



JOHN 13:1-20

Washing One Another's Feet

DAY ONE Observation

A shift in the Gospel of John begins in John 12:36, *These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them.* Though Jesus had come unto His own people, they had not received Him (cf. 1:11).

Despite His many miracles, Jesus had been rejected as Messiah. He was not the Messiah the people were looking for. They wanted a Messiah who defeated the Romans and met all their physical needs. Jesus came to set them free from sin, death, and Satan (cf. 8:31-47; 11:25-26).

While John 1-12 recorded the public ministry of Jesus to the nation, John 13-17 record the private ministry of Jesus with His disciples. Those who have found the Messiah are now taught by Jesus what it means to follow Him.

Pray and ask God to speak to your heart as you read John 13:1-20. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Record the main message or your thoughts next to each paragraph.

Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

² During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him, ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, ⁴ got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself.

⁵ Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. ⁶ So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter." ⁸ Peter said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." ⁹ Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head." ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is

completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.”¹¹ For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, “Not all of you are clean.”

¹² So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³ You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵ For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. ¹⁶ Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. ¹⁸ I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘HE WHO EATS MY BREAD HAS LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME.’ ¹⁹ From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He. ²⁰ Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.” (NASB)

What thought or verse stands out to you in John 13:1-20? Why?

According to Luke 22:24-30, what argument was going on between the disciples during this Passover meal? Summarize Jesus’ message to them in Luke 22:25-30.

Take note of all the phrases that John uses in John 13:1-3 leading up to Jesus’ washing of the disciples’ feet. What did Jesus know and what was His motive in washing their feet?

**DAY TWO
Meditation**

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Jesus' words in John 13:13-17 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

“You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am.

If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.

Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.”

Which words, phrases, or images speak most to you? Why?

Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.

DAY THREE Interpretation

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

Write out John 13:10. _____

The King James version says, "Jesus saith to him, He that is **washed** needeth not save to **wash** his feet..." However, more modern translations make a distinction in this verse between being "bathed" and having your feet "washed." This is an important distinction. To understand it more, go to blueletterbible.org and type "John 13:10" into the "Search the Bible" box. Next click on John 13:10 to bring up the verse in the Greek. Find the first word "washed" (*louo*) and click on the Strong's number (G3068) to bring up the definition and its usage in the NT.

The Greek word is *louo*. What is its definition (see Strong's Definition)? _____

Scroll down and look at how this Greek word is used in two other key passages. What does each passage teach you about our "washing"? What is washed? What is it washed in?

Hebrews 10:22 _____

Revelation 1:5 _____

Looking back at the Strong's Definition, you will see that the Greek word, *louo* (G3068) is contrasted with another Greek word (G3538). Click on G3538 to bring up this Greek word. Or, if you cannot find this link, go back to John 13:10 and click on the second word "wash" (*nipto*).

This Greek word is *nipto*. What is its definition (see Strong's Definition)? _____

Scroll down and look at how this Greek word is used throughout the NT. You will notice that *nipto* only refers to a washing of a part of the body not to a whole cleansing. Thus, in John 13:10, Jesus makes a key distinction between having your whole body "bathed," and thus being made completely clean, versus having only your feet "washed."

What do you think it means to be completely "bathed" in Christ (see also Titus 3:5-7)?

What do you think it means to have your feet "washed"? _____

DAY FOUR Devotion

Read the following excerpt from J.C. Ryle's *Expository Thoughts on John*. J. C. Ryle (1816-1900) was a brilliant scholar, being educated at Eton College and Oxford University, where he excelled in the Classics and seem destined for a successful life in law and politics. However, a bout of sickness caused him to reassess his life. He ended up visiting a church where he heard Ephesians 2 and came to faith in Jesus Christ. Ryle would eventually become the first Anglican bishop of Liverpool, where his sermons and writings would impact thousands in England and abroad. At the end of his life, he was described as "the man of granite with the heart of a child."

13:1-5. The passage we have now read begins one of the most interesting portions of John's Gospel. For five consecutive chapters we find the Evangelist recording matters which are not mentioned by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. We can never be thankful enough that the Holy Spirit has caused them to be written for our learning! In every age the contents of these chapters have been justly regarded as one of the most precious parts of the Bible. They have been the food and drink, the strength and comfort of all true-hearted Christians. Let us ever approach them with peculiar reverence. The place whereon we stand is holy ground.

We learn, for one thing, from these verses, *what patient and continuing love there is in Christ's heart towards His people*. It is written that "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." Knowing perfectly well that they were about to forsake Him shamefully in a very few hours, in full view of their approaching display of weakness and infirmity, our blessed Master did not cease to have loving thoughts of His disciples. He was not weary of them—He loved them to the last.

The love of Christ to sinners is the very essence and marrow of the Gospel. That He should love us at all, and care for our souls—that He should love us before we love Him, or even know anything about Him, that He should love us so much as to come into the world to save us, take our nature on Him, bear our sins, and die for us

on the cross—all this is wonderful indeed! It is a kind of love to which there is nothing like it, among men. The narrow selfishness of human nature cannot fully comprehend it. It is one of those things which even the angels of God "desire to look into." It is a truth which Christian preachers and teachers should proclaim incessantly, and never be weary of proclaiming.

...Let no man be afraid of beginning with Christ, if he desires to be saved. The chief of sinners may come to Him with boldness, and trust Him for pardon with confidence. This loving Savior is One who delights to "receive sinners." (Luke 15:2.) Let no man be afraid of going on with Christ after he has once come to Him and believed. Let him not fancy that Christ will cast him off because of failures, and dismiss him into his former hopelessness on account of infirmities. Such thoughts are entirely unwarranted by anything in the Scriptures. Jesus will never reject any servant because of feeble service and weak performance. Those whom He receives He always keeps. Those whom He loves at first He loves at last. His promise shall never be broken, and it is for saints as well as sinners—"Him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37.)

We learn, for another thing, from these verses, *what deep corruption may sometimes be found in the heart of a great professor of religion*. It is written that "the devil put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Christ."

This Judas, we must always remember, was one of the twelve Apostles. He had been chosen by Christ Himself, at the same time with Peter, James, John, and their companions. For three years he had walked in Christ's society, had seen His miracles, had heard His preaching, had experienced many proofs of His loving-kindness. He had even preached himself and wrought miracles in Christ's name; and when our Lord sent out His disciples two and two, Judas Iscariot no doubt must have been one of some couple that was sent. Yet here we see this very man possessed by the devil, and rushing headlong to destruction.

...He shows us what length a man may go in religious profession, and yet turn out a rotten hypocrite at last, and prove never to have been converted. He shows us the uselessness of the highest privileges, unless we have a heart to value them and turn them to good account. Privileges alone without grace save nobody, and will only make hell deeper. He shows us the uselessness of mere head-knowledge. To know things with our brains, and be able to talk and preach and speak to others, is no proof that our own feet are in the way of peace. These are terrible lessons—but they are true.

Let us never be surprised if we see hypocrisy and false profession among Christians in modern days. There is nothing new in it, nothing peculiar, nothing that did not happen even among Christ's own immediate followers, and under Christ's own eyes. Counterfeit money is a strong proof that there is good coin somewhere. Hypocrisy is a strong indirect evidence that there is such a thing as true religion.

Above all, let us pray daily that our own Christianity may at any rate be genuine, sincere, real and true. Our faith may be feeble, our hope dim, our knowledge small,

our failures frequent, our faults many. But at all events let us be real and true. Let us be able to say with poor, weak, erring Peter, "You, Lord, who know all things, know that I love You." (John 21:17.)

13:6-15. The verses we have now read conclude the story of our Lord's washing the feet of His disciples, the night before He was crucified. It is a story full of touching interest, which for some wise reason no Evangelist records except John. The wonderful condescension of Christ, in doing such a menial action, can hardly fail to strike any reader. The mere fact that the Master should wash the feet of the servants might well fill us with surprise. But the circumstances and sayings which arose out of the action are just as interesting as the action itself. Let us see what they were.

We should notice, firstly, *the hasty ignorance of the Apostle Peter*. One moment we find him refusing to allow his Master to do such a servile work as He is about to do... "You shall never wash my feet!" Another moment we find him rushing with characteristic impetuosity into the other extreme—"Lord, wash not my feet only, but my hands and my head." But throughout the transaction we find him unable to take in the real meaning of what his eyes behold. He sees, but he does not understand.

Let us learn from Peter's conduct that a man may have plenty of faith and love, and yet be sadly destitute of clear knowledge. We must not set down men as graceless and godless because they are dull, and stupid, and blundering in their religion. The heart may often be quite right when the head is quite wrong. We must make allowances for the corruption of the understanding, as well as of the will. We must not be surprised to find that the brains as well as the affections of Adam's children have been hurt by the

fall. It is a humbling lesson, and one seldom fully learned except by long experience. But the longer we live the more true shall we find it, that a believer, like Peter, may make many mistakes and lack understanding, and yet, like Peter, have a heart right before God, and get to heaven at last.

Even at our best estate we shall find that many of Christ's dealings with us are hard to understand in this life. The "why" and "wherefore" of many a providence will often puzzle and perplex us quite as much as the washing puzzled Peter. The wisdom, and fitness, and necessity of many a thing will often be hidden from our eyes. But at times like these we must remember the Master's words, and fall back upon them—"What I do you know not now, but you shall know hereafter." There came days, long after Christ had left the world, when Peter saw the full meaning of all that happened on the memorable night before the crucifixion. Even so there will be a day when *every dark page in our life's history* will be explained, and when, as we stand with Christ in glory, we shall know all.

We should notice, secondly, in this passage, ***the plain practical lesson which lies upon its surface.*** That lesson is read out to us by our Lord. He says, "I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you."

HUMILITY is evidently one part of the lesson. If the only-begotten Son of God, the King of kings, did not think it beneath Him to do the humblest work of a servant, there is nothing which His disciples should think themselves too great or too good to do. No sin is so offensive to God, and so injurious to the soul as pride. No grace is so commended, both by precept and example, as humility. *Be clothed with humility* (1 Pet. 5:5). ... Perhaps there is no sight so

displeasing in God's eyes as a self-conceited, self-satisfied, self-contented, stuck-up professor of religion.

...LOVE is manifestly the other part of the great practical lesson. Our Lord would have us love others so much that we should delight to do anything which can promote their happiness. We ought to rejoice in doing kindnesses, even in little things. We ought to count it a pleasure to lessen sorrow and multiply joy, even when it costs us some self-sacrifice and self-denial. We ought to love every child of Adam so well, that if in the least trifle we can do anything to make him more happy and comfortable, we should be glad to do it. This was the mind of the Master, and this the ruling principle of His conduct upon earth. There are but few who walk in His steps, it may be feared; but these few are after His own heart.

...Humility and love are precisely the graces which the men of the world can understand, if they do not comprehend doctrines. They are graces about which there is no mystery, and they are within reach of all Christians. The poorest and most ignorant Christian can every day find occasion for practicing love and humility. Then if we would do good to the world, and make our calling and election sure, let no man forget our Lord's example in this passage. Like Him, let us be humble and loving towards all.

What stands out to you from Ryle's words?

DAY FIVE
Application

Re-read John 13:1-20 and consider the truths that you have learned this week. Seek to apply the message of John 13 to your daily life.

What thought or truth impacted you this week from your study of John 13:1-20?

Jesus draws a distinction in this passage between being entirely “bathed” and having one’s feet washed (13:10). When a person trusts Jesus Christ as Savior, they are bathed...they are made clean (cf. Titus 3:4-7). However, as believers, walking through this sinful world in a body still impacted by sin, we often have “dirty feet”—selfish motives, wrong thoughts, harmful words, sinful actions...as well as fears, weaknesses, failures, and wounds. What are some of the things that feel “unclean” or burdensome in your life right now?

Have you ever had someone “wash your feet”—come alongside you, encourage you, walk with you, serve you, stick with you through a time of failure or difficulty? If so, what was that like?

Who is someone in your life that God is calling you to encourage, walk with, or serve despite their weaknesses, failures, or sins? Write down their name or think of them in your mind.

Pray for this person now. Ask God for an opportunity to show them Christ’s love this week.

Though “washing feet” seems to be intended as a spiritual lesson of humble service more than something we physically do, it can still be a meaningful physical act. If there is someone in your life who has encouraged you or who needs encouragement, and the opportunity presents itself, wash their feet as a symbolic gesture of humble gratitude this week.