

## John 43 – Washing Feet: A Metaphor of Forgiveness

Dr. Leon L. Sanders  
John 13:5-20

### Christ's Feet Washing Metaphor

- Though clearly explained, this simple metaphor obfuscated by churches
- This metaphor could only be performed by Christ
- We are to practice the truth of the metaphor



### Apostles as Sinful Men

- Great tendency to elevate the Apostles above the status of sinful men
  - Roman Catholicism's elevation of Peter and Mary
  - New Testament clearly shows Apostles' fought over power (covetousness) (Mt. 9:33-35; Lk. 22:24-27)
  - Latest occurred on Jericho Road to Bethany just a few days earlier threatening to divide the group just when Christ would be taken away (Destroy the Gospel)

## Jesus Assumes Role of Slave

- Throughout His ministry Christ had taught that He was God's Son come to die for men
  - Apostles finally understood He was God's Christ
  - They did not understand God's dying for sinners as sin
- On His last night He took on the role of a slave
  - Slaves considered beneath even poorest of free people
  - Apostles very confused about purpose of Jesus' role

## Peter Speaks as the Group

- Peter probably expressed the attitudes of the Apostles
  - No mention of other Apostles resisting but absence of evidence is not evidence of absence
- Jesus is God; He should not be in role of a slave (Ph 2:5-11)
  - Peter believes he is upholding Christ's holiness
  - Peter actually assumes role of judge over God and His actions via pietism; opposite of Jesus' example to them

## What We Must Understand

- Jesus not only God's Son; He was man's creator  
(De 1:26-27; Jo 1:1-9)
  - When man sinned against God it was against
    - Father
    - Son
    - Holy Spirit
- If Peter truly understood Christ's role he would not have refused Christ but would have asked why?

## Peter's Ignorance Displayed

- Because Peter did not understand Christ's metaphor he foolishly overreacts displaying his ignorance
  - Christ told him he would not understand the metaphor now but would later (After Pentecost)
  - Peter asks Christ to wash his head and hands also
  - Christ replies this was unnecessary and says why this was unnecessary which explains the metaphor to posterity

## Christ Explains His Metaphor

- Washing head and body is a picture of salvation
  - All the Apostles were *clean* (saved) except one
  - Judas Iscariot was present during this example of Christ as slave giving him another opportunity to repent
- Washing the feet was a picture of asking forgiveness
  - All Christians sin and need to repent (1Jo 1:8-10)
  - Feet washing reminds us that all are sinners

## No Part With Christ

- Jesus clearly stated that those who do not repent and ask forgiveness for sins after confession are not saved
  - As long as we remain in this fleshly body we shall sin
  - Hagiazo Process reminds us of our sins so we may repent
  - Otherwise, we would excuse our sins and blame others (Ro 2:1-11)
- Feet washing is metaphor for confession, repentance and forgiveness of sins

## Only Christ *Performs* Metaphor

- Since Christ, as God, can forgive sins
  - Christ performs this metaphor as a reminder to us
  - People as sinners can understand the sins of others against them and forgive as Christ forgives
  - There was no command to practice the metaphor
  - The command is to practice forgiveness even when others do not ask or seek forgiveness from you

## Christ Expands His Metaphor

- Christ says that if He, as God, forgives their sins then they, as sinners, should forgive the sins of others
  - This is not permission to continue the metaphor
  - All are to forgive others as God has forgiven them as embodied in the prayer He taught them (Mt 6:7-13)
- This was also taught in the Old Testament - Hosea's forgiveness of his wife (Hos 3)

## Performed Before Pesach Meal

- Christ performed this metaphor before the Passover meal which also reinforced His role as slave and sacrifice for sinful man - Forgiveness based on sacrifice
  - After this metaphor but before the meal Christ tells the Apostles what it means to be a leader - One must serve
  - Contradictory by sinful man's understanding, this is consummate wisdom from God's perspective (1Co 2:14)

## Christ – Only Teacher and Leader

- Christ reminds them that *only* He is teacher and leader
  - Only He clearly has the Father's message (JCo 13:12)
  - Only Christ is *Teacher* sent from the Father by the Father (Mt 23:1-12)
  - All believers, including Apostles, are sinners and thus equally in need of Christ's continual forgiveness
  - Thus, as equal sinners they should do as He did: forgive each other (Mt 18:21-35)

## No One is Equal to Christ

- Christ destroys the basis for their covetousness of power in Heaven over others
  - They have done nothing except through Spirit's empowerment; thus, they have no basis for power
  - Whatever they receive is by God's grace, not their works
  - Christ reminds them they are slaves to Him as He is to the Father who is the Author of the Gospel

## Another Reason for this Discussion

- Christ calls them *blessed* if they do for each other as He as done for them
  - Forgiveness is a gift from God we should freely give to others demonstrating the love of God (Jo 15:12-13)
  - Judas sin exhibited as covetousness for slight monetary gain blinds him to his need for forgiveness
  - He rejects this explanation of his need, firm in his plan to betray Christ for price of a slave – Thirty silver coins

## Unity of Trinity and Believer

- Christ will repeat this theme of unity of the believer with the Trinity throughout His teaching this night
  - Christ sends out the messengers of the Gospel
  - When one believes Gospel, one believes the messenger
  - In turn, this demonstrates belief in Christ as Savior
  - Finally, this unifies the believer with the Father via Son
  - None of this occurs without the Holy Spirit (1Co 12:12-13)

## Christ Interprets Palms (Ps 41:9)

- Christ states that one of their number will betray Him
  - He quotes from the Psalm showing this was always known by God and placed in His word for man to study
  - He tells them this by quoting this Psalm so they will understand afterward (After Pentecost)
  - This guides them in understanding how to interpret the Old Testament under the auspices of the Holy Spirit

## Sinful Man is not an Individual

- Sinful man rejects the unity of the Body of Christ via the Spirit guided by the Father and thus believers also
  - Sinful man joins into confederation with other sinners
  - Judas Iscariot entered into confederation with Priests and Pharisees when he rejected Christ as Messiah
  - Though he *appeared* to be an individual he only changed allegiance from the apostolic group to the pietistic religious groups seeking to stop God's Gospel message

## Works Based Religions

- All religions are works based and therefore hate the pure Gospel of God based solely on Christ's work
  - The Sadducees and Pharisees hated Christ's teaching because it rejected their Gnostic, Talmudic customs
  - Roman Catholicism hates Christ's Gospel as it removes power from man (Pope) to Christ
  - Much of Protestantism hates Gospel as it rejects man's societal remaking - Social Justice equality (Socialism)

## Works Based Religions Cont.

- The list continues
  - Islam hates the Gospel because it also speaks against both against other prophets and its work based salvation
  - Confucianism is based on man's wisdom defining goodness apart from Christ's sacrificial work
  - Buddhism is based on a man's work wisdom apart from Christ nullifying His death, preventing their salvation

## Defining Characteristic of Christ

- The fundamental defining characteristic of Christ and His Gospel is - Forgiveness: Sum of the Spiritual fruits (Ga 5:16-24)
  - Only Christians can truly forgive as they understand the forgiveness they received from Christ via the Spirit
  - This flows from their *new nature* exhibiting the Logos of God; it is this unity of Logoi that links Father, Son, Spirit and Believer together
  - Lost unified only in their sin - Divisive and violent