

WASHING THE DISCIPLES' FEET

JOHN 13:1-17 • TV-418A

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John 13:1-17

“Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him; Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean. So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? 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; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”

If you’re not going to have any problem today remembering the title of this message; if you’d like to follow in your Bible, we’re going to read from gospel of **John chapter 13.**

WASHING THE DISCIPLES' FEET

JOHN 13:1-17 • HENRY T. MAHAN

And here's the subject: **“WASHING THE DISCIPLES' FEET.”** That's my subject today, **“WASHING THE DISCIPLES' FEET.”**

Now, before our Lord went to the cross He spent much time instructing His disciples concerning what He was doing and how He must suffer. You remember He said in **John 14**; *“I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place I'll come again and receive you unto myself.”*

He instructed these disciples on what He was doing and where He was going and how He must suffer and die. And then He began to instruct them about the things that they must endure for His sake and for the sake of the Gospel, how the world would treat them, how they should behave, and the spirit in which they should minister His Gospel.

They were going out to preach the Gospel and He wanted them to go in the right attitude and the right spirit. And so, much of this is recorded in **John 13, 14, 15, and 16**. And then in **John 17** you have our Lord's high priestly prayer.

But let's turn this morning to **John chapter 13**. Turn in your Bibles now. And the reason I want you to follow in the Scriptures is because I'm going to stay real close to each verse, almost each phrase we're going to talk about in this message, **“WASHING THE DISCIPLES' FEET.”**

Now, let's look at **verse 1, John 13**. What's the Lord saying; what's He teaching these disciples? It says in **verse 1**; *“Now before the Feast of the Passover when Jesus knew that His hour was come, that He should depart out of the world unto the Father.”* Now what's this hour He spoke frequently about? He often spoke of this hour.

Do you remember the very first miracle that our Lord performed in Canaan of Galilee at the Wedding Feast? His mother came to Him and she said, *“They don't have any more wine.”*

And the first thing He said was; *“Woman, what have I to do with thee; mine hour is not yet come, (the hour of my revelation, the hour of my glory, the hour for the accomplishment of that which I came to do) the hour is not yet come.”*

And then the disciples trying to prevent Him from going to the cross said, *“Lord, don't do this. Don't go to Jerusalem.”* And He said, *“Shall I pray to the Father, deliver me from this hour? For this cause came I to this hour. This is why I came, for this hour.”*

And then when He prayed in **John 17** He said; *“Father, the hour is come. Now glorify thy Son that thy Son may glorify thee.”* That's what He's saying here in **John 13:1**; *“Before the Feast of the Passover Jesus knew that the hour was come.”*

And then it says in **verse 1**; *“Having loved His own, having loved His own which were in the world; (that's these disciples) He loved them to the end.”*

WASHING THE DISCIPLES' FEET

JOHN 13:1-17 • HENRY T. MAHAN

You see; His love for His sheep is everlasting both ways. He said, *"I've drawn you with an everlasting love."* The love of Christ is everlasting. It is infinite. It knows no bounds, it knows no limit.

It is unchangeable, it's immutable because He's God, *"Having loved His own."* What do you mean having loved them? Well He always loved them. *"Having loved them He loved them (still) to the end, (even and unto the death of the cross)."*

Now look at **verses 2 and 3** carefully; *"And supper being ended the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Jesus;"* (now I'll leave that for the moment and come back to that in a moment) *"Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands and that He was come from God and that He went to God; Jesus knowing that God had put all things in His hands."* What is this, all things in His hands?

Well, you see, Jesus of Nazareth was a man in every sense of the word He was a man, *"Born of a woman, flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone."* He lived in this earth, *"Tempted, tested, in all points as we are, yet without sin."* He was a man.

And yet, Jesus of Nazareth is God, God incarnate, and God in every sense of the word, God in human flesh. You see; *"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."*

Jesus Christ is a man, but He's God. He said, *"Great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh."* The disciples said, *"Show us the Father."* He said, *"You've seen me, you've seen the Father. I and my Father are one."*

Well you see; Jesus of Nazareth was from the beginning; *"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God and the Word was made flesh."*

Well, from the beginning Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus Christ God's Son, had committed into His hands, in an everlasting covenant, the whole kingdom of God, the whole purpose of God, the whole counsel of God, the whole redemption of men and all things pertaining to God.

These things were committed to Him from the beginning and trusted to Him. That's what He said in **John 17** when He prayed; He said, *"I have finished the work you gave me to do."* Well when was this work given to Him, *"From before the foundation of the world. He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."*

And **John 3:35** says; *"The Father loves the Son and hath given all things into His hands. And all the promises of God are in Him, (in Christ) yea and amen."* In **John 14** He said; *"I'm the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me."* You see; it's all in Christ. Christ is all.

So Jesus knowing that all things were given into His hands and that He came from God and that He would accomplish what He came to do and return to God, **verses 4 and 5**; now listen, watch

WASHING THE DISCIPLES' FEET

JOHN 13:1-17 • HENRY T. MAHAN

it. This is the reason I wanted you to turn to this chapter because we're going right down the line, **verses 4 and 5**; *"He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded."*

Jesus knowing; He said, *"The hour is come, having loved His own, He loved them to the end."* Knowing that all things were given into His hands; that He came from God; He knew why He came, what He came to do, and He would go back to God.

He riseth from supper and laid aside His garments and took a towel and girded himself with a towel. Now, back in those days men wore robes. Our Lord had a robe without seam, woven, and one piece from top to bottom.

The men wore a robe and they wore an undergarment under that robe. For He took off His robe and laid it aside and girded himself with a large towel; after that He poured water in a basin. And then He began to wash the disciple's feet and to wipe them with a towel.

Now; why was He doing this? Well, there was a custom in that day, when a guest came to your home, especially a prominent guest, or a welcomed guest (people wore sandals in those days; men wore robes and they wore sandals).

There were no paved sidewalks or paved streets. They walked on the ground. They walked through the dust, they walked through the fields, and they walked through the desert. And when a person came to your home as a guest they would stop at the door and remove their sandals.

If you were a good host or hostess you'd have at the door a servant, a slave. This was a very lowly task. And you would have a slave or a servant or someone at the door to wash the feet of your guest.

They'd take off a sandal and the slave or the servant or whoever it might be had a basin of water. And they'd put their feet in the water. They'd wash that foot and dry it with a towel and then put the other foot in and dry it with a towel and walk into the dinner.

Well our Lord, when the disciples met here in this house to have this supper; there was no one at the door to wash their feet. And they came in and had supper with the Lord.

After the supper the Lord took off His robe and laid it aside and girded himself with a towel and started performing the work of a slave, the work of a servant. This is the Lord, the Master, down at the feet of these disciples washing their dirty feet and drying them with a towel.

So He washed the feet of Peter and the feet of James, John, Luke, and some of the others. He came to Simon Peter. Look at **verse 6**; *"Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?"* Peter recoiled back. I imagine he pulled his feet up under him and he said, "Lord dost thou wash my feet; you the Lord are going to wash my feet?"

WASHING THE DISCIPLES' FEET

JOHN 13:1-17 • HENRY T. MAHAN

Now I understand Peter's amazement. I don't condone his questioning the Lord. It's like Eli said; *"It's the Lord; let Him do what He will."* If He's the Lord He does what He will do. He has a reason for what He's doing. Don't question Him.

But I understand Peter's amazement; he was shocked. To Peter this was a shocking, amazing event, that the Lord should wash his feet. He said, "Lord; do you wash my feet?"

I was down in Mexico preaching a couple of years ago and we were staying on a coffee plantation and they'd brought the coffee in and they'd go through different processes and then they spread it out on this large patio to dry.

The owner of the plantation and his wife were sitting with us, the guests, on the patio and the natives were spreading the coffee. There were only two or three men out there working with hundreds of bags of coffee.

And they had this coffee spread out. It was during the dry season. It wasn't supposed to rain. And we were sitting there talking. We looked up and there was a heavy cloud coming. And the lady of the plantation said, "It's going to rain and we've got to get this coffee up." She said, "You all excuse me."

And so the missionaries and my wife and I and the missionary's wives jumped up with them and went out and got brooms and scrapers and all of these different things and started helping the natives get this coffee together.

And the wife and the husband of the plantation were horrified. They came to me and tried to take my broom away. I said, "No; I want to help." And they just insisted that I not do this menial labor. And I said, "I'm going to help get this coffee in."

And so we helped and we got it all up and the rains came. And we were sitting over under the shelter and the patio. She was still shocked; the ranch owner's wife was just; I could tell she was terribly upset that her guests should have partaken in such a menial, lowly, task. She couldn't get over it. And I know how Peter felt here; he was shocked. And so he said, "Lord; do you wash my feet?"

And listen to **verse 7**; look at it: *"Jesus answered and said unto him, what I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."* Now Peter knew what He was doing; He was washing his feet. Peter knew what He was doing. What's the Lord saying here? The Lord is saying; "What I'm doing, what I'm doing here, what I'm illustrating, what I'm showing you, you don't understand. You can't understand yet. You will, but not now."

"I have many things to say to you. I have many things to show you. I have many things to teach you but you can't understand them now based on what you know, based on your spiritual experience. What I do you don't understand but you will."

WASHING THE DISCIPLES' FEET

JOHN 13:1-17 • HENRY T. MAHAN

Oh that we could learn that! You know, so many religious people know it all. They've got all the answers. They don't even know the question but they've got all the answers you know. I wish we could be still and be quiet and wait upon God.

You know, *"We know in part, we prophesy in part, and we see through a glass dimly. If any man thinks he knows; he knows not as he ought to know."* Spiritual truth is revealed slowly by experience. There's so much we do not know. And that's what He said to Peter: "Peter; just wait now, you don't know now."

And Peter said to Him; look at **verse 8**. *Peter said to Him: "You'll never; (now watch that word never) you'll never wash my feet."* Oh my! You know, the apostle Peter had behaved with humility before. He said, "Lord; dost thou wash my feet? That can't be. You're the Lord and Master; you wash my feet?"

And now he speaks rashly; he speaks foolishly, *"You'll never wash my feet."* Can you identify with Peter? Do you ever talk that way? He talked that way a lot. Christ said, *"You'll deny me."* He said, "I'll never deny you."

He said, "I'll die with you." He said, *"All of you will be offended because of me this night."* Peter said, "They may, but not I, never, never." Oh my; how foolish do we talk, bound by our pride, bound by our tradition and self-righteous thoughts.

We proceed to tell even God what we will and won't do. *"You'll never wash my feet, never."* That's pretty strong isn't it? Well listen how the Lord replied in **verse 8**; *"Jesus answered him, if I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me."*

Now notice Christ didn't say, "If I don't wash your feet." He said, "If I don't wash you." You see, what He's speaking of here, like a while ago He said to Peter; *"What I do you know not now."* Well Peter knew what He was doing; He was washing His feet.

If this is just a story and a picture of humility only, if Peter knew what He was doing; He was acting the part of a servant. He was acting very humbly. He was washing their feet. But Christ said, "You don't know what I'm doing. You don't know now; you will."

And here He's saying, "If I don't wash you;" He didn't say, "If I don't wash your feet." He said, "If I don't wash you; you have no part with me." You see, He's speaking here of His blood which was shed to wash us, to cleanse us, to purify us, to put away our sins.

"If you don't believe me Peter, if you don't trust me, if you don't receive me, if you don't submit to me, if you don't rest in me, if you don't look to my death and my blood;" you see, Peter; couldn't see the cross, not yet.

Christ had talked about dying and leaving but Peter couldn't imagine such an ignominious, hateful death as the cross and the shedding of His blood. And this is what Christ is talking about;

WASHING THE DISCIPLES' FEET

JOHN 13:1-17 • HENRY T. MAHAN

“I’ve got to wash you. If I don’t wash you, you have no part with me. You have no part in my covenant because it is the blood of the everlasting covenant. You have no part in my kingdom for it is the kingdom of God’s dear Son. You have no part in my house, in my holy temple, in my heaven, because we’re not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold but with the precious blood of Christ. The blood of Jesus Christ God’s Son cleanseth us, cleanseth us from all sin.”

“God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.” He died the just for the unjust to bring us to God.” “And Peter; if you’re not washed; you have no part with me, no part.”

Well how does Peter reply? Simon Peter said to Him; “Lord; then don’t wash my feet only. Wash my hands, wash my head, wash me all over.” One thing about Peter; he knew how to err but he knew how to repent.

He knew how to pop off didn’t he? But he knew how to weep. And when the Lord warned him; *“If I don’t wash you; you have no part with me.”* He repented and he said; “Lord wash my feet, my walk is so sinful. Wash my hands; my deeds are so sinful. Wash my head; my thoughts are so sinful. If you’re going to talk about washing me and cleansing me and purifying me I need it all over.” And that’s a good statement: “While you’re washing; just wash me all over.”

Now note the words of our Lord very carefully in **verse 10**: *“And Jesus said to Peter: He that is washed, (in other words, those for whom Christ died, those for whom He shed His blood, those who believe, those who trust His blood and His righteousness, those for whom He died) those who are washed; they’re clean every wit.”*

They’re clean within, they’re clean without. By His stripes we’re healed. *“The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin.”* So they’re clean every wit and they need only to wash their feet. I’m going to show you something in a minute.

In other words He said; “Peter, I’m washing your feet here, now. I’ve already washed you, already washed you by the blood, by the cross you’re washed, you’re cleansed, and you’re made whole. And he that’s cleansed; he needs only to wash his feet. He doesn’t need to wash all over again; he’s already clean. He’s clean every wit.”

What’s this taken from? Well, over in those countries they didn’t have indoor plumbing. They didn’t have bathrooms and showers. They had what they called public baths. They still have them down in some of the islands where I preached and visited. They have public baths.

And people get a towel at home and they walk down to the bathhouse. That’s the way these fellows would do in this country, over there in the Orient. They’d get in this country and Jerusalem; they’d get a towel, a bathrobe, whatever, go down to the bathhouse and wash and then they’d walk back home.

Well, when they got back home; what did they need to do? They needed to wash their feet. Down at the bathhouse they washed all over and *“they’re clean every wit.”* But on the way

WASHING THE DISCIPLES' FEET

JOHN 13:1-17 • HENRY T. MAHAN

home, walking across the dirty fields and roads and walkways their feet got dirty and so they washed their feet.

And that's what Christ is saying; He's saying to Peter: *"I'm washing your feet. Now you're clean and you're clean every wit. And all of you are clean, but not all (of you)."* Now I'll get to that in a moment.

But He said, "All you need to do now is wash your feet." And that's the way it is with children of God. We're cleansed. We're cleansed in the blood of Christ. We're redeemed by the blood of Christ. We're made whole by the blood of Christ.

We're walking through this world daily. We need daily cleansing and daily forgiveness, and daily pardon. That's what we need. Like one of the old preachers said one time, "I get up in the morning and I say; Lord keep me from sin this day." And he said, "Before I go to sleep at night I pray, Lord forgive me of my sins of this day."

I'm already washed, I'm already forgiven, I'm already saved by His blood but I need daily pardon and daily forgiveness and daily cleansing because of my walk through this world, I'm still human.

So, He says to Peter; He said, *"Now he's that washed needs only to wash his feet because he's clean every wit."* And listen, *"And you're all clean;"* but now He puts a phrase in here, *"but not all (of you)."* Do you see that in **verse 10**? *"You're clean but not all."*

What's He talking about? Who's He talking about? Well the next verse tells you, **verse 11**; listen; *"For He knew who would betray Him, therefore He said, you're not all clean (there's one of you that's not clean)."*

And you know who that was; Judas was not clean. The blood, righteousness, obedience, and death of Christ will effectually save all who believe, cleanse and redeem all who believe, all His sheep, but not those who are not His sheep.

You're clean but not all of you for there's one of you who Jesus knew from the beginning who this was, therefore He said: *"You're not all clean."*

Now **verse 12**; *"So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, know ye what I have done to you?"* (Do you understand this picture? Do you understand this illustration?) I have redeemed you. I have cleansed you. I have made you accepted through my work, through my sacrifice, and through my death. But you're still human. You still walk in this world of sin."

"You still need daily washing, daily forgiveness, daily compassion, and daily understanding. You see; you're not perfect; you're still walking. We walk in the spirit, I know, but we still walk in this world and you need daily forgiveness and daily cleansing. And I'm showing you, I

WASHING THE DISCIPLES' FEET

JOHN 13:1-17 • HENRY T. MAHAN

pardoned you, I've forgiven you, but you're not perfect, not yet, so I have to daily cleanse you and daily pardon you."

Now look at **verses 13 and 14**: *"Now; you call me Master and you call me Lord, and you say, well, so I am. So if I your Master (King of Kings and Lord of Lords) have washed your feet you ought also to wash one another's feet."*

What did our Lord say by washing their feet? I know what He's saying; He's saying; "You're human, you fail, you're earthen vessels, you have dirty feet, you walk through the world, and I forgive you and I understand you and I have compassion on you. Now you do the same for one another."

Remember, Lord, that we're human. You also remember that your friends and brothers are human. And as our Lord and Master sat at the feet of His disciples humbly and watched them recognizing their frailty and their flesh; cannot we do the same?

Cannot we forgive? Cannot we encourage? Cannot we help the fallen? Cannot we get down with them and encourage them? For He said in **verse 15**; *"I've given you an example that you should do as I have done."*

Now this is not an ordinance. He didn't say "I've given you an ordinance, but an example." He didn't say, "I've given you a ritual to repeat." I don't need my feet washed. But there are some other things I need. I need your love; I need your forgiveness, your understanding, your compassion. I need your help. Do you see what I am saying?

I don't need my feet washed. And you can't wash my feet and prove your humility. But we can prove our humility and prove these things that we've been with Christ and we're acting like Christ by our attitude.

You know; people that practice foot washing as an ordinance, as a ritual, they do it every six months or every three months. This is talking about daily forgiveness and daily humility and daily mercy and that can be done all the time.

"Verily I say unto you, the servant's not greater than his Lord. If you know these things happy are you if you do them!"