I. Introduction

A. John 13:21-38 . . . When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me." [22] The disciples began looking at one another, at a loss to know of which one He was speaking. [23] There was reclining on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. [24] So Simon Peter gestured to him, and said to him, "Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking." [25] He, leaning back thus on Jesus' bosom, said to Him, "Lord, who is it?" [26] Jesus then answered, "That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him." So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. [27] After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly." [28] Now no one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He had said this to him. [29] For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, "Buy the things we have need of for the feast"; or else, that he should give something to the poor. [30] So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night. [31] Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him (*the Son of Man*); [32] if God is glorified in Him (*the Son of Man*), God will also glorify Him (*the Son of Man*) in Himself, and will glorify Him (*the Son of Man*) immediately. [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.' [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 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."

B. Five lessons from these verses: (1 - vs 21) God knows what is in your heart, and there is great wisdom and safety in being just as aware as God is of what is in your heart. (2 - vs 27) Opening ourselves to the influence and temptations of the devil leads to greater and greater sin. (3 - vs 34)

Jesus is both the example and standard of love for one another. (4 - vs 35) Love among Christians shows the world what we believe and who we belong to. (5 - vs 36-38) Spiritual pride leads to spiritual downfall.

C. Pray

II. Five lessons from John 13:21-38

A. First Lesson: (vs 21) God knows what is in your heart and in my heart, and there is great wisdom and safety in being just as aware as God is of what is in your heart as He.

1. The first time John makes us aware of how much Jesus knows about what is in our hearts is in John 1:47, where upon seeing Nathanael, Jesus said, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!"
   a. The second time John brings this same truth to our attention is in John 2:23-25, where he writes, "When Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. [24] But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them . . . for He knew what was in man."
   b. John's third example of how much Jesus knows about what is in our hearts is found in John 6:64, where Jesus says, "But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him."
   c. The fourth time John speaks of this is in John 6:70, where Jesus said, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?"And John goes on to say that Jesus was speaking of Judas Iscariot.
   d. Then here in John 13:11 & 21, we see once again that Jesus knows what is in our hearts – that is, what it is that we desire, long for, value, and treasure.
2. My point is simple – just as God knows what is in your heart, so there is great wisdom and safety in making a sincere and honest effort at being just as aware – as He is – of what is in your heart.
   a. But, you may say, the Bible says, "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9) Doesn't this means that though I may have some small idea of what is in my heart, left to discover what is in it on our own, I cannot know the depth and extent of what is there?
   b. Yes, it does mean that. However, the next verse says, "I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind" (Jeremiah 17:10). And

we read in 1 Samuel 16:7, that God does not see people as man sees them, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.

c. So though it is true that on your own you cannot adequately discern what is in your heart, you do belong to a God who fully knows what is in there and can reveal it to you.
   (1) Therefore, like David, you can ask God to search you and look deep into your heart and show you what is there. You can ask God to try or test you in order to expose your anxious, distrustful thoughts. And you can ask God to reveal to you any hurtful way that is in you (Psalm 139:23-24).
   (2) And though you ought to pray this prayer for an extended period of time because of the depth and extent of evil that resides in your heart, you should not stop with this prayer, but rather continue on by asking God to lead you in the everlasting way.
   (3) When talking to God about gaining His help and empowerment for godly living, I personally use an adaptation of Psalm 23:3, which goes like this, "Lead me in paths of righteousness for Your name's sake."

3. So why is it wise to ask God to search our hearts and reveal the ugliness that is there?
   a. First of all, so we can die to it, kill it off, turn away from it, flee from it, and replace it with Godly desires, Christ-like longings, as well as God-honoring, God-pleasing qualities, beliefs, values, thinking, and behavior.
   b. But also, it is wise to ask God to search our hearts in order to remove and die to the things that are in there that get in the way of pleasing Him, loving Him, revering Him, and honoring Him.
4. Admittedly, this is not the only important effort we ought to make in our pursuit of godliness.
   a. For example, Jesus told the disciples, "Keep watching and praying that they may not enter into temptation" (Matthew 26:41). Truly, vigilance is vital to remaining faithful in living a godly life.
   b. And Paul exhorts us to guard what comes into and is going on in our mind (Philippians 4:8) – for as we think so we live (Proverbs 23:7).
5. However, Jesus emphasized the relation of the heart to how we live when He said, "Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders" (Matthew

15:19). In other words, what is in your heart forms the foundation of what you desire, treasure, value, and fear, as well as how you think, speak, and behave.

6. And so I encourage you to make full use of God's knowledge of what is in your heart, and as you see what He sees, do what is necessary to move toward having a pure heart.

B. Second Lesson: (vs 27) Opening ourselves to the influence and temptations of the devil leads to greater and greater sin.
   1. We know from John 13:2 that before they had gotten to the dinner we just read about, Judas was already thinking that getting paid to betray Jesus was a good idea, and he looking for the right time to make it happen – even though he hadn't acted on his plan as yet.
   2. However, when Jesus identified Judas as the one who would betray Him by giving him the "dipped morsel," Judas went from the planning stage to the action stage. And it was in this same moment of moving from planning to acting that Satan moved in to a heart that was open to carrying out an evil deed.
   3. My point here is that evil grows. No one begins life as a murderer or an habitual liar or an alcoholic or a con artist or an adulterer or an angry person or an abusive person. People become those things incrementally, step by step, and a little at a time.
   4. And the same is true for Christians. Having gotten out of the deep end of the pool of sin, we don't just jump back in, we stick a toe in, and then wade in, and then we move back into the deep end.
   5. In other words, sin grows progressively, and most often slowly, but it always grows – if left unchecked.
   6. And so my question to you is the same one I ask myself: Is there any sin, be it so small, that you are allowing to remain a part of your life? Is there any sin, be it so small, that you have put off, but now have returned to – even if in just a small way? If the answer to either of these is "yes" then you are on dangerous ground, for as Paul writes, "A little yeast (if left long enough) leavens the whole lump of dough" (1 Corinthians 5:6).
   7. Therefore, let us ever be on guard for the small sins, for saying no when they are small, or putting them out while they are small prevents them from growing bigger and doing greater damage.

C. Third Lesson: (vs 34) Jesus is both the example and standard of love for one another.

1. Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (John 13:34).
2. Sadly, we are far more prone to notice when we are not being loved than when we are being loving.
    a. We are far more prone to give attention to the extent of the love, the quality of the love, and the faithfulness of the love we receiving than the love we are giving.
    b. And we are far more prone to give love according to how we believe we are being loved, than to love as God loves us, or even to love others as we want to be by them.
3. In spite of our misuse of love, Paul says, “Love never fails.” To me, the reason love never fails is because love never fails to be love.
    a. And again, in my way of thinking, for love to never fail to be love, it must stand apart from and hold influence over our desires, fears, passions, insecurities, self-centeredness, and felt-needs.
    b. And for love to stand apart from and hold influence over all these things, it must have an immovable, unchangeable standard – which it does – and that standard is the love of Jesus for His disciples, and the love of God for you and me.
4. Therefore, anchor your love to the standard of love demonstrated by Jesus toward His disciples – so that your thoughts, words, and deeds will express love in all situations and toward all people. And should you lack insight in to how to show love in a certain situation or to a specific person, go back to Jesus – study and ponder what He did and said, and follow His example.

D. Fourth Lesson: (vs 35) Love among Christians shows the world what we believe and who we belong to.
    1. Jesus said that if the disciples loved one another – in a manner that was like the way He loved them, it would show the world that they were His disciples.
    2. Just before saying this, Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you” (vs 34).
        a. And He repeats this command in John 15:12, where He says, “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.”
        b. And He repeats it again in John 15:17, where He says, “This I command you, that you love one another.”
    3. John restates this command twice in his first letter.

a. The first time is in 1 John 3:11, “For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.”
b. And the second time is in 1 John 3:23, “This is His command-ment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.”

4. So what is the significance and importance of Christians loving one another?
   a. First of all, it shows that Christians not only teach, but keep the second great commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31).
   b. Second, it shows that Christians believe in God and know God, for as John writes, “Love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. [8] The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love” (1 John 4:7-8),
   c. And third reason is the one Jesus gives here in John 13. When we Christians love one another, it gives the world a reason to believe that our claim to be born again and our claim to be followers of Jesus Christ, is valid and true.
5. Such things as infighting, power struggles, unresolved conflicts, division within the church, some Christians not talking to others, and church splits for non-biblical reasons, are examples of Christians failing to love each other as Jesus has loved us. And these kinds of failures give the world valid reasons to think we are hypocrites, and that our claims to being born again and followers of Jesus Christ are false.
6. Therefore, be it within a single church, a denomination, among churches within a community, or within the Body of Christ universal, there is a lot riding on the love we Christians have for one another – such as the glory of God, the worth of Jesus Christ, the validity of the message, and the integrity of Christianity universally.
7. There is one more truth I want to point out about Christians loving one another. John says that this kind of love for one another is proof that we are believers, for in 1 John 3:14, he says, “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love [the brethren] abides in death.”

E. Fifth Lesson: (vs 36-38) Spiritual pride leads to spiritual downfall.
1. The writer of Proverbs 16:18, said, “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling.”

2. In applying these words to Peter's boast in John 13:37, and to Peter's subsequent denial of His Lord, we see that thinking more highly of our strength of character, morality, spirituality, Christian commitment, and Christian zeal produces a self-confidence that leaves us inattentive to temptation and therefore vulnerable to failure in the very area or ways we thought ourselves too strong to fail.
    a. It is the humble Christian who is aware of his strengths, and at the same time remains ever vigilant against any temptation, worldly influence, wrong thought, fleshly desire, careless moment, or wicked way.
    b. It is the humble Christian who is confident of his growth in Christ-likeness, and at the same time ever suspicious of his humanity and susceptibility to temptation and sin.
3. You see, awareness of your godly strengths is good, but without humble and constant vigilance against falling back or being careless, such awareness becomes pride waiting for destruction. And in the same way, confidence over your growth in spirituality is good, but without constant suspicion of your humanity and susceptibility, that confidence becomes a haughty spirit waiting to stumble.
    a. Peter believed that he was of such character and had such zeal for following Jesus that he would willingly lay down his life for Christ – if and when needed.
    b. And yet, Peter stumbled over fear. And he stumbled because he was caught off-guard, and in stumbling he went down as fast as a running child stumbling over a rock.
    c. His lack of humility left him vulnerable. He thought he did not need to be always vigilant regarding what was going on around him, and that he did not need to be always suspicious of what was going on inside him.
4. We are as vulnerable as Peter, for not only fear, but worldly pleasures, possessions, riches, and power lurk around many corners so that without humble vigilance against such things and constant suspicion of our propensity to give in to such things, we too will fall, just as fast and just as hard as Peter.
5. Thankfully, like Peter, we can weep over our failure, repent, and return to living as we ought. And if we repent and return, we will return wiser, more humble, more vigilant, more aware of our need to be suspicious of our humanity, and more determined than ever to as fully as possible draw on the strength, help, word, and grace of God to remain faithful.