

The Gospel of John

Chapter 13:1-17

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- **The Gospel of John Outline:**

- Chapter 1 Our Lord is the Word, the Light and the Life
- Chapter 2 The Lord of the Wedding Feast; Zeal for the purity of the temple
- Chapter 3 Spiritual Birth, Belief and Salvation vs. Unbelief and Condemnation
- Chapter 4 The Ministry in Samaria, The Harvest, The Faith of the Nobleman
- Chapter 5 Paralytic man healed on the Sabbath, Unity of The Father and Son
- Chapter 6 The Bread of Life
- Chapter 7 The public debates about Jesus during the Feast of Tabernacles
- Chapter 8 Public debates: Woman caught in adultery; The Son makes you free; Abraham's true children
- Chapter 9 Jesus heals a man born blind.
- Chapter 10 Jesus is the Door and the True Shepherd
- Chapter 11 Our Lord is the Resurrection and the Life
- Chapter 12 Jesus Anointed and Worshipped as King, God softens some and hardens some, Public ministry ends
- Chapter 13 Jesus Loves His Disciples

- **Review and Introduction**

Having concluded His public ministry, in this chapter through to chapter 18, Jesus spends His last hours ministering to the disciples. There are many things which John does not include perhaps because the other gospel authors already had. There are also many things which the others do not include in their accounts, one of which is the event we cover today, Jesus demonstrating His lowliness to the disciples.

Exposition of John 13:1-17

Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

- Before the Passover meal began, John begins this particular account by declaring that Jesus loved the disciples who were in the world. Notice that John is really saying two things about Jesus' love for them. First he writes "...having loved His own..." which shows that Jesus had loved them all along and was not loving them now simply because the end was near. Jesus had loved them all along and in a similar manner continues to love those who are His own in the world.
- The second thing to consider is that Jesus is loving them to the end. Even in the midst of imminent tragedy, Jesus loves His friends and ministers to them.
- Notice that John will give us an example of Jesus love for His own. It is not enough to simply state that Jesus loves, but he gives manifest evidence of the love. The reason this is crucial is because true love should be evident. True love is not a hermit which resides only in our hearts. True love is manifest in action. If we declare that we love someone from our hearts but there is no evidence of the love, then the love does not minister.

2 And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him,

- John moves into the account by stating that dinner had been completed and that the devil had planted the intent of betraying the Lord in His heart. It is only fitting that the most heinous crime ever committed would involve the sins of man and the sins of the devil. John gives this portion of the account to bring out the stark contrast between what was in the heart of Christ and what was in the heart of Judas. Christ's plans were to serve all of them and Judas was set on betrayal.

3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God,⁴ rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself.⁵ After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

- This is truly an incredible insight where John states that Jesus, because He new "...that the Father had given all things into His hands" He therefore served the others. We might have concluded that if someone knew that He was going to be exalted that He might begin to lord it over others. But instead, *because* of the knowledge, Christ takes on a lowly form and becomes a common servant to the others.
- Having adorned Himself in the fashion of a servant, He also begins the lowliest task of a servant, washing their feet and drying them with His clothing. John gives us each detail because He is relaying the significance of *who* was washing feet.

6 Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?"⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, "What I

am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this."

- This portion of the account teaches many things including things about Peter. Apparently, our Lord starts by washing Peter's feet and his response is as if to put out his hand to stop His actions for fear an inappropriate thing might occur. Peter is attempting to protect the good name of the Lord by refusing his Lord! Peter's actions could have been recorded as heroic if they hadn't been in clear disobedience to our Lord's intentions. This is quite a common thing where men will, in the name of protecting God's honor, run off and dishonor Him further by their disobedience.
- Even after reassuring Peter that he would not understand His actions and that he would explain later what He was doing, Peter refuses to be served by the Lord. We are not required to have all the understanding of something before we obey. Rather, we know whom we have believed and He is faithful. This is all we need to obey. We can rest in the assurance that in His sovereign time, we will know that which we need to know. But in all cases, obedience is normative.

8 Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."⁹ Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!"¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you."¹¹ For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, "You are not all clean."

- Peter's obstinacy becomes more grievous as He flatly denies the Lord's instruction. Previously we may have understood Peter's modesty but now He refuses to allow the Lord to do as He intends. Really this is arrogance in the garb of humility. Until we will give up the liberty of judging God's works, whatever attempts we make to honor God will simply be pride dressed up as humility.
- What a wonderful prophetic announcement by our Lord! Jesus obviates Peter's objection by warning Him in declaring that unless he is washed by Christ, he can have no part of Christ. Note that there are not multiple ways to be a part of Christ; the only way is for us to have our sins washed away by Christ. If our sins are not washed, we are not part of Him and we are not saved.
- Again Peter replies with foolishness. Although, he gives a lovable response, what we see is Peter's requirement for being clean set in contrast with Christ's requirement. Peter's the-more-the-better attitude is not an improvement on Christ's definition of clean. So many times we can take the righteous requirements of God and think that we are raising them to a higher level and then when we strive for the higher level we think that we are attaining greater righteousness. But notice that Peter's hyperbole is no righteousness at all; it is no improvement on Christ's requirement. When we attempt to bolster God's righteousness what we end up with is self righteousness.
- Those who are washed by Christ are truly washed. Here Christ demonstrates that He knows Judas' intentions but even still washes His feet. Given this, we can see that the important thing is not having clean feet. Judas' feet were cleaned like the rest yet he was His betrayer. This cleansing was only a picture of the true cleansing that Christ was to provide.

12 So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?"¹³ "You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am."¹⁴ "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet."¹⁵ "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you."¹⁶ "Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him."¹⁷ "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. NKJV

- Christ then goes on to explain His actions. Here He teaches that there is an inconsistency when we call Jesus our Lord or we wear His name yet we fail to love one another. We are to be characterized as those who love our brothers.
- Christ states that His actions are normative. But our foolish flesh wants to think that Christ is giving us a cookbook with a recipe for loving our brother. Clearly, Christ's actions are an example of loving our brother but they are not the definition of loving our brother. It is the example we follow not the method. Our lives should be filled with examples of various methods of loving our brother.
- Uphold the doctrines of truth yet abandoning our love for one another is a particular temptation for EEF. Just like the Ephesian church in Rev. 2 who refuted those who were in error, who hated sin and corrupt teaching, yet they had lost their first love. This love would clearly include the joy and pleasure that we have when we come to know of our cleansing from sin. But this also includes our love manifested by the way we treat one another. If the times comes for correcting a brother, we do so in love. If there is an opportunity to encourage a brother we do so in love. If God provides an opportunity to be generous helpful to a brother, we do so in love. Note also that Christ teaches that it is not enough to simply *know* these things rather, they must be evident in our lives.