

Beholding the Perfections of Christ

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 13:31-38
Preached on: Sunday, March 15, 2015

We return this morning to John's Gospel, chapter 13. So if you will, take your Bibles and turn there. We will be looking at verses 31 through 38. Having dismissed Judas to fulfill his treachery, Jesus gives a farewell address to the 11 apostles beginning in verse 31 here in chapter 13, an address that will go all the way through to the end of chapter 16. This is a final charge filled with important instructions and warnings to the men he has chosen to carry on the Gospel enterprise and, ultimately, all of us. We're going to read a new commandment that is given. There are numerous soul-thrilling promises that are made and so forth. But this morning we are going to examine the opening section of this farewell address beginning in verse 31, John 13. Let me read this to you.

31 When therefore he had gone out, Jesus said, "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 will glorify Him immediately. 33 Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You shall seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' 34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." 36 Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?" Jesus answered, "Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you shall follow later." 37 Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You." 38 Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a cock shall not crow until you deny Me three times."

Here in these 7 verses, the Spirit of God puts the glory of Christ on display once again. Through his inspired writer, we can behold the perfections of Christ, at least some of them, which is the title of my discourse to you this morning. And here we can focus our affections and our attention on 3 primary characteristics of our Lord. 1. We're going to see the glory of his atonement. 2. The legacy of his love. 3. Finally, the fullness of his grace.

But before we examine these profound realities, let me remind you why we are doing this. Let me remind you so we don't take for granted why we come together every Sunday morning and humble ourselves under the teaching of the word of God. The reason in a nutshell is so that we might behold the glory of God in the face of Christ as Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 4:6. Let me explain to you why this is so important. Once we were spiritually dead. We were alienated from God. The Gospel was veiled to our eyes. We

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could not see it. We were perishing, Paul tells us. Our minds were blinded by Satan. We could not see the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God. But the Spirit came along and gave us eyes to see the wretchedness of our sin as well as the glory of our Savior and it is the unique role of the indwelling Spirit of God to continue to help us see these realities: our sin, but more importantly, the glory of Christ because the more we behold the glory of Christ, the more we will hate our sin, the more we will loosen our grip on the things of this world and the more we will discover the only true source of soul-satisfying joy.

Folks, this is crucial for your sanctification. In fact, believers who care very little for a strong pulpit ministry will remain in a state of spiritual immaturity. Let me explain this by reminding you of this great doctrine of sanctification which is a progressive work of God and man that gradually conforms us into the image of Christ in our actual lives.

Unfortunately, this doctrine sometimes gets clouded with misunderstanding. I remember a number of years ago in my seminary days when I thought I had achieved omniscience. I gradually began to realize how little I knew and I was struggling with this doctrine of sanctification. On the one hand, it is clear from Scripture that it is the Holy Spirit that does this work within us to gradually mold us into the image of Christ. Philippians 2:13 says, "It is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." Paul tells us in Romans 12:2 that we are "being transformed by the renewing of our minds." It's in the passive voice. We are not the ones transforming ourselves. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 we read, "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely." And in that great benediction at the end of Hebrews in chapter 13, we're told that it is "the God of peace who is the one who equips us in every good thing to do his will working in us that which is pleasing in his sight."

So naturally I concluded that sanctification is fundamentally an internal sovereign work of the Spirit of God therefore I thought all I needed to do was just be passive in the whole process; basically just kind of stay out of the way, kind of let go and let God.

"Sanctification is purely monergistic and so I don't have to do anything. In fact, if I do do something, then I undermine the truth of the Gospel and start moving toward legalism and I don't want to do that. So I should just merely relax in what God has done for me in my justification." I was told by others that I need to learn to celebrate the magnificent realities of my position in Christ. I kept hearing terms like, "You need to yield. You just need to surrender. You need to remember. You need to focus on the Gospel of grace." Practically speaking this meant I was to focus exclusively on the indicatives of Scripture, the essential truths of the Gospel and for the most part ignore the imperatives, the commands we are instructed to obey because the Spirit of God will see to it that I obey those things. But something was eating at me. To be sure, I didn't want to be a legalist. I didn't want to be caught up in the never-ending drama of rule keeping because there's

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always yet another rule that you need to keep to make yourself feel holy. You all know that, that whole system. But in my effort to avoid becoming a self-righteous legalist, my pendulum swung way too far in the opposite direction and I found myself becoming, frankly, a self-righteous, worldly antinomian. I wasn't walking by the Spirit so as not to carry out the desire of the flesh so my character and conduct did not manifest the fruits of the Spirit like they should be.

So by God's grace, I began to search my heart and, more importantly, search the Scriptures. Yes, it is God who is "at work in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure," but Paul precedes that statement by declaring in verse 12, "Just as you have always obeyed," then he goes on to say, "work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Hmm. In 1 Peter 1, Peter celebrates Christ's work in us as we should rightly do but then he says in verse 5, "Now for this very reason also," in other words, in light of your position in Christ, "apply all diligence in your faith, supply moral excellence," and so forth. The ESV says, "For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue." Well, this doesn't sound like being passive. It sounds like I need to do something here. Hebrews 12:14, "Pursue the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord." 2 Corinthians 7:1, "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

So obviously, we've got to do something more than just relax. We've got to do something more than just remember and yield and surrender and celebrate. I failed to grasp this important truth and I hope you hear this: beloved, we are to take advantage of every means the Holy Spirit gives us so that he can work that change within us, so that he can effect his change in us. You see, he performs his work of sanctification both in and through us, not in spite of us. To be sure, we cannot make ourselves holy, only the Holy Spirit of God can do that but we've got to understand that he provides a variety of means by which he accomplishes this transforming work and we are commanded to place ourselves in the current of those means, those appointed means: things like the word of God; like self-examination; self-denial; watchfulness; prayer; fellowship with other believers; obedience to the word of God; trials and so forth.

We must apply all diligence, as Peter says, to avail ourselves of these channels of grace and there's nothing legalistic about that. For example, think of how the Spirit of God sanctifies us through his word "which is profitable for teaching, for correction, for training in righteousness that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." Jesus prayed in John 17, "Sanctify them in the truth. Thy word is truth." Well, obviously, we must avail ourselves of this truth by studying it and obeying it. Peter says we are "to long for the pure milk of the word so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation." 2 Timothy 2:15, we're told to "Be diligent to present ourselves approved to

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God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." Again, Romans 12:2, we are being transformed. He says, "be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

Well, folks, this will not happen unless we immerse ourselves in the word of God so that the Holy Spirit can put the glory of Christ on display. This is why God gives to the church pastor/teachers. Our role according to Ephesians 4 is to "help believers attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to a mature man to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ." But, folks, we will never become more like Christ by merely relaxing and remembering and celebrating our position in him as wonderful as that is. Child of God, don't miss this: our grasp of the glory of Christ and all that he has done for us must go beyond the realm of the intellect. It must go beyond the sphere of doctrine. It must exceed the limits of celebrating the indicatives. It must settle down deep into our soul in such a way as to ravish our affections and animate our wills so that we will joyfully obey the imperatives. Jesus says, "If you love me, you will," what? "You will keep my commandments." Only then will the Spirit of God accomplish his work in us. Only then will he lavish his blessings upon us. Jesus says, "If you know these things you are blessed if you do them."

Folks, you must understand that his sanctifying work requires what I like to call "a felt Christ," not merely a perceived Christ. We have to feel Christ in such a way as to enjoy that soul-satisfying joy of Christ, that which we experience deep within our souls. This is crucial for our sanctification and when this is true, when this is a reality in our soul, then we say with the psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee and besides thee I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." Beloved, know this: a felt Christ originates from a perpetual preoccupation with a glorified Christ. This is why we come together. Apart from this, our renewed minds and hearts will never long to be like him. We will never long to know him and to serve him and abound in the duties of obedience. It's interesting, in Exodus 34 we read how whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him he would take off the veil until he came out. He didn't want anything to obstruct his vision of the glory of God and then he would have to put it on so as not to terrorize and kind of blind the people when he came down out from the presence of God. And it is with this in mind that the Apostle Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 3:18, "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into His image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."

The bottom line, folks: the more we gaze upon the glory of Christ, the more the Spirit of God transforms us into his image. It's for this reason we must avail ourselves of the Spirit's means of grace to accomplish this important work of sanctification in us and

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through us. Practically speaking, what this means is when you come to the word of God, look for the glory of Christ. When you look for a preacher of the word of God, look for a man that preaches the glory of Christ. When you come to prayer, be consumed with the glory of Christ. When it comes to fellowship, choose friends that will manifest the glory of Christ. When it comes to experiencing trials, know that in them you have the opportunity to experience the glory of Christ. When you joyfully obey the word, you do so because you are experiencing a felt Christ deep within your soul that is overflowing with the doxology of worship and praise and obedient service. That is not legalism. That is how the Spirit of God helps us become more like Christ. Dear Christian, if you will seize upon these great truths, your spiritual life will explode. Beholding the perfections of Christ is at the heart of sanctification and so I invite you this morning to avail yourself of this great means of the Holy Spirit, a means that God has provided for us that he may perform his work in you and in me, that he might transform us into his image from glory to glory.

So, with that introduction we come to the beginning of Jesus' farewell address in John 13:31. Bear in mind that the word of God tells us that with a quivering voice and a trembling body, Jesus has dismissed Judas who is now fully under the control of Satan. In verse 31 we read, "Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus said, '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.'" Beloved, here we can behold one of the perfections of Christ by examining: 1. The glory of his atonement. Notice he says, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." In the Old Testament, the title "Son of Man" is associated with the glory of God as we would read in Daniel 7. But when we come to the synoptic Gospels, we see that that title, Son of Man, is associated with his suffering and here the Lord uses this title of himself to unite both his glory and his suffering together.

There is perhaps no greater display of the glory of God than in the atoning work of the Son. We might ask the question, "How is the Son of Man glorified?" Well, we see him glorified in his incomprehensible condescension. You will recall earlier in chapter 12:41, John reminds us that Isaiah saw in Isaiah 6 the pre-incarnate Christ seated upon his glorious throne, the very one who had judicially hardened Israel because of her apostasy and unbelief, the one who blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts against him and yet this is the same one that will now stoop to take on human flesh and to give his life for sinners. We also see him glorified in his infinite love and in his mercy. This same Jesus now is about to give his life as a ransom for many. We see him glorified in his unassailable power as he goes to the cross to render powerless the effects of sin and Satan and death.

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Well, how is God glorified in him? We see him glorified in his sovereignty and in his faithfulness, to be able to fulfill all of his covenant promises even reaching back to Adam and Eve and obviously all of their descendents. Remember, there were promises there of a Redeemer pictured in the innocent animal that he killed to provide a covering for their sin. We see God glorified in Christ in his faithfulness as it is put on display as he provides a way of salvation not only to the elect of Israel but also to all of the Gentiles who have been grafted into the root of Abrahamic blessing, the necessary elements of the dawning now of a messianic age. He is glorified in his omniscience. Isn't it amazing that he not only conceives but then carries out this amazing plan of redemption whereby he not only saves sinners in terms of forgiving them but he also declares them to be righteous through the imputed righteousness of the perfect sacrifice thereby being able to satisfy the perfect justice of a holy God. We see him glorified as well in his holy hatred of sin when he pours out his wrath upon his Son. And we see him glorified in his omnipotence, power that would not only raise Jesus from the dead but also give spiritual life to sinners like you and me and one day raise us from the dead. Virtually every attribute of deity is dramatically displayed and even magnified on the cross of Calvary.

Jesus went on to add, "If God is glorified in Him," verse 32, "God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately." This speaks of the glory given to the Son as a result of his perfect obedience to his Father's will, his sacrificial death, his resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of the Father. It is for this reason that Paul tells us in Philippians 2:9, therefore "also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name," referring to the name "Lord," the sovereign ruler of all. He goes on to say "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Next, knowing that he would soon leave them and deeply concerned for their well-being as well as our well-being, he turns to the dominant theme of his discourse. This is really a topic of paramount importance. I want you to notice first the profound tenderness with which the Lord addresses them. He says in verse 33, "Little children." I have to think about this and see myself here, though they are like me many times, they are spiritually immature and ignorant in so many ways, they are nevertheless dear to his heart. Obviously John remembers this as he is writing some 50 years later. "Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'"

In just a few hours, the Good Shepherd will lay down his life for his sheep, a concept that they still could not come to grips with. They could not comprehend. They did not want to believe this. And Jesus knew that they would miss him. Jesus knew that they would miss

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his physical presence but they couldn't go where he was going, at least not yet. He alone must perform the great work of redemption on the cross. He alone would then go to the Father. All others must wait. I find it interesting even as the high priest in the Old Testament was the only one allowed to go into the Holy of Holies to make atonement for the sins of the people, so to here we see the great High Priest as the only one who can make this sacrifice by going into the holy place on our behalf. The writer of Hebrews speaks of this in Hebrews 6:19, he says, "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul." Aren't you glad we've got some anchors? We've got an anchor here, folks. This hope we have is an anchor of the soul, "a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us."

So given the inevitability of his departure and knowing that they could not come with him, he gives this important charge to his disciples and to all of us, verse 34, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." We have beheld the perfections of Christ by examining the glory of his atonement and now, secondly, by examining the legacy of his love. Notice he says "A new commandment I give to you." Certainly it is a commandment, it is a great duty, one that we are to faithfully fulfill. Do you want to know the will of God? Here's an area of the will of God. It's real easy, it's written right here. Here's something that we all must do by virtue of his supreme example. This is no superficial sentimental kind of love. This is not your usual run-of-the-mill charity. What the Lord is speaking of here is a very rare, uncommon, exceptional kind of selfless, sacrificial love. "A new commandment I give to you, you are to love one another even as I have loved you."

Now, the Old Testament law required love for God and for one's neighbor but notice this is a new commandment and I believe it's new for several reasons. First of all, it is new in that they must now and we must now love like Jesus loved. You see, this commandment carries with it the full weight of Christ's supreme example. The entirety of his life was a manifestation of this kind of love and it was just perfectly illustrated a few minutes before in the foot washing scenario and now in his death. So he is the standard, the new standard, of loving your neighbor. Moreover, not only is Christ's love our example but also here we see the infinite love that exists between the Father and the Son, all of which is expressed in this new commandment.

Secondly, it's a new commandment because of a new priority. You see folks, here it makes a priority of loving the brethren, fellow Christians, as Christ loves us; loving those who like us are newly born of God; who like us resemble our heavenly Father, therefore, frankly, it should be far more lovable than the unregenerate who are still at enmity with the Triune God that dwells within us. So this is new in that it's going to require a greater

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level of intimacy, a higher degree of self-sacrifice than that which was required under the Mosaic law. We can understand this. Our love for our physical family always runs stronger than our love for those outside the family. So too must be our love for each other as adopted sons and daughters in the family of God. If you think about it, it is possible for brothers or sisters according to the flesh to be eternally separated but not so those who are united together in Christ. Folks, the ties of grace must exceed the ties of blood. I want you to remember this the next time you belittle or ignore or slander or mistreat some brother or sister in Christ; or worse yet, when you abandon them altogether for no biblical reason.

This command is also new because it will now be made possible as a result of a new nature, a transformed heart and mind, one that was promised as a result of the new covenant inaugurated just a few minutes before at the Last Supper. This command is also new because there is a new threat. You see, the nascent church, that fledgling church, would be exceptionally vulnerable and fragile. In fact, it's been vulnerable and fragile throughout redemptive history. Were it not for God who has promised to build the church, the church would've gone long, long ago. As Jesus says, this is a little flock. It doesn't sound too formidable, does it? A little flock? That's what we are. So folks, we've got to stick together. Like a small group of soldiers surrounded by a vast and a vicious enemy, we've got to cover each other's back. We've got to care for each other. Hold onto each other in intimate fellowship. This is so important.

This command is also new because it will be the expression of a new and a blessed hope. You see, regardless of who we are, if we are in Christ, we all share in his glorious inheritance. One day we will all spend heaven together. "But Pastor, some people are just so hard to love." Yes, and you're probably one of them and so am I. So what do you do? Look for some work of the Spirit of God in their life and then love that saint because of that and know that someday both of you will be perfected in the love of Christ.

This is also a new commandment because the Spirit of God uses our obedience in this realm, our commitment to love one another as a means of grace to progressively conform us into the image of Christ. Remember, it is the glory of Christ that motivates our obedience. It is our obedience then that gives us a clearer and richer vision of Christ. Jesus said in John 14:21, "Whoever has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father and I will love him and will," catch this, "manifest Myself to him." Folks, do you want to experience more of that soul-satisfying joy of a felt Christ deep within your soul? Then get serious about keeping his commandments.

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Finally, this command is new because, verse 35, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." Beloved, one of the surest ways that you can determine whether or not you are truly born again is by looking into your heart and asking this question: do I truly love those who belong to Christ? If the answer is yes, then you have your answer. Ask yourself: do you love your church family in this way? Do you love believers in other churches this way? I'm not talking about that goofy, sentimental little cliquish kind of love that you have for your little group of friends. I'm talking about a sincere, self-sacrificing love that Jesus is talking about that reaches out to the whole family of the redeemed. You will recall that the Pharisees were known by their ostentatious garb and their phylacteries but, dear friends, the Christian is known by his love. His love for other believers. This is the mark of a disciple of Christ. This is the kind of love that Paul outlines in 1 Corinthians 13. John will later say in 1 John 3:14, "We know that we have passed out of death into life," in other words, we know that we have been born again, that we are part of the family of God, here's why, "because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death." You show me a person that has no love for fellow Christians and I'll show you a person who has no basis to claim that they truly know Christ. And it is this spirit of love, especially for fellow believers, that informs the world that we belong to Christ. This is why Paul says in Romans 12:9-10, "Let love be without hypocrisy. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor." Does this describe you? Let me ask it differently: is this how other people would describe you with respect to your love for those even within your church family? Peter described the same kind of unfeigned genuine love when he admonished the believers in 1 Peter 1:22 saying, "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart." Then he says in 1 Peter 4:8, "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins." And certainly Peter could speak from experience as we're going to see. It's so neat to see how he learned this lesson so well.

Folks, you can have all of your doctrinal ducks in a row, you can be an activist for the truth, for evangelism, for missions and so forth, you can speak with the tongues of men and angels but as Paul says, "If you do not have love, you have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal." In other words, your words are no better than the gibberish of pagan rituals accompanied by their obnoxious gongs and cymbals so when you come and speak to people, people want to plug their ears and walk the other way. Beloved, this is very serious. It's a very serious issue in every church including ours because the world is watching and the world is judging. Francis Schaeffer captured this perfectly when he said, "The church is to be a loving church in a dying culture. In the midst of our world, in the midst of our present dying culture, Jesus is giving a right to the world. Upon his authority, he gives the world the right to judge whether you and I are born again Christians on the basis of our observable love toward all Christians." He went on to say,

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"That's pretty frightening. Jesus turns to the world and says, 'I have something to say to you: on the basis of my authority, I give you a right. You may judge whether or not an individual is a Christian on the basis of the love he shows to all Christians.'"

Folks, remember this the next time you huddle together in your little gossip corner and whisper slanderous words about someone in your church family. Remember this the next time you walk away from Christian friends because they hurt your feelings or because they didn't jump through your hoops. Remember this the next time you lash out at a brother or sister in Christ in anger and in jealousy and then swell up with pride because you put them in their place. My friends, what kind of message does that communicate to a world that already hates Christ and laughs at the Gospel?

A great example of this kind of love was the English preacher, George Whitfield. You will recall he was the great Puritan preacher who was really responsible for much of the Great Awakening in Britain and even in the American colonies in the mid-1700s. It is reported that there was a feud that went on between Whitfield who was a Calvinist and his friend, John Wesley, who was a very confused Arminian. He held to the contradictory and on biblical tenets of Arminianism. It is reported that Mr. Whitfield was once asked by a partisan, "Do you think that we when we get to heaven shall see John Wesley there?" Whitfield replied, "No, I do not think we shall." And the questioner was quite delighted to hear such an answer but then Mr. Whitfield went on to say, "I believe that John Wesley will have a place so near the throne of God and such poor creatures as you and I will be so far off as to be hardly able to see him." Such should be the heart attitude of every Christian toward every other person in our spiritual family.

Well, upon hearing Jesus' new commandment to love one another as Jesus loved them, notice what Peter says, verse 36, "Lord, where are You going?" Somehow that's not what I would have expected him to say. Well, folks, here we are going to see, 3. The fullness of his grace. Obviously Peter's mind was still stuck on Jesus' earlier statement concerning his departure. He probably had heard very little of what Jesus had just said regarding this new commandment of love. Given Peter's proclivities, his personality, his pride, his undeserved self-confidence which is going to soon be very evident, he probably thought Jesus' admonition pertaining to all this love stuff was really not necessary for him. Some of you may be thinking the same thing and I'm sure Jesus felt that at times he was speaking to toddlers, self absorbed, easily distracted, immature children whose only concern is their own personal happiness.

In fact, it's interesting, last night I had a situation that really illustrates what is going on here. I was putting on my jacket getting ready to go outside and my grandsons were doing what grandsons do, fighting amongst each other, and I happened to catch Brock,

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the youngest one, the 5-year-old, and he's watching me put on my jacket and I said, "Brock, come here," and I basically said to him, "Knockoff all of that angry yelling. Wipe off that scowl on your face. That kind of behavior is unacceptable. You have got to learn to show love toward one another." To which he replied, "Papa, where are you going?" This is the same situation here with Peter but Jesus being the perfect, patient teacher, something I struggle with, one full of grace and truth answered and said, "Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later." There is such hope in that answer, isn't there? Such hope.

"Peter said to Him, 'Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You.'" Matthew records that he said, "Even though all may fall away because of you, I will never fall away." Mark records, "But Peter kept saying insistently, 'Even if I have to die with you, I will not deny you.'" Luke says, "But he said to him, 'Lord, with you I am ready to go both to prison and to death.'" Aren't you glad the Savior is full of grace towards us? He saw through all of this foolish bravado. He knew Peter was well intentioned but he was overconfident. His boast would not be able to endure the temptation that would soon come upon him within literally minutes.

Verse 38, "Jesus answered, 'Will you lay down your life for Me?'" What an ironic statement. It's going to be the other way around, at least at first. "Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times." Oh dear friends, how little we really know ourselves, right? How easily we can exaggerate our spirituality rather than being suspect of it. But Jesus knows all of this. He knew that Peter, even though he meant well, would fail miserably. This would lead to bitter tears of remorse and repentance and ultimately to restoration all because of the fullness of his grace. And as we will examine later, Christ's love for Peter did not allow him to fail ultimately. He did not cast him off. He loved Peter. He loves us all as we learned earlier "to the end, to the uttermost." In fact, about 3 decades later, Peter would lay down his life for his God and finally be able to be with his beloved Savior. Folks, I hope that after gazing upon these perfections of Christ, the Spirit will use this as a means of transforming you a little bit more into the image of Christ.

I want to close with a quote that I've given you in your little bulletin, a quote from John Owen, a great Puritan theologian and pastor out of the University of Oxford who in 1655 said this, "Let us live in the constant contemplation of the glory of Christ, and virtue will proceed from him to repair all our decays, to renew a right spirit within us, and to cause us to abound in all duties of obedience. It will fix the soul unto that object which is suited to give it delight, complacency, and satisfaction. When the mind is filled with thoughts of Christ and his glory, when the soul thereon cleaves unto him with intense affections, they will cast out, or not give admittance unto, those causes of spiritual weakness and

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Beholding the Perfections of Christ

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 13:31-38

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indisposition. And nothing will so much excite and encourage our souls hereunto as a constant view of Christ and his glory."

Father, this is the cry of our heart that we might become more like him for it is in his name that I pray. Amen.

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