

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Humility of Love

Scripture: John 13:1-17

Code: 1540

This morning we come to the 13th chapter of John's gospel in our study. We would say for our visitors that we have been studying the gospel of John now for over a year. We go verse by verse just taking it as God wrote it and opening up each passage to try to understand what John wants to record for us under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Let me just say at the beginning that we believe that the Bible, although written by men, was authored by God Himself.

In the original autographs, every word was inspired by the mind of God, so that when you study the Bible, to study the words of the Bible, not just the concepts, but to study the words of the Bible, is to get at exactly what God meant to say. And so rather than just teach truths about the Bible, we believe in word-by-word, verse-by-verse exposition of the Bible in order that we might understand exactly and precisely what God meant to say to us through these various writers that He used.

And I might add, a footnote to that even in God authoring the Bible and using men as his writers, He allowed the personality of that man to be involved in the writing by a supernatural miracle that we call inspiration...and we call it that because it's a Biblical term...by using both the man's knowledge, ability, experience and vocabulary and the absolute choice of God and that combination brought us the Word of God accurately to the very word inspired by God Himself, And so we study the words of the Bible.

As we come to chapter 13 we come to the great example of the humility of love. The greatest virtue of love is its humility, for it is the humility of love that measures it and that makes it serviceable. And so as we come to this chapter we come to what has to be in all the Word of God one of the most beautiful pictures of love that is anywhere located in the Scriptures. Paul said love seeks not it's own. Love is not selfish. Love always gives. It is the nature of love to give. Love is always humble.

Now in this rich and beautiful passage we're going to see the humility of love, the selflessness of true love. We are about to study what believers in every age have regarded as one of the most precious portions in all of the New Testament. And as we come to John chapter 13, we come to really what amounts to a new section in the Gospel of John. This is a separate section from what has gone up until the end of chapter 12.

Now you remember that at the very beginning of our study of John's Gospel, we told you there would be two basic reactions to Jesus Christ. John, in his Gospel, is presenting Christ as God in human

flesh. And John told us in the very first chapter there would be two reactions to the presentation of Jesus Christ. Number one, the nation Israel would not believe, “He came unto His own and His own” – What? – “received Him not.” Then John turned right around in the next portion of that first chapter and said, “But as many as received Him to them gave He the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.”

So there was a two-fold reaction already predicted in the first chapter. The nation as such would not believe; a few would and they would become the children of God. Now that’s exactly what has happened. And in the section from the beginning of the Gospel through the 12th chapter, we have the rejection of the nation, those who received Him not. But from chapter 13 to 17 we have the record of those who did receive Him. We have the “as many as received Him,” who became His children, by faith. So right in between chapters 12 and 13 there’s a clear line. The first part of the book then is involved with those who rejected...and Christ, you know, in those chapters, presents Himself to Israel, and the nation as such rejects.

Now beginning in chapter 13 and going through chapter 17 we have Jesus involved with those who did receive Him, and that’s the distinction that we want you to see. Now back in chapter 12 verse 36, we really have the key to the fact that the ministry of Jesus publicly ended there. It says in verse 36, “These things spoke Jesus and departed and did hide Himself from them.”

That was the end of Jesus’ public ministry. He had presented Himself to Israel, they had seen everything that He had done, they had seen His miracles, heard His words, watched His love, and as Matthew 12 tells us, they concluded that He had done it by the power of Satan. They had totally rejected Jesus Christ and they had fulfilled to the letter the word of John 1, “He came unto His own and His own received Him not.”

Now, beginning in chapter 13, Jesus moves completely away from the public ministry to the private ministry with those who did receive Him. Grace is over with in the sense of the ministry of Christ. His call to Israel has run its course, and now He turns away from the public ministry to the intimate fellowship of his disciples. And the one thing that He reveals to them in 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17, all those chapters, the one key thing that He reveals to them is His love. He spends all five of those chapters communicating His love to them.

Now, Jesus knew that all things had been given unto His hand. He knew that His hour of humiliation on the cross was very near, only a day away by now. He knew that it wasn’t long before He would take His place on the very throne at the right hand of God after His exaltation. And such thoughts of the cross and His death and His resurrection and His ascension and His glorification and His being seated at the right hand of the Father, and all the glory that would be His then must have crowded His brain. And it would have been very easy for Jesus to become preoccupied with Himself.

It would have been very easy for Jesus to have concluded that He should be very proud of Himself. After all, He was going to bear the sins of the world, and He was going to come out the other side of the grave, and He was going to blast off from a mountain right into Heaven, and He was going to sit down at the right hand of God. And God was going to exalt Him and give Him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and so forth and so on. And Christ could have become very preoccupied with Himself and very proud over the power and the glory that was going to be His.

But instead of that He stooped to the most humiliating act next to death than perhaps He ever did in His life. He stoops to wash the feet of His disciples, just the very opposite of pride. At the moment when it seemed He might have the supreme pride He had the supreme humility. But that's always the way Jesus is, isn't it? Just when it looked like He could have really begun to kind of exalt Himself and glory in what was going to happen, he reached the depths of humility.

But love is like that, you see. Loveless people feel too distinguished, too important to do the menial tasks. Not Jesus. Jesus, fully conscious that He was the Lord of the Universe, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, God incarnate, still washed the disciples' feet. Because, you see, that's the character of love. Love is selfless.

Now to wash the feet of a man or a woman was the duty of a slave. And the disciples of the rabbi...you remember there were many, many rabbis. But the disciples of the rabbis were supposed to render their masters personal service. But even the disciples of the rabbis were not to wash the feet of their masters; they were to get a slave to do that. That was the abject job of a slave. That was the bottom rung on the ladder of service, washing people's feet.

But the wonderful thing about Jesus was, in terms of His ministry, there never was something that He wouldn't do. People might think that the nearer you get to God the farther you are from men, but that's not true. Not at all. The nearer you are to God the closer you are to the hearts of men. Now some people fancy themselves near to God, and in their nearness to God quote/unquote, they're very...like one man said, "Some people are so heavenly minded they're no earthly good," and that's for sure. That's a false kind of service; that's a false kind of nearness to God.

Actual proximity to God is to serve somebody else. And so it was with Jesus. Because His earthly ministry to them was ending, and He knew they may have felt His love would end with it. And when they saw the cross and all the things going on there, they may have felt alone and lonely and despondent and destitute and without love or a lover. Jesus wants to dispel that immediately. He wants to reassure them that He loves them with an everlasting love. And so He spends five chapters taking all the angles that He can possibly think of in His infinite brain to reveal to them His love.

And the first one is right here in this chapter as He washes their feet, Then He gives them a farewell address that shows His love. Then He prays a high priestly prayer that shows His love, and then He dies on a cross, which supremely shows His love. So in all of these chapters He is dispelling the fact that His love is ending, that He will love them and continue to love them and always love them. And behind everything that happens in these chapters is love, the motive of everything.

You might say that this section is the revelation of the tender love of Jesus Christ for His own. And because of that, friends, it makes it one of the most precious passages. I would advise you to eat it up. Get every word of it. Because it's Jesus reiterating to you how much He loves you. And that's exciting, isn't it? All right, it's the day before His death and rather than being preoccupied with His death and sin bearing and glorification, He is totally consumed with His love for the disciples.

You see, that's, again, that amazing fact about Jesus. With a cosmic mind and with a task of redeeming the world, He is still preoccupied with the personal love of twelve people. That's the mystery of His love. And so He reveals His love to them in the greatest possible way that love can be seen, and that's in humility. That's how love is seen, that's how love is made visible. In this passage...you'll notice you have an outline in your bulletin...we're just going to see four things: His love stated, His love spurned, His love shown, and His love shared.

First of all, let's notice the statement of His love. His love is stated in verse 1. "Now before the feast of the Passover when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world, go to the Father – " see, He knew all this, He was aware, He knew what it involved, yet – "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

One commentator says it's very easy to interpret that verse; it goes like this: "Before the feast of the Passover Jesus loved them, and He loved them until the end of the feast of the Passover." That's ridiculous. Jesus didn't just love them from the beginning of the Passover to the end of the Passover. We'll see what that means in a moment, the word "end."

But by Friday, Jesus was to die as the true Passover lamb, and the Passover season had arrived in Israel. All of the pilgrims had arrived to prepare themselves for Passover. Passover would be followed by the seven days of the feast of unleavened bread which really was a part of Passover. The Passover was the annual Hebrew festival held on the 14th of Nissan, and this festival commemorated what God had done in Egypt. You remember the children of Israel were captive in Egypt. God had finally brought the plagues into Egypt in order to let...to make Pharaoh let Israel go.

Finally the last plague was the death of the first-born and God said, "I'm going to send the angel of death and destroy every first born in the land." And He said, "however, if you sprinkle blood on the doorposts and the lintel of your house, the angel of death will pass over and your firstborn will not

die.” That’s what Passover was celebrating the shed blood and the angel of death sparing the first-born. So every year after that, the Jews celebrated Passover and the wonderful protection of God, as He sent the plague, the death of the first-born, and missed every house where the blood was sprinkled on the door...a beautiful picture of Jesus Christ.

This then was the Passover. They were all gathered in Jerusalem, and as far as God’s calendar was concerned it was the last significant Passover. Because from this point on there would be a new supper. Not the Passover feast but the Lord’s Supper; not commemorating lamb’s blood on doorposts but commemorating the Lamb of God slain on the cross once and forever. So this was the last Passover.

And, incidentally, before the Passover meal that’s recorded in chapter 13 here is over, the other gospels tell us Jesus had already instituted the Lord’s Supper. So this is a great transition from the Old Testament Passover to the New Testament Lord’s Supper commemorating the true Lamb, Jesus Christ. And the New Testament age was beginning. No longer would men remember Passover lambs in Egypt. They would remember that slain Lamb, Jesus Christ, and not just once a year but all the time.

All right, notice that in verse 1 that it says also that Jesus knew that His hour was come. He was on a divine time schedule and He knew it. He knew it was getting to be time that He was going to go to be with the Father. And as I said it would be very easy for Him to become preoccupied with His glorification, preoccupied with the great victory over death. But instead of that He has total consciousness of His love for these twelve disciples.

And as concerned as He must have been...and having prayed later on in chapter 17, “Father, glorify me with the glory that I had before the world began – ” He really wanted to go back and get the glory, He wanted to be in God’s presence, He looked forward to it, He longed to have it...still, with all of that, He was totally conscious of revealing clearly His personal love to these twelve that they might be secure in His love.

Now notice at the end of the verse it says this. “Having loved His own – ” and I love those two words, “His own” – “which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” Now what does it mean that He loved them unto the end? That’s the key to understanding this verse. Unto the end in the Greek is *eis telos*, and it means this; He loved them to perfection. He loved them utterly. He loved them to the uttermost. He loved them with total fullness of love. It is the consummate word, *telos*.

With a knowledge of His coming death, His resurrection, His glory, with the task of sin bearing on the cross He was still pre-occupied with a totally perfect consuming full love for these of His own disciples. All the way to the cross, and all the way through the grave, and all the way through eternity He loves them fully, totally, completely, to the uttermost. You see, that’s the word that has no

superior. There is no word that can better define that kind of love. He loved them to the nth possibility that love could go. That's how He loved them.

You say, "Well, they didn't really deserve all that love.' You're right. But, you see, that's not the point. The point is it's the nature of Christ to love utterly, and so He did. And He shows His love for them. Why, when He was arrested Himself He had arranged so that they would not be arrested. He protected them. On the cross, what He was concerned with doing? Making sure that John and Mary got together to arrange for a home for each of them in years to come.

What else did He do? He threw His arms, spiritually speaking, around a dying thief and gathered him up and saved him. Even in the last hours of bearing the sins of the world He was conscious of that one would-be disciple hanging next to Him. He was always preoccupied with that utter love. Someone said "His love no end nor measure knows, no change can turn its course, eternally, the same it flows from one eternal source." He loves, quote, "His own." His own.

The hymn writer has said in that very beautiful hymn, which is probably my very favorite hymn, these words: "Love with everlasting love, Led by Grace that love to know; Spirit breathing from above, Thou has taught me it is so. Oh, this full and perfect peace, Oh, this transport all Divine; and a love which cannot cease, I am His and He is mine."

To know the love of Jesus Christ for His own is to have an insight of the character of agape, divine love. He loved them utterly. It's almost an analogy like a mother who is on her deathbed, and she's breathing the last breath of life. And in that last breath, she just completely loses herself in love for her children. I don't know if you've ever seen a dying mother. Loving her children. But that must be something in a finite measure like the love of Christ at this point. In the last breath of life before He reaches the cross, He is gushing out with personal love for these twelve that are gathered around Him. He loves them utterly, absolutely, to perfection, totally, completely, without reservation. Now only absolute humility can generate absolute love. And so we see His love stated.

Strangely, secondly, we see His love spurned. You say, "Oh my. Who could ever reject that kind of love?" Well, one out of twelve, verse 2. "And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot – " Judas from the town of Kerioth – "Simon's son, to betray Him." Notice the phrase, "supper being ended." That's a rejected reading in the Greek, and should be updated, and it should be this: "The supper, having begun or the supper being in progress, the devil – " and so forth and so on.

So if you have that note there, there is a better reading that we've discovered in recent years. And so this is, "The supper having begun – " or – "in progress, the devil then moved into the heart of Judas to plant there the influence to betray Christ." Of course, you know he'd already begun this and already carried out to some degree.

But here is an interesting contrast, and that's why the Holy Spirit throws verse 2 in there. Because here is Christ just showering these men with love. It's just oozing out of Him, full, total love. And right in the very frame of that love, here is absolute total hatred on the part of Judas, You say, "How could anybody reject that kind of love?" Judas did, and men do it all the time today, don't they? You see the tragedy of Judas? All through the New Testament, because he was constantly basking in the light and living in darkness, constantly feeling the love of Christ and yet hating Him at the same time. And next Sunday we're going to get into detail on the life of Judas and the tragedy that was his life.

But the contrast here is fantastic, Jesus and Judas. Now you say, "Now why would the Holy Spirit bother to throw that in here?" Because, it's obvious. It's proves to be a tremendous contrast to the love of Christ. You see, in trying to define God's love, or Christ's love, you really have a problem, don't you? In fact, the apostle Paul really kind of just gave up on it. He didn't even find any words to describe it.

Neither did John. John just said, "Behold, what manner of love – " see. And he could have said fantastic, stupendous, monumental, colossal, unbelievable, you know, fabulous, and have gone on and on and on. He probably crumpled up a whole lot of sheets and threw them in the wastebasket and said, "Oh forget it. Behold, what manner of love." And Paul says, in Ephesians 2, "His great love," which seems like a small word. But there are no words.

And so here you see the Spirit of God wants you to understand the magnitude of the love of Jesus Christ, so He pitches right into the picture the blackest kind of hatred and rejection in order that the love of Christ looks all that more glorious. The astounding thing about Jesus was that the more men hated Him and hurt Him, the more He loved them. And it's so easy to resent, it's so easy to be bitter.

But not Jesus; He met the greatest injury with supreme love. And in a little while He is kneeling at the feet of Judas, washing them. And so Judas, devil-influenced...opened to the devil, incidentally, because of his greed; the guy was money-hungry, just money, money, money on the brain, and he was self-centered.

And, you know, it's true today that men still reject that love, isn't it? The love of Christ so clearly delineated in the cross and throughout the pages of Scripture, and men still reject it. It's interesting to look at Judas because the words of love by which Jesus gradually drew the hearts of the other disciples to Him, those same words pushed Judas further and further away. The teaching by which He uplifted the souls of the other disciples just seemed to drive a stake into the heart of Judas. And everything that Jesus said in terms of love became like chafing shackles to Judas. And from his fettered greed and his disappointed ambition began to spring jealousy and spite and hatred, and now he was ready to destroy Christ if need be.

Krummacher says an interesting thing in his book. He said, "Would that the traitor's kiss that Judas gave was the only one, but in a spiritual sense Jesus still has to endure it a thousand fold to this hour." For hypocritically to confess Jesus with your mouth while your conduct belies Him, to exalt him to the skies in the virtue of His humanity while divesting Him of His divine glory, and tearing the crown of universal majesty from His head, to sing enthusiastic hymns to Him while trampling His gospel by word and deed, what is that but a Judas kiss by which men pollute the face of Jesus Christ? And so even in the midst of Jesus' love, there is a spurning of His love still today.

So we see His love stated and His love spurned, Now, against that dark background of Judas we see His love shown in one of the most beautiful examples of the love of Christ and, incidentally, one of the most interesting insights into Peter that we see anywhere in Scripture. And I want you to get this. It's an important thing to realize that love has to be more than words, doesn't it? It has to be what else? Deeds.

What did John say? "Love not in word only, but –" What? – "but in deed, and in truth." Love that is real is love expressed in activity, not just words. Don't tell me you love me. Show me and you won't need to say it. Now notice verse 3. "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hand and that He was come from God and went to God." And we'll stop right there for a minute.

You say, "Well, why is that in there? Just this is very important. That verse exalts Jesus, doesn't it? Read it again. "Knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands." Now, that's a pretty comprehensive statement. What does that mean? That, my friend, means everything that is belongs to Jesus. Now would you say there could be anybody exalted higher than that? Could there be anybody higher than someone to whom God gave everything? And not only that, that He was come from God; He proceeded out of God and was going back to God? Listen, that's an exaltation of Jesus Christ without equal in that verse.

That says it all. He is the highest; He came from the highest; He returned to the Highest. He possesses all that is. God gave it all into His hands. This is exaltation. You wonder why is He exalting Christ. Again, why do you think He is exalting Him? So the picture of His humility is all the more visible to us. You see? Same reason He brought in the hatred of Judas to give a contrast to the love of Jesus in verse 1. And now to the humility of Jesus in verses 4-11 He throws verse 3 in to show His exaltation, to show you the depth of His humility. To go from God to washing the feet of sinful disciples, that's a long step.

And so the verse is to show us that the God of the universe, majestic, glory-filled, comes to earth. That's humility. Then kneels down to wash the feet of sinful men, indescribable humility. For a fisherman, to wash the feet of another fisherman, that's a small humility. That's humility, but small. But that Jesus Christ, in whose heart beat the pulse of eternal deity, to stoop down and wash the feet

of lowly men, that's the greatest kind of humiliation. And that's just what Jesus did.

Now I want you to get the scene. Jesus and His disciples had hidden themselves, and now they arrive back in Jerusalem, having set a time to meet at this particular place called the Upper Room, and they probably came from Bethany...it's likely that Jesus was hiding there...and their feet would be very dirty. It was very common. You see, in Israel everywhere was dirt, naturally, obviously. And it was either dust an inch thick or it was liquid mud...you took your choice...and sandals were in. And, naturally, by the time they arrived their feet were dirty. This went on all the time.

In fact, in every Jewish home at the entrance to the home there were large pots of water, because everybody that came in had to wash their feet. And this was the slave's most menial task. When the guests came, he had to go to the door and wash their feet. Now that's not really a pleasant task. But as they all arrive in the Upper Room...I want you to get the picture...there's no servant up there, no slave.

Now one of the twelve should have done it. One of them should have said, "Men, come on over, I'll wash your feet." And probably another one would have said, "Well look, let's just share it; we'll just do it to each other." It could have been a beautiful thing. But they were all selfish. They were really selfish. Well, you say, "Well how do you know that? You're reading into it." No I'm not.

No, in Luke chapter 22...don't look it up, just listen. Luke 22:24, listen to this. This really gives you insight into their attitude. Here they are: they've just arrived. Here's what they're discussing. "And there was a strife among them which of them should be accounted the greatest." See? There they all twelve arrive. "Well, men, I'm sitting in first seat in the Kingdom." "Oh no, you're not. I am." And probably James and John chimed in and said, "Well, our mother asked Jesus if we could." And so they're standing there bickering back and forth about who's the greatest.

Now you know that in an argument about who's the greatest, nobody is going to go down there and wash their feet. They're arguing about prominence, see? What a sickening picture. They think the Kingdom is soon to come and we better, you know, "And I'm going to be in the first place." Something really sickening about that. They're all squabbling about who's the greatest.

The pitcher's there, the basin's there; we know that from the future verses. The towel is there, everything is ready. Jesus doesn't say a word, and nobody moves to wash anybody's feet. They're all standing around bickering about who's the greatest and all having dirty feet.

Now, Jesus waits a long time. He keeps waiting, He keeps waiting. They sit down at the U-shaped table, the food is ready, it's served, they begin to eat, with dirty feet...no rhyme intended there. Nobody's moved a muscle. They're all bickering about greatness, not about humility. Then in a devastating act of humility, Jesus acts. Verse 4, "He riseth from supper –" watch this – "laid aside His

garments, and took a towel and girded Himself. And after that He poureth water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded."

Just get the picture. With calmness, with majesty, in total silence, Jesus stands up. He walks over and takes the pitcher, pours it into the basin, puts a towel around His waist, after having removed His clothing. And He took off His outer robe, His belt, and very likely His inner tunic, leaving Him clothed only like a slave would be clothed, and He kneels to wash their feet, one by one. Can you imagine?

Just try to imagine in your own mind the pain and the sorrow that must have just penetrated those disciples' hearts. Here they were bellyaching about who would be the greatest, and so concerned about that that none of them would humble themselves to wash each other's feet, and so Jesus stooped and began to do it. Can you imagine how that must have gripped their hearts? The pain that must have shot through them, the regret, the sorrow that one of them hadn't had the joy of kneeling and washing the feet of Jesus?

And I'm sure they were dumbfounded, weeping, broken-hearted men. You see, that's love to the uttermost. Do you think that that little lesson that Jesus taught did as much good as, say, a lecture on humility would have done? You'd better know it. You know, that's something they never forgot. And I'll bet you that from then on it was a contest to see who got to the water first. What a painful and profound lesson. Humility is the service of love.

And sadly to say, the Body of Christ, those of us who love Jesus Christ, is full of people who are standing on their dignity when they ought to be kneeling at the feet of their brother. The desire for prominence is death. To love is death to humility and it's death to service. If you want prominence, my friend, you have no capacity for love or humility. Consequently, your service is a waste. My dear brother, when you are tempted to think of your dignity, of your prestige, of your rights, open your Bible to John 13 and get a good look at Jesus, clothed like a slave, kneeling, washing dirt off of the feet of sinful men.

Well, as Jesus moves from disciple to disciple He finally arrives at Peter, and this is just fabulous. Peter's just too much. And Peter must have just been sobbing, you know, just broken. And He gets to Peter, and verse 6 says, "Then cometh He to Simon Peter and Peter says to Him, 'Lord, doest thou wash my feet?' " He just can't allow this. He goes from the highest to the lowest. Lord, that's the highest; my feet, that's the lowest.

This is too much, too convicting. I can't take it, Lord, see? And I'm sure he pulled back his feet. And Jesus replies to Peter, verse 7, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter". He says, "Peter, you're protesting because you're ignorant," which was nothing new for Peter. As I said before, he's the apostle with the foot-shaped mouth.

But He says, “You protest because you’re ignorant, Peter. Some day you’re going to realize that I came into this world not to be ministered unto but – ” What? – “but to minister, that I came to be humiliated, and you’re going to let me be humiliated here and show my humility. Someday, Peter, you’ll know.” And that’s right. After the death and resurrection and ascension, Peter knew. Sure he did. He then understood the total humiliation of Jesus.

Here he doesn’t understand it, He’s still thinking “The Kingdom is coming, the Kingdom; this is the King. What are you doing down there washing my feet, King?” And Jesus says, “Peter, you just don’t realize it, but I’ve got to humble myself. That’s why I came. Someday you’ll know that, Peter. You’re just ignorant right now.”

Well Christ was tender with Peter, wasn’t He, there? He wasn’t at all brash. Well, you can’t be too tender with Peter and get away with it. Christ was so good to him that he got bolder. And look what he does in verse 8; Peter saith unto Him, “Thou shalt never wash my feet.” Cut it out, Lord. That’s the strongest kind of a in the Greek language, “No, never, ever will you wash my feet”.

Boy, he’s really solid on this one. That’s the strongest form of negation in the Greek language. No, no, never. Eternally, you will not wash my feet. So he calls Jesus Lord, and acts as if he is. And you say, “Well, my, this is certainly a praiseworthy modesty on Peter’s part”. No, no. You know why? Because with God...watch this principle...obedience is better than worship. Did you get that? With God, obedience is better than worship.

And so Jesus says to him in the middle of verse 8, “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.” Now watch what Peter says. Simon Peter says to Him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head.” See? Peter says, “You will never, ever wash my feet.” The Lord says, “Peter, if I don’t wash your feet you don’t have any part with me.” “Lord, I’ll take a bath.” So typical of Peter. From one extreme, “No, never,” to the other one, “Lord, wash every part of me.” See? He runs the gamut with Peter [John makes a whooshing noise], just the whole gamut.

Now, you say, “What is Christ saying when He says in verse 8, “If I wash thee not thou hast no part with me”?” He’s saying this. “Peter, I must humble myself. That’s all a part of what I came to do. I must become a servant. This washing of your feet, my death on the cross, all acts of my humiliation, this is all part of the plan, Peter. This is it. You have to accept my humiliation.”

And you see the Jew couldn’t accept the Messiah humiliated. And in Peter’s mind, there was no place for the humiliation of Christ like this. So He says, “You must accept my humiliation. Peter, if you can accept it here, it’s going to be easier for you when you see me on a cross.” That’s in the back of His mind, you see. Peter must be made ready to accept His humiliation. And by Jesus moving among the disciples and washing their feet He is showing them an illustration of humiliation so they can better

accept the cross that comes on the morrow.

Peter has to recognize that Christ came to be humiliated. And He's not really referring to feet there at all in verse 8. "If I wash thee not." He doesn't say if I wash your feet. "If I wash thee not – " he uses it to teach a spiritual truth. "Peter, you must accept My humiliation." But there's another truth that He's teaching in the same words, and I think it's an even more profound truth.

He's saying this: "Peter, unless I wash you on the inside, you're not clean and you have no part with Me." You see, that's really what He's saying. He's using this to teach a spiritual truth, right? I John 1:9 He says, "If we confess our sins He's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to – " What? – "cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Paul said, "He washes us with the water of the Word."

You see, Jesus uses this occasion of Peter's, really, irate indignation over the whole thing to teach the spiritual truth that cleansing comes from Christ. So there's probably a double idea here. Not only the idea that Peter, you have to accept my humiliation, but the fact for all generations that unless Christ cleanses you, you're not cleansed. No man has a relationship with Jesus Christ unless Jesus Christ has cleansed his sins.

Isn't that what it says? "If I wash thee not that thou hast no – " What? – "part with me? There's no one who can enter into the presence of Jesus Christ unless Jesus Christ has cleansed his sins. In John 15:3, Jesus said this, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." In other words, the only way a man can be clean is by Jesus Christ.

And so what Jesus does here, He jumps from the physical illustration of washing feet to the spiritual truth, and Peter is still hung on the physical. This is typical of John's gospel, isn't it? Just what the woman at the well did, just what Nicodemus did, just the way all along with the Pharisees. Jesus starts talking in spiritual truth and they think he's talking in physical. Peter's in the same boat.

So Peter says, "Oh Lord, you know here are my hands and my head. Go at the whole thing if that's what it takes to be a part of you." He still doesn't see the full spiritual meaning. But he says, "Whatever washing you've got to offer me that makes me a part of You, I want it. I want it". Then Jesus continues His spiritual application of the washing in verse 10. "Jesus saith to him – " and this is tremendous – 'He that is washed needeth not except to wash his feet, but is entirely clean, and ye are clean but not all of you.' "

Now, this is important. He has just said, "Peter, the only way you can be clean is if I wash you." "And you know there's no other way to go to God except through Jesus Christ. Neither is there salvation in any other," Peter said. Right? He got the message later on in Acts 4:12 when he preached that sermon. The only way a man ever enters the presence of God is when his sins are cleansed. And there's only one agency of the cleansing of sin in the universe, and that's the blood of Jesus Christ

and the word that He speaks. When a man puts his faith in Jesus Christ he's clean, and not until.

And so Peter says, "Oh, Lord, you know, the whole shot." Then Jesus says...let me translate a word a little different because the word washed and wash are two distinct Greek words. They're not the same word. He that takes a bath doesn't need except to wash his feet. Do you get the point? What's he saying? The idea is very simple, In the orient at this time of the world a man would take a bath in the morning, get himself clean from top to bottom, clean.

Now as he went through the day from house to house every time he arrived at a house he didn't have to take a bath all over again. All he had to do was wash his feet. And then held go on his way and his body was still clean. And he'd go to another house and he'd have to wash his feet. You see, he was already clean from the standpoint of the bath. All he needed was a little dust off the feet everywhere he went.

Now I want you to hang on to this truth; this is really loaded. Jesus is saying this, friends. Get it, Once you have been cleansed, once you have been bathed by the Word of Christ, once you are clean, all God has to do from then on is not bathe you all over again but just daily get the dust off your feet. Did you get that? You see that's the distinction again between your position and your practice.

Positionally you are clean. Doesn't He say that in verse 10? Look at it. You are entirely clean, but from the practical side God's got to wash off the dust every day you walk through the world. Every day you walk through this world as a believer you gather a little dust on your feet. You don't have to be bathed all over again.

How many times do you get saved? How many times do you get cleansed? How many times are you bathed in the blood of Jesus Christ? One time. Right? Does that mean God never has to cleanse any sin again? Oh no. I John 1:9 says what? "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to keep on – " doing what? – "Cleansing us."

Listen, you are clean, positionally, from top to bottom. But every day you live, by the Grace of God He just cleanses the dust off your feet that you gather as you walk through the world. Positionally, you're clean; practically, He just dusts you off on the feet each day. And so Jesus is saying to Peter, "No, no, no, Peter, you don't need a bath. You're already a believer. You just need to get the dust off, that's all."

You see, the believer in Christ is purged from all sin. He is clean; he is perfected forever. If you've ever received Jesus Christ in your life, the moment you received Christ you were clean for eternity. You're perfected. Nothing will ever change that. You take one bath in God's design, that's all you'll ever take. You're clean from that moment on, the rest of your life, positionally clean.

That's your position, bathed, clean. All you need is a little dust washed off your feet every day as you walk through the world and gather the world's dust. And every day the precious blood of Jesus Christ keeps on cleansing the dust off your feet. So you have both a positional cleansing that is total and a practical cleansing that is daily. Beautiful thought.

Then in contrast to that, at the end of verse 10 Jesus says, "Ye are clean but not all of you," for He knew who would betray Him. "Therefore," said He, "ye are not all clean." You see, why did Jesus say that? Why would He say out loud to the disciples, ye are clean but not all of you? I believe He said it for this reason. I believe He said it in order that it might prick the heart of Judas. Judas would know what He meant.

I believe He said it so that it would run a barb into the heart of Judas. It was the last loving appeal for Judas not to do what he was going to do. And you know something. I believe that's also why He washed Judas' feet. Can you imagine what must have been going through the mind of Judas as Jesus knelt washing his feet? I believe this is a last appeal on the part of Jesus. But it had no deterring affect on Judas. He went ahead and did what he was going to do. And later on in this chapter we will see how Satan not only influenced him but over in verse 27, Satan actually got inside of him and entered him.

So what have we seen? The love of Jesus is stated, spurned, shown in this humble beautiful act of love. And while showing His love, He also stops with Peter to give a great spiritual application and talks about the fact that He alone can cleanse men's hearts. And once you've been cleansed totally, all you need from then on is the continual washing of your spiritual feet that get the dust of the world on them every day, and God does that.

There's no cleansing apart from Christ, Then lastly...and very quickly...His love is shared. And this is the climax. Jesus continues to wash their feet in verse 12. And notice what happens. "So after He had washed their feet and had taken His garments, put His clothes back on, was seated again, He said unto them...now it's time for the lesson that He wants them to learn.

He says, "Know ye what I have done to you?" Do you see what I am doing, men, He says? "What am I doing? What am I trying to teach you?" You say, "Oh, He's trying to teach the importance of His humiliation. Yeah, well, he's trying to teach them that you have to be cleansed by Him." Oh yeah, that's right. But those aren't specifically what He's trying to teach.

Those two spiritual lessons that we saw back there in verses 9 through 11, those were a sidetrack. Those were just a little interlude with Peter, The spiritual lesson here isn't the big lesson. No. The spiritual lesson is important. It's true, and it's eternally true, but it's not the main point. That was just a little interlude with Peter, to teach the spiritual lesson.

The real lesson that He is teaching is this, He is teaching that the disciples need to begin to operate on the basis of humility. He is not going to allow them to get away with bickering over who's the hot shot. He wants them to get at the issue of who's going to be humble and show love. That's the point, What really started this whole thing was the disciples fight over who's going to be the first in the Kingdom. And the point of Jesus here was simply to show them how to love each other and how to serve each other in humility. That's the lesson. The spiritual thought was an interlude. That's the key lesson, humble service. The theology is just inserted, parenthetically.

Now, He tells him this is His purpose, just simply verse 13. "Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am. If I then your Lord and Master have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet, for I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you." Now, that's the lesson He's teaching them, "I want you to learn what you've seen me do."

Now friends, this is the argument from the greater to the lesser, isn't it? If the Lord of Glory is willing to be girded with a towel, take upon Him the form of a servant, act like a slave, and wash the dirty feet of sinful disciples, it ought to be sort of reasonable that the disciples might be willing to wash each other's feet, if the Lord of Glory would do it. See, He's teaching them humble service.

Now there are many people who think this is an ordinance of the church that Jesus is instituting. And there are some churches today that have three ordinances: Baptism, Communion, and Foot washing. I don't know if any of you have ever been in a church where they have a foot-washing service. But there are some who believe that this passage is teaching a foot-washing ordinance.

Now, I have no particular quarrel with that. However, I do not feel that it is being taught in this passage. You say, "Why?" Let me show you why. Verse 15 is the key. "For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you." The word "as" there in the Greek is *kaths*. *Kaths* means "like as."

If it was a direct example, the word would be *h*, which means "that which," and it would read like this. "I have given you an example that you should do that which I have done to you." And if He said that, friends, it would have been an ordinance of the Church, cause we would do the same thing. But He said, "I want you to do like as I have done."

You say, "What's He saying?" He is not saying do the same thing, He is saying do it in the same manner, do you see? Not do that which I do, but do it in the way that I do it, like I do it. This is not an example of foot washing; this is an example of humility. He's not saying, "Now notice how I wash their feet, beginning from the big toe out, or you know. No. It is not an illustration of foot washing; it is an illustration of what? Of humility. Of humility.

And you know if you get hung up on the foot washing idea, you know what you have done? You have minimized the lesson. Because Jesus is trying to teach a practical humility for every area of life, for every day of life, for every experience of life. He is not trying to institute a monthly foot-washing service. And to take it and substitute a ritual for the lesson of humility, I think is to minimize the lesson, don't you? And besides, in our civilization, foot washing, it has no meaning. And I'm sure that anyone who goes to the foot-washing service makes sure that their feet are immaculate before it ever begins.

The point is, is humility. And the point is...and as I say, I have some dear friends who have foot-washing services, and it can be a very beautiful thing. I just don't think that's the point here. Like I say, I think it's wonderful if they want to participate in that. But I don't like to see ritual substituted for a day-by-day, moment-by-moment truth that Jesus is trying to teach. And that's humility.

Now, it may mean foot washing. My, in some parts of the world, this may be one of the most beautiful ways you could show love. In I Timothy 5 in verse 10, evidently in that particular place this woman had washed the saints' feet, and she is commended for that. That could be a glorious service, when the need was there. Oh, beautiful kind of servitude.

And I'll tell you something, friends. If you can't wash feet in our society, find something just as menial and just as low, and do it with just as much love and just as much humility. Jesus is trying to teach humble loving service, doing that little menial slave task for the glory of Jesus Christ and to show your love. Jesus desperately wants them to show love. That's the point.

And later on in this chapter...look at it in verse 34, "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples –" if you what? – "have love one to another." You know how the world's going to know that we belong to Jesus? One way, friends, one way. And that's when we show this kind of love to one another.

You say, "Well I don't understand why the world doesn't read our message. I don't understand why the world doesn't hear what we're saying." I'll tell you, because they can't see our love. They may never ever hear our words. But, friends, they will perceive our love when it's on this level, irresistible. We've got to learn it. Jesus says, we've got to learn it.

Are we greater than the Lord? Verse 16, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord, neither he that is sent greater than he who has sent him. If you know these things, happy are you if you do them." You say, "Well I wouldn't be very happy to do it." Don't tell me that. God says you'd be happy. Blessed is the Word. You want to be blessed of God my friend. Learn how to serve. Paul said this, and I say it to you. "By love serve one another." And until you do it and until I do it in

the most menial task the world is not going to know we belong to Jesus Christ.

Our Father, we thank You this morning for teaching us your truth. Thank you for the beautiful example of the love of Jesus Christ in the washing of the disciples' feet. God, I just pray right now that every ounce of pride that is in me might be broken, that God you would take away every bit of desire for dignity or prominence or prestige or the honor of men from my life, and Father from the life of everyone in this place. God break us to be servants.

God, we know we become useless to you when we're exalted. We become useless when we worry about our dignity and our prestige and our prominence. God, humble us even as Jesus was to wash each other's feet, to get down in the dirt and do that thing which is loathed as slave's task. For God, we know that until we live like this and serve like this with this kind of humble love, the world is not going to know we belong to you. We pray to the glory of Jesus Christ, and in His Name. Amen.

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