

The Upper Room Study: a summary Part 1 a study for the College and Career Class
at Gulf Coast Baptist Church 6/4/23 by Steve Thomas

Introduction

Hours before Christ went to the cross, he spent a last supper with his disciples. He began to prepare them for the changes that they were about to experience in the Christian life. In a little more than 4 chapters in the book of John, the Holy Spirit gave us a blueprint of the Christian life, the way that it was intended to be lived. Over the past year, we have been looking at the words of Christ, and then following the trail of ideas through the New Testament. Jesus dealt with the topics of love, joy, peace, the glory of God, a new way of asking, a new covenant, abiding in Christ, defending against Satanic attack, and the new ministry of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. The believer should be familiar with these topics as they apply to the Christian life, so that he can live the abundant life that Jesus came to bring.

Love One Another

Paul, Peter, and John all took the new commandment given in the upper room to love one another, as Christ had loved the disciples, and unwrapped it. They each showed what that love would look like, how to pull strength from it, and how that love could be stifled if attempted the wrong way.

Paul referred to the law of Christ, contrasting the law of Moses with the New Commandment that Christ gave. When the believer tries self improvement, like the Galatians in Galatians 5, it leads to believers biting and devouring one another, not loving one another. Only the Spirit of God can enable this type of love. Paul describes this love in 1 Corinthians 13, in the context of the spiritual gifts. The spiritual gifts are the way that the believer can direct love towards each other, profiting the Body of Christ. These gifts are explained in Romans 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Corinthians 12-14.

In his epistle, Peter directs the believer to obey the Spirit and love with an unfeigned love, this being the outgrowth of the gospel (1:25). In chapter 3 of the same letter, Peter tells the believer that love is the “one mind” that they should have towards one another (3:8-9). Listed here are many of the things Paul describes as characteristics of love in his letters.

John brings up the new commandment 6-7 times in his three short letters. According to John the key to loving one another is to abide in Christ and to live “in the light”. The believer who is in Christ should be focusing on eternal things, at ease in his position. The believer who has not ordered their life (walk) around love is not living in the light, but in darkness.

The Comforter promised in the upper room would lead the believer and enable him to love his brethren. Only when the Spirit is abiding in the believer can the believer love with God’s love, having the mind of Christ (Phil 2:5-9).

Joy and Peace

In the upper room, Jesus predicted sorrow and agitation for the disciples. But he also told them that they would be made to rejoice with His own joy (16:22-24). He also told them that through belief (faith) they could “let not their heart be troubled” (14:1).

Paul connects faith and joy in Romans 5, chapter 12 verses 1-15, and also in 1 Corinthians 12 the aforementioned section on spiritual gifts. The joy of the Lord is not contingent on circumstances, but can be experienced through any trial or tribulation. The book of Philippians separates joy from ones circumstances and mentions joy over 16 times in 4 short chapters. Peter (1 Peter 4:13) and James (1:2,12) teach that joy can be experienced through suffering. They echo what the writer of Hebrews teaches that

by looking forward, one can experience joy by focusing on what God has prepared for us in future tense salvation.

True peace is not available to the unbeliever, only the individual that has experienced the benefits of the crosswork of Christ can experience the peace that passes all understanding. As Christ was revealing in the Upper Room, not only his departure, but the manner of His departure was necessary for the disciples to receive peace (Rom 5:1, 10; Eph 2:16, 2 Cor 5:21).

Paul makes clear that in order for the believer to experience the peace, his focus must be on the Godhead, and communication will reveal his spiritual condition (Phil 4:6-7, Gal 5:22). Worship, Supplication, Thanksgiving, and the Request is shown to be the recipe for peace for the believer. A focus on what God has said about Himself, an understanding of the believer's need for aid and the Father's position to give that aid, a reliance on the Father to give whatever aid is in accordance with His will, an understanding of the works of God and gratitude for those works, and then a specific request to the Father, in the character of the Son to glorify Himself through the believer's circumstances. This pattern will bring peace that guards the mind and heart of the believer.

Trouble will come to the believer, as it did for Christ. But with a proper focus, and an ongoing relationship with the Spirit of God, the believer can experience the three types of peace - peace with God, peace from God, and peace with men.

God is glorified

In John 13, Christ began his discourse with this statement. Christ recognizes that the work about to be done will be accomplished by the Godhead together, not just by Him. Where one person of the Godhead is, the other two persons are as well. They "corroborate glory" in their individual works. Christ was about to reveal some of God's character by his actions over the next several hours. The Father and the Spirit would as well. Christ states that He Himself was glorified, and God (the Father) would be glorified in Him. This could be translated "because of." Christ was about to perform flawlessly the plan that was prepared before time began.

Christ made it possible for the believer to possess and display the glory of God when he accomplished his crosswork. He alluded to this in his upper room discourse. The NT writers unpacked this concept in multiple scenarios, showing how it was to take place. The believer seeks out the desirous will of God, and empowered by God fulfills the works laid out for him to do by the father, empowered by the Son, led by the Spirit. Paul's communication with the Father on behalf of the Thessalonians was that they would be filled up with every good opinion of Goodness and work of faith by God's power (2 Thess 1:11). This was the way in which the character of Christ would be put on full display (1:12). Resurrection life as well as Eternal life are both referred to here, as well as the grace of God.

This is an apt description of the believer being used of God. He has nothing to donate to God's goodness. He simply directs faith and is empowered by God to put Christ's character on full display. Often times this is during times of crisis and tribulation. The believer should seek to please God by allowing God to be glorified both in and through us. ***God is glorified and pleased when the believer is energized by the Godhead to do the works marked out by God (Eph 2:10) - D. Spurbeck.***

Christ states that He is also glorified in the disciples (John 17:10). The change in these men over the next few weeks would be astounding. God's character would be formed in them by the Spirit. Paul uses this language in his letter to the Galatians (4:19).