

Record of Sermons delivered during the month of
February 2018

(added progressively after each Sunday)

(see following pages)

Jesus Gives an Example and a New Commandment

Per S Olyott

(Review of last week) -

Around 2000 years ago on a Sunday at the beginning of April the Lord Jesus Christ rode into Jerusalem and the events of that Sunday are recorded in John Chapter 12, which we've looked at recently.

Today we come to John Chapter 13, which tells us what took place on the following Thursday. Matthew, Mark and Luke tell us that on that day the Lord had the 'Last Supper'. Those three books had been well in circulation when John wrote. So he doesn't go into the details that have already been told by them. He does tell us some other things which took place on that Thursday evening at that last meal: immediately before, during and after it. These events are contained in Chapters 13 through to 17 in this remarkable Gospel of John.

At Chapter 13 a change comes over the Gospel. The first 12 Chapters are addressed very specially, to readers who are not (yet) Christians. In those Chapters John parades the glories of Christ before your eyes. He tells about the miracles He did and the claims that He made. John's intention is to persuade you about who Jesus Christ really is.

From Chapter 13 the intention of the Gospel is much more directed to those who are Christians.

Here we have our Lord speaking, at length, to His disciples before He leaves them for the Cross. The Spirit of God working years later in John's mind, brings, vividly, those discourses back to his memory. (As Jesus had promised would happen.) The old man cannot forget what Jesus had said the night before He died. So he writes it down and two thousand years later after those particular events we're able to read what our Lord said. We are able to be a 'fly on the wall'. Marvellous!

We don't know the house, where the 'upper room' was (we know the City); we don't know the layout of the room, despite all the pictures which have been painted over the years. There's lots of things we don't know: what the Lord looked like --- nor the disciples. But we do know what was said, and what took place. And so we have read the beginning of it today at Chapter 13.

Firstly then, let's look at the contents of Chapter 13:

This Chapter can be easy to identify. Remember the words, 'Jesus gives ...'.

By keeping these two words in mind you can keep the Chapter in mind.

In the first 17 verses: 'Jesus gives', an example for us. Then the Chapter moves on ... 'Jesus gives' a prediction concerning an apostate. Then 'Jesus gives' a new commandment. Finally the Chapter closes ... 'Jesus gives' another prediction. This time concerning a 'back-slider'.

So keeping these in mind a brief summary of the Chapter:

It's Thursday night. (verse 1) It's the day before the Feast of the Passover. (verses 3 &4) Jesus is conscious of His identity and it's because He is conscious, that He comes from God and goes to God, that He leaves the table, returning shortly afterwards dressed like a slave. There He is: girded in a towel. In His hand is a basin with water. There reclining around the table are the 12 disciples. He comes to them one-by-one and does what the most menial slave would do. Washes their feet!

When you arrived at a house in the East, your feet were dusty. You would be wearing sandals. It was a common courtesy that your feet should be washed. But it was the job given to the lowest of the slaves.

Here is the One who is conscious that He comes from God and goes to God, yet washing the disciples feet.

“You'll never wash my feet!” says Peter, who has rather a lot to say in this Chapter. “Then if I don't wash your feet, we sever the connection between us.” says Jesus. “Well not just my feet only,” says Peter. “Wash my hands, my head .. all of me!”

Jesus says, “You don't understand what I am doing now, but you will understand it afterwards:

“A man who has had a bath doesn't need another bath, all he needs is to have a little wash (to comfort his feet).” A pause, perhaps a glance around the table, then He says, “You're not all clean.”

“I've given you an example tonight. You call me 'Master' and Lord, and so I am, but you are servants and a servant is never greater than his master, nor is the one who is sent greater than the one who sends him.” “If I wash your feet you should wash one another's feet.”¹

Our Lord is showing that although He is the Great God, He lives for the benefit of His people. And so He is prepared to stoop to the most menial task of all, if it is for the benefit of His people. **And you should do likewise!**

So having **given us an example** the Chapter moves on.

(Verses 18-30) **Jesus gives a prediction** – concerning an apostate.

The word 'apostate' means that occasionally - far too often – someone who professes to be a Christian; acts like a Christian; speaks like a Christian; and looks like a Christian --- but deliberately and decidedly, walks out on the Christian faith and is very often afterwards an opponent of the Christian faith.

Jesus predicts that one of the 12 at table will be such an apostate.

Some of the description in these verses assumes knowledge of mealtime customs and

¹ Now on the basis of those words, throughout subsequent history, certain Christians have had 'feet washing' ceremonies in Church. But they missed the whole point. There may be times, in the 'East', when a Christian should wash the feet of another: after a journey – as a comfort for a traveller. But washing feet just for the sake of washing feet misses the whole point.

etiquette of that time and place. Knowledge which is different from our normal experience. The many classic paintings of this event are misleading. One famous one has a large trestle table: our Lord supposedly in the middle with six disciples on each side on chairs. Not like that at all!

Actual they most likely sat in a semicircle or three sides of a square². Round a low table. Each reclining on couches (like 'bean bags', perhaps) with their legs stretched out away from the table. They had a cushion under their left arm and they supported their head with their left hand as they ate. Reaching into the central table with their right arm to share the food. Or in at least one case to offer a morsel to another.

Consequently when you wanted to talk to the person on your left you half turned and had your head on their chest. John was on Christ's right side allowing John to lean back and talk privately to Jesus. The person who was on the left of our Lord Jesus Christ was Judas! The position on the left of the host in these reclining situations was the position of honour. Jesus could lean back to offer the morsel³ to him.

The offer of the morsel was a sign of reconciliation. When this gesture was not responded to by a return offer of a morsel, Jesus understands that Judas is resolute in obeying Satan and so Jesus says, "*What you are going to do, do quickly.*" Despite the offer of the morsel being sign of fellowship, from Christ, Judas resolves deliberately and consciously to go Satan's way.

Then when Judas had gone, our Lord Jesus Christ seems to have relaxed with the eleven who were left. (Verses 31- 35) We see 'Jesus Gives' a **new commandment**. Up till now the presence of the traitor seems to have kept our Lord from 'pouring out His heart' to the disciples. But with the eleven, now He does.

He doesn't reflect on the traitor who has just gone. He doesn't reflect on tomorrow and its agonies. He simple says to them, verses 31 and onwards, that the time for His glory has arrived. In verses 31 & 32 we see it takes Him but a few seconds to use the word 'glorify' or 'glorified' 5 times!

He talks about the glory of Himself and His Father. The glory of Father and Son is going to reach its zenith, its height, its peak. Since God the Father will be glorified in the humiliation of God the Son, the consequent, exaltation and glorifying of God the Son is also guaranteed. He who announces, that He is about to be glorified, gives to the eleven who remain a New Commandment.

That is, a commandment in a new form.

Every philosopher in the world has said, "Love one another". Some people have used that as ammunition against the Christian faith. They say, "Jesus wasn't the only One who gave that commandment. Plenty of other people have said 'Love one another'." (One notable Prime Minister in recent times has been extravagant in his celebration of

2 As an antidote to the classic paintings showing a long high table with Jesus seated at the centre and the others seated on either side, all on chairs with their legs and feet under the table see: <http://www.julianspriggs.co.uk/Pages/Reclining>

3 The seating arrangement suggested a conciliatory motive of Jesus towards Judas, as was the traditional offer of the morsel to him. The response was supposed to be a reciprocal offer, which Judas declined to do and left.

the 'love' which is demonstrated by the vote to accept gays etc into same sex marriage.)

Jesus gave the commandment in a different form. The commandment He gave was not 'love one another' – no matter what and in all circumstances. The commandment He gave was 'as I have loved you, that you also love one another'. Which is a unique statement in the total history of the world! Not said before or since.

Then 'Jesus gives' a **prediction concerning a backslider**. Jesus has told His disciples that He is going. And just like He told the Jews before, He says that where I'm going you can't come. But where I'm going you can come: afterwards. And there's poor Peter at the side table. He's horrified, to think that Jesus is going some where where he can't go. The thought of life without Christ to Peter was devastating. He couldn't imagine a day without Christ!

“Why can't I come Lord? I'll even go to the place of death with you”

“Will you?” says Jesus, “Will you lay down your life for my sake? Peter, before morning comes you'll even deny knowing me. Not once or twice, but three times,” Those are the events that are recorded in Chapter 13. Events that took place at the time of the 'last supper'.

So we remember that the purpose of John's Gospel is to make it as 'clear as crystal' who Jesus is. Now having reviewed the events of the Chapter we begin to review these events to clarify how John uses them to show important aspects of who Jesus is and what His purpose is.

It will be helpful if you refer to the verses as we mention them while we learn about Christ.

- The Origin of Christ (verse 3). ³ *Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God, ...* . This Person at the head of their table was not just an ordinary religious teacher or Master. This Person with them has a divine origin. He's come from God. He's not just a teacher or prophet who has been 'raised up' by God. Not just a teacher like John the Baptist 'sent' from God. He's come from the presence of the living God. (carrying with Him the essence – that is, of one Being – of the Godhead.)
- His Destiny (verse 1) ¹ *... when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart ... together with the end of verse 3, ... going back to God,*
The next day the awful event is to take place which will place our Lord in the lowest place of humiliation. But this will be the first step in His path of exaltation and so John sees fit to mention, at this point, that our Lord here knew not only His origin, but His destiny. Our Lord has come from God and He goes to God. The route by which He goes is in verse 1, *... that his hour had come* .
As we have been reading John's Gospel we have heard many times about 'the hour'. In each of the previous occasions it has referred to His coming agony and sufferings with shame by the Cross. And still His hour has not come. But now the hour has come and the emphasis changes to reveal the destiny that goes beyond the agony and suffering: His exaltation and return to God.

- His Power: (again at verse 3) He shows that He is aware. He knows that, *the Father had given all things into his hands ...* .
Some Scripture and Sunday School teachers of the past (hopefully) have given the impression that the Cross was a sad, tragic, unfortunate, unhappy accident. That's not the way it was at all. The cross was tragic ... Yes! But it was not an accident. Wicked men did put Christ on the cross. Yes! But it was not an accident. Even so they were not puppets! But such is the sovereignty of God is that even the venom of men brought to pass something that God had planned. All things are in Jesus Christ's hands! They could never have imagined that, could they? Twelve or a few more hours later, when they nailed Him to the Cross. They could never have imagined it and unbelievers today still can't see it. Even nailed to the cross He exercised His Kingly Powers. Continuing to have every thing in His hands. In perfect command of the situation. (Even to the point of saving one of the thieves next to Him and taking his soul – his person – to paradise that very day!)
- His Identity (verse 13). ¹³ *You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am ...* . The Greek translated 'teacher' here and 'Master' in the KJV, referred to an exalted or special teacher. Then the word 'Lord' was often reserved as one of Names of God. So it is fitting, 'right', that we call Him such, *for so I am*. There are displays of His deity in this Chapter (as well as in many others): (verse 21) *one of you will betray me*; the one who is close to me will wound me, the one to whom I give the morsel. Judas Iscariot it is, who can't hide His innermost thoughts from Christ.
Only God can see into the heart of man yet Christ sees into the heart of Judas and later the heart of Peter. Displaying His deity.

[2390]

May these truths about our Master remain with all the saints gathered here today.

Next week we continue with Chapter 13

Jesus Gives an Example and a New Commandment – Part 2

Per S Olyott

(Review of last week) -

Last week we had a summary of the events of Chapter 13 and we began to draw out our Knowledge of what the Chapter reveals about Christ.

The third aspect of this Chapter is to look at lessons for ourselves. This Chapter marks the point where the Gospel speaks less to the unbeliever and more to the Christian. From 13:1 the Gospel becomes fuller and fuller with lessons for the Christian. It tells you what it is to be a disciple of Christ.⁴

If this were the only Chapter that you had. If some foul government came and burned all the Bibles and all you could snatch was one page out of yours and when you got to your secret place you found it was John 13, you would find enough in that one Chapter to know what it is to be a disciple of Christ.

- Verse 18: ¹⁸ *I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen.* To be a disciple of Christ is to be someone chosen by Him. A terrific thought!
- Verse 1: ¹ *... having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.* To be a disciple of Christ is to be chosen by Him because He loves you.
- Verse 13: To be a disciple of Christ is to acknowledge Him as Lord and Master (an exalted teacher).
- Verse 20: to be a disciple of Christ is to *receive* Christ.
There's an old heresy, that still walks the world: It puts on different clothes and has different names. Its typical name is 'Sandemanianism' and while you may not have heard of it you will probably have met it. It is the teaching that you only have to believe certain things to be a Christian.
There's a set of propositions: do you believe number 1? Tick – yes; number 2? Tick – yes, and so on. So if you can believe certain propositions they tell you that you're a Christian because you believe a set of truths.

What they don't tell you is that if the Devil had a pen he could tick them all as well!

There's more to being a Christian than believing a set of truths – the Devil never submits himself to the Lord and Master. Similarly there are many people who believe the truths, but they never submit themselves to Christ as their Lord and Master. And they certainly never *receive* Christ. They just can't comprehend the language of verse 20 about *receiving* Him and *receiving* Him that sent Him! There is no personal embrace.

⁴ John has this as a regular burden of his writings. Especially in his first letter, where he presses the point by three cycles that can allow the reader to self assess if he carries the 'mark' of a Christian and what to do with those teachers who fail this test.

- But that's what it is to be a Christian. People who have *received* Christ are *clean* (verses 10 & 11). They have been bathed (as it says in the Greek) and now just need a 'sponge' (such as rinsing the feet is not the same as a thorough washing in the bath). So the physical example is clear enough, but what is the deeper meaning? The Christian is completely cleaned such that he needs not be washed again.

The Christian is pardoned (washed of his sins). However today you find that you have committed more sins. Go to God confess them and forsake them (that is, turn from them – the meaning of 'repent') but you don't ever need a wholesale washing of your soul as you did at conversion. You do need the sponging of your feet (and hands) as it were. To be a disciple is to be clean (once and for all). That is, forgiven – justified. If you're not clean then it's because you're not a true disciple – as Judas demonstrates. (verse 11).

- To be a Christian is to see life without Christ as impossible. (verse 8 & 9) Peter says, "You'll never wash my feet!" "If I don't wash your feet I want nothing to do with you." was the reply. Impulsive as ever, Peter says, "Then wash all of me". He can't comprehend living a moment without Christ. The same in verse 37: "Why can't I follow you now. I'll lay down my life for Your sake." He can't tolerate the thought that he could go one step of his pathway without Jesus Christ. That's Christianity!
- To be a Christian (verse 38 & 11) is to be loyal to Christ despite failure. Jesus said to the 12 that night, "One of you will betray me." And when Judas had gone He said to Peter, "You'll let me down." But letting Christ down is not the same as betraying him. Which is absolutely marvellous to know, since who of you can ever say you have never let Christ down?

Someone who walks out on Christ and will have nothing more to do with Him, is an apostate, but someone who fails, even to the point where he may even deny Christ temporarily, is not an apostate. He returns. That was Peter. Who was never accused of betrayal (as Judas was). A failing Christian is not necessarily a false Christian.

- To be a disciple (verse 35) is to be part of a fellowship (you have love for one another) That's the 'badge' of discipleship. Let no one tell you that they can be a Christian without going to Church. The fellowship of other Christians is a 'mark' and a privilege of discipleship.
- To be a Christian (verse 36) is to be 'bound for glory'. "*Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterwards.*" Jesus will amplify this further in Chapter 14.

The 13th Chapter tells us what it is like to be a disciple of Christ.
Are you a disciple of Christ?

This Chapter however and the lessons we learn from it, by contrast (complete contrast), also tells us about the character and destiny of an apostate.

There's a great deal about apostasy here.

(verse 2) ² *During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him,* Apostasy is a Satanic condition, which starts with a thought. The Devil sows the thought: "Walk out on Christ. Have nothing more to do with Him". "Although you know fully well who He is: treat Him as though He is not."

What starts with a thought, leads to an action: (verse 27) ²⁷ *Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him.* The first action of Judas was the action of refusal: he refused to respond to the offer. To give the customary return offer. Jesus fully recognised this rebuttal and what it meant and told him "To get on with it". The ultimate action of Judas was to leave and initiate the event which occurred in the 'garden'. (verse 30) ³⁰ *So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.* It was the night!

Here then was the person who 'nurses' the thought, that he will one day walk out on Christ. Eventually that thought becomes an action: that is apostasy. That's how it starts and that's how it finishes. When it starts, that thought, can be hidden from other people. So much so that here in this Chapter the disciples are astonished, They say "Whoever can it be? Who is Jesus speaking about?" Peter makes a signal across the table to John. "Ask Him who it is." John leans back onto Jesus' chest and says, "Who is it?"

They haven't a clue. Judas had hid it so well. He'd been 'nursing' that thought week in and week out, but nobody knew. Except Christ! He confides to John, "It's the one to whom I give the morsel dipped in gravy,"

Christ makes this offer to Judas, since He knew all along what was going on.

That thought can be in the heart, even when you: sing the hymns like everybody else; bow the head in prayer and follow the Scripture reading; listen to the Sermon and have fellowship with Christians. Yet there in the heart is the thought: "I'm finishing with this". And what is a thought becomes an action – unless something marvellous happens. The thought that nobody else knows about, is not hidden from Christ. If He were to give out the morsel today He would know to whom to give it.

But let's not be ignorant of what the significance of the morsel was. An apostate is someone who becomes filled with brutal malice. Verse 18 tells us that. *'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.'* We would say today. "Kicked." In the emotional sense. "A person close to me, kicked me in the teeth." That's what apostasy is: acknowledging Christ, worshipping Christ and then treating Him with contempt. But to such a person, (known to the Saviour all along) He puts him on His left hand side, the place of honour, and He gives to him the sign of friendship.

None of the others have any clue what He is talking about. Our Lord is making it easy for Judas to come back: he's in the place of honour; he's been given the sign of friendship; he's not been 'shown up' before anyone else. Our Lord is making it easy.

He's showing to Judas that there is pardon for him. The way of return is still open. He can still 'draw back from the brink'. But we don't even read that Judas vacillated. He got up immediately and went out and for him it was night. As he went out that door it was night upon his soul. He walked into total blackness.

The remaining days of his life were lived without any divine light or hope. Without the comforting presence of divine pardon. Without the comforting acceptance of the Living God, he went to his grave in utter despair and suicidal. It was not repentance and it was not remorse. It was total despair.

Despair is something the Christian never comes to.

He walked out voluntarily and yet what he did didn't overthrow the Saviour's cause. The moment he went out the door Jesus spoke (verses 31 & 32) about His own glory which was to follow.

Apostasy is 'night'. But let nobody who has nursed the thought, think that their walking out is now inevitable. It isn't! The Lord is no less tender. It's the same Jesus Christ yesterday and today. The pardon is still offered. The way back is still open. You've not yet walked out. When you do walk out it may well be night for you, but until you do there is a tender Saviour willing to receive you back at His feet. To forgive all. To clean you from all your sin, so that you can spend the rest of your life walking with Him – if you will.

But now your own thought life is in the balance; “Shall I walk with Christ and bear the contempt and shame of being a Christian or shall I be like most of the world?” But remember this: before you walk out: Scripture⁵ says that those who once tasted and then went away, their last state is worse than their first.

When they walk away they have an animosity to the Christian Gospel that they never had before. They have less light on their soul than even the unconverted and a deeper despair than those who have never tasted of true spiritual things ever have. It is night! There's not a star in it. Despair. Total abandonment. Without God – by choice! Although they know the truth to be the truth.

Jesus gave the 'morsel' not as an insult, but to say that you need not go. You're welcome to remain.

There's even more that could be said about this Chapter:

- The greatest spiritual grace is humility: It was the perfect One who washed the feet. The sign of this spiritual grace is not how many you rule but how many you serve. It was the One who served who had the right to be called Lord and Master.
- God detests self confidence. Here is Peter saying, “You'll never wash me.” He seems to know better than the Saviour. Here's Peter saying, “I'll never let You down.” He seems to know better than the Saviour.

⁵ For example 2 Peter 2:18-22

Peter is filled with the idea, "I'm not the same as others. I'm not as weak and as frail as everybody else. I can make it. I won't go the way that other people have gone."

Jesus warns us against that in this Chapter. (As Paul reiterates in 1 Corinthians 10:12, ¹² *Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.*)

When we see that humility is the greatest spiritual grace while self-confidence is something that God rejects and disowns – not rating it at all, we then understand the significance of the New Commandment which is near the close of the Chapter, at verse 34. Look at the New Commandment: A New commandment I give to you (plural), that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

They were to find out the next day just how Christ loved them: the next day He bled in shame; and bore His own body for their sins to the 'tree'. He made this greatest possible sacrifice solely for their benefit and welfare. "That's love" says Jesus! "Seeking the welfare of your brethren, whatever it costs."

Not the type of wishy-washy love extolled by pundits and public figures on TV who use 'love' to cover all feel-good emotions – that love is simply being 'nice' to and accepting of everybody and everything. Even completely destroying the value of the word when they apply it to perverted human practices. That love is never offending anybody. That love is not being honest – when a correction is what is really needed. Love as a sickly sweet facade. There is none of that in the New Testament.

Love is caring deeply – more deeply than can be expressed – about the welfare of our fellow Christian. Living for that welfare and even dying for that welfare. No cost is too great in serving the true good of our brethren

That's the New Commandment.

It was Thursday night 2000 years ago and as the Lord of Glory took His first steps towards the final steps to His glory, these were the words He left ringing in His disciples ears.

[2426]

May this be so for all the saints gathered here today.

Delivered Sunday 18th February 2018

Delivered Sunday 25th February 2018

COMMUNION