

The Humble Example of Christ

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Preacher: Tom Holland

[0:00] When we finished last time, we had the Apostle Peter in the 13th chapter of John telling the Lord Jesus that under no circumstances would he ever allow Jesus to wash his feet.

And Peter was always coming out with these emphatic statements that he had to eat later, but he said, you're not going to wash my feet.

And it's real easy sitting here to view Peter's objections as a credit to his own personal humility. But in truth, and I didn't really focus on this, I started reading a lot of the old guys, the old Irritus and Reformers that are commentaries on this section.

And they really look at this as an act of disobedience based upon pride.

[1:27] One Puritan said this, never spurn away the tokens of the Savior's love. If the Savior wants to wash your feet, let him wash your feet.

And it was at this point, of course, the Lord settled the issue pretty quickly, didn't He? He told Peter, He said, if I do not wash you, you have no part with me.

If I don't wash you, Peter, you're not going to have any part with me. Now we can be certain that Peter, and I think everybody in the upper room, were thinking in terms of the water.

There's water in this basin and the Lord girded Himself and He took a towel and He began to wash their feet. And they're all thinking in terms of washing with the towel that Jesus had, this water in the basin.

But that type of washing, even administered by the Lord Jesus Himself, is not sufficient for salvation.

[2:43] That's not the point of salvation. We don't get our feet washed physically with a basin of water. And Peter, like the rest of us, could be a part of Jesus only if He was washed in the blood of the eternal covenant.

That's the washing. The blood of the eternal covenant. So the Lord then makes a transition.

From the lower nature of earthly water to the highest possible sphere of grace applied by the atoning sacrifice of our crucified Lord.

And it reminds me of when Jesus spoke to the woman at the well at Sychar. She's thinking about the water that lay at the bottom of Jacob's well that she had to draw out, fill those huge pots, and carry them back into town.

And in fact, she told the Lord, give me some of that eternal water because I don't want to come out here and lug that water back in. She's thinking in terms of physical water. Jesus was speaking to her about the water of eternal life.

[4:05] And He took it to an entirely different level with her. The Lord does the same thing in the sixth chapter of John. There He is speaking to the assembled Jews concerning the manna in the wilderness.

And of course, they're all bragging that Moses fed them for 38 years and he only fed them one meal. Well, actually, Moses never fed them anything.

God fed them. But the Lord transitions to speak of the fact that He is the unique bread of life. Forget the manna. Forget that whatever it was.

I think that's what it means. What is it? Whatever it was that came down, Jesus had come down from heaven as the true bread of God.

So Peter is complaining to the Lord about a lower washing with earthly water. And the Lord tells Peter he needs a higher washing in atoning blood.

[5:12] And this is really made clear in verse 10 where Jesus says to the assembled disciples that you are clean, but not all of you.

And of course, we know that He's speaking of Judas there. Well, the Lord had washed even the feet of Judas, the betrayer.

But that didn't make him clean in the sense of eternal life. It was a physical worship. Where Peter was struggling was the idea that the master would serve the servant.

And that's a disconnect in both the Jewish world and in the Roman world. Those societies didn't like that.

Where the master served the servant. But the Lord had much more to do for Peter than that.

[6 : 15] And if He didn't do it, He said you're going to be cut off from the ministry and from eternal life as well. And we can say this with authority. Because even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and give His life a ransom for many.

Over in Mark's Gospel, chapter 10, verse 45. And this raises an interesting question that applies to Peter and to every human that ever lived, saved and unsaved.

And you've got to dwell on this a little bit and chew on this tonight. If Peter could not submit to the level of allowing his Lord to go down so low as to wash his feet, how is he going to submit to the Lord to be indebted to Him for eternity by the shedding of His blood?

Which has a much more weighty impact. Peter's struggling with earthly water. What's he going to do about eternal blood when Jesus goes to the cross? Now, in some churches, foot washing is a big deal.

So much so that some believe it is the third ordinance of the church after baptism and the Lord's Supper.

[7 : 48] Some churches don't hold to this to be the third ordinance, and we don't. The two ordinances are the Lord's Supper and baptism. Immersion. But I think we see here that Christ has infinitely more to do for us than just to bestow a mere outward blessing on those that were assembled.

When Jesus told Peter, if he didn't wash him, he would have no part of the ministry of the Lord. Obviously, that had a profound impact on Peter.

And this is what he said. Simon Peter, that's verse 9. Simon Peter said to him, Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head.

You can always count on Peter. Say something. So here we see Peter once more going from one extreme to the other. He starts out two minutes earlier.

He says, you are never going to wash my feet. You're never going to wash anything that I have.

And while Peter is clearly wrong, we cannot fail to see in him the strength of his love for the Master.

[8 : 58] But on another occasion, we heard Peter say, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And we remember his declaration. You are the Christ, the Son of God.

So he's strong. He's strong in his belief. Now, the Lord is ever tender to his own. He's going to correct Peter, but without embarrassment or rebuke.

He says to Peter, very matter-of-factly, he says, He that is washed, or washed, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit and ye are clean.

I just read that in the King James. Kind of the old King James. The word washed there appears twice. He that is washed, needeth not to wash, except he is to wash his feet.

Now, we are not Greek scholars. Like Joseph Henry Thayer or James Strong or A.T. Robinson or William Vine or Don Coleman.

[10 : 04] The giants of Greek scholarship. And although that word wash is used twice in verse 10, in our English translation, it is two entirely different words in the Greek.

The first word we come to is washed from L-O-U-O, meaning to bathe the whole person or to bathe every part of the person.

That's a bath. The second time the word is used in that same verse, it is the Greek word nipto. I don't know if I said that right or not. Meaning to wet only a part or only to clean the hands or clean the feet.

It's narrowed down. And we see this in the New King James or in the New American Standard Version, which says this, Jesus said to him, He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean and you are clean.

Telling Peter and the others, you are clean. Now there is deep spiritual significance in all of this. And with the indwelling Holy Spirit, I think it's simple for true believers to understand.

[11:29] The natural man, and that is to say the unsaved man, doesn't have a clue what's going on. Once the soul has been washed by regeneration, it is clean.

And it does not need that level of bathing again. Once we are born again, better rendered, born from above, justified by God in His great judicial act of declaring us cleansed from sin, we are positionally clean.

All that is left is to be cleansed from the sins of our daily life, which pick up in this sin-polluted world the dust.

Dust there being sins. And the analogy the Lord uses for picking up daily sins is dust. So the image here is washing the dust of Jerusalem off their feet.

But in reality, He's teaching us a bigger lesson. Let me put this another way. Once a person has truly been born again, justified by God, he does not need to be born again, again, or justified a second time.

[12:57] He can't be. He can't be. And I love to tease my Herminian friends with this directive. And of course, they're the ones that believe you can lose legitimate salvation through some human act.

And here's my teaser. I will say to them, list for me the names of every person in the Bible, Old and New Testament, that was truly saved, lost their salvation, and was subsequently saved a second or a third or a fourth time.

Give me a list of those things. And I've only had one say, well, maybe King David, you know, he did some horrendous things with that. See, I said, okay, where does it say that he got born again, again?

And they can't find that. They can't find that. They can't find it because it's not in there, and it's not in there because it can't happen.

Justification is a one-time act by God and is forever. But while the believer does not have to be regenerated or justified a second time, he does need to be cleansed from the defilement that he has contracted from the world, the flesh, and the devil.

[14:17] This is not my notes. I'm making this up. We contract from contact. We're in a sin-filled world, aren't we, guys? And we fight the devil. We fight the world.

And we especially fight the flesh. And we're known to lose a few of those battles, haven't we? And we pick up the dust of sin. This leads us to ask a question. What steps are we to take to be cleansed from the daily defilement of sin?

And the best answer I have for that is to go to John's inspired writings in the first epistle, first chapter, verse 9.

And if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

We should be going to the Lord daily or if necessary hour by hour for our spiritual foot washing. We pick up this dust of the world. That is what the Lord meant when he told the disciples that they'd already been bathed, but they needed to wash their feet.

[15:30] Their feet needed to be cleansed. In our first John passage, the key word is confess, which is *homogeo* in the Greek. And what does that mean? Strong's Concordance, another great Greek scholar along the lines of the Don, defines the word confess this way.

Confess means to say the same thing as another, to agree with or to assent. And the best explanation I ever heard, I certainly didn't think of this myself, is that when we go to the Lord in confession, we see our sin as He sees our sin.

And I had a guy show me this. He showed the church I happened to be visiting that day years ago. He said, we go over here and we stand over here with the Lord and we look back at our sin and say, I see that with your eyes, Lord, that was sin.

I need to confess that. I see what you see. I thought that was a beautiful, beautiful picture that man lived.

We agree with God that our actions or our thoughts are indeed sinful. We can even call the sin for what it is.

[16:45] If we lust, tell the Lord, Lord, I lust it in violation of your commandment. If we're stolen, and I hope none of us have, if you've stolen something, give me a call.

We tell the Lord what we have done. He already knows. What are we hiding? What are we hiding from? He already knows.

Tell Him plainly. So the Lord tells His assembled disciples that they are clean. And then He adds these troubling words.

And you are clean, but not all of you. And actually, according to my text, He said, but not all. You guys are clean, but not all.

Not you guys. Back yonder on the upper room. You guys are clean, but not all. I mean, my heart would have skipped a bunch of these. We're not even going to study that tonight where they all said, is it I, Lord?

[17 : 48] But I promise you, I'd have been sitting there thinking that. But is it I, Lord? You are clean, but not all. For He knew the One who was, and I love the tense here.

At least in English it comes out as present tense. He knew the One who was betraying Him.

Because that was going on right then, even though Judas was in the room still. For this reason, He said, not all of you are clean.

Well, that would have given me pause to reflect. Jesus reassures the disciples that they have been cleaned, but that was not true of all of them.

There is one among them who was most dirty. He's filthy. He's filthy. He is the notable exception.

Now, obviously, the Lord knew who was betraying Him in intimate detail. Although, the disciples did not know at this point.

[18 : 53] Now, Dr. MacArthur believes that the Lord is issuing here a last appeal. And a warning to Judas, who is on the brink of executing his wicked scheme.

And it's already been set in motion, because he's already met with the Jewish leadership. And in this, Judas is not going to be deterred. Calvin wrote that the Lord Jesus was allowing Judas more time to be moved to repentance.

Judas did not take advantage of this, and is serving his eternal punishment for rejecting Christ, even as we speak here tonight. He's still an eternal punishment.

Jesus, of course, the omnipotent God, knew all of this was going to transpire. In the minutest possible details.

Long before the night in the upper room, the Lord had said this regarding Judas. John 6, 7. Did I myself not choose you, the twelve?

[20 : 06] And yet one of you is a devil. I think I would have hung on that. I would have sought out Jesus Christ.

Lord, what do you mean by that? Every aspect of Christ's death, and this includes the betrayal of Judas, was part of God's predetermined plan.

Then, this man, that's capital, Jesus, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put him to death.

And I want to quickly add here, just because this was part of the predetermined plan of the Father, it in no way excuses or exonerates Judas from his sin.

Why did Judas betray the Lord? Because he wanted to. Jesus did not fit his model of what the Messiah should be. And he betrays him into the hands of sinful men.

[21 : 19] The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of him, but woe to that man! By whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.

Boy, that's a powerful statement. Judas would agree with that tonight. It would have been a lot better if I had never been born. The Lord next explains what it is he has done and why he did it. John 13, 12-17. So when he had washed their feet and taken his garments and reclined at the table again, or reclined again, he said to them, Do you know what I have done to you?

I don't imagine. I'm glad Peter didn't jump up and interrupt, you know, this time at least. You call me teacher and Lord, and you are right.

That's another passage, by the way. You know, there's a whole group that said Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah. What did he just say he was? Lord. Lord. Womath well said the Messiah is coming. He said, I who speak to you and me.

[22 : 28] I think he did declare many times to me the Messiah. You call me teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. I am is important there. Same words he uttered from the burning bush.

If I then, the Lord and the teacher, washed your feet, now listen to this, guys, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.

Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you're blessed if you do them.

Having washed the disciples' feet, the Lord puts on his garments, and he again reclines at the table. Now, the Lord has just given them three important lessons, and we should learn from these as well. In fact, I will say, we are now moving into, for the night at least, the application phases of our study. This is how we should be living out our lives in the church until Jesus returns or until we go to be with Him.

[23 : 48] Now, first we learn, once again, concerning the humiliation of Christ. Remember, the foot washing, that was reserved for the lowest of the lowest slave.

That was the guy that had to do that, the lowest of the slaves. Jesus came to this earth in humility. If I'd written in it a fictional account of the Son of God coming down there, I'd have put Him in a gold palace and servants and all that.

God the Father didn't do that. He came to earth in humility. For eternity, He was in the presence of the glory of the Godhead, of which He was a co-equal member.

He left that glory. He came to this earth. He pitched His tent with us for 33 years. So we see the humiliation of Christ.

The second lesson we deal with is our justification. It is God who justifies us. It is God's legal declaration that we are without sin.

[24 : 56] Well, how can He do that? Because He's the judge. And He declares us to be without sin. He's able to do that by placing our sins upon His dear Son. 2 Corinthians 5.21 He, God the Father, made Him, Christ the Son, who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Literally, He made Him who knew no sin, sin. And that to be is in italics. He who knew no sin, sin on our behalf.

He didn't become a sinner when He took our sins upon. And the doctrine of justification is of great importance, but that again is not the primary truth that is in focus.

The crucial principle that Jesus was teaching to His followers in the upper room and to everyone who would follow Him down through the centuries till He returns was the importance of humble, loving service.

That's what He was doing. We need to view this especially in light of all the bickering that went on among the disciples as to who would be first among them and who was going to be the most important to the Lord.

[26 : 32] Consider this. If the Lord of glory was willing to take on the role of the lowest slave, how could any of His fathers do anything less?

The Lord of glory was willing to do that as an example to us. Consider that question in light of the Lord's comment recorded by Dr. Luke. And for those of you who get copies, it says like 646.

That's Luke 646. Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say? Wow.

So Jesus goes to meddling then, right? That to fail, to follow the priceless example of Christ in humble service is to elevate oneself above Him.

A slave, and that's what *doulos* means, that's what you read in your New Testament servant or bond servant, it's *doulos*, it's slave. A slave is never above his master.

[27 : 46] And according to the New Testament, all followers of Christ are slaves. Slaves to righteousness. John told us elsewhere that we should walk as Jesus walked.

1 John 2, verse 6. So how did Jesus walk? He walked in humility. He who created the universe, spoke the universe into existence.

And by the way, if you want to come to my house tonight, you will see the Milky Way. I've been going out there last night when I got home about 10, 10.30. It was amazing to see it.

And we can look up and we can see the handiwork of God, the fingerprints of God. We are to walk as Jesus walked. He walked, the Creator God walked in humility, even performing the function of the lowest slave.

The lowest of the low. Should we be unwilling to do any less than what our Lord and Master did? And I believe the answer to that is no.

[28 : 58] We should not be.