

The Necessity of Washing

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[0:00] I turn with me now to the New Testament and to the Gospel of John chapter 13. Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper.

He laid aside his outer garments and, taking a towel, tied it round his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped round him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, Lord, do you wash my feet? Jesus answered him, what I am doing you do not understand now, but afterwards you will understand.

And Peter said to him, you shall never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, if I do not wash you, you have no share with me.

[1:45] Simon Peter said to him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus said to him, the one who has bathed does not need to wash except for his feet, but is completely clean.

And you are clean, but not every one of you, for he knew who was to betray him. That was why he said, not all of you are clean. When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, do you understand what I have done to you?

You call me teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.

If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. I am not speaking of all of you. I know whom I have chosen, but the scripture will be fulfilled.

[3:04] He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me. I am telling you this now before it takes place, that when it does take place, you may believe that I am he.

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.

And we can pick up a reading again at verse 31. That section from 31 to 30 just describes Judas Iscariot just leaving the upper room and going out to betray Jesus.

So when he had gone out, that's Judas Iscariot. When Judas Iscariot had gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.

If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. Little children, yet a little while I am with you.

[4:15] You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, where I am going, you cannot come. A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another.

Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

Amen. May God bless you as that reading of his word. And to his name be the praise. We sing again, this time in Sing Psalms again, in Psalm 119, 119 at verse 9.

You'll find that on page 157 of the Blue Psalm books. Page 157. We sing verses 9 to 16, the whole of this section.

How can the young keep their life pure? By doing what your word demands, I seek you with my heart and soul. Let me not stray from your commands.

[5:26] Verses 9 to 16, to God's praise. Amen. O God, the young keep their life pure, By doing what your word demands, I seek you with my heart and soul.

Let me not stray from your commands. Pure word I've made and in my heart, To keep me from offending you.

Praise be to you, O Lord my God, Teach me your status, firm and true.

It love proceeding from your mind. I'm glad you with my lips have told.

I love to follow you, O Lord my God, As others love to count their goal.

[7:13] I meditated upon your face, And all your precepts I regret.

I did delight in your deace. Your word I never will delay.

Turn back with me then please to the passage read, John chapter 13. And I'd just like to read from verse 5 down to verse 10.

John 13, John 13, verse 5. Then he poured water into a basin, And began to wash the disciples' feet, And to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped round him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, Lord, do you wash my feet? Jesus answered him, What I am doing you do not understand now, But afterwards you will understand.

[8:30] Peter said to him, You shall never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I do not wash you, You have no share with me.

I will leave it at that. I'd like to focus on these words particularly. If I do not wash you, You have no share with me.

This is a very solemn section of the history of Jesus. And the events that we're looking at here, They take place on the final part of his journey on this earth.

Scripture tells us that his hour has now come. His time to die on the cross for the sins of his people is now at hand.

And up until this point, Jesus has been primarily concerned with outsiders, if you like. Others who have come to him for healing, for teaching, for salvation.

[9:38] But now, as he nears his time to go towards the cross, Jesus turns his attention wholly to his disciples and shows them the extent of his love and compassion as he assembles all of them around him for the last time.

This last night then was an eventful night. This period just before Jesus went forward to the cross, to his interrogation.

He prayed his great high priestly prayer. He taught his disciples many valuable truths. He observed the Passover meal with his disciples.

That was him instituting the Lord's Supper, as we know it. And he was betrayed into the hands of his enemies by one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot.

And the other three Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, they carry a more detailed account of the feast itself that was happening in the upper room.

[10:54] But John omits that detail and instead, John gives us insight into the dialogue and remarkable occurrences that are now beginning to happen around the table.

At that time, and in that culture, food washing someone else's feet was regarded as one of the most humble and demeaning tasks anyone could perform.

It was reserved for household slaves. So what I'd like to look at this evening is to look at this act of washing and what happened in the upper room.

And particularly, secondly, the significance of the washing. So as the meal gets underway here in the upper room, this overpowering and astonishing scene starts to unfold before us.

And it was something that the disciples had not experienced before. And it's something that the disciples would not have expected to happen.

[12:17] The son of God, perfect and sinless, who has all power and authority, he gets up from the table, he takes off his overgarments, he

wraps a towel around his waist, he pours a basin of water, he goes down on his knees and starts washing his disciples' feet.

And as you begin to realize what's happening here, you almost want to cry out, stop! Because this isn't the work of the Lord of glory.

Surely it isn't. This is what we should be doing for you. And this is very similar to what John the Baptist said to Jesus as Jesus came to be baptized by him.

And we're told in Matthew chapter 3, then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John to be baptized. John would have prevented him saying, I need to be baptized by you.

And do you come to me? So it's kind of very similar what we have here, and particularly the way it works out with Peter, the disciple.

[13:40] Yet, how wrong we would be in saying or even thinking that. Because Jesus in his word is continually teaching us and showing us by example, what we have to do, what is necessary.

As Jesus starts to wash their feet, we can ask the question, well, how did the disciples feel at this point? And scripture really tells a reaction.

They never said a word. Not a word is recorded for us. They never said a word. They're most likely sitting there in silent astonishment at Jesus doing this for them.

Not a word was said until, of course, as we read, Jesus came to Peter. And here, as we might expect, Peter, Peter's character comes to the fore again.

And in one respect, he speaks for all of us. Can we not visualize him sitting there at the table, and as Jesus comes right in front of him, can we not visualize him quickly just pulling his feet away and drawing them back as quickly as possible and protesting, are you going to wash my feet?

[15:15] Even though Peter didn't have a full understanding of the work of Jesus, he knew one thing. This was the Christ.

Peter knew that. It was crystal clear in his mind. He had testified to that previously when Jesus asked him, Jesus asked the disciples, who do you say that I am?

And it was Peter who spoke up and said, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. So Peter knew that this was a Christ. Peter knew he was holy. And Peter knew that he himself was full of sin. And he concluded this shouldn't be happening. And Jesus explained to Peter that he didn't realize the spiritual significance and the full extent of what he was actually doing for them right there.

And we will consider this very shortly. We might have thought that this in itself would have been enough for Peter, for Jesus to speak that word, but no.

[16:28] And I suppose we shouldn't be surprised, Peter being Peter, for what we're told about him in the Gospels. Peter replied even more strongly, you're not doing that to me.

I can't allow this to happen. You'll never wash my feet. And it's always as if Peter is taking charge or wants to take charge of this whole situation that has unfolded before him.

And however commendable Peter's reaction was, it was wrong. And Peter appears to have forgotten Jesus' words and teaching.

And we have in Mark chapter 10 and verse 45, where Jesus spoke in front of the disciples, I didn't come to be ministered to, but to serve. So now we have Jesus' reply to Peter.

And it's a text we're going to focus on this evening. If I don't wash you, then you have no share with me. Or, as an older version puts it, or you have no part of me.

[17:44] It means the same thing. So clearly, when Jesus spoke that to Peter, this had a direct influence on Peter's thinking and understanding.

And Peter's responded once again, well, Lord, not my feet only, but my hands and my head as well. Just wash all of me. And we might think, well, what an excellent answer that was.

But again, it wasn't correct. And we're told then in verse 13 that Jesus then sat down and he begins to explain what he has done.

You call me teacher and Lord. You're right. For so I am. And here then is where we also begin to understand the mystery of what's behind this washing.

With the benefit of hindsight of the cross, and especially our understanding from the word as we have it, we can now appreciate what Jesus was doing.

[18:54] And this was symbolic of his sacrifice at Calvary. I'm going to quote here, some of which is partly from Alistair Begg. And of course, as

follows, the glory that God has given to Jesus is a glory that is seen supremely in the path of obedience.

It is seen supremely in the expression of lowly service. It is seen in a savior who washes his disciples' feet. It is seen in a king who comes riding on a donkey.

It is seen in the arrival of divinity in such an expression of apparent poverty, simplicity and helplessness. And the father is glorified in a love that culminates in the cross.

That kind of summarizes everything to do with this passage that we have here. So just as Jesus laid aside his garments and assumed the role of house servant to wash his disciples' feet.

So he also served humanity and particularly all of his own beloved children whom he loves all the way to dine on the cross for them.

[20:22] And this is the love he speaks about in verse one. Before the feast of the Passover when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

So what we understand from this passage, looking at verse 10, there's a bathing and there's a bathing and there's a food washing mentioned. And the bathing represents salvation and the food washing represents restoration.

Jesus told Peter that he had already washed, receiving the bathing of salvation. He was clean. And other than Judas Iscariot, so were the rest of the disciples. The bathing of salvation isn't something a believer undertakes every day at all.

It's done once. And that's when Jesus becomes your personal savior. So what does this mean in your personal experience?

[21:42] Well, first of all, it is exactly that. It is personal. It is personal between you and Jesus. The Bible tells us that we need to believe.

And yes, we do. But it's not a casual believing. It's not a casual believing in God's word. It's not an acknowledgement or just an acknowledgement that you believe the Bible is true.

It is much more than that. It's about coming to that place where you genuinely acknowledge your need of Jesus.

It's about finally admitting that you cannot make yourself better before God. It's about finally acknowledging that you cannot work or earn your way into God's favor in any way.

And it's about reaching that place where you realize that you are truly a sinner and you desperately need God's forgiveness. And it's about falling on your knees in true humility and pleading with God to take hold of your life.

[23:09] Because if he doesn't, then you know that you will be going to hell. You will be going to hell. It's about truly acknowledging that Jesus is your only real hope.

And that you believe Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is all that you have left to hold on to. As it is in the words of the hymn writer, Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to your cross I cling.

And that is the pleading that you need to have genuinely before the Lord. That's what's required.

And if you genuinely do that and do it sincerely, then God's word is crystal clear.

He will come into your life and he will save you. And then from that time onwards, you are clean. You are pure in Christ.

Your sins are eternally forgiven because you are now identified with Christ. And in Christ, cleansed in the blood of the Lamb.

[24:38] And as we're told in Romans chapter 8, there is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. This is a washing of regeneration.

This is what's referred to as being born again. This bathing refers to a spiritual cleansing and a spiritual renewing.

And perhaps it's summarized best in 2 Corinthians chapter 5. This bathing is for union with Christ and in Christ. And what we're told there in 2 Corinthians 5, 17, therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

That's what happens. Being born again, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away and behold, all things have become new in that person's life, in that person's experience.

And this union, this bond is so strong that nothing can ever break it. Nothing can ever break it. Nothing can ever break it. The Christian's permanent relationship with Christ then is pictured in the bathing of which he speaks about here.

[26:04] So then the question is, well, what's pictured in the food washing that Jesus carried out with his disciples?

Well, it is that believers still need to be delivered from the ongoing power of sin in their lives. Let me try to explain.

When we take the bathing as an example, if we take a bath at our home or if we take a shower, then we are washing ourselves, albeit externally and physically, and we are clean, basically from head to toe, when we are finished washing.

But the moment we step out of that bath, or the moment we step out of that shower, and we put our feet on the ground, they become soiled.

so our feet are no longer clean. And this is the illustration of the picture that has been given to us here.

[27:16] And just because Christians are forgiven for their sins doesn't mean that they've stopped sinning or that they become immune to sin.

Every single day, we are acutely aware that we have to go to the Lord for forgiveness for this food washing, because our feet become immediately soiled, then they need to be washed, continually made clean.

Because we are surrounded by sin in this world. And it comes out through our thoughts, through our words, through our deeds. Sin is continually around us.

So we might ask the question then, how does Jesus wash the believers' feet? How do we experience that as Christians? How do the Lord's people experience that in their lives?

Well, they go to His word, first and foremost. They go to His word. They love out His word. They pray for His word to be applied to them in their daily lives.

[28:29] They pray and they ask daily for forgiveness for their sins. And they listen out for God talking to them as well. It's a two-way process.

But it's a process particularly of seeking forgiveness, going to God for forgiveness for our sins daily or umpteen times daily confessing our sins and seeking that forgiveness from the Lord.

And in doing so, we seek to let Him direct our path daily and keep us in close fellowship with Him.

And just as mentioned towards the end of our reading in John 13, John in his first epistle takes up this again.

But he says in 1 John 1, verse 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 Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.

Through the word is the way in which we get the bathing. And it is also through the word that we get the food washing. The psalmist said, just as we sang there in Psalm 119, how can, how can a young man purify his way?

[29:59] And it's by living according to your word. Jesus said, Jesus said, those who believed in Him, they would be sanctified by God's word.

Our bathing and our food washing are both accomplished through the word of God. Jesus didn't look on His disciples as merely men of flesh.

He looked on them as He does with all of His people, as those whom the Father has given Him. A great part of the joy that was set before Him, they are those who believe, who truly believe in Him and have a saving relationship with Him.

So it leads us to conclude then that if you're here tonight and you're not allowing Jesus into your life, and you're not experiencing this bathing or this food washing, then you're saying to Him that you can handle your own life yourself and you don't need Him to look after you each day.

You may not think that, but you have a barrier up if you're not willing to search after Jesus and to accept Him into your life. Jesus had one primary purpose when He came to this world and that was to die for sinners.

[31:40] He accomplished this purpose on behalf of every person, everyone who would believe in Him. He did this on the cross because of His great love for each and every one of His children.

He did this on the cross but He also walked on this earth for 33 years and He ministered for three of these years.

And that ministry was perfect. It was perfect in His obedience, it was perfect in His ministry and healings, and it was perfect in His humility.

We're not being instructed to go outside of here and to literally start washing each other's feet. But what we are being asked to do is to look out for one another through this love of God, this bond that there is through all of God's people.

[32:49] we've been instructed to to look out for each other and to watch out for each other and to serve one another, to pray for each other and to primarily have a love for one another in Christ.

Just as we have it in verse 34 here and Jesus gives the disciples and us this new commandment, a new commandment I give to you, that you love one another that you love one another just as I have loved you.

You also are to love one another and by this all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love one for another.

God's children are justified and adopted into his family by the bathing before the ongoing work of food washing can begin in them.

and that involves daily confession and forgiveness. If there is anyone here tonight who is not in Christ then I plead with you to go to him and to do as we have gone through here to go to him and to realise that there is nothing else in your life that is so important as to have Jesus.

[34:17] I pray that that you will be given to see that you can do no more for yourself and that every single thing depends on Jesus Because we have a warning here a warning from Jesus that is given in love.

Jesus says as it is with our text If I don't wash you then you have no part with me.

Father we just thank you for the way of salvation that you have opened up for sinners such as we are.

We thank you Father that for each one of your people then you have lifted them out of that mighty clay and that you have placed them and their foundation in life now is Jesus for he is the living word we just bless you and thank you for your mercy and for your love and for this great offer and may it be Lord that if there are any here this evening that they would go to you and that they would plead for this bathing in sincerity that they might receive it Amen.

Well let's close our service now and we can sing in Psalm 119 the section 105 down to 112 page 163 it's in sing psalms I beg your pardon page 163 in the blue psalm books Psalm 119 at verse 105 page 163 your words your words a lamp that shines before my feet it is a light that guides me on my way the oath that I have taken I have confirmed that all your righteous laws I will obey we'll sing these verses 105 to 112 to God's praise your words a lamp that shines before my feet it is a light that guides me on my way the oath that I have taken my way

[37:09] The oath that I have taken I conferred, that all your righteous laws I will obey.

O Lord, you know that I have suffered much, please serve my life according to your word.

I'll send the living praises of my heart, instruct me in your righteous laws, O Lord.

I will not dismay, I do holy law, though constantly my life is in my hands.

Although the wicked set us here for me, I am the mother of all your own hands.

[38:45] Your statutes are my heritage always, and every day they make my heart rejoice.

My heart is set on keeping your decrees, and to the very end they are my choice.

After the benediction, I'll go to the door to my right here. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, rest upon and abide with each one of you, now and always. Amen.

Amen.