

G R A C E

Reformed Baptist Church

Soli ♦ Deo ♦ Gloria

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Sermon Notes

Jesus Introduces a New Commandment

John 13:33-38

February 5, 2006

INTRODUCTION

- ❑ Jesus has washed His disciples' feet.
- ❑ He stated, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter...He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean..."
- ❑ He commanded them to wash one another's feet.
- ❑ He predicted His betrayal at the hands of Judas Iscariot.
- ❑ Once Judas left the room, Jesus proclaimed, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself and will glorify Him immediately."
- ❑ So, now, the context/setting is in the Upper Room with Jesus and the **eleven** disciples – without Judas - he has now left. This is crucial to understanding the context of the words of Jesus in the remainder of this chapter.

Verse 33

- ❑ Jesus begins Verse 33 by calling his disciples "Little children..."
 - This is certainly a term of endearment. I could also be accurately translated, "My dear children."
 - This certainly reveals Jesus' affection and particular love for the remaining twelve disciples.
- ❑ He then says, "as I said to the Jews, now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'"
 - Jesus had told the Jews twice in this Gospel that He was leaving, and they would not be able to find Him (John 7:33-34; 8:21)

- The title “Jews” certainly refers to those *against* Jesus – the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem [the normal way John uses the title in this Gospel].
- Yet, unlike the *Jews*, Jesus addresses this audience with the affectionate expression, “little children.”
- Therefore, the context is entirely different now that Jesus is speaking to His [eleven] disciples.
 - There are several probable meanings in what Jesus is saying:
 - First, the words of Jesus may be read, in some way, in light of Acts 1:1-5. In other words, as Jesus speaks to His disciples, He is saying, “You cannot come with Me, but you will receive, as a result of My leaving, what the Father has promised: the Holy Spirit.”
 - This would separate the disciples from the *Jews* even more; for in John 8:22, 24, Jesus tells the Jews, “Where I am going, you cannot come...you will die in your sins...”
 - Not so with the disciples, for they were chosen by God for salvation and for the spreading of the Gospel to the ends of the earth.
 - Secondly, Jesus is telling His disciples that they **cannot** come where He is going. In other words, this is, once again, a word of ability. They do not have the ability, so to speak, to go where Jesus is going. In light of the footwashing and Judas’ imminent betrayal, Jesus is referring to His crucifixion, where He will, as the Good Shepherd, lay down His life for His sheep.

However, the disciples could never go where Jesus is going – to the Cross as the perfect sacrifice, in order to appease the wrath of the Father. Only Jesus Christ, the perfect God-man, could [i.e. had the ability to] do such a work because of who He is.

- Of course, the disciples do not understand these words of Jesus.

Verses 34-35

- Jesus, then, states, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”
 - To begin with, Jesus calls this “a **new** commandment.”
 - At first, there appears to be nothing “new” about this commandment.
 - According to the Old Testament Mosaic Law, there were two love commandments: Love the Lord (Deuteronomy 6:5); and love your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:18).

- Also, in the New Testament, Jesus asserts that all the law and the prophets were summed up in these two commands (Mark 12:28-33; Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:14).
- So what is “new” about this commandment?
 - To begin with, we must first determine the **context of this passage**.
 - First of all, Judas has left and all that remains is Jesus’ eleven disciples.
 - Secondly, Jesus has just had the last supper with His disciples [and although John does not state this in this Gospel], and in so doing, Jesus inaugurated the new covenant [Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25], promised by the prophets [Jeremiah 31:29-34; Ezekiel 36:24-26]. This new covenant promised to be a community of God’s people, created by the **work of Jesus Christ**, who were marked by hearts of flesh; love for God’s law; and an indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
 - Thirdly, Jesus says, “love one another, even as I have loved you.”
 - Therefore, Jesus is commanding His disciples to love **the people of God**.
 - Now, this certainly does not mean that we are not to love those who are not Christians [for we are commanded to “love our neighbors as ourselves” and to “love our enemies”]; however, **in this context**, we are to love fellow believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, with a *peculiar* sort of love.

“Brotherly love is, indeed, extended to strangers, for we are all of the same flesh, and are all created after the image of God; but because the image of God shines more brightly in those who have been regenerated, it is proper that the bond of love, among the disciples of Christ should be far more close. In God brother loves seeks its cause, from him it has its root, and to him it is directed. Thus, in proportion as it perceives any man to be a child of God, it embraces him with the greater warmth and affection”
John Calvin

- Next, Jesus explains this “new commandment”: to “love one another, even as I have loved you.”
 - **In this context**, Jesus has just washed His disciples feet, thus foreshadowing the Cross – the place of sacrifice where our Lord will lay down His life for His sheep.
 - Therefore, not only are we to love our fellow brother or sister in Christ, be we are **do so sacrificially**.
 - This is a type of love the world does not know.

Therefore, sacrificial love should be the distinguishing characteristic of all Christians.

- The early church took this commandment to heart. According to accounts in the first three centuries, Christians were accused of cannibalism (they ate the “body” of Christ) and incest (they called each other “brothers” and sisters” and often married one another).
- Yet, Tertullian, the early church father noted how the pagans of his day marveled at the love of the Christian fellowship, especially as it faced sometimes ferocious persecution, “**See how they love one another!...how are they ready even to die for one another!**” (*Apology* 39.7)

When the world looks at the church, and how we love one another, what do they see?

A carbon copy of themselves?

- Yet, Jesus says, “By this all men will know that you are My disciples.”
 - We want to **do** something; yet, Jesus Christ simply says, “Love your brother to the point of laying down your life for him – this is how the world will know.”
 - Notice, the “way the world will know that we are Christ’s disciples” is not by how well we can argue a theological or legal point in the public square, how talented we are, how much money we make or how much of “God’s favor” [a phrase I feel is so often perverted] is upon us. It is simple, maybe **too simple**, by “loving one another *sacrificially*.”
 - The world will beat the church 100 times out of 100 if the standard is anything else. For every celebrity that is a “Christian,” the world has thousands...for every Christian millionaire, the world has thousands...but for every Christian who takes up his or her Cross daily, follows the Lord Jesus Christ, and loves his or her brother sacrificially, the world has **none**.
 - The Evangelical Church in this country has entered into an arena of competition with the world where by it will lose every time. The world will always win when it comes to size, money, status, talent, etc.
 - We create in our minds ways that we believe we can show the world that we are Christ’s disciples; however, virtually every time, these ways involve, ultimately, the exaltation of ourselves.
 - If we follow this train of thought, we can **always justify our selfish actions** by stating that we are doing it “for God’s glory” – as if God is impressed with us and appreciates our endorsement.
 - Once again, the words of Jesus **do not make sense to the carnal mind**. Too often the Christian church says, “Strive for excellence [of course, according to the standard of the world] in all you do. Look out for yourself. Be the best in what you do. Win the gold ... And then give glory to God.”

- Let us, therefore, glorify God by **obeying Him** and **loving the people of God** in the manner in which Christ loved us – sacrificially.

Verse 36

- Notice, here, that Peter is less concerned with the “new commandment” than he is with the word that Jesus will only be with them “a little longer,” and where He is going, they “cannot come.”
- So, Peter asks, “Where are you going?”
 - It definitely appears that Peter is focused on the **physical**.
- Jesus responds, “Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later.”
 - Only Jesus can go now, to the Cross, and the unblemished Lamb of God.
 - However, Peter will follow later, not in the manner of a substitutionary death [for only Christ can do this]; but, he too will die and join Christ in eternity.
 - This Verse is also likely a prophecy to the death of Peter. Church tradition says that Peter was crucified, but requested to be crucified upside down, as he did not believe himself worthy to be crucified in the same manner as his Lord.

Verses 37 – 38

- Yet, the impetuous Peter is not satisfied with the Lord’s response, for he asks, “Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You.”
 - Peter reveals his willingness to die for his Lord; yet, Jesus knew Peter better than Peter knew Himself.
 - Peter, although he clearly loved his Lord, was, at times quite haughty and arrogant. It was as though the Lord would use His passion; yet, he first had to be humbled.
 - The arrogance in Peter’s response to Jesus was one that, I believe many of us suffer from today.
 - Notice the irony, here: Peter is telling Christ ‘I will lay down my life for You.’ **Yet, it will be the other way around.** *We* need our Lord...He does not need us.
- For, Jesus answered him, “Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times.”
 - It is as though Peter says, “Lord, I will lay down my life for you,” and Jesus says, “Oh, Really?”
 - Jesus then predicts Peter’s denial.

- When Jesus says, “a rooster will not crow until...” He is predicting that Peter will deny him **very shortly**, for it was already night.
- There is some evidence to suggest that the cock was thought to crow at the same time every night/morning. One scholar notes, “in many countries the domestic rooster was regarded as an alarm clock.”
- If this true, it may have been that Jesus was saying, “Before, say, 3:00 a.m., you will deny Me three times.”
- This must have come as a blow to the disciple, for he does not speak again until John 18:10.