

A summary of John 16:1-15

- 1. Bearing witness: the example of Jesus (v.1,3,4,5,7)** In vv.1 and 4, Jesus tells His disciples that He spoke “these things.” What are these things? These things are the commandments (the Father’s word or **logos**). In 14:15, He said that if we love Him, we will keep His commandments. Jesus loved the Father and kept His commandments. What are His commandments or words? In 16:5 and 7, Jesus said He was going to the Father, that is, He was going to the cross to be crucified. This was His keeping of the Father’s word. This was the ultimate act of bearing witness of the Father and His word. The Greek word for witness is **martyr**. He denied Himself by losing His soul life. What about us? In Matthew 16:24, Jesus tells us that if we would come after Him, we must deny ourselves, pick up our cross, and follow Him. Who can say that he or she completely denies him or herself twenty-four hours a day? We should not loosely declare that we are bearing witness of Jesus. If we do so, how many hours a day, or, more realistically, how many minutes a day do we really do so? However, at the same time, we can try to exercise to be a testimony, regardless of our level of life. How? One example may be to give up our right to enjoy certain privileges. For example, to contact a stranger on the street and preach the gospel to him or her is a bearing witness. To talk to someone we do not know after the Sunday morning meeting is a bearing witness, and may require us to deny ourselves to a certain extent. It may even lead us to give up our right to partake of the Sunday lunch (this is by no means a law or a requirement), not because we are deliberately giving up something, but because the Lord has spoken to us, and we respond, a little bit, to keep His word and take care of people. We deny our right of enjoyment so others can enjoy that same right. This is a matter of the level of the divine life in us, and can never be used as a yardstick to judge others. On the other hand, anytime the Lord speaks His **logos** word to us, and we listen (by His mercy), and His **logos** word becomes **rhema** to us, we are then responsible to keep that word or commandment, to bear witness. According to our level of life, we may then deny ourselves, not because we have to, but because of the urgency of life within us. The more we yield and respond to the Lord’s speaking, the more the divine life will grow in us to produce a living that bears witness of Jesus Christ.
- 2. The functions of the Spirit of truth (14:17;16:13)** . The Greek word for truth can also be translated as reality. In 15:1, Jesus said that He is the true vine. The Greek word for truth in 15:1 and 14:17 and 16:13 has the same root. Jesus is the only true reality in this universe. Everything else is a shadow or a picture. In 16:13, Jesus says that the Spirit of truth will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will declare to us the things that are to come. In other words, the Spirit of truth bears witness to us of the things that He hears from the Son. Today, the Spirit of truth is in all those who believe in Jesus. The Spirit of truth in us is leading and guiding us into all truth or reality, that is, to bear witness, whatever our level of life. For example, if we go to the metro station to preach the gospel, with a burden, with prayer (especially the corporate prayers), the Spirit of truth in us may be leading and guiding us to do so. When we speak the gospel for Christ, the truth, or the Spirit of truth in us, will declare more things to us. The Spirit of truth in us may inform us how the church in 2019 may be blessed more than in 2018, and how it may grow. The Spirit of truth may also reveal to us the need of paying more attention to the humanity of the brothers and sisters (what kind of job they have, how are their studies, what are their plans for the future). The Spirit of truth in us may also reveal to us some things through the New Testament. Certain Bible scholars say that based on John 16:13, the book of Acts, the epistles and the book of Revelation (in the Bible) are the result of the Spirit of truth revealing these things to us in a prophetic way. The Spirit of truth is actually the Triune God Himself in operation, filling us with burden, with visions, concerning the church and the church life. When Jesus was on the earth, He could not say many things to His disciples because they were not able to bear them. What about us? Are we still unable to bear them? We are actually better of than the disciples. The Spirit of truth was not yet

in the disciples, but is now in us.

- 3. The Spirit of truth will convict the world concerning sin (16:8,9).** “And when he comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.” The Greek word for world is cosmos. This refers to the people around us, including ourselves. This may also refer to the world that is inside us, that is, Satan’s system, of which he is the ruler (12:31). The world in us needs to be rebuked, or convicted, or exposed. How? Concerning sin. Sin, in Greek, means to miss the mark, or to misaim, not just referring to terrible crimes or hateful deeds, but also referring to “good” or “honorable” activities. Anything that we do without Christ, or apart from Christ, or devoid of believing Christ as the meaning of our life, is a sin. Of course, this is relative. We may believe the Lord in certain aspects of our living and our church life, but not in all. For example, if I trust my bank account more than the Lord, then I have sinned. Do we trust our job? In other words, if I do not work, how will I support myself? I must work in order to support my family. Eventually, we end up trusting our bank account, or our ability to support our family, rather than the Lord. Do we offer one tenth of our income to God? We may have many reasons not to offer that much. We may secretly feel that if we offer so much, how will we survive?! This indicates our lack of faith.
- 4. Concerning righteousness (v.10, Romans 4:25).** Jesus said that He would convict the world concerning righteousness: “concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer;” The pathway to the Father was a pathway of the cross. Jesus, as our pattern, was the epitome of righteousness because He denied Himself and willingly went to the cross to do the Father’s will, to offer Himself to the Father, and die for our sins, to wash us from our sins, and redeem us back to God. His “righteous” act was approved, or justified, by the Father, by the Father raising up the Son in resurrection on the third day. Romans 4:25 says that Jesus our Lord was delivered up for our offenses, and raised up (from the dead) for our justification. Actually, the Father raising up Jesus from the dead was a proof that He was wholly satisfied with the Son’s sacrifice, and justified or approved of the Son’s act. 1 Corinthians 1:30 says that Christ Jesus became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption. In the same way, do we lay down our lives for the church, for the saints? Do we deny ourselves? If so, even a little bit, a short time a day (how much or how little is immaterial), God will justify us in our living and in our testimony of the eternal life that is in us, and that will never depart. On the one hand, the moment we believe in Jesus, we are instantly forgiven and washed of our sins, and born of God with a new life and a new nature. This takes place instantaneously, and can never be revoked. We are justified by His death and resurrection. On the other hand, we need to be justified subjectively moment by moment in our living.
- 5. Concerning judgment (v.11).** The ruler of this world, Satan, was judged on the cross, and will be executed when the Lord returns. Today, he is the ruler of this world (12:31). The world, with Satan’s schemes and stratagems, is inside us, and will also be judged. All of our sins of unbelief, or not trusting the Lord, will be judged if we do not repent. Many times, we do not believe the Lord or His word. For example, He tells us to preach the gospel, but we have our excuses. He speaks to us to pray with the saints, but we are too busy, or too occupied. This is unbelief. If we do not repent, we will be judged by the Lord upon His return. On the one hand, positionally, we have not come into judgment, but have passed from death into life (John 5:24), if we have believed in Jesus. On the other hand, subjectively, in our living, we may be judged for our sins if we do not confess them (for example, every idle word – Matthew 12:36). At the same time, He will also reward the believers, based on their believing (not once for all, but on a continual basis). If we deny ourselves, if we repent and confess our sins (1 John 1:9), and if we also exercise to be a person of prayers, of gospel preaching, of abiding in the teaching and fellowship of the servants of God, and accompanying people to care for their humanity to bring them to believe in and trust in the Lord, the Lord will reward us. He is a righteous judge (2 Timothy 4:8), but He is also a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).