

JESUS' HUMBLENESS AND LOVE

John 13:1-17

Key Verse: 13:8

"'No,' said Peter, 'you shall never wash my feet.'
Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no part
with me.'"

We call John chapters 13-16 "the upper room dialogues," which consist of instructions, warnings and particularly precious promises. In chapter 13, Jesus gives an example of how to love one another by washing the disciples' feet. Most importantly, Jesus teaches divine humility and how to realize the love of God. Jesus also shows God's unfailing love toward Judas Iscariot, the betrayer (18-30). Most of all, Jesus commands his disciples to love one another. Let's learn why he did so.

First, Jesus loved them with the full extent of his love (1). Look at verse 1a. "It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this [world](#) and go to the Father." Jesus knew that the time of his suffering and death on the cross was approaching. Jesus was in great anguish at the thought of his crucifixion.

What did Jesus do at this time of suffering? Look at verse 1b. "Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love." In this verse "the full extent" was translated in the R.S.V., "he loved them to the end." As God loved the people of Israel to the end, so Jesus loved his disciples to the end. Jesus loved them from the beginning to the end. Jesus loved his disciples even though his time of crucifixion was approaching and he was bracing himself. Revelation 1:8a says, "'I am the Alpha and the [Omega](#),' says the Lord God." Jesus is God who is Alpha and Omega. In Jesus we find the beginning of our lives and our final destination. In Jesus we receive God's [love](#) to the end, as he loved his disciples to the end. Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." Here we learn that our [Lord Jesus Christ](#) is the God of "to the end." How nice it would be if parents would not divorce, but take care of their beloved children to the end. Then there would be no brokenhearted young people. We must grow like our Lord Jesus Christ who is the God of "to the end." Human love is relativistic. Jesus' love is absolute. His love endures forever. Psalm 136:1-4 says, "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His love endures forever. Give thanks to the God of gods. His love endures forever. Give thanks to the Lord of lords: His love endures forever. To him who alone does great wonders, His love endures forever." The phrase, "endures forever" is the same as "to the end."

There are many people who are sorrowful. Most of them are sorrowful because they want a father's love or a mother's love. There seem to be many problems. But the love problem seems to be the most serious problem. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 says, "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all

mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing." Without love the world would be void. Without love human beings would all look like robots. Without love, which is from above, humankind would look like small and big trees. One medical doctor, a heart transplant specialist, hated his girlfriend, who was also a heart transplant specialist, for ten years. He died of lung cancer which had become inoperable. When he was at the brink of death, he said to his girlfriend, "The first time I met you, you looked like my mom, not girlfriend. My harshness might have been my nasty nagging for your love. Forgive me." Then he breathed his last. How can we love others to the end? We must grow in the love of God. 1 Corinthians 13:11 says, "When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me." Again 1 Corinthians 13:13 says, "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." We are very precious because we have the love of God.

Second, the devil came into Judas Iscariot (2). This part shows us how Jesus had tried to love Judas Iscariot, the betrayer. Look at verse 2a. "The evening meal was being served..." To Jesus, this was the last supper before his crucifixion. And it was the time of teaching his disciples the meaning of his precious blood shed on the cross and the meaning of his bodily death. Yet it was simply a joyful occasion for the disciples, because they could have a formal dinner with their Master. They scarcely even had a regular hot meal. Now they had a whole upper room for themselves and prepared to eat the Passover meal with their Master, Jesus. However, they did not realize the deep meaning of the Last Supper, and that the hour had come for Jesus to die on the cross as the Paschal Lamb.

This joyful occasion was interrupted by Satan's attack. Look at verse 2b. Judas' impure motive made him vulnerable. "The devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus." Judas' philosophy was, "What do I get out of it?" Judas never accepted the love of God. He also never committed himself to Jesus due to his crooked philosophy of life. As soon as he sensed Jesus' ill-luck, he was ready to get out of the situation. But he was going nowhere. Satan was waiting to get him. Judas Iscariot is comparable to Cain in not accepting the word of God. To the end, he did not give his heart to Jesus (Ge 4:6-8). When Judas did not give his heart to Jesus, he could not but betray Jesus to be killed.

Third, Jesus demonstrates the love of God (3-5). Jesus knew that the Father had already put all things under his power (3). Jesus also knew that he would ascend to heaven after his resurrection and that he would be exalted to the throne of God to rule the world forever. So Jesus could have hacked his enemies to pieces. But Jesus did not do so. Rather, Jesus was conscious that his time to obey God's will had come. And Jesus knew that the time for him to be with his disciples was almost over. But to Jesus it was a painful reality that his disciples did not know the love of God. What did Jesus do?

It was customary for a servant to wash the feet of those who came to his master's house before they ate dinner. But Jesus, the Son of God,

humbled himself and took the form of a servant and began to wash his disciples' feet. It is because humbleness is the basic element of Jesus' love. John 1:1-3 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." So Jesus did not have to humble himself before his creatures. But our Lord Jesus Christ is the God of grace and truth. John 1:14 says, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." This verse means that God Almighty came to this world in the form of mankind. Man cannot become a cockroach. Infinite God cannot become a man. But he did so. Jesus was born in a stable and laid in a manger. Because of humble Jesus, the mother of Jesus became the object of worship to the Russians, who have painted several million icons, the pictures of the mother Mary. Why did Jesus wash his disciples' smelly feet? It was because Jesus wanted his disciples to serve others with the love of God: It was because Jesus wanted to raise his disciples as a kingdom of priests.

Fourth, a personal love relationship (6-11). Look at verse 6. "He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?'" Peter was surprised at Jesus' act. He could not understand why his Master was approaching to wash his feet, which he had not washed last night.

How did Jesus respond? Look at verse 7. "Jesus replied, 'You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.'" Jesus' humiliation--his washing sinners' feet--has always been a question to selfish human beings. Peter was one of them. Peter just couldn't accept his washing (8a). Look at verse 8b. "Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.'" This verse is short. But it has deep spiritual meaning. In brief, Peter must learn the servanthship of Jesus Christ our Lord and, as a result, realize the love of God and love God's flock of sheep to the end. It is surprising that humbleness is the foundation to the realization of divine love. So proud people, even if they claim to be Christians, are no more than the modern Pharisees, because they have never experienced the humility of Jesus and through the humility of Jesus, they have never experienced the love of God. There was a boy whose mother died when he was an infant. He was sorrowful because his step-mother only loved her own children. He was sorrowful because he was always hungry. He was sorrowful because he was not sent to junior or senior high school. He was sorrowful because he was beaten up almost every night. His sorrow grew until he could not bear it anymore. His sorrow continued until he was twenty-six years old. One day he met an American missionary and learned God's promise of the kingdom of God based on Mark 1:15, which says, "'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!'" He was no more sorrowful in the hope of meeting his mother in the kingdom of God. He heard a rumor that his mother was a sincere Christian, and that his mother prayed for her second son to be raised as a great servant of God and obtain a Ph.D. But his wounds were too deep whenever he remembered that he had been mistreated for nineteen years by his step-mother. One day he happened to read Ephesians 2:10. It says, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." There is the

phrase "in advance" in the last part of this verse. He realized that God gave him divine discipline from his infancy to his young manhood. He also realized that God chose and prepared him in such a way as his servant to use him as a mother-like shepherd. Then his sorrow melted away, and he made a decision to become a shepherd for all sorrowful young people. Through unbearable divine humiliation he experienced the love of God.

Let's review what Jesus said. Look at verse 8b. "Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.'" When we meditate on this verse prayerfully, we learn that it is required to experience divine humbleness by humbling oneself to the maximum degree, as our Lord Jesus Christ did (Jn 1:14). Our Lord Jesus Christ is originally God. But he gave up his heavenly glory, power and honor as God. Promotion is easy to accept. But demotion is not easy for anyone. A man was one of the executive directors of an insurance company. But the company was taken over by a bigger company. The young executive director was dismissed. But the young executive director, out of his self-conceit, could not talk about this dismissal to his wife. So he went fishing for a year. Finally he was hallucinating that he was president of the company. That night he was sweating and shivering all night. The next day he was hospitalized in a mental clinic, and after several days he died of empty pride.

But our Lord Jesus Christ demoted himself from God Almighty to the form of a servant. His incarnation is indeed full of grace and truth. To Paul, the incarnation of Jesus was easy to grasp. So he said in Philippians 2:5-8, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross." To Peter, the incarnation of Jesus was beyond comprehension. But Jesus said to him, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me" (8b). Peter, the man of human loyalty, was surprised at Jesus' words, "you have no part with me." To Peter, Jesus was all the world. He left his fishing business and his lovely wife and followed Jesus. When Jesus said, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me," it precisely meant that Peter must learn the humility of Jesus, and next, the humbleness of Jesus. As we have thought before, when we experience the humbleness of Jesus, we can realize the love of God, and we can be men and women of God's love.

Spiritually speaking, washing feet is to bear one's weaknesses and all his sins. Jesus came to this world to wash Peter's feet and bear all his weaknesses and sins. Love requires unlimited sacrifice. A servant of God took care of one heavy young man to help him lose weight so that he might have a certain possibility of getting married. The servant also helped him whole-heartedly to finish college, even though he had remained in the first year course after wasting seven years at a college. When the man shaped up, he wanted to marry in his own way. And he thought he needed \$250,000. So he charged the servant of God in criminal court that the servant abused him by letting him ride an exercise bike against his will. According to his friend, he said he needed the money for his marriage. But his case was turned down. The cross of Jesus explains the deeper meaning of this. Peter had to accept

Jesus' grace of washing his feet. He had to realize that he had been loved and served by Jesus. This realization opens a person's spiritual eyes to see how terrible a sinner he is. This realization opens one's spiritual eyes to see the love of God through his Son Jesus. Also, this realization would create a bond of love between Jesus and Peter. Otherwise, Peter could have no part with Jesus. This applies to each of us also. When Peter heard he would have no part with Jesus, he was frustrated, thinking that his love relationship would be broken. So he said, "Then, Lord, wash everything" (9).

We like people who are pretty and kind. Especially we like people who are sweet and gentle. But it is not easy for anybody to bear with spoiled and childish people. It is not easy for anybody to bear with selfish and lazy people. But we must follow our Lord Jesus' example and be a blessing to others. Moreover, by this, we must prove that we are the children of God. But if we have no bond of love with Jesus through the grace of divine humbleness, we cannot love others.

What did Jesus answer? Look at verse 10. "Jesus answered, 'A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.'" This verse teaches us that we are all children of God in Christ, cleansed and sanctified because of the efficacy of his blood (2Co 5:17). But we are still in the flesh with a sinful body. So we must confess our sins daily for the forgiveness of sins (1Jn 1:9). Jesus said that not every one was clean because Judas was going to betray him (11). It was indeed astonishing that there was Judas Iscariot. In light of Judas Iscariot, we can maintain our personal love relationship when we come to Jesus as we are and ask his mercy for cleansing (11).

Fifth, love is serving (12-17). Jesus asked them, "Do you understand what I have done for you?" (12b) But they did not understand what he meant. So he said, "You call me your Teacher. That's right, I am." Then he began to explain the main point of his example. Look at verse 14. "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet." Why did Jesus show them an example of how to love by washing others' feet? At that time, those who washed others' feet were slaves and servants. When Jesus washed their feet, it did not necessarily mean that they should become a servant or slave to other people. There is a comparatively humble person. His Bible testimony was poor. So his leader told him to write a better testimony. Then he was mad. So he took revenge on his leader by talking about two unhappy events to his leader which had happened nineteen years ago. These days people are revengeful. Many people sue others for money. Many people abandon their wives. In this merciless world it is not easy for anyone to love others.

Look at verse 12. "When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. 'Do you understand what I have done for you?' he asked them." Jesus knew that his disciples did not understand his teaching about humility and love and serving others with God's love. So Jesus explained to them how to love one another. Look at verses 13-15. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." Jesus told

them this so that they might follow his example.

Still his disciples did not understand Jesus' teaching. At that time, it was the custom for despised servants or sold slaves to serve their masters. Jesus' disciples, who wanted to be great men of God in their generation by virtue of Jesus' kingship, could not accept his teaching of divine love. So Jesus told them again. Look at verse 15. "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." Here Jesus charges them to follow his example. Jesus wanted them to follow his example in serving all kinds of sinners, as he had done in his Messianic ministry. Jesus really wanted them to serve the Samaritan women, to help them experience the love of God. Jesus wanted them to serve the lepers to be healed so that they might experience the love of God and be saved.

Look at verse 16. "I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him." Here we learn that childish persons cannot serve others with the love of God. Childish people serve others with human love to some extent. But when the friend whom they had cared for becomes argumentative or rebellious, they hate him more than they loved him before. One Bible teacher taught his sheep one to one. After a while his sheep became rebellious. Then he was so furious that he rebuked his sheep until he fainted for a while. Serving others with the love of God is possible when one is sanctified by the truth. In other words, we can serve others with the love of God when we are spiritually mature. We can serve others with the love of God when we are glorified by the love of God. St. John wrote this chapter after he had been glorified by Jesus' love from a man who had been politically ambitious. Therefore we must grow in the love of Jesus and become like mothers and fathers so that we can help the needy. Parent-level people can serve others with the love of God. People at a "brother" or "step-brother" level cannot serve others.

Men and women are crying, not knowing the love of God. The world is crying because of no love of God. We must experience the humbleness of Jesus and, as a result, realize the love of God and follow the example of Jesus.