

The Upper Room (John 13)

John 13.31-32: The Pathway to Glory

Now that Judas had departed the upper room to betray the Lord Jesus, the hour of Calvary was very near. Rather than being *troubled* at the prospect of His betrayal (v.18, 21), the Lord now thinks of the *glory* of His death, making **three** profound statements (vv.31-32). John's gospel ever has in view the glorification of the Son of Man. Consequently, John makes no mention of the agony of Gethsemane, instead the Lord is viewed as the great I AM before whom the band of officers fell (18.4-6). There is no mention of Simon bearing the cross, instead He went forth bearing His own cross (19.17). *Note. There is much more that John omits, all of which is instructive.* The first two statements are in the *aorist* tense (v.31) followed by one in the *future* tense (v.32). The RV reads: *Now was the Son of Man glorified and God was glorified in Him.* These are not statements of past events, rather the work of the cross is seen as an assured and accomplished fact. Calvary was '*virtually accomplished since the decisive steps were already been taken and the redemptive purposes of God are secure*' (DA Carson). The three statements of glory are as follows:

- (1) *Now is the Son of Man glorified* (v.31). Calvary brings glory to the Son of Man. *The Lord Jesus did not regard His death as martyrdom or a disgrace. Rather, He considers His death on the shameful tree as His glorification!* 'Son of Man' is a title presented in a twofold way in the gospels (x12 in John). It is the title which the Lord used most often to refer to Himself and is associated either with *reproach* and *suffering* (3.14) or His *exaltation* and coming great *glory* (1.51; 3.13; 5.27; 6.62). As 'the Son of Man', He is God's appointed representative who speaks and acts with divine authority (Luke 5.24). The title clearly links to Daniel 7.13-14 which associates the Son of Man with an everlasting earthly dominion and kingdom. How is the Son of Man to be glorified at Calvary? There at the cross will be the manifestation of His moral beauty and intrinsic excellence by His submission unto death. John 12.23-24 relates to His *official* glory in connection with the coming kingdom – *His glory as the Head of all men and all things* (JND). John 13.31 rather relates to the *moral* glory of the cross. All the infinite perfections of the Son of Man were displayed at Calvary. **Hamilton Smith:** *The One who learned obedience was tested by death and found obedient unto death. Perfect subjection to His Father's will had its brightest display in the shadows of the cross.*
- (2) *God is glorified in Him* (v.31). Calvary brings glory to God. John's gospel emphasises the burnt offering aspect of the death of Christ – not so much His death for us, but His death for God. The Father is glorified in the perfection and work of His Son (cp. John 14.13). **MacDonald:** *God is glorified in the work of the Saviour. It proclaimed Him to be a holy God who could not pass over sin, but also a loving God who did not desire the death of the sinner; it proclaimed how He could be a just God, yet be able to justify sinners. Every attribute of deity was superlatively magnified at Calvary.* The first man (Adam) dishonoured God by being disobedient, and so has every human being since. The second man, the Son of Man, glorifies God by being obedient unto death (17.4).
- (3) *God shall also glorify Him (Christ) in Himself (God) and shall straightway glorify Him* (v.32). Since the Son of Man has glorified God, God will likewise glorify Him and do so 'immediately' (straightway). This refers to the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus. God hath highly exalted Him and given Him glory (Philippians 2; 1 Peter 1.21) *with, or alongside* Himself (this is probably the thought behind the phrase 'in (en) Himself' and links with 17.5). Christ is now hidden in God (Colossians 3.3), but hidden there as the glorified One. **Hamilton Smith:** *Christ glorified as a Man in the glory is the only adequate answer to His work on the cross – the eternal proof of God's satisfaction with that work.* And this glorification God did immediately! He would not wait until the kingdom was ushered in when Christ shall be revealed in glory before all.

John 13.33-35: The Precept of Love

v.33: The glorification of the Lord Jesus necessitated His separation from them (cf. v.1). He was on His way back to the Father, by way of the cross. He refers to the disciples as 'little children', a phrase which is peculiar to John's writings (x7 in 1 John). It is not a diminutive of age, but **affection**. It has the thought of parental care, compassion and family intimacy. The disciples would seek the Lord, in the sense of desiring to be with Him again, but where He was going, they could not yet follow (cf. v.36). What a contrast this was to the Jews (see 7.33-34; 8.21). **MacDonald:** *For the disciples, His departure would only be temporary. He would come again for them (14.3). But for the Jews, His leaving them would be final. He was returning to heaven, and they could not follow Him because of their unbelief.*

v.34: In the meantime, the Lord would give them a new commandment, something that must characterise them as His disciples until His coming to receive them. **DA Carson:** *This commandment is the marching order for the newly gathering messianic community.* Note the commandment's: *passion* ('love'); *people* ('one another'); *pattern* ('as I have loved you') and *proof* ('by this shall all men know'). Why do we need a commandment to love? Isn't this the day of grace, not law? Because we have the flesh, and therefore an inner desire to be selfish and live for ourselves. The flesh makes us suspicious and envious of each other. Hence the need for Divine commandment.

This commandment is 'new' in the sense of *fresh* in contrast to what is *worn out* (*kainos*). The commandment to love was *old* in time, being given in the law (Leviticus 19.18; Deuteronomy 6.5, cf. 1 John 2.7-8). But, now the Lord Jesus brings a *new character* to the commandment. God's people had once been taught to love their neighbour as themselves; now the Lord Jesus teaches His disciples to love (*agapao*) one another as He has loved us. This is a new *motive* for, and *measure* of, our love. The standard is raised! We should love as He does; willing to stoop to the feet of those who betrayed and denied Him; willing to sacrifice unconditionally for the benefit of others. To what extent are we manifesting this love towards our fellow believers? To those who are weaker and poorer than us? To those who have failed and sinned? Are we content simply to point out their faults and criticize and say hard, unkind things? Or do we love them enough to go to them in the Spirit of Christ and seek to recover them to Himself?

v.35: Disciples of the Lord Jesus should be characterised by love as it reflects the relationship of love that exists between the Father and the Son (8.29; 10.18; 12.49-50; 14.31; 15.10). In addition, true love for one another declares to all that we belong to Christ. What a witness! **MacDonald:** *The badge of Christian discipleship is not a cross worn around the neck or some distinctive type of clothing. Anyone could profess discipleship by these means. The true mark of a Christian is love for his fellow Christians. This requires divine power, and this power is only given to those indwelt by the Spirit (Romans 5.5).* Note. 1 Corinthians 13 considers the subject of love in relation to the exercise of spiritual gift. John 13 is in the context of love within the company of the Lord's people. Loveless companies of Christians nullify their witness to the world. Let us not point the finger at others, but look within.

John 13.36-38: The Prediction of Peter's Denial

v.36: Peter could not shake his mind from the Lord's words in v.33. Where was He going? Although Peter may have quickly forgotten the Lord's command to love, he was clearly concerned about being in His presence. Are we? What a privilege to know His gathering presence as the saints meet. Do we value it? The Lord reveals that although Peter could not follow Him now, he would do so 'afterwards' or 'some time later'. This may be a reference to Peter's martyrdom (21.18; 2 Pet. 1.14). Christ was going back to the Father by way of the cross, and this was a work He must do **alone** (see the types of Leviticus 16.17; Joshua 3.11-17). Yet, this separation would not be **permanent**. Peter would 'follow' the Lord Jesus in death some time later. History tells us Peter was martyred by being crucified upside down. This was his own request as he considered himself unworthy to die as His Saviour. Although Peter's fall was certain (v.38), so was his recovery.

v.37: Peter thought the Lord was questioning his devotion and commitment to face what lay ahead – but Peter was willing to die for the Lord and he sincerely believed it (fleshly confidence)! And so said all the disciples (Mark 14.31). **Gooding:** *However determined we may be to love, obey and follow Christ, our love and determination are not enough in themselves to keep us following as we should.* Peter did not know himself well enough. He had a hidden weakness which the Lord would now expose. *Praise God, what he could not do in his own strength, he would later do by divine restoring grace (21.18).*

v.38: The sad truth was, that instead of *dying* with the Lord, he would *deny* the Lord three times. Peter needed to acknowledge this rebuke and confess his weakness to the Lord – as do we all. Without this, the Lord may allow circumstances to painfully reveal our flaws, in order that we might be saved from them (Luke 22.61-62). Again, the glory of the Son of Man is revealed in this verse. He would muzzle the rooster until the appropriate moment (18.27). Here is one who has dominion over the whole earth, including the animal kingdom (cp. Genesis 1.26). It is interesting that Peter denied the Lord *three* times. In the trespass offering, amends had to be made and compensation paid (Leviticus 5.16). Peter thus made amends by confessing his love for the Lord *three* times. The compensation was 'feed my sheep' (21.17).