

John 13 • Four Lessons for His Own

Introduction

John 13-17 records that very special time of ministry Christ had with the disciples in the transition from the Upper Room to the Garden of Gethsemane. At this time He prepared His disciples for His death and the work they would do after His resurrection and ascension into Heaven. It begins here in the Upper Room where Christ first establishes all the teaching that will follow with four important lessons for every Christian.

¹Now 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. ²During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him, ³Jesus, 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, ⁴got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself. ⁵Then 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.

[Read v.1-5] A Lesson in Humility

Q: How does this opening signal a completely new phase of Jesus' ministry as recorded by John?

A: "His hour had come". (v.1) Five times previous John recorded specific events at which Jesus noted that His hour or time "had not yet come" (Jn. 2:4; 5:25; 7:6; 7:30; 8:20) This final section on Christ's earthly ministry signals that He is about to undertake the purpose for which He was sent.

Application: When the servant of God is in the will of God there is nothing that can touch him until his work is done. Jesus could not be arrested, let alone killed, until the right hour had arrived. How might this apply to our ministry and life?

Q: How is v.3 an example of faith which parallels every Believer's spiritual walk?

A: Jesus knew He was born of the Father and, after doing the work of the Father, would return to the Father. Likewise, as believers we know that we have been born of God, and having lived for His glory and purposes in this life will one day be going to God.

Application: Biblical faith understands that God is in control regardless of the earthly circumstances and operates in the knowledge of not just where we have come from in Christ, but our ultimate destination in Him.

Q: How do v.1-3 differ from v.4-5 in their emphasis on Christ?

A: In v.1-3 the emphasis is on what Jesus **knew**, whereas in v.4-5 the emphasis is on what Jesus **did**.

Application: Biblical truth is visibly proven by the application of biblical love.

Q: Why was this act of foot washing a particularly powerful lesson in that time and culture?

A: It was the assigned duty of slaves to wash the feet of guests; it was an extremely menial task. By taking the place of a slave (as Jesus will make clear in v.13-16), Jesus provided a personal example of humility and service for all His followers to emulate.

Q: If we study the Gospels synoptically (in parallel with each other), why might this be an even more powerful lesson?

A: Luke records in his Gospel that on this very evening the Twelve debate who among them is the greatest wherein Jesus states, "I am among you as the one who serves". (Lk. 22:24-27)

Q: Look at the use of hands in this passage. What is the startling contrast provided?

A: "...knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands..." (v.3), Jesus literally picks up a towel and a basin. Christ's example of humility was not born out of poverty, but of riches. (2 Co. 8:9) It is the contrast of

what Jesus *knew* vs. what He *did*.

Application: *Jesus was the Sovereign, yet He assumed the place of a servant; He had all things in His hands, yet He picked up a towel; He was Lord and Master, yet He served His followers. True humility grows out of a right relationship with the Father which is not merely thinking of one's self as lowly, but not thinking of one's self at all.*

⁶So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?"

⁷Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter."

⁸Peter said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!"

Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

⁹Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head."

¹⁰Jesus 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." ¹¹For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, "Not all of you are clean."

[Read v.6-11] A Lesson in Holiness

Q: What is the meaning of v.8 where Christ tells Peter he must be washed or "you have no part with Me"?

A: There is a difference between "union" and "communion". Peter as one of Christ's own through faith was in "union" with Christ, but sin can break our "communion" with Him. "Sonship" and "fellowship" are not the same thing. Only as we allow Christ to cleanse us can we remain in fellowship with Him and enjoy His presence and power.

Q: Why does Christ make a distinction between washing and cleansing in v.10?

A: Given in its original, historical setting, people at that time used public baths. As they walked the dusty streets back home their feet became dirty so that they did not need to take another bath, but only needed to wash their feet. It is the same for the Believer: when we were saved we were washed all over (1 Co. 6:9-11; Titus 3:5-6); when we confess our daily sins to the Lord we are having our feet washed and our "walk", so to speak, is cleansed.

but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

— 1 John 1:7-9

Q: How is this same teaching reflected in the Old Testament?

A: When a priest was ordained, they were washed all over (Ex. 29:4) which represents our once-and-for-all cleansing. But God also provided the laver (Ex. 30:17-21) to be used in the daily washing of their hands and feet to address being defiled by the world. The priest did not need to be repeatedly ordained (washed), but cleansed so he could enter the Temple to serve God.

Q: How is this teaching reflected in Christ's greater working in the Church as a whole?

A: We are washed once and for all through the blood of Christ (His work on the cross) (1 Jn. 1:5-10) and subsequently cleansed daily through the application of His Word (Jn. 15:3; Eph. 5:25-26).

Q: How might this be applied to us personally?

A: As we are committed daily to His Word, allow the Spirit to search our hearts (Heb. 4:12), and then confess our sins, we keep our feet clean, so to speak, and continue to walk in the light. (Ps. 119:9) It is the daily cleansing that keeps the Believer in communion (fellowship) with Christ.

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¹²So 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?” ¹³You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. ¹⁶Truly, 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. ¹⁷If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

Application: Many believers repeat Peter’s mistake (v.9) in wanting to be repeatedly saved (washed) when all they need is their feet washed (cleansing), that part of us which comes into daily contact with the world.

[Read v.12-17] A Lesson in Happiness

Q: How could this possibly be a lesson in “happiness”?

A: The key to this section is v.17, “If you know these things, you are **blessed** if you do them”. The word “blessed” in Scripture when used of God conveys a sense of praise, but when used of man denotes a state of happiness.

Application: When we humbly serve others, walk according to God’s holiness and follow His Word, the Believer experiences happiness regardless of the earthly circumstances.

Q: What has Jesus done by giving an example to follow?

A: He has provided a greater definition of happiness than what the world offers by showing it comes by serving others in His name and character.

Q: What is the irony of the actual master-servant relationship here?

A: Jesus was absolutely their Master and had every right to command their service, but instead He served them.

Q: How is Jesus not actually putting them down but lifting them up?

A: By establishing that the slave (servant) is not greater than the master, if the master becomes a slave then they are not reduced in status but elevated to the same level.

Q: How is this a personal application of Jesus in v.1-5 which contrasted what Jesus knew with what Jesus did?

A: We cannot be blessed (happy) spiritually until we do what Jesus tells us to do. We have to act upon what we know—put His Word into practice. This is best evidenced in our service and treatment of others.

Application: If there is a formula for spiritual happiness it is found in the sequence humbleness, holiness and happiness. We begin by submitting to Christ, daily keep our life clean, and serve others, the ultimate expression of being washed by the Word by putting it into practice.

[Read v.18-38] A Lesson in Hypocrisy

Q: How does this section overall convey Christ’s two greatest concerns?

A: In v.18-30 Christ is concerned with fulfilling the Word of God which begins by quoting Ps. 41:9 and seeing its literal fulfillment in v.30, and in v.31-38 Christ is concerned with magnifying the glory of God. (v.31-32)

Application: How does this mirror what is supposed to be every Believer’s greatest concerns? Jesus “hour” that had come is a reflection of our own “hour” of fulfillment of God’s plan in our own life.

Q: What might be ironic about Jesus’ quote of Ps. 41:9 in v.18?

A: Jesus had just washed Judas’ feet and now Judas would lift up his heel against Him.

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.’” ¹⁹From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He. ²⁰Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.”

²¹When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me.”

²²The disciples began looking at one another, at a loss to know of which one

He was speaking.²³ There was reclining on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.²⁴ So Simon Peter gestured to him, and said to him, "Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking."

²⁵He, leaning back thus on Jesus' bosom, said to Him, "Lord, who is it?"

²⁶Jesus then answered, "That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him." So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.²⁷ After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly."

²⁸Now no one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He had said this to him.²⁹ For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, "Buy the things we have need of for the feast"; or else, that he should give something to the poor.³⁰ So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night.

³¹Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; ³²if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately.³³ Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.³⁵ By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

³⁶Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?"

Jesus answered, "Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later."

³⁷Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You."

³⁸Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times."

Q: What might be ironic about Ps. 41:9 when it was literally written by David?

A: David was most likely referring to Ahitophel, his counselor who turned traitor to join Absalom's rebellion. (2 Sam. 15-17) Both Judas and Ahitophel committed suicide by hanging themselves.

Q: What is the sequence of events between Judas and Satan?

A: First Satan plants the thought in the heart (v.2), then he enters Judas to control him. (v.27)

Application: What does this teach about the way Satan works?

Q: Is Jesus quoting Scripture for the sole purpose of announcing the imminent fulfillment of prophecy? What might be an additional reason for His so doing?

A: Jesus states specifically in v.19 that He is doing so to keep them from stumbling in unbelief.

Application: The Believer who knows the Word will not be easily discouraged by the defeats occurring along the way.

Q: How is v.21 Christ's testimony that "one of you will betray Me" the culmination of His giving Judas every opportunity to change his mind?

1. Christ washed Judas' feet.
2. Christ quoted God's Word to him.
3. Christ issued this final warning.

Q: What is being taught about the one person who discovered the answer to the secret?

A: It was the one who was closest to Christ's heart.

Application: The deeper things of Christ are not conveyed to those without first having established the closest possible personal relationship with Him. One must first prove they can put into practice the basic truths of God's Word before being entrusted with the deeper aspects of His Word.

Q: When did everything ultimately change for Judas?

A: When he accepted the morsel from Jesus.

Point: When Judas accepted the morsel, he finally yielded to Satan who at that time entered him and made him a child of the devil. (Jn. 8:44) In imitation of the Holy Spirit, Satan works in and through human bodies and wills which are surrendered to him.

Q: What is so powerful about the fact that as soon as Judas betrayed Jesus John states, "he went out immediately; and it was night". (v.30)

A: The contrast of light and darkness are prevalent throughout John's Gospel from the very beginning. Like all who reject the Messiah, Judas rejected the Light of the world (Jn. 8:12) and went out into the darkness. As noted in Jn. 3:18-21, those who do evil hate the light. Judas is the ultimate lesson of what it means to reject Christ.

Q: How does Mark characterize the results of Judas' choices?

A: "It would have been good for that man if he had not been born". (Mk. 14:21)

Observation: *There is a sequence to the life of Judas which serves as a warning to all:*

1. *Judas pretended to be a Christian.*
2. *Judas played with sin and never fully dealt with it.*
3. *Judas put off salvation.*
4. *Judas was therefore susceptible to Satan to whom he ultimately surrendered his life.*

Even Peter thought Judas was saved and once said to Christ, “We believe”, at which point Jesus pointed out that Judas never believed and therefore was never actually saved. It is in line with the old adage, “The same sun that melts the ice only hardens the clay”.

As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. So Jesus said to the twelve, “You do not want to go away also, do you?” Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. “We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.” Jesus answered them, “Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?” Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him.

— John 6:66–71

Q: *How might Peter’s reaction throughout all of this be an example of Christ’s admonition in the Sermon on the Mount, “Do not judge so that you will not be judged”? (Mt. 7:1)*

A: Peter was anxious to discover another man’s sin (v.24) and subsequently had to face his own sin.

Q: *What is significantly different about what Jesus told Peter in v.37 from what Jesus told the Jews previously?*

A: On two occasions (Jn. 7:33-36; 8:21-24) Jesus told the Jews that a time would come when they would seek Him but they would not find Him; to those who believed in Him Jesus here states, “you will follow later”.

Application: *The cure for disbelief is always belief; the cure for disobedience is always obedience.*

Q: *After Judas left and in this second section Jesus changes the emphasis to the glory of God, what did it mean to glorify the Father?*

A: Later in this evening’s teaching Jesus will state, “I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do”. (Jn. 17:4) Likewise we glorify the Father by faithfully doing what He calls us to do.

Q: *How does this chapter begin and end on the same note, so to speak?*

A: It begins with Jesus’ love for His own (13:1) and the disciples’ love for one another. (v.34-35) The true evidence of belonging to Christ is biblical love.

Application: *The proof of acceptance of Christ is to put His Word into practice to the degree that it is proven in our personal relationships; all other results are proof of rejection of Christ in favor of surrendering to quite the opposite.*

Overall Application

*By personal example, Christ provides a foundation for His teaching to follow in establishing that true followers of Christ do not just understand humility but put it into practice, seek to maintain the holiness conveyed on them through the blood of Jesus by the daily washing of His Word to relieve daily contact with the world, and therefore achieve spiritual happiness by acting on what they know by what they do in the character and example of Christ. Their life going forward is living a sincerely changed life rather than adopting the hypocrite's style of looking like a Christian but never actually giving in from the heart. Just like Christ, it is what we **do** with our knowledge which separates us from the rest.*