

## Jn. 13:1-17 “Foot-Washing”

**For the Children:** Have you ever been asked to help mum or dad by doing a really disgusting job – like cleaning the toilet? Maybe you tried to get out of it: “Oooo! That’s disgusting! I’m not doing that!” But somebody has to do those kind of things, for your benefit as well. That’s how Jesus’ disciples felt about washing other people’s dirty feet. So Jesus washed their feet. To show them that if you are not too proud, and you love others, you will serve and help them by doing even the unpleasant jobs that benefit them. But even more importantly, He was preparing them to understand that He loved them so much, He was willing to do the most horrible and shameful work of all, to save them: to die on the cross. **Questions:** What does “humiliation” mean?; What are some other examples of Jesus’ “humiliation”?; Why did Jesus have to undergo humiliation to save us?

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### Introduction:

#### First Point: A Sign of Jesus’ Humiliation

- 1) Knowing His Hour Had Come: The Lord’s act of foot-washing is set in the context of His saving work. This is shown by the timing – just before His death; and by His awareness that His betrayal and return to the Father were imminent
- 2) Loved to the End: The connection to the cross is also shown by the statement that He loved His own “to the end.” This means extreme love, to the uttermost. His love went as far as dying and suffering hell for His sheep. The humiliation of foot-washing is part of a whole programme of humiliation, from incarnation to cross and burial.
- 3) A Menial Task: It was a sign of humiliation because foot-washing was a humiliating work for servants. That is why the disciples were refusing to do it. But the Lord Jesus, who is greater than all of them – the Father had given all things to Him; He had come forth from God and was going back to Him – He was willing to dress like a servant and do this dirty job, with humility and love. See Phlp. 2:7.

#### Second Point: A Symbol of His Cleansing Work

- 1) A Strong Objection: Peter objected in very strong language when it was his turn to have his feet washed. He did not understand the necessity of Jesus’ humiliation. To him, it was just an embarrassment. The same failure was seen on other occasions (Mt. 16:22). But if Peter objects to a smaller humiliation, how will he deal with the cross? He will only understand this later, after Jesus’ humiliation is complete.
- 2) No Part in Him: As in Mt. 16:23, the Lord gives a strong reply, that if Peter rejects Jesus’ humiliation (at any point), he has no part in the benefits of it – in Jesus’ saving work.
- 3) Only One Cleansing: Peter now insists in having a more extensive washing, as if the mere act of physical washing will make him more clean and closer to Jesus. The Lord replies that Peter has already been cleansed/saved. Faith in Christ brings complete, once-for-all cleansing of sins. What Peter needs is just the “dirt washed off his feet” – to be rid of his pride and his misunderstanding of Jesus’ work.

#### Third Point: An Example of Humble Service

- 1) The Breaking of Pride: The disciples had been arguing (again) about who was greatest in Jesus’ kingdom. They all needed to have their pride broken, learn about grace, and the nature of Christ’s kingdom. His kingdom did not operate on worldly views of greatness and power. Jesus’ foot-washing was a “shock-tactic” designed to break their pride and worldliness. They needed to learn that humiliation and humble service *are* fitting for a King!
- 2) The Master’s Example; Since they claimed to follow their Teacher and Master, they should have been willing to follow His example of humble, loving service. It would be a blessing to them if they did. Once we humble ourselves to accept that we need Jesus’ humiliation; that our brethren, joined to us in Christ, also need it; that we all need to have our pride broken to accept that truth – then we can see what humble service exemplifies: not our behaviour, but Christ’s saving work. When we have Christ’s humble, serving love within us, it is bound to result in believers offering humble, loving service to others.

### Conclusion:

