

Jesus Washes the Disciples Feet

John 13:1-17

Introduction:

- In John 13, Jesus goes with his disciples to an upper room for a final time of fellowship before His crucifixion. John 13-17 are some of the most precious passages in the Bible.
- We read here of Jesus' great love for His own. To the end: 'To the fullest extent.' It is clear that God loves everyone, but has a special love for His own.
- "God's wider love for 'the world' (John 3:16) is not displaced by this concentrated love of Jesus for his friends, [because] it is they who experience it in its fullness." (Bruce)
- In this scene all 12 disciples are there, including Judas who we know will betray our Lord

I. A Picture of Humility

- a. This story is found only in John's Gospel interestingly. Mark presents Christ as the Perfect Servant, and John presents Christ as the Son of God. Yet here we see the Son of God stooping down to do a slave's job!
- b. Jesus did something that must have almost seemed crazy. He began to do the job of the lowest servant in the household
- c. In the Middle East it is dry and dusty, so as people would walk with open sandals it became necessary to frequently wash your feet. In fact it was a custom that at someone's home when guests arrived arrangements would be made for a servant/slave to wash the feet of the guests.
- d. Jesus' attitude of servanthood was in direct contrast to that of the disciples, who had recently been arguing among themselves as to which of them was the greatest (Luke 22:24). Since there was no servant present to wash their feet, it would never have occurred to them to wash one another's feet.
- e. Jesus knew actions speak louder than words. So when He wanted to teach the proud, arguing disciples about true humility, He didn't just say it – He showed it. He showed it in a way that illustrated His whole ministry
 - i. · Jesus rose from supper, a place of rest and comfort
 - ii. · Jesus rose from His throne in heaven, a place of rest and comfort

- iii. · Jesus laid aside His garments, taking off His covering
- iv. · Jesus laid aside His glory, taking off His heavenly covering
- v. · Jesus took a towel and girded Himself, being ready to work
- vi. · Jesus took the form of a servant, and came ready to work
- vii. · Jesus poured water into a basin, ready to clean
- viii. · Jesus poured out His blood to cleanse us from the guilt and penalty of sin
- ix. · Jesus sat down again (John 13:12) after washing their feet
- x. · Jesus sat down at the right hand of God the Father after cleansing us
- xi. What a ministry!

- f. Consider, he washed all of their feet- including Judas!
 - g. In fact soon all of Jesus' disciples would forsake him, and Peter would deny knowing Him!
 - h. This is humility
 - i. Do we humbly serve those we love
 - ii. Do we humbly serve the "difficult people" in our lives (family, co-workers, etc.)
 - iii. We are not greater than our Master! He humbled himself to wash those who were unworthy and unthankful!
 - iv. V. 15- This is not an official church ordinance, but a principle that we should be willing to perform humble acts of service for one another!
 - i. Humble yourselves
- II. A Picture of Justification
- a. Peter was profoundly uncomfortable with the Lord washing his feet, and, never being at a loss for words, Peter protested, "You shall never wash my feet!"
 - b. If I were preaching to teenagers I would go into detail describing how smelly and dirty the feet probably were
 - c. Jesus now teaches Peter that there is a spiritual meaning to what He was doing

- d. V. 8-9- The Lord answered Peter that apart from this washing he could have no part with Him (fellowship). Peter, being impulsive as usual, exclaims not just my feet, but my hands, and my head (entire body)!
 - e. V. 10- Jesus explains that He didn't need another bath, but just his feet washed. There is a difference between the bath, and the foot-washing (Justification and Sanctification)
 - f. Jesus taught there is an initial bathing that is distinct from an ongoing washing. We need to be bathed by our trust in Jesus and what He did for us on the cross--once for all. Yet afterward we must continually have our feet washed in ongoing relationship with and trust upon Jesus.
 - g. Justification/Bath- one point in time, without need to be repeated.
 - i. Albert Barnes- What is justification? It is the declared purpose of God to regard and treat those sinners who believe in Jesus Christ as if they had not sinned, on the ground of the merits of the Savior. It is not mere pardon. Pardon is a free forgiveness of past offenses. It has reference to those sins as forgiven and blotted out. Justification has respect to the law, and to God's future dealings with the sinner. It is an act by which God determines to treat him hereafter as righteous--as if he had not sinned. The basis for this is the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ, merit that we can plead as if it were our own. He has taken our place and died in our stead; He has met the descending stroke of justice, which would have fallen on our own heads if He had not interposed.
 - ii. Just as if I'd never sinned! Not just forgiven, but declared righteous!
 - iii. The transaction- my sin for Christ's righteousness
 - iv. Comes by faith- Gal 2:16-17
 - v. Have you been justified?
 - h. This is our position as believers, which can never be changed! Our walk with Jesus can change, but our standing in Jesus never changes!
 - i. This is grace! This is not about achieving, but receiving!
- III. A Picture of Sanctification
- a. Does this give us a license to sin? Paul asked shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid!
 - b. Sanctification- Jesus makes us holy as He is holy!

- c. Justification is a point in time, sanctification begins at salvation and is ongoing!
- d. Jesus spiritual lesson to Peter was that the disciples had already received their salvation bath- except one (Judas), but they need to have their feet washed
- e. Salvation is a one-time act of justification by faith, but the lifelong process of sanctification is one of washing from the stain of sin we experience as we walk through the world.
- f. When a person received a bath at the Roman bath-houses they were cleaned- yet they would still have to travel to their destination on those dirty, dusty roads.
- g. As Christians walk through this world we get contaminated and defiled by the dirty language, worldly philosophies, unholy entertainment, etc- so we need to be constantly cleaned. This cleansing is not for salvation, but for FELLOWSHIP- v. 8
- h. I John 1:9- is for fellowship (v. 7 walking, v. 9- sins plural; specific sins, not referring to the sin nature). Salvation does not require specific forgiveness of each individual sin
- i. How are we cleansed and made holy?
 - i. The Holy Spirit
 - ii. The word of God- Ps. 119:9
 - iii. Fellowship with other believers- I John 1:7
- j. We need to be cleansed of the negative influences in our life!

Conclusion:

- (Jhn 13:15-17) The importance of following Jesus' example of humble service.
- This truth is just one of several from this incident that Christians can apply to their own lives. First, when we come to Christ for the washing of our sins, we can be sure that is permanent and complete. No act can cleanse us further from our sin, as our sin has been exchanged for the perfect righteousness of Christ on the cross (2 Corinthians 5:21). But we do need continual cleansing from the effects of living in a sin-cursed world.

- Philippians 1:6 - Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform [it] until the day of Jesus Christ: Are you allowing God to sanctify you, or are you holding on to your sin?
- 1846 Hungarian doctor named Ignaz Semmelweis started to save lives in the medical field. The finest hospitals lost one out of six young mothers to the scourge of "childbed fever." A doctor's daily routine began in the dissecting room where he performed autopsies. From there he made his way to the hospital to examine expectant mothers without ever pausing to wash his hands. Dr. Semmelweis was the first man in history to associate such examinations with the resultant infection and death. His practice only lost 1 in 50 mothers- all because of his declration- wash your hands! Sadly, doctors did not listen to him at the time.
- Thankfully, Jesus wants to cleanse us- will you come to him in humility?