

“Endless Love to the End”

(Part 5)

John 13.31–38

³¹Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; ³²if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately. ³³Little 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.’ ³⁴A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

³⁶Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, where are You going?” Jesus answered, “Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later.” ³⁷Peter said to Him, “Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You.” ³⁸Jesus answered, “Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times.” [NASB]

HOPE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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28th June, 2009

I. Introduction

When a pop star and a screen star both die relatively young on the same day, the world is rocked with a question: where is all the glory *now*? Strange and sad, how we keep finding ourselves in a place where we ask that question. Where is all the glory *now*? Where is all the fame, all the fortune? Where is all the glory *now*? It was a question the disciples were beginning to face, and soon would face much more intensely. Jesus did not leave them to figure it out for themselves. He told them. “*Now* is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him.” Jesus reveals four intimate features of the glory that is *now*. Intimate immediacy, intimate transcendence, intimate immanence, and intimate eminence.

A. *Intimate Immediacy (31-32)*

First is intimate immediacy.³¹ “Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus said, ‘*Now* is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; ³²if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him *immediately*.’” There is *immediacy* in the relationship between God and His Son. This is true in time and in space, as it were.

1. *Time*

Firstly in time. When the Father glorifies the Son, the Son simultaneously glorifies the Father. The son of perdition had gone out into the darkness, and now the Son of Man would unveil the light of God’s glory for all who have eyes to see. Now His hour had come. Now the suffering of the Savior for all the sins of the elect would be manifest. Now the fullness of perfect obedience to God’s Law—including the penal sanctions for our disobedience—would be complete. Now the world would see Him who lived this song: ^{Ps119.112NIV} “My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end.” Him who lived this song: ¹²⁷ “Because I love your commands more than gold, more than pure gold, ¹²⁸ and because I consider all your precepts right, I hate every wrong path.” The Son glorifies the Father. *Now*.

Now the faithfulness of God would be brilliantly displayed in the dark hours of Jesus’ death for you and me. The real God and real man, dying in the Person of the Son on the cross. Yes, at that time many were saying, “Where is all the glory *now*?” “Where is your God *now*?” And the answer is, “Our God is in heaven, He does whatever he pleases.” ^{Ps115.2f} And the Father pleases to glorify the Son. *Now*.

How? Through the night of betrayal, agony, trial, denial, and crucifixion, God would unveil the Son’s faithfulness to love His own to the end.^{v1} Glorious faithfulness. Even when the Father was faithful to His promise to forsake His Son instead of His Church, so too the Son was faithful to His promise to fulfill the Father’s will to love you and me to the end. And then in a few short days the Son would arise from the dead, unveiling the victorious power of God over our last enemy death.

Intimate immediacy in time and in eternity. We’ll find it again in ch14¹³ “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” It underlies Jesus prayer in ch17¹ “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You.”

2. “*Space*” (*Relation*)

Intimate immediacy. Firstly in time, and secondly in space, as it were, or in relation between Father and Son. Immediacy. No mediation required. There is no mediation in the Father and the Son glorifying one another. There must be a Mediator between God and man for either to glorify the other. Not so between Father and Son. This became evident at Jesus’ baptism. Jesus insisted on being baptized in order to ^{Mt3.15} “fulfill all righteousness.” ¹⁶ After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, ¹⁷ and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”

Intimacy between Father and Son with no mediator. The Son needs no mediator to manifest the glory of God, for it was the Father’s good pleasure that all the fulness of the glory of God should dwell in the Son.^{Col1.19} And the Father needs no mediator to manifest the glory of the Son, but from heaven Father proclaims plainly His Son’s perfection. Intimate immediacy.

B. Intimate Transcendence (33)

Second is intimate *transcendence*.³³ “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.’ Here is intimacy: “Little children.” “My dear children.” We would not like to hear someone our age or younger saying that to us. So you can imagine, then, how intimate was Jesus’ affection for the disciples, that He could say “Little children,” and they genuinely could receive and relish it.

Jesus did not share this intimacy with “the Jews” whom He told would not be able to come where He is.^{7.33} He did not call them “little children”; He called them children of their father the devil.^{8.44} But those who are His “little children” don’t stop being His little children even when He transcends their sight, their touch, their universe. He is going to a place where they cannot come. Not now. He has work to do, to prepare a place for them.^{14.2} They have work to do, to be used as His means upon which Christ will build His Church.^{Mt16.18;Eph2.20}

Their intimacy would not diminish one iota, but they must see the unveiling of His transcendence. He must ascend into heaven before their very sight while blessing them with uplifted hands,^{Lk24.50f} in order for them to fully believe He is God... and in order for them to eagerly anticipate His return. For a time He would be above, and in His Person, out of reach... but no less intimate. Intimate *transcendence*.

C. Intimate Immanence (34-35)

Third is intimate *immanence*.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.” Though the Son of Man ascends into heaven and is transcendent, above and beyond, yet by His Spirit God is *immanent*. He is there with the disciples. He *has* to be, in order for them to love one another. They cannot love one another without being first loved by Him.

He is there with the disciples. He *has* to be, in order for them to be constantly associated with Him, growing in Him, learning from Him, imitating Him, manifesting Him. Finite, fallen, albeit forgiven humans do not have the strength to keep following the Lord unless He is *present*. Intimately present.

1. Evident

Now this intimate immanence is evident and necessary. Firstly, it is evident. It is evident in your love for one another. And here we begin to see the Lord’s work of glorifying His disciples. Nobody ever *adds* glory to God. God’s glory is never *increased*. For us to glorify God is to enhance His reputation among people by worshipping, confessing, proclaiming, and living. Thus Jesus says,^{Mt5.16} “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” And Paul says,^{1Co6.20} “You have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.”

But for God to glorify us is cleanse us from all our wickedness and sin, to make us something we’re not: holy as He is holy.^{Mt5.48} Thus Paul says,^{Ro8.29} “For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also *glorified*.”

As He purifies and sanctifies us to a glorious estate, He unveils His glorious mercy, love, power, and faithfulness to complete the good work He began. He has to be *here*, to do this work *in us*. His *immanence*, His *being here*, is evident in our love according to the *new commandment* Jesus gives.

What is the “new commandment”? The “old commandment” was to love your neighbor as yourself. The “new commandment” is to love one another as Christ has loved us. There is nothing “new” in the *essence* of this command. The moral law is the transcript of God’s holiness, and His holiness never changes. Christ loved the believers in the Old Testament in the same way He loves those in the New. He laid down His life for His friends.^{Jn15.12} Even in the Old, to love your neighbor as yourself, means to sacrificially lay down your own needs for those of your neighbor.

The “New Commandment” is a further unveiling of the Law as a rule of life under the Covenant of Grace. The same law that was beautifully circumscribed on us in creation, spoken to Adam in the Garden, written by God on Moses’ tablets, is written by Christ upon our circumcised hearts. God unveils His glorious faithfulness to His own promise through Moses: Dt30.6⁶ “The LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.” To love the Lord is to love those whom He loves and gave His life for.^{15.14;1Jn4}

To love one another “as I have loved you” can mean “in the way I have loved you... according to the example I have given you.” That is what Jesus implies in ch15¹². But “as I have loved you” can also mean “now that I have loved you.” That is perfectly consistent with this entire chapter 13. We have seen through the foot washing and Jesus’ teaching that we cannot serve one another until we have been served by Jesus. We cannot love one another until we have been loved by Jesus.

We cannot love one another if we do not have Jesus intimately, immanently dwelling in our circumcised, born-again hearts, loving us. As He makes you more glorious by enabling and leading you to love as He has loved you, He will unveil His own glory as the God who is love and truth and life. His intimate immanence will be evident.

2. *Necessary*

Secondly, this intimate immanence is necessary. We think it is a nice resume-filler that ³⁵“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” We want to think the Church would be admired by the world if we would just love one another. But that’s not the point. If we love one another, the world will know we are Jesus’ disciples, because only Jesus’ disciples can love one another as He has loved us. And if the world knows we are Jesus’ disciples, the world will treat us the way it treated Jesus. The world does *not* admire Jesus and will *not* admire His disciples.

And when the world treats us the way it treated Jesus, we will become very aware of our need for His intimate immanence. And He will not disappoint us.

D. *Intimate Eminence (36-38)*

Immediacy, transcendence, immanence. Fourth is intimate *eminence*.³⁶ Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, where are You going?” Jesus answered, “Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will 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 rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times.”

Ugh. It feels like a kick in the gut. Gently, Jesus responds to Peter with assurance... “Peter, you *will* come where I am in due time... but your time is not quite yet. First it must be My time.”

Oh, what suffering Peter’s impertinence brought upon Jesus. But Jesus does not love Peter any less. Jesus just reveals that in order for Him to unveil God’s glory and to glorify Peter and all the disciples, Jesus must be *eminent*. He must be *above* Peter. He must go *before* Peter if He is to love Peter and us to the end.

Peter once confessed Jesus to be the Son of God. Peter then insisted the Son of God must never suffer.^{Mt16.22} Now Peter again claims that He will stand by Jesus to prevent Jesus’ suffering. He has learned that to deny Jesus’ humble foot-washing is to deny Jesus’ sovereign soul-washing. Peter must come to know that to deny Jesus’ suffering is to deny Jesus. He will learn this in a very miserable way, as he in fact does deny Jesus not once, not twice, but three times.

II. Doctrine

Jesus’ transcendent, immanent, and eminent intimacy with us brings immediate glory to the Father, and future glory to the Church. Jesus’ intimacy glorifies God, and will glorify us. He reveals God’s faithfulness, and makes us faithful.

III. Receiving

Let me put this in another way. I know you will understand it, whether you are a believer or not, born again or not, the Spirit of Christ dwelling immanently in you or not. I know you will, because on every human heart there is a remnant of a rule reverberating down through history from the very first man and woman who lived on earth. It is a rule that says, “Faithfulness is good.” This rule is so fundamental to the holiness with which God made Adam and Eve. Corrupted as it may be, there is a whisper of it in every soul save that which God has given over like Judas to the possession of the devil. It is a rule we all deep inside yearn to experience in practice. Love God and love one another... faithfully. You find this Law of nature in some surprising places.

What I think may be the sweetest, purest rock song ever written and sung captures both the human cry and the divine promise. Sadly, it also expresses the human lie. Written and recorded by Chrissy Hynde with the Pretenders, the song is entitled “I’ll Stand by You.” As an expression of the human cry and the divine law and promise, it is sweet and pure. As an expression of a human promise without Christ, it is a heartbreaking lie... as Peter himself proved. The song is, then, heartbreaking beauty.

“Oh, why you look so sad? Tears are in your eyes. Come on and come to me now. Don’t be ashamed to cry; let me see you through, ’cause I’ve seen the dark side too.” Jesus has seen the dark side too. He has seen your dark side for you.

“When the night falls on you, you don’t know what to do... Nothing you confess, could make me love you less.” Jesus at this very moment in His transcendent glory is showing to His Father the wounds He suffered in His intimate love for you. He suffered these knowing every dark sin you would commit. So there’s nothing you can confess that will make Him love you less. “I’ll stand by you, I’ll stand by you, won’t let nobody hurt you, I’ll stand by you.”

“So if you’re mad, get mad, don’t hold it all inside. Come on and talk to me now. Hey, what you got to hide? I get angry too; well I’m a lot like you.” King David got mad, and what did He do? Injustice swirled around him, wickedness whirled up within him. He went and talked to God. Jesus got angry too. Injustice and untruth swirled around Him in whom there is no wickedness. Jesus is a Person. Jesus is human. He is intimately immanent. His Spirit is in you who believe. When the world treats you as it treated Him because you are His disciple, you can Talk to Him. He is human, a lot like you.

And so intimate is His immanence, that “When you’re standing at the crossroads and don’t know which path to choose, let Me come along, ’cause even if you’re wrong, I’ll stand by you, I’ll stand by you. Won’t let nobody hurt you; I’ll stand by you. Take me in, into your darkest hour; and I’ll never desert you... I’ll stand by you.

The cry of the human soul is for faithfulness. The lie of the human soul is that apart from Christ we can be faithful. That faithfulness which Adam and Eve once knew was lost in their unfaithfulness to God, to each other, and to all of their descendants. Peter proved what you and I know. We like to say, “And when... when the night falls on you, baby, you’re feeling all alone, you won’t be on your own; I’ll stand by you.” But in the darkest hour we don’t.

I look back on my life and see a string of dark hours when I didn’t. And how grief-stricken are the moments and hours when I have encouraged people to think I’d stand by them and that was all they needed. When I sang “I’ll stand by you,” instead of singing “Jesus Christ will stand by you.” It is the lie of the human soul, that anything or anyone apart from Christ will stand by you in your darkest hour. Your darkest hour, you see, is precisely that hour when all your disciples or your friends or your loves don’t stand by you.

There is only One who suffered a darker hour, for in His darkest hour His infinite and eternal Father appeared not to stand by Him. That was the dark hour of Gethsemane, the dark hour of the trial, the dark hour of Peter’s denial, the dark hour of the cross, the dark hour of the tomb. But through that dark hour, though none stood by Him, Jesus stood by His promise to love *you* to the end.

Take it from Peter. Peter was singing this song “I’ll stand by You” to Jesus, and Jesus had not even yet *done* this song to the end, to Peter. In that order, the song is a lie. You will not—you cannot—stand by anyone, until you let Jesus love you to the end. His intimacy is *eminent*, yes *preeminent*. His intimate faithfulness unveils God’s glory. His intimate faithfulness will bring your glory.

Unless you are at this moment given over to the devil, there is something in you that whispers, “Love that is faithful to the end is *good*.” In fact, if you hear that whisper, you can be sure you have not been given over to the devil. Now is the time, then, while it is still day, and you have *not* come to the darkest hour, to receive Jesus who will love you to the end. He, and He alone, will stand by you. No lie. Only pure, sweet, Truth.