

John 13:5-12

Peter's Lesson; the Lord's Illustration.

Main thought: The Priority of Love Among Disciples

*Theology*: pp. 375, 378, 414, 653.

## I. Introduction

1 John 3:16–18

16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

17 But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?

18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

- A. What a crucial reality.
- B. The life of the church, the weaving of lives together, will cause weaknesses and sins, and failures to appear.
- C. It is inevitable.
- D. However, in today's narrative, Jesus illustrates for Peter, and us, the command that He would give them to keep the church unified: love in deed.

## II. v.5 “Then he threw water into the basin and He began to wash the feet of the disciples and to wipe with the towel, which He was girded about the waist.”

- A. After Jesus got up from the supper, probably toward the end of the supper, He removed His outer garment to reveal His inner garment and proceeded to fill a basin that was provided (Mark 14:12-15).
  - 1. From there, He began washing the feet of the disciples, starting with John, who as at the first seat, to the right of Jesus, probably.
  - 2. Then, to the left of Jesus, Judas.
  - 3. Then down and around the typical horseshoe table.
    - a) It is a curious thing to think about that Jesus is doing to these men exactly what the unknown woman in Luke 7 and Mary did in John 12.
    - b) Jesus now is demonstrating incredible humility and love.
    - c) He is showing His devotion to them in the same way that the women showed devotion to Him.
- B. It does not appear that this was a ceremonial action.
- C. He literally began to clean the dust and dirt off of the disciples' feet.

### III. v.6 **“Then, He came toward Simon Peter. He said to Him, “Lord, you wash my feet?!”**

- A. Jesus finished with the disciple in front of Peter and began to move on to Peter.
- B. At this point, notice that all the disciples' feet have been washed and therefore, Peter has seen them all being subjected to that activity of the Lord.
  - 1. It appears that of all the disciples, Peter is the only one to say anything.
    - a) What does he say?
    - b) “Lord. You wash my feet?!”
  - 2. This is either a question meant to engage Jesus in a dialogue.
  - 3. Or, it is an exclamation that is meant for everyone to hear.
    - a) Why would Peter say this?
    - b) What makes him think that for Jesus to wash his feet is incredible?
    - c) What makes him think that he is to be treated in a different manner than the others?
    - d) It would seem that Peter thought Jesus a little strange for doing this.
  - 4. Remember, Peter is the one who was right up there with Jesus as far as revelation is concerned (Matthew 16:18).
    - a) Peter is, obviously, the guy occupying most of the time with Christ.
    - b) It would seem that Peter believed more of himself than he really ought to have.
  - 5. So, Peter asks: “Do you wash my feet?”

### IV. v. 7 **“Jesus answered and said to him, “You do not know now that which I do/am doing. But, you will know after these things.”**

- A. Jesus tells Peter that Peter is utterly ignorant of the significance of what Jesus is doing.
- B. This indicates that Jesus knew that not only was Peter ignorant, but, probably so were the rest of the disciples.
  - 1. It might be good to review Peter in this narrative, as well as the other disciples.
    - a) v.24 = Peter did not know who it was who was going to betray Jesus (but neither did the others-v.22).
    - b) v. 36 = even after Jesus warned them in Matthew 16 that He would be betrayed into Roman and Jewish hands, Peter was still ignorant of the plan.
    - c) v. 37 = it didn't make sense to Peter that he would be disallowed from following Jesus.

- d) John 16:17 = still did not see it.
2. But, all the while, Peter is asserting his commitments, loyalty, and ability to handle it.
  3. Peter is confident that he can follow Jesus, like a companion; an equal.
    - a) Peter believes that he can follow Jesus.
    - b) This is not bad, but he believes that he can do it the way that he is.
  4. What will it take to make Peter get over himself and his supreme abilities?
  5. A fall.
    - a) Luke 22:54-62 Peter's arrest.
    - b) Simon had to be assaulted with his own weakness and the Rock needed to be installed, Peter.
    - c) That only happens when, once you have fallen, you are raised up *by Christ*.

1 Peter 5:5-7

5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to *your* elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,

7 casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

6. So, this self-confidence, in the eyes and estimation of Jesus Christ, and compared to the ways that the Lord works in us, is really ignorant pride.

Matthew 6:20-24

20 "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;

21 for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22 "The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.

23 "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

7. Rest assured, Jesus does want Peter to understand it all in time.

8. But, since He is moving rapidly toward the cross, His time is short and He needs to get in one final lesson, and what a lesson it was.

**V. v.8 “Peter says to Him, “Not in any way shall you bathe my feet, (even) into the age/forever.” Jesus answered to him, “Unless I wash you, you do not have a part with Me.”**

- A. Throughout this narrative, the verbs for “bathing” and “washing” are used interchangeably, but not synonymously.
- B. Peter bans Jesus from washing him into eternity.
  1. Peter thinks he knows the reality behind this situation.
  2. The conclusion with Peter is that his braggadocio is keeping him out of service to Jesus Christ.
- C. What is going on here?
  1. Peter is simply not allowing the Lord to do what HE determined to do.
  2. Peter wanted to supplement the Lord's work.
  3. Peter seemed to think that there, basically, was no need for Jesus to do this.
- D. But, look at Jesus' response.
  1. “Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me.”
  2. This is a dogmatic statement.
  3. Men need to be washed before being used of the Lord.
    - a) Isaiah 6:1-8
    - b) Zechariah 3:1-7

1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.  
 2 The Lord said to Satan, “The Lord rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?”  
 3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and standing before the angel.  
 4 He spoke and said to those who were standing before him, saying, “Remove the filthy garments from him.” Again he said to him, “See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes.”  
 5 Then I said, “Let them put a clean turban on his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments, while the angel of the Lord was standing by.  
 6 And the angel of the Lord admonished Joshua, saying,

7 “Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘If you will walk in My ways and if you will perform My service, then you will also govern My house and also have charge of My courts, and I will grant you free access among these who are standing *here*.

## VI. v.9 “Simon Peter says to Him, “Lord (wash) not only my feet, but rather also (wash) the hands and the head.””

*“A moment ago he told his Master He was doing too much: now he tells Him He is doing too little” (Dods).<sup>1</sup>*

1. Now, Peter swings over, way past the middle of the spectrum where Jesus was.
2. Peter seems to think that Jesus is impressed, I suppose.

### B. Peter has a history of speaking directly to the Lord.

1. Matthew 14:28
  - a) **28** Peter said to Him, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.”
2. Matthew 15:15–16
  - a) **15** Peter said to Him, “Explain the parable to us.”
  - b) **16** Jesus said, “Are you still lacking in understanding also?”
3. Matthew 16:21–23
  - a) **21** From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.
 

(Mark 8:32 **32** And He was stating the matter plainly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him.)
  - b) **22** Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “God forbid *it*, Lord! This shall never happen to You.”
  - c) **23** But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.”
4. Matthew 26:33–35

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<sup>1</sup> Robertson, A. T. (1933). *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Jn 13:9). Nashville, TN: Broadman Press.

- a) 33 But Peter said to Him, “*Even* though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away.”
  - b) 34 Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you that this *very* night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.”
  - c) 35 Peter \*said to Him, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You.” All the disciples said the same thing too.
5. Now, compare that with testing time:
- a) Mark 14:53-72
- C. Point: when Peter felt that he had some contribution to the test, or he felt the confidence of his own abilities, he could boast greatly.
1. However, when Jesus' steady righteousness pushed the situation beyond Peter's control, he denied the Lord, refused to die with Him, and left Jesus.
  2. When the test was according to Jesus' terms, he failed.
    - a) It is the same for us.
      - (1) Never boast of your commitments to Christ.
      - (2) The shame of failure to follow through might be too much to bear.
    - b) It is best just to simply follow Him and allow His perfect wisdom bring the tests to you for your strengthening.
    - c) Along the way, “various trials” will come and push your faith to the breaking point and beyond.

James 1:2–4

2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,

3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

4 And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

## **VII. v.10 “Jesus says to him, “The one having been bathed does not have a need, except to wash the feet. But/rather, he is wholly clean, and you are clean ones, but not all (of you).”**

- A. From vv. 5 to 9, the verb “to wash” (nipto) has been used.
1. That is a verb that is used of washing dirt off the surface of the surface of the skin.

2. Matthew 15:2, for example, refers to ceremonially “washing the hands” before a meal.
- B. But, in this verse, Jesus introduces a new verb: “to bath” (louw).
1. The Lord is using an illustration to prove a point.
  2. Bathing completely cleanses a person.
  3. When he gets dirt on his feet, he does not need to back to the full-immersion bath.
  4. However, the dirt must be taken care of.
  5. Therefore, a washing is in order.
  6. And that is what Jesus must do to Peter.
- C. Peter has already “bathed” by the Word of Christ.

John 15:3

3 “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

- D. What is interesting is the Greek construction in v. 10.
1. The verb indicates that the act of washing the feet is the responsibility of Peter.
  2. However, the non-use of the personal possessive pronoun, the use of a simple direct object, and the context may lead us to believe that Jesus is not saying here, “You must wash your own feet.”
- E. Rather, it would seem that the actual act of washing the feet is the responsibility of the other disciples, and not Peter.
- F. That is, “Peter, you are to wash the feet yourself.” That, instead of, “Peter, you are to wash your feet.”
1. Why this possible distinction?
  2. Well, what is the command listed later in the context?
    - a) Vv. 14-15 = the command to wash (surface wash) the feet of the other disciples.
    - b) This is not the same as “wash your own feet.”
  3. It is very likely that Jesus is telling Peter that he has a responsibility to wash feet, other's feet and to let them wash his.
  4. This self-denial is the idea.
    - a) The teaching is summarized by Paul in Philippians 2:3-8.
    - b) This humility is necessary in the church so that we might obey the Lord's command here.
- G. Now, Jesus states that not everyone in the room is clean.
- H. Not everyone in the room has been bathed by Christ.

- Judas.
- I. That is another way to say, “Not everyone has believed My Word. Not everyone is a gift from the Father to Me.”

### **VIII.v.11 “For He knew the one betraying Him. Because of this, He said that, “You are not all clean ones.”**

- A. John adds to the information to explain to the reader that Jesus knew what He was doing.
  1. Consider this: When Jesus chose Judas, and for months afterwards, He did not tell Judas what he would do to Christ.
  2. Judas was a part, one of the biggest parts, in this whole plan.
  3. But, Jesus knew that. Judas did not.
    - a) A mocker would accuse Jesus of wrong-doing. However, Judas is the one who was going to betray Him, not the other way around.
    - b) Judas was the one who never believed the teaching of Christ truly.
    - c) Judas was the one stealing from the money box.
    - d) Judas was the one playing the extreme hypocrite.
  4. Jesus simply allowed the intentions of his heart to play out so that the plan of God would be accomplished.

### **IX. v.12 “When therefore, He washed their feet, and took His garments and reclined again, He said to them, “(Do) you know what I have done?”**

- A. Jesus, just as quietly as He took them off, put His garments back on.
  1. He sat down and simply asked them a question.
  2. This question will form the basis of the rest of the narrative.
    - a) But, I want us to think about it too.
    - b) Do you know what He did?
  3. Was Jesus concerned with their dirty feet? No.
  4. Was He wishing Martha was there to get everything neat and tidy? No.
  5. Should there have been a slave there to wash their feet, like any good host would have provided? No.
  6. Jesus orchestrated it all.
- B. Remember, the room was set and ready under, apparently, predetermined orders from Christ (Mark 14:12-16).

1. It is likely that this upper room was Mark's father's room (Acts 12). It would continue to be the meeting place for the church into the Christian dispersion in Acts 8-15.
2. He had told the host to keep everyone out and not even provide the standard slave to wash feet.

C. Jesus was in perfect control of the entire event: even Peter's lesson.

## **X. Conclusion**

Galatians 6:2-3

- 2 Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.
- 3 For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.