

G R A C E

Reformed Baptist Church

Soli ♦ Deo ♦ Gloria

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Sermon Notes

Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet (Part II)

John 13:12-20

February 19, 2006

INTRODUCTION

- ❑ In the first 11 Verses of this Chapter, John details for the reader the events surrounding the footwashing event that occurred prior to the Last Supper.
- ❑ During this event, Peter objects to having his feet washed by Jesus; however, the response of the Lord was one that revealed the true meaning of foot washing:

The significance of foot washing is directly related to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Just as the act of foot washing was a supremely humble act, so the Cross of Calvary demonstrated the supreme humility of Christ; and **just as foot washing washed the feet clean from dirt, the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary washed away the sins of “the world” – those whom Jesus “loved to the end” – “His own.”**

Verses 12-15

- ❑ After Jesus washes His disciples' feet, he returns to the table and reclines at it once again.
- ❑ John then records that Jesus said, “Do you know what I have done to you?”
 - Given the syntax of this passage, this question could also have been a command (an imperative): “Understand what I have done.”
 - Either way, whether Jesus' words are a question or command, He is challenging His disciples to think about the significance of what He has just done.
- ❑ Jesus, then, acknowledges the truthfulness of two titles attributed to Him: (1) Teacher, and (2) Lord.
 - The title, “Teacher.”
 - The term “Teacher” is equivalent to “Rabbi.”
 - This was a typical way of addressing a religious leader.

- The title, “Lord.”
 - The word **Lord** (Greek: *kurios*, κυριος) was applied to Jesus originally as a title of respect. In fact, this could simply be, given the context, a word meaning “Sir.”
 - However, following the crucifixion and resurrection, “Lord” took on a much deeper meaning. Notice how the Apostle Paul uses it in Philippians 2:5:11: “that Jesus Christ is **Lord**.” Read also Acts 2:36.
 - Furthermore, in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, the term “Lord” was used for God.
- Jesus, then, states that if He, who is in every way superior to His disciples, washed their feet [his subordinates], how much more should they wash one another’s [their equals] feet?
- Jesus follows this statement by explaining that His actions were “an example that you also should do as I did to you.”
 - One of the marks of a great leader, religious or otherwise, is that He will never ask His subordinates to do that which He is unable or unwilling to do. How much more is this true in the case of Jesus Christ, in light of the footwashing and, more significantly, the cross.

- Some Christian traditions take this phrase to be a command [an imperative] to literally wash one another’s feet, just as Christ washed His disciples’ feet.
- Furthermore, some will even place the act of footwashing on the same level as a sacrament or ordinance. In other words, some often view the Scriptures as revealing not just two, but three ordinances: (1) the Lord’s Supper; (2) baptism; and (3) footwashing.
- Indeed, even the Roman Catholic Church observes footwashing on Maundy Thursday (the Roman Catholic Holiday prior to Good Friday intended to remember the Lord’s Supper). On this day, the ecclesiastical heads (popes, cardinals, bishops, abbots, etc.) wash the feet of more junior clergymen and even at times the poor and needy.
- However, there are at least two reasons why we in this church do not observe footwashing as a universal ordinance.
 - First of all, there is no other place in Scripture, or in any other extra-biblical literature, where footwashing is commanded as an ordinance.
 - 1 Timothy 5:10 may appear, at first glance, to be an exception; however, it is not. It is not presented there as a “universal rite”;

however, it “is place in a list of good deeds of open-hearted hospitality that qualify a widow to be included in the support list.”

- Secondly, and probably most importantly, the context of this passage is the foreshadowing of the cross through (1) the “washing” of the disciples’ feet by Jesus Christ and (2) the **humility of our Lord**.

Therefore, Christ is calling us to a life of humility.

- To view footwashing as a **command** in this context is to, quite possibly, look to physical more than the deeper spiritual meaning Jesus is presenting.
- Once again, Jesus states, “I gave you **an example...**”
 - The Greek word for example can mean “example” or “pattern.”
- **The example that Jesus gave was not for some physical rite, but for a life marked with humility and service to others.**
- Remember the words of the Apostle Paul, “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;” Philippians 2:3
- “Every year they have a fashion of washing some people’s feet, as if it were a farce which they were playing on the stage; and so, when they have performed this idle and unmeaning ceremony, they think that they have fully discharged their duty, and reckon themselves at liberty to despise their brethren during the rest of the year. But – what is far worse – after having washed the feet of twelve men, they subject every member of Christ to cruel torture, and thus spit in Christ’s face. this display of buffoonery, therefore, is nothing else than a shameful mockery of Christ. At all events, Christ does not here enjoin an annual ceremony, but bids us be ready, throughout our whole life, to wash the feet of our brethren and neighbors.” John Calvin
- **Let us not forget that we are commanded by Christ to “take up our cross daily and follow Him”, yet, we certainly do not believe that we must “take up” a physical, actual cross.**

Verse 16

- Jesus repeats His command to “do as He did” by introducing two additional relationships: (1) slave and master; and (2) the one who is sent and the sender.
- The point is that Jesus is greater than His disciples in every way: (1) He is their Lord; (2) He is their Teacher; (3) He is their Master; and He is the One who Sends them.
- We see this / these truth(s) in John 10 & 14 as well, when Jesus explains His functional subordination to the Father (the One who sent Him):

“My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all...” John 10:29

“...the Father is greater than I...” John 14:29

Verse 17

- ❑ Jesus concludes His command to His disciples by saying, “If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.”
- ❑ This statement is one of only two beatitudes presented in this Gospel. The other is in John 20:29: “Blessed are the who did not see, and yet believed.”
- ❑ The point Jesus is making is that simply **knowing** something is not enough, we must **act on that knowledge**. Simply knowing that we should humble ourselves is not enough, we must actually be humble.

Verse 18

- ❑ This Verse parallels Verse 11: “Not all of you are clean.”
- ❑ It also parallels John 6:70, which states, “Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?”
- ❑ The point is that **even Judas is chosen**. However, “not all election is to salvation.” (Carson)
- ❑ Our Lord chooses different people for different tasks, in accordance with His will, so that His eternal purposes may be accomplished. Just as Pharaoh was raised up for God’s glory (Romans 9:17); and just as some vessels were “prepared for destruction” (Romans 9:22); so **Judas was chosen so that God might be glorified**.
- ❑ It is ironic to see, now, that even though Satan and Judas were conspiring “behind the scenes” to betray Jesus (Verse 2), they were truly servants in the hands of a Sovereign God, acting perfectly in accordance with His purposes and plans.
- ❑ Now Jesus gives one specific reason why even Judas was “chosen”: **so that the Scripture may be fulfilled**.
- ❑ Jesus, then, quotes from Psalm 41:9. In its original context, David (who is likely the author) laments that his enemies are mocking him even as he suffers from a serious sickness.
- ❑ It is important to realize that in the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern culture, “eating bread” with someone is a sign of close friendship and fellowship.
 - Example: I once heard a missionary from Spain state that until you ate with someone, you always addressed them with the formal “you” (*usted*). However, after you shared a meal with them, you were then allowed, socially, to address them in the informal manner (*tú*), as a friend.
- ❑ Therefore, this makes the betrayal even more painful, for it is at the hand of a close friend.

- The Psalmist (and Jesus), then states that “He who eats my bread **has lifted up his heel against me.**”
 - Many, if not most, scholars believe that this phrase is “a metaphor derived from the lifting up of a horse’s hoof preparatory to kicking.” Leon Morris
 - Further, I should be noted, to show the bottom of one’s foot is an ultimate insult, even to this day, in Middle Eastern cultures.
 - It could also mean the following as well:
 - “has given me a great fall”
 - “has taken cruel advantage of me”
 - “has walked out on me”
 - It could also be referring to the shaking off of the dust from one’s feet.
 - **The point is, however, that it is a heinous betrayal at the had of a friend.**

Verse 19

- Verse 19 is, arguably, the most explicit statement of Jesus Christ’s deity in all of this Gospel.
- To begin with, Jesus asserts His supernatural knowledge: “I am telling you **before it comes to pass.**” Further, this asserts not only His knowledge, but is power, His sovereignty, for, in the previous Verse Jesus mentions that He knows that ones He has chosen. Therefore, viewed in conjunction with this Verse, Jesus does not simply **know** the future, He **controls** it.
- It would not be until after His death, resurrection, ascension, and the sending of the Holy Spirit, that the disciples would fully come to terms with all that Jesus had said and done; however, this is another time to which they would be able to look back, through the power of the Holy Spirit, and be strengthened by the words of our Lord.
- However, what is so significant about this Verse is the use of the *ego eimi, εγω ειμι* [**I AM**] phrase by Jesus.
- In the original Greek, the words of Jesus, here, as recorded by John are **identical to the words of Isaiah in Isaiah 43:10** as recorded in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. Note: This was the Old Testament that was read by all Greek-speaking Jews in first century Palestine.
- In Isaiah 43:10, the prophet writes, “In order that you may know and believe Me and understand that I am He.” Here (John 13), we read, “...so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He.”

- Once you remove the extra words, and compare the two passages, the originals look like the following:

Isaiah 43:10: *hina pisteusete ... hoti ego eimi*

John 13:19: *hina pisteuete ... hoti ego eimi*

- The Septuagint translates the Hebrew phrase *ani hu* as *ego eimi* not only in Isaiah 41:4, but also in 43:10 and 46:4.
- As theologian James White states, in his book *The Forgotten Trinity*, “The use of *ani hu* by Isaiah is a euphemism for the very name of God himself.”
- In Isaiah 41:4, the prophet reveals one of the most significant characteristics of *ani hu* is His sovereignty and omniscience: “Who has performed and accomplished it, Calling forth the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD, am the first, and with the last. I am He [*ego eimi / ani hu*].”
 - It is certainly no coincidence that Jesus is declaring His sovereignty (in choosing) and omniscience (“I am telling you before it comes to pass”) in John 13:19.
- Furthermore, and probably most significant, the speaker in Isaiah 43 is the LORD (Yahweh). This is clear in Isaiah 43:11, the next Verse: “I, even I, am the LORD, And there is no savior besides Me.”
- Therefore, it is very clear that Jesus Christ [and John] is presenting Himself as equal in essence with Yahweh of the Old Testament.

Verse 20

- Jesus concludes this section by saying, “he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.”
- Jesus has just made the statement “I AM He,” thus equating Himself ontologically with Yahweh. Therefore, the final words of this Verse make perfect sense: “he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.”
 - In other words, since Jesus Christ is fully God, and the Father is fully God, and there is only one God, to accept Jesus is to accept the Father – the One who sent Jesus.
- However, Jesus’ words also echo a common Jewish teaching of the first century that to embrace one’s representative, was to embrace the individual (who sent the representative).
- Therefore, to embrace the one(s) Jesus send is to embrace Jesus is to embrace the Father.
- There is little doubt that these words of Jesus anticipate the commissioning of the disciples after His resurrection.

✳ Read **Isaiah 43:1 – 12**