

The Lord Gives His Disciples a New Commandment

John 13:31-38

John 13:31-38 *“So, when he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. ³² If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately. ³³ Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come,’ so now I say to you. ³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

³⁶ *Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, where are You going?”*

Jesus answered him, “Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward.”

³⁷ *Peter said to Him, “Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake.”*

³⁸ *Jesus answered him, “Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times.”*

Background Notes

The events and discourses in John 13 took place when Jesus and His disciples had gathered together for a meal and conversation in the Upper Room, before they left for the Garden of Gethsemane where the Lord was arrested.

These conversations of the Lord with His own disciples are known as the “Upper Room Discourses,” and they include the “High Priestly Prayer” of our Lord in John 17. After the foot washing and the designation of Judas as the betrayer, Judas left to continue his plans to betray of Jesus.

After Judas departed, the Lord began to talk to His disciples more intimately. The tension of the betrayer’s presence was gone. For example, “*little children*” is a term of endearment: “*Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer*”(v33).

Somewhere in the time period covered by these verses, the Lord’s Supper was instituted. Remember, we previously mentioned that John didn’t include the institution of the Lord’s Supper in his Gospel. Recently I looked at two “Harmonies of the Gospels” to see where they would place the institution of the Lord’s Supper in John’s Gospel. It was interesting that one Harmony put the institution of the Lord’s Supper between verse 32 and 33 of John 13. The other Harmony put the Lord’s Supper between chapters 13 and 14. In any case, the Lord’s Supper was instituted after Judas left the room, when only the Lord and His true disciples were present.

(By the way, do you know what a “Harmony of the Gospels” is? These books have four columns – for Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They provide a section of text from each of the respective Gospels in a chronological way, so that the accounts of all the events harmonize and we can see where the events fit together.)

In verse 36 the Lord said to Peter, *“Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward.”* That was a prophecy of Peter’s martyrdom. The Lord made another prediction of Peter’s martyrdom in John 21: *“Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.”* This He spoke, signifying by what death he [Peter] would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, *“Follow Me.”* As you probably know, reliable tradition tells us that when Peter died as a martyr he was crucified upside down.

In John 13:38, the Lord said to Peter, *“Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times.”* The “Cock Crow” was one of the four night watch periods for Roman soldiers. It was the third watch, from midnight until 3AM. It was called the “Cock Crow” because it ended with the first streaks of dawn began to lighten the sky, which is when the roosters would start crowing. Indeed, Peter did hear the rooster crowing early the next morning, after he had denied the Lord three times during the night. The sound of the rooster crowing reminded him of the Lord’s prediction, and brought him deep regret and bitter sorrow.

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. God was glorified in the cross of Christ.

The verbs “glorify” or “glorified” were used five times in verses 31 and 32: *“So, when he had gone out [Judas], Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately.”* In these verses the coming death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus were predicted.

We can understand how the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus would glorify God, but what about the cross? The crucifixion certainly didn’t look like an event in which God was being glorified! The Lord’s death on a cross looked like a gross miscarriage of justice - an innocent man, crucified on a Roman cross! It certainly didn’t appear that God was being glorified! But God was indeed glorified in the cross of Christ.

The death of Jesus Christ was not just another Roman crucifixion. The holiness of God’s nature was upheld at the cross, and God’s glorious love was displayed to the greatest degree at the cross. When the perfect Man, Jesus of Nazareth, was crucified, every righteous claim of God against sin was settled. At the cross, Jesus Christ took the judgment of God against the sin of the world upon Himself - because He loved us! As the Son of God, Jesus Christ’s sacrifice was of infinite value. The cross of Christ maintained the holiness and righteousness of God, and displayed God’s great love.

Now you know as well as I do that it requires faith to believe all this - but all of it is true! God was glorified in the cross of Christ. The death of Christ was not a defeat; it was a victory! It was a defeat for Satan, but a victory for God. God was glorified in the cross of Christ.

2. The mark of a Christian is love.

"Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, 'Where I am going, you cannot come,' so now I say to you" (v33). Jesus was telling His disciples that where He was going, they could not come **at that time**. Compare that with what the Lord said to the unbelieving Jews back in John 8:21: *"I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. **Where I go you cannot come**" [emphasis added].* So Jesus told His disciples, "Although you can't come with Me now, you will certainly follow Me later."

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another"(v34). This is sometimes called the "Eleventh Commandment." This doesn't mean that love was not commanded in the Old Testament! "Love your neighbor as yourself" is an Old Testament commandment (Leviticus 19:18). But the new commandment Jesus gave here is that we are to love one another **as Christ has loved us**. "As Christ has loved us" is the point!

Jesus repeated this command in John 15:12: *"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."* Quite a command, isn't it? Only with the enabling power of the Holy Spirit can we even **begin** to meet this commandment!

"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" **Love** is the mark of the Christian. In the 1st century, the pagan Romans said of the early Christians, "See how they love one another!" Quite a testimony! Quite an "apologetic" for the validity of the Christian faith!

What about us today? Can "see how they love one another" be said of us, as it was of the early Christians? **The mark of the Christian is love!**

Practical Applications

1. Let's love the fellow believers that we don't naturally like!

Now I know that I don't have to give that Practical Application here in this church, because I'm sure **everyone** here **loves** one another! You even **like** one another! Well, seriously speaking – there's a lot of love here, and it's great to see! But somewhere along the line there are likely a few believers who are more difficult to love – wouldn't you agree? Maybe their

personalities just rub us the wrong way. Maybe they're controlling or manipulative people. Maybe they're lazy and selfish. Maybe they sing off-key, or they have bad breath!

Sometimes there are people we're just not drawn to, for one reason or another. Well - we must love **them** too! All of them! If they have problems, we must help them whenever we can, and we must do it in **love – just as Christ loved us!**

The word "love" used here, by the way, is the Greek word "*agape*." Do you know the definition of the *agape* kind of love? It's defined as the **voluntary denial of self in the interest of others**. It is not romantic love, and it's not emotional love. It's a **volitional** love. It's a love that's a determined act of the will! It involves the voluntary denial of self in the interest of others.

That is the kind of love we are to have for one another - even when we don't naturally like a particular fellow believer. Why? Because Jesus loved us and gave His life for us while we were still sinners – while we were definitely not naturally lovely or likeable! And we are to love others as He loves us!

I know of a group of Christians who recently met together to determine how they could best love a fellow-believer, because this person had become very obnoxious in the way that he was relating to some of them. These believers knew that the mark of Christian is love, and so they were determined that they were going to try, to the best of their ability, to maintain that "mark" and love this believer. Praise the Lord!

Let's follow their example, and love the fellow believers that we don't naturally like!

2. Let's realize the deceitfulness of our own hearts.

In verse 37 Peter said, "*Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake.*"

Peter meant well, and he was completely sincere when he made this promise. He really thought he would be willing to lay down his life for the Lord Jesus. But where was Peter when the Lord was arrested and crucified? Peter didn't realize the deceitfulness of his own heart! He denied that he even knew the Lord three times - just a few hours after promising to lay down his life for the Lord!

We might say, "How could Peter have denied the Lord? How could he have done that?" Well - what about **us**? What would we do if we were facing crucifixion? Would we deny the Lord?

Jeremiah 17:9 says, "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?*" So let's not be too quick to condemn Peter! Let's realize the deceitfulness of our own hearts!