

A summary of John 15:18-27

- 1. What is the world? (v.18-19; 1 John 2:16)** Chapters 13-17 of the Gospel of John are Jesus' final words to His twelve disciples. His words are deep and meaningful because this was the last time He would have to speak to them before His death. In 15:6,7,10,14, Jesus challenges His disciples, and us, by laying down a condition "If." If we love Him, we will keep His commandments. If we are His friends, we will do what He commands us. It is easy to say we love the Lord. But do we keep His commandments? Either we love Him, or we do not. Then, in v.18, Jesus says that if the world hates us, it has hated Him long before it hated us. Satan is the ruler of this world (John 12:31). The world is a realm. The Greek word for world is **cosmos**, which means world system, of which Satan is the author. Christ is another realm (John 15:1). Either we are in Christ, or we are in the world. We cannot be in both, and we cannot deceive ourselves that we are in Christ, when actually we are in the world. What is the world? We need to go to 1 John 2:16: ***For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.*** In this verse, we see three aspects of the world: the material or sinful world (***the desires or lust of the flesh***), the soulish or psychological world (***the desires or lust of the eyes***), and the religious or spiritual world (***the pride of life***). In a sense, the material or sinful or fleshly world is the easiest to identify and recognize, if we are believers. We generally know when we are engaged or caught in something sinful (see Galatians 5:19 for a definition of the works of the flesh) because our conscience will let us know. Often, when we commit a blatant sin (such as losing our temper, or telling a lie, or taking something that does not belong to us), we feel ashamed, and we come to the Lord to confess our sin, and, if we have offended someone else, we confess to that person also. However, the soulish or psychological world is harder to recognize. This is the world that we see with our eyes, that attracts us. This may not be the sinful or material world, but the "good" world. For example, we all need to study. We all need to work. Studying and working are not sinful things in themselves. We need to be diligent, and we need creativity. We need to plan for our future, and have goals. However, do we do everything by depending on the Lord? Do we pray before we apply for a job? Do we pray to the Lord before applying to a school? Before an exam, do we ask the Lord for wisdom? If we get a good grade, or appear for a job interview and get accepted, do we even acknowledge and thank God? If not, then we are caught in the soulish world. There is no evil involved. We may have no bad intentions. However, unknowingly, we begin to live our lives like everyone else in the world. We do the same things that everyone else does (good things, not bad things). We get married, we have children, we raise a family, we work hard to support our family, and we like to be the best parents and the best children. All of this is necessary and commendable, but without God, we become common (just like everyone else), and we are caught in the world, and controlled by Satan, without our knowledge. The third aspect of the world (the pride of life) is the most subtle of the three. This is a trap to those who love the Lord, who are committed to Him. If we did not care for the Lord, we would not care for spiritual success or spiritual attainment. Once we begin to follow the Lord in the church life, we may begin to do things out of routine, or out of duty. We may come to the Lord's day gathering, we may even offer praises, we may go out to preach the gospel, and we may participate in the corporate prayers. These are all fundamental exercises, but do we have the Lord's speaking when we participate in these graces? Are these graces to us, or are they the law? Do we have peace and joy when we preach the gospel, or when we visit someone? Do we feel joyful when we meet the brothers and sisters on Lord's day morning, or when we see the children? If not, we may be caught in religious duty, or doing things without the Lord's speaking and His leading. This is the hardest aspect of the world to realize, because we may be self-satisfied, thinking that we are pleasing the Lord, or that we are a good brother or sister. We need the Lord's mercy to realize that these three aspects are with us, and even in us.

- 2. Hatred and persecution (vv.18-21,25).** We do not like to be persecuted. We would rather like to have a good, comfortable Christian life. The Bible states the contrary. Jesus said that because we are not of the world, the world will hate us (v.19). Jesus was persecuted His whole life. He is our master. What about us, His servants? We are not greater than Him (v.20). Obviously, in North America, we do not experience persecution to the same degree as in Middle Eastern countries or some places in Africa, and more recently in Sri Lanka. We do not necessarily need to go to these countries to experience persecution, though we praise the Lord for those that the Lord has burdened to go. Nor do we ask the Lord for persecution. At the same time, even though we may not have the same kind of persecution here in Canada, do we live a kind of life where we are willing to give up, or sacrifice the comfort that we are used to? Recently, a brother did research on the number of times in the New Testament that the reference to “preaching the gospel” occurs. The result was staggering. In the entire New Testament, the preaching of the gospel is mentioned about 131 times. Do we respond by preaching the gospel? Do we renounce our comfort Sunday afternoon to go out with the brothers and sisters to preach the gospel? Do we preach the gospel in our daily life, at work, at school? Do we sacrifice our comfort to go out and care for someone going through a divorce, or someone with poor grades, or someone having a hard time finding a job? Many times, we reject such a revelation. Again and again, the Lord speaks to us, but we want the Lord to bless us if we come to one meeting on Sunday morning. We come to one meeting and we think we love the Lord! If we are not willing to be persecuted, we may not bear “much” fruit. In John 15:2, the word for “more” fruit refers to quantity, whereas in 15:8, the Greek word for “much” refers to quality. Thus, both quantity and quality are essential to our growth. Without persecution, we will not bear much, or abundant fruit (our own growth in the divine life to produce the fruits of the Spirit), nor will we affect other people around us (bearing more fruit in quantity).
- 3. Guilty of sin (vv.22,24).** The Lord has spoken so much to us, and He is still speaking. Do we respond? Again, 131 verses show us the importance of preaching the gospel. Do we do it? We have no, or little response! Are we sensitive to that? Do we feel guilty? Sometimes, we do not like to feel guilty. Actually, guilt is an indication that we are not insensitive, and that we are growing in the divine life. If we do not go out to wash the feet of the brothers and sisters, we should be sensitive to the fact that we did not hear the Lord’s speaking, or if we did, we did not act upon it. We should not feel so comfortable. For example, if we feel comfortable not preaching the gospel or visiting the saints, that may indicate that our level of life (the divine life) is quite low. We may not be that sensitive to sin.
- 4. Bearing witness (v.27).** The same Greek word is used for “martyr,” as in Acts 1:8. This means that as witnesses, or martyrs, we do not care for our own life. Some Christians go to other countries to preach the gospel and lay down their lives for Christ. Do we bear witness in our living? Do people know that we are Christians? This does not mean that we shout to all our coworkers that we are Christians. Rather, we testify through our living, and through our prayers for them. For example, if our coworkers at work say something bad about us, or to us, we should not blame them. Rather, we should pray for them. Maybe we can pray for one coworker. If he or she is open, then we can speak only to that one. It is not a matter of how many people we can witness to, or how many people will get saved through us. The Lord should get all the glory. Often though, we get all the glory, and the Lord is persecuted! During the break time on Sunday morning, and during the love feast, do we talk to at least one person whom we do not know? Do we pray for one brother or sister? Do we pray for the children? May we pray for people, pray for that one whom the Lord has put on our heart. May we not condemn them. Jesus loved the world (3:16). He did not come into the world to condemn the world, but that the world should be saved through Him (3:17). May we have such a heart to pray for others and bear witness of Jesus Christ through our living.