

A NEW COMMAND

John 13:18-38

Key Verse: 13:34,35

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

In this passage Jesus prepares his disciples to deal with the upcoming events of Judas' betrayal and Peter's denial. Furthermore, Jesus teaches them what they must do after his death and resurrection as of first importance. It is to love one another with the love of Christ. May God help us to accept this new command in our hearts today and put it into practice.

First, Jesus predicts Judas' betrayal (18-30)

Look at verse 18. “I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture: ‘He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.’” In this verse Jesus predicted his betrayal as a fulfillment of scripture. Jesus did not say who would betray him; Jesus did not expose Judas. It was because Jesus had accepted God's will for him to die on the cross for the sin of the world. Jesus was prepared to fulfill the Scriptures, quoting Psalm 41:9 as follows: “He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.” This verse reveals the bitter nature of betrayal so well. Sharing bread together is the expression of intimate fellowship. Many times we have dinner fellowship together after the Sunday worship service. It is a time of joy and blessing for all of us. We enjoy good food and good fellowship and sing many happy songs. Afterward we feel

deep joy in our souls and find new strength to live for God's glory. Those who share this kind of fellowship become most intimate with one another. They trust one another and tell the secrets of their hearts to one another. Judas had had this kind of fellowship with Jesus and the other disciples. Perhaps Judas had sung many joyful songs together with them. But this man, who was trusted and loved and cherished, would lift up his heel against Jesus. Lifting up the heel is an expression of betrayal. Jesus had loved Judas with humbleness and sacrifice. But Judas would react by betraying Jesus to the religious leaders. Jesus was probably experiencing more pain at the thought of Judas' betrayal than being pierced by a spear.

Seventeen years ago in Turkey, a Muslim converted to Christianity through the patient endurance and sacrifice of a foreign missionary. After his conversion, he preached the gospel throughout Turkey. He came to know many missionaries and was affiliated with a Biblical seminary. Two years ago, in the name of the seminary, he asked donations from around the world for the work of Muslim evangelism. Many sincere Christians gave generously. Then the man used that money to publish a book in which he renounced the name of Jesus and described all foreign missionaries as cultural imperialists. His book became a best seller and he became a rich man; he also became very fat. As a result of his book, many missionaries were greatly hindered in the work of evangelism. One missionary who has suffered imprisonment and mistreatment for his faith said, "Imprisonment was not as painful as that betrayal."

Many UBF missionaries and shepherds can understand this pain of betrayal to some extent. It is indeed painful when our love goes unappreciated. Jesus felt this pain more keenly than anyone else ever could. And yet Jesus was not knocked down by this betrayal. Jesus understood it as part of God's divine sovereign

purpose. It was the fulfillment of Scripture. Jesus knew that his life was in the hand of God. Whether he experienced sufferings or joys, he found the meaning in the word of God. So Jesus was not angry at Judas. Jesus continued to love Judas to the end. Here we learn from Jesus that we must come to the word of God to understand God's purpose in painful events, even in the time of betrayal. Sometimes we feel we have no strength at all to deal with it. This may be true. But when we come to God we can find God's divine purpose in the event and the inner strength to overcome it and continue in our mission.

Jesus also had to care for his other disciples. Jesus had to prepare them for this betrayal. Jesus would take something that could wound their faith and use it to strengthen their faith. Look at verse 19. "I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He." One of the striking themes of John's gospel is that Jesus knew what was inside a man. This revealed Jesus' identity as the Messiah with awesome clarity. Scientists go to great lengths to study the ocean floors and the galaxies. But the knowledge of what is in a man may be more difficult to attain. Yet Jesus had this knowledge. Jesus instantly knew each person he came into contact with. Who could imagine that the Samaritan woman in chapter four had a holy desire to worship God? Yet Jesus knew she did. When Jesus met Peter, he immediately knew that he was Simon. Though he had a big mouth, he lacked the confidence to be a true leader. Jesus gave him the new name Peter, which means Rock. Jesus taught him the power of faith until he became the foundation of Jesus' church. It was this personal and intimate knowledge of his disciples that convinced them that he was the Messiah. Jesus said in John 10:14, "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me..."

As Jesus knew his other disciples, he also knew Judas Iscariot. Jesus was not surprised by his betrayal. Jesus knew it would happen. It was important for his disciples to understand that as he knew each of them very personally, he also knew Judas Iscariot. He knew Judas would betray him. After they overcame the shock of Judas' betrayal, they would realize that Jesus knew him and it would strengthen their faith that Jesus is the Messiah. It was most important for them to deeply believe and affirm that Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus is God who knows all things. This Jesus did not come to this world to condemn the world but to save sinners by his grace. We must know and believe that Jesus is the Messiah even in the midst of betrayal and terrible misunderstanding. Jesus always wants us to come to him through his word so that we may know the depth of his love and sovereign power.

Look at verse 20. "I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me, and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me." In the midst of the painful betrayal, Jesus was full of vision for his disciples. He knew that their personal confession that he is the Messiah would have the power to change the world. When they went out to preach the gospel, whoever accepted them would be accepting Jesus and through Jesus they would come to God. In this way the knowledge of God would spread to the whole world.

For example, in Ukraine ministry there has been Missionary Point. He accepted the word of God through Dr. Peter Kim's Bible study with an absolute attitude. Through Bible study he met the Messiah and came to the Almighty God. He received new life and became a disciple of Jesus. Now he listens very carefully to his shepherd and studies the word of God with a trembling heart. He delivered a message on John 19 at the United Ukraine Spring Bible Conference, titled, "It is finished." His message was so convincing that all who heard it wept tears of

repentance. After the conference, Kiev UBF had two weddings and will have another wedding soon. Among the six persons marrying, five of them study the Bible with Missionary Point and his coworker Rebekah. The other one is Shepherd Ilya Ushomirsky from Chicago. When we accept the word of God through God's servant we become Jesus' people and God's people. Then we can be a blessing to others and help them to have saving faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Some people are broken hearted and powerless after one sheep ran away without saying, "Thank you." But we must not be consumed by one person who ran away until we lose all our strength and joy of life. We must remember Jesus' words and continue to preach the gospel. We must diligently plant faith in those who are following Jesus. There will be many who accept Jesus' words and the gospel work will bear fruit in them down through the generations until Jesus comes again.

By the way, we also see Judas' problem here. Judas was chosen to be one of Jesus' disciples. But he did not accept Jesus' calling or his word absolutely. In John 6, when many people left Jesus because they could not accept the Bread of life, Jesus said to his disciples, "Have I not chosen you the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil." He meant Judas. In John 12, when Mary poured the perfume on Jesus' feet, Judas objected, "Why wasn't this perfume sold, and the money given to the poor?" He did not care about the poor. He was a thief. He didn't appreciate her extravagant love for Jesus. It is God's one-sided grace to be chosen by Jesus to be his people. We must accept this choosing with an absolute attitude and obey Jesus' word with great respect.

Look at verse 21. "After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, 'I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me.'" When Jesus predicted his

betrayal, it was with intense anguish. Jesus was troubled in spirit. Jesus really loved Judas. Jesus knew how much Judas would suffer eternally because of his betrayal. Jesus also knew how painful his other disciples would be due to Judas' betrayal. Jesus loved Judas to the end and Jesus was a friend to Judas to the end. But he had to tell the truth about Judas. There was no other way.

The disciples were shocked by Jesus' words. They stared at one another without saying a word. Food which was on its way to their mouths was stopped in mid-air. Their eyes popped open and they looked at Jesus with stunned expressions. Here we learn that the disciples were not really keen as to what was happening around them and in the work of God. They probably knew many things about each other, such as how many times Peter would use the word, "Man" when he was speaking, or what brand of sandals John liked to wear. But they didn't know each other's spiritual condition. Until now each of them had a personal relationship with Jesus but not much concern for each other. Instead, they rather competed with each other to push others out of the way and promote their own causes. They should have prayed with and for one another and learned to carry each other's burdens.

Peter took the initiative to figure out who was going to betray Jesus. But it was John who was close to Jesus and asked the question. Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then he dipped the bread and gave it to Judas. Judas could have refused the bread, saying, "I don't want bread; I want eternal life." But he took the bread. John says simply that Satan entered into Judas. Now he was no longer himself. He was the instrument of Satan. He went out into the night, embraced by the darkness of Satan. It was the beginning of his descent into eternal condemnation in the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

Second, Jesus gives a new command (31-38).

What did Jesus say when Judas was gone? Look at verses 31-32. “When he was gone, Jesus said, ‘Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.’” In the midst of his sorrow and anguish of heart, Jesus glorified God. Here “glorified” means reveals the love of God in its richness and depth. Jesus did this by loving the betrayer to the end. Jesus would do this most of all through his death on the cross.

Look at verse 33. “My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going you cannot come.” Jesus knew the disciples so well. They had become like his children. They had been loved and cared for by him in every way to grow strong and steadfast as men of God. They had learned how to depend on him for everything. But now it was time for him to go. Jesus knew how much they would long for him and look for him when he was gone. But he told them very clearly that they would not be able to come with him. It was the time of his departure and their parting. Jesus helped them to accept the truth that they had to learn to live without him being with them in the body.

Then Jesus gave them a new command. Look at verses 34-35. “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” Until now the disciples had concentrated on their personal love relationship with Jesus. Each one had formed an intimate relationship with Jesus. But now it was time for

them to learn to love one another. It was time for them to love instead of being loved. It was time for them to care for one another, overcoming their self-centeredness. Jesus wanted them to love one another as he had loved them. When this love of Jesus circulated among them, they could have Jesus in their midst and reveal Jesus' love to the world. Even though Jesus would not be with them in the flesh, the Spirit of Jesus, which manifests the holy love of God, would circulate among them. The Spirit of Jesus' love would mark them as unique among all people in the world.

To the disciples, it might have been very hard to learn to love one another. Peter and John competed with each other to receive Jesus' love and to be recognized as leaders. They would both have to learn how to humble themselves to love the other person and build him up. Matthew the tax collector and Simon the Zealot were natural adversaries. But Simon would have to learn to curb his patriotism and Matthew would have to learn how to sacrifice. How could they possibly learn to love one another? They had to remember Jesus and how he had loved them. They had to struggle to love one another as an absolute command of Jesus. In any situation or circumstance they had to first of all learn to love one another.

There is a beautiful example of loving one another in the Ukraine. Dr. Peter Kim is the national director of the Ukraine UBF. The work of God in Kiev is growing in quality and quantity. Top students from Kiev University and KIPT are growing in faith to establish house churches and to see God's vision for spreading the gospel to all of the Ukraine and to the world. They have even sent a missionary to the Muslim world. But Dr. Kim is very mindful of the work of God in Odessa, under the direction of Missionary John Lee. In order to have a spring Bible conference together, the Kiev coworkers traveled nearly eight hours by bus to Odessa for a

conference at the Black Sea. From Kiev, 106 attended the conference. From Odessa, 57 attended the conference. Yet the Kiev coworkers were happy to travel to Odessa for the conference. Missionary John Lee is a little older than Dr. Peter Kim. But he recognizes his leadership and joyfully and humbly coworks together. When shepherds from Odessa and Kiev have fellowship, they are very happy and become one in mind and heart. When two men of God love one another in Christ, there is a beautiful work of God in their nation and there is great hope for the spread of the gospel throughout Ukraine and to the Muslim world as well.

Jesus' command is very simple, "Love one another." This is not an option as a Christian. It is Jesus' command to us to love one another. We live in a generation that is moved by feelings. Many people are willing to love others when they feel love in their hearts. But those who depend on their feelings will treat Jesus' command at random. We cannot obey Jesus' command only when we feel like it. We must obey this command even when we don't feel like it. One husband worked hard at his job every day to support his family and to serve the work of God. When he came home, he was tired. So he did not want to talk to his wife. Then she was very lonely and became sorrowful. She stopped making dinner for him. But he accepted Jesus' command to love one another and decided to overcome his habit of taking it easy at home after hard work. He began to talk to his wife and to listen to her and to do things that she wanted him to do. Then her heart was moved and love began to circulate between them. Even though they don't have much time together, they are very happy with the moments they can share. And the wife started making dinner for her husband again. This was possible when the husband decided to love his wife, overcoming his desire to rest at home.

Peter did not hear Jesus' words about loving one another. He only heard Jesus' words about going away. He wanted to follow Jesus and be with Jesus wherever Jesus was. But Jesus told him he could not follow now. This was Jesus' word. But Peter did not accept it. He insisted that he must follow Jesus now. He was too confident in himself. He was not trusting in Jesus' words and humbly doing what Jesus wanted him to do. Jesus knew he would fail to follow and predicted his denial. It was not to criticize him, but to help him realize that his life was in the hand of God and that he must depend absolutely on God in following Jesus.

We learned many things in this passage. But most of all we learned that Jesus commands us to love one another as he has loved us. Let's make a decision to love one another and pray for the help of God.