

WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY

The Glory of the Word That Washes

INTRODUCTION

The Gospel of John is a fascinating record of Jesus' ministry. The first 12 chapters cover nearly 3 years of Christ's life and ministry. The next 9 chapters basically cover a week of His ministry. Chapter 13 starts what we often call the Passion of the Christ. Chapter 13, starting at verse 31 through to the end of Chapter 17 give us a glimpse into the intimate and personal communication of Jesus with His disciples and His Father.

Before we get to all that we will deal with John 13: 1-30. You will recognize this passage as Jesus washing His disciple's feet and the identification of the betrayer, Judas. It is a rich passage. The beginning of this passage has given Bible students trouble for years. It is hard to match up John's chronology of events with the rest of the Synoptics (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). The late Dr. R.C. Sproul, Sr., writes, "One of the most difficult problems we face in biblical studies is trying to understand the relationship between John's Gospel and the Synoptic Gospels with respect to the timing of events during Holy Week."¹ Dr. D.A. Carson simplifies the argument for us by asserting, "there is nothing in the words themselves to discourage us from taking the clause as an introduction to the footwashing only."² The Passover most certainly follows the footwashing and the problem is minimized.

We will spend a few Sundays just focusing on this part of Chapter 13. Today we are going to take a "bird's eye view" of the passage and ensure that we see the forest before we look at the trees.

READ [John 13:1-30 \(ESV\)](#)

Verses 1 to 30 can be summed up in one word: CLEANSING. There is the cleansing of the disciple's feet; and there is a cleansing of the disciples as a group (for the betrayer was dismissed from the group). If you take notes, my outline is something like this:

- I. Cultural Conversion
- II. Spiritual "Foot" Washing.
- III. So What? Application.

¹ R. C. Sproul. John (St. Andrew's Expository Commentary) (Kindle Locations 3217-3218). Kindle Edition.

² Carson, D. A. (1991). [The Gospel according to John](#) (p. 460). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

I - CULTURAL CONVERSION

As we look at the cleansing of the disciples, we need to ascertain what is really going on here. Jesus is taking a cultural habit and transforming it. He's turning it into a spiritual event. We should not be surprised that He does this. John has recorded Jesus doing this throughout this Gospel. From the wedding of Cana, to the New Birth and Nicodemus, through to the drinking of water and the eating of bread, Jesus uses these earthly realities to teach spiritual realities. In addition, we get clues from the story to support that idea. Notice:

- a. Peter certainly was aware of the cultural expectation of foot washing. But note what Jesus said to him: "Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand."³
- b. And then these words of our Savior certainly lift the drama far beyond ordinary foot washing: "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me."⁴
- c. To all the disciples, after he washed their feet, John records, "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?"⁵

You can be certain He means something other than cultural foot washing. But what does He mean?

II - SPIRITUAL "FOOT" WASHING

As pertaining to the disciples, there is conversation about 2 levels of cleaning. There is cleaning of the feet (e.g., v6) and there is cleaning of the whole body (e.g., vv9-10). Let me suggest to you 2 things:

1. In New Covenant terminology the complete washing of the whole person refers to the subject of justification. In justification "you are clean".
2. In the same sense the washing of the feet refers to sanctification – the daily process of dealing with sin and pursuing righteousness.

Excluding Judas, Jesus is saying to these men, "You are all clean. You are all washed. You are all justified. Your standing with me is without condemnation." You will well know Romans 8:1 (ESV), *"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."*

But you all know that although our standing before God is justified, our state is yet in process. The flesh battles with the Spirit (Galatians 5:17) and we are yet working out our salvation (Philippians 2:12). This

³ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Jn 13:7). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁴ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Jn 13:8). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁵ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Jn 13:12). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

process of becoming like Christ is called sanctification. In terms of John 13, sanctification is dealing with the corruption of sin that meets us in our daily walk. In terms of the symbolism, we need to always be washing our feet.

How do we become cleansed from the corruption of daily life? Answer? *"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, ESV). That verb "confess" is in the present, active tense. We could translate it, "If we continue to keep on confessing our sin . . ." Dr. John MacArthur writes, "Continual confession of sin is an indication of genuine salvation."⁶

How does Christ cleanse His Bride the Church? Answer? "by the washing of water with the word."⁷ Just as clear, fresh water cleanses our feet from daily travels, so God's written Word washes us clean as we repent and confess our sins. It purifies our thoughts, scrubs our motives, and cleans our conscience as we absorb it and obey its truths. Notice Psalm 19:

"The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether." (Psalm 19:7–9, ESV)

How do we sum all this up? **Jesus is encouraging His disciples that through salvation and the gift of justification their standing before Him is clean. But earthly reality requires that we consistently have our feet washed by the Word that our sins be forgiven.**

Someone might say, "I don't need to worry about sin in my life. Why I believed in Jesus and He cleansed me of all guilt." What would Jesus say to that person? "If I do not wash you [meaning wash your feet], you have no share with me."⁸ What is Jesus saying in terms we understand? It is this, "If you have been truly justified, you will desire to be sanctified." Notice Romans 8:13–14 (ESV),

¹³ *For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.* ¹⁴ *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*

Do you see that? If you are led by the Spirit; if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you are truly sons of God. One of the significant evidences that you are a Christian is your response to sin.

SO WHAT?

⁶ MacArthur, J., Jr. (Ed.). (1997). [The MacArthur Study Bible](#) (electronic ed., p. 1964). Nashville, TN: Word Pub.

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Eph 5:26). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁸ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 13:8). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

The Example Applied

In the Upper Room Jesus taught His disciples that they needed Him, the Word of God, to wash their daily corruption of sin. And then He said to them, *"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."* (John 13:14–15, ESV). Now we will spend more time on this in a future message, but please note the imperative here. Just as Jesus applied the washing of the Word to the daily sin of His disciples, we are to do that for one another. In short, if you witness sin in my life, you are to wash my feet – to bring the cleansing power of the Word to bear on my life.

The Prerequisite to Intimacy

There's a second application from this passage. Before Jesus could enter intimate, personal dialogue with His disciples, He had to first deal with their own sin and the corruption in the group. That is a clear principle of Scripture. Confession and cleansing of sin must precede intimacy with God. John was so convinced of this he wrote a whole letter (1 John) to make sure we knew that. Listen to the instruction of James:

"Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you." (James 4:8–10, ESV)

Professing Christians have said to me, "I don't get anything out of church." Or "I read my Bible and I don't get anything out of it." Beloved one of the most common issues in both cases is the issue of sin. As Jesus taught in the Parable of the Soils (Matthew 13:20), worldliness will choke out the Word and the Scriptures will have no meaning for you.

Conclusion

So, in conclusion as we apply this passage to ourselves, we need to remember:

1. One of the characteristics of genuine faith in Christ is found in a person who is fights sin by the Spirit through the Word of God.
2. Genuine Christians ought to courageously speak into the lives of other Christians applying the water of the Word that they might be cleansed. Secondly, genuine Christians ought to be willing to receive correction from other Believers.
3. Lastly, forgiveness must precede fellowship. Before we worship, we must weep. Before we open the Scriptures, we need to seek cleansing. Before we serve Christ, we must make sure our hearts are united in Him.

“Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation. Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob. Selah” (Psalm 24:3–6, ESV)