

Sermon #92 — John's Gospel

Title: **FOOT WASHING**

Text: John 13:1-20

Subject: *Lessons from the Foot Washing*

Date: Sunday Morning — July 25, 2010

Tape: John #92

Reading: *Philippians 2:1-30*

1 If [there be] therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, [being] of one accord, of one mind.

3 [Let] nothing [be done] through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and

FOOT WASHING

given him a name which is above every name:

10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of [things] in heaven, and [things] in earth, and [things] under the earth;

11 And [that] every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye 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.

13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of [his] good pleasure.

14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

18 For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.

20 For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.

FOOT WASHING

21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

22 But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.

23 Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me.

24 But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.

25 Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.

26 For he longed after you all, and was full of

heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.

27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

28 I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.

29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation:

30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

(Philippians 2:1-30)

FOOT WASHING

INTRODUCTION

The things recorded in John 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 are things that God the Holy Spirit inspired John alone to record. Neither Matthew, Mark, nor Luke mention the things recorded in these five chapters. We can never be sufficiently thankful that God the Holy Spirit caused them to be written here for our learning and admonition and for our edification and consolation. The things here revealed have been meat and drink for thirsty souls for two thousand years. They provide strength and comfort for Zion's pilgrims in every age and land, as they are blessed to the hearts of God's elect by the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit. May he be pleased to bless them to our souls this hour, as we look again at our Savior's marvellous condescension and humility of soul in washing his disciples' feet (John 13:1-20).

“1 ¶Now before the feast of the passover, **when Jesus knew** that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, **having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.** 2 And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's [son], to betray him; 3 **Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands,** and that he was come

FOOT WASHING

from God, and went to God; 4 He riseth from supper, and **laid aside his garments**; and took a towel, and **girded himself**. 5 After that he poureth water into a bason, and **began to wash the disciples' feet**, and to wipe [them] with the towel wherewith he was girded. 6 Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? 7 Jesus answered and said unto him, **What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter**. 8 Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, **If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me**. 9 Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also [my] hands and [my] head. 10 Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash [his] feet, but **is clean every whit**: and **ye are clean, but not all**. 11 For **he knew who should betray him**; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean. 12 **So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again**, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? 13 Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for [so] I am. 14 If I then, [your] Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For **I have given you an example**, that ye should do as I have done to you. 16 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is

FOOT WASHING

sent greater than he that sent him. 17 **If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.**”

“18 ¶ I speak not of you all: **I know whom I have chosen:** but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. 19 **Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am** [he]. 20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.” (John 13:1-20)

The title of my message is — **FOOT WASHING**. What was the intent of our Lord Jesus in performing this very menial task? What does he teach us in this passage?

BLESSED DEPARTURE

First, we learn that as our Savior looked upon his rapidly-approaching death as a blessed departure out of this world unto the Father, so we who believe should anticipate the death of the body. — “*Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father*” (v. 1). Our blessed Savior expressed a great ambition to eat this last passover feast with his disciples, that he might fulfill its typical significance by dying in our place, as our

FOOT WASHING

Passover Sacrifice, to make atonement for the sins of his elect. Our Lord Jesus was anxious to die as our Substitute and accomplish our redemption by the sacrifice of himself.

Though he must die the shameful, painful, ignominious death of the cross, though he must be made sin for us, though he must die as a man cursed of God, when he was made sin for us, our Savior knew that his departure out of this world would be the end of sin and the end of suffering, the end of shame and the end of the curse, the end of wrath and the end of sorrow both for him and for us, — *“for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin!”* Therefore, his death as our Substitute would be his accomplished exodus (Luke 9:31) out of this world unto the Father.

Because he died for us, “the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God,” he has delivered us from the fear of death. That is to say, death for God’s saints is but removing from one place to another. It is the quiet, sweet, longed for departure out of this world unto the Father. — As **John Trapp** put it, — “It is to the saints no more than a passage to the Father, an inlet to eternal life.” — **One aged believer** long ago said, as he was dying, “The Father loves me, the Son redeemed me, the Holy Ghost comforts me; how then can I be cast down at the approach of death?”

FOOT WASHING

- As a specific time and hour was fixed for our Savior's entrance into this world from eternity, so the time and hour of our entrance into this world was fixed from eternity.
- As the specific time and hour of our Redeemer's departure out of this world was fixed from eternity, so the time and hour of our departure out of this world was fixed from eternity.
- Bless God, I will soon depart out of this world!
- When I depart out of this world I will be departing unto my Father, to dwell forever in his house!

INCOMPARABLE LOVE

Second, the Holy Spirit here speaks of our Savior's great love for his people as an incomparable love of indestructible and patient perseverance. — *“Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end”* (v. 1).

The objects of his love are described as *“his own.”* Those words do not refer to all men, though all are his property by creation. The words *“his own”* do not refer to the Jews, who were his own nation and countrymen according to the flesh. And they do not merely refer to the twelve apostles, whom he had chosen. These two, sweet, sweet words —

FOOT WASHING

“HIS OWN,” — refer to all the hosts of God’s elect, those who are his own...

- by his choice of them,
- by the Father’s gift of them to him,
- by the purchase he made of them with his blood,
- and by his effectual call of them by his grace.

Our Savior’s love is specifically said to be a love for “*his own which were in the world.*” — **That means that our Savior loves us in our present state and condition, whatever that state and condition may be!** He loves his own in this present, evil world!

- Though we live in this body of sin and death.
- Though we are liable to many snares and temptations.
- Though we are weak and frail, faltering and failing, sinful and shameful!

Still, we are and always will be the objects of the love and care of Christ Jesus our Lord!

The acts of his love to us are expressed both in time past, and to come: “*having loved*” us, he loved us from everlasting, with a love of complacency and delight, which he showed...

- By espousing us to himself from eternity!
- By undertaking our cause, as our Surety in the covenant of grace!

FOOT WASHING

- By taking upon himself all responsibility for us as our Substitute, Representative, and Mediator, from everlasting!
- By assuming our nature in the incarnation!
- And having done all this, “*he loved them to the end.*”

Yes, the Lord of Glory died for us, because he loved us! And he continues to show that incomparable love for us by interceding for us in heaven, by supplying us with all grace, and by preserving us unto Glory. And he will at last bring us into his kingdom and glory, and we shall be forever with him. Imagine that! And try to get hold of this: — That same love for our souls continues not only to the end of our lives in this world, but to the end of the world and forever! The Lord Jesus loves us, no, HE LOVED US continually from everlasting and to everlasting!

ETERNAL DOMINION

Third, we are here taught that our Savior’s dominion as our Mediator is an eternal dominion. As he is “*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,*” in whom all God’s elect were blessed and accepted from everlasting, so the Triune Jehovah trusted him from everlasting as the Mediator-Savior of his elect, and all things were given into his hands as Lord from everlasting. **Notice that the language here speaks of that which was already done.**

FOOT WASHING

We cannot even think like this really, but **all the works of God were finished before the world began** (Hebrews 4:3).

“For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.” (Hebrews 4:3)

- Christ was our accepted Sacrifice from eternity (Revelation 13:8).
- We were accepted in him from eternity (Ephesians 1:6).
- We were blessed with all the blessings of grace in Christ from eternity (Ephesians 1:3-6).
- The Book of God says we were saved in Christ from eternity (2 Timothy 1:9).
- And Christ was made Lord over all things as our Mediator from eternity, made Lord over all flesh to give eternal life to all the objects of his love from eternity.
- And all the works of God “*finished from the foundation of the world,*” are brought to light, made manifest, and openly performed in due time, to the praise of his glory!

FOOT WASHING

But the primary purpose of verse 3 is to show us that our Savior understood and was fully aware of his own great, indescribable dignity and superiority as a man.
— “Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God.” By telling us this, and then telling us about our Lord washing his disciples’ feet, the Holy Spirit is emphasizing the Lord’s act as a matter of great, indescribable condescension.

In the very moment when he knew himself, as God-Man Mediator, to be the Lord, Proprietor, and Governor of heaven and earth, the Lord Jesus did that which none but the lowest of servants among the sons of men (slaves) perform. It is obviously the Holy Spirit’s intention that we have before us a sense of Christ’s unbounded condescension as we consider the things that follow.

Then, the Holy Spirit inspired John to tell us that our Savior also knew that he “was come from God, and went to God” (v. 3). — He came from the Triune God upon a mission as Jehovah’s Servant, to save his people from their sins. And the Savior knew that his work would soon be done. When he had finished all that he was sent to accomplish, he would return to the Triune God as our God-man Mediator. With these thoughts before him, our dear Savior stooped to wash his disciples’ feet. Only now, only

FOOT WASHING

under these conditions could he give such a vivid picture of his undying love for those very people for whom he was about to die! He was now about to return to his Father. For a while, they would see him no more (John16:10).

INDESCRIBABLE HUMILIATION

Fourth, our Savior's act of washing his disciples' feet was intended to set before them and us a picture of his indescribable humiliation as our sin-atonng Substitute.

I have no doubt that we have before us in this chapter a very clear and vivid picture of the self-abasing, condescending service we ought to gladly render to one another. What the Lord Jesus did for us, we should gladly do for one another.

- Does he serve us? Let us serve one another.
- Does he refresh us? Let us refresh one another.
- Does he stoop to meet our needs? Let us stoop to meet one another's needs.
- Did he empty himself to fill us? Let us empty ourselves to fill one another.
- Did he abase himself to meet our needs and lift us up? Let us abase ourselves to meet the needs of others and lift others.
- Does he love us? Let us love one another.

FOOT WASHING

- Did he lay down his life for us? Let us lay down our lives for one another.

The foot washing described in this chapter portrays the loving services we ought to render to the church and kingdom of our God, the humility of mind with which we should gladly serve one another in this world (Philippians 2:1-11). **And the Master's washing of the disciples' feet may well be intended to be a declaration of the high esteem with which God's servants should be esteemed by his people.** Our Lord's statement in verse 20 certainly implies that he intended that we understand it this way.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.” (John 13:20)

The washing of his disciples' feet and not their hands was, perhaps, a ceremonial presentation of them as his Apostles, as preachers of the Gospel (Isaiah 52:7-8; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

(Isaiah 52:7-8) “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! 8 Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice;

FOOT WASHING

with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion.”

(1 Thessalonians 5:12-13) “And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; 13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. [And] be at peace among yourselves.”

But the primary thing intended by this marvellous act of humiliation was to give us a picture of the great, indescribable condescension and humiliation of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, when he stooped to redeem us!

(John 13:4-5) “He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. 5 After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe [them] with the towel wherewith he was girded.”

What a beautiful picture this is of the Son of God laying aside his glory which he had with the Father before all worlds, and taking upon him the form of a servant, when he came to wash his people from their sins in his blood!

FOOT WASHING

(Philippians 2:5-8) “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

(2 Corinthians 8:9) “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”

(2 Corinthians 5:21) “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

This is truly the one thing needful, the one thing that is absolutely necessary for our souls. — We must be washed in the Savior’s precious blood! The Lord Jesus said, emphatically, to Peter, — **“If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me!”** Though our Savior baptized no one, and made a point of stressing that fact (John 4:2), as if to tell us that baptism has no saving merit or efficacy of any kind, he says to you and me, as he did to Peter, — **“If I**

FOOT WASHING

wash thee not, thou hast no part with me!” — “Without shedding of blood is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22).

- We must be washed **judicially** (Romans 3:24-26).

“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 25 Whom God hath set forth [to be] a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26 To declare, [I say], at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” (Romans 3:24-26)

- We must be washed **experimentally** (Titus 3:4-7; Zechariah 3:1-9).

“But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, 5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, **by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost**; 6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; 7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” (Titus 3:4-7)

FOOT WASHING

- We must be washed **continually** (1 John 1:7, 9).

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7)

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

INWARD, NOT OUTWARD

Fifth, the fact that the Lord Jesus washed Judas’ feet is very instructive. Are you not astonished by the fact that Judas’ feet were washed by the Son of God, in common with the other Apostles? It is almost shocking. Isn’t it? It shouldn’t be. Our Lord Jesus did this deliberately; and his deliberate act of washing Judas’ feet was obviously intended to teach us much.

1. True, saving grace is inward, not outward. Judas was washed ceremonially, outwardly, but not spiritually, not inwardly, not experimentally.

FOOT WASHING

2. There is no saving benefit, merit, or efficacy in any outward ordinance, even if the ordinance were administered by Christ himself!
3. God's people, true believers, are never injured or kept from spiritual benefit by the presence of devils in our assemblies of worship. — Judas' defilement did not corrupt Peter, James, or John.

Robert Hawker rightly observed, “As the presence of Judas had no effect to injure the Apostles in those hallowed seasons with their Lord, so neither can devils, or bad men, hinder the blessed manifestations which the Lord makes to his own, when handing to them their portions in secret, and causing them to eat of the ‘*hidden manna*’ (Revelation 2:17).”

4. When devils, like Judas, do raise their ugly heads and manifest themselves in our midst, we should be reminded of God's distinguishing grace. — The only difference between Judas and the others was God's free, sovereign, electing, distinguishing grace; and the same is true today (vv. 18-19; 1 Corinthians 4:7).

(John 13:18-19) “I speak not of you all: **I know whom I have chosen**: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel

FOOT WASHING

against me. 19 **Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am [he].**”

(1 Corinthians 4:7) “For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?”

APPLICATION

O what a picture of grace we have before us! What an endearing portrait God the Holy Ghost has given us by the pen of his servant John, of our Lord Jesus Christ! Can the imagination conceive anything equally lovely, as in thus beholding the Son of God in our nature, washing the feet of poor fishermen? The picture was drawn at that moment, above all others, when the Lord Jesus “*knew that the Father had given all things into his hands!*” Ponder it well. What a lesson is here taught to mortify the pride of our hearts!

While the great ones of the earth carry themselves so proudly, and will hardly condescend to look upon the poor, the destitute, the homeless, and the wicked, the King of heaven stoops to the lowest humiliation, and washes his disciples’ feet! Let us never lose sight of this unequalled

FOOT WASHING

condescension of our Lord! Shall you, or I, or shall any poor sinner, in the view of such clemency, ever imagine that it is beneath the dignity of the Son of God to regard his people in our low estate.

- Did the Lord Jesus wash their feet, and will he not wash my soul?
- Did Son of God, unasked, yea, even when Peter refused him, persist to perform such an act of grace, and will he turn a blind eye to our needs or a deaf ear to our earnest petitions?
- Can any child of God, in the contemplation of such love in our Savior and Lord, say, I am too low, too abject, too unworthy for his care?

By this act of washing his disciples' feet before his departure, our blessed Savior intended to convince us that **his love is the same now as it was when he walked here in our flesh**, as when he lived for us, and as when he died in our stead at Calvary. **His very last act on earth, before suffering for them, was to wash his disciples' feet. And with that act he declared his complete devotion to them. Neither time, nor place, nor circumstances can alter his love for our souls!**

May God the Holy Spirit cause us to keep these things always in remembrance! And it will not be long until he who washed his disciples' feet will bring us home to glory,

FOOT WASHING

washed from all our sins in his blood, and present us to himself, sanctified and cleansed, “*a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but...holy and without blemish*” (Ephesians 5:25-27). Soon, the Son of God, our Savior, will “*present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy*” (Jude 24).

Amen.