
Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." John 13:8

How Jesus Loves Us: In His Heart

One of the godly puritans, Thomas Goodwin, once said, "When you read the Upper Room Discourse, you are being given a window into the heart of Christ. It is a sermon filled with so many precious promises." Jesus is just hours away from his betrayal and his ultimate crucifixion and in this, His final sermon, he leaves us with precious promises.

There is a promise that people will know we are His disciples if we love each other. A promise that He will prepare a place for us in His Father's house. We are promised that when we pray in Jesus' name, prayer, consistent with what Jesus would ask for, our joy and God's glory, He will answer us. There is even a staggering promise in John 14, where He declares that we will do greater works than the works of Jesus! We wonder how this is possible, except to say that people travel to far more places to speak the gospel. And because Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit to us, more people continue to be led to Christ. We live in the age of the greater works for the glory of Jesus.

And the promises go on and on. If we abide in Christ, we will bear much fruit to the glory of the Father. He will give us His peace in the midst of trouble. When we listen to His words, we hear something of the profound heart of Jesus. In the opening scene of the upper room, we also see the heart of Christ by means of His example. In John 13, we see Jesus the humble servant who calls us to humbly serve for the good of other people and for his glory.

In humility, He lays aside his outer garments and ties around his waist, a towel. He takes a basin of water and washes the feet of the disciples. It is a profound moment. It is an act of humble, selfless love. Jesus even takes the time to wash the dirty, smelly feet of Judas who will soon betray him. In verse 12, Jesus explains why He has washed their feet, He says, "You call me Master and Lord, and you are right. For so I am. If I then your Lord and teacher have washed your feet, you should do as I have done. You should wash one another's feet."

Not long before this, the disciples argue over who is the greatest among them, who has the right and the prerogative to sit at the right hand of Jesus, and who will be first in the Kingdom of God. And Jesus answers, "The greatest among you is the one who serves." And here in the

upper room, He puts a picture to that reality. The One who is supremely great rises from a table that He might go low and set an example of what it means to humbly serve. I'm reasonably sure that Peter never forgot that moment because we read in first Peter 5:5, "All of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another because God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble." The word he uses for "clothe," refers to a servant tying a towel around his waist so that the servant may go low. We are always called to be a "people of the towel," to clothe ourselves with humility, that we may be Jesus-like in how we serve.

So now we return, as promised, to John 13:6-11. There is a truth embedded in Jesus' face-to-face encounter with Peter. There is a truth that takes us to a different level of meaning and deeper spiritual truth.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"
Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

John 13:6-11

A study of these verses will help us to discern a deeper spiritual meaning. Let me state it clearly before we dig into it. When it comes to Jesus, there are two kinds of cleansing. There is what we might call a *complete* cleansing and there is a *continual* cleansing. The complete cleansing is when Jesus saves you. When He washes away your sin and mine, and He makes us his own forever. He gives us full, eternal forgiveness. But the second kind of cleansing is the cleansing we need every day. Spiritually speaking, Jesus washes our feet, meaning He cleanses us from our day-to-day sins. This is a huge truth in Christian living. Let's work our way through the narrative.

Complete Cleansing

As the Lord Jesus moves around the upper room to wash the encrusted dirty feet of the disciples, He comes to Peter and Peter says to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Peter is not really asking a question so much as registering a protest. Here is a person who knows it's inappropriate for Jesus to wash his feet. Peter is a disciple. Jesus is the teacher.

In the ancient world, disciples were called by God to follow rabbis. It was the duty of a disciple to listen carefully to his master, their rabbi. Disciples were careful to obey his teaching and emulate his lifestyle. It was *never* expected that a master would serve the disciples.

And so Peter expresses how inappropriate this is, (though it does beg the question, why didn't he wash Jesus' feet?) But let me tell you, lay off Peter—He's got enough stuff to keep him busy. But Jesus answers rather incredibly, He simply says, "Peter, you don't get it. You lack understanding in this moment." And then He says, "Later, you will understand." And the word "later" is a more forceful word that requires one to look *later* down the road after the events of this upper room. Later. Meaning, "after the cross," where he secures our salvation, and after the resurrection, when we learn that the Father accepts the Son's sacrifice. And "later" after the Holy Spirit comes. Jesus calls the Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, telling us that the Spirit of Truth will give us understanding and will guide us into all Truth. And so when that future time comes, Peter and the disciples will get it. They will understand. So already Jesus is hinting at a deeper spiritual level of meaning.

How does Peter respond? Verse eight. "No, said Peter, you shall never wash my feet!" Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." When Peter says no, it is not a flippant utterance. The *no* is emphatic. "It's *not* going to happen. You will never bow before me and take into your holy hands my dirty, smelly feet and wash them." In fact, most commentators say this is so emphatic that it could be translated "never in all eternity will you ever wash my feet." And Jesus says back to him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with me." Ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand that statement— "If I do not wash you, you don't belong to me. I'm not yours. And you're not mine."

And there is a subtle shift here. Jesus does not say, "if I do not wash *your feet*..." He says, "If I do not wash *you*, you have no part with me." That's not a small difference. Jesus is saying, "if I don't wash *you* and not just your feet, you cannot be mine and I will not be yours. And how do we know we should take it that way? Because of impulsive Peter. Verse nine, "Then Lord," Simon Peter replied, "Not just my feet, but my hand and hands as well." Here is a man who wants to have a part with Jesus. He wants to belong to Jesus. Yes, he's going to deny him later, as you do from time to time in your life. But he wants to be with Jesus and belong to him. And so he says, "Jesus starts at the bottom of my feet and go all the way up to the top of my head." It's as though Peter is saying to Jesus, "If I must be cleaned by you so I can belong to you, then give me a thorough cleansing."

And it is at this very moment that Jesus aims to make clear that deeper spiritual lesson. Verse ten is the key, "those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet. Their whole body is clean and you are clean, though not every one of you. For he knew who was going to betray him. And that is why he said, Not all of you are clean."

Jesus is using a physical action to demonstrate a spiritual lesson. Imagine for a moment that you lived in Jesus' day, and you receive an invitation to attend a banquet. Before going to this banquet, you take a bath and are thoroughly clean from toe to head, and you put on clean garments and your sandals, and you go to the home of the one holding the banquet. When you arrive, you don't ask for a full bath; you don't need one. But you expect someone will perform the menial tasks of cleaning your feet. With that cultural action in mind consider verse ten again, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet. Their whole body is clean."

And then he switches to the spiritual, "and you are clean, though not every one of you. For he knew who was going to betray him. That is why he said, not all of you are clean." When he said, Not all of you are clean He's referring to Judas who will betray him.

But Jesus is no longer using physical images. And he is not saying Judas didn't take a bath. You know you can't read it that way, "Judas forgot to take his bath. Just go home." No. He is saying, "the one person in this room who is not clean is Judas." Because he's the betrayer. He is the one responsible for my being handed over to be crucified. But the rest of you are clean. But then notice the tweak he gives it. "You are clean, but you still need to have your feet washed." Verse ten, "those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet." Their whole body is clean, but they still need to have their feet washed. Jesus is using the bath at home and the foot washing at the guest house to picture for us two levels of cleansing, the first being that of complete cleansing. You've had a full bath. You are clean. But after the journey, you need your feet clean.

And so as we ponder the Scriptures and listen to Jesus, I am among those persuaded that Jesus is, first of all, talking about a complete cleansing. in John 15:13, "You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you." You are already clean because I have told you the gospel. I've explained to you the word of truth. You have embraced me. You are clean. Judas isn't clean. You are clean. And then in 1 John 1:7, "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of his Son purifies us from all sin." Other translations read, *cleanses* us from all sins." So the Jesus of the upper room goes to the cross. He takes our sin upon himself as our legal and moral guilt. And He pays the price that we might not suffer the justice owed us, but the eternity given to us. And he does by means of his blood.

"What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Oh, precious is the flow that makes me white as snow. No other fount I know. Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

And a less familiar hymn, "Oh, now I see the cleansing wave. the fountain deep and wide. Jesus, my Lord mighty to save points to his wounded side. The cleansing stream. I see. I see. I plunge and Oh, it cleanses me. Oh, praise the Lord. It cleanses me. It cleanses me. Yes, cleanses me. Amazing grace, 'tis heaven below to feel the blood applied. And Jesus, only Jesus know, my

Jesus crucified. The cleansing stream. I see. I see. I plunge and oh, it cleanses me. Oh, praise the Lord. It cleanses me. It cleanses me. Yes, cleanses me.

And one more. It's a question. Have you been to Jesus for his cleansing power? Are you washed in the blood of the lamb? Are you fully trusting in his grace this hour? Are you washed in the blood of the lamb? Are you washed in the blood in the soul-cleansing blood of the lamb? Are your garments spotless? Are they white as snow? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

You can't know eternal grace if you are not completely cleansed by the shed blood of the crucified Lord. You are clean! It's a once for all time cleansing. You have received free and full forgiveness forever.

Except for Judas. In our sermon next week, we will read about Judas going out to betray Jesus, *and it was night*, which has a deeper meaning. It was the night of his eternal justice. The 11 had received Christ. They are cleansed, John told us, by the Word.

Continual Cleansing

But there is a second cleansing—a continual cleansing. Because as long as we live in this world, we rub against its filth. We are not going to live sinlessly. And while we don't have to go back for a full cleansing, we need to go to Jesus every day and get His daily pardon and cleansing.

1 John 1, 8-9, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves. And the truth is not in us." No true Christian will ever confess that he has no sin. But John continues, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." And again, the other versions read "*cleanse* us from all unrighteousness." And the word confess means to agree with, to call our sin what God calls our sin. And to come to him and ask his daily pardon. In the Lord's Prayer, we pray, "Give us this day, our daily bread, and *forgive us our sins*." This is why, in verse ten again, Jesus says, "Those who have had a bath, the bath of salvation, are clean."

And did you know the word forgiveness means to have your slate wiped clean? That big old list of your ugly sins wiped clean by Jesus. And we go to him continually to ask forgiveness. Peter said this, "Never in all eternity will you wash my feet." And Jesus said, "Later you'll understand." Do you understand that every day of your life until you arrive in heaven, the High and Holy King of Heaven, washes your feet? It's a spiritual washing. Those of you who are clean, you still need to have your feet washed. The High and Holy King comes to us every day, for he is still a humble servant, and he stoops at our feet spiritually and washes them.

He cleans our soul so that our sins are forgiven, that we might go out another day and love and worship him. Hold this picture in your mind. He who is the center of Heaven's praise is still the humble servant who forgives us. How do we ever get over that?

Father in heaven help us to see Jesus exalted in supremacy, reigning at the highest pinnacle in the universe, and help us to see him bent over us in love, always forgiving. Thank you that he will never no sin is too terrible for you to forgive. Thank you that when we arrive in heaven someday, you will no longer have to serve us that way. And we will never see a slate with any of our sins written on it. Blessed be the name of the Lord. Amen.

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