus refers to the ruler of this world (Satan). What is the “world,” as defined by the Bible? One definition is all the people, whom God loves unconditionally (John 3:16). Another definition, applicable in this chapter, is the world system, that is, a living void of the cross, a living where we are free to do whatever we want, without God and without other brothers and sisters. This living consists of three aspects: the material aspect, the sinful aspect, and the religious aspect. This is not a matter of right or wrong, or good or bad. For example, a father and a husband may be consumed with working long hours in order to earn extra money for the comfort and security of his family. He may not have the time or the energy to attend the Lord’s day gathering, nor to pray or read the Bible. Some may say that this is good. After all, is he not providing for his family, as a good husband and a good father? Others may say that this is bad. As a Christian, he should set aside time for God. Actually, in God’s eyes, it is rather a matter of a realm, not so much of what we are doing. Where are we? In the world, or living a crucified life? In darkness, or light? Of course, darkness and light have their “works” or “fruit.” If we walk like the world, we will be in darkness. When we are in darkness, we do not know where we are going (John 12:35), even though we may be busy doing many things. We may not have the Lord, and we may not be able to gain the Lord.
- 4. How can we be brought into the realm of light (v.40).** Verse 40 is a quotation of Isaiah 6:10. This verse seems paradoxical, and many misinterpret this verse by blaming God for hardening their heart! A superficial reading of the verse may lead one to such a conclusion. A deeper reading of the verse will lead us to worship God for His mercy, rather than blame Him! God is so kind in this verse. It is as if He almost exonerates man of his refusal to believe, and instead assumes the responsibility of hardening man’s heart. Actually, other verses in the Bible reveal the contrary. 2 Corinthians 4:4 tells us that “the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers.” Pharaoh in the Old Testament hardened his own heart (Exodus 8:32). Even the disciples’ heart, right after the feeding of the five thousand, was hardened (Mark 6:52). God never hardens our heart. Satan hardens our heart, and we harden our own heart. What does God do? God endeavors to open our blinded eyes (Ephesians 1:17-18), to open our eyes, so that we may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:18). If we realize that we are in darkness, then we may be brought into the light, not just once, but again and again. We also need to participate proactively in the church life, in the gatherings, to be with companions, and to preach the gospel, so that we may be brought more into the light. Unfortunately, not that many believers preach the gospel, thinking that people are not open, or that people will reject or throw away any tracts that we may distribute. Actually, according to our recent experience, no one has thrown away in our presence tracts given out by us. Our responsibility is to preach the word, in season or out of season (2 Timothy 4:2). Some will believe (John 12:43). This shows how merciful God is, not willing that any should perish (1 Timothy 2:4). This should inspire us to preach the gospel even more, and not to lose heart.
- 5. Confess and testify the Lord (v.42).** Many of the rulers believed in Jesus. This is marvelous, and disproves the common accusation that God hardens the hearts of unbelievers! However, those rulers who believed did not openly confess the name of Jesus because they were afraid of being put out of the synagogue. Are we ashamed of the name of Jesus? Are we afraid of losing our job, or losing our friends, or losing the approval and favor of our teachers or students? Are we afraid to invite our friends to the church gatherings? Do we love the glory that comes from man rather than the glory that comes from God (v.43)? It is always healthy for a new believer, as soon as he or she is saved, to testify to others and to confess the name of the Lord. Such a confession is a salvation to us, as believers, and can be the seed of eternal life sown into others.