Good morning! I invite you to turn with me in your Bibles to John 13. We will be looking at the last section of this chapter today, starting in verse 31.

What we’ll find in our passage today is that Judas leaves the room. And after that, Jesus begins to converse with his disciples on a deeper level. Perhaps you’ve had an experience where you were at a dinner party or something and the conversation was stifled to some degree because of there being a particular person in the room. Once that person vacated the premisis, the atmosphere changed. The party sort of came to life; people began to enjoy themselves and have some more open conversations. Prior to that their words were more guarded, but now they feel a new ambiance has been set and words flow more freely.

I don’t know if that’s exactly the case here. Jesus, I’m sure, always had the freedom to converse and I don’t find him to be one that held his tongue too much when words were needing to be spoken. But there does seem to be a new atmosphere and a depth of conversation that begins here.

Jesus is no longer concerned about his betrayer being in the room. At the very least the conversation does not revolve around him any more. Jesus has opportunity to focus on his disciples and preparing them for what lies ahead.

And through these words we can be prepared for life ahead too. So let’s give our attention to the inspired word of God…

From time to time you will hear ministers talk about what they learned after seminary. And you will hear them talk about all the things that seminary didn’t prepare them for.

When I hear these conversations I often think about how good the Lord has been to me. I have not had a lot of instances like that. But I know that some pastors have seemed to feel overwhelmed by the ministry, and it seems that they were not well equipped to take on the tasks and the callings they came to have. And as a result, they feel overwhelmed, unequipped, and sometimes burned out. And it all boils down to the fact that they weren’t really prepared. They had not gotten the tools and the ministerial readiness that was needed for the task at hand.

This certainly wasn’t the case for the disciples of Christ. Jesus had spent these years getting his disciples ready for their life and work as his apostles, and he left no stone unturned.

As a matter of fact, I found one very interesting quote in one of the commentaries that I happened across this week. The author said this, “The disciples of the Lord had no other preparation for the events of the next few hours than strong, confident hearts.” The author said that Jesus didn’t give them tips on where to go or what to do in terms of protecting themselves or maybe an exit strategy for when things got dicey. There were no physical preparations, so to speak. The author said that Jesus’ purpose in these last hours with them was to give them a strong, internal defense. Not a physical defense – they were not given instructions on survival techniques and self preservation, but they were given instruction that would gird them up spiritually.

That’s what men and women need most. They need a strong internal defense. Just like these disciples, they need the spiritual fortitude that will help them endure the trials and tribulations that they will face in this world. The greatest need in this world is a heart that is a robust internal defense; a hearth that is fortified and girded with strength.

And that’s what we are finding in this upper room. What we have here is that framework that keeps the ship sailing when the storms of life come raging along. The castle may come under siege, but as long as the keep is strong, you will be fine.

This section of Scripture is the beginning of that spiritual preparation for the night. What we have in these verses is something of an introduction to the rest of the upper room discourse. And in these words Jesus helps to prepare his disciples for life after Christ, you might say. After Jesus is gone—after he is taken from them—what must they know?

Well, in this passage we find three basic teachings. Preparation for life needs, first of all, the right perspective.

1. **Prepared hearts must have a godly perspective [31-32]**

Now there’s a saying around our house. We call it “Sparks optimism.” And it is all about perspective. Years ago we began to kid John that no matter how dire the situation, he would have a brighter spin on the situation. And sometimes it would get to be rather funny. You know how it is. The house may be on fire and be going up in a blaze of flames. You know, it’s one of those situations where pretty much everything is lost. From most vantage points it would seem rather dire. But John would probably come along and say, ‘Well, at least we have good marshmallow roasting for a night.”

It’s all about perspective, right? That’s “Sparks Optimism.”

I’m being a bit facetious and exaggerating, but you get the point. You know how important a good perspective is.

As a matter of fact, we saw some of this in our study of Philippians, didn’t we? We saw some perspective adjustment that Paul helped us to have. What was one of the remedies for anxiety that he mentioned in Philippians 4? Paul said, “Do not be anxious, but in everything with prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” Anxiety is partly due to one’s perspective being cockeyed. It is not a time for worry, it is a time for thanksgiving. It is time to give thanks to God for what you have, for who he is, for what he can and will do. Instead of being fixated on what you can’t do, you are to praise and thank God for what He is and the endless possibilities that are at his disposal.

So you know how important perspective can be for life’s adventures. But what does Jesus say? What perspective does he bring to bear? It is found there in verses 31-32. Notice what he says. He says, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. 32 If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once.”

What is he talking about? He’s talking about his crucifixion, resurrection and possibly even his ascension. But how does he talk about it? He talks about it in terms of being glorified.

Now, when we talk about crucifixion, glory (glorification, being glorified) probably isn’t the words we’d first choose to describe it. We may say that crucifixion is gory; it is grotesque in what it does to a person. And here on this dark night when evil will prevail and the sinful actions of Judas and his cohorts come to be fulfilled, we recognize that there is obscene cruelty and malevolent men doing their worst.

Yet Christ says it is time for him to be glorified.

Now pause again here and remember that we typically call the cross and the tomb the height of Christ’s humiliation. We talk about his exaltation when it comes to his resurrection, ascension and his coming again. But it is interesting here that Jesus breaks with our theological categories to some degree. He calls his crucifixion the time of his being glorified.

What gives? Why does he use this language? It is because he wants us to know that evil is not victorious in the ultimate sense. In the cross he is being obedient. He is doing His father’s will and even as he is forsaken and undergoes the shame and ignominy, He is obedient to the end. God is glorified in it. He is therefore glorified in it.

And what’s more, God will glorify him because of it. That’s what verse 32 is talking about when it talks about being glorified. That is talking about Christ being resurrected. Christ will be glorified in that death will not be able to contain him. Its grip will be loosed and it will only be a short time until he receives a new glory and is brought up again from the dead.

That is the perspective these disciples needed to have. They needed to understand that the terrible things that they witness are not thwarting the plans of God. They are the plans of God. They are the means to accomplishing God’s greater plan in this world. They are events that glorify our Lord and our God and we should glory in it.

That’s the perspective we need to keep too. The cross was not a defeat in any sense of the word. It, along with the resurrection, was a triumph. The son may have been humiliated and put to public shame, but the work was glorifying because by it we have gained the victory over sin and Satan.

And we may extrapolate from this that all the dark deeds in this world are in the hands of God. May we never fall into despair or dread the difficulties of trying times; for God is glorified in and through them.

This is key for having that strong, internal defense. Make sure you have the right perspective. For when you don’t, all is bleak. When you do, all things can be endured with grace and steadfastness.

Now, having given us the right perspective on his impending death, Jesus then proceeds to give us a new command. And so we see that prepared hearts will not only take to heart his perspective, but will adhere to his precept.

1. **His precept [34-35]**

He says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Now what does Jesus mean by a “new commandment.” Obviously, we are commanded to love and that’s a command that’s been around for a very long time. The concept can be found all through the Old Testament. So what in the world does Jesus mean when he says he’s giving a new commandment.

There have been several different ways to interpret this. Some say that it is a new commandment in that it has a new dimension to it. We are not just to love, but we are to love (as it says here) as Jesus has loved us. There’s a radical power and depth that should characterize our love as it is to be an embodiment of the very same love which Christ has shown to each one of us.

Others have taken it to mean that it is to be love in the superlative sense. What we mean is that there are two works in the Greek language that we can translate new. There is the word neos which means new, but of the same kind. So, if you have shoes that wear out, you can get a “new” pair of shoes. What we mean is that you are getting a new shoe, but of the same sort.

There’s another Greek word, kainos, which means new in the sense that it is radically better and improved over the older version. So, if your shoes wear out, instead of getting the same kind of sneakers, you may get a pair of shoes that have radical technological developments that actually do the walking for you and are powered by lithium batteries that last a lifetime. That would be a radically new and superior kind of shoe.

So, that’s how some see this. The love that we show is of a radically superior kind. Sure you used to love people, but now your love is going to be imbued with a greater zeal, a more proative passion, a deeper sense of duty, and so forth.

There’s a third way people have taken this. Sometimes we say we have a new rule, but it is simply an old rule restated with a new vigor and commitment to keeping it. So, for instance, a parent may say that we have a new rule where kids are to be in bed by 8:30. Well, kids have always had a bedtime of 8:30. But the parents have let things slip over the summer and the kids have stayed up later and enjoyed more time outside. But with school starting up again, we are “getting back at it.” We’re laying down the law and rededicating ourselves to doing it they way it is supposed to be.

You may ask me what my professional opinion is: I really can’t tell the difference. It all basically sounds the same to me. My opinion really is this: the focus should be on the love part not the new part. Jesus wants one thing out of us: he wants us to love one another. He knows we’re really bad at it. But he wants us to get it in our heads that this is to be our primary calling in this world.

As a matter of fact, he reiterates this fact in verse 35 when he says, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

The badge that identifies a group of people as Christians will be their undying, robust, deep, sincere commitment to love each other.

The last thing we need to remember, in order to have that internal defense system that we need to face life, is Christ’s patience. We’ve noted his perspective and precept, now we need to see how he deals with each of us when we are filled with sin.

1. **His patience**

You have to look at the way Jesus deals with Peter. He is so patient; he is so gracious. When you consider all of what Peter does, and how offensive it would be, you understand how much Jesus is willing to forgive.

It begins with Peter asking his question. In verse 33 Jesus says, “Where I am going you cannot come.” And then he starts talking about his new commandment and the imperative of love. Now what does Peter do? He begins to say, “Lord, where are you going?” This is wrong on two fronts. First of all, Peter should have been thinking about the command Jesus gave to love. He should have said, “Okay, wherever Jesus is going, he said I can’t go there. I’m okay with that. But this love thing sounds really important, I want to know more about that.”

But what does he do? Instead of being content that he couldn’t go with Jesus (wherever that may be) he says, “Whoa, whoa, whoa! Don’t be telling me what I can and can’t do? Tell me where you are going because I’m gonna go too. And I’ll prove it.”

Do you see how inflated Peter is? Peter runs roughshod over Jesus’ words and pushes his own will and desires (not to mention completely neglecting the weightier issue of the love that he is to show – Kinda funny too that Peter is being very unloving after being commanded to love).

But notice how Jesus responds. He shows immense grace and patience by simply repeating the words that he had already spoken, “Where I am going, you cannot follow me now.” And he even indulges Peter by saying, “You will follow later.”

Now, is Peter happy with that? Of course not. In verse 37 Peter pushes a little more and says, “Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you."

Understand what Peter is doing. He’s basically calling Jesus a fool. He’s telling Jesus that he’s wrong. He doesn’t have a clue. He knows he can follow him. And not only that, but he will go to the ultimate level of sacrifice and die for him. “You see, Jesus! You’re being silly. I know you are the all wise Son of God and all, but you obviously don’t know anything!” That’s a pretty brazen thing to do.

This leads Jesus in verse 38 to speak prophetically and help put Peter in his place. And this is a grace on Jesus’ part. He simply helps Peter understand the depth of his sinfulness. He essentially says, “Peter, you have no love in you; you have no power in you. You are a sinner and there’s no way you can overcome your depraved nature.

But that’s where we can come back to what Jesus previously said, “You will follow after.” That’s the promise of Peter’s restoration and new empowerment that he would receive through the Holy Spirit.

Peter probably would have been thinking, “Am I the betrayer?” They were just talking about that, you know? But the consolation was that there was hope and a promise of later following Christ (to the point of death, btw).

What you see through all this is that Jesus is full of grace. He deals graciously with his people and even their sins will not get between them. Ultimately, Christ provides a way to conquer sin and set his people free.

And isn’t that what our hearts need? Come what may in this world, we have a Savior. What we need most is a God who is patient with us; One who deals with us, not on the basis of what we deserve, but on the basis of his radical grace.

You could face a tsunami tomorrow. Who knows what the next hour holds. You could get a text tonight saying that you’ve been fired and there is no severance package. You may get that phone call in the middle of the night that every parent dreads. You fill in the blank. Put your worst nightmare in that blank. It doesn’t matter what kind of catastrophe you imagine (and I know that there are some people in this world who are very good at making up catastrophes).

Now ask yourself, what is it you need to be prepared for that catastrophe? Is it 6 months of savings in your bank account? Is that what will get you through? That might be a nice cushion, but it’s not really what you need. And that will only go so far.

No. What you really need is the full assurance that the Lord will be a God unto you. He will love you and be kind to you. He will carry you and support you. What you need is exactly what he gave Peter and his disciples: the knowledge that He will be gracious to you, and has a glorious future for you.

That is what the Lord offers you here. He gives you that preparedness of heart. In this world, we can trust in him.