

**The Gospel of John (81);
Jesus washes the Feet of His Disciples (2)**

Introduction:

Let us return this morning to the opening episode of John 13, in which we read of Jesus washing the feet of His disciples. Last Lord's Day, when we began to consider this passage, we focused on Jesus setting forth an example for us to be humble before others, willing to serve the brethren on behalf of our lord. This lesson is set before us through Jesus humbling Himself to wash His disciples' feet. But Jesus as an example to His disciples to humble themselves in order to serve one another is but one of two major teachings of this passage. The second lesson is shown forth through Peter's protest to Jesus that He not wash his feet. The response of Jesus reveals the teaching of our passage of the on-going need for Christians to be cleansed of sin by Jesus Christ. Accompanying this is the responsibility of the Christian to assist in cleansing his Christian brethren of their sins. In other words, the importance of the believers' sanctification is set before us and the responsibility that each of us has as a Christian to serve others, helping them in this sanctification process. We will consider this emphasis today in our study of this passage.

As we stated last Lord's Day, we may consider the account before us through this outline:

1. John's introduction to this portion of his Gospel (13:1)
2. Jesus began to wash the feet of the disciples (13:2-5)
3. Peter's reaction to Jesus' action (13:6-9)
4. Jesus' response to Peter's protest (13:10-11)
5. Jesus' resultant instructions to His disciples (13:12-17)

We addressed the first two of these matters last week; we will consider the last three today, Lord willing. Let us read the passage once again, giving special attention to Peter's reaction to Jesus and the response of Jesus to His disciple. Here is **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.

²And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him, ³Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, ⁴rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. ⁵After 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. ⁶Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?"

⁷Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this."

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

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

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

¹⁰Jesus 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." ¹¹For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, "You are not all clean."

¹²So 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? ¹³You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. ¹⁴If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶Most 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. ¹⁷If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

III. Peter’s reaction to Jesus’ action (13:6-9)

We read that Jesus “rose from supper and laid aside His garments.” Jesus then proceeded to serve His disciples by washing their feet. He served all His disciples who were present, from the least to the greatest. He even washed the feet of Judas Iscariot, who would shortly betray Him. We do not know in what order our Lord served His disciples, but when He approached Peter, Peter protested. He said to Jesus, “Lord, are You washing my feet?”

Our Lord’s explanation should have been sufficient to gain Peter’s submission. Jesus said to him, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.”

But Peter, perhaps moved by a sense of humility before his Lord, continued to protest. He declaring forthrightly, “You shall never wash my feet!”

Then Jesus replied, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.” Jesus made it clear to Peter that it was necessary for Jesus to wash his feet, otherwise, he would not be regarded as one of His disciples. Peter’s refusal to have Jesus wash his feet would mean that he would have “no part” with Him, that is, he would have no part in salvation that comes to those who are His true disciples. Peter responded with a sense of not only acquiescence, but with an expressed willingness to have not just his feet, but his entire body washed by Jesus. “Simon Peter said to Him, ‘Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!’”

But then we read...

IV. Jesus’ response to Peter’s protest (13:10-11)

We read in **verses 10 and 11**, “*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.’ ¹¹For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, ‘You are not all clean.’*” Here we see that this action of our lord Jesus in washing the feet of His disciples was a metaphor for Him sanctifying His disciples, cleansing them of their sins.

When Jesus said to His disciples, “you are clean”, He was declaring that His disciples had been recipients of God’s grace having brought them into a state of salvation. When Jesus said, “but not all of you”, He was, of course, referring to Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, who did not have salvation. Judas had not been cleansed of his sins as the others had been. When Jesus said to Peter, “He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean”, He was saying that His disciples are in need of Him to cleanse them of their sins that they continue to commit, even though they had been formally fully bathed, or wholly cleansed.

Now it is important that we understand precisely what the metaphor of Jesus teaches us, what it is to be “washed” or “bathed.” If asked what it means, we might respond by saying that to be “washed” or “bathed” indicates that *God has forgiven that believer of his sins*. Now it is certainly true that true disciples of Christ have had their sins forgiven. We commonly think in terms of forgiveness of sins as having been washed clean by the blood of Jesus. But the metaphor of being washed by Jesus conveys something more than God’s forgiveness of sins. It speaks of God through Jesus Christ having enabled one to cease to sin in that which he had formally lived. *For one to be cleansed of sin is to no longer be living in that sin*. We may see that this is so from Paul’s description of the Christians in the church at Corinth. The members of this church had been formerly great sinners, but God had *cleansed* them, having *washed* them. Here is **1 Corinthians 6:7-11** in which Paul was rebuking some in the church for suing other Christians before non-Christian judges.

Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated? ⁸No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren! ⁹Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, ¹⁰nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹***And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified*** in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

These Christians had formerly been egregious sinners, but they were no longer. Paul said, “Such **were** some of you.” What had changed them? They were **washed, sanctified, and justified**. They were delivered from their former lives characterized by sin, having been set apart unto God by God, and having been justified, that is, having been forgiven of their sins and regarded as righteous through their faith in Jesus Christ. But they had also been “washed” that is, they were delivered from their former sinful ways, living as ones cleansed before the Lord. To be “washed” or “cleansed” is not a metaphor that speaks directly of the forgiveness of sins, but it speaks of deliverance from sinning.

Here are the words of **Thomas Boston** (1676-1732) who wrote extensively on this passage in John’s Gospel.¹

The next thing to be spoke to, is, the sinner’s being washed by Christ. This is inseparable from his having part with Christ, and is the privilege of all, and only those who have part with Him. Concerning this washing I offer these particulars.

1. There is a filthiness in sin, whereby the soul is polluted and defiled before the Lord. This is supposed in the washing from it: Ezekiel 36:25, “then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you.” Sin does not only make the sinner guilty, but filthy and abominable. It is the abominable thing that God hates (Jer. 44:4), filth itself (Isa. 4:4). This filthiness of sin lies in its contrariety to the holiness of God expressed in His law. Holiness is the glory of God, and the beauty of the soul (Ezek. 15:11); sin the deformity and filthiness of it...

5. As washing is properly the purging away of filthiness, spots, and stains from the object washed; so the washing from sin is formally and directly the satisfaction of the sinner (Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5). So if Christ sanctify us not, we have no part in Him. Howbeit, it supposes or implies more than that wherein it formally consists.

When Jesus said to His disciples, ***‘He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you’***, He was not speaking directly of their justification, that is, the forgiveness of their sins and becoming right with God through faith in Jesus Christ. Rather, Jesus was speaking of them having been initially sanctified, having been washed from the filthiness of their sin. Judas had not been “washed”, or sanctified. We read elsewhere that he was a thief. He was also covetous and was complicit in the murder of Jesus. But the other disciples had been washed or bathed entirely; they were completely clean. They were no longer characterized by the sins that had practiced before becoming true disciples of Jesus Christ. Judas had undergone no change. He was still filthy in his sins in need of washing.

What Jesus was describing was a true and lasting change that takes place when someone is converted, when one comes to faith in Him. The doctrine of justification, which is essential and foundational to our salvation, does not directly affect the internal change of the sinner who has come to believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. Justification is outside of us. It has to do with our standing before God, not directly with our life lived out before God. When the believing sinner is justified through faith, God declares that believer to be no longer guilty before Him and under His wrath, rather, upon the sinner’s faith in Jesus Christ, God forgives that believer of his guilt of sin and begins then and thereafter to regard and treat the believer as righteous before Him. But our justification says nothing about an inward change that takes place within our

¹ Thomas Boston, **The Complete Works of the Late Rev. Thomas Boston**, vol. 6 (Richard Owen Roberts, 1980), pp. 551-619.

heart and lives. Justification is wholly outside of us. It is a legal (forensic) declaration of God as the Judge declaring the guilty one to be righteous. The inward change of the sinner into a saint, a holy man or woman, takes place through the grace of sanctification, not the grace of justification. Washing is the biblical metaphor for God's work of sanctification in the lives of His people. **Titus 3:3-7** speaks to this:

³For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. ⁴But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, ⁵not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through *the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit*, ⁶whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Here Paul wrote that salvation is experienced through an initial act of God in sanctification, which is *the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.*" He also wrote of the believer having been *justified*, which is different from washing, although it always accompanies the Holy Spirit washing the sinner of his sin. Justification and sanctification can never be separated from one another, but they should always be distinguished from one another. How do these two great works of God's grace in salvation compare with one another?

(1) Justification is an act of God about the *standing* of a man before God; but sanctification is the work of God concerning the *nature* of a man. It has been said in this way: Justification is an act of God as a Judge about a delinquent, absolving him from a sentence of death; but sanctification is an act of God about us, as a physician, in curing us of a mortal disease. It has been pointed out that David joins them both together in Psalm 103:3, "(God) who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases."

(2) Justification and sanctification differ from one another in that justification is an act of God's grace on account of the *righteousness of another*, even Jesus, but sanctification is a work of God in which *he infuses righteousness into us*. The first, justification, speaks of imputation: God imputes or reckons the righteousness of Jesus Christ to be that of the believing sinner. This is God's work *for* us. The second, sanctification, speaks of infusion, in which God works *in* us to make us holy.

(3) Justification and sanctification differ from one another in that *our justification is complete, or perfect, but our sanctification is incomplete*. Justification occurred when the sinner first truly believed on Jesus Christ as his Savior. Justification is complete, knowing of no degrees. It is the same in every believer, new and old alike. The newest believer among us is as justified before God as the one among us who has believed longest. There is not degree of our justification. You are either justified or you are not. Our justification cannot be diminished or increased. It cannot be interrupted or it cannot cease to be. But sanctification is an imperfect, incomplete, changeable thing in every believer. Yes, every believer was initially sanctified in his conversion, that is what Jesus meant when He declared all of His disciples but Judas were "clean." But there are varying degrees of sanctification from believer to believer. One believer is more or less sanctified than another. Sanctification has many degrees between persons and even in the same person. A true believer may not become more justified than he is presently, but he can become much more sanctified than he is currently. A saint who has died and gone to be with the Lord is no more justified there than he was when he was a believer here on earth. But then he will be completely sanctified, far above the condition in which he now finds himself.

(4) Justification and sanctification differ from one another in that *our justification involves no work of our own*, but is based solely upon the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf, *but our sanctification involves very much our work*. As God has commanded through Paul,

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, *work out your own salvation* with fear and trembling.

And yet, we know and confess that this work we do is in no way meritorious and in no way contributes to our justification. Justification involves our believing, trusting, resting in Jesus Christ *alone* for our righteousness. Our sanctification also involves our believing, trusting, resting in Jesus Christ, but it is as we go forth with all of our effort. We rest in Jesus Christ for our justification, but we work with all our might toward our full sanctification. The Scriptures liken it to striving, fighting, running, sowing, seeking, journeying, enduring, overcoming, and even exerting violence in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. There is no salvation for the believer unless you trust Jesus Christ alone for your justification. But there is no salvation for you if you refuse or fail to “*work out your own salvation* with fear and trembling.

The biblical need for the “washing” of the sinner in his coming to salvation betrays a great problem in evangelicalism in its understanding of salvation and of the content of the gospel. Salvation is commonly reduced only to the promise that God forgives guilty sinners of their sins. The “gospel” being proclaimed is the message that guilty sinners may have their sins forgiven them freely at which time they are given the gift of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ alone. *People who claim to trust Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins are promised they have salvation irrespective of whether or not they continue in their practice of sin.* The result is that many claim to be justified before God, but who have never been experienced “the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. But if one is not washed from his sin, he is not forgiven of his sin, for they go together. John wrote in 1 John 3:7, “Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness (that is sanctification) is righteous (that is justification). The way that you may know that you are justified before God is not based solely you’re your claim to believe on Jesus. The way that you may know that you are justified before God is if you have been and are being sanctified by God. Is there a work of God’s grace in your life, making you more like the Savior? If not, you are still in your sins.

But because of this defective and deficient “gospel” being proclaimed, there are scores of professing Christians in evangelical churches everywhere who are yet in their sins, though they think that they have Jesus Christ as their Savior. And so it is as Proverbs declares, “There are those who are clean in their own eyes but are not washed of their filth” (Prov. 30:12). Salvation is more than forgiveness of sins, although certainly it includes that blessing, thank the Lord. When the Lord bestows salvation, He washes the sinner of his sin. He no longer lives in sin. He has been cleansed from his sin. God has caused him to be bathed, to be washed and he is now “clean.” He no longer lives as a “filthy” sinner any longer, for he has been washed. He now lives in newness of life, washed clean by and before the Lord.

When we proclaim the need and the offer of salvation to the lost, we need to speak of God forgiving them of their sins, of course, but we also must proclaim in that offer of salvation that God will cleanse them of sin, that is, God will enable them to cease sinning against Him and to begin to live a holy life before Him. We should never offer the forgiveness of sins separated from the offer of deliverance from sinning. There is no promise of God of salvation to the ones who continue in sin. Jesus said of Judas that he was not “clean”, in other words, he was still in his sin. And so it is with everyone who has not been cleansed from sin.

In consideration of this matter, the concern may arise, “How do I know that I have been cleansed from sin?” Again, **Thomas Boston** also addressed this matter:

QUESTION: How may I know that I am washed by Christ?

MARK 1. If ye are washed by Christ, though ye are not washed perfectly, ye are washed universally; washed in every part, though not perfectly clean in any part: 2 Corinthians 5:17, “If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.” Ye are washed from the gross pollutions of the outward man, from the reigning pollutions of the inner man: Psalm 24:3, 4, “Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully.” There is a new set in you for purity, darting to all the points of the Christian compass, though you fall short of degrees in every point. The compass ye find, 1 John 3:3, “And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure.”

2. Ye lay the stress of your acceptance with God, not upon your inherent cleanness, the effect of your washing; but on the blood of Christ, the cause of it: Philippians 3:3, “For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Jesus Christ, and have no confidence in the flesh”...

3. Your hearts are loosed from sin, though it cleaves to you. It lies not like mud in a pool, where there is nothing to wear (wash) it out; but like mud in a spring, where the spring-water tends to work (wash) it out. So ye will be groaning under the remains of your uncleanness, saying, with the Apostle, Romans 7:24, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death?” You will be content to see every spot, Psalm 139:23, 24, that it may be washed off; and really desirous to be made perfectly clean; as was the Apostle, Philippians 3:13, 14, “I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”²

The doctrine (teaching) that is set forth by our Lord in our passage may be stated this way:

Such an inseparable connection there is between a sinner’s having part with Christ, and being washed from his sins by Christ, that if a sinner is not washed from his sins by Christ, he has no part with Christ, while he is so. (Thomas Boston)

Here is another statement of this doctrine:

That without the washing of the soul from sin men have no communion with God in Christ nor interest in Him. (Thomas Manton--1620-1677)

This washing of the soul of sin is the result of *repentance*. Just as justification and sanctification go together, and forgiveness and deliverance go together, so faith and repentance go together. Biblical repentance, which is turning from sin unto God, is a work of God’s grace in the soul of the one that God is converting from sin unto salvation.

A. As a manifestation of true faith, repentance is necessary in order to receive salvation.

Not all faith is saving faith. Only that faith that is shown in repentance from sin and turning to God in obedience to Jesus Christ the Lord is saving faith. That this is so, is very clear from the Holy Scriptures. John the Baptist had declared to his generation

⁸Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, ⁹and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. ¹⁰And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. ***Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.***” (Matt. 3:8-10)

Unless a man repents of sin, turning to the Lord Jesus Christ in faith, he will not inherit salvation, but God will consign him to everlasting punishment.

It is important for us to understand the nature of repentance and how it is associated with saving faith. Sometimes in Scripture the command to *repent* is given in order to be saved. In other cases the sinner is called upon to *believe* the gospel so as to be saved. And then there are also places in which both the command to repent and to believe are both declared, as we read in Mark 1:15. Saving faith and repenting of sin go hand in hand. They occur at the same time. We might say that to repent of sin and turning to the Lord Jesus is saving faith in action. When someone truly believes the gospel of Jesus Christ, he does so by turning from sin and submitting unto Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord.

² Ibid, pp. 558f.

B What is true biblical repentance?

1. What repentance is not--penance

First, we assert very strongly that *biblical repentance should not be understood as doing penance*. Repentance is taught everywhere in the Bible; penance is taught nowhere in the Bible. Those who prescribe penance teach that penance is something that a person must do in order to appease God. Penance is viewed as making satisfaction to God for one's own sin through things he does. They make penance a sacrifice that satisfies God with respect to sin. The only sacrifice that God accepts for sin is the sacrifice of His Son upon His cross. The belief and practice of penance is foreign to the gospel. It denies the full satisfaction that Jesus Christ provided God, when He died on the cross for the sins of His people. Jesus called out from His cross, "It is finished." "It is not finished" is the belief of those who say that there is something more you must do in order to satisfy God's justice with respect to your sin. They say that penance "means a more complete payment of the debt which the sinner owes to God." The Bible teaches, the gospel announces, that Jesus Christ paid all that was required for all of the sins of all of His people. We are commanded in the Scriptures to repent. We are never commanded in the Scriptures to do penance.

Repentance, simply, is fully *turning oneself from serving sin to submitting to God and doing His will*. It is the act of "turning away" from "your iniquities" (Cf. Acts 3:26).

2. What true repentance is—what we are to do and experience.

True repentance includes the following elements. **First, true repentance involves a true awareness and acknowledgement of personal sin.** Often times when evangelism is conducted, this is not a matter that is driven home to the conscience of the hearers. It is not enough to get a person to acknowledge that he is a sinner just like everyone else are also sinners; rather, it is "*Me, My* sin, Lord." True repentance takes place when a person becomes aware of his own sin before the Lord.

Second, true repentance includes a sense of one's guilt because of his sin. That is, when a man repents of his sin, he feels the just condemnation of God upon himself for his sin. He does not see his sin as a minor matter, but that it is a terrible affront to God's law that warrants condemnation. She understands that his sin is an exceeding egregious crime that is worthy of God's wrath. He sees his sin as exceedingly sinful and he recognizes that he has no basis of plea before God for forgiveness. He comes to know that if forgiveness is to come from God, it must be only due to the free and voluntary exercise of God's mercy, that He is free to bestow or withhold.

Third, true repentance involves a sense of shame due to one's sin. This is different than guilt. Guilt is a sense of one's condemnation. Shame is the feeling of utter disgrace due to sin. There are some who teach that you are never to experience shame or guilt, that God in His grace has provided such a perfect sacrifice in Christ that guilt and shame are never to be experienced, and that if a preacher like leads people to experience guilt and shame over sin, he is a false teacher. But if you have not experienced a sense of guilt--just condemnation-- and a sense of shame concerning your sin, you have not received forgiveness of sin. If our sin caused Christ to be treated as guilty and caused Him to suffer shame, it should certainly do so in us. Adam and Eve sensed great shame in the nakedness of their sin, and we should feel no less. A shameless man is a non-Christian man.

Four, true repentance includes a sorrow over personal sin. It is inward sorrow, a remorse for having ever committed it. This is in contrast to a sorrow or fear merely for its consequences. This sorrow is not simply a sorrow for having committed the sin itself, but *it is sorrow before God*. When one becomes aware of sin and God's attitude toward sin and His work through Christ in dealing with sin, the repentant sinner feels great sorrow. Not only has his sin deeply grieved God, but his sin was a cause of Christ's terrible shame and infinite suffering as the sin-bearer. There is sorrow for having committed it, but it is a sorrow that involves remorse for the pain it placed upon the Lord Jesus who bore it upon His cross.

Five, true repentance includes a desire and effort toward restitution, if it is possible to do so. This is the effort to undo the offense before others, making restitution if need be, to vindicate the ways of God and bring Him glory. **Zacchaeus** is a wonderful example for this desire for restitution. We read of his

commitment to the Lord upon the Lord being very gracious toward him: “Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, ‘Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold’” (Luke 19:8). He had been a thief, and he had oppressed the people over whom he had power. He would undo what he had done unto them, if he could.

Six, true repentance involves confession of sin. There is an owning of personal responsibility. When one truly repents he makes no excuses. He does not lessen his guilt; rather if it were possible (but it isn't), he would magnify his guilt. Again, Zacchaeus could be cited. He stood and confessed his sins to Christ, but it was in the hearing of others. When John baptized in the Jordan he did so while they were confessing their sins.

Seven, with true repentance there is a confession of specific sin. Yes, there is a keen recognition of the pervasiveness of sin in one's entire being, but it is generally specific offences which makes the matter known. These specific offences are recognized and acknowledged by the one who repents. The gravity of one sin will often reveal to him the all pervasiveness of sin in him, and seeing this, he turns from it.

Eight, true repentance includes a hatred of sin in all its forms wherever it is detected. The non-Christian may grieve over certain “sins”, but these are *outside* of themselves. They hate “sins” which run counter their understanding of what is right and wrong--things they may identify as crimes against the environment, sins of intolerance, or prejudice. But generally these are sins outside of themselves. They are the sins of others that they hate. With respect to themselves all their behavior and attitudes are justified and they justify others who view matters in the same vein. All are somewhat like the immoral woman of Proverbs, which reads,

This is the way of an adulterous woman:
She eats and wipes her mouth,
And says, “I have done no wickedness.” (Pro 30:20).

We are all like that to various degrees, until God moves us to repent of our sins. When one becomes a Christian, having repented of sin, he adopts the same view of sin that God has--he has a hatred of it. He hates it in *himself and* he hates it in *others*. He grieves over what he does and he grieves over what others do.

This is important. There is something defective somewhere if we do not hate sin. If we are not grieved by immorality in all its forms, if an overheard blasphemy does not cut us to the heart, if an off-color joke does not offend our sensibilities but rather appeals to our sense of humor, there is something amiss within us.

Nine, with true repentance there is a cessation--a turning-- from doing those former sins. What we are saying here is that when one repents of sin, he deals with sin. It is not merely a confession of sin without the intention or resolve to turn from it.

And **ten, with true repentance there is a turning to God and His Son Jesus Christ.** Repentance is not just turning from sin, but it is turning to God. In fact, the apostle Paul emphasized this aspect in Acts 20:

¹⁸And when they (the Ephesian elders) had come to him (Paul), he said to them: “You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, ¹⁹servicing the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; ²⁰how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, ²¹testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, *repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.* (Act 20:18-20)

Now it is important to stress this. Although all of the elements stated above must be present in true repentance, the degree to which these things are experienced varies greatly from individual to individual. Some feel these things very acutely, so as to be almost consumed by them. Others, however, do not experience them as acutely; nevertheless, they are all present. The bottom line is this, not that you have felt

these things acutely, but that the essence of repentance has been exercised by yourself--that is, ***you have turned from serving sin and are you are now submitted to God and doing His will from the heart.***

Paul described the nature of true repentance that had taken place among the Christians in the church at Corinth. That church had significant problems which the apostle had addressed in his letter to that church. The members of that church responded in true repentance. Paul described their repentance in **2 Corinthians 7:8-11.**

⁸For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it. For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while. ⁹Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. ¹⁰For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. ¹¹For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

3. True repentance is a work of God's grace in the soul

Although all people everywhere are commanded to repent of sin, true repentance is not a product of fallen man's effort, but it is the manifestation of the grace of God at work in his life. Paul indicated this to Timothy in the way they he should minister to those caught in sin:

²⁴And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, ²⁵in humility correcting those who are in opposition, ***if God perhaps will grant them repentance***, so that they may know the truth, ²⁶and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will. (2 Tim. 2:24-26)

People who need repentance are ones who had been taken captive by the devil to do his will. God must grant (bestow) repentance, or else they will not escape his control. Repentance is a gift of God. Repentance is the outworking of the grace of God in the soul.

That repentance is a gift of God was also declared by certain Jewish Christians when the first heard news that Gentiles were coming to salvation through the gospel. Paul had testified to them how God had wrought great grace among his Gentile hearers and that they had turned from sin in faith and submission to the Lord Jesus. We read of their reaction in

When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also ***God has granted repentance that leads to life.***" (Acts 11:18)

And we could go back further yet. Early in the Christian era, when the Jewish leaders threatened the apostles not to preach Jesus Christ to the people of Jerusalem, Peter and the others answered them:

"We ought to obey God rather than men. ³⁰The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. ³¹Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, ***to give repentance to Israel*** and forgiveness of sins. ³²And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him." (Acts 5:29-32)

The point is this, the metaphor of "washing" that our Lord Jesus used when he washed the feet of His disciples, in that they were all, but one, "clean", He was declaring that they had all exercised repentance from sin when they came to saving faith. Perhaps this was when they professed faith in the coming one when they were baptized by John the Baptist, I do not know, but they were all clean, except for Judas.

Let us return to our passage of John 13.

V. Jesus' resultant instructions to His disciples (13:12-17)

¹²So 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?" ¹³You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. ¹⁴If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶Most 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. ¹⁷If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

After Jesus completed this work of washing the feet of His disciples, He sat down again asking them, "Do you know what I have done to you?" He was indicating to them that He had just given them a spiritual lesson on how to relate and serve one another. He declared forthrightly, "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done unto you."

Interestingly, there are some who take this action of Jesus as an example for His people quite literally. There are churches that have made foot washing a third ordinance of the church. They practice baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the washing of one another's feet. I am happy that we have not adopted this belief and practice.³

Our Lord was instructing His disciples that just as He served His disciples in order to cleanse them of their sins, so everyone of His disciples should be in the service of other disciples (Christians), instructing and exhorting them that they may be cleansed from sin. The fact is, even though we are Christians and we have been wholly washed when we first came to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, and although nothing can ever cause us to become 'unwashed', as it were, nevertheless, as Christians we still have problems with sinning. It is as the wholly "bathed" person that has his feet soiled after walking throughout the day; his "feet" are in need of washing when he arrived home in the evening. So we as Christians, still commit sin and we are in need of cleansing or washing from that sin. Even though our current sinning cannot condemn us, our sinning defiles us. Our sinning damages and hinders our sense of assurance and the quality of our fellowship with the Lord and with other Christians about us. We are in need of having our "feet washed." And our Lord instructs us here to purpose to assist our Christian brothers and sister in becoming cleansed from their sins. This is a work of fellowship that is to be taking place within the body of a local church.

A. Consider these verses in God's Word that exhort Christians to be cleansed from sin.

2 Corinthians 7:1. "Since we have these promises, beloved, let us *cleanse* ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God."

1 John 1:7. "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son *cleanses* us from all sin."

1 John 1:9. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to *cleanse* us from all unrighteousness."

2 Timothy 2:21. "Therefore, if anyone *cleanses* himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work."

Psalms 119:9. "How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word."

³ Some Baptists, including the notable Benjamin Keach (1640-1704), advocated that "the laying on of hands" was a third ordinance, in addition to baptism and the Lord's Supper.

B. Consider these verses in God’s Word that exhort Christians to help “cleanse” other Christians of their sins.

James 5:19. “My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, ²⁰let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”

Galatians 6:1. “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.”

1 Peter 4:8. “Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.”

Hebrews 3:13. “But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today,’ that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”

1 Thessalonians 5:14. “And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.”

1 Timothy 4:12. “Be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”

Jude 22, 23. “And have mercy on those who doubt; ²³save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.”

James 5:16. “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”

Hebrews 10:24. “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

1 Thessalonians 5:11. “Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”

This is what it is to wash one “the feet” of our brethren. When Peter first refused to allow Jesus to wash his feet, Jesus said to him, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.” And after He had finished this service that He rendered unto them, He said to them,

“Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. ¹⁴If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. (John 13:12-15)

May the Lord enable us to serve one another faithfully in these matters.

“Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise,
be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (1 Tim. 1:17)
